

Analysis of Relationship between Social Profiling Project Exit Strategy and Community-Based Project Sustainability in Siaya County, Kenya

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Abstract

Community-based initiatives are vital means of development. Initiating projects is an avenue to local communities' social, environmental and economic needs satisfaction. Nonetheless, majority are not sustainable and enjoy little success! Sustainability is not something one can stick into a project like a budget line! It is a way of life, a way of thinking that if not modelled is difficult to achieve. Many projects hurriedly closes down without planned exit strategy. To withdraw responsibly, one requires a sustainable disengagement strategy. Host of disengagement strategies are in existence and key among them is social profiling. This paper sought to analyse the relationship between social profile exit strategy and project sustainability. The study was anchored on Durkheim's work on social integration stipulating, "for if society lacks the unity that drives from the fact that the relationships between its parts are exactly regulated, the unity resulting from the harmonious articulation of its various functions assured by effective discipline and if, in addition, society lacks the unity based upon the commitment of men's wills to a common objective, then it is no more than a pile of sand that the least jolt or the slightest puff will suffice to scatter" (Kenneth and Kenneth, 2005). The study was descriptive and used a sample size of 370 and 346 women and youth groups respectively drawn through snow-ball sampling technique. Primary data was obtained through group interviews and questionnaires whereas secondary data used pre-recorded documents. Data was analysed through grounded theory and logistic regression. Out of the observed case, 83% were correctly classified. Women group projects were 1.609 times (or 61%) more likely to be sustainable. Social profile showed a significant effect on sustainability Wald = 60.051, df = 4 and $p = 0.000 < 0.05$. The study recommended that social profiling must precede a close down

Keywords: Social-Profiling, Project-Exit Strategy, Community-based project, Sustainability.

Introduction

The contemporary idea of sustainability hailed from The United Nations Stockholm Conference on Environment in 1972 and subsequent debates in the 1970s over the "limits to

growth” (Warhurst, 2002). Current debates on development policy and aid reforms too show an increasing significance and a growing concern on sustainability issues (Davis & Sankar, 2006). To this effect, development cooperation projects world over aim at bringing permanent and sustainable changes.

Success of any project is seen in the continuation of its benefits upon completion of external support, or that positive effects can be sustained. A general consensus is that the likelihood for sustained impacts can be increased if the project plan for sustainability right from the beginning (Pluye et.al, 2005). Sustainability is a thorny issue to many development organizations (Davis & Sankar, 2006; United Nations Development Programme – UNDP, 2006; GB, AB, 2008; International Fund for Agricultural Development – IFAD, 2009; Engels, 2010). Sustainability efforts are often implemented too late, or as an afterthought, and frequently difficult to evaluate (Goodman & Steckler, 1989; Shediak-Rizkallah & Bone, 1998, Weiss et.al., 2002; Mancini & Marek, 2004; Pluye et.al., 2004) yet no agency nor an individual can claim a lasting impact say, in terms of rural poverty reduction without ensuring sustainability.

The most popular directions taken by many researchers on sustainability is examination of factors within an organizational set up that impacts on sustainability. Whereas significant improvements had been noted in sustainability of International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) operations, sustainability still remained elusive as confirmed by 2008 Annual Report on results and impacts. Sustainability was found satisfactory in 67% of the projects evaluated in 2007 as compared to only 40% in 2002. However, 50% of the projects evaluated in 2007 were rated as moderately satisfactory for sustainability and 33% remained unsatisfactory (IFAD, 2009). This scenario made IFAD’s Asia and Pacific division in 2008 to place high priority on identifying factors affecting sustainability of investment projects. In conclusion, a project would be sustainable, if we were to consider four sustainability dimensions – institutional sustainability, household and community resilient, environmental sustainability and structural changes. IFAD further suggested an introduction of key elements of sustainability strategy early enough at design stage. The key strategy elements identified were – thorough analysis of both governmental and non-governmental organization (NGOs) involved in project implementation, baseline assessment of household livelihood security and resilience, appropriate risk analysis, and formulation of exit strategies.

According to Gardner and Joubert (2005), the topic of ‘exit strategies’ confounds and eludes emergency and development practitioners alike. In the dynamic context of Southern Africa, the mere mention of an “exit” when discussing food programming causes panic among communities, NGOs staff, government and other stakeholders. Based on Roba and Mwasi (2006) study on, ‘integrating environmental dimensions of poverty reduction into local development planning and governance in Kenya’, community – based projects emerged as vital means of wealth creation necessary for alleviating poverty. Thus, before phasing out humanitarian and development programmes or projects, it is crucial to develop a sustainable disengagement strategy to withdraw responsibly. Such a disengagement strategy should be part of any programme or project plan.

Goodwin, and Santilli (2009) states, whereas many projects have been funded in developing countries, their success (or otherwise) has not been widely monitored and hence, the actual benefits to local communities remain largely unquantified. Communities incur cost when they engage in community-based initiatives, they too have an interest in knowing how successful such initiatives are before engaging with NGOs and others to realise their aspirations. The big questions therefore are: Will their engagement bring to them net benefits? Will what they get from the initiatives be longer than what they have to contribute? There is evidence that

majority of community-based initiatives enjoy very little success. Sometimes a phase out can often be controversial, particularly when the motivation is seen as political or out of the hands of programme managers on the ground. For example, a joint donor evaluation of a country's exit decision making (Heldgaar, 2008) confirmed that country – level – exit decision that tended to be politically motivated – one which does not involve a prior assessment of the sustainability of the activities supported and ignores exploration of the possibilities of other donors taking over, is often disastrous! Thus, Oswald and Reudin (2012) on their part, concludes that donors' responsibility in phasing out funding should include transparency, inclusion, predictability, obligation and sustainability.

Mitchel and Muckosy (2008) reviewed 200 community-based tourism (CBT) projects across the Americas and found that many accommodation providers had only 5% occupancy and of the 15 CBT enterprises reviewed, only 6 (4%) were considered to be economically viable leading to a conclusion that the most likely outcome for a CBT initiative is a collapse after funding dries up. Several community – based projects are mushrooming in Western Kenya region with a clear goal of improving community livelihood. Odour (2012) for example, highlighted a successful afforestation project based in Rarieda district, Siaya County. The project focus was on tree growing for charcoal. This commercial tree growing for charcoal project in Madiany division highlights potentiality for improving livelihoods of the rural poor, mainly as there is a wide local, regional, national and even international market for charcoal. Odour further notes that current initiative is yet to maximise its potentiality since it is still in its pilot phase, and enabling environment is not sufficiently developed. If farmers produce charcoal and the enabling environment is not conducive for selling it profitably, it would be very easy for the initiative to collapse. Being a business enterprise whose every activity is valued, sustainability can only be assured as long as there is an assured market. The big question is, is the market guaranteed?

To date, little has been written on exit strategies, particularly for developmental relief programmes (Rogers & Macias, 2004). The duo defined programme exit strategy as a plan describing how the programme intends to withdraw its resources while ensuring that achievement of the programme goals (relief or development) is not jeopardized and that progress towards these goals will continue. The World Food Programme – WFP (2005) notes, the purpose of an exit strategy is not to hasten the exit – exit is not valuable for its own sake – but to improve the chance of sustainable outcomes for the outcomes. Gardner and Joubert (2005) identified three approaches of Exit strategy. First, the phase – down where there is a gradual reduction of programme activities, utilizing local organizations to sustain programme benefits while the original sponsor (or the implementing agencies or donor) deploys fewer resources. It is usually a preliminary stage to phasing over and/or phasing out. Secondly, the phase – out where a sponsor withdraws involvement in a programme without turning it over to another institution for continued implementation, and thirdly, the phase –over, where a sponsor transfers programme activities to local institutions or communities. Grigoras, Popescu, Merce, and Arion (2007) notes, in the era of time and resource constrains, it is proper to draft an exit strategy that guarantees long term process viability. Many exit strategies can be used however, of importance is communities' social profile. This is the reason for this paper to analyse the relationship between social profile project-exit strategy and project sustainability in community based projects from Siaya County, Kenya.

Social profile refers to community's resilience, that is, its thrust to predict, internalise and respond to social changes in a set of established mechanisms.

Purpose of the study

The study was set out to establish the relationship between social profiling project exit strategy and community-based project sustainability in Siaya County, Kenya.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive research which attempted to describe state of affairs of the outcome as it exists at present (Kothari, 2004). It was appropriate to this study as the researcher sought qualitative characteristics of project sustainability which could not be measured quantitatively but only their presence or absence in a community-based projects could be noticed with the goal of prescribing appropriate exit strategies. Many projects are initiated, handed over, yet they remain white elephants – so, why this?

Case research design that takes both positivist and interpretative nature was equally popular in this study. Bhattacharjee (2012) defines it as an in-depth investigation of a problem in one or more real-life settings (case sites) over an extended period of time. It is appropriate because of its ability to discover a wider variety of social, cultural and political factors potentially related to project sustainability that may not be known in advance. Also, its analysis tends to be qualitative in nature, but heavily contextualised and nuanced.

The study targeted 4,920 women groups and 2560 youth groups spread across the six sub-counties. These two clusters were sampled through a snow – ball sample technique which picked a sample size of 370 women groups and 346 youth groups. Here, the researcher started by identifying a few groups that match the criteria for study inclusion and then requested them to recommend others they know who also meet researcher’s selection criteria (Bhattacharje, 2012). This method is the only way to reach hard-to-reach populations or when no sampling frame is available.

Primary data was collected through group interviews and questionnaires, whereas secondary data was obtained through pre-recorded documents. After sorting data into various categories, the data was qualitatively and quantitatively analysed using grounded theory and logistic regression. SPSS programme aided logistic regression analysis. The analysed data was then presented in tables to display the relationship among the categories.

Results and Discussion

In order to determine whether community-based projects are sustainable after exit, 716 cases were observed with a 100% response rate. The groups interviewed were asked to state their agreement/disagreement of social profile or resiliency resulting in a frequency table 1

Table 1:
Categorical Variables Coding

		Frequency	Parameter Coding			
			(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Social Profile	Strongly Disagree	61	0.000 0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	Disagree	22	1.000 0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	Neutral	35	0.000 0.000	1.000	0.000	0.000
	Agree	93	0.000 0.000	0.000	0.000	1.000

	Strongly Agree	505	0.000	0.000	0.000
			1.000		
Group	Youth Group	346	0.000		
	Women Group	370	1.000		

Source: Field data November 2015

From table 1, those who strongly agreed to the statement that “the group is highly socially profiled” were 505 accounting for 71%. Only 61 (9%) had a contrary view. The collected data was inputted in SPSS resulting in the following tables.

Table 2:
Model Summary

Step	- 2 Log Likelihood (- 2LL)	Cox and Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	612.600 ^a	0.092	0.149

Source: Field data, November 2015

a – Estimation terminated at iteration number 5 because parameter estimates changed by less than 0.001

Table 2 provides the - 2LL and pseudo – R² values for the full model that is, a model with the regressors. The value -2LL = 612.600 indicates to us that the model is significantly a better fit. Nagelkerke R² value suggests to us that the model had explained roughly 15% of variation in the outcome – project sustainability. To further confirm its goodness of fit, table 3 provides the necessary statistics.

Table 3:
Hosmer and Lemeshow Test

Step	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
1	1.351	3	0.717

Source: Field data, November 2015

It is clear that column 4 of table 3 tells us that the model has satisfied ‘goodness of fit’ test. Its p = 0.717 > 0.05 indicates an insignificant difference.

To respond to our dilemma of “*whether project sustainability can be predicted by the Social Profile and/or group structure*”, table 4 provides the required statistics.

Table 4:
Variables in the equation

	B	S.E	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp (B)	95% C.I for Exp (B) Lower Upper	
Step 1 ^a Group (1)	0.476	0.207	5.267	1	0.022	1.609	1.702	2.416
Social Profile			60.051	4	0.000			
Social Profile (1)	-0.445	0.531	0.703	1	0.402	0.641	0.226	1.814

Social Profile (2)	-	0.451	9.553	1	0.002	0.248	0.102	0.600
	1.395							
Social Profile (3)	-	0.366	0.089	1	0.766	0.897	0.437	1.838
	0.109							
Social Profile (4)	1.073	0.320	11.245	1	0.001	2.926	1.562	5.479
Constant	0.753	0.298	6.370	1	0.012	2.123		

Source: Field data, November 2015

a) Variables entered on step 1: Group, Social Profile

Beginning with group variable in table 4, there is a significant and positive effect between groups and project sustainability. The Wald = 5.267, df = 1 and $p = 0.022 < 0.05$ attest to this. Projects initiated and handed over to women groups are 1.609 times or roughly 61% more likely to be sustainable than in the youth groups.

There is also a significant relationship between social profile exit strategy and project sustainability as evidenced by the Wald statistic = 60.051, df = 4 and $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ – table 4. In overall, projects handed over to a more resilient/social profiled community are 2.926 times or 193% more likely to be sustainable than those handed over to a less resilient/social profiled community. The B value = 1.703 points out that increasing social profile influence increases the odds of a project being sustainable.

Table 4 can also help us to develop a model of prediction.

Given Y to stand for project sustainability

$X_G = 1$ for Women group and 0 for Youth group

X_{SP1} = a dummy variable taking value 1 for those disagreeing with social profile strategy

X_{SP2} = a dummy variable taking value 1 for those being neutral with social profile strategy

X_{SP3} = a dummy variable taking value 1 for those agreeing with social profile strategy

X_{SP4} = a dummy variable taking value 1 for those strongly agreeing with social profile strategy

The reference category being youth group and those strongly disagreeing with the social profile strategy, the following logistic regression can be derived:

$$\ln(Y) = 0.753 + 0.467 X_G - 0.445 X_{SP1} - 1.395 X_{SP2} - 0.109 X_{SP3} + 1.073 X_{SP4}.$$

The exponents of the coefficients helps us to determine the odds ratio that reflects the increase/decrease in the odds of a project being sustainable. In the absence of these predictor variables the odds ratio of a project being sustainable is $e^{0.753} = 2.123$ times (or 2.123 – 1) multiplied by 100, that is, 112.3%. See last row of table 4.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study was set out to establish whether project sustainability after closure varies with social profile existing in a given community. Despite a growing body of scholarly literature over the last several decades, “sustainability” as a topic of study has been fragmented and often contradictory. There is a wide variety of synonyms of the term and definitions. However, all definitions share a view that long-term economic and social change can only be sustainable and beneficial when safeguarding the natural resources upon which development depends. Implicit in all definitions is the concept of ‘intragenerational and intergenerational equity’, that is, the fair distribution of, and access to resources within the same generation, and between succeeding generation.

In order to get to the solutions, we must think about the process – we need to talk to partners, communities and donors since sustainability takes patience and it takes a conversation. Continuation of any programme/project is the primary responsibility of key stakeholders – community entities, civil society organisations and local governments. Any project/programme with the rights based approach can be considered sustainable when there is somebody capable enough to bear responsibility, and the right holders are familiar with their rights and can influence the decisions that concern their own lives. From our analysis we found out that the odds of a project being sustainable was increased by the odds of these key stakeholders being socially profiled. Equally, women groups that are least affected by any form of mobility tends to survive longer than youth groups which are adversely affected by mobility.

Thus in recommendation, introduce sustainability key elements at the design phase. The key elements are: analyse thoroughly governmental and non-governmental institutions involved in project implementation; perform a baseline assessment of household livelihood and security; perform appropriate risk analysis; and formulate exit strategy. Of importance, community incentives to be revised during exit strategy preparation

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