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# **STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PRACTICES AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT FUNDED WATER PROJECTS IN KISII COUNTY KENYA**

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## **Abstract**

*Project Stakeholder Management is a critical component of the project management phase, which if not properly handled, may lead to project failure. One aspect that has not been given much consideration is effective stakeholder management as advised by M & E experts. For instance, not much is known how stakeholder involvement influences the implementation of water projects. The general objective of the study was to assess the role of Stakeholder Involvement Practices on implementation of county government funded water projects in Kisii County. This study was anchored in the stakeholder theory. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a target population of 201 county water staff managing 90 water projects across the county. Census method was used to collect data. The primary data was collected by*



*use of questionnaires. Quantitative data was analyzed by employing descriptive statistics and inferential analysis, and the results were presented by tables and figures. While the descriptive findings highlighted a positive stance among respondents regarding the county government's proactive stakeholder engagement efforts, the regression analysis indicated the potential for a positive and significant effect at a 10% significance level. Based on these insights, it is recommended that project managers and policymakers continue to prioritize stakeholder involvement. Developing a comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy that includes stakeholder identification, role definition, resource allocation, and continuous monitoring is essential.*

*Keywords: Indicators, Project, Logical Framework, Monitoring, Evaluation, Stakeholder*

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background of the Study**

Globally, Stakeholder management in projects has become a necessity for governments, development and humanitarian organizations, since they enhance project implementation. A report by the Project Management institute authored by (David & Mike, 2015) reports that how project teams plan and implement the stakeholder identification and engagement processes from beginning to the end of the life cycle determines the stakeholder commitment level to the project. A study by (Gladysz & Gurtner, 2021) indicated that stakeholder involvement is a key segment that influences the performance of the projects. The study concluded that stakeholder involvement is positively and significantly associated with performance.

In China, evaluation has a long history, dating back four thousand years where it was used to assess public programs. Countries such as Brazil have stressed a whole-of-government approach to the setting of program objectives and the creation of a system of performance indicators. Others such as Colombia have combined this with an agenda of rigorous impact evaluations. The government of Lebanon put in place a Monitoring and evaluation system in the public administration sphere that capacity builds on an Internal M&E system conducted by an external institution referred to as the Central Inspection Board (Government of Lebanon, 2019).

In South Africa for instance, the presidency put in place the Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (GWM & EPF) with the aim of developing policy documents that in turn gave direction, vision and strategies for M&E (Hlatshwayo & Govender, 2015). (Caitlin & Linda, 2018) reveal that in Johannesburg-South Africa a Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results-AA was established with the aim of establishing the status of M&E practices and implementation in the Southern African country. The purpose was to understand

the various factors that shape M&E practices and to provide recommendations towards addressing some of the challenges in the city.

The government of Kenya according to (National Council for Law Reports, 2010) is mandated by the Kenyan Constitution in schedule four to ensure that M&E mechanisms are an integral part of the development and execution of government policies, projects and programmes so as to ensure there is transparency and accountability. As a result, the government of Kenya in the year 2004 as reported by (Senelwa, 2021) developed a government-wide M&E reporting system known as the National Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System (NIMES) and County Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System (CIMES) framework at national and county government levels respectively. Subsequently the M&E directorate was established (Senelwa, 2021) and its mandate was to track implementation of the Indicators of the Medium –Term plans of the Kenyan Vision 2030.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Project Stakeholder management is a critical component of the project management phase, that if not properly handled, may lead to project failure. Globally, progressive projects pivot their success on involvement of stakeholders in the project life cycle. Currently, Kenya faces transitional challenges from a centralized state to devolved governance system. This has prefigured both challenges and opportunities. The decentralized form of governance has exerted pressure on especially the performance of government water departments. Therefore, this calls for effective monitoring and evaluation systems. Though M & E practices implementation have substantial cost, time as well as human resource implications, they are significant for successful projects and should not be overlooked at the beginning of the process (Khan, 2013). Counties and government ministries have an established M&E system of reporting that helps to keep projects on track and assists in reporting within the departments and agencies. However, monitoring and evaluation reports generated are not used to guide policy makers and other relevant stakeholders (Senelwa, 2021). Similarly, National and county Governments according to (Senelwa, 2021) do not have adequate capacity to monitor and evaluate their own projects due to inadequate human and financial resources. The government of Tanzania has been experiencing challenges in implementation of their water projects. Despite most of the projects being implemented at community level failing to meet expectations, Participatory M&E is still critical at the infancy stages of projects (Mgoba & Kabote, 2020).

There are several empirical studies that have been undertaken focusing on implementation of water funded projects. However, few of them focus on water projects that are being implemented by the County Governments with the bulk of research focusing on water

projects implemented by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and National Government agencies mostly through Constituency Development funds among other funds. For instance a study conducted by (Cleophas et al, 2017) sought to find out the Effect of Contractor Capacity and Monitoring and Evaluation on Completion of Water Projects among Water Services Boards in Kenya. Another study conducted in Marsabit County on Monitoring and Evaluation practices on performance of water projects focused on 14 projects being implemented by the national government within the county (Roba & Odollo, 2022). Another study conducted in Machakos County focused on Project Monitoring and Evaluation Practices on Performance of Water and Sanitation Projects (WASH) funded by the National Government (Waweru & Dr Kimathi, 2022).

None of these studies have specifically touched on the influence of Stakeholder Management on Implementation of water projects funded by the now devolved system of county Governments and most specifically in Kisii County, hence the need for the researcher to conduct this study to help bridge the knowledge gap. In view of the aforementioned, this study therefore seeks to assess the influence of Stakeholder management on implementation of county government funded water projects in Kisii County. The study will particularly focus on planning, stakeholder involvement, M & E Training and resource allocation for M & E Implementation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **The Stakeholder Theory**

It is until recently that scholars and many researchers have concurred that project success concerns not only cost, time and quality, but also the satisfaction and effective management of all the stakeholders involved (Bourne & Walker, 2005). Freeman (1984) defines stakeholders as those individuals or group of individuals who have a claim or interest in a project and its activities. The theory underscores the fact that the creation and the ongoing operations of each project/programme are as a result of several actors' activities, who are the stakeholders. The central idea therefore is that a programme/ project's success is dependent on how well the organization manages the relationships with key groups such as customers, employees, suppliers, communities, financiers, and others that can affect the realization of the project objectives (Freeman, 1984). The social responsibility of the government owned Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) therefore significantly increases, and external relationships become crucial for the success of the project. In any government projects, stakeholder management is a decisive factor as well for a project's success or failure and therefore identification of stakeholders and their involvement should be part of the project's planning process (Bourne & Walker, 2005). Most projects/programme consist of individuals and groups with different

interests and motivational incentives, hence this makes most of government projects/programmes complex in particular because of the need to incorporate perspectives of a large number of parties involved (Yescombe, 2007).

The stakeholder theory offers critical and fundamental insights into why the inclusion of community members, government officials and contractors in monitoring the county government funded projects contribute to accurate M&E reporting and traceable progress of such projects.

## Conceptual Review

The conceptual framework discusses the inter-relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. The study will establish the extent to which Monitoring and evaluation function (Independent Variable) influence implementation of county government funded water projects (dependent variable).

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

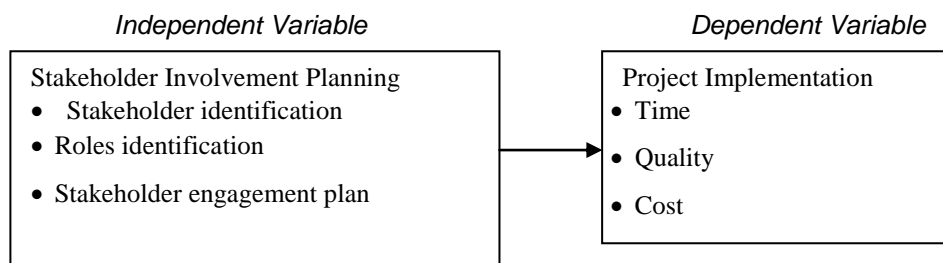


Figure 1 above, the stakeholder involvement planning is the independent variable, whereas implementation of County water funded project in dependent variable. The researcher argues that for effective implementation of county water funded project, the county staff should ensure stakeholders are identified, there is a stakeholder engagement plan and stakeholder roles are properly identified.

## Empirical Literature

### ***Stakeholder involvement practices on implementation of water projects***

Kioko (2017) assessed the factors influencing effective monitoring and evaluation of projects funded by Machakos County Government, Kenya. Its 2<sup>nd</sup> objective of the study was to assess the role of stakeholder participation in the effectiveness of M&E of projects funded by Machakos County government, Kenya.

Nyamongo (2017) conducted a study on factors influencing implementation of monitoring and evaluation in water projects in Kenya; a case of non-governmental organization water

project in Kajiado County. Its 1<sup>st</sup> objective of the study was to examine how stakeholders' involvement influence implementation of monitoring and evaluation in NGOs water projects in Kajiado County. The study findings revealed that stakeholder's involvement was a factor influencing implementation of M&E with a support of 82%.

The role of stakeholder participation in project performance cannot be overlooked. A review of case studies has demonstrated a relationship between the two. A study was undertaken to demonstrate how stakeholder participation influences the performance of donor funded projects.

Rogers (2018) advocates for multi-stakeholder's dialogues in the data collection, hypothesis testing as well as in intervention in order to secure greater participation. According to Crawford and Bryce (2017), monitoring is part and parcel of the project management function and as such is a complex issue which results to confusion in trying to apply them on projects. During the implementation phase of projects, monitoring enhances the project management decision making and as a result securing the success of the project (Gyorkos, 2016; Crawford and Bryce, 2016).

Stakeholder involvement must be included in the early stages/planning stages of the evaluation process. This includes support of high profile individuals and political agents who may be interested in learning and using instruments to demonstrate effectiveness (Jones et al, 2019). Proudlock (2019) also found out that the process of evaluation in particular analysis and interpretation of results can be improved through the participation of intended beneficiaries who are the primary stakeholders and the best judges of their own situation.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The research study adopted a descriptive survey design. Descriptive research design was used because it enables the researcher to generalize the findings to a larger population.

### **Target Population**

The study target population according to (Kisii County Government, 2018) Annual Development plan includes 201 respondents drawn from the Ministry of water both at the county and at the sub-counties spread across the 90 Water Projects. Other key players involved in Monitoring and Evaluation of water projects include Water Resource and Management Authority (WARMA), Monitoring and Evaluation department under the Economic Planning Section, Gusii Water and Sanitation Company (GWASCO), Lake Victoria South Water Services and Water Resource Users Association. A census approach was adopted.

Table 1: Target Population

Target Population	Total
Ministry of Water, Energy, Environment, Natural Resources and Climate change	60
Water Resource and Management Authority (WARMA)	12
Sub-counties water officers	90
M&E Department	18
Gusii Water and Sanitation Company (GWASCO)	20
Total	200

### Research Instruments

Data was collected by use of questionnaires, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, observation as well as secondary published data.

### Data Collection Procedure

The researcher used questionnaires and interview schedules to collect data from key informants and M&E experts. Focus group discussions were used to collect data from the project beneficiaries and other key stakeholders. The researcher used observation method to experience Monitoring and Evaluation firsthand.

### Data Processing and Analysis

To ensure easy analysis, the questionnaires were coded according to each variable of the study to ensure accuracy during analysis. Quantitative data was analyzed by employing descriptive statistics and inferential analysis. Hierarchical Linear Multiple regression was used to measure statistically the significance of the dependent variables on the independent variable.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Role of Stakeholder involvement

The study sought the opinion of the respondents on the various aspects of stakeholder involvement in relation to implementation of county government funded water projects. The respondents were required to rate each statement that matches the application of stakeholder involvement implementation of county government funded water projects using 5 points likert scale were a rate of 5 represented, Strongly Agree and 1 represented Strongly Disagree. The analysis is illustrated in Table 2. An overall mean of above of 3.3 pointed out that majority of the respondents agreed with the statements representing stakeholder involvement in M&E. This implies that Kisii county government defines potential roles for stakeholders in the funded water

project, identifies opportunities to improve stakeholder involvement better, identifies resources and creates a stakeholder engagement plan. The findings are in agreement with Larson & Williams (2012) that Stakeholder participation and participatory approaches for decision making are increasingly considered in various sectors, including water, to overcome alienation, foster communication and stimulate reform process. This also concurs with Nyamongo (2017) that stakeholder's involvement was a factor influencing implementation of M&E with a support of 82%. These findings also reflect the ideals of the stakeholder theory which reports that a project's successful implementation highly depends on how effectively stakeholders are identified and involved during the entire project life cycle.

The researcher sought to find out whether the county government identifies all stakeholders to be involved in the M&E exercise and the results were as summarized in the Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Stakeholder Involvement.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Has a criterion for identifying all relevant stakeholders	8.2%	10.6%	10.0%	31.8%	39.4%	1	5	3.84	1.281
The county government defines potential roles for stakeholders in the funded water project.	12.9%	3.5%	1.2%	37.1%	45.3%	1	5	3.98	1.334
The county government identifies opportunities to improve stakeholder involvement better.	34.1%	32.9%	10.0%	10.6%	12.4%	1	5	2.34	1.368
The county government monitors stakeholder involvement throughout the project.	34.1%	24.1%	15.9%	21.2%	4.7%	1	5	2.38	1.278
The county government identifies resources stakeholders bring to the project.	10.0%	12.9%	3.5%	35.9%	37.6%	1	5	3.78	1.339
The county government creates a stakeholder engagement plan.	8.8%	14.1%	3.5%	39.4%	34.1%	1	5	3.76	1.299

Note: SA=Strongly Agree, A= Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree.

### Inferential statistics

The main inferential statistic applied in this research was multiple regressions that were hierarchical in nature. The approach was employed in order to account for the effects of



background characteristics on project implementation, and to determine the contribution in the variance of project implementation that was solely due to the monitoring and evaluation function. Prior to running the regression, bivariate correlations were first run. It is documented that correlation is a precursor to regression (Kilmer & Rodriguez, 2017).

Table 3: Bivariate correlations

		Planning	Stakeholder involvement	Training	Resource allocation	Project implementation
Stakeholder involvement	Pearson Correlation	.548**	1	.365**	.492**	.514**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	170	170	170	170	170

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Bivariate correlations in table 3 above revealed positive correlations between independent variables as well as between independent variables and the dependent variable. In particular, Stakeholder involvement correlated positively and significantly with (1) M&E training ( $r=0.365$ ,  $p<0.01$ ); 2) resource allocation ( $r=0.492$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and 3) project implementation ( $r=0.514$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

### ***Regression Analysis on effect of stakeholder involvement practices on implementation of water projects***

The regression coefficients confirmed that although stakeholder involvement ( $\beta=0.136$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) was not a significant predictor of project implementation at the 5% significant level, it could be significant with a change of the significance level to 10%.

Table 4: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-.032	.260		-.124	.901		
	Stakeholder involvement	.139	.071	.136	1.961	.052	.591	1.692

a. Dependent Variable: Project implementation

The multiple regression results indicated that stakeholder involvement ( $\beta = 0.136$ ,  $p=0.052$ ) did not have a significant impact on implementation of funded water projects in Kisii County when the significance level is set at 5% but could have a positive and significant effect at a 10% significance level. This finding showing a lack of significant effect of stakeholder involvement on project implementation in the Kisii County funded water projects context was surprising and contrasted several other findings. For instance, it has been demonstrated that stakeholder management strategies have a positive and significant effect on public private partnerships (PPP) projects (Jayasuriya et al., 2020). Although the reasons for this study to report non-significant results are not clear, it is important to note that the studies that have reported significant findings with stakeholder involvement were not explicit on the significant level. Argued from this point, a 10% significance level would definitely place stakeholder involvement into this category.

## CONCLUSIONS

Stakeholder involvement plays a critical and multifaceted role in successfully implementing water projects. The study's findings highlight the significance of involving various stakeholders throughout the project lifecycle, emphasizing that their engagement can significantly impact the outcomes and sustainability of county government-funded water projects in Kisii County. The study demonstrates that a robust engagement strategy involving stakeholder identification, defining roles, ensuring adequate resources, and monitoring involvement throughout the project cycle contributes to project success. While the regression analysis may not show a significant effect, the clear alignment between descriptive and regression results reaffirms the importance of inclusive stakeholder engagement in enhancing project outcomes. This research aligns with the broader project management literature emphasizing the role of stakeholder engagement in project success.

There is no available database in Kenya for all projects implemented and their status, therefore the researcher experienced challenges in gathering information on project statistics and their completion rate.

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