

## **Original Research Article**

### **FACTORS AFFECTING SUSTAINABILITY OF DONOR FUNDED FOOD SECURITY PROJECTS IN THARAKA SOUTH SUB-COUNTY, THARAKA NITHI COUNTY, KENYA**

#### **ABSTRACT**

Project activities have been used to solve many existing food insecurity problems globally. Despite the efforts made by the Government and other development partners to implement food security projects in areas of need it has been observed that they collapse soon after the withdrawal of support by the donors and community members seldom sustain these projects. Previous studies mainly attributed the limited sustainability of donor funded food security projects to management deficiencies without considering other aspects especially that are community based such as community involvement among others. Therefore, this study sought to fill this gap by investigating factors which affect sustainability of donor funded food security projects in Tharaka South Sub-County, Tharaka Nithi County. This study was guided by Resource based Theory and stakeholder theory. The study was exploratory and was executed through a descriptive survey and it targeted donor funded food security projects in Tharaka South Sub County whose their project cycle has ended. These projects included Njaa Marufuku, National Agriculture Sector Extension Policy, Food for Asset and Mount Kenya East Pilot Project for Natural Resource Management (MKEPP). The study targeted a population of 400 community project beneficiaries, Social Development Officer in the Sub County, project officers and opinion leaders in the Sub County and a sample of 238 respondents was adopted. The study used both simple random and purposive sampling methods. Simple random sampling method was used to select the community project beneficiaries. To get specific information from project officers and donors the study identified them purposively as they were technocrats in food security projects. Questionnaires were used as the main research instruments to solicit information from the Donors, Project Officers, and Community Project Beneficiaries and Opinion Leaders .Questionnaires contained both closed ended and open-ended questions. Data obtained from the questionnaires was coded and subjected to analysis. Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found out that out of 238 total sample size of the participants, 227 respondents filled in and submitted the questionnaires making a response rate of 95% respectively. This implied that return rate was appropriate for data analysis. The study found out Community involvement and Sustainability of Donor Funded Food Security Projects correlated positively and significantly ( $r=0.548$ ,  $p=0.000$ ); Institution capacity and Sustainability of Donor Funded Food Security Projects correlated positively and significantly ( $r=0.521$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) and roles of Donors and Sustainability of Donor funded food security projects correlated positively ( $r=0.534$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). Finally, the study established that donors play a very important role in ensuring sustainability of donor funded food security

projects. The study recommended that community members be involved by the donors in generating project ideas since engaging the community in its own development ensures that the proposed development will better target people's needs, incorporate local knowledge, create capacity to undertake other projects and maintain facilities, distribute benefits equitably and help lower costs and hence ensure project sustainability.

**Key Words:** Food Security, Community, Projects, Donor Funding, Sustainability

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development is the development that satisfies the wants and desires of the current generation while at the same time not interfering with the capability of the off-springs to satisfy their desires and wants using the same resource [1]. Donor funding remains a top priority for the International Development Community in provision of direct or indirect finance for goods or services at costs that are less than would be charged in the normal 'open market' [2]. According to USAID [3] it is estimated that 800 million people are constantly malnourished globally. Out of 105 developing countries, 64 had a very slow food productivity compared to the growth of population in the last ten years [4]. Food security in developed countries like the United States has been largely addressed through technology and policies [5]. In Africa food production has been largely supported by government efforts and their development partners, but this has been with failures [6]. The search for a sustainable food production and access solutions still remain a challenge in developing countries like Kenya where communities living in arid and semi-arid lands continue to thrive in extreme hunger.

MOA [7] reported that in Sub Saharan Africa alone, over 218

million people live under extreme poverty and hunger. Projections showed that there would be more hunger unless preventive measures are taken. There are generally low sustainability levels of donor funded food security projects in Sub Saharan Africa [3]. Empirical evidence on the sustainability of donor funded food security projects in less advanced countries in general and Kenya in particular remains mixed [8]. It is currently estimated that over 40% of all donor funded food security projects in Africa are not functional [9]. Recent figures from individual Sub-Saharan African states show operational failure rates of about 35% to 60% [10]. The limited sustainability of donor funded food security projects has been attributed to community management deficiencies such as weak cost-recovery mechanisms, inadequate trained project managers and technicians at grassroots level, and weak local institutions [11, 12].

Tharaka South Sub-County is in the ASAL areas in Upper Eastern region of Kenya which experience widespread and chronic food insecurity. It is among the least developed areas in the country as it receives low amounts of rainfall and experiences frequent droughts leading to crop failures and famine to the community [13]. As a result of frequent crop failures, the

community depends mostly on relief food supplies from the Government, various donors and faith based organizations. In addition to relief food supplies, the Government and other development agencies have been implementing food security projects in the Constituency to address the food insecurity. The food security projects have not been successful because the beneficiaries have remained food insecure. These projects have therefore not delivered what they were intended to, as per the stakeholder expectations.

Kenya Food Security Steering Group [14] stated that food consumption score in Tharaka Nithi County is a measure of the quality and quantity of foods consumed at household level in terms of nutritional value, frequency of meals and dietary diversity. The higher the frequency and nutritional value and diversity, the higher the score. Majority of the households in the marginal and mixed farming zones are currently consuming two meals per day compared to the normal three comprising of two to three food groups. Tharaka Nithi County Steering Group Report [15] declared that most of the foods being consumed are less nutritious and sometimes the less preferred ones. 54.2 percent of the households in the marginal mixed farming have borderline food consumption scores while 19 percent have poor food consumption scores. The rest account for a poor food consumption score. In the mixed farming, 16.7 percent of the households were having a poor consumption score, 53.3 having borderline and 30 percent having acceptable scores In the rain fed

zones, 16.7 percent were having poor food consumption scores, 50 percent borderline and 33.3 percent having acceptable food consumption score. On average, the food consumption score for the region was 19 percent for the poor, 52.5 percent for borderline and 28.5 acceptable scores [15].

NGOs have flocked arid and semi-arid areas in Kenya including Tharaka South Sub County with others still implementing development projects that ran into millions of dollars. Some of these projects include water harvesting for small scale irrigation; Njaa Marufuku Kenya (NMK); Traditional high value food crops promotion project (THVC); Promotion of private sector development in agriculture (PSDA); Kenya Agricultural Productivity And Agribusiness Project (KAPAP), East African Agricultural Productivity Project (EAAPP) and NALEP-SIDA among others. Despite that these projects have been implemented in the Sub County, 64% of the community is still poor and dependent on relief food distribution each year [16]. This study therefore sought to assess the factors affecting sustainability of donor funded food security projects in Tharaka South Sub-County, Tharaka Nithi County. For many decades since independence, the presence of NGOs, CBOs, government agencies and donor agencies have been visible in ASAL areas of Kenya such as Tharaka South Sub County initiating and implementing food security projects. However, these projects have not yet achieved the defining objective of sustainability. As a matter of fact, most of these projects have had a short life-span, stalled, never

impacted the community or collapsed altogether. Previous studies conducted on sustainability of donor funded food security projects have mainly focused on policies and management deficiencies with little attention on the community involvement to enhance sustainability. Therefore there exists a knowledge gap which this study sought to fill by investigating determinants of sustainability of donor funded food security projects in Tharaka South Sub County.

## **2.0 METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted in Tharaka South Sub-County which is situated in the lower parts of Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. Tharaka South Sub County was chosen because it is among the ASAL areas in the country which experience chronic food insecurity and therefore the results of the study was generalized to ASAL areas in Kenya. Borrowing from Kombo [17] the research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey because it allowed studying phenomena that do not allow for manipulation of variables. The study was exploratory and can be appropriately executed through a descriptive survey. The study targeted donor funded food security projects in Tharaka South Sub County which their project cycle has ended. These projects included Njaa Marufuku, National Agriculture Sector Extension Policy, Food for Asset and Mount Kenya East Pilot Project for Natural Resource Management (MKEPP). The study targeted 400 community project beneficiaries, Social Development Officer in the Sub County, project officers and opinion leaders in the

Sub County. The determination of the sample size was done as in Krejcie [18]. In this study a target population of 454 persons required an optimum sample size of 238 respondents. The study used both simple random and purposive sampling methods. Once a sampling frame was available, each person in the population was assigned a number. The questionnaires were used as the main research instruments. Questionnaires were used to solicit information from the Donors, Project Officers, and community members and opinion leaders while the interview schedule was used to collect data from the project beneficiaries. Questionnaires contained both closed ended and open-ended questions. Most questionnaires were of the five-point likert rating scale of the range (1-5 for example 1-strongly agree, 2 – agree 3-undecided, disagree; 5-strongly disagree). Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The preference for questionnaire for use was based on the fact that respondents were able to complete them without help, anonymously, and it was cheaper and quicker than other methods while reaching out to larger sample. Data was analyzed descriptively using, frequencies and percentages to describe the basic characteristics of the data. Inferential data analysis was done using the Correlation Coefficient and multiple linear regressions. Open ended questions were analyzed qualitatively, and the results presented in APA Tables.

### **3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1 Involvement of Community in Projects Implementation in Tharaka South Sub County.**

##### **3.1.1 Stages of Involvement of Community in Projects Implementation in Tharaka South Sub County.**

The respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which stakeholders are involved in the implementation of donor funded food security projects. Likert scale for rating questionnaires was employed: Scale: 5- very high, 4 – high, 3 – Not sure, 2 – low and 1 – Very Low. The results showed that (2.0485) respondents indicated that community involvement in project identification was high, (2.4361) respondents indicated community involvement in project preparation was high, (3.0705) respondents indicated community involvement in project implementation was very high and finally a (2.9736) respondents indicated community involvement in project monitoring was very high (Table 1). This implies that community is involved at very high extent in stages in implementation of donor funded food security projects hence ensuring sustainability of Donor Funded Food Security Projects in Tharaka South Sub-County.

This goes in line with Anderson [19] who stated that to achieve any desired outcome of a project community must be actively involved; stepping in to the community requires an attitude of 'do it with the people' which entails doing things with them not doing things for them or to them. When things are done for people or to people the emotional commitment is limited thus the significance of participatory development.

Manikutty [20] stated that Community involvement has a favorable impact on the outcomes of a project and this linkage gets established through better aggregation of preferences, better design through use of local knowledge, pressure by community on bureaucracies to perform and better implementation through ownership.

##### **3.1.2 Involvement in Generation of the project ideas in Tharaka South Sub County.**

The study sought to know who generates the project ideas. During the study it was observed that 22 (9.7%) of the respondents were community members who generated project, 55 (24.2%) were government officials and 150 (66.1%) were NGOs representative (Table 2). This implies that most of donor funded food security projects in Tharaka South Sub County are proposed and implemented by NGOs. This is an indication that communities' members are not involved in generating projects ideas. This is in agreement with Delmon, [21] who reported that donor funded food security projects reach the communities through various means which include International Financial Institutions (IFIs), United Nations (U.N) Agencies for example the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) which provides grants through government and UNDP offices to start up programs, Consultative Groups to Assist the Poorest (CGAP) where funds flow from global headquarters to individual grassroots institutions as grants and finally public philanthropic foundations.

Table 1: Stages of involvement of community in projects implementation

Descriptive statistics	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Community involvement in project identification	227	1.00	4.00	2.0485	.66007
Community involvement in project preparation	227	1.00	4.00	2.4361	.73420
Community involvement in project implementation	227	1.00	5.00	3.0705	1.13057
Community involvement in project monitoring	227	1.00	5.00	2.9736	1.08864
Valid N (listwise)	227				

Table 2: Response on Generation of the Project Ideas

Project Ideas		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Community Members	22	9.7	9.7	9.7
	The government Officials	55	24.2	24.2	33.9
	NGOs	150	66.1	66.1	100.0
	Total	227	100.0	100.0	

It is possible that lack of community involvement in generating projects ideas negatively influences project sustainability. The study findings also corroborated with Okafor [22] who observed that when communities participate in their own projects include empowering communities improve efficiency, local participation yields better projects, better outcomes as well as greater transparency and accountability enhances service delivery.

Communities who were the beneficiaries of the projects should not be seen as targets of poverty reduction efforts but should be

seen as assets and partners in the development process.

### 3.1.3 Donor Involvement in Projects Planning and Implementation in Tharaka South Sub County.

The respondents were requested to indicate whether donors involved them during planning and Implementation of donor funded food security projects. The results showed that 227 (100%) of the respondents agreed that donors are involved in planning and Implementation of community-based food security (Table 3 & 4). This implies that most of the donor

funded food security projects are planned and executed by Donors. It is important for the community to be involved in planning and implementation of donor funded projects because this will enable

the donor to have an understanding of the needs of the community and thus enhance project acceptability by the community. This will in return improve the suitability of a donor funded project.

Table 3: Appointment of the Project Managers

Appointment of the Project Managers		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Democratic election	186	81.9	81.9	81.9
	Un-democratic election	41	18.1	18.1	100.0
	Total	227	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Donor Involvement in Projects Planning and Implementation

Donor Involvement		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	227	100.0	100.0	100.0

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

The study found out that Community involvement and Sustainability of Donor funded food security projects correlated positively and significantly ( $r=0.548$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). The study findings also indicated that majority of the respondents stated that they were involved in the various stages of project planning and implementation. That is to say therefore community involvement enhances engagement initiatives of the projects which are mainly achieved through taking an active role in identifying their needs and prioritizing those needs, mobilizing internal and external resources and implementing activities towards achieving their objectives. Involvement also helps promote self-reliance thus reducing dependency on the outside agencies and thus it improves efficiency. Community involvement decreases complaints on management issues in the projects

as it encourages greater transparency and accountability and thus it enhances service delivery.

Most of the community members were involved in the implementation of the community projects in all the phases despite them not being given a chance to generate ideas and there was a strong positive correlation between Community involvement and sustainability of donor funded community projects. This shows that the customers are very important when it comes to project implementation since they are the main beneficiaries.

#### 5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Community members should be involved by the donors in generating project ideas since engaging the community in its own development ensures that the proposed development will better target people's needs, incorporate local knowledge, create grass root

or capacity to undertake other projects and maintain facilities, distribute benefits equitably and help lower costs.

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