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INFLUENCE OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION ON SUSTAINABILITY OF WOMEN BASED AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS. A CASE OF JOYWO UASIN GISHU COUNTY

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Abstract: Project sustainability, especially in the agricultural sector, has continued to receive great scholarly attention. Like all other projects, agricultural projects rely on effective Monitoring & Evaluation to ensure their sustainability. Yet sustainability of projects is still a major challenge in many developing countries. The study established the influence of monitoring and evaluations on sustainability of women-based agricultural projects. A case of Joywo Uasin Gishu County. The study specifically; examined the influence of M&E communication advocacy, M&E financial capacity, M&E human capacity and M&E frameworks on sustainability of women based agricultural projects. The study was informed by Utilitarian Theory and Theory of Social Change. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with mixed approaches. The target population was composed of 219 womenbased agricultural projects. Stratified and random sampling techniques were used to select 116 representative samples from the sub county governments. The study used a Five- Point Likert scale questionnaires and interview schedules to collect data. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The regression coefficient indicated the relative significance of the independent variables. The study established that women based agricultural projects that are high performers are without doubt effective communicators. As well, when the budget is all inclusive, that it takes into consideration the funds for monitoring and evaluation and those of the overall project, the eventual outcome is project sustainability. Also, sustainability of women based agricultural projects is attained when training has been made on monitoring and evaluation use and implementation. Further, planning has led to the sustainability of women based agricultural projects. It was therefore recommended for M &E managers to ensure there is regular communication between the M&E management and the employees in monitoring. Also, organizations need to strike the right balance regarding the M &E budget, it should not be too little to affect the credibility and accuracy and not too much to interfere with the activities of the project. In addition, M&E capacity building should focus not only on the technical aspects of M&E, but also address skills in leadership, financial management and communication. Finally, there is need to conduct monitoring and evaluation before planning.

Keywords: Sustainability, Agricultural Products, Monitoring and Evaluation, Women based.

I. INTRODUCTION

Project sustainability, especially in the agriculture sector, has continued to receive great scholarly attention. For instance, according to [1], of the projects evaluated in 2007 50 per cent including in the agricultural sector, were rated as moderately even the best planning, that are designed to work effectively, may fail to produce good performance in community based agriculture projects if they are not successfully implemented to realize sustainability. In support of this, a UNDP Evaluation (as cited [2]) notes that there are many different that influence the success of community based projects, including planning and the systems or mechanisms in place for co-ordination and control.

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Organizations need leadership that supports, recognizes and appreciates M&E functions and the use of M&E data to enhance project sustainability. Project success can be regarded as having been achieved once sustainability of the project has been realized. [3] states that in developing countries getting to the level of sustainability of a project is immensely difficult, owing to inherent challenges. However, even with these challenges, almost all developed countries see M&E as important tools for line management within individual government ministries, and for enhancing sound accountability and surveillance in relationships between the government, Parliament and civil society [4]. The application of M&E results is a major determinant of project sustainability and it results from good planning, project implementation based on requisite capacity and informed decisions based on sound and relevant data [5].

Further, [5] notes that M&E data provides a basis to feed back into the projects, improve policy analysis and policy development and aid in project and managerial activities. This enhances transparency, surveillance and project sustainability. Capacity building can bridge the gap between planning and data demand and use. If officials and, indeed, farmers are deficient in capacity project sustainability will most likely be negatively impacted. Therefore, it is important to identify and deal with these to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of M&E in women based agriculture based projects and sustainability [6].

Globally, Effective M&E, vital for tracking and measuring results and throwing light on the impact of development interventions, remain challenging. In US, the M&E system provides effective operations meet internal and external reporting requirements of uniform future programming. Moreover, there is not a single recognized industry standard for, assessing the quality of M&E system [7]. With the exception of India most of the existing evaluations in South Asia are donor-driven. With the assistance of Japan Nepal introduced a project on M&E System strengthening to provide training in M&E and improve training manuals, monitoring reporting documents and sharing information and skills. These evaluations are often conducted to meet terms of donor agencies and are generally predisposed, provide inadequate feedback regarding interventions and are not effective due to lack of evaluation capacity [8]. Availability of trained M&E personnel is reportedly a key limitation in Sri Lanka another in Asia [9].

M&E is a significant practice in sustainability of agriculture project and must focus on women groups [10]. M&E capacity development can go a long way in ensuring that there is right demand and use of the data collected. [5] notes that one problem in African countries, and perhaps in other regions, is that although sector ministries collect a range of performance information the quality of data is often poor. [11] observes that in Africa there is too much data and not enough information. In some regions, including Africa, sector ministries collect a range of performance data whose quality is often poor and hence difficult to use. There is, therefore, a need to build reliable ministry data systems on which M&E systems depend. Data authentication and credibility is partly a technical issue of accuracy, procedures and quality control

In Kenya, [12] says that evaluations are yet to reach acceptable levels. They merely deal with some aspects of the result chain, namely inputs and outputs at the expense of impact, are propelled by activist and donor demands and carried out by evaluators devoid of the requisite knowledge. With regard to demand and use, there is need to focus on the following: documentation of old and recent information; use of data; need for data; data accuracy and relevance. M& E systems should be demand-driven as opposed to being supply-driven, to facilitate sustainability.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Every society globally engages in some form of agriculture. Like all other projects, agricultural projects rely on effective Monitoring & Evaluation to ensure their sustainability. Yet sustainability of projects is still a major challenge in many developing countries. This is in spite of the commitment of colossal resources by governments, non-governmental organizations and individual investors, especially in agriculture sector.

Data collected on the progressive performance of agriculture in selected countries globally indicates notable gaps between African countries and other countries and in comparison of yields per hectare. African countries, including Kenya, lag behind the rest of the world. The exploitable yield gaps for maize in Africa indicate that production on demonstration farms is way above actual production in Nyeri South Sub-County. The above statistics indicate that a lot needs to be done by Monitoring & Evaluation oversight agencies. Efforts have been made to improve food production by various stakeholders such as the County Government of Nyeri and Ministry of Agriculture. Their initiatives include provision of fertilizers and provision of seeds for planting training of farmers, among others.

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However follow-up on these initiatives has not been effectively undertaken, especially due to poor funding for Monitoring & Evaluation in Nyeri South Sub-County in 2012. The study of [13] in Nigeria and Ghana revealed that the absence of sustainability of the projects depended on the lack of project planning partnership due to M&E. While [14] revealed that financial management, appropriate training and leadership are the major determinants that influence the sustainability of the projects in Kenya. As indicated by [15], the expected sustainable benefits of half of the World Bank project investments had failed after the completion of the project. Therefore, when projects fail to meet their desired sustainable objectives as planned, it becomes a big threat to both management and beneficiaries of the projects.

III. OBJECTIVES

The study mainly focused on examining the influence of monitoring and evaluations on sustainability of women-based agriculture projects in Joywo Uasin Gishu County.

Specifically the study targeted to:

- i. Examine the influence of M&E communication advocacy on sustainability of women based agricultural projects
- ii. Establish the influence of M&E human capacity on sustainability of women based agricultural projects
- iii. Establish the influence of M&E frameworks on sustainability of women based agricultural projects

IV. THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical review of survey books, research articles, and some other sources important to a specific issue, area of research, or hypothesis, and by so doing, gives a portrayal, outline, and basic assessment of these works in connection to the issue being explored. This study used: Utilitarian Theory, Social Change Theory, Queuing Theory, and Institutional Theory.

The Utilitarian Theory emphasizes the influence of the greater good in society. In the Anglo Saxon world, utilitarianism has had greater acceptance. It has been influential in modern economics in general. The basic principle of utilitarianism states that an action is right if it results in greater amount of good for the greatest number of people affected by its action. This view raises a number of ethical issues. The Utilitarian Theory puts at the centre of its decision a variable that is very commonly used in economics as a parameter to measure the value of actions, namely utility [16]. In M&E an analysis of costs and benefits is important since it enables one to understand the viability of a project and enhances surveillance. This is also very relevant when it comes to data demand and use, particularly making sure data collection is relevant, sound and cost effective [17].

Institutional theory indicates that organization's structures are influenced by social values that are typically taken-for granted, widely accepted and resistant to change. One aspect of institutional theory suggests that organizations conform to external environmental pressures to demonstrate their legitimacy to key stakeholder groups [18]. Conforming to shared norms enhances the perceived legitimacy of organizations, protects them from external pressure and scrutiny, and enhances their potential for survival. Legitimate activities resonate with the shared understanding among stakeholder groups of acceptable standards of performance, and in regulated environments legitimacy can take a more dominant role than enhancing economic performance. The socially constructed patterns of practice, and the assumptions, beliefs and values that underpin the meaning of legitimate are referred to as institutional logics [19]. Institutional logics are important as they provide mechanisms to drive change, and crucially, also enable changes to be resisted through sustaining the legitimacy of current practice and shared values.

Queuing theory has its origins in research by Agner Krarup Erlang in 1909. The theory enables mathematical analysis of several related processes, including arriving at the back of the queue, waiting in queue (a storage process) and being served in front of the queue [20]. The theory permits the derivation and calculation of several performance measures including the average waiting time in the queue or the system, the expected number waiting or receiving service, and the probability of encountering the system in certain states such as empty, full having an available server or having to wait a certain time to be served [21]. Queuing model can be utilized to model the planning system variations and genetic algorithm can be implemented to solve the integrated optimization problem. It is also demonstrated that the proposed optimization approach can significantly improve a production system with respect to total travelling time, total work-in-progress in the system, utilization and quantity of material handling equipment and required area. In this study, the queuing theory is used to explain the association between project planning and the sustainability it helps to reduce the

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number of staff required in a project, by scheduling policies derived from queue management theory are commonly used by businesses to efficiently manage their inventory

The Social Change Theory is associated with, among others, Julius Nyerere and Paulo Freire, a Brazilian scholar. Most development practitioners are influenced by the work of Paulo Freire (1970, 1973), that was developed in the context of his work with communities battling against poverty and social inequalities. In practice, the Social Change Theory aims to enhance empowerment through participation of vulnerable groups, enhancing prudent planning and coordination, surveillance and capacity building as opposed to the traditional top-down approaches. The theory aims at addressing the issue of how development projects did not lead to sustainable changes and this is particularly relevant to the agricultural sector because of the need to meet targets, mitigate poor planning, accountability and low incomes derived from the production units. It is important that due diligence in a project set up is adhered to, including Monitoring & Evaluation , whether in planning, capacity building, data use or even in surveillance. This should be done ethically with a view to mitigating likely adversity that may accrue in case of mistakes. Further, Monitoring & Evaluation data reports should meet the requisite ethical standards.

V. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

According to [22], conceptual framework is a diagrammatical representation that shows the relationship between dependent variable and independent variables. In the study, the conceptual framework is as shown below:



Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

VI. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

a) Project Communication Measures and Project Sustainability

The Essential Influence of Communications provides that eye-opening insight [23]. Further research on the importance of effective communications uncovers that a startling 56 percent is at risk due to ineffective communication. Despite this risk, many organizations admit that they are currently not placing adequate importance on effectively communicating critical project information, especially when explaining the business benefits of strategic initiatives to stakeholders at all levels of a project. Organizations cannot execute strategic initiatives unless they can effectively communicate their strategic alignment and business benefits [24].

PMI's Pulse communications research found out that effective communications leads to more successful projects, allowing organizations to become high performers completing an average of 80 percent of projects on time, on budget and meeting original goals. These organizations risk 14 times fewer dollars than their low-performing counterparts. The report also focuses on communications challenges that prevent organizations from accomplishing more successful projects [25].

The report identifies key initiatives that can help organizations improve their communication as they face their own unique challenges in such a complex and risky environment.

In a study it is asserted that organizations are very aware of just how critical effective communications is. However, the Pulse communications research finds that only one in four organizations can be described as highly-effective communicators. This suggests that the majority of organizations have opportunities to identify problem areas and chart a course to improve the effectiveness of their project communications which in turn has a ripple effect on project performance [26]. The Pulse communications report quantifies just how much effective communications can lead to more successful projects, and just how much ineffective communications can cost an organization. These findings suggest that low performers can clearly benefit from improving their communications, as improvements will enable them to realize more successful projects, and fewer dollars at risk [27].

b) Human Capacity and Project Sustainability

[28] carried out a study called developing an integrated Monitoring and Evaluation flow for Sustainable Investment Projects in Romania the objective of the study was to develop skilled human capacity in project monitoring system and also a project evaluation system for the investment projects involving economic. The study used critical analysis and found that both the estimated advantages and the disadvantages of such a human capacity tool, opening new perspectives for developing further improved models and systems. [29] analyzed the utilization of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems by Development Agencies, the Case of the UNDP in Zimbabwe. They examined the utilisation of Monitoring and Evaluation human capacity by international development agencies, using the UNDP in Zimbabwe as the case study. It does not have a standalone monitoring and evaluation department. The study used documentary analysis and found that, there is low human capacity in use of evaluation findings from previous programmes while its evaluation approaches have a disturbing skew towards the quantitative. Such overly quantitative approaches carry the risk of sidelining the impact of contextual factors in development programmes and projects.

c) M &E framework and Project Sustainability

In Latin America at least 20 countries are currently working to strengthen their Monitoring and Evaluation frameworks, this was influenced by exemplary achievements of Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Brazil; the motivation has been boosted by the budget constraints [30]. [31] analyzed the influence of monitoring and evaluation framework to the success of donor funded food security intervention projects in Kenya. The purpose of the study was to find out the influence of monitoring and evaluation to the success of donor funded food security intervention projects. The study targeted residents of Kibwezi district who have benefited from donor funded food security projects. The study utilized a case study design because it was considered a robust research method particularly when a holistic and in-depth investigation is required. The study established that the community was not involved in any monitoring and evaluation framework of the food security intervention projects. The findings of the study indicated that food security project implementing agencies to recognize the influence played by participatory monitoring and evaluation framework in the success and sustainability of the projects.

VII. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design with mixed approaches. The design was deemed appropriate because the study aims at describing M&E and sustainability of agricultural projects in JOYWO by using both qualitative and quantitative methods. According to[32], descriptive Survey research designs are used in preliminary and explanatory studies to allow research to gather information, summarize and interpret for the purpose of clarification. The target population was composed of 219 women-based agricultural projects in Joywo 2018 in Uasin Gishu County. The sample size was calculated using Cochran's sample size formula cited in [33] where a 116 respondents were selected. A five point likert scale questionnaire was used for data collection. Crobanch alpha coefficients were used to check the reliability of the study instrument where the coefficients ranged between 0.724 - 0.817, thus the instrument was deemed to be reliable[34].

Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Questionnaires received were checked for completeness with repeat calls being made for incomplete questionnaires to maintain the number of respondents. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations,) was used to describe the data while Qualitative data was categorized and reported in emergent themes and measures of central tendency gave expected summary statistics of the variables to be tested. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationships between variables. Effect sizes as set out in [35] were used

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to decide on the practical significance of the findings. The practical significant cut-off point for correlation coefficients was set at $r \ge 0.30$ which represents a medium effect and $r \ge 0.50$ for a large effect [35],[36]. The regression model that was used to test the hypothesis is shown below:

$$y_1 = \alpha + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \beta_3 x_3 + \beta_4 x_4 + \varepsilon_i$$

 y_1 = sustainability of agriculture based project

 $\alpha = constant.$

 β_1 ... β_5 = the slope which represents the degree in which project success changes as the independent variable change by one unit variables.

 x_1 = communication advocacy; x_2 = M&E human capacity ; x_3 = M&E financial capacity ; x_4 = M&E frameworks ;

 $\varepsilon = \text{error term}$

VIII. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 116 questionnaires were administered out of which only 102 fully filled questionnaires were returned. This gave a response rate of 87.93% which was within what [37] prescribed as a significant response rate for statistical analysis and established at a minimal value of 50%.

A. Descriptive Statistics

The following were the major findings as per the descriptive statistics

i. M&E Communication Advocacy

As per the findings, the respondents indicated that regular communication between the M&E management and the employees in monitoring affect the sustainability of women based agricultural projects as shown by a mean of 4.5576 and that Repayment period from financial institutions affected the business annual profit growth thus affecting the overall sustainability of women based agricultural projects as shown by a mean of 4.006.Further, the respondents indicated M&E processes which are well documented and controlled affect the sustainability of women based agricultural projects to a moderate extent as shown by a mean of 2.6727. The respondents also indicated that lack of information limit alternative source of finance for business growth and have a low effect as shown by a mean of 2.3030. These findings were same as those of [38], who reports there is increasingly awareness of up-to-date information about communication advocacy as a way of ensuring return on their investment.

Engaging in good communication strategies in the enterprises outlines programmatic outcomes on women agricultural projects. In support of the study findings, [39] elucidated that low performers can clearly benefit from improving their communications which will in turn enable them to realize successful projects. Similarly, [40] argued that PMO directors and senior project leaders need to take ownership and better communicate the strategic and business benefits to realize more successful projects. Moreover, [41] noted that high performers are able to optimize outcomes by relaying information to project teams frequently and effectively.

ii. M&E Framework

As per the findings, the respondents indicated that Planning before conducting Monitoring &Evaluation is undertaken provided wide range of possibilities for improving competitiveness and market to increase sustainability as shown by a mean of 4.5939. Increase of information platform provided clear mechanism for access to market opportunities for enhancing the sustainability of women based agricultural projects as illustrated by a mean of 4.3515 has a great effect on sustainability of women agricultural projects. Further, the study indicated that Planning influences sustainability of food crops as shown by a mean of 2.8242. Concisely, access to premium markets affects the sustainability of women agricultural projects in a low extent as shown by a mean of 2.2061. These findings were consistent with those of [42] who stated that the monitoring and evaluation framework should be incorporated in the business to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness.

iii. M&E Human Capacity

As per the findings, the respondents indicated that they had received training on M & E tools thus assisting in the sustainability of agricultural projects as shown by a mean of 4.5879 and had a very great effect on growth of small

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business. The respondents further indicated that they had received training on problem solving kills shown by a mean of 4.4242 which had a great effect on sustainability of women agricultural projects. Further, the respondents indicated that they received training on use and implementation of monitoring and evaluation as illustrated by a mean of 3.4303 and received training on customer care and management skills as shown by a mean of 3.4242. This had a moderate effect on sustainability of women based agricultural projects.

B. Descriptive statistics

Correlation

The correlation analysis is a measure of linear association between two variables. The values of correlation coefficients range from -1 to +1 representing perfect negative and positive correlation .A correlation coefficient of +1 indicates that the two variables are perfectly related in a positive linear sense; a correlation coefficient of -1 indicates that the two variables are perfectly related in a negative linear sense, and a correlation coefficient of 0 indicates that there is no relationship between the two variables [43].

		M&E Communication	M&E Financial Capacity	M&E Human Capacity	M&E Framework
Project Sustainability.	Pearson correlation	0.567	0.517	0.502	0.479
	Sig	0.003	0.013	0.021	0.026
	Ν	102	102	102	102

TABLE I: CORRELATION MATRIX

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

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The finding in table 4.8 indicates that the correlation between communication advocacy and sustainability of women based agricultural projects was 0.567 with a corresponding p value of 0.003. The correlation coefficient was therefore significant and positive implying that if communication advocacy elements increase the sustainability of women based agricultural projects. The findings concur with [25] findings who also revealed that effective communication strategies influence the sustainability of women based agricultural projects.

The findings also indicate that the correlation between human capacity factors and sustainability of women based agricultural projects was 0.502 with a corresponding p value of 0.026. The correlation coefficient revealed a significant and positive association implying that if human capacity factors indicators increase the sustainability of women based agricultural projects.

The finding results indicate that the correlation between monitoring and evaluation framework and sustainability of women based agricultural projects was 0.479 with a corresponding p value of 0.021. The correlation coefficient revealed a significant and positive association implying that increase in monitoring and evaluation framework increases the sustainability of women based agricultural projects. According to [44], monitoring and evaluation elements are very essential in enhancing effective sustainability of agribusiness.

Regression Analysis

In statistical modelling, regression analysis is a statistical process for estimating the relationships among variables. It includes many techniques for modelling and analyzing several variables, when the focus is on the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.892	0.796	0.791	1.073

TABLE II: MODEL SUMMARY

The adjusted R^2 from the table 4.9 found to be 0.791 implying that 79.1% of the variations in sustainability of women based agricultural projects are explained by changes in communication advocacy, financial capacity, human capacity and Monitoring and Evaluation framework. These findings were supported by those of [45] who reported that it is noted that

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the effective sustainability of women based agricultural projects require personnel with the required knowledge and expertise skills.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	Т	Sig.
			Coefficients		
	В	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.319	0.352		3.747	0.000
Communication advocacy (CA)	0.634	0.214	0.591	2.963	0.003
Human capacity (HC)	0.608	0.271	0.575	2.244	0.021
M&E framework (M&E F)	0.542	0.233	0.517	2.326	0.026

TABLE III: COEFFICIENTS OF DETERMINATION

The established model for the study was:

$Y = 1.319 + 0.634X_1 + 0.608X_3 + 0.542X_4$

Sustainability = 1.319 + 0.634 CA + 0.608 HC+ 0.542 M&EF

As per regression equation, it was established that taking all the factors constant at zero sustainability of women based agricultural projects was 1.319.

IX. CONCLUSION

Clearly, M&E communication advocacy positively influences the sustainability of women based agricultural projects. The findings show that women based agricultural projects that are high performers are without doubt effective communicators. Placing adequate importance on effectively communicating critical project information enables the agricultural projects that are women based to accomplish projects with the required timeframe while at the same time properly utilizing the project resources. The results suggest M& E communication advocacy is a critical component in attaining project sustainability of women based agricultural projects.

Moreover, M &E human capacity is essential in attaining the sustainability of women based agricultural projects. Sustainability of these women based agricultural projects is attained when training has been made on monitoring and evaluation use and implementation. The ministry of agriculture officials together with farmers have benefited from training programs on M& E. The only challenge was that sufficient efforts were not directed towards ensuring that the funds meant for training and related services are sufficient.

Finally, M & E framework has a positive and significant influence on sustainability of women based agricultural projects. In fact, planning has led to the sustainability of food crops. This has further been facilitated by indicator formulation that was done in the planning process. Despite indicators being reviewed, field visits are rarely conducted to check on monitoring and evaluation.

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