

The Influence of Monitoring and Evaluation Reports On Sustainability of Donor-Funded Community-Based Education Projects: A Case of Arumeru District, Arusha Tanzania

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of monitoring and evaluation Reports on sustainability of donor-funded community -based education projects in Arumeru district. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants. The study used a total of 102 participants. The study used a qualitative approach whereby interview and focus group discussion method were used during collection of data. An interview was used to gather data from the project implementers, whereas data from community members was collected through focus group discussion. Data were analyzed using Content Analysis method.

The findings revealed that, sustainability of donor-funded community-based education projects in Arumeru District lay down on community participation and project implementers. Sustainability of donor-funded community-based education projects require effective monitoring, and evaluation, as well as resource mobilization. The findings recommended that, community participation should be improved through provision of education, and effective communication to the people or community members. Provision of education and effective communication will rise up awareness for the community members about their participation roles in the sustainability of donor-funded community-based education projects in Tanzania. Also, project implementers should focus on building the capacity of the local community to make sure the project's sustainability. This includes training community members in project management, leadership, and technical skills. By empowering the community, they will better be equipped with skills and knowledge that will help them to maintain and run the project after the donor funding had ended. Measurement and evaluation reports hold stakeholders accountable for the resources they have committed to the project. By providing regular updates on the project's progress. Also, measurement and evaluation reports ensure that stakeholders remain engaged and motivated to continue their support.

Key words: Monitoring, Evaluation, Donor funded, Education projects

1.0. Introduction

1.1. Donor Funded Community Based Education Project

A donor funded community-based education project involves financial support from external sources to implement educational initiatives within a specific community. These projects are designed to address local educational needs and improve access to quality education.

Community-based education projects are initiatives that engage and involve local communities in the design, implementation and evaluation of educational programs. These projects aim to address specific educational challenges within a community while taking into account its unique cultural, social and economic contexts. By involving community members, these projects can lead to more relevant and sustainable education solutions.

Governments at both International, Regional, National and County levels design and implement projects with the aim of attaining certain development milestones and change the current situation (Abotsi, 2019). According to Alderman (2020), a project consists of a sequence of organized initiatives with a clear beginning and finish period and is focused on achieving a clear objective with constraints on budget, time,

scope and satisfaction of the client. A number of projects may require that their activities be continued for a long period in order to allow for a continuous stream of benefits that results to socioeconomic and cultural change among the project beneficiaries

Globally, donor funded projects through Non-governmental Organizations (NGO's) have become an important part of development internationally, nationally and locally (Bank, 2017). NGOs are known for various activities, which include delivery of essential services to people that need urgent emergency services, and advocating for changes through policy-change campaigns and civil education. There has also been increased NGO activity in an array of more specialized roles such as emergency response and preparedness campaigns, promotion of democracy and democratic practices, conflict resolution, promotion and advocacy for human rights, recognition and preservation of cultures and heritage, sensitization of population towards climate change and its effect, analysis of local and international policies, promoting availability of information to the public (Bundy, 2019).

Level of resources and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) ensures that donor funded projects are sustained to term. Donor funds recipients have often accorded M&E, level of funding, involvement of target community and participation of trained project staff

Evidences show that donor-funded projects in Africa are largely unsustainable. According to Operations Evaluation Department (OED) of the World Bank, Kenya got a general rating of 49% on manageability of donor financed in the period between 2017 and 2022 (WB, 2023). During the same period Uganda, Tanzania and Ghana scored 59.5%, 70.1% and 64.5% respectively (World Bank, 2023)

Alderman (2020), says that for an undertaking to accomplish sustainability, it requires to be actualized utilizing a key technique The planned methodology joins four rule parts, future presentation: expecting things will transform, and needing to increase aids that can be gotten in the midst of and from that change. Also, outside forces: perceiving the assortment of the task condition and the many measurements which effect on venture results, including invention, governments, culture, and financial matters. Thirdly, natural fit: making arrangements fora persistent fit flanked by the undertaking and its environment, including mission, objectives, systems, structures, and assets; and process introduction: planning and administration needs develop in an iterative sequence of cognizant and thoughtful gaining for a fact as the facts changes. Globally, donor funded projects through Non-governmental Organizations (NGO's) have become an important part of development internationally, nationally and locally (Bank, 2017). NGOs are known for various activities, which include delivery of essential services to people that need urgent emergency services, and advocating for changes through policy-change campaigns and civil education. There has also been increased NGO activity in an array of more specialized roles such as emergency response and preparedness campaigns, promotion of democracy and democratic practices, conflict resolution, promotion and advocacy for human rights, recognition and preservation of cultures and heritage, sensitization of population towards climate change and its effect, analysis of local and international policies, promoting availability of information to the public (Bundy, 2019).

1.2. Monitoring and Evaluation systems and Sustainability of Community Projects

Tafara (2019) conducted study titled—Rural community-based education projects management and sustainability, a case of central Ethiopia. The study assessed the important of community participation in education project whereas qualitative and quantitative method are used to collect data. The findings indicated that the community participation in planning and implementation was very good while monitoring mechanism of operation and management as well as community participation was poor. The findings also revealed that there was lack of control mechanisms in monitoring and evaluation of education project lead the poor management of education projects properly for its sustainability. Nwankwoala (2016) on his study investigated the reasons for failure of community-based projects at Folovhodwe area. Questionnaires and interviews were employed to collect data. The study revealed that lack of funds, poor project management, poor management of funds, lack of commitment and motivation's low level of education of project members, lack of community involvement, lack of monitoring and evaluation by government officials and community leaders, lack of training and unavailability of workshops for project members and lack of government involvement in addressing project challenges were identified as the reasons for failure of community-based projects. According to Nyakundi (2014) monitoring designates checking and testing each

portion of project implementation together with the set standards. Nyamu (2015) explains the need for equitable distribution of resources through monitoring while project evaluation is that constituent of the venture that maintains its momentum and on course within the budgetary constraints. The M&E needs high level of coordination at the management level and draws from the best of each stakeholder in the entire 10 spectrum of project execution and provide correction of any shortcomings. The performance of a venture cannot be sustained without the sustained monitoring and evaluation. It is also imperative that target setting should be done collectively to realign energies and commitment of the stakeholders to the set goal. Endeavoring to achieve these may provide a committee with relevance and remain focused during the lifecycle of the project (Ochelle, 2017). Reporting the progress of community projects to the beneficiaries enhances transparency and accountability. The community develops trust with the project management and they can freely contribute funds for the operation of the projects and this makes the projects to be sustainable. Oino (2015) noted that community participation in assessing project progress is critical for their sustainability. Project progress reporting meetings should be held customarily and the local community equipped to actively participate. He additionally observed that the community should be offered a chance to query on the progress of the community projects because this reduces chances of misappropriation of project resources. Evaluation of on-going projects requires a proper strategy which can work if one is to achieve the desired results. It is of vital importance to discuss about “participatory evaluation”, asking the people concerned to participate in evaluating their own projects thereby, enabling them to determine the future effectiveness of their goals of the project. Oketch (2017) connoted that evaluation is a process integral to the development process and by which a community (where project is established) assesses whether what is being done is bringing the desired results. In view of the definitions above, there are many reasons of conducting an evaluation which include the following: To judge the worth of ongoing programs/ projects; To estimate usefulness of attempts to improve programs; To increase the effectiveness of management and administration of programs; To delay a decision; and to justify and legitimize already made decisions (Onkoba, 2017)

2. Material And Method

The study was conducted in Arumeru district council. Arumeru district council is one among the districts in Arusha region implementing various donor projects especially education projects for example at African Amini Alama organization has different education projects such as Nariva Academy, Pamoja secondary school, Maasai Vision Medium Academy, and Simba Vision as well as Naurey Golden Soils secondary school (NGSSS), Precious English Medium school, Precious Leaders secondary school and Amani English Medium school

This research was adopting descriptive research design. The study was using qualitative approach. qualitative approach is characterized by the collection of narratives from respondents (Bouma, 2010). Therefore, the use of quantitative approach enables the researcher to achieve the main objective of this study. In this study, the targeted population was project implementers because are the one who design and implement donor funded community based education projects. Also community members were included because are the one who benefit from the project.

The purposive sampling technique was used among the community members in the study area. The community members and project implementers were selected purposively because they have key information that can be used by the researcher to make conclusion about the studied problem

The study used a total sample of 102 participants including 85 community members these includes five (5) members in a group from one community education project and 17 project implementers from seventeen schools seven (7) schools was secondary schools and ten (10) schools was primary schools. The data were collected through interview, focus group discussion and focus group discussion.

In this study the data was analyzed through qualitative techniques depending on the specific objectives of the study. Qualitative data from Key Informant Interviews and focused group discussion was analyzed using Content Analysis method. First interviews transcribed into word document. Then from these transcriptions’ key themes and concepts was identified.

3.0. Results And Discussions.

3.1. Monitoring and Evaluation

Community participation plays a crucial role in monitoring and evaluation (M &E) for the sustainability of donor-funded community-based education projects. Through interview, one of the project implementers said;

“Community members possess valuable local knowledge and contextual insights that external evaluators may lack. Their participation ensures that M&E processes are better informed and tailored to the specific needs of the community” (Interview. 28.9.2023

This finding is supported by the evidence from UNESCO (2018), community participation can lead to continuous feedback and quality insurance. Regular input from community stakeholders helps identify and address issues in real time, improving the project’s overall quality. Therefore, community participation plays huge contribution towards sustainability of donor-funded community-based education projects as illustrated above.

Through focus group discussion, one of the community members explain;

“Community members have a deep understanding of the local context, including cultural, social, and economic factors that can affect the project’s success. Their participation in M&E helps to identify potential challenges and opportunities that may not be apparent to external evaluators”. (FGD. 04.10.2023)

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes are critical for improving the sustainability of donor-funded community-based education projects. They help project implementers assess the project’s progress, identify challenges and make data-driven decisions.

Through focus group discussion, one of the project implementers said;

“Regular monitoring and evaluation create transparency and accountability, both to donors and the local community. This builds trust and encourages stakeholders to remain committed to the project’s sustainability” (FGD. 28.9.2023

Also, through interview, one of the project implementer said;

Monitoring and evaluation provide insights into resource allocation. Implementers can allocate resources more efficiently to areas that have the most impact, ensuring long-term sustainability”

This study was supported by the evidence from UNESCO (2017) monitoring and evaluation allows implementers to measure the impact of their education projects, such as improvements in literacy rates, school attendance, or knowledge acquisition. By understanding the real impact, they can adjust to ensure long-term benefits.

3.2.1 Documentation and Reporting

Documentation and reporting by project implementers play crucial roles in improving the sustainability of donor-funded community-based education projects. Proper documentation and reporting ensure that the use of donor funds is transparent and accountable. These fosters trust among donors and stakeholders, which is vital for long-term project support. Through interview, one of the project implementers quoted;

“Detailed reports provide data on project progress, challenges and achievements. This information helps project implementers make informed decisions, adjust strategies, and allocate resources effectively, thus enhancing sustainability” (Interview. 27.9.2023)

Through documenting best practices, lessons learned, and training materials, project implementers can transfer knowledge to local communities. This empowers community members to take ownership of the project, ensuring its continuation after donor funding ends (UNESCO, 2017). UNICEF (2013) added that, reporting mechanisms facilitate engagement with various stakeholders, including local authorities, community members, and beneficiaries. Engaging these groups in the decision-making process promotes local ownership and commitment to the project’s sustainability.

3.2.2. Influence of Monitoring and Evaluation Reports on Sustainability of donor-Funded Community-Based Education Projects

This objective assessed the influence of monitoring and evaluation reports on sustainability of

donor funded community-based education projects. The data collected from community members via focus group discussion and the data from project implementers collected through interview method. The verification of the collected data was done via documentary methods which lead to the final judgment to the findings. 98% of the respondents participated in the provision of data out of 100% as illustrated in the table 4.5.

Table 3.1: Influence of Monitoring and Evaluation Reports

| Responses | Frequencies | Percentages (%) |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Accountability and transparency | 90 | 90 |
| Learning and adaptation | 87 | 87 |
| Resources allocation | 78 | 78 |
| Long-term planning | 83 | 83 |
| Stakeholders Engagement | 68 | 68 |

Source: Field Data (2023)

3.2.3. Accountability and Transparency

Data of the findings show that, 90% reported accountability and transparency. Monitoring and evaluation play a crucial role in ensuring accountability and transparency in donor-funded community based education projects. Monitoring and evaluation provide a structured approach for collecting data on project activities, outputs and outcomes. This data allows project implementers to be more accountable to both donors and the community. Accountability is enhanced as stakeholders can track progress against agreed upon targets.

Through interview, one of the project implementers said;

“Monitoring and evaluation activities promote transparency by involving various stakeholders in the process. This engagement can include community members, local authorities, and donors. Transparency increases as these stakeholders are informed about project progress, challenges and results” (Interview. 28.9.2023)

This study was supported by the evidence to World Bank (2018) the evaluation component of monitoring and evaluation is essential for identifying what works and what doesn't. By learning from project successes and failures, adjustments can be made to ensure the sustainability of community based education initiatives. Schwarte, et al (2017) viewed that, donors often require evidence of accountability and proper use of funds. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation help project implementers comply with donor regulations and demonstrate responsible resources management.

3.2.4. Learning and Adaptation

Again, 87% reported learning and adaptation. Monitoring and evaluation play a crucial role in influencing learning and adaptation towards the sustainability of donor-funded community-based education projects. They help assess the effectiveness and impact of such projects and inform decision-making for ongoing improvements. Through interview, one of the project implementers said;

“Monitoring and evaluation allow project managers to assess the performance of the education project, identify areas where it is succeeding and where it may be failing short. This information is crucial for making necessary adjustments” (Interview. 01.10.2023).

“By providing a record of progress, measuring performance, informing resource allocation, engaging stakeholders, and identifying capacity gaps, M&E reports can help to ensure the long-term sustainability of these projects”. (Interview. 15.10.2023).

Also, through focus group discussion, one of the community members said;

“By collecting data on various project indicators, monitoring and evaluation provides a foundation

for data-driven decision-making. This allows project stakeholders to adapt strategies and interventions based on evidence rather than assumptions". (FGD. 02.10.2023).

Through monitoring and evaluation, project implementers can identify best practices and success stories within the project. This enables the replication of successful approaches in other project areas or similar initiatives (Gaventa & McGee, 2013).

3.2.5 Resources Allocation

Monitoring and evaluation play a crucial role in influencing resource allocation towards the sustainability of donor-funded community-based education projects. Through monitoring and evaluation, the donor and project implementers can assess the effectiveness of the education project. This involves evaluating whether the project is achieving its intended educational outcomes, such as improved literacy rates or increased school enrollment. Through interview, one of the project implementers said;

"Monitoring and evaluation help identify gaps and challenges within the project. It highlights areas where the project might be underperforming or facing unforeseen obstacles, which may require additional resources for mitigation". (Interview. 02.10.2023)

Also, through focus group discussion, one of the community members said;

"Monitoring and evaluation help to identify gaps and challenges within the project. It highlights areas where the project might be underperforming or facing unforeseen obstacles, which may require additional resources for mitigation" (FGD. 03.10.2023)

This finding is supported by the evidence to OECD (2010) monitoring and evaluation provides data and evidence that can inform decision-making regarding resource allocation. Donors and project managers can use this data to allocate resources strategically to address program components.

3.2.6. Long-Term Planning

Moreover, 83% reported long-term planning. Monitoring and evaluation play a crucial role in influencing long-term planning towards the sustainability of donor-funded community-based educational projects. They provide a framework for assessing project effectiveness, identifying areas for improvement, and ensuring that project objectives are met.

Through interview, one of the project implementers said;

"Monitoring and evaluation allow project managers to continuously assess the performance of the educational project. By collecting data on various project indicators, such as student enrollment, attendance, and learning outcomes, project manager can gauge the impact of the project on the community" (Interview. 02.10.2023)

3.2.7. Stakeholder Engagement

Monitoring and evaluation play a crucial role in influencing stakeholder's engagement towards the sustainability of donor-funded community-based educational projects. When stakeholders are actively involved in the monitoring and 29 evaluation processes, it can enhance project effectiveness and long-term impact. This study was supported by the evidence to Ajayi (2018) monitoring and evaluation ensures that the project's progress and outcomes are tracked and reported accurately. This promotes accountability and transparency, which are essential for gaining and maintain the trust of stakeholders.

4.0 Conclusion And Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

In regard, to the findings, it was found that, community participation plays a crucial role in the sustainability of donor-funded community-based education projects in Meru district by influencing ownership and commitment, local contextualization, resource mobilization, monitoring and evaluation and long-term vision. Also, it was reported that, project implementers play a crucial role in the sustainability of donor-funded community-based education project through ensuring effective planning and implementation,

community engagement, monitoring and evaluation, documentation and reporting, resource mobilization. Monitoring and evaluation reported as most crucial towards sustainability of donor-funded community based education projects as influencing accountability and transparency, learning and adaptation, resources allocation, long-term planning and stakeholders Engagement.

4.2. Recommendations

It is recommended that there should effective monitoring and evaluation on every stage of the project so as to check and balance on the performance of the project, M&E reports hold stakeholders accountable for the resources they have committed to the project. By providing regular updates on the project's progress, M&E reports ensure that stakeholders remain engaged and motivated to continue their support and project sustainability is reached

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