

Effects of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation on Stakeholder Relationships and Project Quality in the Local Authority Service Delivery Action Planning (LASDAP) Process in Bondo Sub County in Siaya County, Kenya

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Abstract

Community participation has remained a key concept in the development process in Kenya and many parts of the world today as a measure of improving good governance. Local Authority Service Delivery Action Planning (LASDAP) was meant to achieve community participation in development projects. Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) was incorporated as the driving force for enhancing community participation. Many projects have been implemented yet no study had been carried out to determine the effect of participatory monitoring and evaluation on the LASDAP project implementation. The study intended to investigate the effect of participatory monitoring and evaluation on the LASDAP project implementation in the former Bondo County Council now named Bondo sub-county in the new structure of county government in Kenya. *Ex-post-facto* design was used in the study to examine the effects of participatory monitoring and evaluation since it was introduced in 2008. The target population of the study comprised of 1260 LASDAP project committee members within the Bondo sub-county. Multi-stage sampling method was used to select seven wards out of the 14 wards. 42 projects were selected using both purposive and simple random sampling methods from the eight wards. Seven respondents were selected from each of the 42 projects. Purposive sampling method was then used to select 3 females and simple random sampling method to select four males respectively to yield a study sample of 294 respondents. Questionnaires were used to collect data. Validity of the instruments was examined by a team of experts from the department of Applied Community Development Studies. The questionnaires were pilot tested in Gem sub-county formerly Siaya county council for reliability and a reliability coefficient of 0.78 obtained. Data collected was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) V.20. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data, which included frequencies, means, percentages and standard deviations to determine the associations and trends in the interactions of variables. The study found that PM&E in general improved the LASDAP process and especially stakeholder relationships and the project output in terms of quality. PM&E also enhanced good governance with the increased accountability, responsiveness to the needs of the citizens and level of transparency. These findings led to the recommendation that the Siaya county government adopt monitoring structures used by the Project Management Committees (PMCs) in current and future projects.

Keywords: Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation, Stakeholder Relationships, Project Quality

1.0. Introduction

Enhancing quality of service delivery requires active community participation in matters of governance and this has remained a concern not just in Africa but in the entire world. George and Kirkpatrick (2007) analyzing Agenda 21 of the UN conference on environment and development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 recommended that each local authority ought to enter into dialogue with its citizens, local organizations and private enterprises and adopt a local agenda. In Africa, participatory monitoring and evaluation is rapidly gaining attention from governments, civil society, and international development agencies as an innovative platform for strengthening citizens' voice in budgetary processes and in the delivery of public goods and services. It is increasingly recognized that participatory monitoring and evaluation is not only an effective mechanism for African cities to improve targeting of public resources to the poor, but also a new tool, in support of decentralization and social accountability (UN-HABITAT, 2008).

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) in the Local Authority Service Delivery Action Planning (LASDAP) process used in the defunct local authorities borrowed heavily from Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). PRA puts strong emphasis on participatory development or people centred development and the key philosophy driving PRA is empowerment of the rural communities by way of fast tracking the development process through participatory monitoring and evaluation (Edmunds & Merchant, 2008). Similarly for purposes of ownership and sustainability of projects, it is imperative that the beneficiaries take part in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects (Kibua & Mwabu, 2008). Wider participation ensures that stakeholder concerns are adequately addressed, regional development is equitable and

administration and utilization of public resources is efficient.

The introduction of the Local Authority Service Delivery Action Planning (LASDAP) in 2002 in Kenya by the then Ministry of Local Government created an entry point for local authorities to constructively engage with their citizens on matters of planning and development and its introduction was greeted with wide local and regional acclaim (Government of Kenya (GOK), 2009). The objective of the LASDAP was to improve efficiency and accountability in the operations of local authorities (LAs). In particular, LASDAP process had focused on improving several aspects of local authority management and these included; service delivery, financial management including budgeting, participatory planning and local governance, revenue mobilisation, monitoring and evaluation, institutional reforms, fiscal and overall decentralisation. Preparation of the plan in the first instance enables local authorities to access the Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF) which is five percent of the revenue raised through domestic taxes by the government. LASDAP provides a planning link between county government, citizens and other stakeholders. In addition LASDAP provides a forum for annual consultations, monitoring and feedback mechanism to communities, the then Ministry of Local Government and now Ministry of Planning and Devolution, civic leaders, the private sector and donors (GOK, 2010 b). The LASDAP guidelines also provided for project management committees (PMCs) who were the elected representatives of the beneficiaries and worked hand in hand with other stakeholders to spearhead the PM&E within the LASDAP process. The guidelines for eligibility for PMC membership were stated as ability to read, write and minimum skills in leadership or supervisory.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) is a major concept in the Local Authority Service Delivery Action Planning (LASDAP) process basically designed to improve good governance and proper utilization of resources for the benefit of the wider public. The objective of the local authority service delivery action planning (LASDAP) process was to improve the process of development planning by creating an all-inclusive, accountable and transparent development process. Since the inception of PM&E on LASDAP in 2008, several projects have been implemented but no study has been carried out to determine the effect of PM&E on LASDAP project implementation in Bondo sub-county and whether there is change in the management of project implementation hence the need for the study.

1.2. Study Objective

The study objective was to investigate the effect of participatory monitoring and evaluation on the implementation of local authority service delivery action planning projects. The specific focus was in terms of stakeholder relationships and quality of Projects undertaken under Local Authority Service Delivery Action Planning process in Bondo Sub County

2.0. Methodology

This area highlights techniques and methods used in undertaking the study and analyzing the data.

2.1 Research Design

The study used an *ex-post-facto* research design since it examines the effects of naturally occurring treatment after the treatment has occurred (Kathuri & Pals, 1993). The researcher investigated the effects of participatory monitoring and evaluation after 5 years of full adoption of the local authority service delivery action planning (LASDAP) process. The investigation focused on the effect of PM&E on stakeholder relationship and quality of projects. The study targeted LASDAP project management committee members. A thorough documentary review was also conducted using documents provided by the council such as the council's strategic plan, budgets and project files alongside annual LASDAP reports. Records of performance contracting commitments and reports were also scrutinized. The researcher also used a check list for conducting the documentary review.

2.2 Population of the study and the sampling procedure

The target population was 3150 project committee members and the accessible population of the study was 1260 LASDAP project committee members within the Bondo sub-county. Multi-stage sampling method was used to select seven wards out of the 14 wards. 42 projects were selected purposively to ensure both complete and incomplete were included in the study in equal numbers from the seven wards. Seven respondents were selected from each of the 42 projects. Purposive sampling method was then used to select 3 females and simple random sampling method to select four males from each of the selected projects. The total sample was 294 respondents.

2.3. Instrumentation

Content Validity of the instruments was examined by a team of experts from the department of Applied Community Development Studies, Egerton University. The questionnaires were pilot tested in Gem sub-county

formerly Siaya county council to determine the reliability of the instrument and a reliability coefficient of 0.78 obtained.

2.4. Data collection

Questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents. The researcher distributed the questionnaires and had the respondents fill them instantly. This guidance ensured that the quality of data was enhanced. The researcher intended to use this direct contact method to explain and give proper instructions to the respondents before filling in the questionnaires. The respondents were mobilized and met at their various locations at the LASDAP project areas in the wards. Secondary data with regard to project details was obtained from the council's LASDAP records to help in the location of project areas using a check list.

2.5. Data analysis

Data collected was analyzed with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) V.20. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data, which included frequencies, means, percentages and standard deviations to determine the associations and trends in the interactions of variables.

3.0. Results and Discussions

The findings show that 44% of the respondents were from age group (41-50) and this could be attributed to the fact that the community felt project oversight could better be manned by people who were neither too young nor too old. The task required energy, experience and vigilance. These qualities were well adapted to this age group as opposed to the young or elderly members of the community. On comparison of gender, male respondents in the study were 63% compared to female who were (37.41%). In most cultures men tend to dominate every aspect of public participation and leadership. There is also a considerable belief that men are better placed to deal with strangers and ensure community interests in promoting development. These findings are however inconsistent with the World Bank (2008) report on Monitoring and Evaluation which notes that development effectiveness and sustainability of community development investments could increase significantly if there was equal participation of both men and women in the project activities. The report suggests that reasonable involvement of both genders adds significant value to the entire development process. LASDAP was purposely designed to ensure proper gender mainstreaming. The presence of women could enhance the quality of projects especially the general safety and aesthetics. These findings also indicate a positive dimension in sharing the benefits of the LASDAP projects which could help reduce the gap of how men and women are affected by poverty.

The research also sought to establish the educational background of the respondents and the results indicated that 37.4 % of the respondents were secondary school leavers followed by primary school leavers 27.6% and tertiary 14.3%. These three categories form the bulk of the adult population structure in Kenya and therefore could form the larger portion of any community. Those with university level education were 9.5% while others who had other qualifications including professional courses like accountancy formed 12%. These findings also pointed at the fact that oversight tasks required some minimum level of knowledge and intellectual reasoning and the community was conscious of that. These findings also suggest PM&E could be improved since the players could make informed decisions and this could improve efficiency and quality of projects. The LASDAP program had prescribed guidelines for constituting the PMCs which had to be adhered to when electing the PMC members. The guidelines required that a member of the PMC had to know how to read and write. Members were also required to have experience in handling supervisory work. This finding showed reasonable degree of compliance with the LASDAP guidelines. These findings add and support the findings of the World Bank (2012) on PM&E which notes that education facilitates community groups to identify creative and sustainable ways to share assets to improve community welfare as well as nurture corporate relationships with diverse local leaders.

The study aimed at finding out whether the stakeholder relationship had improved as a result of PM&E in the LASDAP process. Stakeholder relationship is critical in enhancing the principles of good governance. Variables such as the conduct of meetings, the information and communication exchanges among other interactive and stakeholder engagement during the process were assessed. The findings of the study indicate that PM&E could enforce good practices such as adequate preparation for meetings and activities by both the implementers and the PMC members an indication that there was good understanding of roles by stakeholders. This could contribute to increased efficiency arising from incorporation of the PM&E in the LASDAP process. The respondents also strongly agreed that there was high level of trust. However some matters like the tendering processes still remained difficult to share freely. Results on further enquiry into whether there was improved relationship among stakeholders indicated that only 22% of the respondents felt their opinion was not well sought while the rest (78%) felt they were adequately consulted. This indicated good working relationship and mutual trust among the concerned parties. These findings concur with Baker (2000) who points out that

participating in PM&E is an opportunity to influence change in a dynamic manner in order to ensure execution of community development projects. The author further asserts that, by providing feedback on whether programs are achieving aims in line with community needs and desires, PM&E is a powerful tool for enhancing relationships among team players in the development process. The teams require different synergy, reasonable skills background and adequate facilitation in order to carry out their functions

These findings also concurred with a World Bank report (2012) on participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E). The report suggests that PM&E should be of interest to those involved in and affected by community development projects. PM&E serves to drive accountability and transparency, inform decision making about project design and management and provide lessons learned for future projects. When done in a participatory manner, monitoring can be a valuable process for building trust across diverse stakeholder groups, incorporating local knowledge and preferences, improving program outcomes, triangulating findings and institutionalizing local engagement. These findings are further supported by a study by Francoise (1995) who notes that good practice in PM&E continues to evolve and there is a good focus on building social capital and local ownership through multi-stakeholder processes; factoring sustainability and handover strategies into project design and measuring, and communicating results to optimize project impacts and value.

The study also sought to determine whether Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation affected the quality of projects. The findings showed that 52.72 % of the respondents were able to access bill of quantities (BQs) while the rest did not get. This implies that the presence of the PM&E necessitated authorities to provide details of the projects. The findings indicate that the respondents strongly agreed that there was reasonable compliance with the BQ. On verification of all works and supplies, 62% of respondents agreed that the PMC verified all works and supplies to ensure compliance with the BQ for the LASDAP projects. This ensured that the projects and all their fittings were of the right measurements and sizes. Most respondents also strongly agreed that projects remained functional and in good condition even long after they were put into use. The respondents also strongly agreed that the paintings and the fittings were environmentally friendly and attractive and this could have been attributed to the variety of people and knowledge that were carrying out PM&E.

The findings also indicated that 63% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement that the finishing, attractiveness, and general aesthetics of the completed projects were satisfactory. The mixture of talents, knowledge and experience brought about by the presence of PMCs through PM&E process brought about enhanced urge to improve the quality of projects. Diversity of people and opinions could improve the efficiency in the implementation of projects. These findings add to and support findings by Edmunds & Merchant (2008), who note that bills of quantities can not only help clarify whether costs for a project were justified but also enhance adherence to design and general implementation plan and ensure desired quality levels are reached. It ensures that the right quality of material is used and this enhances quality if it is provided with reasonable measure of compliance. The findings also suggest that by involving the community in monitoring, stakeholders can be kept abreast of progress and make suggestions for corrections, while the project partners can benefit from increased support and buy-in as a result of such transparency. This is confirmed by Kholi and Deb (2008), who note that performance monitoring determines the level of quality and acceptance for the plans and actions to implement them. By involving all levels of management and stakeholders, it enhances realization of strategies and objectives, productivity and return on use of public funds. The LASDAP records and minutes of various meetings reviewed helped to verify the content of the interactive process created by PM&E in the LASDAP process. Through the minutes and the LASDAP report, open and intense consultations at community and council levels could be established and these were strongly anchored on the PM&E process. It helped verify the level of involvement of stakeholders from the attendance lists and their inputs.

In order to determine the overall effectiveness of PM&E on the LASDAP process, the results on the Likert-type scale which ran from 1 to 5 and stated as: 1-Strongly Agree, 2- Agree, 3- Disagree, 4-Strongly Disagree and 5- Don't know were computed and means calculated using the SPSS V20. From the analysis of the means and the standard deviation, it is observable that the effect of PM&E on improvement of stakeholder relationships within the LASDAP process received the most favourable opinion with a mean of 1.6644 moving towards the strong agreement. As indicated earlier, this was most likely a result of harmony in interactions, sharing tasks in meetings, high level of trust and enhanced feedback mechanism reported by the stakeholders. The effect of PM&E on improvement of quality within the LASDAP process received favourable opinion giving a mean of 1.9226 from the respondents. This could have been due to the fact that projects selected and implemented were functional and met the desired standards. The projects further complied with the BQs and specifications.

4.0. Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effect of participatory monitoring and evaluation in the implementation of the LASDAP projects. Despite numerous challenges and areas that still required improvement, the study found that participatory monitoring and evaluation contributed to the improvement of stakeholder

relationships and quality of project outputs in the LASDAP process. There was observable improvement on infrastructure in education, water, roads, health and market infrastructure largely to the benefit of intense community participation in the process of monitoring and evaluation. Stakeholder relationships had improved significantly in the implementation of LASDAP projects. This resulted in the increment on allocations by the central government since the then Ministry of Local government felt funds were creating an impact and therefore it was important to increase allocations to local authorities with outstanding performance in the project implementation.

Effective PM&E of community development programs can improve management, accountability, participation, trust, learning and efficiency and development impacts. Monitoring is as much about building relationships, trust and mutual learning as it is about collecting and reporting data and this worked well through PM&E in the LASDAP process. In view of the findings it could be concluded that participatory monitoring and evaluation has an effect on the relationship between stakeholders involved in the LASDAP process. The sharing of information, having joint meetings, making joint decisions on milestones all added up to enhance relationships.

5.0. Recommendations

Based on the summary of the findings of the study it can be recommended that the county government adopts and continues with the monitoring structures that were used in the now defunct Local Authorities as a measure of strengthening service delivery.

The county government and the national government should ensure that there are elaborate programs to build the capacities of the PM&E actors like the PMCs in order to ensure public funds are properly utilized and there is value for money. This will enhance institutional and human capacity for improved performance.

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