

Influence Of Monitoring And Evaluation Strategy On The Implementation Of Government Projects. A Case Study Of Vision 2020 Umurenge Projects (Vup); Rwanda.

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of monitoring and evaluation strategy on implementation of government projects; (A case study of Vision 2020 Umurenge Projects-VUP). The objectives of the study were: to determine how the strength of monitoring and evaluation team influences the implementation of Vision 2020 Umurenge projects, to establish how management support influences the implementation of Vision 2020 Umurenge projects, to examine how clarity of scope in monitoring and evaluation influences the implementation of Vision 2020 Umurenge projects and to determine how frequency of meetings with stakeholders influences the implementation of Vision 2020 Umurenge projects. Descriptive survey design was used. The target population of this research was 164 respondents including 144 VUP staff, 4 VUP directors and 16 beneficiaries of the Vision 2020 Umurenge project (VUP). The study adopted a descriptive survey design and relied on data collected through a questionnaire structured to meet the objectives of the study. Descriptive statistics was used to show the trend between the variables. Frequency tables, Chi square tables and percentages were used to describe, organize, and summarize collected data. The variables were subjected to correlation analysis and the Software Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze data. The ethical issues related to the study were addressed by maintaining a high level of confidentiality of the information given by the respondents. All the factors had a significant p-value ($p < 0.05$) at 95% confidence level. Strength of monitoring and evaluation team, management support influence, clarity of the scope in M&E and frequency of meetings with the stakeholders was 0.018, 0.031, 0.024 and 0.046 respectively. At the end of the study, the findings were that 46% of the respondents felt that the strength of the M&E team is influential to the implementation of VUP. In addition, the study revealed that 35% of the respondents felt that management support influenced the implementation of VUP projects. A further 24% of the respondents indicated that clarity of an M&E scope influenced implementation of VUP projects to a very great extent. It is imperative that management supports the M&E team to achieve the desired goals. A clear scope of work makes planning easy and provides a clear guideline for the M&E team. 46% of the respondents stated that a clear scope of work influences the implementation of VUP projects to a very great extent. Another 34% indicated that it influences by a great extent. Finally, many respondents (58%) attested to the fact that frequency of meetings with stakeholders influences the implementation of VUP project by a very great extent. The study recommended that there is need to include all stakeholders in each stage of the project M&E as they play an active role since they are the consumers of the project for the sake of sustainability. Cooperation of stakeholders should also be encouraged. All the stakeholders need to be clearly identified and their requirements documented. Each of the stakeholders' requirements needs to be prioritized and focus placed on those that are most critical to success and adequate funding needs to be devoted to the implementation of M&E practices for its potential to be realized in a project because insufficient financing is a major factor for poor maintenance which, in turn, is often cited as a reason for project failure.

Key words: monitoring and evaluation team, management support, clarity of scope, meetings with stakeholders Vision 2020 Umurenge projects.

1.1 Background

Boyden, Jo. (2010) defines monitoring as a continuing function that aims primarily to provide the management and main stakeholders of an ongoing intervention with early indications of progress, or lack thereof, in the achievement of results. Boyden, Jo. (2010) again defines evaluation as the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, program, or policy, and its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.

Simon (2011) observes that project evaluation is the periodic assessment of a project's relevance, performance, efficiency, and impact both expected and unexpected in relation to stated objectives. Spicker(2008), advises that there is need for effective Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) which is increasingly being recognized as an indispensable tool of both project and portfolio management. This is because M&E provide a basis for accountability in the use of development resources. Further, M&E can be applied to strengthen the project design and implementation and stimulate partnership with project stakeholders.

Monitoring and Evaluation is an embedded concept and constitute part of every project. It involves a systematic and routine collecting of information from projects and programs by assessing as systematically and objectively as possible a complete or ongoing project (Owen, 2013). While current public policy models have certainly started to reflect a shift away from traditional thinking about organizational design and public management, a systematic process for creating and sustaining improved performance that reflects changes in the environment is clearly absent (Karami, 2015).

Evaluating a United States Federal programme in the USA, 'itizen learning teams' played a role in checking and assessing a large government programme for community renaissance of distressed areas. Operating with local volunteers provided constant feedback to local leaders and government funding agencies (Scott, 2008).

Ghana came up with a commission called the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) as a regulatory policy to assimilate the principle of M&E operations. NDPC adapted the Results Based Monitoring and Evaluation System (RBMES) and Results Based Budgeting (RBB) in the M&E process. This was purposely to ensure cost effectiveness, institutional capacity strengthening, promotion of good governance and accountability as well as credibility to the partners and government. The Rwanda's "Vision 2020 Umurenge project" is an example of what is generally referred to as Community Driven Development (CDD) initiatives that empower local communities by providing fungible funds (often from the central government but sometimes from donor sources such as World Bank.

There are 2 rules that govern the utilization of the VUP funds to ensure transparency and accountability, but decisions over the utilization of the funds are primarily by each project (World bank 2011). Unlike other development funds that filter from the central government through larger and more layers of administrative organs and bureaucracies, the funds under VUP go directly to local level projects. The VUP provides individuals at the rural grassroots the opportunity to make expenditure choices that maximize their welfare in line with their needs and preferences. To the extent that the local population is better informed about their priorities, the choices made can be expected to be more aligned to their problems and circumstances.

Rwanda like any other developing country has development endeavors for it to ensure social protection and eradicate poverty. It is in this view that in the year 2008, the Government of Rwanda (GoR) in collaboration with development partners and NGOs initiated VUP running under the National Social Protection Strategy¹ with the aim of eradicating extreme poverty by the year 2020 through the components of public works, credit packages and direct support. It is managed by Rwanda Local Development Support Funds (RLDSF), an agency of MINALOC. VUP is one of the projects which are running under the National Social Protection Strategy. VUP uses the existing decentralization system and leverages technical and financial assistance to accelerate the rate of poverty reduction in Rwanda. The aim of the project is to eradicate extreme poverty by 2020.

However, "Vision 2020 Umurenge" project initiatives have not been effective and efficient to-date in its implementation efforts. It is hoped that some implementation strategies such as monitoring and evaluation application and practice have not been exercised as desired. Most people must have heard of, or participated in a monitoring and evaluation exercise. Many may even have initiated a monitoring and evaluation by using internal resources or by contracting external consultants to measure if the program/project has been successful. Monitoring and evaluation should be exercised throughout the lifespan or project cycle to provide an overview of the program.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is an important strategy or techniques employed if private or public initiatives/programs are to be successfully implemented (Schelber, 2014). Schelber adds that M&E practice and application to government projects remains challenged. The challenges involved in the application of monitoring

and evaluation have a devastating potential for severe economic impact and socio-economic development of the country.

"Vision 2020 Umurenge project" M&E application challenges must be minimized or eliminated and instead be applied and exercised for the government initiatives or projects to be successfully implemented as desired. Project finance management has equally been a major concern that has led to poor execution of M&E activities (World Bank 2011). Without monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the government projects thoroughly and throughout all its implementation stages, results would be doubtful or may not yield the desired results or deliverables. Projects which are monitored and evaluated at their closure or final stages are rarely successful due to unrealistic and undesired outputs/outcomes, impacts and sustainability.

Although studies have been carried out on Monitoring and Evaluation, it seems like no study focused on implementation of monitoring and evaluation of VUP 2020 Umurenge projects in Rwanda. The research problem therefore aimed at finding out the practice and application of monitoring and evaluation strategy in the implementation of government programs particularly "Vision 2020 Umurenge Projects (VUP)" in its successful objectives achievement.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1.3.1 General objective

The general objective of the study was to assess the influence of monitoring and evaluation strategy on implementation of "Vision 2020 Umurenge Projects (VUP)".

1.3.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To determine the influence of monitoring and evaluation team on implementation of Vision 2020 Umurenge projects.
2. To establish the effect of management support on implementation of Vision 2020 Umurenge projects.
3. To examine the clarity of scope in monitoring and evaluation on implementation of Vision 2020 Umurenge projects.
4. To determine the impact of meetings with stakeholders on implementation of Vision 2020 Umurenge projects.

1.4 Research questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does strength of monitoring and evaluation team influences implementation of Vision 2020 Umurenge projects?
2. What is the effect of management support on implementation of Vision 2020 Umurenge projects?
3. To what extent does clarity of scope in monitoring and evaluation influences implementation of Vision 2020 Umurenge projects?
4. Does frequency of meeting with stake holders have an impact on implementation of Vision 2020 Umurenge projects?

2.0 Conceptual framework

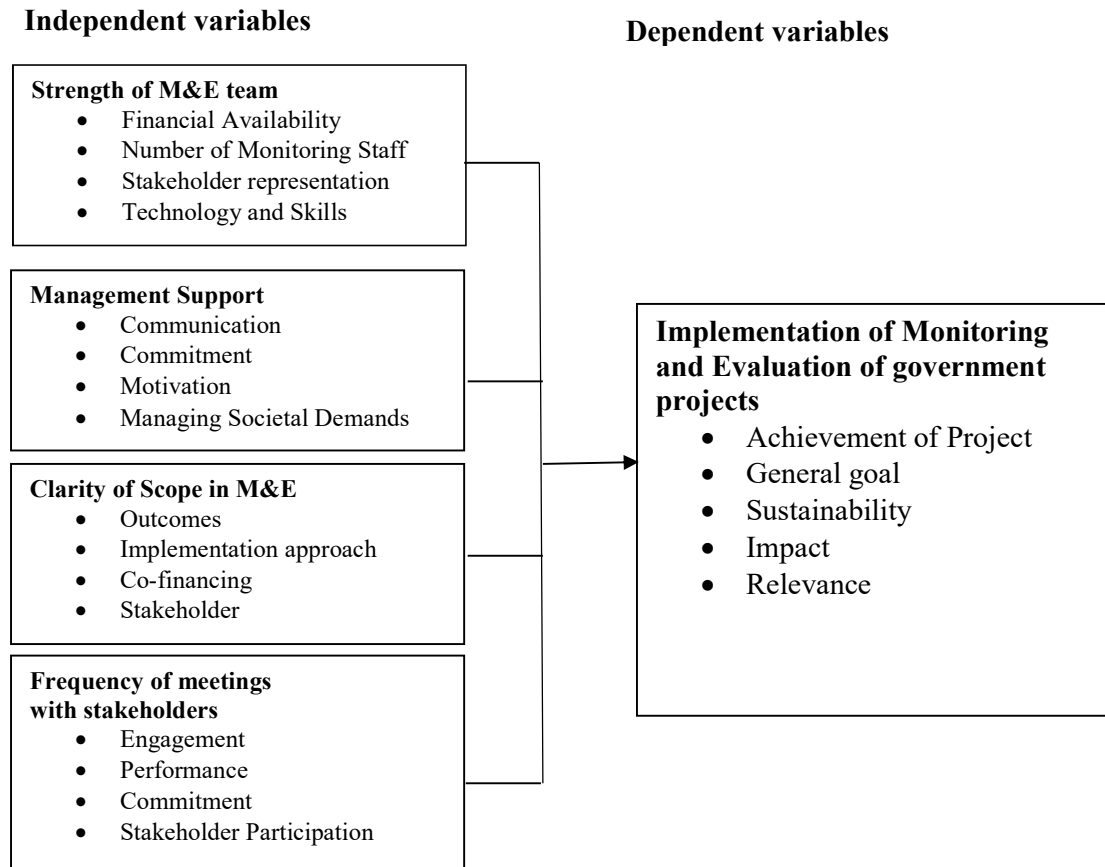


Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework

3.0 Target population

Population is defined as the total collection of elements about which wishes to make inferences (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). Mugenda and Mugenda, (2003), explain that the target population should have some observable characteristics, to which the researcher intends to generalize the results of the study. The population of this study was 164 people including, 144 staff members of the VUP projects, four directors and 16 beneficiaries of the project.

3.1 Sample size and sampling procedure

Sampling is defined as the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that they represent the larger group from which they are selected (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). A sample size of 117 respondents was determined from a total population of 164 individuals using the formula by Yamane (1967). Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the VUP staff members. Stratified random sampling technique ensures that different groups of a population are adequately represented in the sample. Stratified sampling divides the population into homogeneous groups such that the elements within each group are more alike than the elements in the population (Nachimas and Nachimas 2008). Purposive sampling method was used to select three directors and eleven beneficiaries.

4.4 Strength of M&E team and implementation of VUP.

Table 4.8: Strength of M&E team and implementation of VUP.

| | Strength of M&E team | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Valid | To a very low extent | 0 | 0 |
| | To a low extent | 2 | 2 |
| | To a moderate extent | 14 | 17 |
| | To a great extent | 37 | 46 |
| | To a very great extent | 27 | 35 |
| | Total | | 80 |

Based on the Table 4.1 above, 46% of the respondents indicated to a great extent that the strength of an M&E team is influential to the implementation of VUP. A further 35% of the respondents indicated that it influences its implementation to a very great extent. Providing support and strengthening of M&E team is a sign of good governance. Providing support and strengthening of M&E team will also play a key role in ensuring that the M&E team adds value to the organizations operations (Naidoo, 2011). A motivated team usually achieves high performance (Zaccaro et al, 2002). This implies that the more a team is strengthened, the better the performance and value addition to the organization.

4.4.1 Beneficiaries involvement in the formulation of M&E strategy

The study sought to find out the beneficiaries' involvement in the formulation of M&E strategy. This is shown in the below.

Table 4.9: Beneficiaries involvement in the formulation of M&E strategy

| | Beneficiaries involvement | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|---------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Valid | I strongly disagree | 0 | 0 |
| | Disagree | 6 | 8 |
| | Neutral | 13 | 17 |
| | I agree | 28 | 35 |
| | I strongly agree | 32 | 40 |
| | Total | | 80 |

Out of the 80 respondents, 32 (40%) respondents stated that beneficiaries were very involved in the formulation of M&E strategies. A further 28 (35%) of respondents agreed that beneficiaries were involved in the formulation. 13 (7%) of the respondents were neutral on the issue while 6 (8%) respondents disagreed on the subject matter. The majority of respondents who agreed on this stated that this is due to the fact that they were involved in the baseline surveys and formulation of the M&E objectives and other stages of the M&E process.

4.5 Management Support and implementation of VUP

Table 4.10: Management support and implementation of VUP.

| | Management support | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Valid | To a very low extent | 9 | 12 |
| | To a low extent | 10 | 13 |
| | To a moderate extent | 27 | 35 |
| | To a great extent | 13 | 16 |
| | To a very great extent | 21 | 24 |
| | Total | 80 | 100 |

The respondents were divided based on their opinions whether or not management support influences the implementation of VUP projects. 27 (35%) respondents said that management support influences VUP implementation to a moderate extent, a further 21 (24%) respondents indicated that they influenced to a very great extent. It is imperative that management supports the M&E team so as to achieve the desired goals. A motivated team usually achieves high performance (Zaccaro et al, 2002).

4.5.1 The monitoring and evaluation staff and training

The researcher also asked the respondents on their own opinion whether or not the monitoring and evaluation staff is composed of very well-trained personnel. The results were as shown in the table below.

Table 4.11: The monitoring and evaluation staff and training

| | The monitoring and evaluation staff is composed of very well-trained personnel | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|--|-----------|------------|
| Valid | I strongly disagree | 0 | 0 |
| | Disagree | 6 | 8 |
| | Neutral | 6 | 7 |
| | I agree | 50 | 63 |
| | I strongly agree | 18 | 22 |
| | Total | 80 | 100 |

Out of the 80 respondents, 50 (63%) agreed that the M&E staffs were composed of very well trained personnel, while 18 (22%) strongly agreed. 6 (7%) of the key respondents were neutral on the issue. Lastly, 6 (8%) of the respondents disagreed on the issue. The importance of well-trained M&E personnel is enormous and the efficiency of an M&E strategy can be achieved by staffing with very well-trained personnel.

4.6 Clarity of Scope in M&E and implementation

Table 4.12: Clarity of Scope in M&E and implementation of VUP.

| | Clarity of Scope in M&E | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|-------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Valid | To a very low extent | 2 | 2 |
| | To a low extent | 5 | 6 |
| | To a moderate extent | 9 | 12 |
| | To a great extent | 27 | 34 |
| | To a very great extent | 37 | 46 |
| | Total | 80 | 100 |

Based on table 4.5 above, a clear scope of work makes planning easy and provides a clear guideline for the M&E team. 46% of the respondents stated that a clear scope of work influences the implementation of VUP to a very great extent. Another 34% of the respondents indicated that it influences VUP implementation by a great extent. This implies that clarity of scope influences the VUP implementation.

4.6.1 The monitoring and evaluation staff knowledge of what they were doing

The extent to which the monitoring and evaluation staff knew what they were doing was observed. The table below shows the results.

Table 4.13: Monitoring and evaluation staff Knowledge of what they were doing

| | The monitoring and evaluation staff know what they are doing | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|--|-----------|------------|
| Valid | I strongly disagree | 7 | 9 |
| | Disagree | 6 | 8 |
| | Neutral | 38 | 48 |
| | I agree | 18 | 23 |
| | I strongly agree | 9 | 12 |
| | Total | 80 | 100 |

The majority(48%) of the respondents were neutral on the subject matter, citing that they did not have an idea of the finite details of the monitoring and evaluation requirements hence they could not adequately state whether or not they knew what they were doing. 23% and 12% of the respondents reported that they agreed and strongly agreed with the subject matter respectively.

4.7 Influence of Frequency of meetings with stakeholders

Among the many factors, the researcher also wished to determine how frequency of meetings with stakeholders influences the implementation of VUP. The findings are based on engagement, performance, commitment, and frequency of stakeholder's participation.

Table 4.14: Frequency of meetings with stakeholders and implementation of VUP.

| | Frequency of meetings with stakeholders | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|---|-----------|------------|
| Valid | To a very low extent | 0 | 0 |
| | To a low extent | 2 | 2 |
| | To a moderate extent | 9 | 12 |
| | To a great extent | 22 | 28 |
| | To a very great extent | 47 | 58 |
| | Total | 80 | 100 |

The majority (58%) of respondents attested to the fact that frequency of meetings with stakeholders influences the implementation of VUP by a very great extent. A further 28% of the respondents supported this fact. Frequent meetings with stakeholders ensures that there is constant feedback about project progress. Adjustments are made on time, which prevents repetition of work and assures that quality is maintained during the entire projects' lifetime.

Rogers (2008) suggests the use of multi-stakeholders' dialogues in data collection, hypothesis testing, to allow greater involvement and recognize the differences that may arise.

4.7.1 Monitoring and evaluation team coordination

The table below shows the respondents' thoughts on whether the M&E team was always well prepared and well-coordinated as they did their job.

Table 4.15: Monitoring and evaluation team coordination

| | The monitoring and evaluation team is always properly prepared and well-coordinated | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|---|-----------|------------|
| Valid | I strongly disagree | 0 | 0 |
| | Disagree | 5 | 6 |
| | Neutral | 11 | 14 |
| | I agree | 23 | 29 |
| | I strongly agree | 41 | 51 |
| | Total | 80 | 100 |

The vast majority (51%) of the respondents, strongly agreed that the M&E team was very well prepared and well-coordinated. A further 29% of the respondents agreed to this and 14% were neutral on the issue. The frequent visits to the study area plus the coordinated efforts to ensure community participation were the key reasons as to why the respondents felt that the team was very well prepared and coordinated. The preparedness of the M&E teams has a positive influence on the implementation of the project.

4.7.2 VUP Authority team visit

Table 4.16: VUP authority team visit

| | Frequency of VUP visits | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|-------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Valid | Once Per Year | 7 | 9 |
| | Monthly | 51 | 63 |
| | Weekly | 11 | 14 |
| | Never Ever | 11 | 14 |
| | Total | 80 | 100 |

The researcher sought to establish the frequency of VUP team visits to the areas of residence of the respondents. Most of the respondents, 63%, reported that they had sighted the VUP team at least monthly. 14% of the respondents reported weekly visits while a similar percentage reported that they had never had a glimpse of the VUP team. Lastly, 9% of the respondents reported once a year visits. This was attributed to the annual stakeholder meetings where project progress was discussed. Monitoring of projects is done periodically, unlike evaluations

4.8 Correlation analysis

To quantify the relationship and strength of the relationship between the variables, the study used Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (or Pearson correlation coefficient for short) is a measure of the strength of a linear association between two variables and is denoted by r . The Pearson correlation coefficient, r , can take a range of values from +1 to -1. A value of 0 (zero) indicates that there is no association between the two variables. A value greater than 0 indicates a positive association, that is, as the value of one variable increases, so does the value of the other variable. A value less than 0 (zero) indicates a negative association, that is, as the value of one variable increases, the value of the other variable decreases.

Table 4.17: Correlation and the coefficient of determination

| | Implementation of VUP projects | Strength of M&E team | Management support | Clarity of Scope in M&E | Frequency of meetings with stakeholders |
|--|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Implementation of VUP projects (r) (p) Sig. (2 tailed) | 1.000 | | | | |
| Strength of M & E team (r) (p) (2 tailed) | 0.894 0.018 | 1.000 | | | |
| Management support (r) (p) Sig. (2 tailed) | 0.493 0.031 | 0.316 0.047 | 1.000 | | |
| Clarity of Scope in M&E (r) (p) Sig. (2 tailed) | 0.661 0.024 | 0.163 0.019 | 0.216 0.047 | 1.000 | |
| Frequency of meetings with stakeholders (r)(p) Sig. (2 tailed) | 0.402 0.046 | 0.161 0.029 | 0.233 0.0464 | 0.462 0.014 | 1.000 |

According to the Table 4.10, there is a positive relationship between implementation of VUP projects and strength of M&E team, management support, clarity of the scope in M&E and frequency of meetings with the stakeholders (0.894, 0.493, 0.661, and 0.402) respectively. The positive relationship indicates that there is a correlation between the factors influencing implementation of VUP. This notwithstanding, all the factors had a significant p-value ($p < 0.05$) at 95% confidence level. The significant values for the relationship between implementation of VUP projects and Strength of M&E team, management support, clarity of the scope in M&E and frequency of meetings with the stakeholders were 0.018, 0.031, 0.024 and 0.046 respectively. This implies that strength of M&E team was the most significant factor.

Analysis of the table 4.20 presents the degree of correlation and levels of significance between influence of monitoring and evaluation strategy on implementation of the in the government projects in Rwanda. All the factors display weak correlation relationship with implementation of VUP.

However, within the factors which are the independent variables, strength of M&E team have a high correlation of 89.6%. This high correlation between independent variables leads to multicollinearity between the variables and it leads to spurious results.

5.0. Conclusions

The findings of the study revealed that monitoring and evaluation strategy influenced the implementation of VUP in Bugesera District. Both Monitoring and evaluation strategies investigated have provided critical lessons for addressing M&E, performance, and results as implementation of Monitoring and Evaluation of VUP projects. Based on the first objective which was to determine how strength of monitoring and evaluation team influences implementation of VUP projects in Bugesera District, the results showed that majority of respondents indicated that strength of monitoring and evaluation team influences the implementation of VUP where this is determined by the finances availed to it, the number of trained and competent staff in the team as well as the skills they possess in addition to the rapport they have with the various stakeholders.

Conclusion based on the second objective which was to establish how management support influences the implementation of VUP projects in Bugesera District, the study concludes that VUP projects need management support to clarify all the strategic objectives of the project so as to make sure that the project is executed and delivered in line with strategic objectives and serve the overall business purpose.

Based on the third objective, it can be concluded that clear scope of work influences the implementation of VUP projects to a very great extent. Therefore, clear scope of any project, as with the VUP projects, is maintained through effective stakeholders' communication and proper documentation of project work. On the fourth objective, the study concludes that frequency of meetings with stakeholders influences the implementation of VUP projects by a very great extent and therefore, VUP Projects involves multiple stakeholders, who potentially have the ability to speed up, slow down or completely obstruct the project progress.

5.1. Recommendations

From the findings and conclusion, the influence of monitoring and evaluation strategy on implementation of government projects in Rwanda is to larger extent. The study recommends that organizations should consider monitoring and evaluation as mandatory at all levels of the projects. When these are put in place, the implementation of projects would be successfully accomplished. The following recommendations were made from the findings of the study.

1. There is need to include all stakeholders in project M&E in each stage as they play an active role since they are the beneficiaries of the project for the sake of sustainability. Cooperation of stakeholders should also be encouraged.
2. All the stakeholders need to be clearly identified and their requirements documented. Each of the stakeholders' requirements needs to be prioritized and focus placed on those that are most critical to success.
3. Adequate funding needs to be devoted to implementation of M&E practices for its potential to be realized in a project because insufficient financing is a major factor which in turn is often cited as a reason for project failure.

5.2. Areas for further research

Despite the overall findings in this study, there are still open opportunities for further studies. Further studies should be conducted on:

1. Determining how to strengthen primary stakeholders' participation in M&E of VUP Projects particularly how to ensure the beneficiaries do participate effectively in monitoring and evaluating of projects.
2. Highlighting challenges facing monitoring and evaluation of VUP Projects.
3. Influence of information technology system on monitoring and evaluation on VUP projects.

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