Assessment of Stakeholders Management Protocols with a Special Focus on Selected Joint Projects in Ethiopia

Yehualashet Getahun Ayele
School of Commerce, Addis Ababa University
PO box 1176, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Tel: +251 911 808 692 E-mail: getyehuall@gmail.com

Abstract
The purpose /objective of this study is to provide new theoretical and empirical insights into joint project stakeholder related phenomena through the study of how stakeholders attempt to influence joint projects; and how a joint project management tries to manage these influences in joint multi-firm projects. Accordingly, the focus of this study is the evaluation of the stakeholder management protocol of joint projects performed by selected non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are recently functioning in Ethiopia. For the reason that the overriding purpose of the study is to investigate the stakeholder management experience of the designated institutions as practiced in the selected projects, this study has made use of descriptive method of research design. In the meanwhile, mixed research approach has been adopted to carry out the study. Moreover, because it was possible to obtain the information the researcher needed from all stakeholders of the designated institutions simultaneously, the time dimension of the study is cross-sectional. The target population of this study is the entire project personnel, the relevant government officials, and project beneficiaries of the chosen projects, out of which 15% is taken as a representative sample. Because the appraisal principally targeted on those individuals who had experiences with project stakeholder management, a non-probability judgment sampling technique was adopted. Finally, the findings of this study highlighted the importance of stakeholder management in joint projects. Through the application of the ideas of stakeholder theory, the results of this study provided new theoretical and empirical understanding of how joint project stakeholders may influence the project management's decision making during the project lifecycle. These findings also demonstrated how a joint project may analyze its stakeholder environment and respond to stakeholder pressures and unexpected events in the context of joint projects. Ultimately, the new knowledge of joint stakeholders' influence strategies and better understanding of how a joint project can deal with stakeholder influences supports project managers in the development of effective project stakeholder management approaches.
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1) BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Virtually no project is ever successful without the corporate effort of pertinent stakeholders. This inevitable fact of projects calls for the importance of introducing carefully designed stakeholders' management protocol. This is further boosted by joint projects that cross national boundaries; and play a key role in the creation of wealth and wellbeing around the world. In the light of this, the fate and performance of today's projects are strongly determined by the joint efforts of all stakeholders. To make the matter more appealing, the joint efforts that projects demand are happening at faster and faster rates.

Nowadays joint projects are implemented in institutionally demanding environments and are executed by coalitions of stakeholders that have differing interests, objectives and socio-cultural backgrounds. Consequently, these projects are subject to the demands and pressures presented by various stakeholders such as community groups, local residents, landowners, environmentalists, regulatory agencies, and local and national governments.

Although stakeholder management has long been acknowledged as a means of increasing the propensity for successful delivery of joint projects, the full benefits of stakeholder management have yet to be tapped. Previous research efforts indicate lack of comprehensive stakeholder management process since the existing frameworks in project either focused on a particular project life cycle stage or failed to incorporate important considerations such as the impact of procurement routes, internal stakeholder collaboration, responsibility for stakeholder management and project life cycle. In brief, these were undermined as applied to joint projects.

Thus, this study aims to develop a comprehensive framework for stakeholder management protocol in joint projects in order to enable the industry tap the full benefits of stakeholder management. So as to achieve this aim, previous work on stakeholder management has been reviewed. The current practice of stakeholder management within the Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), the effects of procurement routes and contract forms on stakeholder management process, and the relationship among the critical success factors for stakeholder management in joint projects were investigated using an industry survey among professionals practicing within Ethiopia.

WHY PROJECT STAKEHOLDERS MANAGEMENT?

With no doubt, project stakeholders' management is critical to projects' success in today's highly competitive and dynamic project environment. In the light of this, in this study the researcher examined the project stakeholder management practices of joint projects in Ethiopia. In the meanwhile, Stakeholders Management as a discipline within project management is one of the least researched and least discussed topics in professional journals and books focusing on management. However, empirical evidences suggest that stakeholders management is not as such a trouble-free practice in most projects (Feldman, 1995). This is the most imperative reason that made the researcher to choose project stakeholders management to be his subject of study.

2) STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Project stakeholder management has become fundamental in the management of projects in general and joint projects in particular, irrespective of the form and structure of the performing organization. These days, many government and non-government organizations largely depend on joint projects to achieve their strategic objectives. However, the success of these projects, to a large extent, depends on the ability of the organization to make wise use of stakeholders' potentials.

Stakeholder management is crucial to the success of every project in every organization, and engaging the right people at the right time and in the right way is indispensable to its success. Most projects have more than one stakeholder or stakeholder group, presenting the project management with a major challenge of resolving their often divergent and potentially conflicting requirements (Maylor, 2010,p.77). Consequently, the managerial challenges in joint projects are not purely technical; these challenges also arguably entail the management of the social, political and cultural aspects in the context of several stakeholders with differing socio-cultural backgrounds, goals and strategies.

Most often, project stakeholders have conflicting interests. Therefore, it's the project management's responsibility to figure out these conflicts and try to resolve them as quickly as possible. It's also the project management's duty to manage stakeholder expectations. The management should also be certain to identify and meet with all key stakeholders early in the project to understand all their needs and constraints. However, project managers are not inherently powerful or capable of imposing their will directly on the various project stakeholders. Thus, if they are to get their way, they have to exercise influence effectively over project stakeholders. More to the point, project managers have direct control over very few things; therefore their ability to influence others may be very important.

Until today, existing scarce research has primarily focused on the conceptual development of stakeholder management tools and frameworks in order to better manage stakeholders (e.g. McEllroy and Mills, 2003; Olander and Landin, 2005; Winch and Bonke, 2002). In these attempts, the ideas and theoretical frameworks of stakeholder theory have only been utilized to a limited extent. Hence, what has been missing from prior literature is empirical research and theorizing on how stakeholders actually try to influence the project and how a project tries to manage these influences. Following Berman et al. (1999) there is very little descriptive theory or research that describes how stakeholders and project organizations actually interact. In addition, the role and impact of different contextual factors on the behaviors of stakeholders and a project have not been widely investigated before. Furthermore, joint project stakeholders and their management have received only scant research attention, since the closed project mind-set that dominated project research for decades (Engwall, 2003) has apparently directed research to independently performed project's stakeholders that are formal members of the project coalition.

By successfully managing project stakeholders, management will be better able to keep a lid on scope creep, ensure project requirements are aligned, understand tolerance for risk, and mitigate issues that would otherwise delay the project. Good stakeholder management is a testimony to administrative influence in an organization, and a key component to a healthy project environment. It's, therefore, a virtuous idea to practice good stakeholder management and constantly communicate with them in order to collaborate on the project. After all, they have a stake in how it all turns out.

Having the general bird's eye view discussed above concerning the impact of project stakeholders management on project performance, let's now investigate surfaced problems in the context of the specific institutions considered in this study. In these institutions, the most attention worthy problem encountered was project overrun - both cost and schedule. Furthermore, project scope change requirements were submitted to the project team at any stage of the PLC thereby aggravating the matter. The other attention worthy problem experienced was the inability of the institutions to get funds released to perform projects as planned. This was experienced every time finance sources get dissatisfied with the project performing institution for one reason or another. To make the matter even worse, senior managers' attitude pertaining to the need to manage these stakeholders was very deprived. At last, absence of support from project sponsors to the project manager in his/her way to execute appropriate stakeholders management protocol was experienced.

To conclude, many international investment and joint projects still have strikingly poor performance

records in terms of economy, environment and public support (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003; Grün, 2004; Morris and Hough, 1987). On the contrary, the number and complexity of joint projects have been growing rapidly over the last few decades (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003; Grün, 2004; Miller and Lessard, 2000). Therefore, in order to realize project success, it is important to engage as well as manage stakeholders effectively in the course of carrying out joint projects. The question, however, still remains of how effective stakeholder management can be carried out in joint projects. In view of that, the success or failure of a project is influenced very strongly by the expectations and perceptions of the stakeholders involved on the project, and hence failure to balance or address the concerns of the stakeholders is very likely to result in many projects failing. However, mere involvement of project stakeholders is not a guarantee for achieving a successful project; it also needs to be properly done.

Research Problem: How can joint project's stakeholder management protocol be improved to enhance the propensity of achieving successful project execution with long-term partnerships in mind?

3) BASIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to explore the research problem stated above, this study largely focused on the following eleven basic research questions:

RQ1. Who are the Stakeholders of a typical joint project?

RQ2. Who are the major sources of finance for most joint projects?

RQ3. Do project financing institutions set project requirements to be met by the project performing institution?

RQ4. Does the project management of the performing institution acknowledge the importance of stakeholder management so as to enhance the propensity of realizing successful joint project execution?

RQ5. What challenges are there in managing stakeholders in the nominated NGOs?

RQ6. What is the current protocol of stakeholder management in the nominated institutions? (Is stakeholder management done as a personal intuitive initiative or based on a conscious strategy for doing so?)

RQ7. What are the effects of employing poor stakeholder management protocols?

RQ8. Does the stakeholder management protocol of the performing organization affect its financial position afterwards/ subsequently?

RQ9. What are the most imperative success factors for joint projects stakeholder management and how could they be used to improve the stakeholder management protocol?

RQ10. What are the tools and techniques for stakeholder management in joint projects and to what extent are they used?

RQ11. How do contract forms or contract administrations affect stakeholder management protocol in joint projects?

4) OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

4.1) GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The general objective of this study is to rise our knowledge of project stakeholder behavior; and develop a comprehensive framework for stakeholder management in the context of joint projects having demanding stakeholder issues (projects with multiple and diverse stakeholders and interests). Therefore, this study will provide new theoretical and empirical insights into project stakeholder related phenomena through the study of how stakeholders attempt to influence joint projects and how a project management tries to manage these influences in joint multi-firm projects.

4.2) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The following explicit objectives have been addressed in this study.

①. To assess project managements' perception pertaining to the significance of stakeholder management in joint projects,

②. To evaluate existing stakeholder management protocols in selected project-driven organizations in Ethiopia.

③. To investigate the impact of the functioning stakeholder management protocols on the future fate of the project-driven institutions considered in this study.

④. To ascertain the critical success factors for joint projects stakeholder management.

⑤. To examine the tools and techniques to be used for better stakeholder management in joint projects in Ethiopia.

⑥. To evaluate as to how contract forms and contract administration impact stakeholder management frameworks in joint projects.

5) SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Perhaps the most imperative and attention worthy aspect of joint projects is project overrun, if not total failure. It is not uncommon for joint projects to experience cost and schedule overruns. Most often than not, the project

overruns are attributed to poor stakeholder management protocol. However, if the stakeholder management protocol is developed in such a way as to draw the attention of all relevant stakeholders to the project along with realizing the maximum possible stakeholders' input, the chances of success are greatly enhanced. Yet even with the best-designed stakeholder management protocol, the particular project implementation environment matters. With this in mind, the objective of this study is to analyze the significance of stakeholders management protocol as practiced in designated Ethiopian based joint projects, and assess the effectiveness of the protocol used to carry out these projects. Where appropriate, possible suggestions have been made as to how similar projects could be improved in the future by a rightful selection and implementation of project stakeholder management protocol. Most importantly, this study strived to fill the knowledge gap pertaining to stakeholders management protocol, and made every possible effort to enhance the success of future joint projects in Ethiopia. Above all, the researcher acknowledges that stakeholders' reaction determines the feat and failure of projects. Hence, every project management ought to struggle to keep project stakeholders satisfied as it is the only way to secure their support for the successful accomplishment of projects. In view of this reality of projects, there is no doubt that, stakeholders management protocol in Ethiopia should be supported with genuine researches of this kind to make our dream projects real, via joint efforts of all stakeholders. This is the overriding rationale & the ultimate goal of this study.

6) DELIMITATION/SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is delimited to selected joint projects performed by Menschen für Menschen (MfM) and World Vision – Ethiopia; both of which are Non – Government Organizations performing various projects in different parts of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. This is further restricted to the organizations' stakeholder management undertakings in pre-designated projects. It is also worth mentioning that the findings of this study are likely to be extended to organizations of similar dynamism with the organizations set aside for special consideration in this study (Menschen für Menschen, MfM and World Vision - Ethiopia).

7) LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations of various kind and height are inescapable features of researches at all levels. In the light of this, the researcher experienced the following major challenges (limitations) during this research project work: lack of willingness from some stakeholders to offer the researcher the information he needed, (even if they were found to be willing) absence of complete and well organized information that the researcher needed as input for the study, poor research culture of the society, deprived attitude of the society towards research and its potential upshots, inadequate information/data, etc.

8) METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

For the reason that the researcher's overriding motive is to investigate (evaluate) the stakeholder management experience of the designated organizations as practiced in the selected projects, this study has made use of descriptive method of research design.

In the meanwhile, mixed (qualitative enhanced with quantitative) research approach has been adopted to carry out this study. Moreover, because it is possible to obtain the information the researcher needed from all relevant stakeholders of the projects simultaneously, the time dimension of the study is cross-sectional.
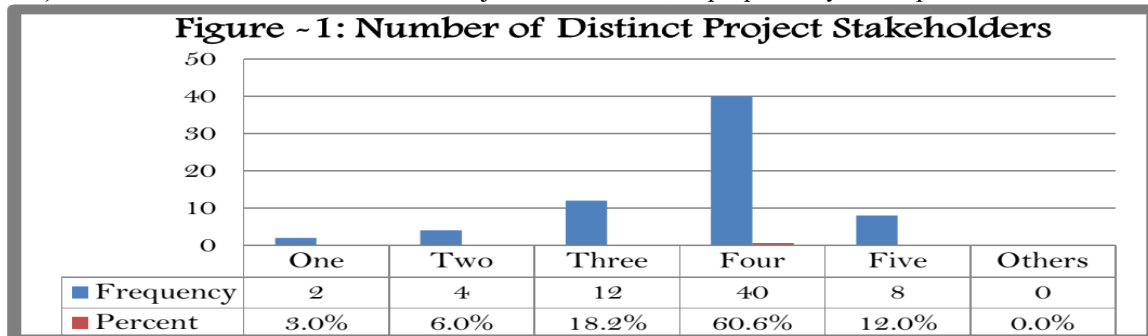
The respondents of the survey/appraisal were targeted individuals who had experiences, in one way or another, with stakeholder management in the nominated NGOs. Therefore, random sampling was not suitable for this research. Hence, a non-probability judgment (also called purposive sampling) technique was adopted, in which the selection of the sample was based on the judgment about some appropriate characteristic required of the sample members.

9) DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This section of the study is organized in such a way as to support the discussion presented on the research findings with illustrative figures and tables. Accordingly, each of the research questions are answered by means of using tables and figures to summarize major research findings pertaining to the research question focused; and then adequate and relevant explanation is presented to the findings presented in the relevant tables and charts.

RQ₁. WHO ARE THE STAKEHOLDERS OF A TYPICAL JOINT PROJECT?

    A)   The number of Distinct Classes of Project Stakeholders, as proposed by the respondents:

Figure ~1: Number of Distinct Project Stakeholders

	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Others
Frequency	2	4	12	40	8	0
Percent	3.0%	6.0%	18.2%	60.6%	12.0%	0.0%

Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

    B)   The diagram below discloses the major stakeholders of a typical joint project.

Figure ~2: Key Project Stakeholders
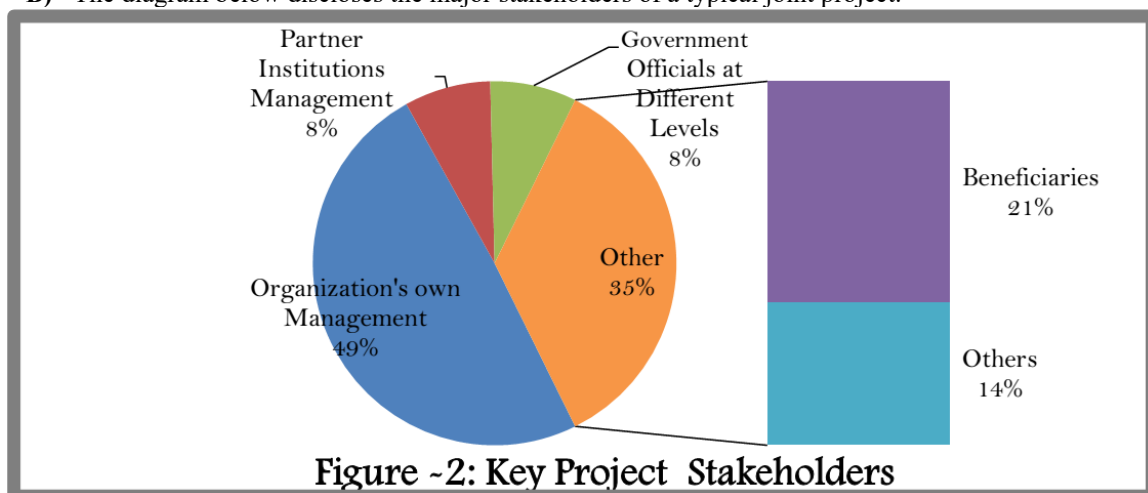
Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

    C)   The table below reveals how the interviewees (who are 66 in number) classified the following 12 likely stakeholders into stakeholders or not-stakeholders:

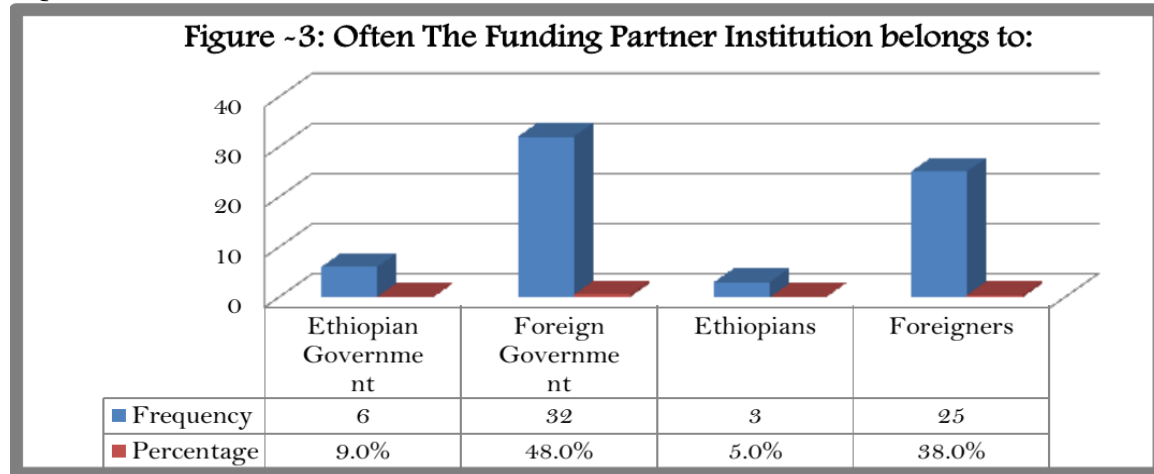Table ~1: Status of a range of likely stakeholders

	Range of likely stakeholders	Status as a stakeholder or not ("Yes" or "No")	
		Yes	No
1	Traditional/Local Authorities	50	16
2	Donors/Project Sponsors	63	3
3	Public Authorities	65	1
4	Project Partner Organization	40	26
5	Project Team	65	1
6	Clients/End Users	53	13
7	Contractors/ Consultants	48	18
8	Financial Institutions	18	48
9	Labour Unions	19	47
10	Media	30	36
11	Insurance Companies	16	50
12	Project Community	31	35

Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

As figure -1 revealed the maximum number of groups of stakeholders the interviewees suggested is five, and more than 60% of them suggested four different categories of stakeholders as an ideal number of distinct stakeholders to be considered in the stakeholder management efforts of any institution. The very important question to raise here is according to these interviewees if the maximum number of stakeholder groups is limited

to five "Which groups of stakeholders are to be managed and which are to be ignored". From the interviewees' suggestion, in this regard, one can certainly conclude that if only four distinct stakeholders are to be considered, then the possibility of overlooking or ignoring one or more salient stakeholders is very high. This, as a result, introduces substantial challenges in the stakeholder management effort/process of the institutions. Moreover, figure -2 disclosed that the most important stakeholders are the "performing organization's own management" (which accounts for 49%) followed by "project beneficiaries" (accounts 21%). Finally, Table -1 displayed that the most likely stakeholder groups are "public authorities" and "project teams" while the most unlikely project stakeholder groups are "Insurance companies", "Financial institutions" and "Labour unions" respectively.

RQ2. WHO ARE THE MAJOR SOURCES OF FINANCE FOR MOST JOINT PROJECTS?

Figure ~3: Often The Funding Partner Institution belongs to:

	Ethiopian Government	Foreign Government	Ethiopians	Foreigners
Frequency	6	32	3	25
Percentage	9.0%	48.0%	5.0%	38.0%

Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

As the diagram above disclosed, the principal sources of finance for the projects are foreign governments and foreign citizens. These finance sources account for 86% of the finance sources. Thus, it is only the remaining 14% of the money that comes from the government of Ethiopian and Ethiopians. This finding/discovery has so many important implications about the composition of stakeholders for these projects. More explicitly, foreigners are likely stakeholders of most joint projects.

RQ3. DO PROJECT FINANCING INSTITUTIONS SET PROJECT REQUIREMENTS TO BE MET BY THE PROJECT PERFORMING INSTITUTION?

Figure ~4: Do project financing institutions set requirements?

	Yes	No
Series1	66	0
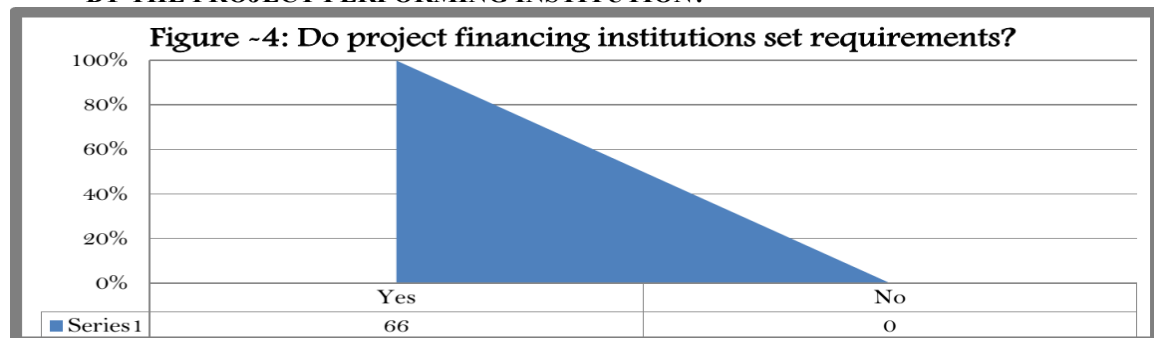
Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

Figure - 4 evidently asserted that project finance sources have their own interests which they expect the project performing institution to fulfill so that the fund is eventually released. Therefore, the release of the fund promised to run the project is conditional which depends on how the project performing institution is responding to the interests or requirements of the financing parties. This, in turn, infers that project financing parties are active project stakeholders having their own interests. More importantly, taking all these into consideration, we can see that the performance or success of a project depends on how the project performing institution manages (responds to the needs of) its finance sources.

RQ4. DOES THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT ACKNOWLEDGE THE IMPORTANCE OF STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT?
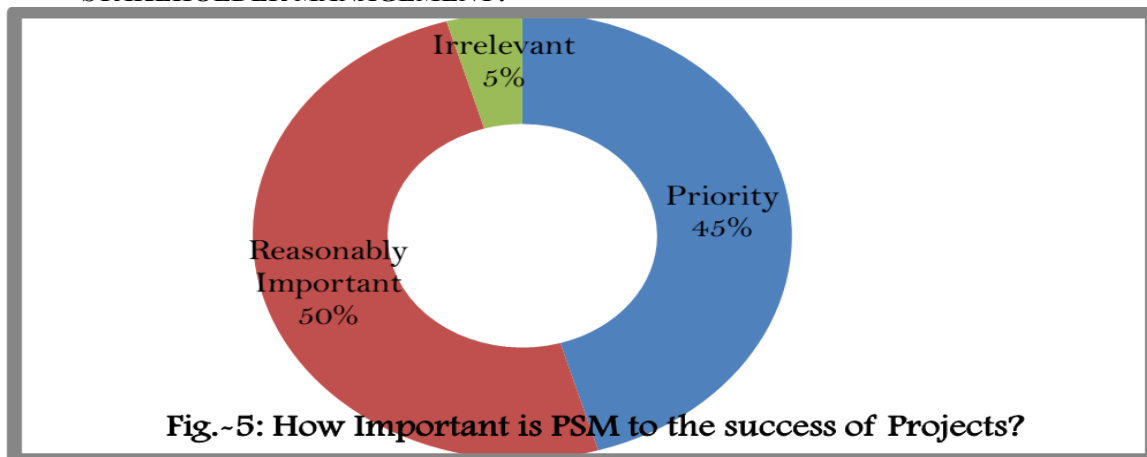

Fig.~5: How Important is PSM to the success of Projects?

Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

As shown in the diagram above, 95% of the respondents acknowledged the importance of stakeholder management to enhance the propensity of realizing successful joint project execution. In addition, it came out during a focus group discussion with frontline project staffs that what matters most is the performing institutions past history. According to this discussion, there are NGOs identified as loyal to the society by both the government and the society. For these institutions, what is most important is the finance source. Once the fund needed to perform the project is secured; all other stakeholders are very likely to cooperate with the performing institution irrespective of how they are managed.

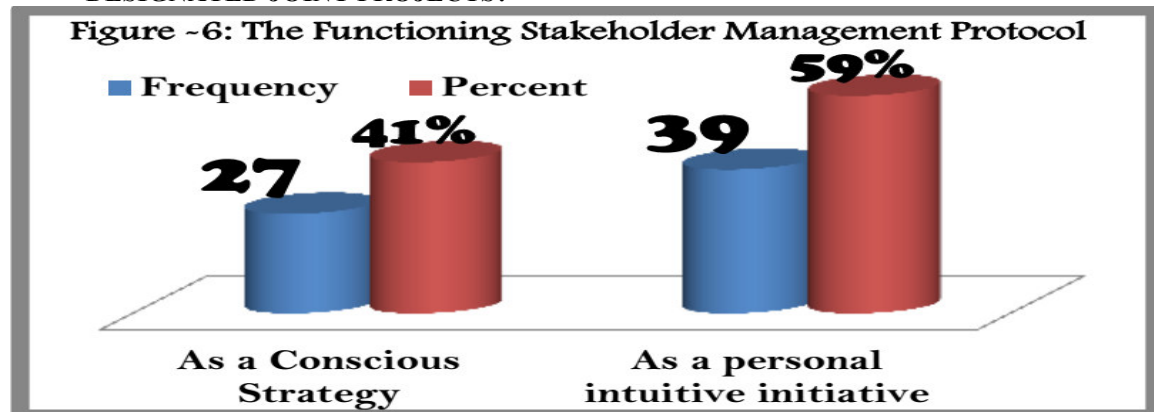### RQ5. WHAT CHALLENGES ARE THERE IN MANAGING STAKEHOLDERS IN THE NOMINATED NGOs?

Table ~2: Likely Challenges in Managing Stakeholders:

LIKELY CHALLENGES IN MANAGING STAKEHOLDERS (Multiple answers)	"Yes"	"No"
Failure to identify all relevant stakeholders	63%	37%
Late identification of stakeholders' interest	96%	4%
Conflicting requirements of stakeholders	100%	0%
Poor engagement of stakeholders	79%	21%
Incompatible interests of partners in the joint projects	100%	0%
Cause for concern attitude (or perception) of senior managers pertaining to the need to manage stakeholders	54%	46%
Unharmonious socio-cultural backgrounds, goals and strategies of partners	100%	0%
Absence of support from project sponsors to the project manager in his/her way to execute appropriate stakeholders management protocol	73%	27%
Others	95%	5%

Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

The data summarized in the table above disclosed that 100% of the respondents identified "Conflicting requirements of stakeholders", "Incompatible interests of partners in the joint projects" and "Unharmonious socio-cultural backgrounds, goals and strategies of partners" as challenges in managing stakeholders. Being identified by 96% of the respondents "Late identification of stakeholders' interest" follows as another challenge. Please note that "Conflicting requirements of stakeholders, as used in this study" refers to project scope related needs of stakeholders whereas "Incompatible interests of partners in the joint projects" refers to such interests of the partner institution as building one's own image, and get recognition by the project beneficiaries against the will and interest of the other partner. At last, the above scheme of challenges also revealed that project stakeholder management is a battle wherein diverse and unable to get along concerns are made to go together, on the side of the project manager.

RQ6. WHAT IS THE CURRENT PROTOCOL OF STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT IN THE DESIGNATED JOINT PROJECTS?

Figure ~6: The Functioning Stakeholder Management Protocol

■ Frequency ■ Percent

59%

41%

39

27

As a Conscious Strategy

As a personal intuitive initiative

Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

As portrayed in the diagram above, 59% of the respondents answered that stakeholder management is done at individual level based on individuals' own determination. From this data one can also conclude that the stakeholder management efforts of individuals are not coordinated at institutional level. This, without doubt, undermines the stakeholder management efforts and the potential benefits which can be harvested had it been carried out in an organized manner.

RQ7. WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF EMPLOYING POOR STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT PROTOCOLS?

A) Does deprived project stakeholder management protocol cause project overrun?

Figure ~7: Does poor project stakeholder management cause project overrun?

No 9%

Yes 91%
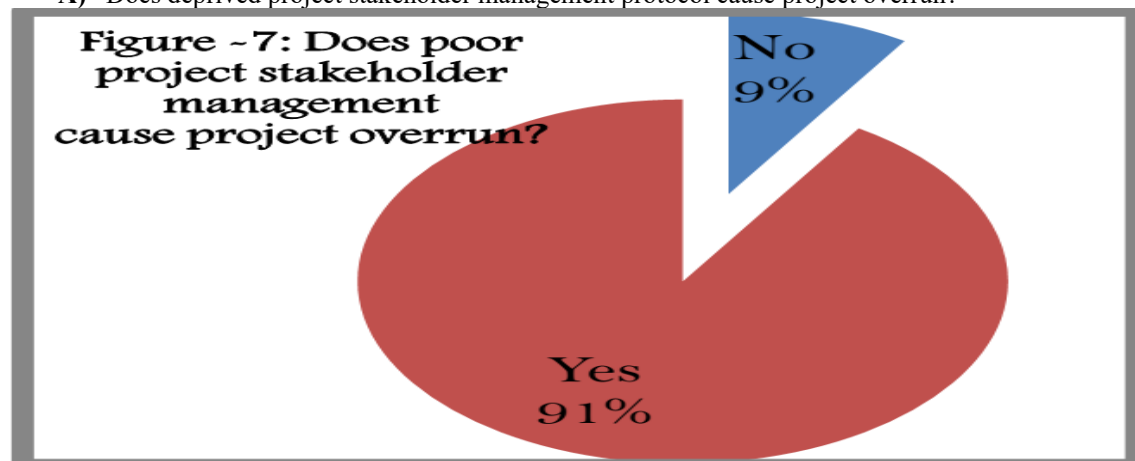
Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

B) Does Project Stakeholder Management affect Project Performance?

Figure ~8: Does PSM affect Project Performance

	Yes	No
■ Percentage	95.50%	4.50%
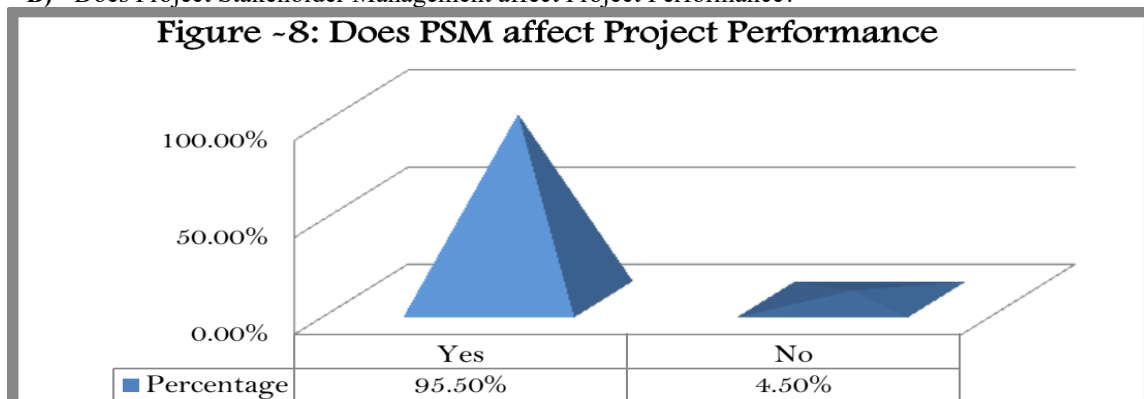
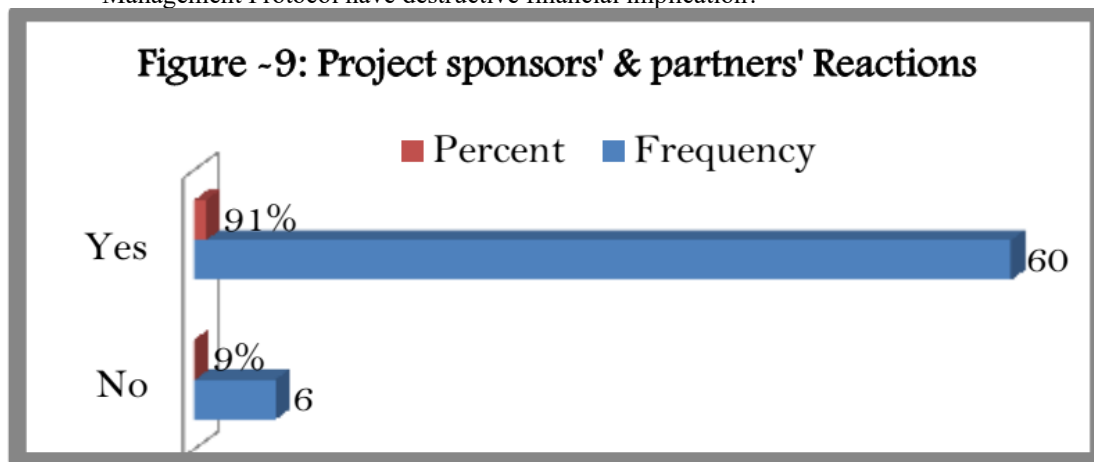Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

C) Do Project sponsors & partners care about how your institution manages them?

Table ~3: Project Sponsors and Partners expectations:

|		Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	12.1	12.1
	Disagree	22.7	34.8
	Not Sure	24.2	59.1
	Agree	31.8	90.9
	Strongly Agree	9.1	100.0
Total		100.0	

Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

D) Does Project sponsors' and partners' reactions for your institution's deprived Project Stakeholder Management Protocol have destructive financial implication?

Figure ~9: Project sponsors' & partners' Reactions

Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

E) Do you think Project Stakeholder Management (PSM) can make a difference in the performance of a project?

Figure ~10: PSM vs Project Performance
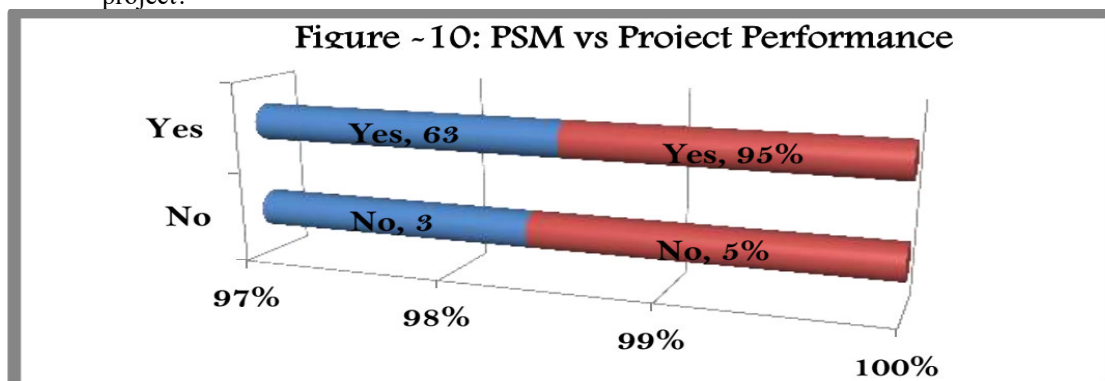
Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

Making use of the above charts and tables, the effects of employing a poor stakeholder management protocol are summarized as stated below. As depicted on Figure -7 above, 91% of the respondents answered that deprived project stakeholder management protocol is likely to cause project overruns (both cost and schedule overruns). Likewise, as revealed by figure -8, 95.5% of the respondents asserted that project stakeholder management affects project performance; however; the respondents have mixed perception concerning whether project sponsors and partners care about how they are managed by the project performing institution. On the

other hand, 91% of them stated that poor Project Stakeholder Management (PSM) protocol has destructive financial implication on the financial position of the performing institution. Generally, 95% of the respondents answered that PSM makes a difference in the performance of projects (you may see figure -10). To sum up, the use of a deprived PSM protocol is very costly. Its use costs institutions project overruns (in the short-run) and grave financial complications in the long-run. Eventually, sooner or later, this forces the institution to tremendously compromise its project performance.

RQ8. DOES THE STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL OF THE PERFORMING ORGANIZATION AFFECT ITS SUBSEQUENT FINANCIAL POSITION?

Figure -11: PSM Protocol vs Financial Position of the Institution
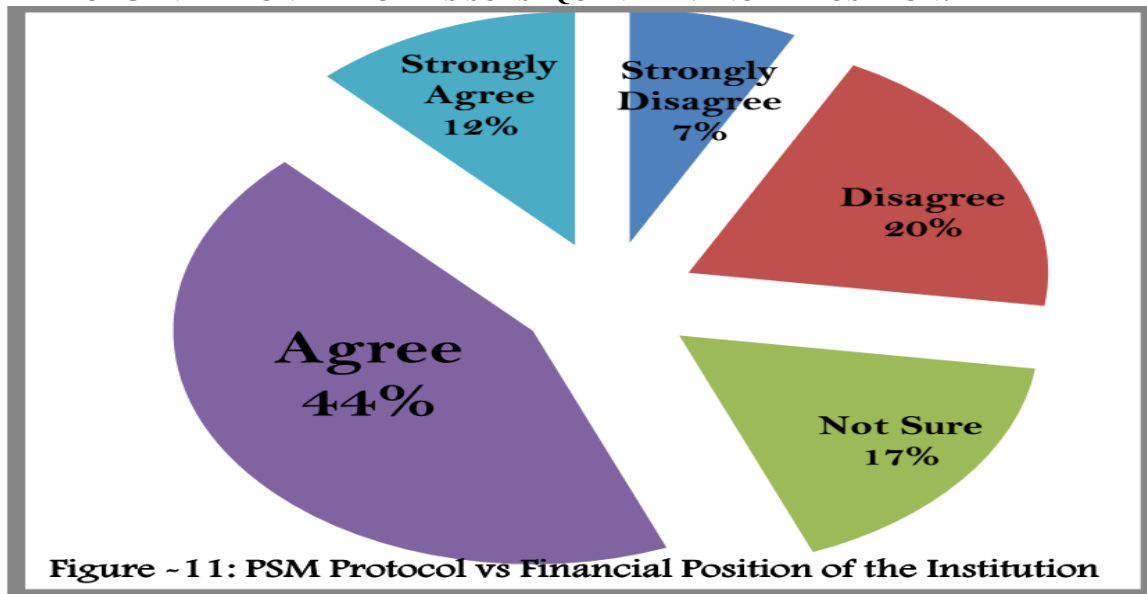
Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

As shown on figure -11, well above average of the respondents agree that the project stakeholder management protocol employed by project performing institutions affects their subsequent financial positions. Perhaps this is because both of the NGOs investigated in this study rely on donors as their principal sources of finance. Yet, on account of this, their finance sources are conditional. More explicitly, donors release the finance required to undertake future projects if and only if they were happy with the way they were managed during previously performed projects. Also the declining donor commitment perhaps is one of the killer challenges that threaten the very existence, survival and sustainability of the sector as much of the work in the sector is highly donor reliant, to the extent that certain projects will simply not grow beyond their conception stages without donors support. Altogether, the project management protocol employed by project performing institutions has the potential to determine the future fate of the institutions by means of defining the institutions forthcoming relationships with present and potential donors. Therefore, it can be concluded that the prospective institutional affiliations and future project performing capacities of institutions is only as good as their project stakeholder management protocol. To be precise, good quality Stakeholder Management Protocol infers high inflow of finance for subsequent projects.

RQ9. WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPERATIVE SUCCESS FACTORS FOR JOINT PROJECTS' STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT AND HOW COULD THEY BE USED TO IMPROVE THE STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL?
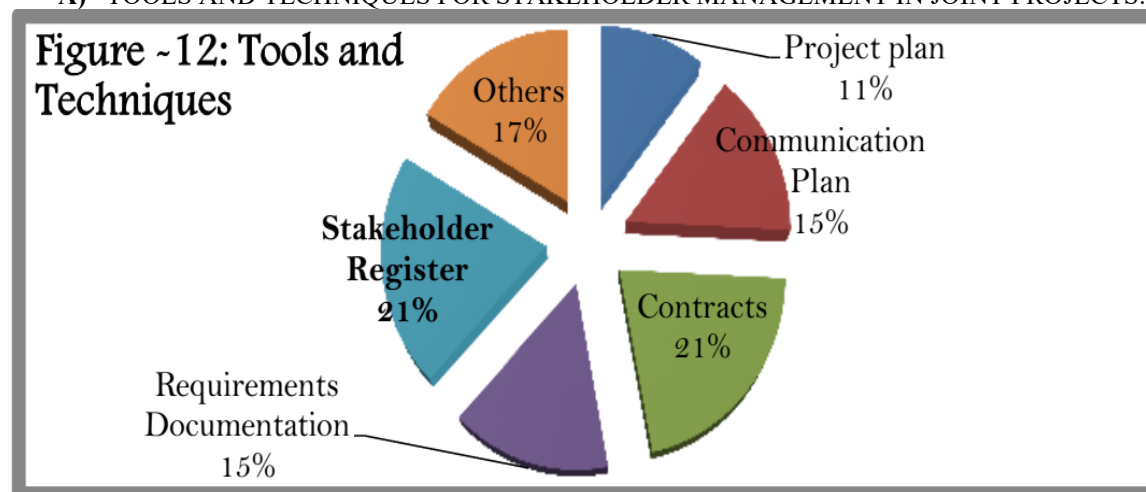
Table ~4: Most imperative success factors for joint PSM

SUCCESS FACTORS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Has no formula	3	4.54%
Organizational Harmony	6	9.09%
Communication Plan	6	9.09%
Financial Position	1	1.51%
Hands on Experience	13	19.69%
Ability to Handle Unexpected project Issues	20	30.30%
Managements' Support	6	9.09%
High Quality Human Capital	8	12.12%
Others	3	4.54%
Total	66	100%

Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

Here respondents were asked to state one and only their most important success factor required for smooth joint project stakeholder management. In response to this question, the target respondents offered the above list of success factors. The data collection process for this part of the study was carried out by means of both questionnaire and focus group discussions. However, the researcher has noticed that most of the focus group participants were truly challenged to pick their most important success factor out of several success factors they raised during the focus group discussion. To conclude, the table above disclosed that the "Ability to Handle Unexpected Project Issues" was mentioned as the most important success factor by 30.30% of the respondents. At last, 100% of the respondents suggested that perpetual and observant utilization of these success factors could improve the stakeholder management protocol.

RQ10. WHAT ARE THE TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES FOR STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT OF JOINT PROJECTS AND TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THEY USED?

A) TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES FOR STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT IN JOINT PROJECTS:

Figure ~12: Tools and Techniques

- Others 17%
- Project plan 11%
- Communication Plan 15%
- Contracts 21%
- Requirements Documentation 15%
- Stakeholder Register 21%

Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

B) HOW FREQUENTLY ARE THE ABOVE TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES USED?

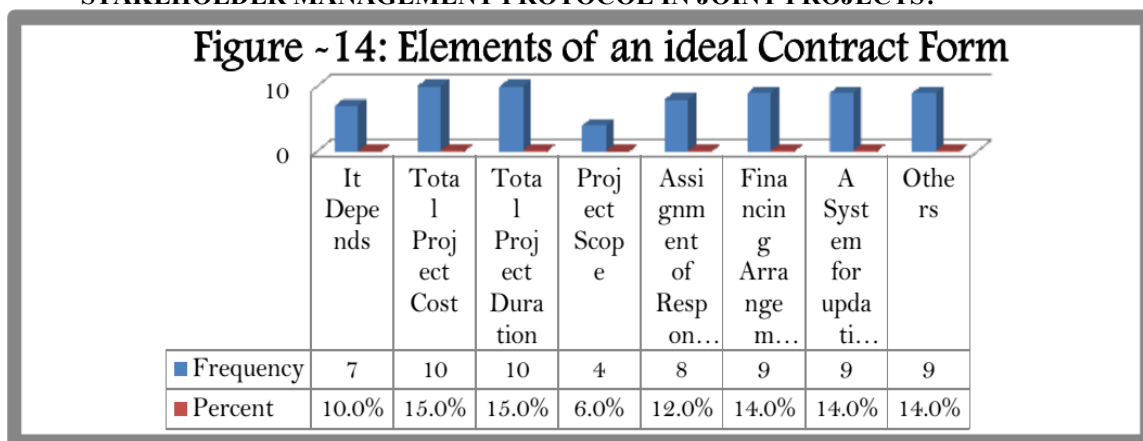Figure ~13: How often Tools and Techniques are used
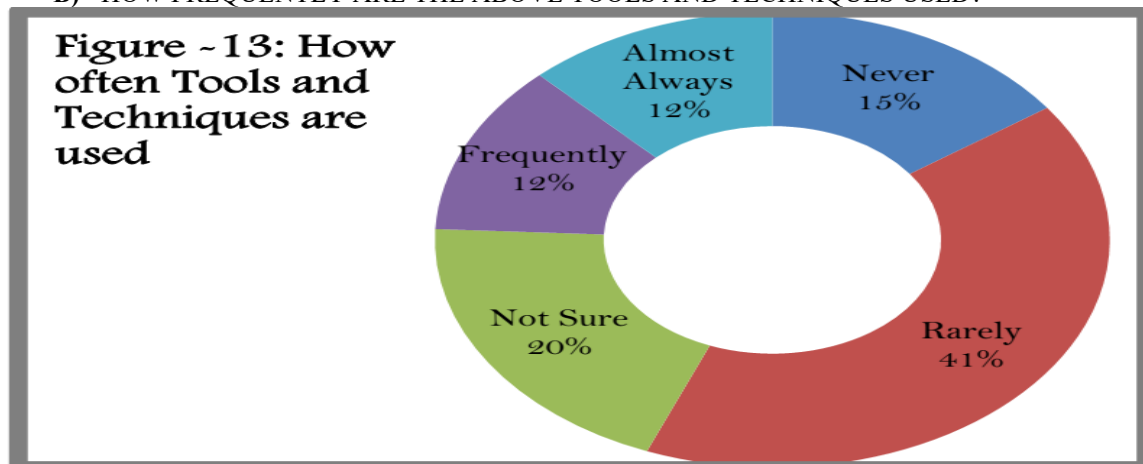
Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

Collectively 83% of the respondents nominated "Stakeholder Register", "Contract Forms", "Requirements Documentation", "Communication Plan", and "Project Plan" as tools and techniques to be utilized in the stakeholder management of joint projects. The remaining 17% of them identified wide-ranging items as tools and techniques. But most senior project staffs picked "Communication Plan" as the most important tool in the stakeholder management practice. As per some of these project personnel, usually failure to develop a comprehensive communication plan at the outset of a project is much more costly than what it takes to directly tackle some of the issues which arise because of various communication problems. Therefore, they say, communication plan is worth preparing in the early development stages of every project. Furthermore, figure 13 shows that despite their importance, these tools and techniques (including communication plan) are not in use as they should be. Simply put, these tools & techniques are disregarded by most project personnel notwithstanding their importance. However, during focus group discussions, virtually all project staffs did acknowledge that project stakeholder management is only as good as how often and suitably these tools and techniques are used.

RQ11. HOW DO CONTRACT FORMS OR CONTRACT ADMINISTRATIONS AFFECT STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL IN JOINT PROJECTS?

Figure ~14: Elements of an ideal Contract Form

	It Depends	Total Project Cost	Total Project Duration	Project Scope	Assignment of Respon…	Financing Arrangem…	A System for updati…	Others
■ Frequency	7	10	10	4	8	9	9	9
■ Percent	10.0%	15.0%	15.0%	6.0%	12.0%	14.0%	14.0%	14.0%

Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

The basic elements of an ideal contract, in the view of respondents, are displayed in figure 14 above. Some of these elements plainly determine the stakeholder management protocol because the protocol (when needed) is amended to take contractual agreements into account. For example, "Assignment of responsibility, 12%" and "A System for updating progress report, 14%" have been mentioned as elements of an ideal contract form; however; more often than not these are part of project stakeholder management protocols employed by most project managers. Therefore, contract forms or contract administrations do affect stakeholder management protocol of joint projects through defining/determining the contents of the protocol.

SUPPLEMENTARY ATTENTION WORTHY FINDINGS/OBSERVATIONS:
a) **WHAT IS/ARE THE BASES FOR YOUR STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION?**

Table ~5: Bases of Stakeholder Identification

Bases of Stakeholder Identification					
Bases of Identification	Influence	Interest	Mission & Vision	Geographical Location	Others
Percentage	56%	10.6%	6.1%	7.6%	19.7%

Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

The table above plainly articulates that 56% of the respondents accredited "Influence" as their basis of stakeholder identification. On the other hand, the other three critically important basis of stakeholder identification ("Interest", "Mission and Vision", and "Geographical Location") were acknowledged only by 10.6%, 6.1%, and 7.6% of the respondents respectively. Accordingly, we can see that "the ability to influence" is more important than the combination of all other bases of stakeholder identification. Therefore, as we can see, very critical stakeholder identification bases such as "Interest", "Mission", and "Location" were not given the level of attention they deserve in the stakeholder identification process. As a result, the possibility of disregarding key project stakeholders such as those having interest in the project & the local community (as shown by 7.6% for Geographical location) is very likely.

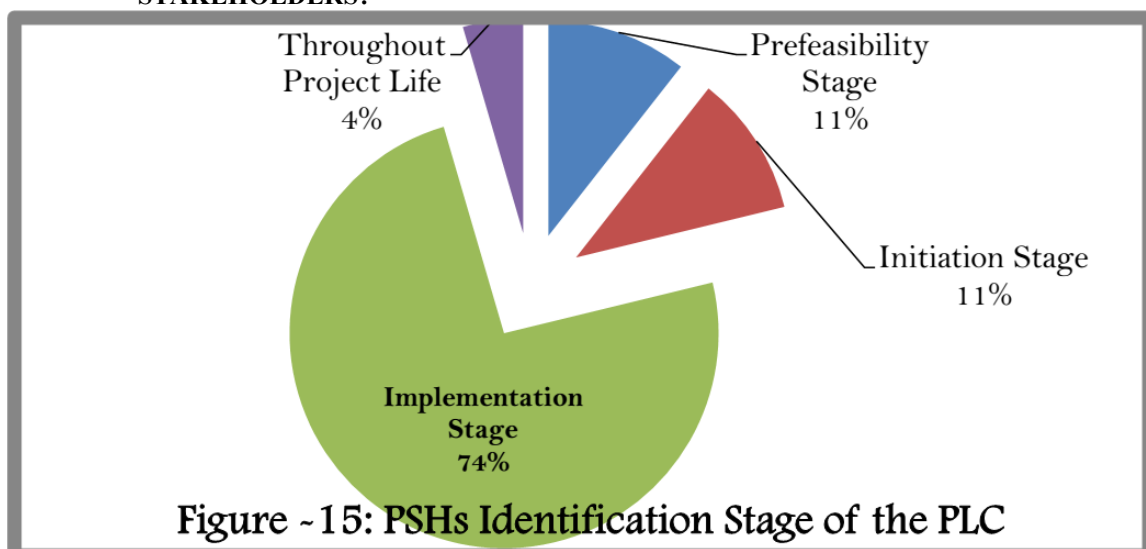b) **AT WHICH STAGE OF YOUR PROJECT LIFE-CYCLE DO YOU IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS?**

Figure ~15: PSHs Identification Stage of the PLC

Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

Theoretically all relevant stakeholders should be identified in the earliest possible stage of a project. This enables the stakeholders to contribute their part for the successful completion of the project during its entire lifecycle. However, what has been disclosed in Figure -15 above is very shocking. As shown in the figure, 74% of the respondents answered that the act of identifying stakeholders is done during the implementation stage of the project. This finding is an indication of a very serious problem since stakeholder identification needs to be performed beginning from the conception of the project instead of waiting until its implementation stage. More explicitly, attempting to identify stakeholders in the implementation stage of a project is intolerable by all means since it is too late to correct mistakes, and many other potential benefits might have also been missed.

c) **DOES YOUR PROJECT MANAGEMENT PLACE DUE EMPHASIS & HAVE UNWAVERING POSITION PERTAINING TO PROJECT STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT (PSM)?**

Figure -16: Does your project management have unwavering Position concerning PSM
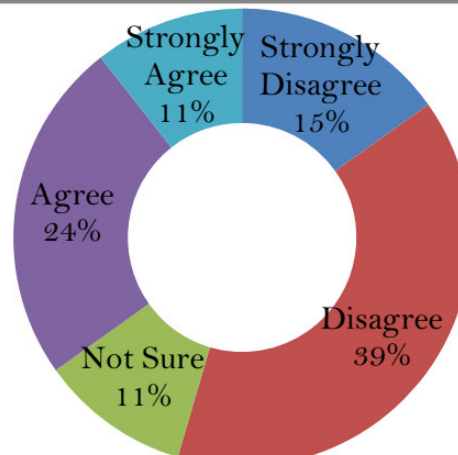
Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

Well above average (54%) of the respondents stated that their project management doesn't seem to care about its PSM practice. These respondents affirm that their project management's attitude towards stakeholder management is conditional. During a focus group discussion, they asserted that their project management puts its effort to manage a given stakeholder only when it considers the particular stakeholder to be worthwhile. Afterwards, if the management think this stakeholder is no more important for the project, it disregards the stakeholder notwithstanding future possible affiliations with it. The participants of the focus group discussion continue, this stakeholder management trend on the side of the management is very damaging; and places a very serious stumbling block for future partnerships and teamworks. According to this discussion, if a given stakeholder is made to contribute to a certain project and is then abandoned by the project management when thought to be no more important, this stakeholder will not be willing to cooperate with this project team in the future. Therefore, this practice places hindrance for future partnerships since stakeholders may lose confidence on the management. To conclude, the management's position on project stakeholder management (PSM) is very wavering and unreliable.

d) **DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION ALLOCATE ENOUGH FUNDS, TECHNICAL TOOLS, EXPERTS, AND SKILLED PERSONNEL FOR IMPROVING PROJECT STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT?**
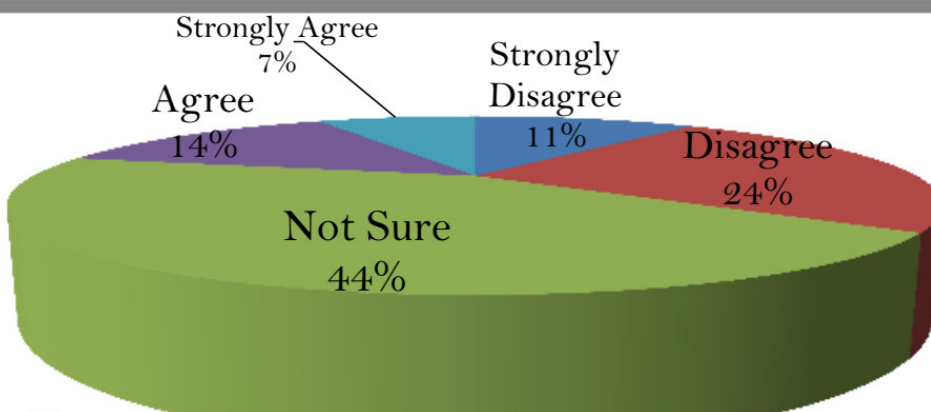

Figure -17: Does your institution allocate adequate funds & other supports?

Source: Own Survey Data, 2017

It is a sheer fact of the reality on the ground that a stakeholder management protocol should be backed-up by all the inputs it requires for its smooth accomplishment. Besides, the researcher of this study believes that a stakeholder management protocol is only as good as the financial and non-financial inputs allocated to it. Accordingly, Figure -17 above revealed that most project stakeholder management efforts are not being supported by the allocation of adequate funds and other non-financial offerings. To make the matter even worse,

it is only 21% of the respondents who granted the adequate allocation of these inputs.

10)CONCLUSION

In brief, this research has provided a comprehensive investigation of stakeholder management in joint projects. It is understood that, the provision of quality stakeholder management protocol is imperative for institutions in general and projects in particular to be able to compete in a global level and direct their successful journey through long-term partnership. This, in turn, allows them to achieve their dreams in today's dynamic and highly integrated competition-oriented world. Accordingly, the researcher of this study believes that this research has the potential to lift awareness of this important issue. Furthermore, the factors identified by this study to have an effect on the quality of stakeholder management practice in joint projects can serve practitioners in the project sector as well as policy makers at different levels as a useful guide/tool to stakeholder management assessments, and improvement efforts.

11)RECOMMENDATIONS

Under this section of the study, two sets of recommendations have been forwarded as shown below.

a) RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCED STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL:
   ✓ In order to ensure enhanced stakeholder management protocol, effective stakeholder involvement and management should be given priority right from project conception, and project designers should make sure that there is adequate budgetary provision for that.
   ✓ Also there is a need to institutionalize the stakeholder management efforts of individuals in projects. With this in mind, projects should have separate organizational units entrusted with the complex task of project stakeholder management. The fellows (members) of the unit should come from all key actors especially from project beneficiaries and donors.
   ✓ Projects should design their stakeholder management protocol with long-term partnerships in mind with the aim of enjoying sustainable institutional affiliations.

b) RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES IN THE FOCUS AREA OF THIS STUDY:
   ✓ As the study is limited to the most prominent Non-Governmental Organizations currently undertaking joint projects in Ethiopia, the researcher's first recommendation would be a replication of this study in different settings (which might include public institutions performing various developmental or construction projects in the country) to provide more interesting insights into inter-sector comparisons and intra-sector practices.
   ✓ Finally, nowadays since there is a strong interest in adopting well-designed stakeholder management protocols of varies dynamism, a longitudinal study may be useful to provide further insights into the project management sector efforts.

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