Effect of Relationship Building Strategy on the Sustainability of Women-led Development Projects in Uasin Gishu County

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Abstract: With the rapid increasing population, Kenya is faced with a critical challenge of food production, unemployment and poverty. In recent years, the country has implemented agricultural development programmes especially those led by women through government and donor funding. However, for different reasons these women-led development projects have produced mixed outcomes. This study, therefore, sought to assess the effect of relationship building strategy on the sustainability of women-led development projects in Uasin Gishu County. The study was anchored on Social Network theory. The study applied descriptive research design. The target population was 386 women led enterprises registered with Ministry of trade in Uasin Gishu County and are implementing agricultural projects from Kesses and Turbo sub-counties. Using Krejcie & Morgan (1970) table of sample determination, the research recruited 412 respondents spread across the two sub-counties. Proportionate sampling helped the researcher to research 226 respondents in Kesses sub-county and 186 respondents in Turbo Sub- County respectively. Simple random sampling technique was used to interview the 412 respondents in the two sub-counties. Data was analyzed by the use of descriptive statistics and presented in form of mode, mean, standard deviation and correlation since there are more than two variables. Whereas inferential statistics was done by testing linearity and normality regression. Based on the findings of this study, the study concluded that the network building and recruitment of donors influenced sustainability of women-led development projects. Network building and recruitment of donors enhanced sustainability of women led project. The study recommended that relationship building strategy with network building and recruitment of donors should be used to enhance sustainability of women led project.

Keyword: Relationship building strategy, development, women, sustainability, project

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1. Introduction

Globally, women development projects have played a significant role especially in the developing nations (UNDP, 2002; Achieng, 2016). Their contribution has had a positive impact on trade and overall economic growth of many nations. Women being the backbone of rural economies in developing countries especially in Africa, play a significant role to ensure their families wellbeing by providing food, shelter, healthcare and education (Kibas,

2005). However, research indicates that women-led development projects dispose off less capital than businesses led by men. Only 28% of these are led by women, but they account for 32% of the entrepreneurship finance gap. This gender finance gap is prominently evident in developing economies like Kenya (IFC, 2017). Oino et al. (2015) agreed that worldwide, donor funds have been spent in communities to enhance the living standards of the people through initiation and implementation of projects.

However, in developing countries like Kenya, significant proportion of projects may be inoperable or abandoned completely. Similarly, according to Foxand (2022) in a study of sustainability of projects in rural areas of Limpopo Province in South Africa, projects can't be implemented and sustained without active community participation; such projects will collapse leaving the communities trapped in abject poverty. According to Women Challenge International Kenya an international NGO concerned with women, majority of the Kenya's population is the women aged 18 to 45 years and currently number about 60% of the population (YCIFK, 2022). This means that the women are a significant group which cannot be ignored in community development agenda.

The Government of Kenya in its effort to support the women established the Women Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) in 2018 which is channeled through financial intermediaries like banks and Saccos. This was a strategic move towards arresting unemployment which is virtually a women problem. In response to this, many women projects have been implemented in Uasin Gishu County, but some are not able to sustain themselves during and after implementation (YEDF, 2019). According to a report from the District Women office (2019), 80 women groups were registered and applied for the women fund to start their income generating Projects in Uasin Gishu County in 2020 ranging from Kshs 50,000-250,000. Currently, 42 women groups are active but with a lot of challenges to sustain themselves (DYO, 2019). The government of Kenya target which is in line with Vision 2030 aims to make sure that women unemployment problem is solved. The above ambition by the government has triggered the need to examine the effect of relationship building strategy on the sustainability of women-led development projects in Uasin Gishu County. Sera and Susan (2018), point out that if a plan or strategy for RM is developed, it can lead to creative ways in using the organizations own assets that are locally available in order to support the organization. Ngiri (2019) points out that resource mobilization, scheduling and optimization are considered key to successful project management hence their sustainability.

Study objective

To assess the effect of relationship building strategy on the sustainability of women-led development projects in Uasin Gishu County.

2. Literature Review

The concept of sustainability of projects has been of great concern (United Nations, 2020). According to IFAD Strategic Framework (2020-2022), sustainability of a project can be defined as the ability to ensure that the institutions supported through projects and the benefits realized are maintained and continue after the end of the project external funding. The Brundtland Report is probably the most widely quoted definition as it marks an important shift away from the idea of sustainability as primarily an ecological concern to one that emphasizes the economic and social processes of development (IISD, 2020).

In this study, the contribution on sustainability of women-led development project is viewed from the perspective of resource mobilization on relationship building. As pointed out by Chitere (2012) resource mobilization strategies does not only mean use of money but it is extensiveness denotes the process that achieves organizational management organization through the mobilization of knowledge in human, use of skills, equipment and services. It also involves seeking communication for development, and relationship building. According to Densford et al. (2018) resource mobilization strategies have been found to greatly enhance the performance of any organization. It also involves seeking new sources of resource mobilization, right and maximum use of the available resources (Kerine, 2015).

In Tanzania, Goddard and Assad (2016) stated that many non-profit organizations have adopted diversification as the strategy for resource mobilization. This means that the NPOs hold a mixed portfolio of investments rather than depending on a single investment to meet current and future income needs (Lewis, 2018). This cardinal rule of investing also holds for NGOs that need a secure flow of income to meet current and future program needs. Income diversification does not refer only to internal income generation, but also to the number of income sources that provide the main funding of the organization (Luvega, 2015).

In Kenya, Karanja and Karuti (2017) in their study found that the majority of NPOs in Kenya face funding challenges, have an unreliable source of funding, and are unable to meet the tough conditions set in accessing the funds. Some NPOs have come up with approaches to raise resources for running their operations. Some of these approaches include soliciting funds through donations for a worthy cause through online fundraising. Another form of fund-raising is crowdfunding and has been adopted by non-profit organizations to source funds. It is the latest resource mobilization technique that has been adopted by non-profits. It refers to any effort to raise money with donations from a large number of people.

Training also leads to better managerial skills such as; planning, decision making, ability to facilitate a group meeting and managing the enterprise. It increases ones' expressions abilities such as self-confidence and self-esteem and improvement in the entrepreneurship qualities

such as risk takers, innovativeness and creativity (Panda, 2009). This is emphasized by a study conducted by Swain and Varghese and established that membership training programs in SHGs enhances entrepreneurship skills and the ability to recognize and process new information, asses and adjust to changes, which positively affects productivity and self-confidence (Swain& Varghese,2009). Women after joining SHG are able to resolve conflict both inter-conflict and Intra-conflict without a hand from their leaders, individuals can freely express their mind without fear (Ranjula & Yang, 2012). Kindernothilfe (2008) stress women in SHGs need training and capacity building to increase their capacity.

Communication strategies are fundamental in articulating, explaining and promoting a vision and a set of well-defined goals. They build a reliable, cohesive voice that links varied activities and goals in a manner that appeals to an organization's stakeholders (Kibe, 2019). The main communication strategies as pointed out by Gacheri (2018) consist of interactive strategy, integrative strategy, two-way communication strategies, inclusive strategy and participative strategy. However, some of the strategies seem to be highly interconnected or interdependent, for instance, open and two-way communication strategies where open communication is considered a two-way process (Miksen, 2018).

Ndung'u (2018) analyzed the role of participatory communication in community projects in Dagoretti Constituency in Nairobi. A mixed methods research design was applied. Participatory communication was found to enhance the success of the projects since with adequate information; all the project stakeholders were able to take part in the various stages of the project from identification to implementation and even the sustainability of the projects. The study noted that the adoption of participatory communication enabled project stakeholders to provide feedback on how the successful implementation of projects can be fast-tracked by offering suggestions on how to sustain the projects in the long term and also how to involve the community.

Mulili (2018) explored the effect of communication as a change management practice on the performance of Turnkey Africa Kenya Ltd. The study found that the multi-channeled communication approach affected the sustainability of change programmes which in turn impacted the achievement of business objectives in the firm. According to the study, using multi-channeled communication approach had cultivated a broad base of interactive opportunities that opened the ability to impact the lives of all stakeholders at different touch points in their organizational life. With the multi-channel approach, repetitive messages from different channels and perspectives were easier to process and understand. The

study found that the organized use of the several channels led to active information and feedback gathering.

Social Network Theory

This theory was advanced by Barness (1954) and revised by Wade (2015). This is the study of how people, organizations or groups interact with each other inside their networks. This theory views social relationships in nodes and ties. Nodes are the individual actors within the networks, and the ties are the relationship between the actors. There can be many types of ties between the nodes. A social network consists of a set of actors ("nodes") and the relations ("ties or edges") between these actors (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). The nodes may be individuals, groups, organizations or societies.

Social network theory is a sociology-based theory that builds upon the relation dimensions. Conceptualization of nodes, the actors in network and ties and the relation existing in these actors. This theory is grounded in three principles; first, the behavior of a node is influenced by the behavior of other nodes in the network. Secondly, the ties between nodes form the basis for the exchange of both goods and ideas. Third, these ties have the ability to create structures among the actors in the network that can influence their behavior (Wassermann and Faust 1994). The social network analysis gives the characteristics of a social network that determines the social capital of its individual actors. In contrast to physical and human capital, social capital focuses on relations between persons. "Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society- it is the glue that holds them together" (World Bank, 2022). It is a cultural resource characterized by norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness. It is also understood as a social intelligence needed for successful interpersonal interaction. The central premise of social capital is that individuals benefit from various norms and values that a social network fosters and produces, such as trust, reciprocity, information and cooperation. These norms and values provide the necessary preconditions for collective action of central importance to the concept of social capital in the notion of trust. People are more likely to form social or economic ties with others. In conformity to this study woman involved in development projects are a connected link of the nodes and ties within the group enhancing their participation in their own development. The management and owning of development projects lead to livelihood enhancement and empowerment as advocated by the network theory when the tie is strong. The theory also relates to how women groups relate, the better the relationship between the members the likelihood of sustainability of the development projects.

3. Methodology

The Study was conducted in Uasin Gishu County. The County share common borders with Trans-Nzoia County to the North, Elgeyo-Marakwet County to the East, Baringo County to the South East, Kericho County to the South, Nandi County to the South West and Kakamega County to the North West. The County has a total area of 3,327.8km^2 (Uasin Gishu County Information Office, 2019). The researcher's focus on Eldoret Municipality was based on the fact that it is an economic zone. Thus, Eldoret Municipality is an ideal context to answer the research questions raised in this study. The study population consisted of women-led development organizations operating in Kesses and Turbo sub-counties. The target population was 386 women-led enterprises registered with Ministry of trade in Uasin Gishu County and were implementing agricultural development projects. They are found in two sub-counties, that is Kesses and Turbo in Uasin Gishu County. Each group consisted of an average of 15 women. Unit of analysis was top three officials of the women-led enterprises. They included the chairperson, secretary and treasurer. The researcher used a sampling frame that was derived from women-led enterprises registered with Usain Gishu ministry of trade as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Determination of Sample Size

S/N	Sub-county	No. of Women Enterprises Implementing Agricultural Development Projects	Total No. of Officials Per Sub-County Enterprises	Sample Size of Women Officials per Sub-county
1	Kesses	199	597	226
2	Turbo	187	369	186
Total		386	966	412

Using Krejcie & Morgan (1970) table of sample determination, the research recruited 412 respondents spread across the two sub-counties of Uasin Gishu. Proportionate sampling helped the researcher to research 226 respondents in Kesses Sub- County and 186 respondents in Turbo Sub- County. A simple random sampling technique was used to interview the 412 respondents in the two sub-counties. The study purposively included personnel from the county ministry of trade and industry, ward administrator from each sub-county, one agricultural officer from each sub-county, an NGO personnel funding women led development organizations. 10 women from women led development programmes from each sub-county especially those with the largest enrolment were included as Key Informants to enrich the study.

Information gathered through the questionnaires were edited for accuracy, uniformity, consistency and completeness, coded and then grouped according to particular attributes and within the appropriate class interval. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze data. Data was analyzed by the use of descriptive statistics such as mode, mean, standard deviation and correlation since there were more than two variables. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically and verbatim. Whereas inferential statistics were done by testing linearity and normality regression.

4. Results and Discussion

The study sought to assess the effect of relationship-building strategy on the sustainability of women-led development projects in Uasin Gishu County. The following research hypothesis was tested.

Research Hypothesis

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between relationship-building strategy and sustainability of women-led development projects in Uasin Gishu County.

The results are presented in Table 2
To achieve the objective, the study evaluates the following statements on the effect of relationship-building strategy on the sustainability of women-led projects.

Table 2: Network building * Recruitment of donors

		Recruitment of donors					Total
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	strongly agree	
Network building	Strongly disagree	0	2	1	3	1	7
		0.0%	1.9%	50.0%	2.8%	0.8%	2.1%
	Disagree	3	1	1	0	1	6
		75.0%	0.9%	50.0%	0.0%	0.8%	1.8%
	Not sure	0	1	0	2	1	4
		0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	1.9%	0.8%	1.2%
	Agree	1	1	0	102	1	105
		25.0%	0.9%	0.0%	94.4%	0.8%	31.0%
	strongly agree	0	101	0	1	115	217
		0.0%	95.3%	0.0%	0.9%	96.6%	64.0%
Total		4	106	2	108	119	339
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The results showed that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed 217(64.0%) network building and recruitment of donors with 115(96.6%). This means that relationship building strategy with network building and recruitment of donors enhances sustainability of women led project. This is vital for resource mobilization. In concurrence with this study, is another study in Tanzania by Goddard and Assad (2016) that stated that many non-profit organizations have adopted diversification as the strategy for resource mobilization. However, some respondents were not in agreement with Network building shown by strongly disagree7 (2.1%) and Disagree 6(1.8%) and also Recruitment of donors strongly disagree with 2(1.9%) and disagreed with 3(75.0%).

Table 3: Relationship building

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Network building	339	4.78	.468	.022
Resource accountability	339	4.68	.468	.025
Recruitment of donors	339	3.73	1.248	.068
Reciprocity trust/ trust	339	2.75	1.401	.089

The result further, shows that Recruitment of donors had a mean of 3.73 with standard deviation 1.248 and Reciprocity trust/ trust had a mean of 2.75 had mean of 1.401 with standard deviation .089. This means that network building enhances sustainability of women led project through resource mobilization. This view is shared by another study (Densford et al., 2018) that found that resource mobilization strategies have been found to greatly enhance the performance of any organization.

Table 4: Network building influence resource mobilization of women led project your organization

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	little extent	57	16.8	16.8
	moderate extent	111	32.7	49.6
	Very extent	39	11.5	61.1
	Large Extent	14	4.1	65.2
	Very Large Extent	118	34.8	100.0
	Total	339	100.0	

The study indicated that the majority of the respondents 118 (34.8%) were for very large extent, 111(32.7%) shown moderate extent that network building influence resource mobilization of women led project your organization. Then followed by (57) 16.8% showed little extent and 39 (11.5%) very extent.

The researcher further asked the respondents to show what extent does recruitment of donors' influence sustainability of women-led project your organization. Table 5 presents the results.

Table 5: Recruitment of donors' influence sustainability of women-led project

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very extent	5	1.5	1.5
	Moderate	2	.6	2.1
	large extent	7	2.1	4.1
	very large extent	325	95.9	100.0
	Total	339	100.0	

The study showed that 325 (9.59%) the majority showed that Recruitment of donors influence sustainability of women-led project while 7(2.1%) for large extent, 5(1.5%) for very extent, 2(.6%) for moderate extent.

The researcher also asked respondents to show how networking of resources enhances sustainability of women led projects. The results were presented in table 6.

Table 6: Networking of resources enhance sustainability of women led projects

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	249	73.5	73.5
	No	90	26.5	100.0
	Total	339	100.0	

The study showed that 249(73.5%) the majority of the respondents said that networking of resources enhance sustainability of women led projects in this organization. However, a few of the respondents said No (90) 26.5% meaning that networking of resources enhance sustainability of women led projects.

On whether the networking of resources enhances sustainability of women led projects, the results are displayed table 7 shows that results.

Table 7: Explanations on networking of resources enhance sustainability

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Enhancing capacity building process	339	1.5015	1.01578
Because it allows collective recognition	339	1.9086	1.42688
Through the provision of various tool for sustainability.	339	1.8230	1.32050
It helps for proper handling of resources and it's use	339	1.3982	.66001
Networking of resources allows available of various resources needed in development projects	339	1.4838	.92414
It include woman in need and it is fast way to reach out Target group	339	1.5752	1.06425
By diversifying resources hence creating a pool of funds	339	1.4336	1.01360
It is mandatory that for us to be allocated resources women must be included	339	1.4248	.99530
It makes project team easier	339	1.3746	.89612
Through networking women will be able to acquire the resources which will help in the continuity of the project for a long time	339	1.4366	.97814
It achieves gender equality.	339	1.4631	.97951
Promotes women's role in all sectors	339	1.3481	.71527
It helps women to carry to carry out their projects successfully without further struggle since the resources required for their project will be always available	339	1.4779	.99790
It makes it sustainable because of funding that are achieved through networking	339	1.4189	.90121
Avails resources for the project	339	1.3835	.81435
It provides resources for them to fuel their projects.	339	1.3274	.71056
Communication	339	1.3717	.81256
It enables projects to run smoothly	339	1.2448	.57223
It create a favourable environment for women led project	339	1.2920	.67519
It empowers them	339	1.3628	.81111
It's authentic	339	1.3923	.87844
Once they get to know you and understand your business needs, they will be inclined to help you.	339	1.3599	.81061
Valid N (listwise)	339		

The results showed that Because it allows collective recognition had a mean of 1.9086 with standard deviation 1.42688, Through the provision of various tool for sustainability, had a mean of 1.8230 with standard deviation 1.32050, Enhancing capacity building process had a mean of 1.5015 with standard deviation 1.01578, It include woman in need and it is fast way to reach out Target group had a mean of 1.5752 with standard deviation 1.06425, It helps women to carry to carry out their projects successfully without further had a mean of 1.4779 with standard deviation .99790, It achieves gender equality had a mean of 1.4631 with standard deviation .97951, It makes it sustainable because of funding that are achieved through networking had a mean of 1.4189 with standard deviation .90121, By diversifying resources hence creating a pool of funds had a mean of 1.4336 with standard deviation 1.01360, It is mandatory that for us to be allocated resources women must be included had a mean of 1.4248, It makes project team easier had a mean of 1.4366 with standard deviation .99530, Through networking women will be able to acquire the resources which will help in the continuity of the project for a long time had a mean of 1.4366 with standard deviation.97814 and , It enables projects to run smoothly had a mean of 1.2448 with standard deviation.57223.

The researcher also asked respondents to show how Trust influence resource mobilization of women led project your organization and enhances sustainability of women led projects. The results were presented in table 8.

Table 8: Trust influence resource mobilization of women led project in your organization

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Large Extent	197	58.1	58.1
	Large Extent	99	29.2	87.3
	Moderate Extent	43	12.7	100.0
	Total	339	100.0	

The study showed that 197 (58.1 %) very large extent where the majority Trust the influence of resource mobilization in the organization influence sustainability of women-led project while 99(29.2%) is for large extent, and 43(12.7%) for moderate extent.

The respondents were asked to indicate their opinion on what can be done to improve relationship building in order to enhance resource mobilization and the results presented in table 9.

The result showed that Involve public relations specialists had mean of 4.8997 with standard deviation.58226, Team building activities had mean of 4.8791 with standard deviation.63907, Avoiding gender biasness and diversity amongst tribes had mean of 4.6460 with standard deviation.71650, Be close and friendly by members and organization in general had mean of 4.634 with standard deviation.72292,There should be trust and good relation amongst people had mean of 2.6195 with standard deviation 1.94595 Reduce corruption had mean of 2.5693 with standard deviation 1.94687, Interaction with others so as to build unity and exchange ideas about how had mean of 2.5575 with standard deviation 1.94421.

Good communication between leaders and members had mean of 2.5339 with standard deviation 1.92950. Communication has also been seen to work effectively as a strategy in relationship building to enhance sustainability in women-led project. A study by Kibe (2019) reiterated that participatory communication build a reliable, cohesive voice that links varied activities and goals in a manner that appeals to an organization's stakeholders. Ensuring of transparency and accountability. This can help in resource mobilization had mean of 2.4749 with standard deviation 1.92349.

Table 9: Opinion on what can be done to improve relationship building in order to enhance resource mobilization

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Enhancing strong relationship between the members of the organization and the Society members	339	1.6519	.88866
Allow collaboration Amon stakeholders, community leaders and community members	339	2.5251	1.92503
There should be trust and good relation amongst people.	339	2.6195	1.94595
Good interaction	339	2.4779	1.92199
Team building activities	339	4.8791	.63907
Be close and friendly by members and organization in general	339	4.6342	.72292
Encouraging respect and teamwork among stakeholders	339	1.8525	1.02430
Increase money to sustain projects	339	1.4543	.87375
Frequent meet ups	339	1.4572	.88400
Accept each other opinion and diversity of ideas from everyone in the organizations	339	1.3746	.87608
Encourage love and unity among members.	339	1.6254	.87270
Good communication between leaders and members	339	2.5339	1.92950
Interaction with others to build unity and exchange ideas about how resources mobilization is done among different people	339	2.5575	1.94421
Ensuring transparency and accountability. This can help in resource mobilization	339	2.4749	1.92349
Involve public relations specialists	339	4.8997	.58226
Avoiding gender biasness and diversity amongst tribes.	339	4.6460	.71650
Social events	339	1.7109	.86289
Frequent team building activities	339	1.4159	.81834
Respect for human rights and equity to all	339	1.4071	.81738
Increase awareness	338	1.2722	.66929
Proper education over the same	339	1.6755	.92677
Connect all resource mobilization efforts to the cause, the why of your work.	339	2.4838	1.92359
Reduce corruption	339	2.5693	1.94687
Valid N (listwise)	0		

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study sought to assess the effect of relationship building strategy on the sustainability of women-led development projects in Uasin Gishu County. Based research objective, the study concluded that the network building and recruitment of donors influence sustainability of women-led development projects. Network building and recruitment of donors enhances sustainability of women led project.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on these findings, the study recommended for network building and recruitment of donors to enhance sustainability of women-led development projects. This study recommended that relationship building strategy with network building and recruitment of donors should be used to enhance sustainability of women led project. Based

on communication strategies used in the organization, the study recommended that firms should use face to face with

market research, having meetings and phone calls seu of circulars, online communication to encourage members.

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