Role of Project Environment on Performance of Community Development Project. A Case of the Climate Resilient Post Harvest Agribusiness Support Project (PASP) IFAD-funded Project in Kirehe District, Rwanda

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Abstract: *This paper examined how project environment affects the performance of community development projects, specifically through a case study of the Climate Resilient Post Harvest Agribusiness Support Project (PASP), which is an IFAD-funded project in Rwanda. The study aimed to determine the impact of the project management plan on the performance of PASP. The study employed a descriptive research design using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The target population included staff from MINAGRI and 15,552 rural households who were direct beneficiaries from Kirehe District. A sample size of 131 respondents from PASP was chosen, and data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The study analyzed the data using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21 and presented the findings through descriptive statistics to enable the beneficiaries to easily interpret them. The study found that there is a positive association between the planning process of management and the performance of community development projects. The project plan influences the achievement of objectives and planning at all levels with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders. The study also established a positive relationship between community participation and the performance of community development projects, which was shown by the goodness of fit of 82%. This means that a given set of predictor variables explains 71.9% of the variance in the dependent variable in the model. The study recommended that PASP management and staff should follow up on community participation from the planning process and that beneficiaries should be committed to protecting initiatives meant for their development.*

Keywords: *Project Environment, Performance project, Community Development, Climate Resilient and Agribusiness*

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1. Introduction

A project is not carried out in isolation, but rather it is often affected by different internal and external factors that can either assist or hinder its successful completion. External factors that surround a project's environment consist of "all relevant aspects of public affairs, economics, and the social scene" (Gilbert, 2023) within which the project must operate. These forces are complex and uncertain and can significantly impact a project's outcome. Therefore, it is crucial to have a good understanding of them before undertaking a project. If the analysis of the project environment is done well, it will allow the project to position itself carefully to its

environment and align its objectives and management strategies with the existing situation and context (Atkinson, 2019).

The project environment in many developing countries present special challenges for project managers that almost presupposes extensive cost and time overruns even before a project commences. These challenges arise mainly from inherent risks such as political instability, excessive bureaucratic contract procedures, and lack of adequate infrastructure such as transportation networks, electricity supply, and telecommunications systems. In recognition of these unique problems, previous research studies have suggested that there is a need to develop appropriate management tools and techniques specifically tailored to the project environment of developing countries (Halter, 2018). The project environmental factors that have been generally identified include political, legal, institutional, cultural, sociological technological resource, economic, financial, and physical infrastructure (Walker, 2019). According to Ajayi et al. (2020), the four most important external environmental factors in decreasing order include community issues, weather conditions, economic situation (boom or meltdown) and government policy. For example, in developed nations like the United States of America, Canada and Russia among others are keen on implementing sustainable development projects with community participation being at the centre stage to achieve uniform, steady and long lasting development since it is the only way to recover from economic drawbacks. Development experts confirm that community participation is essential to sustainable development projects (Richardson, 2019). As commonly experienced, different people view community participation from different perspectives.

Project performance, according to Cheung et al. (2020), can be measured and evaluated using a large number of performance indicators that could be related to various dimensions (groups) such as time, cost, quality, client satisfaction, client changes, business performance, health and safety. Generally, performance dimensions may have one or more indicators, and could be influenced by various project characteristics. For example, Iyer and Jha (2015) identified many factors as having an influence on project cost performance, these include: project manager's competence, top management support, project manager's coordinating and leadership skills, monitoring and feedback by the participants, decision-making, coordination among project participants, owners' competence, social condition, economic condition, and climatic condition.

In Africa, community participation is conceived as one of the key elements of project sustainability. Israel (2020) states that participatory approaches make the projects more efficient and effective in addition to contributing in project sustainability. Most of the projects have been initiated to help the youth generation to improve their living standards while contributing to poverty reduction. Development projects in Rwanda are executed with the aim of achieving economic progress through acquisition of skills which enables people to source for income and hence improved livelihood. The livelihood project in Rwanda for example aims at improving people's income and hence alleviates poverty and hunger through skills development, promoting savings and advancing loans for businesses start up among others. Studies by Larson and Larson (2019) indicated that the livelihood project has so far transformed the lives of the rural households though the question of participation is still of concern.

Many communities of both developed and developing countries in the world have embarked upon community development projects such as: green schemes, community markets, cultural centres and social clubs in order to address persistent community poverty-related problems and improve the quality of life of residents (Kisii, 2019). According to Putnam (2020), community development in America commenced with a number of programmes such as the Structural Adjustment Programme, Urban Sprawl, the New Deal and other community development programmes aimed at improving the lives of the majority of low-income neighborhoods.

In Rwanda, development projects are executed with the aim of achieving economic progress through acquisition of skills which enables people to source for income and hence improved livelihood. The livelihood project in Rwanda for example aims at improving people's income and hence alleviates poverty and hunger through skills development, promoting savings and advancing loans for businesses start up among others. Studies by Harold (2019) indicated that the livelihood project has so far transformed the lives of the rural households though the question of participation is still of concern. The project is based on four models which are implemented globally developed by the world vision. It is in that perspective that this study will be carried out in order to analyse the factors influencing performance of community development project: A case study of PASP.

The climate resilient Post-Harvest Agribusiness Support Project (PASP)IFAD-funded project in Rwanda is primarily aligned with the second strategic objective of the new RB-COSOP (2013- 2018) which seeks to contribute to achievement of government targets reducing post-harvest losses and generating opportunities for youth employment and added value of agriculture produce through processing and agribusiness. PASP has been designed concurrently with the formulation of PSTA III (2013-2017). This has allowed project formulation to be closely articulated with the sector development goals and ensured its full alignment with MINAGRI 's policy framework and investment programme (WHO, 2016).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Despite efforts made by the government and other development actors to improve social, political and economic welfare in Rwanda through development projects, recent welfare monitoring survey indicate that poverty is on the increase due to poor performance of the already initiated development projects and also short lifetime of projects upon completion (UNDP, 2016).

According to Schmidt (2019), project performance, can be measured and evaluated using a large number of performance indicators that could be related to various dimensions (groups) such as time, cost, quality, client satisfaction, client changes, business performance, health and safety. Generally, performance dimensions may have one or more indicators, and could be influenced by various project characteristics. For example, Walker (2019) identified many factors as having an influence on project cost performance, these include: project manager's competence, top management support, project manager's coordinating and leadership skills, monitoring and feedback by the participants, decision-making, coordination among project participants, owners' competence, social condition, economic condition, and climatic condition.

Previous studies have found that varying factors as being responsible for influencing performance of community projects. Sanoff (2020) asserts the 'importance of community participation in planning and management of developmental as being crucial to their lasting success. The concept of community participation is further viewed as a basis for project success at the World Bank (2016). Other studies have also found other factors influencing the performance of community project which includes poor project sponsorship, undefined requirements and miscommunication. Jason Westland (2016) he further argues that the number one cause of project failure is lack of adoption of a formal project methodology with structured project processes for initiating, planning, implementing/executing, monitoring and evaluation and closure.

According to Dongier et al., (2021) many projects that have been planned properly have always performed in achieving their objectives while those with lack or poor planning have always failed at either the initial stages or failed to achieve the anticipated results. In Rwanda, some projects didn't perform well and among the reasons of failure are poor planning, governing policies, lack of availability of project resources and lack of community participation (RDB, 2013). Against the gap the study conducted a study on establishing the influence of project environment on performance of community development projects. A case study of the Climate Resilient Post Harvest Agribusiness Support Project (PASP)IFAD-funded project in Rwanda.

1.3. Research question

The study sought to answer the following research question:

How does the project environment of project management plan influences project performance of Climate Resilient Post-Harvest Agribusiness Support Project?

2. Literature Review

Effective project planning is an essential component of successful project management. It involves creating a comprehensive plan that outlines the necessary steps and resources needed to achieve a project's objectives. This includes defining the project's scope, establishing a timeline, assigning tasks and resources, and budgeting appropriately (Halter, 2018). According to Gudda (2021), randomized planning involves collecting data at various points in the project's timeline, ensuring thorough statistical analysis of project impacts and other contributing factors. Atkinson (2019) describes project planning as a dynamic system that evolves throughout the project's life cycle. Each subsequent model may sacrifice some methodological rigor, but ultimately leads to significant reductions in cost and time requirements.

According to Belasi and Tukel (2020), the project planning has to be undertaken and completed within a set time, budget resources to meet the needs of stakeholders. Non-Governments organization intervenes with different social and development projects of infrastructure projects among other education. This creates natural tension because delivery times for projects typically run beyond the life span of intervention. Often efforts are hampered by the lack of overarching project milestones, but many other factors can lead to individual projects being plagued with problems. These include unexpected budget cuts, stakeholder changing or adding requirement after the project have been started, and lack of willingness to plan for volatility and adverse scenarios (Atmar,2022). Therefore, the project planning requires a thoroughly management plan its changes would occur beyond different reasons, for instance in their priori relation or even with post share success. Some could follow good success, and others could have no relation to prior success. In either case, inclusion of such changes biases tests against finding an inverse relation between project planning and project success. To address this potential problem, different factors in planning are merely reviewed toward changes (Calmorin, 2018).

Apmknowledge (2019), states that there are project planning tools that help to define and keep track of the project tasks and resources involved in a manageable way. Structured brainstorming involves an interactive session with the project planning team where each of the participants are allowed to air their views on the project's

goals/objectives, outputs, tasks to produce each output, a time estimation to complete each task, the budget implication and the persons responsible for each of the tasks. All this information is grouped and ranked in order of importance.

The project plan shows how the project quality and risks will be analysed. The quality of the product or service should meet all stakeholders' expectations. Quality is however not determined at the end of the project but during implementation so that errors can be eliminated. The quality plan is involved in setting standards, acceptance criteria and metrics that will be used throughout the project. Quality reviews and inspections are therefore undertaken based on the project plan. In the planning process the project team also need to plan for project risks. Analysing project risks involves determining the probability of an event happening or not happening and the impact thereof. For instance, the possibility of losing donor support can be considered a risk. This helps in determining the highest risks that may need attention. Planning for risks ensures that the project team develops risk management plans to respond to the high-risk events (Gilbert, 2023).

3. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design. This design was selected because it explains and discusses the phenomena. The target population of this study was staff from MINAGRI. The study targeted these respondents because they are core units and responsible for the management of PASP. The team was the staff of 186 rural project staff from MINAGRI, 7 technicians, 3 government officials was taken as total population. (MINAGRI report, 2022). Thus, the total population was 196 people.

The researcher used the purposive technique in the PASP case study, this is one of the projects that MINAGRI implemented in 2010 and funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). A sample was selected based on what the researcher thinks of as a particular sample unit that could contribute to answer the particular research questions.

This study adopted stratified sampling technique. Stratified sampling is a probability sampling technique wherein the researcher divides the entire population into different subgroups or strata, then randomly selects the final subjects proportionally from the different strata. The reason for the choice of the sampling method was be because it enabled the researcher to representatively sample even the smallest and most inaccessible subgroups in the population. This allowed the researcher to sample the rare extremes of the given population. In addition, the study will use the following formula proposed by Using Yamane (1973) to determine the sample.

$$ n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} $$

Where:
n = sample size
N = population size
e = the level of precision
1 = Constant

n= 196 / [1+ 196 (0.05)^2] =131 respondents
n = 131 respondents.
A total number of 131 from PASP was made a sample size. The following table gives details:

Table 1: Table representing the sample size

Respondents	Population	Sample size
Manager (Coordinator)	1	1
Rural engineer	1	1
Agronomist	1	1
Socio economist	1	1
Environmentalist	1	1
Accountant	1	1
Procurement specialist	1	1
Government officials	3	1
Rural sector support project staff	186	123
Total	**196**	**131**

Source: Primary data, 2023

This research used the non-probability sampling technique, specifically the technique of convenience sampling to collect data as it is fast, inexpensive, and easy and the subjects are readily available. This research sample was 131 respondents. A convenience sample normally allowed the researcher to gain basic data and trends related to this study, avoiding the complications of using a randomized sample.

The choice of data collection methods depended on the research problem to be investigated, the research design and the information to be collected on the variable. Data collection methods generally fell into two categories: primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected from the field using questionnaires and interviews. Answers were written on questionnaires given by respondents and also the answers were obtained using the interviews in the field as the main source of the primary data. Besides, in secondary data, relevant existing documents, reports, journals and other documents related to the subject was critically consulted to verify the actual facts on the subject. The data were analyzed according to the research questions underlying the study.

In order to obtain useful and accurate data and arrive at valid results, the researcher used the following data collection methods: Questionnaire and interview schedule. The study used primary data collected through questionnaires. The questionnaires were self-completed, but the researcher was available to clarify any unclear questions. In addition, an interview guide was also being used in this study. The questionnaire was characterised with a series of questions meant to assist in gathering information from the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of both open ended and close ended questions which allowed the researcher to gather sufficient, informative and in-depth information about the phenomenon under study.

The questionnaire of this study developed by the researchers through following steps; they based questionnaires on the literature review and research objectives in order to get the relevant information on the research questions then, researchers structured questionnaires into three sections: Part (A) general independent variables, Part (B) research variables. The format of questionnaire was designed A5 point Likert scale ranging 1 to 5 as answers to statement like questions. Moreover, interviews were undertaken with project staff and government officers to get their views and opinions on the topic under investigation. In order to avoid bias or leading the interviewees in giving their answers, the interviewer kept the questions open-ended. The data collected were analysed using the software called Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Data were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Data were presented in tables. A regression model was used to determine the effects of each of the variables with respect to community development. Regression is concerned with describing and evaluating the relationship between a given variable and one or more other variables. More specifically, regression is an attempt to explain movements in a variable by reference to movements in one or more other variables. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) o tests the significance of the model. R square measures the extent of goodness of fit of the regression model

After collecting data through questionnaires, the data was checked for completeness and comprehensibility. They were then coded and analyzed using SPSS and Excel. The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods. Descriptive statistics with frequency distribution were used to analyze the data. Frequency tables were used to present the data to facilitate understanding and interpretation. The qualitative data was consolidated, analyzed in terms of content and a narrative report were produced presenting the respondents' views on the factors affecting the performance of PASP in Rwanda. The regression model for this study is:

The regression was:
$Y = \beta 0 + \beta 1 X_1 + \varepsilon$
Where Y= Project Performance
 X1= Planning process of Management
$\beta 1$= Beta coefficients
ε= Error Term.

4. Results and Discussion

3.1. Findings

3.1.1. Response Rate

Eight (8) respondents were targeted for interviews, of which six (6) were successfully interviewed; while a total of 123 questionnaires were given out and 112 were completed and returned. This gave a response rate of 75 and 94.7 percent respectively as seen below.

Table 2: Response Rate Source

Category	Sample Size	Actual number of Respondents	Response rate (in %)
Interview guide respondents			
Top level	8	6	75.0
Questionnaire respondents			
Rural sector support project staff	123	112	94.9
Total	**131**	**118**	**90.7**

Source: Primary Data, 2023

A summary of the response rate in Table 3 above shows the level of diversity which was involved while collecting the data. A sufficient number of employees participated in providing the required information thereby giving an assurance that the data can be relied on. This is because Mugenda (2009), recommends any response rate above 50 percent as adequate for analysis and reporting.

3.1.2. Descriptive statistics on project management plan

The research work was conducted on the role of project environment on performance of community development project. A case study of the Climate Resilient Post Harvest Agribusiness support project (PASP)IFAD-funded project in Rwanda. This section deals with the presentation and analysis of the research data and discussion of findings. These are presented in tables following. Table 3 outlines the respondents' rate at which the following factors in regard to how project management plan influences the performance of community development projects, where, SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree, F=Frequencies, W=Weight.

Table 3: Influence of planning on the performance of CDP

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Yes	100	56.5	89.3	89.3
Valid	No	12	6.8	10.7	100.0
	Total	112	63.3	100.0	

Source: Primary data, 2023

Table 3 indicates that 89.3% of the respondents agreed that planning has a significant impact on the performance of community development projects. Only 10.7% of the respondents did not consider planning as an influence. Lack of planning or inadequate planning is one of the major causes of project failure. The scholar advocates for planning and recognizes it as a prerequisite for the success and progress of community development projects as it lays out the project's scope, objectives, timelines, and budget estimates.

Table 4: Project management plan and project performance of PASP project

Statement	SA Freq (%)	A Freq (%)	N Freq (%)	D Freq (%)	SD Freq (%)
Planning achievement of the objectives of community development projects	60(54)	32(29)	15(13)	3(7)	0(0)
Planning should be done for all levels of project implementation	42(38)	64(57)	6(4)	0(0)	0(0)
Community development projects are successful when planning involves all the stakeholders	88(79)	15(13)	9(8)	0(0)	0(0)
Project planning is a very expensive endeavor community development projects	3(2)	0(0)	18(15)	62(55)	37(33)
Planning is less carrying out development projects	0(0)	0(0)	12(11)	54(48)	54(48)

Source: Primary data, 2023-**Key:** M: Mean, SD: Standard deviation

According to the findings presented in Table 4, planning is crucial in achieving project objectives. 54% of the respondents strongly agreed and 29% agreed on this fact. A project management plan serves as the foundation of a project and outlines its scope, objectives, and the means to achieve those objectives. It includes the indicators, activities, cost, and timeline involved. Therefore, a plan is crucial in determining the way to achieve objectives. The results in Table 4 support this, as 98% of the respondents agreed that planning should be done at all levels of project implementation. In addition, all respondents (100%) acknowledged that planning should involve all stakeholders. The results also revealed that 48% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the notion that planning is less important in project implementation, while 48% strongly agreed with it. When it comes to the cost of planning, there were mixed reactions, with 15% of the respondents remaining neutral, 55% disagreeing with the idea that planning is an expensive endeavour, and 33% strongly disagreeing.

Table 5: Level of agreement on performance of PASP project

Statements	SA Freq (%)	A Freq (%)	N Freq (%)	D Freq (%)	SD Freq (%)	M	SD
Timely completion	83 (74)	10 (9)	15 (13)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0.30	0.87
Effective and efficient budgetary use	53 (47)	40 (36)	19 (17)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0.32	0.75
Output and outcome	24 (21)	80 (71)	8 (7)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0.43	0.76
Meeting project objectives	77 (69)	23 (21)	12 (11)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0.41	0.67
Environmental condition	12 (11)	96 (86)	4 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0.42	0.52

Source: Primary data, 2023

Table 5 displays the level of agreement regarding the performance of the project. The first item indicates that the PASP project was completed on time, with 74% of respondents strongly agreeing and 9% agreeing with the statement. The second item relates to the effective and efficient use of the budget, with 93% of respondents strongly agreeing and agreeing, while 17% remained neutral. The third item concerns output and outcome, with 21% strongly agreeing, 71% agreeing, and 7% remaining neutral. Meeting the project objectives of the PASP project was another statement, with 69% strongly agreeing and 21% agreeing. Lastly, 98% of respondents

agreed that environmental conditions should be considered while implementing the project, while 3% remained neutral.

3.1.3. Correlation analysis

The findings of the correlations between the independent variables and the dependent variables are summarized and presented in Table 6

Table 6: Correlation analysis between independent and dependent variables

		Project Plan	Project performance
Project Plan	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	112	
Project performance	Pearson Correlation	.660[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	112	112

Based on the data presented in Table 6, there is a strong and positive correlation between a project's plan and its performance (r= -.660, p=0.000). This means that a well-designed project plan can lead to better performance, as evidenced by the positive relationship between the two coefficients.

3.1.4. Regression analysis

A multiple regression analysis was performed in this section to identify the predictor and its contribution towards the criterion. Table 7 shows the model summary of the results:

Table 7: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.820[a]	.672	.660	.51929

a. Predictors: (Constant)Project Plan

Table 7 above shows the quantity of variance that is explained by the predictor variables. The first statistic, R is the multiple correlation coefficient between the predictor variable and dependent variable. In this model, the value is .820[a], which indicate that there is a great deal of variance shared by the independent variables and dependent variable. The next value, R Square, is simply

the squared value of R. This is frequently used to describe the goodness of fit or the amount variance of 67.2% which explained by a given set of predictor variables and its value is 67.2% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by independent variables in the model.

Table 8: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	59.138	4	14.784	54.827	.000[b]
	Residual	28.853	107	.270		
	Total	87.991	111			

a. Dependent Variable: Project performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Project Plan

The table above indicates standard regression which provides the effect of individual predictor variables. That variable is project Plan. The table 8. shows the output analysis and whether there is a statistically significant

difference group mean. As seen, the significance value is 0.000[b] and the mean is 0.70. Therefore, there is a statistically significant difference in the mean length of model.

Table 9: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.185	.306		7.140	.000
	Project Plan	-.235	.055	-.395	-4.255	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Project performance

Information presented in Table 9 evidenced that $Y=2.185 -0.235 \ X_1 +\varepsilon$ Where y=project performance. The regression output above shows that project planning variable is statistically equal to 0. 000. This shows the regression of independent variable is associated with project performance. Multiple analysis regression result above indicates the influence of independent variable based on the regression coefficient. The unstandardized Coefficients is -.395 when is constant and at the same time the Std. Error is 0.306 when they are associated with coefficients.

3.2. Discussion of Findings

From the findings, the study revealed that the project management plan has a significant influence on the project performance of PASP project. This is achieved by planning for the achievement of the objectives of community development projects, planning for all levels of project implementation, and involving all stakeholders in the planning process. The findings also reveal that project planning is not an expensive endeavor for community development projects, and even planning less can lead to successful development projects.

During the interview done with the manager of the project he stated that most of the projects that are initiated start with great ideas and investments full of promising outcomes. However, during their lifetime, these projects end up being faced with various challenges that hinder their promising prospective. The inability of project planners to define adequately the project deliverables and scope is one of the main contributing factors to failure. This makes all the project team members to fail understand the real basics of the project and hence leads to failure achieve maximum output.

These findings are in line with ASDP (2020) who pointed out that many projects that have been planned properly have always performed in achieving their objectives while those with lack or poor planning have always failed at either the initial stages or failed to achieve the anticipated results. In Rwanda, some projects didn't perform well and among the reasons of failure are poor planning, inappropriate objectives and targets, coordination of activities, mobilization of resources, and poor feasibility study. Besides, project performance is what most of the project strive to attain because they gain the capacity to carry out their activities uninterruptedly through performance. However, Burke. (2018) reported that the project planning process perception is not quite

the same in most countries around the world. The project scope change has mostly a positive impact to the success or performance of project.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study found that there exists a positive association between project management plan and performance of community development projects; that planning influences the achievement of project objectives and in order to be effective planning ought to be inclusive of all stakeholders. It was clear from the study that improved planning is guaranteed to impact project performance.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that:

1. Planning be incorporated at all levels of the project cycle. This includes a thorough review process to ensure that the project is on track and that all stakeholders are involved in the planning process.

2. Project officers and field officers should work together to create a comprehensive plan for each project level - including planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and project closure - from the very beginning of the project. By following this approach, valuable time will not be wasted during transitions between project levels, which can impact project performance.

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