ASSESSMENT OF RURAL COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN WATER PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

A CASE STUDY OF KATANGINI BOREHOLE WATER PROJECT MAKUENI COUNTY - KENYA

By

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This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the award of a master's degree in development studies from St. Paul's university.

August, 2015

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ABSTRACT

Water projects have improved access to water supply in rural areas but most of the infrastructure put in place has ceased to function. Studies according to the Ministry of Water and Irrigation show that 57% of the past investments in rural water supplies in Kenya are unproductive. Infrastructure implemented for safe water supply in rural communities after some months or years cease to function due to low project sustainability. In an attempt to address this sustainability challenge, the rural water sub-sector in most rural areas has increasingly incorporated community participation in the planning and construction of water projects in recent decades. Despite wide acceptance of the idea that community participation brings a sense of ownership for water projects, evidence for project sustainability is lacking and it is not clear which type of community participation brings out project sustainability. This case study was carried out in Makueni County in Kenya. The study used both quantitative and qualitative study design to assess rural community participation in water project sustainability. The main objective of this study was to assess the rural community participation in water project sustainability. The specific objectives were to examine community participation that enhances sustainability of rural water projects, to determine the effects of community participation on the rural community skills in maintaining water projects, to assess the community understanding of the water system being used in rural water projects, to examine the community participation structures that exist in enhancing rural water project sustainability. This study was based on the four capital model of sustainability. The four capital model of sustainability entailed social, financial, environmental, and economic. The target population for this study was 1200 households that used the water project as their source of water while the sample population was 10% of the target population. The sampling frame included simple random sampling, convenient sampling and snowball sampling. Data collection was done using three methods; Questionnaires, interviews and Focused Group discussion. The study found that there was high community participation in human capital as compared to financial, natural and manufactured capitals. The high community participation in human capital strengthened the sustainability of Katangini borehole community water project. The study found out that community participation had resulted in the constitution of a community committee and influenced the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation. The study also established that majority of the community members did not clearly understand the water system that was being used though the water project committee was well aware of the technicalities of the system being used. The main challenges however, ranged from lack of competence in management skills, lack of accessibility to spare parts, and increased unwillingness to pay for water services. In recommendation, there is need for more community participation and capacity building of the management committees, enhanced network systems between spare part suppliers and the community in order to boost the ease of accessibility to spare parts. Moreover, there is need to have a systematized back up support aimed at enhancing more community participation in governance and financial management. There is also need for a clear support package and services rendered by the District Water Officer through a form of Memorandum of Understanding with the community management. In conclusion, there is need for further investigative research on how community committees manage rural water projects.

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