

Evaluating the Relevance of Donor Funded Road Construction Projects in Kenya

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Abstract: Relevance is the extent to which an intervention's objectives are related to the needs, problems and issues to be addressed. Among the most vital public assets in many countries are the roads. Road developments bring immediate and vivid benefits to road users by opening access to hospitals, schools, and markets. They offer better-quality comfort, speed, and safety; and minimize all operational costs. To support the development objectives, Kenya has embarked on a programme of upgrading roads to improve the quality of living by the year 2030. It's a programme dubbed vision 2030 that has numerous goals. It is however a challenging and costly investment that has exceeded Kenya's budget capacity. Engaging donors has become necessary to meet the deficit. This article examines the relevance of donor aid in Kenya's road construction projects. A descriptive survey was used, to collect data from the population of all road construction contractors in the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure. Sampling was used to secure a representative group. Findings disclosed that donor funded projects had a positive effect on the economy, preserved a reasonable balance between peoples' economic aspirations and their sustainable development priorities, therefore appropriate policies should be initiated to foster good relations with donors. There should be therefore an explicit goal definition and communication of donors versus government priorities to achieve relevance.

Keywords - Donor Aid, Relevance, Road Construction

I. INTRODUCTION

It is argued that road construction projects are the key to raising living standards. By cutting down on transport costs, roads are expected to generate market activity, affect input and output prices and nurture economic connections (Van de Walle, 2009). The local economy goes through tremendous change including; the boosting of agricultural production, donor which results to cascaded effect on income-earning opportunities (citizens are capacitated), governments are able to collect more revenue and consequently there is population redistribution all over a country. Better roads facilitate access to social service facilities enhancing social outcomes. Infrastructure development globally plays a crucial role in determining the overall productivity and development of a country's economy. Roads which are poorly constructed and maintained, constrain mobility, raise significantly vehicle operating costs, escalate accident rates and their associated human and property costs, they augment isolation, poverty, poor health, and illiteracy in rural communities (Emeasoba, Ogbuefi, and Enugu, 2013).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Relevance (Niringiye and Aye bale, 2012) defines relevance as the extent to which an intervention's objectives are related to the needs, problems and issues to be addressed. In addition, they say it is concerned with the extent to which the objectives of the programme are consistent with policy identified needs and objectives. Relevance is also about consistency with existing priorities and policies effective demand. (Skinner, Staiger, and Fisher, 2010) points out that relevance is a significant issue during the course of the intervention cycle. Consequently, therefore, during planning and preparation, the responsible organizations should make a first assessment of the relevance of the objectives of the intervention. In addition, make sure that the intervention strategy is complete. In his explanation, (Chianca, 2008) says while evaluating the relevance of a program or a project, it is important to consider some questions such as: To what extent are the objectives of the program still valid? Are the activities and outputs of the program consistent with the overall goal and the attainment of its objectives? Are the activities and outputs of the program consistent with the intended impacts and effects? ("Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results," n.d.), relevance concerns the congruency between the perception of what is required as intended by the initiative planners and the reality of what is needed from the perspective of intended beneficiaries. Moreover, a crucial sub-category of relevance is the standards or criteria of suitability that concerns the cultural approval as well as feasibility of the activities of delivery of a development initiative. While relevance examines the importance of the initiative

relative to the needs and priorities of intended beneficiaries, appropriateness examines whether the initiative as it is operationalized is acceptable and is feasible within the local context (“Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results,” n.d.). An initiative may be relevant in that it addresses a need that intended beneficiaries perceive to be important, but unsuitable since the method of delivery is different with the culture or not practicable given geographic or other contextual realities. In applying the criterion of relevance, evaluations should explore the extent to which the planning, design and implementation of initiatives takes into account the local context.

a) Objectives

(“pi_handbook_180808.pdf,” 2008.), project objective is single statement of the broader aim of a project, that is how the project can contribute to a larger national or international development plan or action. The objectives are specific, time-related targets that describe the tangible outcomes that the project will accomplish. (Zewo, 2008) describes the project objectives as the intended and direct, short- and medium-term effects on the target group. The project objective must lie within the scope of the project, and one must be able to directly attribute the effects to the project. The project objective ought also to describe an outcome, meaning the effect of change that the project is supposed to cause for the target group. In practice it is often not quite so simple to distinguish outcomes from outputs, i.e. the project’s products and deliverables. Well-formulated, genuine outcome (and impact) objectives are therefore of great importance if the outcome and impact assessment is to have any significance. A well-formulated project objective provides a concrete description of the project’s effect at the outcome level; Was developed in a participatory process; Is accepted by the target group and other stakeholders; Is clear and concise (Zewo, 2008).

b) Activities

Activities according to (Parsons, Gokey, and Thorton, 2013) are important in order to appreciate the extent to which a project was delivered as planned, and to highlight obstacles to implementation. The activities provide a way of describing the various project components in specific and measurable terms, as well as show the resources required and individuals responsible for various tasks. They are most valuable when you are able to connect a given set of activities to a particular output or outcome.

It is important that activity indicators capture those elements of the project that are essential for its success. Activity indicators should include three essential elements; who conducted the activity, what they did, and where were they working (Parsons et al., 2013).’

c) Output

(Parsons et al., 2013), output indicators describe the delivery of products, including, but not limited to: the providing training and technical assistance; creating standards and legislative documents; investing in buildings and infrastructure; and hiring staff required to implement a project. They are also the tangible and intangible products that result from project activities. They can also be considered to be the first level of results associated with a project. Often confused with “activities”, outputs are the direct term results allied with a project. In short, they are generally what the project has achieved in the short term. An informal way to think about outputs is to quantify the project activities that have a direct link on the project goal (Odhiambo, 2013).

When combined with measures of inputs and activities, output indicators can provide measures of economy and efficiency, describing the relationship between investments in a project and products. It is usually important to track output indicators at regular intervals over the life course of an initiative, as a way of assessing progress towards project goals and detecting delays. While achieving project outputs offers no guarantees that your project will be successful, without achieving your outputs the chances of success may be slim (Parsons et al., 2013). There is often confusion about the differences between project outputs (products) and outcomes (the short and medium term benefits that those products deliver). One easy way to distinguish between outputs and outcomes is to consider whether the indicator describes project effectiveness (an outcome). For example, installing fingerprinting technology in district police precincts and training the police on forensic techniques are both outputs; they offer no indication of whether the new technology is actually used or whether it improves police effectiveness. The outcomes for this project, their short to medium term effects, may include increased use of forensic evidence in court, changes in the rate of successful prosecutions, or reductions in the use of police interrogation as the primary method of gathering evidence. Going one step further, potential long term impacts for a project of this sort might include reductions in the rate of violent and property crimes and/or increased public confidence in the police (Parsons et al., 2013).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design was descriptive survey. It involved describing the characteristics of a particular individual or of a group of variables (Kothari, 2008). The population of this study was all the road construction

contractors in the Ministry of Transport & Infrastructure, Kenya. Sampling was used to secure a representative group which enabled the researcher to gain information about the population according to (Mugenda, 2003). To obtain at least 10% of the project managers, the sample size was distributed as 5 managers and 326 contractors. Data was collected mainly by use of questionnaire method that contained both open ended and closed questions. The researcher obtained an introduction letter from the university and a research permit from the bodies and Ministry officials identified. Content validity tested whether all the important aspects of the constructions are measured. This was done by first testing the instruments on 10% of the sample and reviewing the findings. Reliability of the responses was tested using the Cronbach alpha. Normally, α should be between 0.7 – 0.9 (Santos, 1999). The data collected from the field was captured using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 and Microsoft Excel (2013). Descriptive statistics was used to define the data collected while, inferential statistics mainly involved the testing of correlation among the various variables. For nominal data Pearson's Chi Square statistics together with correlation coefficient computed.

IV. FINDINGS

Relevance of Donor Funded Road Construction Projects

The objective of the study was to establish the relevance of the donor funded road construction projects. Data for this objective was gathered using Likert scale, table 1 displays the results.

Table 1: Relevance of Objectives

Statement	SD	D	I	A	SA	Total	Mean	Standard Deviation
There is relevance between donor-funded road projects and the overall development goals of the government	14	67	94	78	35	288	3.18	1.074
There was consistency between donor funded road projects and the government planned road projects	10	59	101	80	44	294	3.30	1.058
There was a road construction policy plan in the Kenyan vision 2030.	15	60	85	100	34	294	3.27	1.070
There was a relationship between the stakeholder's needs and the project objectives.	9	65	110	74	38	296	3.23	1.028
Overall	48	251	390	332	151	1172	3.245	1.0575

Key: SD=strongly disagree, D=disagree, I=indifferent, A=Agree, SA=strongly agree

On average 65.9% thought that the donor funded road projects were in line with the objectives of the government and also the stakeholders. The findings are in agreement with (Chianca, 2008) who articulates that before any project is laid out, there is an evaluation of several aspects such as the extent to which the objectives of the program are valid, whether the activities and outputs of the program are consistent with the overall goal and the attainment of its objectives and whether the activities and outputs of the program are consistent with the expected impacts and effects. It was important to understand the view of various bodies on relevance of these projects. A cross-tabulation was carried out and the results displayed in table 2 and 3 below.

Table 2: Type of Project * There is a relationship between donor-funded projects and Govt. goals Cross-tabulation

		There is a relationship between donor-funded projects and Govt. goals					Total
		SD	D	I	A	SA	
Type of Project	KENHA	8	29	65	42	18	162
	KURA	5	9	19	16	10	59
	KERRA	1	16	12	14	8	51
	Others	1	4	10	2	6	23
Total		15	58	106	74	42	295

Table 3: Type of Project * There was improvement in transport sector policy Cross-tabulation

		There was improvement in transport sector policy					Total
		SD	D	I	A	SA	
Type of Project	KENHA	7	32	60	40	22	161
	KURA	4	9	18	17	12	60
	KERRA	0	15	12	12	10	49
	Others	0	4	9	7	3	23
Total		11	60	99	76	47	293

From the tables 2 and table 3, it was clear that majority of the respondents felt that there the development interventions met the population needs and country priorities, and are consistent with donor policies. Output as one of the indicators or products of project activities was tested with a list of questions to the respondents. Table 4 expounds on the responses.

Table 4: Relevance of Output

Statement	SD	D	I	A	SA	Total	Mean	Standard deviation
There was improvement in transport sector policy?	11	60	99	76	47	293	3.30	1.082
There is a relationship between donor-funded road projects and development goals?	15	58	106	74	42	295	3.24	1.081
There is a master plan to ensure relevance between donor-funded road projects/programs and development goals?	9	61	85	93	41	289	3.33	1.058
Overall	35	179	290	243	130	877	3.29	1.074

The percentage mean response was 65.8%. This was a confident response indicating that donor funded road projects brought some positivity in the development objectives and goals in the roads sub-sector. As supported by literature, the development of roads has been extensively supported as poverty mitigation instrument by donor institutions. It is argued that road construction projects are the key to raising living standards. By cutting down on transport costs, roads are expected to generate market activity, affect input and output prices and nurture economic connections (Van de Walle, 2009). A general question was asked about the relevance of donor funded road projects and the response displayed in table 5 below.

Table 5: Achievement of Relevance of Construction in Donor Funded Road Projects

Was relevance achieved?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	241	80.9%
No	57	19.1%
Total	298	100.0%

80.9% of the respondents agreed that relevance was achieved in donor funded road projects. Relevance explains the consistency with existing priorities and policies effective to demand. The findings are agree with (Skinner,

Staiger, and Fisher, 2010) who says that during planning and preparation, the responsible organizations should make a first assessment of the relevance of the objectives of the intervention.

Relationship between Relevance and Performance of donor funded Road Construction Projects

Table 6: Relationship between Relevance and Performance

		Performance				Total	Statistics	Value (Significance)
		D	I	A	SA			
Relevance	D	8	28	6	0	42	Chi Square	30.202 (<0.001)
	I	20	79	32	0	131	Correlation	0.291 (<0.001)
	A	4	64	45	6	119		
	SA	0	3	3	0	6		
Total		32	174	86	6	298		

Key: D=disagree, I=indifferent, A=Agree, SA=strongly agree

The chi-square test of independence shows that there is a positive correlation between relevance and performance of donor funded road construction projects. This relationship is significant ($p < 0.001$).

Summary and Conclusion of the Findings

As supported by literature, the development of roads has been extensively supported as poverty mitigation instrument by donor institutions. Cross-tabulations were carried out to test the view of various bodies regarding the relevance of these projects. It was clear from the findings that majority of the respondents felt that there was relevance of the road construction projects. The significance test showed that relevance was statistically significant and hence the alternate hypothesis was accepted. By definition relevance is the extent to which an intervention's objectives are related to the needs, problems and issues to be addressed. Therefore, all the institutions running projects should ensure that the activities and outputs of the program are consistent with the overall goal and the attainment of its objectives. Donors should agree to accept only projects and programs based on recipient Government. There should be therefore an explicit goal definition and communication of donors versus government priorities to achieve relevance.

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