

# **FACTORS INFLUENCING IMPLEMENTATION OF ORPHAN AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN PROJECTS IN IGEMBE NORTH SUB-COUNTY, MERU COUNTY, KENYA**

**Caroline Gakii Maore**

Master of Arts in Project Planning and Management, University of Nairobi, Kenya

**Prof. Harriet Kidombo**

ODEL campus, University of Nairobi, Kenya

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## **ABSTRACT**

Project ideas have been suggested; some ideas so superior that if implemented through project work could positively change people's lives. However, such ideas remain elusive due to the challenges of the actual implementation. Orphans and vulnerable children projects in Kenya are facing challenges of qualified project officers and lack of an extensive number of project administrators who have the applicable abilities required for project administration. The purpose of this study was to establish the factors influencing implementation of orphan and vulnerable children projects in Kenya. The study focused on Orphan and Vulnerable Children projects in Igembe North Sub-County, Meru County Kenya. The study mainly focused on the influence of effective planning, management skills, project characteristics and accountability on implementation of Orphan and Vulnerable Children Projects in Igembe North Sub-County, Meru County Kenya. The study was grounded on system theory, co-evolutionary theory and theory of change (TOC). The study adopted a cross-section research design. The target population for this study was 378 comprising of staff working with OVC project, community leaders and the beneficiaries. To obtain the desired sample size of 190 for the study Nassiuma formula was used. The study selected the respondents using stratified random sampling technique. Primary data was obtained using self-administered questionnaires. The questionnaire was made up of both open ended and closed ended questions. The drop and pick method was

preferred for questionnaire administration so as to give respondents enough time to give well thought out responses. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 25.0). All the questionnaires received were referenced and items in the questionnaire were coded to facilitate data entry. After data cleaning which entailed checking for errors in entry, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean score and standard deviation were estimated for all the quantitative variables. Inferential data analysis was done using multiple regression analysis. Information was presented in form of tables. The study found that staff motivation and leadership influenced the implementation of OVC funded projects in Kenya to a very great extent. The study also found that fast deployment and ease of staffing influenced the implementation of OVC funded projects in Kenya to a very great extent. The study found that accountability had a strong and positive significance on the implementation of OVC funded projects in Kenya. The study further found that project characteristics has a positive significance on the implementation of OVC funded projects in Kenya. The study concluded that project characteristics had the greatest influence on the implementation of orphans and vulnerable children funded projects in Kenya, followed by effective planning, then accountability while management skills had the least effect on the implementation of orphans and vulnerable children funded projects in Kenya. The study recommended that management team should be trained on leadership styles and also the study recommended that there

should exist capacity building on monitoring and evaluations guidelines with more emphasis on reporting and participatory M&E. The study finally recommends that the community should be sensitized to be heavily involved in in these projects. This can be done through including them as the stakeholders of the projects as well as allowing them to contribute to the projects hence improve performance of the projects. The study recommends further studies to be

done on other counties as this study was only limited to Meru County alone. Further study be done on factors influencing performance of OVC projects. There is also need for further studies to be done on other types of projects such as health and community-based projects.

**Key Words:** *implementation, orphan and vulnerable children projects, Igembe North sub-county, Meru county, Kenya*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Project implementation is a process whereby project inputs are converted to project outputs. It involves putting in action the activities of the project, putting into practice what was proposed in the project document and management of the project or executing the project intentions. The ultimate importance of project implementation is achieved through avoiding the project's failure to keep within cost budget, failure to keep within time stipulated for approvals, design, occupancy and failure to meet the required technical standards for quality, functionality, fitness for purpose, safety and environment protection (Flanagan, Norman & Bromilow, 2013). Project implementation ensures that enterprises maximize on profitability, minimize the consequences of risky and uncertain events in terms of achieving the project's objectives and seizes the chances of the risky events from arising (Kululanga & Kuotcha, 2010).

Some, scholars are of the opinion that the technical expertise of the project manager is of paramount importance for success; others suggest that interpersonal or soft skills are the primary determinant of success; and still others hold that both technical background and leadership skills are necessary for effective planning success (Zhao, Lynch Jr & Chen, 2010). Every child requires basic needs to develop and grow to a healthy and responsible adult (UNICEF, 2016). A child requires parental love, care and protection in the early stages of development. The immediate family environment of a child is critical in determining how that child develops because it is in this environment that they get nurtured, thereby experiencing love and acceptance, a sense of belonging, safety and security as well as developing trust, respect and confidence. According to Gaventa and Blauert (2016), disadvantaged groups are unappreciated, devalued or derided by the larger society. Vulnerable children (VC) and orphaned children fall in the category of the disadvantaged group, United Nations Children's Education Fund (UNICEF 2016).

The criteria of project implementation for the project will be cost, time and quality which are basic elements of project success (Lim & Mohammed, 2009). Quality is all about the entirety of

features requisite by a product to meet the desired need and fit for purpose. To ensure the effectiveness and conformity of quality performance, the specification of quality requirements should be clearly and explicitly stated in design and contract documents. Project implementation measure for this is defined in terms of cost, time, quality and profitability, as small and medium enterprises focus on earning returns over project investment.

The management of vulnerable and orphaned children projects plays an important role in the daily live activities for the children (Weisman, 2011). A manager is the person who is vested with formal authority over an organization or one of the organization's subunit. Therefore, management affects the entire organization by providing direction. They are also required to ensure that resource adequacy, socio-cultural factors, accountability and project characteristics and ownership, as aspects of the socioeconomic environment, are well considered so that their effect in project implementation is positive rather than negative. Vulnerable and orphaned children projects are either publicly or privately funded for children who either have no parents (Orphans) or cannot get adequate support from the parents or guardian who should take care of them as they grow (Gibson, 2009).

In the entire world, according to Ntuala (2010), resources put into project implementation occasionally get directed to other personal initiatives at the expense of the community development interventions, culminating into numerous stalled projects that were common among the northern –Korea-Based Poverty Intervention Initiatives. Basing her study on factors influencing the implementation of community-based projects in Brazil, Otega (2009) (as cited in Richard, 2013) noted that maximum people participation, systematic disbursement of funds and proper management measures greatly contributed the realization of the desired project deliverables. Reporting from a study conducted in Sangwan China, Cindy (2012) (as cited in Richard, 2013), observed that the low-cost housing projects that targeted the poor as a means of addressing the sprawling slums took longer than was anticipated.

United Kingdom (UK) in 2010 statistics showed that 52% of projects had cost overruns in excess of 10% while 45% of projects had time overruns of over 25% (Burrow, 2011). Same research indicated that similar studies carried out in India showed that 56% of projects had cost overruns in excess of 20% while 49% had time overruns in excess of between 1 and 160 months. Projects were initiated by kings and other leaders to undertake monumental projects to build a name for themselves and their generations to come (Mbatha, 2011). Ancient structures did not have time limitation or cost limitation. However, causes of delays have been identified in various parts of the world recently such as Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, Hong Kong and Thailand (Flanagan & Norman, 2013). The results reveal that there are differences and similarities as to the causes of delays. Thus, the consultants work out a project to fit within the said amount, and not beyond. This limits creativity and innovation, unlike in the past as stated (The Quantity Surveyor, 2011).

In Yemen, for instance, there are 30,000 VCs and orphans. Migration to the cities, poverty, unemployment, high fertility rates, lack of social services, and abandonment of support for the

poor by the state, all led to the problem of VCs and orphans. The VCs and orphaned children could be used for selling drugs and girls for sex; they could be trafficked and sold as well. These children want to live and so can be involved in such illegal activities. According to UNICEF (2016) approximately 15 million children worldwide have lost one or both parents due to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV and AIDS). In most of the African countries, close to half of the children enrolled in primary schools cannot manage to access secondary education because of the inability of the caregivers to finance their education at this level (UNAIDS, 2010).

Project implementation cost and time overruns in Australia in traditional and new systems accounts for 13-19% of cost overruns and 10 to 69% of time overruns. New systems give 11% and 13 to 25% respectively. There needs to be foresight of improving knowledge of the links between risk perception, attitude towards risk objects and actual behavior (Flanagan & Norman, 2013). Consultants use skills, knowledge and experience with care to ensure clients' interests are protected. Schwalbe (2015) cites improved effective management of change and clarify project issues from start. Decisions supported through analysis, define and structure of projects continually monitored, clearer understanding of specific risks associated with projects.

Orphans and vulnerable children are the main problems of developing countries, especially sub-Saharan Africa. UNAIDS (2010) estimated that of the 16.6 million children (aged 0–17) who have lost one or both parents to AIDS, 14.8 million are in sub-Saharan Africa. Within Ethiopia 5.5 million children, around 6% of the total population, are categorized as orphans or vulnerable children (OVC). In Ghana, Orme and Seipel (2010) argue that children have made the street their home for a variety of reasons. While a few children are from intact families and have come to urban streets for economic reasons or for adventure, a large number of children are pushed into a life on the streets of urban centers for the same reasons as children in other parts of the world. Typically, they end up on the streets as a result of the death of their parents, poverty, sexual abuse, violence in the home, neglect, divorce in the family and the like. Some of these children maintain some contact with their families and may even receive some support from them, but many more are living and working on the street without any contact with or support from family members. In almost all cases, these children live without adult protection and without decent income-generating employment. They usually work as laborers, vendors or domestic servants. Some children support themselves by begging or prostitution.

According to Liyong (2012), implementation of NGO funded projects in Uganda; some are readily vandalized by the intended project beneficiaries, because such were initiated with minimum stakeholder participation. He suggested that effective project implementation needed as its key participants, the contribution of the beneficiaries, since without developing a feeling of ownership, the hitherto project beneficiaries turn into project enemies. In Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria, South Africa and Mozambique causes and effects of various factors to project time and cost overruns to project completion by various causes of delays and disruptions as; design changes, delays in payment to information delays, funding problems, poor effective planning,

compensation issues and disagreement on the valuation of work done. Conversely, time overrun, cost overrun, negative social impact, idling of resources and disputes are the main effects of delays and disruptions. Kikwasi (2012) suggested that there still exists a number of causes of delays and disruptions and their influences put projects at great risk that have an influence on their performance. The studies recommended that adequate budget, timely issuing of information, finalization of design and effective planning skills should be the main focus of the parties in project procurement process. Public Procurement Oversight Authority's (PPOA, 2015)

Orphans and vulnerable children project implementation have been measured through project cost, quality, customer or stakeholder's satisfaction, timeliness and achieving of project objective as effective indicator to measure of project implementation (Nyikal, 2011). Lekunze, Antwi and Oladele (2011) established that the institutions that used a stakeholder participatory approach while involving the youth had greater chances of success than others that did not consider such an approach. Atiibo (2012) on the other hand examined stakeholder management challenges and their impact on project management in the case of advocacy and empowerment in the upper east region of Ghana. The study found that the interests and roles of the key stakeholders were very critical to the operations, however stakeholder management was found to be characterized by casual and ad-hoc actions and predominantly not institutionalized.

In Kenya, VC are associated with malnutrition, sickness, lower school enrolment rates, drugs and substance abuse, lack of clothing and shelter and poor school participation compared to the less vulnerable children. Currently, Kenya has not managed to carry out a comprehensive survey but the government approximates that there are close to 2.4 million orphaned and vulnerable children in the country (UNICEF, 2016). The Government of Kenya (GoK) does acknowledge that even though free primary education has been introduced, Orphans and Vulnerable Children do not tend to enroll in the government system (GoK, 2013). Substantial progress has been made since 2009 towards strengthening Kenya's child protection system. The government, supported by UNICEF, has completed a mapping and assessment of the current system in Kenya which identifies priority gaps that should be addressed.

OVC Empowerment Program is a programming approach that intends to empower orphans and vulnerable children. It thrives to enhance capacity of orphans and other vulnerable children to identify, prioritize and address their long-term challenges with little emphasis to short term emergency intervention. There are well over 100 million orphans and vulnerable children in the countries where such organizations serve, living and dying in extreme poverty. These children are often socially and spiritually dislocated leading to sexual, and labor exploitation, disease, starvation and death. Communities are often overwhelmed by the problem of orphans who are begging for food and/or work, sometimes they steal to survive, and who are often dirty and sick. This humanitarian crises is well documented. Three year empowerment program assisting children to move from extreme poverty to self-sufficiency and after graduating, a child will have moved to sustainable self-sufficiency, able to provide food, clothing, shelter, education, medical

care, and social support for themselves and their siblings. Know God's love, and have hope for the future in their own community (Heymann, Sherr & Kidman, 2012).

In Kenya alone, there are 30,000 children in the program (The Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church, 2018). The success rate is almost 90 percent. The empowerment program for orphans and vulnerable children is comprehensive, addressing the many challenges that keep them in poverty. In so doing, the empowerment program helps children to address the root cause of their poverty and overcome them. The organizations seek to realize a glimpse of God's reign on earth through empowering the most vulnerable of God's children physically, psychologically, and spiritually. After three years, children in the program are self-sufficient on an upward trajectory financially, socially, and understand God's love for them. We have now been able to observe groups which have been graduated up to 7 years, and in almost every case, the groups continue meeting together and supporting one another to continue realizing their dreams. Additionally, as soon as these children begin to stabilize their own lives, we see them bringing other orphans into their groups and replicating their own empowerment with other (Kauffeldt, 2011).

Meru County is found in the eastern region of Kenya, approximately 225 kilometers northeast of Nairobi. It covers an area of 6,936 square kilometers. Meru shares its border with five other counties; Isiolo to the North, Nyeri to the South West, Tharaka-Nithi to the South West and Laikipia to the West. The county's economy relies mostly on agriculture. Most people are engaged in subsistence farming where they grow common foods such as maize, beans, sorghum, millet cabbages and fruits. Other grow coffee and tea as cash crops and take their teas for processing in nearby factories including Weru, Kionyo, Githongo and Imenti Tea Factory. Commercial fruit growing has become popular under Bill and Melinda Gates foundation's Project Nurture. This includes small scale growing of mangoes and passion fruit in Imenti. The county is renowned for its wide scale growing of the Miraa (Khat) - a herbal plant, which turned a lucrative cash crop for the locals. The Khat is mostly grown in Maua, Igembe and Tigania and fetches millions of shilling in the export market for its farmers (Gioto, Wandiga & Oludhe, 2018).

In Meru County, project implementation based on this mapping a draft Child Protection System Strategy has been developed. Orphans and vulnerable children continue to lag behind in accessing and acquiring formal education. Therefore, it is imperative to make follow ups and discover what could be the underlying factors causing school dropout (UNICEF, 2016). The launch of the Governor Gender Roundtable for Meru County saw the women put their demands on the table for the governor and his team to take up. Through National Plan of Action on OVC which helps to strengthen the capacity of families to protect and care for OVC, provide economic, psychosocial and other forms of social support, as well as mobilize and support community-based responses to increase OVC access to essential services such as food and nutrition, education, health care, housing, water and sanitation (Ajuna, Ntale & Ngui, 2018).

The organization wants the children to become an asset to their community as opposed to a problem. It is based on principle that if actively involved and well facilitated, children have capacity to identify structural cause of poverty and possible solution to these causes using both local and external resources. After completing the program I would like to see the community view these young people as leaders both spiritually, socially and economically.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Project ideas have been suggested, some ideas so superior that if could be implemented through project work could positively change people lives. However, such ideas remain elusive due to the challenges of the actual implementation (Dolphine, 2009) (as cited by Richard, 2013). Orphans and vulnerable children projects in Kenya are facing challenges of qualified project staffs and lack of an extensive number of project administrators who have the applicable abilities required for project administration rehearse for effective project conveyance. More than Kshs 100 billion is lost because of absence of project administration aptitudes and related innovations. One path in which poor project administration aptitudes as a rule shows itself is fizzled projects or delays in project execution (Githenya & Ngugi, 2014). The disappointment of rural road maintenance projects improvement tasks is an issue in Kenya if administrative difficulties are not tended to. OVC projects have been unsuccessful even though they aim at empowering orphans and vulnerable children. It has not been able to thrive to enhance capacity of orphans and other vulnerable children to identify, prioritize and address their long-term challenges with little emphasis to short term emergency intervention. Even though many projects on orphans and vulnerable children have been initiated, many of them are never completed (General Board of Global Ministries, 2019). Other projects have been stopped due to various challenges such as repeated accusation of abuse of funds, patronage due to excessive powers, incomplete projects, a lack of technical capacity, poor planning and a litany of other weaknesses which threaten to undermine the very success of the county projects. Despite so many orphans and vulnerable children projects having been initiated so as to transform the living standards of the constituents, little has been achieved. Through these linkages and digitization, the government will cab fraud, create openness in terms of tendering and enhance responsibility and accountability of government officers. The Kenyan government has responded by putting in place the National Plan of Action on OVC which helps to strengthen the capacity of families to protect and care for OVC, provide economic, psychosocial and other forms of social support, as well as mobilize and support community-based responses to increase OVC access to essential services such as food and nutrition, education, health care, housing, water and sanitation. The Department of Children Services, within the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development, in collaboration with the National Steering Committee on OVC developed the OVC Policy, a key aspect of which is the provision of a direct predictable and regular cash subsidy of KSH 1,500 per month to households caring for OVC (Sloth-Nielsen, 2014). Mbwele (2018) conducted a study on factors influencing implementation of development projects managed by disadvantaged groups in Kenya: a case of Makueni County, Anyango (2016) focused on factors determining project



implementation of health projects in Gedo Region, Somalia. Nzioki (2014) studied the school-based factors influencing participation of orphans and vulnerable children in primary schools concentrating on Kamukunji District, Nairobi County Kenya. Although the topic under review has been previously explored extensively out of the country but most of these studies were context specific, their implementation and implication are usually limited to countries, and the operating environment where these studies were conducted. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by establishing the factors influencing implementation of Orphan and Vulnerable Children Projects in Igembe North Sub-County, Meru County Kenya.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to establish the factors influencing implementation of orphan and vulnerable children projects in Kenya focusing on Orphan and Vulnerable Children Projects in Igembe North Sub-County, Meru County Kenya.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To assess the influence of management skills on implementation of Orphan and Vulnerable Children Projects in Igembe North Sub-County, Meru County Kenya.
2. To establish the influence of effective planning on implementation of Orphan and Vulnerable Children Projects in Igembe North Sub-County, Meru County Kenya.
3. To determine the influence of accountability on implementation of Orphan and Vulnerable Children Projects in Igembe North Sub-County, Meru County Kenya.
4. To establish how project characteristics, influence implementation of Orphan and Vulnerable Children Projects in Igembe North Sub-County, Meru County Kenya.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Implementation of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Projects**

The role of managing projects is very involving and project managers oversee project member permanently attached to the project office and subject matter experts from the organizations functional, technical and support personnel. Meeting projects' objectives, schedules, budgets assessing alternatives assessing risks and deciding how to accept avoid or remove or mitigate them and for leading the initiative to successful completion of the project. The criteria of project implementation for the project will be cost, time and quality which are basic elements of project success (Lim & Mohammed, 2012). Quality is all about the entirety of features requisite by a product to meet the desired need and fit for purpose. To ensure the effectiveness and conformity of quality performance, the specification of quality requirements should be clearly and explicitly stated in design and contract documents. Project implementation measure for this is defined in

terms of cost, time, quality and profitability, as small and medium enterprises focus on earning returns over project investment.

Satisfaction of the clients, tight deadlines, adherence and marshal limited or sometime non-existing resources to get the job done-while shepherding, motivating and cajoling a diverse universe of personalities up and down the organization chain. They are held accountable for project results but often have little power over personnel matters and they must find way to feature since in the next project they may need the same people. Responsibility without authority is a major problem when having team members having dual reporting structure; the project manager may find it difficult to extent influence over the team members. This learning investment is paid back many times over in the form of good decisions, effective meetings, and successful cases, project managers use senior leadership support to get things done (Turner, Ledwith & Kelly, 2010).

Project managers are very good at scheduling update forums with senior leadership project delivery. Project management tools are other essentials of managers. Effective project managers understand how, when, and why to deploy project management disciplines at different points in a project. Examples of these tools include developing project charters, planning, scheduling, vendor management, risk assessment, budgeting, change management, and project control. Projects cannot be successful without interpersonal skills. Successful project managers know how to motivate people who do not work for them, and keep teams working effectively together. Quite simply, effective project managers tend to be as likeable as they are assertive (Lloyd & Walker, 2011).

Project implementation success requires managers create structure from chaos by using specific tools such as charters, risk assessments, Gantt charts, decision matrices, and many other tools throughout the project. There are times when interpersonal skills are not enough to garner the support needed from the organization on one or more project tasks. In these and functional leaders, should ensure that all business functions are making the project a priority. As a project manager you will spend a lot of time orchestrating meetings. As a result, you must be comfortable running meetings with wide variety of audiences. There need to be foresight of improving knowledge of the links between risk perception, attitude towards risk objects and actual behavior. Consultants use skills, knowledge and experience with care to ensure clients' interests are protected. Effective management of a project is important to enhance performance from the very start of the project. Decisions supported through analysis, define and structure of projects continually monitored, clearer understanding of specific risks associated with projects (Flanagan & Norman, 2013).

Some of the overriding factors leading to successful project implementation include technical credibility and the ability to use a systems approach for completing tasks that met performance standards on time and within planned costs. Project manager best suited for Effective planning ventures based on their training, experience, and educational background. The focus of project-management training has been on the technical skills deemed essential to the position, from

mastering planning or budgeting processes to cost containment and evaluating risk, however, posits that because managers who are pressed into the role of project manager often focus on technical issues while giving management aspects less credence, they fall short of relating their game plans to the overarching strategy of the organization. It recommends that all projects greater than \$5 million use life cycle cost analysis and develop a plan for funding the project, including its maintenance and operation, until the end of its service life (ASCE, 2009).

### **Management Skills and Implementation of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Projects**

The role of managing projects is very involving and project managers must oversee project member permanently attached to the project office and subject matter experts from the organizations functional, technical and support personnel. Meeting projects' objectives, schedules, budgets assessing alternatives assessing risks and deciding how to accept avoid or remove or mitigate them and for leading the initiative to successful completion of the project. Project environment is multidimensional in function and core in day to day operations in the project office and the project team. Intra organization, the parent organization, user community and contractors affect implementation of projects. There are also external organizations having related interests, organizations having oversight authority in the project office. It is a complex situation which presents communication paradigm unparalleled by any other management position (Lloyd & Walker, 2011).

Effective project managers understand the inner workings of their organizations and know enough about their products/services to hold intelligent conversations with customers, stakeholders, suppliers, and functional leaders within the organization. The best project managers are excellent listeners, and view exchanges with the above groups as learning opportunities. Project managers that are new to an organization set aside learning time each week to better understand and interact with the four groups noted above. This learning investment is paid back many times over in the form of good decisions, effective meetings, and successful cases, project managers use senior leadership support to get things done (Turner et al., 2010).

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organization on one or more project tasks. In these and functional leaders, should ensure that all business functions are making the project a priority. As a project manager you will spend a lot of time orchestrating meetings. As a result, you must be comfortable running meetings with wide variety of audiences. All managers plan and manage projects because some projects are quite narrow in scope and are carried out within a single department. For example a marketing plan for a new product may be designed by one individual or by individuals within one department. Broader projects, for example merger, may include numerous people within and outside an organization, likely in geographically dispersed locations. Since the thrust of the initiative was the design, development, and installation of an information system, project management was traditionally awarded to a technical rather than a functional area expert, without regard to leadership skills (Zhao et al., 2010).

Effective project manager uses coaching or supporting leadership styles. Coaching leadership use their conceptual skills to make a point are proactive, and oriented towards efficiency. Additionally, they project self-confidence, communicate effectively (use of oral presentations), promote group cohesion (manage the group process), gain cooperation from others (use of socialized power), provide feedback (develop others), and use their unilateral power appropriately. Supporting leadership is reflective of project managers who use their conceptual skills, are orientated toward efficiency, proactive, self-confident, good communicators, and team builders (managing group process), make use of socialized power, develop others, and have stamina and adaptability. However, they are not perceived by subordinates as not expressing themselves with emotion (spontaneous behavior) nor using their unilateral power appropriately (Morris, 2009).

### **Effective planning and Implementation of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Projects**

Planning when done effectively has been known to lead to success of projects using all the parameters of time, cost and quality (Hernando, López-Paredes, Martín-Cruz & Pajares, 2013) Their review provided planning as plausible explanation for the success of development projects – that they are able to meet set targets due to effective planning. This project implementation factor has been supported by other researchers among them (Agheneza, 2009). They indicated that the process of project planning and implementation is able to resolve inherent challenges ranging from conceptual differences about the projects if there are well thought out and capture proper technical and economic considerations. Further, they should have the necessary basic information obtained through sufficient investigation and surveys to adequate project monitoring throughout the project lifecycle and in-depth evaluation exercise. Where all the above factors are considered, development projects such as health projects tend to have strong links between sectoral planning and project identification, /feasibility and formulation, and between project preparation/project appraisal and project implementation (Golini & Landoni, 2013).

An important characteristic of effective planning is listening and considering the views and requirements of beneficiaries during the planning process. Where there is no input from local

stakeholders and beneficiaries or their perspectives and experiences from other projects are not sought during the planning stage, they may tend to see the project as having been imposed on them and not meeting their immediate needs. Hershey (2013) concluded that poor planning, lack of experience among the executing teams, scope creep, change in project design, project complexity and fraudulent practices may result in budget overruns. HIV prevention interventions demand a thorough, results-driven, objective oriented framework that is alive to the actual situations of the groups afflicted by the scourge, and that are in tandem with the national HIV plan.

Successful planning uses successful and optimal performing projects as benchmarks for other future projects. This enables institutionalization of learning. In this way unnecessary hurdles that come with building a project from scratch are circumvented. The more often a template is reused for project planning near accurate timelines and budget estimates will be achieved. Planning has numerous benefits. This significant first step in the project process enables realistic timelines in implementation to be set. Having near accurate timelines and cost estimates also enable vivid documentation of various stages in the work plan and expected outputs. This makes tracking the project much easier as the implementation goes on. A suitable plan takes in to account all financial and non-financial resources and builds within a corrective mechanism so that remedial action is instituted when deviations are above normal (Goatham, 2013).

Project Management Institute recommends between 10 and 15 percent provision for contingency in planning. It is prudent to be a little pessimistic and deliver early as opposed to being overly optimistic and delivering later than planned (Moir, 2015) (as cited in Anunda, 2014). Determining the scope of the project to be implemented may be difficult where a considerable amount of time is not spent upfront properly planning. Putting together requirements, coming up with detailed plans for project management, establishing and scheduling activities requires careful thought, co-ordination and lots of time. Without proper project planning activities, there may be lack of stakeholder buy in and commitment and inadequate resources. The result is an increase in success ratios throughout projects being carried out by particular NGOs that take planning seriously (Harding, 2012).

Project planning enables efficient allocation and use of available resources. Developing the work breakdown structure and cost breakdown structure and making the necessary adjustments along the way requires detailed planning to ensure a project is moving towards achievement of pre-set objectives. Successful projects seek to employ limited resources while maximizing output and effectiveness (Zwikael, Pathak, Singh & Ahmed, 2014). Planning may seem time consuming at the start but will yield minimum rework and rescheduling later (Ika, 2009). Project planning with clarity and correctness may turn out to be a repetitive process until we get it right, but it may save the project a lot of cost and time in future. The risks associated with poor planning necessitate that the planning exercise be as meticulous as possible to enable the project achieve success (Kerzner, 2009).

Good project managers therefore, will have identified all the stakeholders and ensure, through good communication, that stakeholders have clarity of the project's objectives and outputs. Before detailed planning takes place, stakeholder agreement for the project's outputs are obtained (this has long been recognized as a significant factor for project success). Cutting corners in project planning is a recipe for disaster, no matter what the reason is. The initiation phase is critical to the success of the project as it establishes its core foundations. Effective project planning takes into consideration all aspects of planning including stakeholder engagement, benefits mapping, risk assessment, as well as the actual plan (schedule) itself. The three most cited factors for project failure are: lack of stakeholder engagement, lack of communication, and lack of clear roles and responsibilities. These factors therefore, need to be considered very early on in the creation and planning of any project. An article published in *The Project Manager*, by Angela Lecomber, looked at the dynamic challenge of planning in the world of new and complex projects: The singular unifying characteristic new and complex projects possess is the inability for all stakeholders to 'be on the same page' in order to envision the same outcome.

### **Accountability and Implementation of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Projects**

According to project times on Wednesday twenty second (2012), without accountability which is difficult to achieve, there is no need or reason to lead a project or be on a project team as it will definitely fail. It requires existence of direct authority as compared to a situation where members of project team report to different organizational leaders. To ensure accountability for project management, project tasks must be considered first priority to day-to-day responsibilities. Setting expectations, tracking progress and integrating performance management process is important. Project expectations and goals need to be very clear to all involved. The project management team needs to think through the potential conflict, determine priorities and communicate clearly upfront despite having well written document with tasks and accountabilities.

The project objectives should be made part of each team member regular performance management process. The priority of your project should be clearly understood in relation to other projects day-to-day responsibilities. The value of the project should be clearly communicated to the project team and to the rest of the organization. Back up with rewards, recognition, performance discussions should be synergized by continual feedback. Accountability help to deliver projects results which outperform those projects without one and thus accountability play a vital role in ensuring success (Lloyd, et al 2011).

According to Robert and Wade (2010), one key factor in successful completion of projects is accountability. There has been a large bureaucracy with a dominant role in decision making regarding national planning and development since Kenya gained independence from Britain in 1963. The way decisions regarding development have been made and implemented in Kenya has therefore been largely centralized in Nairobi, the capital city with little systematic input by

Kenya's citizens into what objectives should be pursued and how these objectives should be implemented. The only formal system of citizen participation has been through five year election cycles, during which Kenyans elect legislators, but over whom they have little or no control. There have been a number of efforts to change this development model in a way that takes development closer to the citizen. There have been a number of efforts to change this development model in a way that takes development closer to the people through decentralization, but these efforts have not drawn on lessons from the failures of previous decentralization efforts.

It is therefore unsurprising that in spite of all these efforts, inequality and poverty continue to afflict the majority of Kenya's people. This fund was motivated by the need to redress the imbalances caused by prior development models. Specifically, it was aimed at addressing the corruption that had become associated with a system where individuals bought political power using money stolen from public coffers. This situation had created a spiral where citizens expected to be bribed and where to bribe it was deemed normal to steal from that very public. The fund was also hoped to redirect public expenditure from recurrent to development expenditure. Central to this disconnectedness are the existing systems of accounting and accountability which have continued to perpetuate centralized control of development. While an important aim of accountability is to enable interaction among various groups the current accountability system perpetuates asymmetrical power relations between the national planning and development field and the community field (Turner et al., 2010).

The existing systems of accountability rely on periodical accounting reports which are neither accessible nor understandable to the majority of the people at the grassroots since neither is made available to them in an active medium. The reports are prepared for distant center of parliament and the executive where they enable them to discuss events at the local, but without giving voice to the local hence perpetuating the distance between the local and the elitist capital of Nairobi. Since the reports do not go into the heart of community input into need identification, project choice, decision making and implementation, it would be difficult to evaluate CDF even on its terms of being more efficient and effective.

Moving to a social accountability is however not easy, for those steeped in the structured tradition of standardized accounting and accountability and neither is it free. The cost of retaining the four-decade old discredited centralized approach is however likely to be higher if recent post-election events in Kenya are anything to go. In spite of all these efforts, inequality and poverty continue to afflict the majority of Kenya's people. It is against these earlier failed efforts that the CDF was introduced. This fund was motivated by the need to redress the imbalances caused by prior development models. Specifically, it was aimed at addressing the corruption that had become associated with a system where individuals bought political power using money stolen from public coffers. This situation had created a spiral where citizens expected to be bribed and where to bribe it was deemed normal to steal from that very public. The fund was also hoped to redirect public expenditure from recurrent to development

expenditure. Before then, the recurrent expenditure consumed 80 per cent of the budget (Lloyd & Walker, 2011).

### **Project Characteristics and Implementation of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Projects**

Some of specific goals of a project are successful completion and profitability. A successful project is the one which is complete within the time frame, the quality is acceptable and the client/customer is pleased with the project and there is no active liability such as law suits. Projects which extend over time frame usually have extended overhead cost which impact on profitability. Completion of projects within specified quality which is indicated by materials and equipment furnished to be of the specified parameters and to perform as expected. Profitable projects have a characteristic of effective cost control which ensures the project meet or are under the estimated costs. Cost control also indicates the effectiveness of the project management and project productivity. Success of project also directly relate to safety and well-being of the personnel working in the project (Ojo & Olaniyan, 2012).

The current and future profitability of the projects can be affected by accidents. A profitable project is that which produce at least the initially expected profit and is also the achievement of the optimum profit available for the project. Project characteristics do influence implementation of projects. Projects have different characteristics based on the sector in is being undertaken. They may be unique with specific parameters such as duration, quality, budgets, project team, and location among others. Projects are always completed within finite time duration and have a specific start date and a specific completion date. A project has a specific completion date requirement while programs have specific completion milestones. In some projects, their physical location is different from company or corporate management (Lloyd & Walker, 2011).

Effective management of subcontractors who perform substantial amount of work on the project need to be coordinated to ensure they meet the objectives. Project characteristics have been identified as major causes of in accurate cash flow prediction which makes it exposed to more risk, the extent of its impact is a major concern to the project's cost professionals. Some of major project characteristics which deal with the project itself are client type, project type, project duration, project's value and procurement method. Project characteristic has been shown to affect the predictability of cash flow in the project. Motivation theory indicates that human behaviors are directed by their motives; some related researches also focus on the relationships among motives, rewards and payoffs. Even in human resource management research and practice, the importance of reward structures is still stressed, especially in creative organizations (Turner et al., 2010).

Superior reward designs not only integrate project' and stakeholder 'goals alignment but also lead to stakeholders 'contributions toward firm's desired goals. Research also indicates that each project has different odds to succeed in marketplace. By understanding what causes projects to succeed more, it is helpful for finding ways to enhance teams' rate of success. Motivation theory is often used to explain the inner driver which forces employees to work hard to enhance firms'



performances. In some studies, expectancy theory even serves a good reason to explain why people work harder when they feel they can get valuable payoff. Previous studies have shown that there are reasonable linkages between financial incentives and people's behaviors. Rewards are the most popular devices used by firms to attract and motivate employees, and this phenomenon makes them an issue of concern. The linkages between goal and performance, will significantly impact on the creation performance (Below, 2012).

Project duration has effect on its successful completion especially those projects with technical complexity and communication complexity. In this regard it's wise to keep the project team motivated. One of the contributing factors to longer project durations is phase overlap which is associated with attempt to shorten the overall project duration. Speedy delivery is almost always a primary project goal. Turner (2009) suggested that the improvement in project success rates is critical for business success, since projects are increasingly recognized as the best way to manage the changes required by business strategies. Moreover, the effects of the global financial crisis have required organizations to be more efficient and to have more effective and strategically aligned project portfolios that could be achieved by having more effective governance processes. In this scenario, organizations with mature benefits realization processes are able to prioritize and to support the most valuable initiatives.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### **System Theory**

The term system theory originates from Bertalanffy's (1933) general system theory. Margaret Mead was an influential figure in systems theory. Organizations are social systems. Real systems are open to and interact with their environments. The different parts/elements within and around the organization intermingle to affect the way organization operate and therefore strategy implementation.

It can be argued from a system's approach to strategic management that many of the reasons for strategies failure may be attributed to the "successive dominance of different reductionism approaches to strategic management. Such partial approaches to project management ignore the complex, embedded and dynamic nature of today's organization.

Taking the system approach in project implementation helps managers of organizations to have to understand the customer, better predict environmental reaction, estimate resource competence, and coordinate strategic project activities, obtain top management support influence on implementation. This theory is grounded on how management skills influence implementation of Orphan and Vulnerable Children Projects in Igembe North Sub-County, Meru County Kenya.

### **Co-evolutionary Theory**

Co-evolutionary theory, according to Lewin and Volberda (1999), indicates that as firms grow and evolve from small to larger and multidivisional organizations, the strategy implementation methods also evolve simultaneously. The various project implementation models are meant to meet the changing needs of firms as they evolve through various stages of the organizational life cycle. In contrast to the earlier descriptive models, this model is more prescriptive with an, albeit limited, empirical basis. The research highlights three of classifications of project implementation styles: change, collaborative, and cultural.

Not all institutions implement their projects in the same manner; nevertheless, research investigating the differing styles of implementation is scarce. Jungian theory is used for in framework of implementation style, however, this is very much an analysis of the psychological style of individuals within the firm. More recently, Parsa (1999) utilized Bourgeois and Brodwin's (1984) classification of strategy implementation types.

The majority of existing classification models in project implementation tend to be normative in nature. Alternatively, they are developed from organizational observation, and as such, become context specific and frequently lack any broader theoretical grounding. In contrast, Bourgeois and Brodwin's (1984) model is comprehensive and based on specific theoretical assumptions and has been used by authors such as Parsa (1999). Bourgeois and Brodwin (1984) to refute the traditional approach to project implementation as simply an addition to the strategy formulation phase of the strategy process. Rather, they contend that project implementation evolves either from a process of winning group commitment through a coalitional form of decision-making, or as a result of complete coalitional involvement of implementation staff through a strong corporate culture. Therefore, it explains the influence of effective planning on implementation of Orphan and Vulnerable Children Projects in Igembe North Sub-County, Meru County Kenya.

### **Theory of Change (TOC)**

Theory of change was put forth by Cooper (2005). When applied to social change processes, it represents a thinking action alternative to other more rigid planning approaches and logics. A theory of change defines pieces and steps necessary to bring about a long-term goal. It also describes the types of interventions that bring about results hoped to. A theory of change includes assumptions (often supported by research) that stakeholders use to explain in the process of change (Rogers, 2008). According to the theory of Change, set of assumptions and abstract projections regarding how project members believe reality could be untold in the immediate future. Based on a realistic analysis of current context, a self-assessment about their capabilities of process facilitation and a crucial and explicit review of the study, assumptions of community involvement in accountability and a process that helps monitor consciously and critically individual and also collective way of thinking (Rogers, 2008).

The theory of change describes how changes might occur; the point is not to predict change, but to understand how change may happen through project characteristics in accountability and how it could be influenced through intervention strategies. The study found it most appropriate to

adopt the theory of change because it is a conscious and visualization exercise that enables project stakeholders to focus energy on specific future realities which are not only desirable, but also possible and probable when addressing social and community based issues like school feeding programs. Theory of change therefore served as a basis for project characteristics and accountability influence implementation of Orphan and Vulnerable Children Projects in Igembe North Sub-County, Meru County Kenya.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study adopted a cross-section research design. According to Polit and Beck (2013), in a descriptive study, researchers observe, count, delineate, and classify. They further describe cross-section research studies as studies that have, as their main objective, the accurate portrayal of the characteristics of persons, situations or groups, and/or the frequency with which certain phenomena occur. The cross-section research design was selected because the study was a survey involving collection of data at one point in time. In addition, the cross-sectional survey was preferred because it enabled assessing relationships between variables and it provided opportunity to identify moderators between variables (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Singleton (2009) describes a descriptive cross-sectional survey as a comprehensive design that enables large and diverse amounts of data to be collected within a short time frame and analyzed quantitatively, giving a credible presentation of results. Thus, this approach was suitable for this study, since the study intended to collect comprehensive information through descriptions which were helpful for identifying variables. Bajpai (2011) assert that a descriptive design seeks to get information that describes existing phenomena by asking questions relating to individual perceptions and attitudes.

### **Target Population**

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010), a population is the total collection of elements about which we wish to make inferences. The target population for this study comprised of 378 staff working with OVC project, community leaders and the beneficiaries.

### **Sample Size**

The sampling plan describes the sampling unit, sampling frame, sampling procedures and the sample size for the study. The sampling frame describes the list of all population units from which the sample was selected (Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler, 2014). According to Orodho (2003), sampling involves selecting a given number of subjects from a defined population so as to represent the entire population. Stratified and simple random sampling technique were used in this study. From each category, representative samples were drawn through simple random

methods. This method ensured that all the individuals in the target population had an equal chance of being included in the sample. This helped to eliminate the biasness. To obtain the desired sample size for the study with the population of 378, Nassiuma (2000) formula was used as shown;

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

Where:  $n$ = sample size;  $N$  = population (378);  $Cv$ = coefficient of variation (take 0.6);  $e$ = tolerance of desired level of confidence (take 0.05) at 95% confidence level);  $n = 378 (0.6^2) = 190.5$ (rounded to 190)

$$n = 0.6^2 + (378-1) 0.05^2 = 190$$

### **Sampling Procedures**

The study selected the respondents using stratified proportionate random sampling technique. Stratified random sampling is unbiased sampling method of grouping heterogeneous population into homogenous subsets then making a selection within the individual subset to ensure representativeness. The goal of stratified random sampling was to achieve the desired representation from various sub-groups in the population. In stratified random sampling subjects are selected in such a way that the existing sub-groups in the population are more or less represented in the sample (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2013). The study used simple random sampling to pick the respondents in each stratum.

### **Research Instruments**

Primary data was obtained using self-administered questionnaires. The questionnaire was made up of both open ended and closed ended questions. The open-ended questions were used so as to encourage the respondent to give an in-depth and felt response without feeling held back in illuminating of any information and the closed ended questions allowed respondents to respond from limited options that had been stated. According to Saunders (2011), the open ended or unstructured questions allow profound response from the respondents while the closed or structured questions are generally easier to evaluate. The questionnaires were used in an effort to conserve time and money as well as to facilitate an easier analysis as they were in immediate usable form.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The researcher obtained an introduction letter from the university which was presented to each stakeholder so as to be allowed to collect the necessary data from the respondents. The drop and pick method was preferred for questionnaire administration so as to give respondents enough time to give well thought out responses. The researcher booked appointment with respondent organizations at least two days before visiting to administer questionnaires. The researcher

personally administered the research instruments to the respondents. This enabled the researcher to establish rapport, explain the purpose of the study and the meaning of items that were not clear as observed by Best and Khan (2003).

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 25.0). All the questionnaires received were referenced and items in the questionnaire were coded to facilitate data entry. After data cleaning which entailed checking for errors in entry, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean score and standard deviation were estimated for all the quantitative variables and information presented in form of tables. The qualitative data from the open-ended questions was analyzed using conceptual content analysis and presented in prose. Inferential data analysis was done using multiple regression analysis. Multiple regression analysis was used to establish the relations between the independent and dependent variables. Multiple regression was used because it was the procedure that uses two or more independent variables to predict a dependent variable. Since there were four independent variables in this study the multiple regression model generally assumed the following equation;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where: Y= Implementation of OVC projects;  $\beta_0$ =constant;  $\beta_1$ ,  $\beta_2$ ,  $\beta_3$  and  $\beta_4$  = Regression coefficients;  $X_1$ = Management Skills;  $X_2$ = Effective planning;  $X_3$ = Accountability;  $X_4$ = Project Characteristics;  $\varepsilon$ =Error Term

### **RESEARCH RESULTS**

The study sought to assess the influence of management skills on implementation of Orphan and Vulnerable Children Projects in Igembe North Sub-County, Meru County Kenya. The study found that management skills greatly influenced the implementation of OVC funded projects in Kenya. This was clear as aspects of management skills such as; staff motivation and leadership were found to influence the implementation of OVC funded projects in Kenya to a very great extent. Also, monitoring & evaluation and control were found to influence the implementation of OVC funded projects in Kenya to a great extent.

On effective planning, the study sought to establish its influence on implementation of Orphan and Vulnerable Children Projects in Igembe North Sub-County, Meru County Kenya. The findings revealed that effective planning influenced the implementation of OVC funded projects in Kenya very greatly. Further, the study found that fast deployment and ease of staffing influenced the implementation of OVC funded projects in Kenya to a very great extent. The study also found that annual plan/strategic plan, work breakdown structure, resource allocation and scheduling influenced the implementation of OVC funded projects in Kenya to a great extent.

The study sought to determine the influence of accountability on implementation of Orphan and Vulnerable Children Projects in Igembe North Sub-County, Meru County Kenya. From the aspects of accountability, the study found that interoperability with existing frameworks influenced the implementation of OVC funded projects in Kenya to a very great extent. Further, the findings revealed that; relevant data protection legal, transparency, oversight and information stewardship influence the implementation of OVC funded projects in Kenya to a great extent.

The study sought to establish how project characteristics influence implementation of Orphan and Vulnerable Children Projects in Igembe North Sub-County, Meru County Kenya. The findings on the aspects of project characteristics reveal that phases and duration influence the implementation of orphans and vulnerable children funded projects in Kenya to a very great extent. The study found that value, staff skills and materials influenced implementation of orphans and vulnerable children funded projects in Kenya to a great extent.

The study also sought to determine the trend of orphans and vulnerable children funded projects in Kenya for the last five years where the study found that; the desired quality of projects, efficiency and effectiveness had greatly improved. The study also found that community satisfaction, timely completion of project, operations within budget and sustainability had also improved.

## **REGRESSION ANALYSIS**

The researcher conducted a multiple linear regression (MLR) model so as to quantify factors influencing implementation of orphan and vulnerable children projects in Kenya. The findings were displayed in Table 1, 2 and 3.

**Table 1: Model Summary**

<b>Model</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>Adjusted R Square</b>	<b>Std. Error of the Estimate</b>
1	0.862	0.744	0.737	0.521

The findings show that the adjusted R square was 0.737 which implied that the independent variables selected for the study (management skills, effective planning, accountability and project characteristics) accounted for 73.7% of the variations in implementation of orphans and vulnerable children funded projects in Kenya. According to the test model, 26.3% percent of the variation in implementation of orphans and vulnerable children funded projects in Kenya could not be explained by the model. Therefore, further studies should be done to establish the other factors influencing implementation of orphan and vulnerable children projects in Kenya.

**Table 2: ANOVA Results**

<b>Model</b>	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Regression	121.946	4	30.487	110.282	.000
Residual	42.019	152	0.276		
Total	163.965	156			

From the findings, the probability value of the test model was 0.000 and F-calculated was 110.282. This indicates that the overall test model was significant in predicting the factors influencing implementation of orphan and vulnerable children projects in Kenya since the p-value was less than 0.05 and F-calculated was greater than F-critical which was 2.372.

**Table 3: Regression Coefficients of Determination**

	<b>Unstandardized Coefficients</b>		<b>Standardized Coefficients</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
	<b>B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>		
(Constant)	1.236	0.255		4.847	.000
Management skills	0.722	0.293	0.701	2.464	.018
Effective planning	0.789	0.144	0.765	5.479	.000
Accountability	0.733	0.239	0.711	3.067	.004
Project Characteristics	0.824	0.288	0.799	2.861	.007

From the study results, the resultant regression equation was:

$$Y=1.236 + 0.722X_1 + 0.789X_2 + 0.733X_3 + 0.824X_4$$

As per the equation, it was revealed that if the all factors of the study are held constant, then the implementation of orphans and vulnerable children funded projects in Kenya will be 1.236. Further, if the other factors are held constant, an increase in management skills would increase the implementation of orphans and vulnerable children funded projects in Kenya by 0.722. This variable was found to be significant since its p-value=0.018 was less than 0.05. These findings concur with Lloyd and Walker (2011) who posit that the role of managing projects is very involving and project managers must oversee project member permanently attaché to the project office and subject matter experts from the organizations functional, technical and support personnel.

The findings also revealed that if the other variables were held constant at zero, then a unit change in effective planning would lead to a 0.789-unit change in implementation of orphans and vulnerable children funded projects in Kenya. This variable was found to be significant since its p-value was 0.000 and was less than 0.05. This is agreement with Hermano, López-Paredes, Martín-Cruz and Pajares (2013) who note that planning when done effectively has been known to lead to success of projects using all the parameters of time, cost and quality.

Moreover, the researcher revealed that the implementation of orphans and vulnerable children funded projects in Kenya increases by 0.733 if there is an increase in accountability when other variables are held at constant zero. This variable is significant because its p-value was 0.004 and was less than 0.05. The findings relate to Project Times (2012) who noted that without accountability which is difficult to achieve, there is no need or reason to lead a project or be on a project team as it will definitely fail.

Additionally, the researcher indicated that an increase in project characteristics would increase the implementation of orphans and vulnerable children funded projects in Kenya by 0.824 if other variables are held constant at zero. This variable is significant because its p-value (0.007) was less than 0.05. This is in line with Lloyd and Walker (2011) who affirm that project characteristics do influence implementation of projects since have different characteristics based on the sector in is being undertaken.

Overall, the researcher revealed that project characteristics had the greatest influence on the implementation of orphans and vulnerable children funded projects in Kenya, followed by effective planning, then accountability while management skills had the least effect on the implementation of orphans and vulnerable children funded projects in Kenya. The study therefore reveals that all variables were significant.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study concludes that management skills has a strong and positive effect on the implementation of orphans and vulnerable children funded projects in Kenya. The study concludes that monitoring and evaluation influenced performance of OVC projects in Kenya significantly and hence facilitates negotiations and identification of gaps and suggesting the way forward. The study concludes that staff need to be motivated so as to keep teams working effectively together.

The study also concludes that effective planning has strong and positive influence on the implementation of orphans and vulnerable children funded projects in Kenya. It further deduces that an effective plan is achieved through listening and considering the views and requirements of beneficiaries. Further, it concluded that planning enhances efficient allocation and use of available resources.

The study concluded that accountability has a strong and positive significance on the implementation of orphans and vulnerable children funded projects in Kenya. The study also concluded that accountability helps to deliver projects results which outperform those projects without one and thus accountability play a vital role in ensuring success. The study concludes that accountability aims at addressing the corruption.



The study concluded that project characteristics has a strong and positive influence on the implementation of OVC funded projects in Kenya. The study concluded that project characteristic affects the predictability of cash flow in the project and further that the project duration has effect on its successful completion especially those projects with technical complexity and communication complexity.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study recommends that project managements should devote their support to the projects to ensure that all the resources needed for implementation of the project are available. The management must continue to communicate with all the stakeholders during implementation of the project so as to get their support. The study also recommends that the management's major role should include motivating and directing the project team so that they can work towards the attainment of project goals.

The study revealed that project monitoring greatly affects implementation of OVC projects. This study, therefore, recommends there should exist capacity building on monitoring and evaluations guidelines with more emphasis on reporting and participatory M&E. This will enhance effective assessment of results which enhances the implementation of the OVC projects. The county government should allocate sufficient funds to projects and ensure there is independency in utilization of the funds. The study further recommends that management in OVC projects in Meru county should ensure that they employ and deploy qualified and competent individuals for project monitoring process. In addition, they should employ monitoring/supervision mechanism, to allow efficiency in project implementation.

The study recommends that county government should improve integrated communications plan to improve project implementation. The content of such communications plan should include clear explanation of what new responsibilities, tasks and duties need to be performed by the affected implementers. This will enhance communication of change during and after an organizational change on organizational developments to all levels in the appropriate manner.

The study recommends that the project management office or committee should continuously assess stakeholder interests; this will help to promote their buy-in and eliminate intergroup conflicts thereby improving project performance. The study also recommends that stakeholders should be included in all pre-implementation and inception meetings as well as their views being incorporated in planning and execution. This will increase the acceptability and create a bridging social investment for the health projects, well as enriching the project with more ideas.

Further, the study recommends that the management team should be trained on leadership styles which were found to influence coordination of the OVC project management team. This will in turn create an environment where the projects can be carried out successfully. This can be done

through workshops and also leaders related seminars to enlighten the leaders on how to carry the projects as well managing their teams.

The study finally recommends that the community should be sensitized to be heavily involved in these projects. This can be done through including them as the stakeholders of the projects as well as allowing them to contribute to the projects hence improving the performance of the projects.

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