

EFFECTS OF PROJECT STAKEHOLDERS' ENGAGEMENT ON HEALTH PROJECT MANAGEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF ROCK OF AGES EMPOWERMENT NGO, KAMPALA-UGANDA. A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY.

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Abstract Background

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The study aims to assess the Effects of Project Stakeholders' Engagement on Health Project Management in the context of the Rock of Ages empowerment NGO, Kampala-Uganda.

Methodology

A descriptive cross-sectional case study using both primary and secondary sources of data. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected.

Results

Some responses provided by the respondents include. *"It serves as a platform for monitoring and evaluation of your project to determine what to do next". "it equally serves as a check on the project team and as such makes them time conscious". "Ensures/enhances project success in the form of project effectiveness and sustainability, in other words, it guarantees effective realization of project result Brings out a clearer and better understanding of roles and expectations". "It works to bring the numbers which are very critical for successful advocacy work mainly because there is strength in numbers". "It brings to fore understanding by all parties regarding the roles each has to play in achieving project objectives". "Ensures success through influence and participation of all stakeholders by how they are oriented". "It provides the organization with valuable information as well as serving as a platform for continued sharing of best practices with key stakeholders".*

Conclusion

Stakeholder involvement in budgeting for the project, identifying roles and responsibilities of personnel, availing of resources, and intervening in securing donor funding influence Health Project Management to a very great extent. The respondents indicated that involvement in of control project planning in delivery method, identification of automobile control projects, and instituting work plans largely influence Health Project Management.

Recommendations

There should be Participatory planning with full commitment from all key actors especially from public authorities and donors, effective management of stakeholder expectations, and formalization of expectations and other terms are necessary.

Keywords: Participatory planning, Stakeholders' Engagement, Monitoring, Evaluation

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Background

Stakeholder engagement is an inclusive way of describing a broader process between an organization and the people or structures impacted by the activities that are continuous throughout the entire life of a project (Saumya, 2023). This definition encompasses the entire process of stakeholder management in any project management. Stakeholder engagement is a process by which a firm's stakeholders engage in dialogue to improve a firm's decision-making and accountability toward corporate social responsibility (CSR) and achieving the triple bottom line. (Wikipedia, 2009) Stakeholder engagement works to take into account the concerns and Objectives of a firm's stakeholders in its decisions. Stakeholder

engagement involves building and maintaining relationships. It also involves preserving the active support and commitment of the people to the implementation of change, through program or project delivery.

The engagement works in the context of businesses, labor organizations, non-governmental organizations, trade and industry organizations, governments, financial institutions, and any other relevant structures. The company most often initiates open, two-way dialogue seeking understanding and solutions to issues of mutual concern. Stakeholder engagement occurs when a company wants to consider the views and involvement of someone or some group in making and implementing a business decision (PDFCOFFEE, 2024). Stakeholder

engagement must occur when a company truly wants input from groups that will be affected by the company's decision (Wikipedia, 2009). During the identification of stakeholders, focus should also be put beyond the formal organization structures. The inner circles stand for the most important stakeholders who have the highest influence (Dagmar, 2001).

Attention to stakeholders is needed to assess and enhance political feasibility, especially when it comes to articulating and achieving the common good (Tsegaye et al, 2017). Attention is important to satisfy those involved or affected by that requirement for procedural justice; procedural rationality and legitimacy have been met (Eden and Ackermann, 1998). Stakeholder management supports an organization in achieving its strategic objectives by interpreting and influencing both the external and internal environments and by creating positive relationships with stakeholders through the appropriate management of their expectations and agreed objectives (Yehualashet, 2017). The advantages of Stakeholder Management include eliminating conflicting interests among stakeholders, reducing the pressure on management to produce short-term results, reducing the costs associated with a high turnover among stakeholders,

and providing the firm with committed stakeholders in an environment characterized by increasing competition (Yehualashet, 2017). The study aims to assess the Effects of Project Stakeholders' Engagement on Health Project Management in the context of the Rock of Ages empowerment NGO, Kampala-Uganda.

Methodology
Research Design

A descriptive cross-sectional case study. Secondary data sources were also combined with primary data to complement the results, which were collected from the field using structured and semi-structured questionnaires as well as focus group discussion and key resource persons discussion. Qualitative and Quantitative data was collected which was most appropriate for this kind of study. Triangulation of the instruments was done to ensure corroboration or otherwise of the facts and issues.

Study Area

The study was conducted in the Rock of Ages empowerment NGO, Kampala-Uganda

Table 1: Target Population

Category	Population
Fundraising specialists	10
Advertising specialist.	08
Research associates.	06
Public relations specialists	08
Finance associates	04
Social media managers	02
Program coordinators	09
Program associates	02
Project managers	03
Director of special initiatives.	01
Project advocacy and communication officers	05
Research coordinators	05
IT specialists	07
Volunteers	15
Field officers	16
Drivers	10
Monitoring and evaluation officers	04
Business development and marketing offices	10
Human resource and logistics assistants/ officers	05
Accountants/auditors	10
Total	140

The target population was 140 staff members of Rock of Ages empowerment NGO operating from different departments of the organization.

The Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling method was used to select the sample for this study. The purposive sampling technique helped in the selection of respondents who provided

relevant factual information for discussion (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). The study's sample size was 103 and the response rate was 03. The actual sample size became 100. However, the sample size was determined from the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) Sample Table as appended in the appendices. The choice of target respondents was deliberate, based on whether the organization falls within the category of organizations that could provide information for the study.

Table 2: Sample Size Breakdown

Sample category	Number of sampled
Program and Project Managers	30
Heads of Organizations/other senior staff	28
Frontline Project Staff	45
TOTAL	103

Source: Researcher, 2023

The target population was (140), but the sample size was 103, selected using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table of sample size selection. Note, that after the actual fieldwork, the non-response rate was three.

Data Collection Procedures and Techniques

This work relied mainly on primary and secondary sources of data but more heavily on primary data as the research was, a structured questionnaire and semi-structured guide. The structured questionnaire was made up of closed and open-ended questions administered to the program/project managers. The semi-structured guide was used for focused group and key resource personnel discussion. Alongside the questionnaires, the researcher gathered information using the interview schedule. This enhanced the questionnaire and direct first-hand information was collected from the respondents. The researcher also used an interview guide to collect information from the respondents.

Data Analysis

To transform the raw data into information for useful and meaningful purposes, there was the need to put the data into a manageable form, thus creating summaries and categories and applying statistical inferences. The data were also edited to ensure consistency and as well identify and purge them of all forms of errors and omissions that could come up in the course of the data collection. The data were then coded thus classifying and categorizing the data into manageable and analyzable form. The quantitative aspect of the data was analyzed using statistical software known as, Microsoft Excel while the qualitative aspect was analyzed and interpreted by way of transcription as well as logical and deductive narratives mainly with the aid of tables, graphs, and charts.

Research limitations and challenges.

Given the category of respondents, this study dealt with, the data collection was time-consuming and quite slow as some organizations had to be revisited and called severally before getting the scheduled officers for an interview. In some cases, it was not possible to have a face-to-face interview opportunity with scheduled

officers. (103) questionnaires were issued and only 100 was returned

Another major challenge to this work was time; there was virtually no time to do respondent feedback and discussion of interpretations and conclusions of the research with the participants for verification and insight.

Results

The effects of Project Stakeholders' Engagement on Health Project Management in the context of Rock of Ages empowerment NGO, Kampala-Uganda

The operational definition of stakeholder engagement by the respondents included the following: a way of working with Stakeholders, a two-way dialogue process between management and their Stakeholders, an event to let Stakeholders know what is/should be expected from and by them, a process from start to end of a project to pull energies and strategies to build synergies (because numbers count in advocacy work) and a way of engaging people that impact or will be impacted by your project. Though there are variations in the operationalization of the term, there are commonalities in its application as the frequencies; however, the level of variation gives credence to Karlsen's assertion about spontaneity and casualness in stakeholder management processes. Also comparing the different working definitions here with Wikipedia encyclopedia's definition that, Stakeholder Engagement is the opportunity to discuss and agree on expectations of communication and, primarily, agree on a set of Values and Principles that all stakeholders will abide by, one can see cracks and challenges in the subsequent processes and activities this particular one will be feeding into. However, when it comes to when in the project life Stakeholder engagement is done, there are no contradictions between what the respondent organizations practice and what the International Finance Institute says, that, —stakeholder engagement¹¹ is emerging as a means of describing a broader, more inclusive, and continuous process between a company and those potentially impacted that encompasses a range of activities and approaches, and spans the entire life of a project (IFC, 2007) as they'll undertake it throughout the project life.

Table: 3 working definition of Stakeholder engagement by respondent organizations

No.	Working definition	Frequencies	Percentage%
1	A process of working with Stakeholders	25	25
2	A two-way dialogue process between Health Project Management and Stakeholders	50	50
3	An event to let Stakeholders know what is/should be expected from and by them	10	10
4	A process from start to end of the project to pull energies, strengths, and numbers to build synergies	12	12
5	Engaging the people that impact or are impacted by your work as an organization	3	3
	Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

In response to the question, what contributions does stakeholder engagement offer to project management? The following responses were provided by the respondents, and these justify why stakeholder engagement was generally found to be used by all respondent organizations. *“It serves as a platform for monitoring and evaluation of your project to determine what to do next”*. *“It ensures transparency, accountability, and responsiveness as well as efficiency in project delivery”*; *“it equally serves as a check on the project team and as such makes them time conscious”*. *“Ensures/enhances project success in the form of project effectiveness and sustainability, in other words, it guarantees effective realization of project result Brings out a clearer and better understanding of roles and expectations”*. *“Clear definition and understanding of project objectives among stakeholders. “It works to bring the numbers which are very critical for successful advocacy work mainly because there is strength in numbers”*. *“It brings to fore understanding by all parties regarding the roles each has to play in achieving project objectives”*. *“Ensures success through influence and participation of all stakeholders by how they are oriented”*. *“It provides the organization with valuable information as well as serving as a platform for continued sharing of best practices with key stakeholders”*. Given the above contributions of stakeholder engagement to project management, it came out that, all organizations interviewed undertake it periodically throughout the project life cycle.

Discussion

Stakeholder Engagement in the working terms of the respondents varied a little from one group to the other; however, the majority of them seem to be applying the term similarly as a two-way dialogue process between Health Project Management and their stakeholders, however, others interpret it as a way of working with stakeholders or an event to let Stakeholders know what is/should be expected from and by them. Its contribution to project success as enumerated by respondents among

several others includes: a platform for monitoring and evaluation, ensures transparency, accountability, and responsiveness among stakeholders. Regarding the time this activity is carried out, it was discovered all the respondent organizations do it throughout the project. On communication, it came out that all respondent organizations consider it as important and have institutionalized it as part of stakeholders' management processes and the various ways it is carried out include: Meetings, Reporting, Telephone calls, Conferences, E-mails, Formal and informal letters, Workshops Media programs and Stakeholder Forums.

Conclusion

Stakeholder Involvement in budgeting for the project, identifying roles and responsibilities of personnel, availing of resources, and intervening in securing donor funding influence Health Project Management to a very great extent. The respondents indicated that involvement in control project planning in delivery method, identification of automobile control projects, and instituting work plans influence Health Project Management to a great extent.

Recommendations

Effective stakeholder involvement and management should be given priority right from project design, and project designers should make sure there is adequate budgetary provision for that.

There is a need to have separate organizational units entrusted with the complex task of stakeholder management. Participatory planning with full commitment from all key actors especially from public authorities and donors, effective management of stakeholder expectations, and formalization of expectations and other terms are necessary and should be done by putting them into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), in other words, there should be clear cut relationships and expectations. It should be a process that permits the entire project development through to implementation and evaluation.

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List of abbreviations

NGO: Non-government organization

Source of funding

No source of funding

Conflict of interest

No conflict of interest.

Author Biography


Mohamed Hassan is a student with a master's degree in project planning and management at Kampala University.

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