



An investigation into the factors constraining implementation of international development projects in South Sudan

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Abstract

In many parts of South Sudan, at least 50% of communities depend on international aid in the areas of delivery of health services, water, education, food security, governance, and rule of law, as well as supporting government institutions in building the capacity of civil servants. Many of these projects have either prematurely ended or closed due to a number of reasons. This study aimed at investigating the factors constraining the implementation of international development projects in South Sudan and determining the critical success issues. The study further aimed at making recommendations on how international development organisations can successfully implement projects in a country like South Sudan. The case study involved a sample of 110 participants from five different international development organisations and was done as a quantitative study using descriptive analysis. The findings revealed that political instability and unfavourable government policies, poor project design, less donor commitment in funding development projects, and low community/stakeholder engagement in planning and implementation phases of the projects, as being the major constraints to the implementation of international development projects. Other factors included poor government institutional frameworks coupled with the low level of commitment of the government. From the study results, it was recommended that international development organisations should engage with the local community during the designing, planning and implementation of the projects, and design the projects based on the country's current context to avoid failure. Government institutions should commit to these development projects to ensure their sustainability.

Keywords: international aid, international development projects, political instability

1. Introduction

Project implementation is considered one of the critical areas in project management. Other critical factors for any project success include cost, time, and quality, against which projects can be measured and these issues play an important role in ensuring the successful implementation of projects. Project implementation aims at ensuring that the targets and deliverables are achieved as planned using the available budgeted funds. There are different types of projects depending on their objectives and/or intended final results. Implementation of international development projects, as being unique in their setting, face constraints, especially since they are mostly implemented in developing countries that are prone to challenges such as conflict, poor infrastructure, and sometimes characterised by either failed governments or governments that do not have the capacity to govern themselves on their own.

The major objective of international development projects concerns poverty alleviation and living standards improvement, environment protection, basic human rights protection, assistance for victims of natural or people caused disasters, capacity building and development of basic physical and social infrastructure thereby making their implementation crucial.

1.1 Research context and background

International development projects are unique undertakings

and will be fraught with challenges during implementation and thus are not immune to failure (Boakye & Liu, 2014:1)¹. South Sudan as a young nation is faced with many challenges due to the more than 20 years of civil war, including the recent 2013 political conflict. These challenges impact on the implementation of international development projects. Many international development agencies, banks, and multilateral and bilateral organisations, support the country in the aspects of health, governance, justice and rule of law, peace and reconciliation, and education, as well as various government institutions, in building the capacity of their staff. These projects are mostly carried out in remote areas of the country where accessibility is difficult and both tribal and community conflicts continue to take place. Therefore, this study investigated those factors constraining the implementation of international development projects in South Sudan.

1.2 Research problem

The successful implementation of international development projects in South Sudan has been constrained by a number of factors. If these factors are not evaluated in time during the project initiation process, the actual implementation of these project becomes a challenge for the organisations. South Sudan, a war-torn country that is still under conflict since 2013, has left most of these projects either closed too early, or experiencing adverse effects on their continued implementation.

1.3 Research questions

In line with the research objectives, this research considered the following questions:

- What are the critical success factors for projects?
- What are the factors constraining the implementation of international development projects in South Sudan?
- What recommendations can be made to international development projects regarding successful implementation of projects in South Sudan?

1.4 Significance of study

This study would assist international development organisations to understand the factors constraining project implementation in a country like South Sudan. The recommendations from this study will assist these development organisations in evaluating and improving the project implementations process. Further research in the area would improve what is known regarding the project implementation by development agencies as well as other countries that have similar contexts like South Sudan. The current global imbalance between nations has made other countries, especially in Africa, to deeply depend on international development aid in the form of projects. South Sudan is one of the least developed, newest nation that depends on these projects in most of its sectors. The success of these projects greatly depends on how well they are implemented.

2. Literature review

Despite the importance of international development projects to the development of mostly developing countries, they are failing at a surprising rate (Boakye & Liu, 2014:1) ^[1]. These projects are aimed at improving the standard of living of populations that are in devastating need, but most of these people are in complex areas that also make implementation an issue for the donors.

2.1 Overview of project implementation stage

Project implementation is a critical stage in the project management cycle, where the actual project work is done. This is where the actual results required from the project are delivered. According to Durlak (2008:329) ^[2], implementation refers to what a program consists of when being delivered to a particular setting. Monitoring, program reach, adaptation, and quality, are among the major aspects of implementations.

According to Choudhury (2008:8) ^[3] the project implementation phase is a period of hectic activity for the project and that because of its peculiarities, there is a high need for coordination and control under this phase. This is the stage where a major portion of project work takes place, what changes are necessary, whether the project is on schedule, within the approved budget and if the project meets specifications (Larson & Gray, 2011:8) ^[4]. The status report, changes, quality, and project forecasts, are done at this stage of the project lifecycle.

2.2 Overview of characteristics of international development projects

According to Das and Ngacho (2017:276) ^[5], development projects are essentially community-driven in nature and aim at

redistributing national resources to the community to bring services and facilities closer to the people to alleviate poverty, create employment, and eventually raise the standard of living of the people. These development projects are given out in the form of aid to mostly low developing countries.

2.2.1 Specific objectives and target group

The difference between these projects and other types of projects is that they are aimed at supporting and improving the lives of communities and not a particular client like other projects. The target group in such projects is not a single person or company, but a target group of the population that needs such assistance, and most of these projects are implemented in developing countries like South Sudan. Ika (2012:28) ^[6] describes international development projects as those designed to deliver goods and services intended for public use. International development projects are generally limited in terms of resources and target group, have a lifecycle, and require specific tools and techniques for implementation.

2.2.2 Stakeholders

In contrast Khang and Moe (2008:74) ^[7] highlight that international development projects, unlike other projects, commonly involve three separate key stakeholders, namely the funding agency who pays for but does not use directly the project outputs, the implementing unit, and the target beneficiaries who actually benefit from the project outputs. Khang and Moe (2008:75) ^[7] further explain that these separate roles have implications of financial accountability, mismatch of real needs, and capacity gap of target groups, and thirdly complications around establishing rules and regulations for financial accountability by funding agencies and governments. Ashan and Gunawan (2010:70) ^[8] explain that the process of international development projects is complex because many stakeholders are involved. The donor, host country, the client, coordination, and contractors, are among the stakeholders involved in the implementation of the projects. The performance of the projects depends on the involvement of all these stakeholders in the process of implementation, all play a vital role and confirmation of donor funding is vital in these types of projects.

2.2.3 Project lifecycle

International development projects like any other projects have lifecycles or stages. Ashan and Gunawan (2010:7) ^[8] advise that most development organisations have five common stages in the lifecycle of international development projects. These stages include project identification, preparation, appraisal/approval, implementation, and evaluations. Focusing on all these stages is vital to ensure the successful completion of the project.

The initial stage of the project lifecycle involves the preliminary planning of the project, identification of the target group, and implementing agency. Khang and Moe (2008:75) ^[7] advised that to ensure successful completion of the conceptualising phase the correct beneficiaries should be identified with their relevant needs matched to the donor priorities, the implementing agency should have been identified, and initial awareness/support of all parties involved

analysed for the project to move to the planning stage.

The last stage of the project lifecycle depends on the successful completion of the second and third stages plus successful closure/ acceptance of the attained deliverables. Furthermore, Khang and Moe (2010:77) ^[7] stress that the success of each phase provides favourable pre-conditions for the implementation of the remaining part of the project. Therefore, the lifecycle stages of international development projects are linked to one another, the outputs in one stage become the inputs in the next stage.

2.3 Critical success factors for project success

According to Khang and Moe (2008:72) ^[7] understanding the critical success factors of projects helps to determine the socioeconomic progress in recipient countries, enhances the ability of donors/implementing agencies to ensure desired outcomes, forecasts the statutes of the project, diagnoses problems and prioritizes their attention by sourcing scarce resources to successfully complete the project. Ika, Diallo and Thuillier (2012:109) ^[8] found out that five critical success factors influenced the success of World Bank projects and these were: monitoring, project team, coordination, project design, training of the project team, and the institutional environment. Khang and Moe (2008:73) ^[7] summarised various literature reviews and classified these critical success factors into three major categories namely competency, motivation, and the enabling environment.

2.3.1 Competencies

Khang and Moe (2008:73) ^[7] highlight that the competencies required for project success can be related to the project manager and the team members or institutional competencies of the project team itself. Khang and Moe (2008:73) ^[7] further elaborates how the institutional competencies are being effective; control and communication systems, good planning and scheduling, the absence of bureaucracy, strong teamwork and leadership, and the lack of dysfunctional conflicts. The competencies of a project manager to run a successful project include leadership ability, ability to develop people, communication skills, interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, negotiating skills, and team management skills (Gido & Clements, 2012:304) ^[9].

2.3.2 Motivation

How well is the project team motivated to execute their duties is a crucial component under motivations. These factors recognised under motivation include a clear understanding of the project goals, objectives and mission. What does the project hope to achieve at the end of the year or project cycle? Kwak (2002:5) ^[10] concludes that these factors and the compatibility of the interests of the individuals with those of the project are even more important for international development projects, where the relationship of the project team with other stakeholders are much more complex. Creating a project rewarding system can also motivate project team members to execute their duties and these could be accomplished through providing team members with a change of scenery, providing teams with opportunities to learn new skills and providing them with a chance to break from their departmental cocoon (Larson & Gray, 2011:391) ^[4].

2.3.3 The enabling environment

Khang and Moe (2008:74) ^[7] explain that the enabling environment mostly refers to the relationship to external conditions and stakeholders such as funding agencies, implementing agencies, agencies of recipient governments, and target beneficiaries. Khang and Moe (2008:74) ^[7] elaborates that an enabling environment provides adequate support from key stakeholders, adequate resources, and creates favourable conditions with support from management and compatible rules and regulations.

2.3.4 Project design

According to Ika (2012:114) ^[6] projects have to be defined with regard to the missions and visions of the recipient country which should align with policies, strategies, programs and project objectives. Designing a project in line with the vision and mission of the host country greatly reduces the chances of failure during implementation. The context, target group, resources/budget, implementation strategies, monitoring, anticipated risks, and intended outcomes of the project, lies in the project design.

2.3.5 Project monitoring

According to Justine (2012:183) ^[11] monitoring is a periodic oversight function in the implementation of a project that needs to be followed closely to fully realise the outcomes. Monitoring involves assessing the outcomes of the project in comparison with the stated objectives and goals. Monitoring ensures that risks that were not foreseen during the development of a project, are easily detected and mitigation measures put in place to reduce the impact of such risks.

2.3.6 Project coordination

Coordination involves frequent communication with all stakeholders and ensuring that all planned activities are accomplished on time and within the budgeted resources. The coordination process during the implementation of international development projects is done by a project manager or national coordinator. The competency of the project manager or national supervisor is very crucial during the coordination process.

2.4 Factors constraining the successful implementation of international development projects

International development projects by the nature of their unique characteristics from other projects, are prone to failure. According to the Boakye and Liu (2014:1) ^[11] most of the international development projects face unforeseen circumstances during implementation and simply fail. But the question is why these projects fail, while others are uncompleted or abandoned. What makes them to fail? Or why are some of these projects unsuccessfully implemented? Several scholars have researched why international development projects fail with a particular focus on Africa and these are discussed below.

According to Ika (2012:30) ^[6] factors affecting the implementation of international development projects in Africa are summarized into three categories; structural/contextual problems, institutional/sustainability problems, and managerial/organisational problems.

2.4.1 The structural/contextual problems

The structural/contextual problems may be political instability, economic constraints, geographical, socio-cultural and environmental in nature. According to Kwak (2002:1) ^[10] changes in domestic economic conditions of the recipient country or inaccurate project development plan due to unpredictable economic conditions, adversely affect the implementation of international development projects. Economic constraints are partly caused due to conflict that leads to unproductivity of the country thereby causing inflation.

According to Addo and Choudhury (2012:82) ^[13] political instability usually arising from *coup d'état* cause unnecessary delays in the implementation of projects. This is due to the fact that some or all areas may be inaccessible, or infrastructures can be destroyed therefore delaying the process of implementation. There may be cases where implementation is halted for a period of time, or for extreme cases, donors can pull out from the project, thereby leading to the premature closure of the project.

A country's climate, seasons, altitude, natural geographical and infrastructural aspects should be taken into account during the planning and implementation of projects (Larson & Gray 2011:536) ^[4]. Issues around accessibility and climate play an important role, for example during the rainy seasons some areas of South Sudan are inaccessible.

2.4.2 Institutional/sustainability problems

Corruption, lack of political support/ institutional capacity to implement are among the institutional/sustainability factors affecting the implementation of international development projects. Most African countries, especially the least developed countries, allocate minimal funds for development, as more funds are allocated to military support. The development agenda is ill-considered and less or no support is given for such projects, thereby leading to failure and premature closure.

Corruption by far is still one of the major reasons why development projects fail especially in Africa. According to Agbiboa (2012:329) ^[14] corruption is a pervasive lack of transparency and accountability in governance. Some of the causes of corruption especially in Africa are due to poor economic policies, cultural factors, little or no incentives to public officials, low pay to employees, inequality, poor governance, and the ineffectiveness of the judicial systems. All these factors contribute to the increase and continued misuse and misappropriation of donor funds meant to support developments in Africa.

2.4.3 The managerial/organisational problems

Ika (2012:32) ^[6] highlights that monitoring challenges, delays in project start-up, poor project design, poor stakeholder management and lack of skilled project teams are some of the managerial/organisational factors affecting the implementation of international development projects. Unclear objectives, too optimistic goals in relation to project cost and schedule, unclear lines of responsibilities, authority and accountability, lack of end-user participation, slow and cumbersome decision-making process constrain the

implementation of international development projects (Kwak 2002:4) ^[10].

According to Callistus and Clinton (2016:394) ^[15] monitoring challenges are mainly caused by weak institutional capacity, limited resources and the kind of measures used. The capacity of the team to monitor the progress and availability of resources greatly affects the monitoring of a project thereby affecting the implementation of projects. International development projects require close monitoring to ensure that any risks or issues that may arise due to unforeseen circumstances can be mitigated as early as possible.

According to Thabrew, Wiek and Ries (2009:68) ^[16], one of the major challenges faced in implementing development projects is poor involvement of all stakeholders involved. Stakeholders include the target community, the donor, the national or government institution and the implementing partner. Involvement of stakeholder, especially the target community, is crucial before implementing a project.

According to Gbara (2014:38) ^[17] poor policy designs that do not alleviate the problem will always fail no matter how well the projects are implemented. Projects have to be designed for a specific context of a country, and general theoretical assumptions should not be used. Different projects fit different environments and the needs of the host community. It is imperative to note that when designing a project, there should be consultations and a preliminary assessment with the community to ascertain the relevance of the project being developed. This will avoid designing projects poorly that do not fit the appropriate community and environmental context. Project teams play a vital role in the implementation process of international development projects. The competency of a project team will influence the success of the project and therefore the lack of skilled teams is one of the organisational factors affecting the project implementation process. Project teams require project management skills which include project planning, risk management, organising, motivating, directing, controlling and maintaining a positive attitude, among others (Zuofa & Ochieng, 2014:65) ^[18]. Some of the project team members, especially government officials, may not be experienced or even lack professionalism, thereby failing to implement a project as expected.

3. Research Methodology

According to Greener (2008:38) ^[19] a research design is a grand plan of approach to a research topic. A research design is a plan, structure, and strategy of investigation, so conceived to obtain answers to research questions or problems (Kumar, 2011:95) ^[20]. It is a systematic plan of how a researcher intends to achieve his goals or objectives, what methods will be used, how the research will be conducted, and who will be involved in the research.

During the formulation of a research design, there are different research study types that can be used depending on the objectives to be achieved namely; explanatory, exploratory, descriptive, correlational and casual-comparative. Explanatory research aims at explaining why phenomena occur and to predict future occurrences. It aims at explaining and clarifying why a certain situation occurs the way it does. For this study, explanatory research was used to explain the

factors constraining the implementation of international development projects in South Sudan. The research study used probability sampling and data collected was quantitative in nature.

3.1 Research philosophy

A positivist approach was used for this study as it aimed to collect views from different respondents, to determine the major factors affecting the implementation of international development projects in South Sudan. It further intends to measure or quantify these factors with specific emphasis in South Sudan, based on prior observations from other conflict-affected countries. Since the study aimed at collecting information from a sample from a population, the cross-sectional survey strategy was used to answer those questions specific questions by use of the questionnaire. The target population for this study was about 120 individuals from five major international development agencies or organisations. The probability sampling technique was used for this study because the population had an equal chance of being selected and a sample of 110 individuals were selected using random sampling, 22 participants from each of the five developmental organisations. The sample was taken from different organisations in order to increase the variety of opinions.

3.2 Pilot study

The main goal of a pilot study is to assess the feasibility in order to avoid potential disastrous consequences of embarking on a larger study which could potentially drown the whole research effort (Thabane, Ma, Chu, Ismalia, Rios, Robson, Thabane, Giangregorio, & Goldsmith, 2010:1) ^[21]. The pilot study usually involves a small group selected from the entire population which assists in preparation for a larger study to be undertaken. For this study, a pilot test was carried out with 10 respondents to assess the validity and reliability of the questionnaire for its intended purpose. The pilot study highlighted critical areas which the research had left out.

3.3 Validity and reliability

3.3.1 Validity

Validity is the extent to which the designed instrument relates to the research problem. According to Kothari (2004:73) ^[22] validity indicates the degree to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. There are generally four types of validity; face, content, criterion-related and construct validity. Content validity is the extent to which a measuring instrument provides adequate coverage of the topic under study while criterion-related validity relates to the ability of a researcher to predict some outcome or estimate the existence of some current condition (Kothari, 2004:74) ^[22]. Construct validity testifies to how well the results obtained from the use of the measure fit the theories around which the test is designed while face validity indicates that the items that are intended to measure the concept, do on the face of it look like they measure the concept (Sekaran, 2003:207) ^[23]. In the study, the face validity was applied in a way that each question in the research instrument was linked to the research objectives. The content and construct validity for this study were measured using the pilot study that consisted of 10

respondents to establish whether the questionnaire actually suited the research problem at hand. Some research questions were added during the pilot study while others were removed to ensure that validity of the research instrument.

3.3.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to how consistent, stable, predictable, and accurate, a research instrument is (Kumar, 2011:168) ^[20]. The consistency and similarity of responses from the participants from five different organisations demonstrated a good level of reliability in the instrument.

3.4 Elimination of bias

The study was objective due to the random sampling technique which did not consider the issues of gender, race or specific ethnic groups. There were no assumptions made based on the above groups, although the study may have been biased by only selecting five international development organisations, and yet there are more than that number implementing projects in South Sudan. The views of the other international development organisations could have provided in-depth input into the subject matter. The study also did not make specific choices regarding which departments to consult. Participants included any staff that worked in any of those development organisations whether in procurement, human resource, finance, or project management departments.

3.5 Ethical considerations

According to Kumar (2011:223) ^[20], ethics means adhering to a code of conduct that has evolved over the years for an acceptable professional practice.

3.5.1 Ensuring participants have given informed consent

Participants were administered with a consent letter informing them about the details of the study and participation depended upon their willingness to participate.

3.5.2 Ensuring no harm comes to participants

The participants were not required to include their names and therefore it was not easy to identify an individual from a questionnaire. This ensured that all information was between the respondents and researcher.

3.5.3 Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity

Data collected was safely stored with only the researcher having access to the questionnaires. The names of the participants were not included on the questionnaire and therefore the identities of the participants and the organisations they work for were not revealed.

3.5.4 Ensuring that permission is obtained

Participants from different international development organisations participated in this study and the study was not focused on their organisations per se. All participants were given a cover letter to consent before proceeding with the study.

4. Results

The findings are based on the target population that was

sampled of 110 participants. Of the 110-sampled population, 95 participants responded and completed the questionnaires which provided a percentage of 86.36% of the whole total population.

4.1 Demographic data

The majority of the respondents have worked for their different organisations within the range of 0-1 year. The smallest group of respondents are those that have worked for 11 years and above who were only 5 respondents. The data also implies that a good number of respondents had worked for their various organisations between 2-10 years (27 respondents working between 2-5 years and 30 respondents worked between 6-10 years). The majority of respondents were between the age group of 30 – 39 years old while the age groups of 50-59 years and 60 > years had no respondents. This could be attributed to the fact that most of the people employed by these international development organisations are between 18 – 49 years, as these are the age groups considered still strong enough to work hard and able to carry on more tasks compared to those between 50 and above years. More female respondents participated in the study by 52.6% than the male 47.4%. This could explain that international development organisations are gender sensitive and promote gender sensitivity in their recruitments, ensuring that female are also employed in the organisations. The analysis also explains that females readily participate in research studies than males.

4.2 General knowledge on international development projects in South Sudan

The research instrument under this section majorly focused on the following characteristics; respondent's knowledge on what international development projects are and do in South Sudan, whether South Sudan as a country can survive without international development aid, and respondents' view on South Sudan's dependency on international development aid.

4.2.1 Knowledge of international development projects

The majority of respondents have knowledge of what international development projects are and do in South Sudan. About 35% of respondents strongly agreed while 59% agreed and, only 6% of the respondents were not sure of what international development projects were and do in South Sudan. This analysis indicates there are many international development projects being run in South Sudan and the majority of respondents are aware of their existence and operations in the country.

4.2.2 Does South Sudan entirely depend on international development aid?

47% of the respondents strongly agreed and 47% agreed that South Sudan as a country entirely depends on international development aid. About only 6% of the respondents are still not sure whether South Sudan entirely depends on international aid. This analysis indicates that about 94% of South Sudan's different sectors are being funded through international aid, this means that the vast sectors of the country's economic, social, health, education, environment,

governance, infrastructure development, and as well as capacity building of the various government institutions, largely depend on international aid. Although this is not a good indicator for any country but considering the fact that South Sudan has been in war for a very long time and also coupled with the on-going political crisis, this kind of indicator is definitely inevitable.

4.2.3 Can South Sudan survive on its own without international development?

5.30% strongly agreed, 11.60% agreed, 24.20% were not sure, 34.70% disagreed and 24.20% strongly disagreed with the statement. Generally, the majority of the respondents (58.9%) believe that South Sudan cannot survive on its own without international development aid. Only 16.9% of the total respondents believe that South Sudan can survive without international aid and 24.20% of the respondents were not sure whether the country can survive with or without aid. 58.9% of the respondents that either disagreed or strongly disagreed indicates that there is still a lot that needs to happen before development partners can pull of the country. South Sudan has the full potential of surviving on its own using the different resources available, especially the oil sector, but much has to be done to exploit all these resources that can generate income.

4.3 What factors are the general critical success factors for projects?

The research instrument focused considered the project design and clarity of project goals, how well is the project designed to suit the current context, clarity of the goals the project aims to achieve, and the importance of a competent project manager to drive the project team. In addition a competent and well-trained project team who fully implement to ensure project success, effective monitoring of project activities to ensure that project activities are on-going as planned and if there are any issues which can be mitigated early enough, favourable political, social, economic, cultural and competent institutional frameworks, and availability of donor funding to support the project activities to achieve the intended goals. The analysis as per respondents' views on these factors are presented below.

4.3.1 In my opinion, how well a project is designed is crucial in providing direction and clarity on the goals to be achieved, when they should be achieved, and the risk involved during the implementation

65.3% of the respondents strongly support that the project design and clarity of goals is a critical factor in project success. Whereas 34.7% of the other respondents do also agree on this factor being a critical factor for project success.

4.3.2 The ability of a project manager to effectively coordinate the activities of the project between the different stakeholders, ensuring good communication between the stakeholders is fundamental for project success

75.8% of the respondents strongly agreed while 24.2% agreed that the ability of the project manager to coordinate activities

between the different stakeholders is a critical factor in project success. This analysis indicates how crucial the project manager's role is to the success of the project.

4.3.3 Having competent, well trained and motivated project team enables project activities to be implemented on time, efficiently and effectively

75.8% of the respondents strongly agreed and 24.2% agreed that having a competent well-trained project team is critical in ensuring the success of any project. These findings indicate how important a competent, well trained and motivated project team is in achieving project success.

4.3.4 In my view the issues and risks can easily be detected and mitigated where effective and close monitoring of all project activities is done including feedback on each stage of the process

34.7% of the respondents strongly agreed, 59% agreed and 6.3% were not sure whether effective and close monitoring of project activities is a critical factor for project success. These findings indicate that 93.7% of the respondents are in line with that fact that this is one of the critical success factors for projects. The rationale behind hiring a competent project manager and project team is to ensure that all the project activities are closely and effectively monitored, and if any issues arise these can be easily be mitigated on time.

4.3.5 Projects are successfully implemented in areas where there is favourable political, economic, social, cultural and competent institutional frameworks in place

65.3% of the respondents strongly agreed, 23.1% agreed and 11.6% disagreed that having a favourable political, economic, social, cultural and having competent institutional frameworks in place are among the critical success factors for project success.

4.3.6 In my opinion, donors offer to fund a project based on how well the project is designed, its intended results, the risks involved, previous performance of the project and the institutional/favourable environment

The respondents strongly agreed at 52.6% while 47.4% agreed that donors offer to fund a project based on how well they are designed, the intended results and previous performances. If a project has had previous poor performance, most donors wouldn't want to invest any funds.

4.4 What are the factors constraining the implementation of international development projects in South Sudan?

The second objective of this study that the research instrument focused on was finding out the factors constraining the implementation of international development projects in South Sudan.

4.4.1 Political instability and unclear/unfavourable changes in the government policies have greatly affected the implementation of development projects in South Sudan

65.3% of the respondents strongly agreed and 34.7% generally agreed that political instability and unfavourable government policies are major factors constraining the implementation of

international development projects in South Sudan. The findings indicate that political instability and unclear changes in government policies greatly affect (100%) the implementation of development projects. Furthermore, political instability can lead to inaccessibility of certain locations or even cripple the project activities thereby leading to failure or early closure.

4.4.2 There is less donor commitment in funding development projects due to political instability and economic crisis in South Sudan

75.8% of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement. These findings indicate that political instability goes as far as affecting the level of donor commitment to funding development projects because some of the hardware components of the projects are destroyed during conflicts therefore discouraging donors from funding such projects.

4.4.3 Poor government institutional frameworks coupled with the low level of commitment of the government have contributed to the failure of many development projects in South Sudan

75.8% of the respondents strongly agreed, 24.2% generally agreed to this factor being a one of the constraints. The findings (100%) indicate that the above factor is one of the major concerns constraining the implementation of international development projects. Institutional frameworks may mean the systems, regulations and procedures that are in place in the various institutions of the government.

4.4.4 In my view, there are development projects in South Sudan that have failed due to the poor project design plus low community involvement in planning as well as other stages of the project

59% of the respondents agreed that this factor contributes to failure of international development projects in South Sudan. 6.3% were not sure whether this factor truly contributed to failures in implementation. The findings indicate that the majority of the participants (93.7%) are in agreement with this factor being one of the constraining factors to the implementation of the international development projects.

4.4.5 Delays in the project start-up due to the poor infrastructure in South Sudan greatly affected the implementation of development projects

65.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that delays in project start-up due to poor infrastructure highly contribute to the failure in implementation of international development projects in South Sudan. 11.6% disagreed while 23.1% generally agreed. Infrastructure development such as roads, electricity, and water play key roles and these facilitate the implementation of development projects in that accessibility is created for fast implementation of project activities.

4.4.6 There is low community/stakeholder engagement in planning and implementation phases of the projects

52.6% of the respondents strongly agreed while 47.4% agreed that low community/stakeholder engagement in planning and implementation phases of the projects is among the constraining factors.

4.4.7 The humanitarian situation of the country has over-shadowed the implementation of development projects

41% of the respondents strongly agreed, 41% agreed and 18% were not sure that the humanitarian situation which has always been overwhelming in South Sudan being a contributing factor to the poor/failure of implementation of international development projects. These findings indicate that most donor communities look at the humanitarian situation more than development and this is partly due to the factor of political instability that has greatly affected the local communities. Therefore, a business case that talks about humanitarian assistance in a political crisis will sell more than one that talks about development.

4.4.8 The economic crisis in South Sudan has greatly affected the implementation of development projects

From the December 2013 political crisis, inflation has gradually increased in the country leading to the current economic situation in the country. 41% of the respondents strongly agreed, 47.4% agreed and 11.6% are not sure whether this factor greatly contributes to the failure of international development projects in South Sudan.

4.5 What recommendations can be made regarding successful implementation of international development projects in South Sudan?

As much as there are constraining factors affecting the implementation of international development projects, if mitigation measures can be found to address these constraining factors implementation of these projects can also be sustained. Based on the constraining factors, the respondents provided responses to the recommendations listed below.

4.5.1 International development organisations should engage the local community during the designing, planning and implementation of the projects

64.2% strongly agreed, 35.8% agreed that one of the recommendations is that local communities should be engaged during the designing, planning and implementation phases of the development projects.

4.5.2 There should be a balance between the humanitarian and development projects to ensure funding for development.

26 47.4% strongly agreed, 41% agreed and 11.6% disagreed that one of the recommendations should be a balance between humanitarian and development projects to reduce humanitarian projects over-shadowing other projects.

4.5.3 The government should focus on infrastructure development like roads, security to create accessibility

52.6% strongly agreed, 41.1% agreed and 6.3% disagreed that the government should focus on infrastructure development to create accessibility.

4.5.4 The government institutions should commit to these development projects to ensure their sustainability

70.5% strongly agreed, 29.5% agreed that government institutions should commit to the implementation of the

development projects to ensure their sustainability. This finding explains how government's commitment and support to implementation of development projects is vital, any deviation could lead communities to not participate. In most of the African countries, communities most likely listen to their leaders. Therefore, any deviation by the leaders can affect the project implementation phase which could adversely lead to project closure.

4.5.5 The international development organisations should design the projects based on the country's current context to avoid failure

63.2% strongly agreed while 36.8% agreed that international organisations should design projects based on the country's current context.

From the findings of the primary research, South Sudan as a conflict-affected country heavily relies on international development aid from donor countries. The dependency on aid is mainly due to the economic situation that has been caused by the on-going conflict. Furthermore, the research also discovered that there are a lot of resources that could be exploited but the country does not have the potential to exploit these resources without the assistance from development partners. This indicates the critical role international development projects play in the development of the country's different sectors.

The findings based on the primary research indicated that the major critical success factors for projects were competency of the project manager, project design, and clarity of project goals, competency of the project team and availability of donor funding, which are based on how well a project has been designed. Other factors included effective and close monitoring of project activities to ensure that risks and issues are mitigated as early as detected and favourable political, social, cultural, economic and competent institutional frameworks.

The findings also indicated that the major factors constraining the implementation of the international development projects in South Sudan were political instability and unfavourable changes in government policies, less donor commitment in funding development projects, poor government institutional frameworks, coupled with the low-level commitment of government and low community/stakeholder engagement in the planning and implementation phases of the projects. Other factors included the humanitarian situation of the country which has over-shadowed the implementation of development projects, the economic crisis, delays in the project start-up due to poor infrastructure and poor project design, plus low community involvement in planning as well as other stages of the project.

5. Recommendations

In order to improve on the factors constraining the implementation of international development projects, a number of recommendations were made from the study based on the South Sudan context and these key recommendations are as below:

- The government institutions should commit to these development projects to ensure their sustainability. These are projects that benefit the host government, therefore

they should commit and take ownership of these projects to realise the benefits.

- International development organisations should engage with the local community during the designing, planning and implementation of the projects.
- The international development organisations should design the projects based on the country's current context to avoid failure.

Other recommendations include

The government should focus on infrastructure development like roads and security to create accessibility. Ensuring available infrastructure creates easy accessibility and delivery of services to the communities and also accessibility in terms of security.

There should be a balance between the humanitarian and development projects to ensure funding for development. Currently, most development partners focus on the humanitarian situation, leaving behind development aspects, for which these contribute to ensuring humanitarian assistance is delivered as well.

5.1 Future research

The study examined the factors that constrained the implementation of international development projects in South Sudan. It also revealed the recommendations that can be used to improve the implementation of these projects. Based on this further research is recommended in the areas of how political instability and civil wars affect development projects and also critical success factors for specifically international development projects. International development projects are unique and interesting in setting and it would be ideal to look at the critical success factors for these projects.

6. Conclusions

The study has showed that international development projects are vital and crucial in conflict affected areas like South Sudan. The success of the projects depends on a number of factors that previous literatures have pointed out. Among the major constraining factors is the political and on-going conflict has greatly affected most of the development plans, nonetheless there are ways that can be adapted to better the implementation of these projects. The need for political instability and the economic crisis to be addressed is key to the successful implementation of development projects. The sustainability of development projects should be taken into consideration as well because no donor would want to invest in a project that will not be sustainable.

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