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ROLE OF STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY AT FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Food and Agriculture Organization projects in Kenya play a crucial role in achievement of the all-important goal of having a Kenya that is free from hunger and malnutrition. However, more often than not, the extent to which the projects are able to persist despite the exit of the donor remains a challenge that FAO is struggling with. This study thus established the extent to which stakeholders are involved when FAO is implementing its projects and its effect on project sustainability. Anchored on the Rights Based Perspective theory of Public Participation, the study determined the influence of consultations and partnerships on project sustainability at Food and Agriculture Organization in Kenya. A descriptive research design was adopted where the target population were 156 respondents obtained from the list of internal project stakeholders such as field coordinators, project managers and supervisors as well as external stakeholders such as government representatives and project beneficiaries. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire to obtain quantitative data which was analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics involving correlation and multiple regression models. The study findings indicated that an increase in stakeholder consultations as well as partnerships can lead to a significant increase in sustainability of FAO projects. Based on the findings, the study recommends FAO project officers to enhance consultation efforts through attitude surveys, open forum meetings with stakeholders, public hearings as well as joint social audit of projects after completion. The study also recommends project managers at FAO to enhance partnerships in project given its significant effect on project sustainability.

Key Words: *Stakeholder Involvement, Consultations, Partnerships, Project Sustainability, Food and Agriculture Organization*

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1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In the modern world, organizations can no longer choose if they want to engage with stakeholders or not; the only decision they need to take is when and how successfully to engage (Heravi, Coffey & Trigunarsyah, 2015). Stakeholder involvement is premised on the notion that 'those groups who can affect or are affected by the achievements of an organization's purpose' should be given the opportunity to comment and input into the development of decisions that affect them (Vink, Imada & Zink, 2008). In today's society, if they are not actively sought out, sooner or later they may demand to be consulted (Meredith, Jack & Mantel, 2000). Stakeholder involvement occurs when an organization wants to consider the views and involvement of someone or some group in making and implementing a business decision (Heravi *et al*., 2015). Stakeholder involvement occur when an organization truly wants input from groups that will be affected by the organization's decision (Vos & Achterkamp, 2006). Aapaoja, Haapasalo and Soderstrom (2013) argue that many of the issues facing development today are complex and require multiple actors in order to solve. The absence of integration of all these stakeholders and shared responsibility in implementation may spoil the project and limit its performance (Luyet, Schlaepfer, Parlange & Buttler, 2012).

Involvement of the beneficiaries in projects ensures capacity is enhanced making beneficiaries become better placed in identifying, implementing, monitoring and evaluating of projects (Zuofa, 2014). When stakeholders participate in projects, a number of advantages will be realized. It will allow their capacities to be built and they will be able to identify their own projects in future. This in turn leads to efficiency and sustainability. When communities are involved in project initiation and implementation, there is the assurance of sustainability subject to some conditions unlike when they have no idea about the project or when it is imposed on them (Ayuso *et al*. 2012). Gitonga (2012) argues that stakeholder involvement impacts on the success of projects. Stakeholders should be involved at the initial stages to up to a point when they are left to manage the project; recognition and conceptualization. Stakeholders should be completely involved when examining and assessing the projects. This will ensure that the stakeholder's perspectives are considered thus giving them a greater say in planning and managing the evaluation process. There is a direct connection between stakeholder involvement and project sustainability through accountability, trust and transparency (Moseti, 2010). It has been argued that project sustainability is important in complying with regulations, maintaining community relations, cost and revenue imperatives as well as societal and moral obligations (Silvius, Schipper & Planko, 2012).

Project sustainability is one of the most critical aspects for all grassroots, national and international development agencies such as FAO (Griffiths, 2007). Recent studies have shown that while the trend with implementation of projects is showing significant improvement, the trend with post implementation sustainability is rather disappointing - increasingly, less projects are being sustained (Morfaw, 2014). A project is sustainable if the community/beneficiaries are capable on their own without the assistance of outside development partners, to continue producing results for their benefit for as long as their problem still exists (Ye, 2017). Silvius et al. (2012) documented that project sustainability is a major challenge in many developing countries. Large number of projects implemented at huge costs often tend to experience difficulties with sustainability. This means that huge expenditures are being incurred in implementing projects while communities are deprived of the benefits and return of these investments due to sustainability issues (Pinter et al. 2012). One of the main drivers of low project sustainability post-handover is not just the technical, financial, institutional, economic, and social factors (Ceptureanu et al. 2018; Chumbula & Massawe, 2018) but the concept of top-down approach being used.

This approach believes that the supposed beneficiaries are too ignorant and perhaps primitive to effectively discern and decide what is good and appropriate for them and as such are not expected to set up their own development priorities, rank them and identify the most felt need (Mulwa, 2008). As a result, sustainability as a key component for ensuring that communities owned the supposed project, continued suffering as long as development specialists kept doing things for the people. Hassan et al. (2018) argued that stakeholder involvement in development projects is meant to correct the inadequacies of the top-down approach to community development, hence ensuring project sustainability. The role FAO plays

in achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 globally cannot be understated. While this organization implements a myriad of agriculture and environmental related projects across the world and in Kenya too, one of the recurring problems it has continuously faced is the problem of project sustainability post-handover (Ye, 2017). Therefore, this study will seek to find out the extent to which stakeholders are involved when FAO is implementing its projects and if so, the effect it has on its sustainability.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

FAO projects in Kenya play a crucial role in achievement of the all-important goal of having a Kenya that is free from hunger and malnutrition, where food and agriculture help to improve the living standards of all, especially the poorest, in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner and thus their model must seek to have sustainable self-reliant projects (FAO, 2020). This strongly seeks to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 that aims to achieve "zero hunger". More often than not, the extent to which the projects are able to persist despite the exit of donors, while the beneficiaries reap dividends; appreciate their participation and ownership role in the project remains a challenge that FAO is struggling with (Oino et al. 2015). Statistics from World Bank reports on Operations Evaluation Department found that only 30% of FAO led agriculture projects studied were classified as "sustained," 29% more were "doubtful," and the remaining (majority at 49%) were "not sustained or unsustainable" (World Bank, 2015).

In addition, out of seventeen education projects covered by the same study and a later study by the World Bank, 50% were classified as likely to be sustained, 27% were doubtful, and 16% were unlikely to be sustained, an indication that indeed after handover, most projects suffer from sustainability problems (World Bank, 2015). Apparently, it is project sustainability that makes the difference between success and failure of projects initiated by NGOs (Ceptureanu et al. 2018; Chumbula & Massawe, 2018; Wanyera, 2016). Given the sustainability challenges in some of the FAO-led projects post ownership-handover, this study seeks to find out the role of stakeholders in the sustainability. This is supported by Frank and Guidero (2012) and Mwangi (2018) who recommend the role of stakeholder involvement in projects delivery.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

i. To establish the influence of consultations on project sustainability at Food and Agriculture Organization in Kenya
ii. To determine the influence of partnerships on project sustainability at Food and Agriculture Organization in Kenya

4. LITERATUREREVIEW

4.1. Empirical Literature

Kabashome (2008) conducted a study to determine how community participation influences sustainability of Water Supply Projects of Kanungu and Kihihi Town Councils in Kanungu District of Tanzania. The study objective was to analyze the extent of the community participation in problem identification, consultation, involvement, decision-making, project ownership and sustainability. The findings showed that there was only minimal community participation which inevitably leads to low levels of success, questionable ownership and sustainability of the projects. Waheduzzaman (2010) conducted a study to determine the effect of the participation of people on Bangladesh good governance. The aim of the study was to examine the hindrances to the practice of participation of people in the local administration and to come up with the appropriate means for improving the participation of people in plans for development which can add to quality governance. To get more astute responses for the research questions, the study used a qualitative method. The study found that there

are multiple setbacks leading to the people's participation incompetence. Some of the obstacles were lack of awareness and lack of a robust legal system for participation.

Ngondo (2014) conducted a study to investigate the effect of the participation of the society in project running activities, as a catalyst for the completion of CDF project within the stipulated time in Kanyekini ward in Kirinyaga central. The findings showed that project recipients had not been directly involved in either of the CDF projects operation teams throughout the CDF projects setting and execution, nonetheless, wherever involvement took place, their contribution was factored quite well and that completion limits were achieved to rally round set calendar, financial plan and integrity. Mupenzi (2010) conducted a study to determine the function of Ubudehe in poverty alleviation in Gatsibo district in Rwanda. The main purpose for the programme was to revitalize and promote communal participation at the village level. The findings showed that even though the longing to significantly engage citizens in society improvement projects, Ubudehe encountered several hindrances due to insufficient funds and hence poverty alleviation is still a subject in consideration amongst citizens in Rwanda.

4.2. Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the Rights Based Perspective theory of Public Participation. This theory presents participation in public policy issues as a right of the beneficiary. According to Hindess and Muetzelfeldt (2000), the proponent of the theory, stakeholders' rights have lately turned out to be an important perception in both rural and town development and political contests across the world. An increase in the perception of the people emerges to be its link to the place and the space, as persons operate as populace of self-governing authority, this authority is at all times distinct in terms of place. Lepofsky and Fraser (2003) argue that, through involvement, people are connected to unreal societies in terms of space, mainly when trying to fulfill the wishes for communal improvement.

Dagnino (2003) argued that addressing issues of society for instance urban poverty; Rights-Based Theory requires the addition of governance and political engagement, ownership and social capital. According to Kabeer (2005), an inclusivity entailing both the opinionated activities and purposes is necessary. The major objective is to come up with a community base setting that allows all the residents irrespective of their societal position, sex, maturity, ethnicity or belief, to contribute effectively and completely in the occasions that towns have to present. In application to this study, the theory supported the role of stakeholder involvement in addressing issues that affect them. While the role of FAO in ending hunger is greatly appreciated, the need to involve the people whom these projects are supposed to impact, is crucial. And this involvement should be inclusive regardless of societal position, sex, maturity, ethnicity or belief.

4.3. Conceptual Framework

The study linked forms of stakeholder involvement that is consultations and partnerships on project sustainability at Food and Agriculture Organization in Kenya. The measurement of project sustainability at FAO was captured through the "Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture Systems" (SAFA) framework by FAO (2013). Based on the SAFA model by FAO, sustainability of a projects is supposed to capture the economic resilience, environmental integrity, governance and social wellbeing. The relationship between these variables was indicated in Figure 1.

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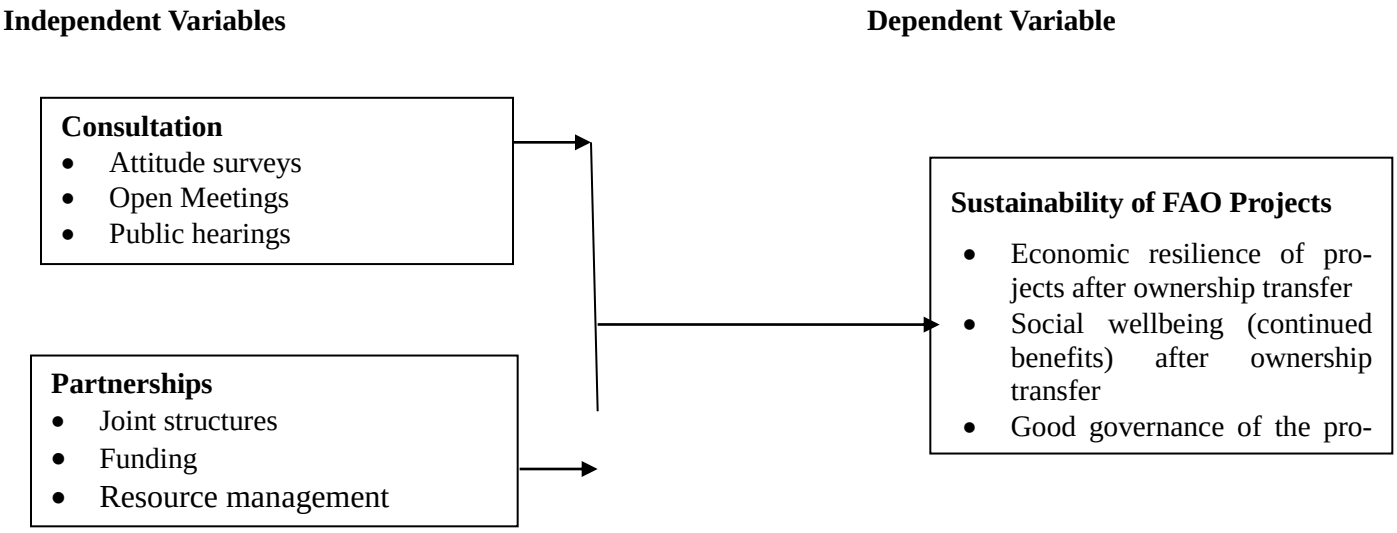

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Public participation through consultations and partnerships is a deliberative mechanism that involves interested or affected individuals in order to acknowledge the plurality of objectives and values and encourages collective solution of problems in the pursuit of more legitimate policies. In decisions where there are clear conflicting interests, public participation matters most. However, public participation cannot be a success if the participants don't have information nor the understanding of its importance. Therefore, therefore, there is a need for public education and thus it moderates the relationship.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative research methodology where a descriptive research design was employed. This design has been viewed as necessary especially where in-depth interrogation of concepts is required with an aim of establishing cause-effect (Ledford & Gast, 2018). In the course of establishing how stakeholder involvement affects projects sustainability, there was a need to use questionnaires to collect data that was analyzed to present a cause-effect link and that is what a descriptive research design subscribes to. The target population for this study were both internal stakeholders (Field Coordinators, Project Managers, Supervisors and Assistant Project Managers) as well as external stakeholders involved in FAO projects (Government representatives in the ministry of Agriculture and project beneficiaries of sample projects). To determine the sample size, Yamane (1957) formula was used as shown below.

$$n = {}^{N}/_{1 + N\,(\varepsilon)^2}$$

Where: N = Target Population (156); n = Sample Size; ε = Sampling error set at 5%. Therefore, replacing the values in the formula gives, 112 target respondents who were distributed through stratified random sampling procedures (Kumar, 2019), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Stratification of the Sample Size

Category	Target Population	Sample Size	Percentage Proportion
Project Field Coordinators	34	24	22%
Project Managers	5	4	3%
Supervisors	25	18	16%
Government representives	3	2	2%
Project Beneficiaries	89	64	57%
Total	**156**	**112**	**100%**

The study used quantitative primary data obtained through structured questionnaire of a 5-point Likert scale type. A pilot was conducted on 15 questionnaires, which was 10% of the target population as recommended by Smith (2015) and ascertained to be valid and reliable. The study collected primary data using drop and pick method. Questionnaires were dropped and picked later to enable the respondents have enough time to respond to the questionnaires. In other cases where the target respondents were not available, their emails were collected from the HR office at FAO then the questionnaires emailed to them. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics where the responses from the questionnaires were tallied, tabulated and analyzed in percentages, frequencies, mean and standard deviation using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS V 21). Frequency tables, graphs and pie charts were used to present the data for easy comparison. Further, multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between variables. The following multiple regression model was used:

$$\mathbf{Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon}$$

Where: Y = Sustainability of FAO Projects; $\mathbf{X_1}$ = Consultations; $\mathbf{X_2}$ = Public-Private Partnerships; $\boldsymbol{\varepsilon}$ = Error term; $\boldsymbol{\alpha}$ = constant and $\boldsymbol{\beta}$ = beta coefficients

6. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

6.1. Response Rate

This study targeted and issued out 112 questionnaires and out of the number, a total of 98 questionnaires were well responded to giving a response rate of 88%. This response rate is satisfactory given the argument by Lewis *et al* (2007) that a response rate above 60% is satisfactory to be used in generalizing study findings.

6.2. Description of Stakeholder Consultations in FAO Projects

The first objective of the study was to establish the influence of consultations on project sustainability at Food and Agriculture Organization in Kenya. The study sought to find out the extent to which FAO consults the stakeholders before implementing projects. The results in Figure 2 indicate that majority of the respondents, 65%, indicated that FAO consults with stakeholders to a high extent. This provides evidence of high consultations with stakeholders.

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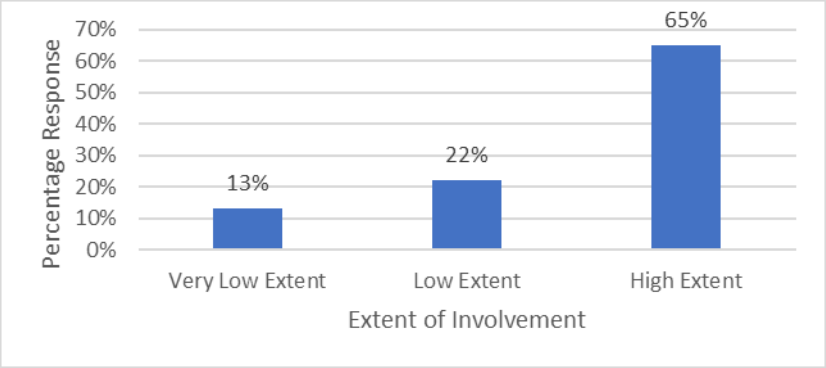

Figure 2: Extent of Stakeholder Consultations by FAO

The Likert scale rating of the statements on stakeholder consultations as presented in Table 2 indicated that before implementing projects at the community level, FAO conducts an attitude survey to establish the reception of the projects by the local community (Mean = 4.08), conducts open forum meetings with stakeholders to get their opinions (Mean = 4.00) as well as public hearings to establish the reception of the projects by the local community (Mean = 3.92). It was also established that before implementing projects at the community level, FAO visits the areas and the beneficiaries to hear their views regarding the project (4.05) as well as conducts joint social audit of its projects after completion (Mean = 3.89). There was an overall agreement of stakeholder consultations in FAO projects with a small variation in responses (Mean = 3.99; SD = 1.16).

Table 2: Description of Stakeholder Consultations in FAO Projects

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
Before implementing projects at the community level, FAO conducts an attitude survey to establish the reception of the projects by the local community	4.08	1.19
Before implementing projects at the community level, FAO conducts open forum meetings with stakeholders to get their opinions	4.00	1.12
Before implementing projects at the community level, FAO conducts public hearings to establish the reception of the projects by the local community	3.92	1.07
Before implementing projects at the community level, FAO visits the areas and the beneficiaries to hear their views regarding the project	4.05	1.21
FAO always for joint social audit of its projects	3.89	1.22
Average	**3.99**	**1.16**

6.3. Description of Partnerships in FAO Projects

The third objective of the study was to examine the influence of partnerships on project sustainability at Food and Agriculture Organization in Kenya. The study sought to find out the extent to which FAO partners with the stakeholders in its projects. The results in Figure 3 indicate that majority of the respondents, 90%, indicated that FAO engages in partnerships with stakeholders in its projects. This provides evidence of high partnerships with stakeholders in FAO projects.

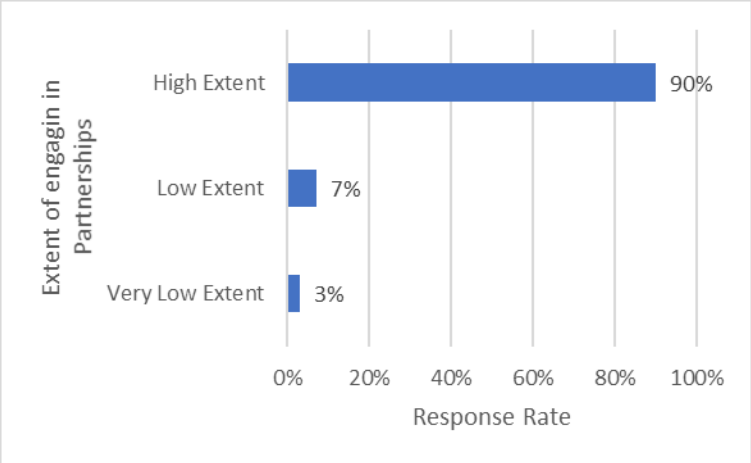

Figure 3: Extent of engaging in partnerships in FAO Projects

The Likert scale rating of the statements on stakeholder collaborations as presented in Table 3indicated that FAO has partnerships with like-minded stakeholders regarding project funding (Mean = 3.78), resource management (Mean = 3.69) and that some projects at FAO are jointly managed with other NGOs and state actors (Mean = 3.70). It was also indicated that FAO is sometimes involved in projects that require collaborative decision making with various agencies (Mean = 3.98) and that some projects at FAO are jointly operated with other NGOs and state actors (Mean = 3.74). Overall, it was established that partnerships in FAO Projects have been established to a high extent (Mean = 3.78).

Table 3: Description of Partnerships in FAO Projects

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
FAO has partnerships with like-minded stakeholders regarding project funding	3.78	1.38
FAO has partnerships with like-minded stakeholders regarding resource management	3.69	1.24
Some projects at FAO are jointly managed with other NGOs and state actors	3.70	1.33
FAO is sometimes involved in projects that require collaborative decision making with various agencies	3.98	1.18
Some projects at FAO are jointly operated with other NGOs and state actors	3.74	1.16
Average	**3.78**	**1.26**

6.4. Sustainability of FAO Projects

The study sought to find out the extent to which FAO projects were sustainable. The Likert scale rating of the statements on sustainability of FAO projects indicated that most of the previous FAO projects continue to change the livelihoods of the beneficiaries positively after handing over (Mean = 3.94). However, it was indicated that most of the previous FAO projects continue to deliver economic benefits to beneficiaries to a moderate extent after handing over (Mean = 3.43) and also continue to operate under sustainable plans to a moderate extent after handing over (Mean = 3.46). It was also established that most of the previous FAO projects continue to be well governed and managed to a low extent after handing over (Mean = 2.46) and most of the previous FAO projects continue to adhere to environmental integrity to a moderate extent after handing over (Mean =3.47). Overall, it was established that FAO projects were moderately sustainable.

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Table 4: Sustainability of FAO Projects

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
Most of the previous FAO projects continue to deliver economic benefits to beneficiaries after handing over	3.43	1.17
Most of the previous FAO projects continue to operate under sustainable plans after handing over	3.46	1.39
Most of the previous FAO projects continue to change the livelihoods of the beneficiaries positively after handing over	3.94	1.23
Most of the previous FAO projects continue to be well governed and managed after handing over	2.46	0.50
Most of the previous FAO projects continue to adhere to environmental integrity after handing over	3.47	1.10
Average	**3.35**	**1.08**

6.5. Multiple Regression Analysis

The study used this inferential method to determine the nature of the relationship between stakeholder involvement and sustainability of FAO projects. Table 5 gives the results of the model summary which imply that stakeholder involvement in terms of partnerships, collaborative planning and stakeholder consultations could predict up to 80.9% of the variations in sustainability of FAO projects. Other than that, the remaining variation can be predicted by other factors.

Table 5: Regression Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.899	0.809	0.803	0.3521
Predictors: (Constant), Partnerships, Collaborative Planning, Stakeholder Consultations			

The study also tested whether the regression model linking the variables was significant. As shown in Table 6, it was established that since the F statistic value of 132.412 was significant Sig = 0.000 < 0.05, the model was significant and any conclusions drawn from it, are relevant.

Table 6: ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	49.234	2	24.617	200.72	.000
Residual	11.651	95	0.122		
Total	60.885	97			
Dependent Variable: Sustainability					
Predictors: (Constant), Partnerships, Stakeholder Consultations					

The regression model coefficients in Table 6 demonstrates that other factors held constant, stakeholder consultations have a positive and significant effect on sustainability of FAO projects ($\beta = 0.149$; Sig < 0.05). This shows that a unit increase in stakeholder consultations can lead to a significant increase in sustainability of FAO projects by 0.149 units. The study findings agree with that of Waheduzzaman (2010) who showed that community participation in projects through consultations was associated with enhanced sustainability of the projects. The regression model coefficients result also indicated that other factors held constant, partnerships have a positive and significant effect on sustainability of FAO projects ($\beta = 0.627$; Sig < 0.05). This shows that a unit increase in partnerships can lead to a significant increase in sustainability of FAO projects by 0.627 units. Musoke (2011) similarly established that partnerships were linked with enhanced project

sustainability.

Table 6: Regression Model Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	**t**	**Sig.**
(Constant)	0.344	0.162		2.115	0.037
Stakeholder Consultations	0.149	0.066	0.197	2.243	0.027
Partnerships	0.627	0.056	0.700	11.199	0.000
Dependent Variable: Sustainability of FAO Projects					

7. CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded that engaging in consultations through attitude survey to establish the reception of the projects by the local, conducting open forum meetings with stakeholders to get their opinions as well as public hearings to establish the reception of the projects by the local community and vising the areas and the beneficiaries to hear their views regarding the project as well as joint social audit of its projects after completion is associated with higher chances of project sustainability. The study also concludes that establishing partnerships such as engaging like-minded stakeholders regarding project funding, resource management, joint management of projects and collaborative decision making with various agencies is associated with higher chances of project sustainability.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Given its positive effect, the study recommends FAO project officers to enhance consultation efforts by allocating more towards attitude surveys, open forum meetings with stakeholders, public hearings as well as joint social audit of projects after completion. The study also recommends project managers at FAO to enhance partnerships in project given its significant effect on project sustainability. They should foster linkages with like-minded stakeholders in project funding and resource management, joint management of projects and collaborative decision making.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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10. ETHICAL APPROVAL AND CONSENT

All procedures performed in this study were in accordance with the required ethical standards and research protocol / proposal by National Commission for Science and Technology, Kenya.

11. DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article. The author has no financial, professional, or personal relationships that could have influenced the preparation, analysis, interpretation, or presen-

tation of the information contained in this paper.

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