

Project Planning, Stakeholder Involvement, Risk Management, and Project Success - A Case of Selected NGOs in South Sudan

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Abstract

Despite the huge inflow of billions of donors into the country for humanitarian and development programs, South Sudan communities have remained vulnerable to natural and humanmade disasters, this has resulted into massive poverty, loss of human lives and property, and internal and cross border displacements as the best coping options. This study was aimed at investigating the factors perceived to influence NGOs projects' success in saving lives and restoring the human dignity of the most vulnerable populations in the Country. These factors studied include Project planning, stakeholder involvement, and Risk Management. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches for data collection through a sample size of 144 respondents, selected from 233 sample frames of NGOs' staff in South Sudan. The sample size was determined by Krejcie Robert V. Morgan W. (1970) table). The study findings show positive relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable as follows; Project Planning and Projects Success at ($r = 0.348$, $P\text{-value} < 0.01$); Project Planning and Risk management at ($r = 0.528$, $P\text{-value} < 0.01$); Risk management and Projects success at ($r = 0.523$, $P\text{-value} < 0.01$); Stakeholder's involvement and Risk management at ($r = 0.503$, $P\text{-value} < 0.01$); and A Regression analysis of ($R = 0.541$). Therefore, in consideration of the positive correlations' independent variable, NGOs are advised to ensure sufficient project planning, risk management, and stakeholders' involvement; to ascertain intervention success.

Keywords: *Project Planning, Stakeholder Involvement, Risk Management and Project success.*

Introduction

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are acknowledged for being promoters of socio-economic development in developing countries, where the government's capacity and revenues are often very limited, to support the provision of basic services to their populations. The last few decades have been marked by the rapid growth of NGOs and the increased involvement of these organizations in the process of development [1]. NGOs also lobby and advocate for good policies formulation and lead campaigns for pro-development [2].

[3] estimate that aid channelled through NGOs has increased from \$0.9 billion in 1970 to \$6.3 billion in 1993. The role of NGOs was

underlined been a significant one to the survival of vulnerable human beings across less-developed nations [2]. Such a recognition of NGOs' work by international law, is the source of all human rights, as noted in the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [4].

In Africa, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have come to play a very prominent role in the continent. Statistics suggest that the NGO sector has grown remarkably over the past decades to over 50,000 by 2012, both in Africa and globally [5]. These INGOs now disburse more money than the United Nations' agencies. This is shown in the fact that more than two-thirds of European Union aid is disbursed through these INGOs [6].

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In South Sudan, the most prominent roles of civil society organizations came into being during the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), documented by [6]. In 1993, SPLM/A Commander-in-Chief, Dr. John Garang, permitted the creation of the first indigenous non-governmental organization, the "Cush Relief and Rehabilitation Society" [6]. Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) considered civil society as the formal and informal organizations outside of state control [6].

In 1996, the NGO Forum was created to coordinate NGOs working in Southern Sudan and has ever since played a pivotal role in the development of the NGO sector in South Sudan [6]. By the end of 2016, the South Sudan NGO Forum registered 104 national and 129 international NGOs operating in the country (South Sudan NGO forum 2016). This underscores the importance and the growth of National and International organizations in the Country.

Although NGOs in South Sudan are seen as being lifesaving, restoring dignity, providing developmental projects, and receiving billions of dollars in aid annually, they are faced with numerous challenges ranging from; high operational cost, insecurity, lack of access, less government recognition and inability to develop the resilience of the local populations affected natural and humanmade hazards [7].

Hence, the need to investigate the key perceived factors determining NGO projects' success, to ascertain the relationship between these variables, and to draw some recommendations for practitioners and policy makers. Therefore, this study was meant to investigate the factors of Planning, Stakeholder's involvement, and risk management as determinants of NGOs' projects' success in South Sudan. The success of an NGO's projects is primarily indicated by the satisfaction of its beneficiaries and key stakeholders with the design and implementation of project activities. Therefore,

success is measured in terms of; timeliness, cost efficiency, meeting project scope, acceptability of the quality of the intervention, and sustainability of the project gains towards the achievement of the project's objectives [8]

In South Sudan, as of 2017 and 2018, over 297 NGOs responded to avert famine declared in 5 counties of Unity and Upper Nile States of South Sudan (WFP 2018). About 95% of all emergency interventions and development programming across the country were supported by either UN agencies or non-governmental organizations [9]. Over 3 billion united states dollars was injected into NGO/UN agencies' interventions within the 2 years of 2017 and 2018 by multilateral donors [10].

These interventions benefitted over 7 million South Sudanese across the 10 states of the Country. The key thematic areas of these interventions included: Health and Nutrition; Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH); Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL); Emergency Program Response (EPR); Emergency Education; Protection and Peace building and conflict prevention, among others.

Despite the huge flow of billions of dollars into the country through hundreds of NGOs, saving of millions of lives, and restoring of people's dignity, the South Sudanese society seems not to have developed sufficient resilience to cope with existing and Similar potential Risks, be it natural or human made. As a result, People have remained in extreme poverty, causing resource induced conflicts, resulting in massive poverty, loss of human lives and property, and displacements both internally and across international borders as the best coping option to the risks.

A study by [9] indicated that 64% of donor-funded projects fail [9]. This is consistent with [10], who revealed that while the World Bank has invested more than US\$5 billion in more than 700 projects in Africa over the past 20 years, its project failure rate was found to be over 50% [10].

Therefore, this study focused on investigating the project success factors of Planning; stakeholder involvement; risk management. This is to gauge their influence on level of project success, although the researcher is not sure of some of the factors to understand why NGOs' projects fail to achieve their desired goals of resilience building in the Country. To determine the factors affecting NGOs projects' success such as project planning, stakeholder involvement, and risk management practices.

1. To examine the relationship between Project planning, and project success
2. To examine the relationship between Project planning, Risk management, and Project success.
3. To assess the relationship between Stakeholder's involvement, Risk management, and Project success.
4. To study the factors structure of Project planning, Stakeholder involvement, Risk management, and Project success.

Hypotheses

Ho1: Projects with appropriate Planning are expected to have a high probability of success.

Ho2: Projects with appropriate Planning and Risk management are expected to have a high probability of success and sustainability.

Ho3: Projects with full stakeholders' involvement and sound Risk management are also expected to have a high probability of success.

Literature Review

Project Planning

Project planning is the process of determining the appropriate vision, mission, goals, and strategies for the achievement of predefined project objectives as advanced by [11]. Project planning is also defined as the extent to which timetables, milestones, workforce, equipment, and budget are specified or estimating the effort, time, cost, and staff resources needed to execute a project [12].

[13] has a similar view on Planning. According to him, Project Planning is the process consisting of the establishment of a total scope of an effort, defined and refined objectives, and develop the course of action required to attain those objectives [13].

Stakeholders' Involvement

A stakeholder is anyone who has an interest in a project, business, or Organization [14]. According to [14], in project management terms, a stakeholder is an individual or group of individuals who will be impacted by the outcome of the project. In his definition, Stakeholders can be within the organization or outside of it; either way, they are very interested in the project and its proceedings.

The stakeholder theory identifies groups of people who have an interest in an organization and describes the methods to understand their expectations and needs. Anyone who has a legitimate interest in an organization, including those whose support is essential for the existence of the organization, are an important stakeholder. The limitation of the theory is that it focuses on the acceptance of the organization by the internal and external stakeholders instead of focusing on its success regardless of who the stakeholders are. Under stakeholder theory, outside interests are taken seriously, irrespective of the views of the organization.

Therefore, it is not clear how this can be achieved nor how the range and variety of such groups can be legitimately identified. It is difficult under this theory to draw a line between organizational obligations and stakeholder mutual rights. [15] believes that organizations that try to please stakeholders are not only at a huge competitive disadvantage but also, they are difficult to manage [15].

Risk Management

According to [16], a risk is 'the chance of injury, damage, or loss'. Following that perspective, risk would not be predestined but subject to human agency [17]. Additionally,

[18] added to this conception the element of uncertainty by defining risk as a situation where something of human value (including humans themselves) is at stake and where the outcome is uncertain. In the same manner, [17] consider that although there would not be an agreed general definition of risk in the literature, there might be some common characteristics that we can mention.

Therefore, Risk management is the systematic process of identifying, analyzing, and responding to project risk.

Successful project risk management will greatly improve the probability of project success. Risk management is the systematic process of identifying, analyzing, and responding to project risk. It includes maximizing the probability and consequences of positive events and minimizing the probability and consequences of adverse events to project objectives [18].

Many of the institutions that humanity has built, could be viewed to address uncertainty, including politics, religion, philosophy, technology, laws, ethics, and morality, [19]. As stated by [19], just as the presence of risk is recognized and accepted as inevitable and unavoidable in every field of human endeavour, so there is a matching drive to address risk as far as possible. There are clear elements that could explain the current importance of the discipline of risk management as advanced by [20]. According to [21], it might be possible to distinguish risk from uncertainty [21]. According to this influential author, risk can be explained as “you don’t know for sure what will happen,” while uncertainty refers to “you don’t even know the odds of what will happen” [22].

Project Success

According to [23], project success is conceptualized as an ideological, social structure, which is arrived at via a morphogenetic sequence. An examination of [24] case studies under the various definitions

show the validity of this approach. Most commonly, a project can be considered successful if outcomes are realized, project outputs are delivered on time and to the agreed quality, costs are within those budgeted, and the requirements of all stakeholders are met. Project outcomes must please the customer, but they should also bring value to the organization [25].

In several studies, like [26], the common idea upon the success of Research and Development projects is that it depends on numerous factors, and it is necessary to take them up in a multi-dimensional format.

Their findings for the common factors of success in Research and Development projects are high-level management support, probability of technical success, market existence, availability of raw materials, need to lower cost, timing, and the commitment of project staff. [27] mentioned that project success is measured against the overall objectives of the project. At the same time, project management performance can be measured against traditional performance against cost, time, scope, and quality. Whereas Project performance successes may involve the consideration of its impact and sustainability of the successes as well [28].

Methodology

The study used cross-sectional and descriptive research design through observing and describing the behaviour of a subject without influencing the behaviour of the respondents in any way [29].

The Research used both qualitative and quantitative research approaches for the data collection and analysis to satisfy the objectives of the study. This was because qualitative data often needed to be supplemented with quantitative methods and vice versa to triangulate different learning from the Research [30].

The study population was 233 NGOs, of which 129 were International NGOs and 104

National NGOs registered in South Sudan. According to the (South Sudan NGO forum 2016) report. The sample size taken was 144 NGOs' staff, determined using the Krejcie Robert V. Morgan W. (1970) table. The sample size was drawn from a population of 233 NGOs, of which 104 were National NGOs and 129 International NGOs. The study reached 79 respondents from INGOs, representing 55% of the 144-sample size, and 65 respondents from NNGOs representing 45% of the 144-sample size.

The study purposively selected 29 Managers from these NGOs, representing 20% of the sample size. The data collected was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The quantitative data analysis was done using a

statistical package for social science (SPSS version 20.0). The qualitative data was coded before the analysis was done. The quantitative data were collected using the KoBo collect platform. The data collected was cleaned of incompleteness and inconsistency using Microsoft excel.

Results and Findings

Relationship between Variables of the Study

The Spearman correlation coefficient was used to determine the degree of relationship between the study variables as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1. Spearman's Zero-Order Correlation Matrix

	1	2	3	4
Project planning (1)	1.000			
Stakeholder involvement (2)	.706**	1.000		
Risk management (3)	.528**	.503**	1.000	
Project success (4)	.348**	.372**	.523**	1.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Source: Primary data

Ho1: Projects with appropriate Planning are expected to have a high probability of success.

The results show that there is a significant positive relationship between project planning and project success among selected NGOs ($r=0.348$, $p\text{-value} < 0.01$). The finding agrees with hypothesis one of the study supported by [29] who said that strategic Planning assists in providing direction, so that organization members know where the organization is heading to and where to expend their major efforts [29]. [30] adds that the process of strategic Planning shapes a company's strategy choice using systematic, logical, and rational approach.

Ho2: Projects with appropriate Planning and Risk management are expected to have a high probability of success and sustainability. The study results show that there is a significant positive relationship between project planning

and risk management at ($r=0.528$, $p\text{-value} = 0.01$) and between risk management and project success at ($r=0.523$, $p\text{-value} = 0.01$). The two independent variables of Project planning and risk management jointly do positively influence project success.

This finding is Inline with hypothesis two above of this study. The finding is supported by [31] who said that reviewing and regularly updating the status for each risk to ensure risks are under control, revise the mitigation action or get approval to proceed with the associated contingency plan, update and publish the current top risk list, and prepare a risk status report for use in project reviews leads to project success.

Ho3: Projects with full stakeholders' involvement and sound Risk management are also expected to have a high probability of success. The findings show that there is a

significant positive relationship between stakeholder involvement and risk management ($r=0.503$, $p\text{-value} =0.01$) and between risk management and project success ($r=0.523$, $p\text{-value} =0.01$). Lastly, there is a significant positive relationship between stakeholder involvement and project success among selected NGOs at ($r=0.372$, $p\text{-value} =0.01$).

Regression Analysis

Table 2. The Regression Model for Project Planning, Stakeholder Involvement, Risk Management, and Project Success

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.624	.290		5.593	.000
	Project planning	.003	.096	.003	.029	.977
	Stakeholder's involvement	.070	.099	.075	.702	.484
	Risk management	.459	.081	.496	5.666	.000
R = .541, R square = .293, Adjusted R Square = .278, F=19.325, sig. = .000						

Source: Primary data

Dependent Variable: Project Success

Predictors: (Constant), Risk management, stakeholder involvement, Project Planning

There is a linear relationship between Risk management, stakeholder involvement, Project planning, and project success. This is shown by the statistics $R=0.541$, R square of 0.293, and adjusted R square of 0.278; hence it is deduced over all that the three variables of Risk management, stakeholders' involvement, and Project Planning together leads to project success by 27.8%.

Risk management ($\beta=0.496$) best explains project success in that a unit change in risk management contributes to a 49.6% change in project success.

Stakeholders involvement ($\beta=0.075$) explains success in that a unit change in stakeholder involvement leads to project success by 7.5%.

Project Planning least at ($\beta=0.03$), which explains project success in a unit change in project planning leads to a 3% change in project success.

This is in line with hypothesis 3 of this study. The study results are in line with [25, 32], who said that Effective stakeholder management is a critical factor in the successful delivery of construction projects. Specifically, stakeholder management has a key role in the achievement of project success [33].

Discussions, Recommendations, and Conclusions

The Relationship between Project Planning and Project Success

The results indicated a positive relationship between Planning and Projects Success ($r = 0.348$, $P\text{-value} < 0.01$), which implied that carefully planned projects lead to improved project success in the NGO sector in South Sudan.

1. Based on this finding, project managers are encouraged to do proper Planning of project activities, budgets, scope, time, and quality right from the initiation of the project idea before the execution of the project.
2. Secondly, the project manager should popularize the planned activities among the internal stakeholders and target beneficiaries/customers for better

involvement where necessary and for acceptance purposes.

The Relationships of Planning, Risk Management, and Project Success

The results of the correlations between Project Planning and Risk Management, Risk management, and Project success indicated a significant positive relationship. With Project Planning and Risk management at ($r = 0.528$, $P\text{-value} < 0.01$) while between Risk management and Projects success at ($r = 0.523$, $P\text{-value} < 0.01$). This implies that effective Project planning, which reflects a clear organizational mission, goals, objectives, strategies, and actions, and with effective risk management through project risk identification, analysis, mitigation, and monitoring plans, lead to successful project implementation, which meet stakeholders' expectations. Therefore, the study recommends that.

1. The management of any organization needs to put in place proper risk management strategies during the planning phase of the project. This should be done right from the planning phase of the project, potential risk factors should be identified and analyzed, and a relevant mitigation and monitoring plan put in place to ensure that these potential risks are controlled effectively. The project manager can use the risk probability/impact chart to do this analysis for future projects and assign qualified staff to handle the monitoring and control mechanism of the plan.
2. The organization should ensure that the key staff to be assigned responsibilities to implement, monitor and control the project execution should be properly trained to ensure that they have the required knowledge, skills, and attitudes to monitor and control the potential risks. This can be done by, identifying capacity gaps of the earmarked staff members to ensure that the right capacity gaps are identified and provided the right training to enable them

to effectively execute the project activities, monitor potential risk factors, and continuously control the risk factors.

The Relationship between Stakeholder Involvement, Risk Management, and Project Success

The correlations between stakeholder involvement and Risk Management, Risk management, and Project success indicated a significant positive relationship. With Stakeholder's involvement and Risk management at ($r = 0.503$, $P\text{-value} < 0.01$), while between Risk management and Project success at ($r = 0.523$, $P\text{-value} < 0.01$). This shows that improved stakeholder involvement, where key stakeholders are identified, and analysed, right from the planning phase of the project, and robust Stakeholder management, leads to high project success. In other words, enhanced stakeholder involvement can help with managing their needs, and expectations, hence decreasing unanticipated risk and reducing unconstructive actions that have a possible impact on project success.

Therefore, the study recommends that.

1. Key stakeholders to each project should be identified, and their expectations documented properly and regularly reviewed to determine any change in their expectations.
2. A stakeholder's analysis should be conducted for each project to determine how the project affects the different stakeholders and draw recommendations for the course of action mitigate negative effects.

The Factor Structure of Planning, Stakeholder Involvement and Risk Management on Project Success

Results showed a regression figure of ($R=0.541$) as a combination of three factors of; Project Planning, Stakeholder Involvement, and Risk management in assessing the level at which they can predict the level of Project

Success in the NGO sector. These variables explained 29.3% of the variance of Project Success ($R^2 = .293$), which implied that a unit change in Planning processes would contribute to a great change in Project Success by (.003) and a one-unit change in Stakeholder Involvement would also contribute to a change in the levels of Project Success in the NGOs sector by (.75) while a one-unit change in Risk management contributed to a change in the levels of Project Success in the NGOs sector by (.496).

The Study Recommends

1. Project managers need to take Stakeholder's involvement very seriously as they plan future projects. This is because the success of projects is highly dependent on it, as can be seen from the above results of the regression analysis of the factor structure of the three variables. This should be done carefully right from the planning phase of the project, by involving all the key teams of the project.
2. Project management team should ensure that the Planning of a project should not only focus on the actions, strategies, objectives, and goals but also on who the stakeholders are, their needs and expectations analyzed, and how they are fully satisfied and engaged in supporting the project.
3. Project management should also take into consideration the potential risks to be encountered by the team as they implement project activities. They can, similarly, identify the potential risks, analyze them, and develop mitigation measures and continuously monitor these risks for better understanding and control. This Planning needs to happen right from the Planning phase of each project.

Conclusions

In general terms, the study established that the variables of Project Planning, Stakeholders

Involvement, and Risk Management do play very important roles in improving project success levels in the NGO sector in South Sudan. Amongst the variables for this study, the correlations between Project Planning and Risk Management top the list of all the correlations of all other factors. Followed by Risk management and Project success, Stakeholders Involvement, and Risk management, Stakeholder involvement and Project Success, and Project Planning and Project Success, respectively. Following this trend, it is important to note that for every project, there must be sufficient Planning immediately at the initiation of the project idea. Secondly, the management of the organization needs to put into place strong risk management strategies right from the planning stages of the project. And finally, the management needs to identify, analyse, inform, involve, and monitor stakeholders right from the planning phase of each project. The challenge is that with most NGOs, although there are some practices of Planning, stakeholder involvement, and risk management, there are insufficient formal guiding policies or frameworks for organizations to execute.

Therefore, there are some inconsistencies regarding the organization's management exercising these important roles routinely. Hence, the findings of this study do provide project managers and owners with the required information and a direction to improve on the factors of Project Planning, Stakeholders' Involvement, and Risk Management for better realization of project success. Findings further affirm that project Managers should adopt improved decision-making through more consultation with key stakeholders of each project being implemented. This would lead to acceptable decisions and ownership of the project by the stakeholders, leading to better project success.

Therefore, NGOs are advised to follow some basic general requirements of Project Planning, Stakeholders Involvement, and Risk

Management as pre-requisite for the determination of project success.

Areas for Further Research

1. The study recommends further investigation of the aspects of planning projects which should be put in place to influence project success.
2. This Research recommends a study on Effective Communication strategy with internal and external stakeholders of projects to ensure effective information sharing, hence the involvement of the key stakeholders in the Planning, execution, monitoring, and control of the project in consideration.

Conflict of Interest Statement

I have worked for several International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and

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continue in the same sector. Therefore, the views expressed in this manuscript are entirely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policy positions of the NGOs I have worked for.

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