

Examining Socio-Economic Strategies Affect the Sustainability of Community Development Plans

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Abstract: *Community Development Projects (CDPs) represent an important role in supporting communities to address their immediate social economic problems. However, most of these projects collapse as soon as their prominent donors withdraw. For example, reliance on donor funding by the Good Shepherd Sisters in Meru County led to the ultimate closure of some programs before the realization of their initial goals. This study intended to establish reasons for project failure and subsequent lack of sustainability. The principal objective of this study was to examine social economic strategies that influence the sustainability of community development projects in Meru County, with reference to Good Shepherd Programs. The research was anchored on stakeholder theory supported by systems theory. The study used a mixed - methods research design. A Convergent parallel mixed approach was used to combine qualitative and quantitative data to deliver a comprehensive examination of the research problem. A population of 250 participants comprising 63 program staff, 4 program directors and 183 parents' mentor were used to provide the data. Purposive, census, and snowball sampling were used to select the study participants. Data analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Both factor analysis and thematic analysis were used for qualitative data analysis. Data from interviews was organized into themes and presented in narrative form and direct quotes. Descriptive statistics generated in the form of frequencies and percentages were used to summarize the quantitative data and presented in frequency distribution tables. The study concluded that there were numerous organizational strategies influencing sustainability of Good Shepherd Programs in Meru County. These ranged from staff involvement, program planning, communication, strategic plans implementation to stakeholder engagement. Consequently, this study suggests a wide range of proposals aimed at making the Good Shepherd Programs effective in order to achieve long - term sustainability. Some of these include informed participation, awareness creation, communal ownership of the projects, visionary and transformational leadership, staff development, transparent and accurate financial accountability, and eliminating dependency on donor funding.*

Keywords: Organizational sustainability, community development, Good Shepherd Programs, Stakeholders, Project sustainability, Strategies

1. Introduction

In project implementation, sustainability refers to the chances that a project will continue long after donor funding declines. Project sustainability is the fundamental difficulty facing local, national, and international development organizations. Large amount of donor funds have been spent in communities worldwide to improve people's living standards. However, one of the most challenging obstacles is determining how long projects can survive in the face of donor withdrawal. In community development programs, sustainability distinguishes success and failed projects (Gichuki, 2019).

In Kenya, the Good Shepherd Sisters have implemented development programs in Meru since the 1980s. They focus on holistic formation, supporting programs for vulnerable children, especially the girl child and women, and advancing for the rights of people living in poverty, victims of human trafficking, gender - based violence, and other sorts of prejudice, and confronting oppressive and unjust structures and systems. The projects implemented include; education sponsorship for school children, a total of about 1, 565

children are sponsored for basic primary, secondary and tertiary education, Microfinance groups that aim at improving the living standards of sponsored families by enlightening them on better use of resources and increasing production as a way of improving their living standards. Other areas of focus include Nutrition and health services to both the parents and children responding to the food and nutrition needs of school going children in most vulnerable schools, rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of children that provides a safe home for vulnerable children (OLGHS, 2017).

In general, the programs contribute to the achievement of different sustainable development goals by promoting gender equality (SDG 5), Quality Education (SDG 4), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), zero hunger (SDG 2), good health and wellbeing (SDG 3), and eradication of poverty (SDG 1). The challenge of project sustainability persists despite all the efforts. Available funds to run all Good Shepherd Programs are solely donor - sourced. For example, in 2019 alone, the annual budget for sponsorship and community projects amounted to about 800, 000 USD (CORAT Africa, ECAP Evaluation Report, 2019). This

reliance on donor funding places the programs at a high risk of closure necessitated by donor withdrawal.

1.1. Statement of the Research Problem

The initial goal of Good Shepherd Sisters in Kenya was to provide holistic formation and supporting vulnerable communities to rise toward social and economic sustenance by establishing social - economic programs on education and women empowerment, rescue, rehabilitation and provision of affordable health care to the communities. However, this has not been achieved despite multiple efforts. Good Shepherd Programs (GSP) have heavily relied on donor funds since their inception in 1980s in Kenya. Up to date, most of the programs are purely donor funded which poses a real sustainability challenge. Sustainability is a systemic challenge since it touches many other components in administration. Currently, the main projects implemented under donor funding include: education sponsorship for children, adult literacy, health and nutrition, feeding programmes, agriculture, community development, rescue and rehabilitation, child protection and social enterprises. Due to donor withdrawal the vocational training and crises intervention Programs were stopped unexpectedly. According to CORAT Africa ECAP Evaluation Report (2019), donor reliance is one of the major challenges of Good Shepherd Programs in Kenya while among other issues including; project management challenges, implementation of strategic plans, limited community involvement and engagement in project planning and design, inadequate human resource capacity, lack of alternative resource mobilization strategies and organized transition management strategies.

On average Good Shepherd Programs Meru receives approximately 800, 000 USD annually for the development work. Despite having constant Congregational support and continued donor funding channeled towards the existing programs, Good Shepherd projects still face myriad challenges as they move toward longer - term sustainability. In the past, this problem has impacted on the quality of outputs leading to ultimate closure of some programs (CORAT Africa ECAP Evaluation Report, 2019). For example, the need for technical and vocational skills training remains a gap for children who complete secondary education and cannot proceed to higher levels of education and for those resulting from poverty related challenges cannot complete primary education. In the past Good Shepherd Sisters owned and managed Vocational training Centers in Meru at two different locations - Kangeta (Igembe central sub - county) and Kambakia (Imenti North Sub County). Both projects were closed, leaving a skills gap for the youth who are the beneficiaries of Good Shepherd Programmes. The closure of these programs resulted from lack of alternative funding opportunities and management related challenges.

Therefore, there is need for more information and knowledge on the social economic strategies that influence the sustainability of community development projects in Meru County. This study sought to find ways of addressing impediments that make it difficult to achieve sustainability.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this study was to examine the social economic strategies that influenced the sustainability of community development programs in Meru County, with reference to Good Shepherd Programs. The specific objectives were to explore organizational factors affecting the sustainability; examine social economic determinants of sustainability and explore the importance of stakeholder engagement in the sustainability of Good Shepherd Programs in Meru County.

1.3 Conceptual framework

The study's conceptual framework hypothesized that organizational strategies on sustainability; project leadership and staff involvement and integration of staff: Social economic determinants of sustainability; resource mobilization and diversification of the sources of funding and stakeholder engagement on sustainability; stakeholder participation and partnership and networking together with intervention actors such as change in funding regulations and interests among donors, government policies on development, environmental changes and political influence led to organizational sustainability. From the perspective of the independent variables, the findings from the study indicated the following based on each objective: organizational factors; Leadership aspects considered as the sustainability drivers for the Good Shepherd Programs in Meru County included staff involvement in planning, effective communication and adapting and implementing project strategic plan. The participants saw leaderships as a crucial aspect in determining the future of the programs in Meru. The findings challenge the management of the programs of the programs to consider staff involvement, proper communication and commitment in the implementing the strategic plan for sustainability and continuity of the programs. The social economic factors considered crucial were; adoption of income generating activities, good financial management practices and systems and involvement of beneficiaries in program design. This implies that Good Shepherd Programs will thrive and become more sustainable if they consider implementation of strategic plans which provides roadmap towards realization of the program vision and mission. This may further include developing a social enterprise and business plan for their income generation activities with good financial management practices that may be incorporated within their administrative and financial policies. On the importance of stakeholder engagement, the study findings revealed the following as key aspects to consider while engaging with stakeholders at all levels. Good stakeholder engagement helps in supporting project mission and goals, a community capable of good leadership is an indication of ability to support its projects and local stakeholders' inclusion from the inception of the project provides effective and informed participation in all matters. The participants saw these as a key stakeholder engagement element in program sustainability. This implies that stakeholders have an important role in the failure and success of a program. Good shepherd leadership therefore are challenged to consider critical components of stakeholder engagement for sustenance of their mission in Meru County. Consequently,

the findings from this study reveal that independent and intervening variables had effect and influence on the

dependent variable of the study. This is seen in Figure 1.

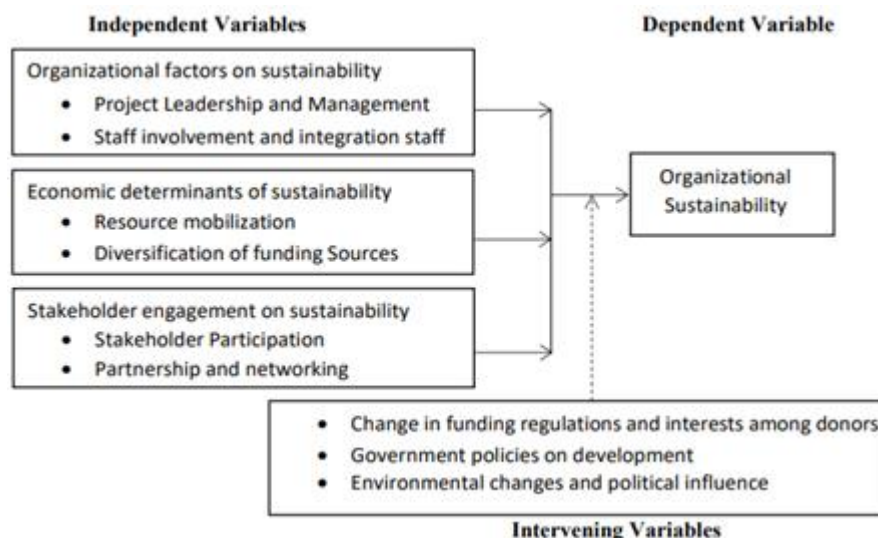


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

1.4. The role of stakeholder theory

The study was anchored on stakeholder theory, which was first advanced in 1984, at the University of Virginia by Dr. Edward Freeman as a strategy to support in managing successful enterprises. The theory has been used in diverse contexts in different types of organizations in the development. Stakeholder theory is a well - known corporate ethics and management theory that encourages ethical, effective, and practical approaches to dealing with environmental issues in a variety of situations (Waheed et al., 2020). Stakeholder theory is a concept in management theory and practice that focuses on all groups that may have an impact on a company. As a result, this leads to an examination of these relationships and interest groups, as well as the mechanisms that enable them to exist (Hawrysz & Maj, 2017). The researcher had assumed that stakeholder theory is applicable to this research because it lays emphasis on the need to treat all stakeholders fairly, as the success of an organization is dependent on their collaboration despite its several flaws that must be addressed, for example all stakeholders have different interests that cannot be met at the same time. The findings of this study support the core argument of the theory that the success of an organization is defined by the ability to gratify all its stakeholders. This means, bringing in different stakeholders with an effort to satisfy their interests. From the study results, 100% of the participants agree that good stakeholder engagement helps in supporting project mission and goals thus leading to future sustainability. This study findings reveal that good stakeholder engagement that helps in supporting project mission and goals (100%), a community capable of good leadership - an indication of ability to support projects (98%), local stakeholders' inclusion from the beginning of the project for effective and informed participation in all matters (96%) and a honest, sincere, well informed and inclusive process of stakeholder involvement (95%) were stakeholder engagement matters that affected sustainability of Good Shepherd Programs. For future improvement of stakeholder theory, the researcher suggests that, more systematic studies on relationship between organizational

sustainability and stakeholder engagement. This will help to establish a critical analysis and assessment of other research that has been done in other places in Kenya and in African perspective on the issue of sustainability. The theory could be strengthened by analyzing organization types and the key stakeholders that they can never assumed to challenge the notion that stakeholders can be anything and anybody at the same time.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study adopted a convergent parallel mixed method design, which allowed gathering both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously. The main advantage of using this method was the ability of quantitative data to produce generalizable results and qualitative data with wide perceptions. The design was appropriate for this study since it helped to collect data that answered the questions on the status while describing the nature of sustainability in this study. The design was aided by questionnaires for both qualitative and quantitative data. The primary evidence behind this method of investigation was that combining qualitative and quantitative techniques resulted in a more comprehensive understanding of a research topic than either methodology can provide (Creswell, 2012). Both data types were collected concurrently, and the raw data combined with the overall results for interpretation. Since the idea of sustainability, as discussed in preceding chapters had a lot to do with people's attitudes and opinions and their lived experiences, this design allowed the use of mixed - method data collection, which was critical, particularly when it came to collecting information related to population attitudes and understanding the topic of sustainability (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

2.2 Location of the Study and Target Population

This study was carried out in Meru County, one of the 47 counties in Kenya, located in the former Eastern Province in Kenya. The county borders Isiolo County to the North and East, Tharaka Nithi County to the South, Nyeri County to the South West, and Laikipia County to the North West. Meru had a population of 1, 545, 714 million according to the Kenya Population and Housing Census, (2019). The data for this study was collected across four selected Sub - counties where Good Shepherd Sisters run community development programs. The target population of the study was 250 participants, including 183 parents' mentors and 67 program staff drawn from the four Good Shepherd Programs in Meru County - Marimba, Kooje, Kangeta and Tumaini (Naari).

2.3 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

The study combined probability and non - probability sampling procedures. The program staff were sampled by census, while purposive sampling was used in identifying program directors engaged as key informants. Snowball sampling was used to select parents' mentors from each program location.

The study focused on the four program locations conducting focused group discussions with eight participants from every location. The first parents' beneficiaries were chosen from each site, and then helped to choose others in their groups based on their availability. The choice of census and purposive sampling was preferred mainly because the number of participants was small. Therefore, it made sense, as proposed by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), to investigate all the target population if the total population was not very large. Additionally, having all members under investigation greatly enhanced the validity of the research data because there was no room for bias associated with sampling fractions of the total population. The program directors were selected on purpose considering their roles as program leaders and leading implementers of the programs. They understood the programs best as vision bearers who provided oversight in the overall management and leadership of the programs (Creswell, 2012).

2.4. Research Instruments and Data Analysis

This study used questionnaires, critical informant interview guides, and a focus group discussion guide to collect relevant data. The interview guide was used for the program directors as the key informants, while questionnaires for the program staff and focus group discussion for parents' mentors. The data collection tools contained a combination of closed and open - ended questions allowing the participants to explain their responses in - depth in their own words.

Factor analysis was used to interpret the data into meaningful information to make inferences and recommendations. It included data preparation involving collecting and organizing data, describing data, testing any underlying hypotheses, and making presumptions. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were coded and

then analyzed using descriptive analysis by Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Thematic analysis was utilized to analyze qualitative data based on the emerging themes, meanings, or patterns. Being descriptive research, frequency counts and percentages were used to present categorical variables. Tables were used to present the quantitative data, and qualitative data was presented in narrative form and verbatim quotes.

3. Results

3.1 Organizational Factors Affecting Sustainability of Good Shepherd Programs

From the focus group discussions undertaken by the researcher while engaging parents' mentors, participants demonstrated their understanding of the concept of sustainability mentioning responses such as: *"Availability to develop and multiply the available resources"* and *"Ability to have capital to sustain projects"* (Tumaini FGD, second Participant and KangetaFGD, first Participant respectively), *"Utilizing the resources and funds for the purpose it was meant"* (Tumaini FGD, first Participant), *"Trustworthiness, transparency and accountability"* (KangetaFGD, third Participant). The study findings also revealed that staff involvement in planning (66%), effective communication (61%), adapting and implementing project strategic plan (58%) and strong program monitoring and evaluation (58%) were the top leadership drivers of sustainability for the Good Shepherd Programs. Other key leadership drivers of sustainability were established to be staff capacity development, implementation of good organizational policies, having right capacity for program managers and staff and results - based approach in organizational leadership.

Further from the semi - structured interviews administered to program directors, the study findings reveal that willingness to listen to views of and engagement of stakeholders by leaders, a visionary leadership that also empower teams and that creates networks and linkages were need for organizational sustainability. The Good Shepherd Program directors engaged in this study had the following to say: *"The leadership must be open to listen to the views and opinions of members. Full engagement of stakeholders in planning. Leadership must be visionary, transparent, and accountable and show ownership of the processes."* (Interviewee 1), *"Leadership must ensure that resources are sourced, people are empowered towards self - sustenance, ... managing organizing and empowering teams."* (Interviewee 2), *"Leadership supports mentoring the teams and empowers them with capacity to continue the mission of the projects even when donors withdraw."* The Participant also mentions, *"Creating linkages and networks that contributes to sustainability by bringing in new ideas and experiences from other organizations."* (Interviewee 3).

These views were also echoed by participants engaged in the focus group discussions calling for; *"Continuous capacity building for leaders, knowledge on what leadership is all about."* *"Ability to cooperate and work together with members."*, *"Having leaders who are self - sacrificing and leading by example."*, *"Having leaders who are honest,*

transparent and communicate openly” (Tumaini FGD, first, second, third and fourth participants). Additionally, program directors mentioned that seeking alternative donors, empowerment of people in communities to take charge of their lives, adoption of income generating activities, proper monitoring and evaluation of projects to help bridge gaps in implementation and engagement of fundraisers to supplement existing donor funds and networking were key measures to ensure project sustainability after donor withdrawals. One Participant engaged through the semi - structured interviews had this to say: *“Mentoring beneficiaries to own the program. Creating reliable income generating activity for the project, invest in staff capacity on*

particular skills and competencies needed for continuing of the project and a well - planned strategy with clear targets, outcomes and risk management, identify and involve key stakeholders.” (Interviewee 3).

The study findings also reveal those aspects on inclusion of sustainability activities in program planning (73%; strongly agree), staff training and development to promote project sustainability (62%; strongly agree), and Program monitoring and evaluation is important for project sustainability (58%; strongly agree). These findings align with the findings already presented and discussed on leadership drivers for organizational sustainability.

Table 1: Leadership - Related Factors that Drive Sustainability

Leadership – related factors	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
There is involvement of staff in planning of project activities.	3%	5%	19%	40%	32%
The leadership in the programs is generally considered to demonstrate mentoring, facilitating, and nurturing.	2%	8%	7%	52%	31%
It is important to include sustainability activities in program planning.	0%	2%	3%	23%	73%
The managers have the needed management capacity.	7%	8%	11%	31%	43%
Adapting and implementing project Strategic plan facilitate and helps to move towards a sustainable program.	0%	3%	11%	44%	42%
The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify, results – oriented focus.	2%	5%	10%	45%	38%
There is evidence of effective communication skills, for managers.	3%	6%	8%	50%	32%
Staff involvement and motivation leads to sustainability.	8%	0%	13%	35%	44%
Program monitoring and evaluation is important for project sustainability.	2%	3%	6%	31%	58%
Having and implementing good organizational policies promote sustainability of projects.	0%	7%	5%	44%	44%
Staff training and development promotes project sustainability.	0%	2%	3%	33%	62%
The leadership in the program considered to illustrate coordinating, organizing, or smooth – running of the program.	2%	2%	5%	51%	41%

Further, participants mentioned strong leadership and management practices (42%), strategic planning and implementation of the plans (17%) and the ability to mobilization of resources from stakeholders (15%) as leadership attributes that were crucial towards leadership and management.

3.2. Social Economic Determinants of Sustainability of Good Shepherd Programs

Majority of participants (79%) mentioned that adoption of income generating activities, good financial management practices and systems followed at 55%, and involvement of beneficiaries in program design came last at 54%. Three social economic factors rated as having the highest impact on sustainability were as follows; 72% strongly agreed that establishment and implementation of good financial

management practices fosters, accountability, transparency, and sustainable financial systems. 60% agreed that community development projects must establish income generating activities to enhance sustainability and 51% strongly agreed that lack of community contributions from beneficiaries to the project activities leads to donor dependency.

Further, participants’ felt that ways of promoting financial sustainability for the Good Shepherd Programs include diversification of donor funding base - both local and international donors (47%), establishment of income generating projects and activities (34%), and proper financial planning and management practices including frequent external audits (9%). Table 2 illustrates the findings.

Table 2: Ratings on Social Economic Factors Related to Sustainability

Suggestions on improving financial sustainability	Frequency (N=47)	Percent
Diversifying donor funding base to involve local and international donors	22	47%
Establishing income generating activities/ projects	16	34%
Proper financial planning and management practices including frequent external audits	9	19%
Transparency and accountability on finances and in management	5	11%
Monitoring and evaluation of projects	4	9%
Encourage local community involvement in design, implementation, and funding to reduce donor dependency	3	6%
Leaders and community to work together	1	2%
Emphasis on existing projects and discovering new projects	1	2%
Strong organizational policies	1	2%

Focus group discussions and interviews with parents' mentors and program directors reinforce these findings when they suggested establishment of income generating activities, seeking for more donor funding, from local and international donors, as well as proper planning, monitoring and evaluation of projects as other ways of achieving financial sustainability. The following were some of the verbatim records from participants: *"Beginning a SACCO to enhance re-generation of funds and boost existing savings scheme. Looking for other donor-fundraising. Establish income generating projects like building hostels near one of the universities for more income."* (Interviewee 3), *"Create a strategic plan with clear budget and develop resource mobilization plan, create a committee for resource mobilization, constant monitoring and evaluation of the strategy, create and implement income generating activity"* (Interviewee 3), *"Beginning income generating activities e.*

g., brick making, kitchen garden, tree nursery beekeeping and poultry." (Kangeta FGD, first Participant).

3.3. Importance of stakeholder engagement on sustainability of Good Shepherd Programs

The study findings reveal that 61% of respondents strongly agreed that good stakeholder engagement that helps in supporting project mission and goals is needed, 39% merely agreed. On a community capable of good leadership - an indication of ability to support projects, strongly agree were at 65% and agree were at 33%. On local stakeholders' inclusion from the beginning of the project for effective and informed participation in all matters, 47% strongly agreed and agree were at 49%. Regarding honest, sincere, well informed and inclusive process of stakeholder involvement 63% strongly agreed and 33% agreed. Table 3 depicts the findings.

Table 3: Ratings on Stakeholder Engagement Factors Relating to Sustainability

Stakeholder engagement aspects	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Good stakeholder engagement helps in supporting project mission and goals	0%	0%	0%	39%	61%
Stakeholder engagement must be emphasized in the planning	4%	2%	0%	47%	47%
The process of stakeholder involvement should be honest, sincere, well informed and inclusive.	0%	0%	2%	35%	63%
Local stakeholders need to be included from the beginning of the project for effective and informed participation in all matters.	0%	0%	4%	49%	47%
Involvement of stakeholder in the planning process increases local ownership of the programmes	0%	4%	5%	35%	56%
Involving stakeholders at project beginning creates good trust and contributes after the project ends.	2%	0%	7%	30%	61%
Community involvement is an essential part for sustainability of projects	0%	0%	5%	46%	49%
Community and leaders are reviewed as an essential and critical factor for program sustainability	2%	0%	7%	43%	48%
A community capable of good leadership is an indication of ability to support their projects	0%	0%	2%	33%	65%

From the semi-structured interviews, the findings reveal that the local community needs to contribute to projects' sustainability, awareness creation and involvement of local leaders and encouragement of communal ownership of the projects were different ways of undertaking stakeholder engagement. Participants called for the following: *"Create community awareness on the intention (mission) and relevance of the program in the community. Share the needs of the community and invite them to help where they can and involve the local leaders in the process of awareness creation."* Interviewee 3. *"Engagement of local beneficiaries in soliciting contributions towards common funding and formation of a committee to support developing of a fundraising strategy."* Interviewee 1.

Asked how community members had been involved in the Good Shepherd Programs, the responses were: *"The community members are involved in monitoring of community projects. For example, they are involved in construction of schools, dispensaries and sinking boreholes"* and *"The community supports in identification of needs e. g., children for sponsorship and other community needs"* (Tumaini FGD, Participant 5 and Participant 7). *"There have also been constant meetings that help members update one another"*, *"Capacity building on different issues e. g., energy saving"*, *"Common planning of group activities"*, *"Monitoring and evaluation of group progress through*

annual meetings" and *"mapping of community needs e. g., needy children and mapping out community projects e. g., dispensaries and schools"* (Kangeta FGD, Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 4 and Participant 6). *"Identifying the needy beneficiaries"*, *"Involvement in decision making on groups"*, *"Capacity enhancement on issues of health and kitchen gardening."* (Kooje FGD, Participant 1, Participant 2 and Participant 3).

The researcher established some of the benefits of stakeholder engagement as a means of enhancing project sustainability to include benefits such as handling of security and legal matters by governments, awareness creation forums, as well as advisory and linkage to services and resources that spur sustainability. In the participants' words; *"The county Government of Meru provides security, peace and order within the project establishments, provide education bursaries to needy children, provide registration services to the individuals and groups e. g., birth certificates for children, beneficiary registration, self-help groups and renewal of CBO certificate. The church provides moral and spiritual support. Donors provide sponsorship for education of children at different levels. Project staff implement the project and create linkages with external stakeholders and the community provides ownership to the project and supports in the implementation"* Interviewee 3. *"County Governments networks provide security and the programs*

gains recognition by local government since it contributes to its development plans. CSOs create a forum for common space for addressing issues that affect the people and the community at the grass roots, it acts as a wider voice for advocacy. County Government provide support to the project in the legal registration and compliance to all the requirements. ” (Interviewee3).

4. Discussion of Results

The study findings revealed staff involvement in planning, effective communication and adapting, implementing project strategic plans were organizational factors that affected sustainability, willingness to listen to views of and engagement of stakeholders by leaders, a visionary leadership that empower teams and creates networks and linkages were enablers of organizational sustainability. These findings align with those of previous studies that have also identified various organizational factors that are drivers of sustainability of programs. Pappas (2012) points out to the importance of participation in programs by people through their roles, duties, relationships, and goals thus aiding sustainability practices. The Good Shepherd Programs are deemed sustainable through the active engagement of people with good knowledge and understanding of sustainability, leading to the majority feeling that the programs are sustainable. Sebastian et al., (2018), in their study in Switzerland aimed at identifying sustainability factors associated with community - based program sustainability established that manager's capacity to set realistic goals and develop program plans, recognition and engagement in participatory processes and transparency were crucial leadership drivers of sustainability. The aspects of strategic planning are also reinforced by Salat and James (2019) who pointed out to strategic planning and the World Bank (2012), who also pointed out the creation of sustainable development programs to pertain to development of peoples' capacities and community empowerment among other factors, leadership factors that were top in the current study. Salat and James, (2019) in their study also asserted the importance of individual and collective resources such as time, materials, money, energy contributing towards projects long term sustainability. Their conclusion pointed to the need to build self – sustenance among beneficiaries and capacities of project staff as observed by participants in the current study.

The study findings also revealed that adoption of income generating activities, good financial management practices and systems, and involvement of beneficiaries in program design were critical social economic drivers of program sustainability. These study findings align with that of other scholars. Persoon, (2016) mentioned the importance of having secondary sources of funds and material resources to supplement and eventually replace external funding. Ndetaulwa (2019) in their study on the influence of resource mobilization on the sustainability of community water projects in Tanzania, Arusha recommended the need for adequacy of financial resources and human resource capacity among other aspects as drivers of sustainability. Davis (2013) in studying financial sustainability and funding of NGOs in Indonesia mentioned the need for funding source diversification and informed decisions on

achievement of long - term objectives towards financial sustainability. Further, Davis (2013) confirms the need for communities to contribute their share to increase the internal funding besides the external donors, factors participants in the current study established as necessary for sustainability. Omeri, (2015) in a study on factors influencing financial sustainability of NGOs established that besides focus on donors, well planned self - funding activities and development of social enterprises to collect extra revenue were a means of financial sustainability for NGOs; findings also reinforced by (Barno, 2019).

Study findings reveal that good stakeholder engagement that helps in supporting project mission and goals, local stakeholders' inclusion from the beginning of the project for effective and informed participation in all matters and an honest, sincere, well informed, and inclusive process of stakeholder involvement were stakeholder engagement matters that affected sustainability of programs. The study further revealed that stakeholder engagement was possible through awareness creation and involvement of local leaders and encouragement of communal ownership of the projects. Past studies share similar sentiments on stakeholder engagement approaches. Persoon, (2016) stressed the importance of engaging stakeholders in ensuring sustainability by linking program partners on all levels and demonstrated its ability to open funding opportunities on top of additional benefits such as training, beneficiary sponsorship and security as was established by this current study. This was since stakeholders, generally bore interests in projects and had the power to influence outcomes on a positive or negative manner (UNDP, 2017). The study at had confirmed that Good Shepherd Programs had attained the reported confidence in its levels of sustainability largely through stakeholder engagements and linkages. Olori and Okide (2014), in their examination of the extent to which community participation was used in the achievement of sustainable community development projects in Rivers State, Nigeria underscored the importance of engagement of community members in the planning and implementation of projects.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the objectives of the study, the following conclusions were made: Organizational strategies affecting sustainability of Good Shepherd Programs in Meru County included staff involvement in planning, effective communication, adapting and implementing project strategic plans, willingness to listen to views of and engagement of stakeholders by leaders, visionary leadership that empower teams and creates networks and linkages to other institutions; Social economic determinants of sustainability of Good Shepherd Programs in Meru County were, projects adopting income generating activities, good financial management practices and systems and involvement of beneficiaries and local communities in program design; Stakeholder engagement for Good Shepherd Programs were effective through awareness creation, involvement of local leaders and encouragement of communal ownership of the projects were established. The Good Shepherd Programs had engaged community members through meetings, especially on community needs assessments and the monitoring and

evaluation of its projects as keyways on encouraging sustainability with benefits such as security and handling of legal matters by government, opportunities for awareness creation forums, advisory and linkage services that spur sustainability.

Based on the study findings, the researcher makes the following recommendations: It is recommended that the Good Shepherd initiatives invest in transformation and visionary leadership that encourages personal development of program staff and of beneficiaries for project ownership and sustainability. The Good Shepherd leaders to adopt transparent and accurate ways of financial accountability and encourage the adoption of income generating activities for the institutions with proceeds from generated funds utilized in eliminating dependence on donor funding. The Good Shepherd Programs adopt strategies of stakeholder engagement and benefits to be accrued in the context of sustainability. That Good Shepherd Programs adopt an alternative income generating activities as a means of spurring program sustainability.

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