

*Evaluation Studies
And Community
Development In
Africa*

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ABSTRACT

Community development is an integral part of any society in the world. Evaluation studies go hand in hand with community development plans and implementation. The studies give feedback to community development plans and their implementation. They establish the needs of the community and assess community development projects as they are in progress. Evaluation studies provide tangible evidence of the deliverables and determine short term plus residual effects of a project. The studies ensure the success of community development projects and provide direction to the next course of action in relation to community development projects. The methodology adopted was review of literature and the conclusions were made based on the point of views draw out of the paper.

Key Words: Evaluation, Studies, Community, Development, Africa

1. INTRODUCTION

Evaluation studies are mainly commissioned and financed by the organization that owns or has an interest in the project to be studied. Evaluation studies are usually carried out by consultancy firms or professional consultants who are specialized in the area concerned. The main concern of evaluation studies is to give value judgment or to establish the worth of the aspect under study. Community Development Foundation (UK) (<http://.cdf.org.uk>) describes Community Development as “a structured intervention that gives communities greater control over the conditions that affect their lives.” According to the Word Vision Africa (2010), “Community development in Africa and elsewhere, is about helping to empower those who are poor.” In brief, community development implies the various interventions initiated in a given society aimed at improved standards of living and lifestyles.

Though evaluation studies use same methods applied by basic research, they differ in that evaluations are applied research whose result should be utilized for the purpose which prompted the study. Evaluation studies go hand in hand with community development plans and implementation. Evaluation studies give feedback to community development plans and their implementation. The studies are incorporated in the community development plans and the implementation process. Governments and nongovernmental organization realized the necessity of evaluation studies in community development; hence, they integrate the studies in the formulation of community development plans. In Africa there are many community development projects initiated. These projects cover a wide range of themes such as poverty eradication, environmental issues, gender issues etc.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 DETERMINING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Evaluation studies establish the needs of the community. These are the studies carried out with the aim of getting the real needs of the community concerned. They help in avoiding initiating projects which do not serve the interests of the community; hence, resulting to less impact to the target group as far as community development is concerned. A good example of a situation analysis is a study carried out by National Coordinating Agency for Population and Development (NCAPD) in Kenya. The study was “The Kenya National Survey for Persons with Disabilities (KNSPWD).” It was designed to provide up-to-date information for planning, monitoring and evaluating the various activities, programmes and projects geared towards improving the wellbeing of People with Disabilities (PWDs) (NCAPD, 2008). The study focused on issues related to the population, the characteristics, the nature and type, causes and possible intervention related to the people with disabilities. Such a study provided for appropriate ground for planning and executing the necessary interventions related to the PWDs.

2.2 APPRAISING THE EXECUTION OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Evaluation studies have the task of assessing community development projects as they are in progress. They give implementation progress reports which are meant for improving the process. This helps in identifying anomalies in the project process which need to be addressed for effective implementation of the project.

A study on “Evaluation of the Community Development Worker (CDW) Programme” was carried out by the South African Management Development Institute (SAMDI, 2005). The main aim of study was to evaluate the process of implementing the CDW programme. It focused on, recruitment and selection procedures of the CDWs in order to ensure the best matching of people with the job description, the overall training intervention in order to determine its effectiveness in providing CDWs with the appropriate skills to perform their duties, the effectiveness of the service delivery by the CDWs in the communities among other factors. The study is a good demonstration of project implementation evaluation. Most of issues can be corrected at this stage. The strategies and procedures can be adjusted, modified or changed so as to deliver the desired results. This process safeguards against the failure of the project or programme, hence, assuring of the success of community development projects.

2.3 ASCERTAINING THE PRODUCT OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Studies on outcomes of a Community Development project are more concerned with the tangible evidence of the deliverables. The thing that can be quantified in terms of numbers or things that must be completed or done as agreed or planned in the project process. For instance if there is a project whose main aim was to facilitate access to learning institution; at the end of the project the outcome measure would be how many learners enrolled in the learning institution as a result of the project. School feeding programme can be a good

example. For instance in the World Food Programme (WFP), the home-grown school feeding (HGSF), is a school feeding programme that provides food produced and purchased within a country as much as possible. The focus among other factors is to see gradual increase in the amount supplied from the local farmers to schools (wfp.org). Therefore in the outcome one will assess the trend of the quantities supplied during the project process along with other aspects like attendance levels, test scores of pupils etc. These are direct products which have an implication to the development of the community concerned.

2.4 ESTABLISHING THE SHORT TERM REPERCUSSION OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Effect determination is the interpretation of the outcomes of the project in short term and the value it has in qualitative terms. It is out of evaluation studies one can determine the effects of community development projects. In Kenya there is Constituency Development Fund (CDF), this is the money set aside by the central government to carry out development projects in the parliamentary represented regions (the constituencies). This is a programme in which many projects are initiated for the purpose of community development. Without evaluation studies it is very difficult to establish the effectiveness of such projects. There could be mini evaluation studies which are constituency based or a national based evaluation study on the whole programme.

For instance, the National Anti-Corruption Campaign Steering Committee (NACCSC) (RoK, 2008), carried out a study on the Constituency Development Fund. The study found out that since its inception in 2003, CDF has facilitated the implementation of a number of local level development projects. However, various forms of corruption were found to be reducing its efficiency and effectiveness. The strengths and weaknesses of the programme could only be determined through evaluation studies, hence, the necessity of such studies.

2.5 PROVING THE LONG TERM IMPLICATION OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Impact assessment identifies residual effect long time after the completion of the community development project. It is the evidence of sustained gains of the community development project over a long time depending on the kind of project completed. The African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF), carried an evaluation on "Efficacy of Community-Based Health Care in Kenya" for its 30 years in Kibwezi (Kenya) (AMREF, 2009). AMREF had been working in Kibwezi to address several development challenges, particularly those related to poverty and health. The study, sought to assess the efficacy, effectiveness and sustainability of the AMREF's interventions on the health status of the Kibwezi community. The study established that the interventions have had positive results in terms of health systems strengthening. This was long term effect of the project.

Another example of a study on a long term effect of a programme on community development is the World Food Programme (WFP, 2010), on School Feeding Programmes in Kenya (1999-2008). The evaluation

covered a ten-year period of WFP-assisted school feeding in Kenya. Among other findings it established that there was positive long term effect on attendance rate, completion rate, increased transition rate from primary to secondary and improved exam score. However, completion rate in disadvantaged areas and girls in rural areas remained low. Such discoveries can only be made upon carrying out impact assessment study.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Evaluation studies go hand in hand with community development. The evaluation studies ensure the success of community development projects, and effectively guaranteeing community development. Any community development project without evaluation is deemed to fail. The evaluation studies give feedback and direction to the next course of action in relation to community development projects.

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