

Project Selection Strategy and the Performance of the NG-CDF Projects in Kenya

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the impact of project selection strategies on NG-CDF project performance in Kenya, emphasizing proactive planning, financial adaptability, and the mitigation of procurement challenges to enhance project efficacy and sustainability. An urgent overhaul of NG-CDF project selection processes is imperative in Kenya to address widespread issues of stalled projects and dissatisfaction, highlighting the critical need for enhanced implementation practices and stakeholder alignment. This study sought to assess the influence of project selection strategy on the performance of the NG-CDF projects in Kenya. The research was conducted in Kenya, focusing on the National Government Constituency Development Fund (NG-CDF) projects, utilizing a cross-sectional study design. The study targeted NG-CDF Fund Account Managers, Project Management Committee (PMC) members, and contractors involved in NG-CDF projects, with a sample size of 384 from 176,243 population determined using the Krejcie and Morgan formula. Data collection employed structured questionnaires to ensure consistency, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. Validity was ensured through content and construct validation methods. Data analysis encompassed descriptive statistics for summarizing data characteristics and inferential statistics for making predictions based on the data. The key findings on project selection strategy reveal that a substantial percentage of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that NG-CDF projects align with strategic plans (67.8%), project members align with community goals (81.9%), and project design reflects community priorities (79.9%). Additionally, a significant proportion of respondents indicated that comprehensive feasibilities are conducted before project selection (67.1%), potential project risks are identified before implementation (72.1%), and legal and regulatory aspects are considered before project selection (75.9%). The study highlights how project selection strategies significantly impact project performance, with 33.2% of the changes in project performance being linked to variations in project selection. This study concludes that while positive perceptions exist regarding NG-CDF projects' alignment with strategic plans and community goals, identified areas for improvement include stakeholder alignment, risk identification, legal compliance, and resource allocation and communication. This study recommends the implementation of stakeholder participation in project selection, enhancement of risk management and legal compliance in NG-CDF projects.

KEYWORDS: *Community projects, Project Performance, Project Selection Strategy*

I. INTRODUCTION

There are global patterns of project delays and overspending in government-backed initiatives (Patanakul et al., 2016). Emphasizing the pivotal role of constituency development funds worldwide, which prioritize local infrastructure and community projects to address specific needs, comprehensive project selection processes have been underscored (Williams et al., 2019; Barth & Koch, 2019). Project success is contingent upon meticulous project selection, incorporating stakeholder analysis, problem assessment, and risk appraisal, to ensure alignment with community interests and strategic objectives (Khaemba & Sang, 2020; Aldea et al., 2019; Gupta & Koontz, 2019). Understanding strategic priorities and garnering support from key stakeholders is crucial for selecting projects that will be effective, necessitating careful consideration of time constraints.

Efficient project selection for NG-CDF initiatives demands a systematic process rooted in transparency and integrity, aligned with the goals of the constituency (Musyoka, 2020; Osman & Kimutai, 2019). Establishing a dedicated committee tasked with actualizing the constituency's objectives ensures unbiased decision-making and mitigates corruption risks. To optimize impact, promptly funding approved initiatives addressing community needs and adhering to budgetary and scheduling constraints is imperative (Kooze, 2020). Nevertheless, the prevailing lack of oversight often leads to the endorsement of projects that inadequately cater to the unique needs of communities.

In Kenya, community project selection aligns with legal requirements outlined in the NG-CDF Act, 2015, emphasizing location meetings for project submission and funding approval (GoK, 2015). The efficacy of community projects is heavily influenced by the selection process, highlighting the importance of detailed planning and financial flexibility (Ali, 2019). Needs identification before project implementation is essential for successful outcomes, with proactive planning and adequate funding contributing to commendable project performance (Akwalu & Muchai, 2020; Said & Gakuu, 2020). However, procurement challenges, particularly in planning portfolios, pose significant hurdles to NG-CDF project implementation, ultimately impacting project performance negatively (Nzuma, 2022). From the foregoing, there is the absence of an in-depth examination of the needs of the community encountered by NG-CDF initiatives in Kenya, particularly regarding project selection and how these challenges affect project performance. This study assessed the effectiveness of project selection strategies in enhancing NG-CDF project performance in Kenya.

Despite the emphasis on meticulous project selection processes globally, there remains a significant gap in understanding how these strategies align with community needs and priorities in the context of NG-CDF initiatives in Kenya. While research highlights the importance of stakeholder analysis, problem assessment, and risk appraisal for successful project outcomes, there is limited examination of the practical challenges and effectiveness of these processes within NG-CDF frameworks. This study aims to address this gap by assessing the effectiveness of project selection strategies in enhancing the performance of NG-CDF projects in Kenya, with a focus on community alignment and overcoming implementation hurdles.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The selection of NG-CDF projects in Kenya has been criticized for poor performance, including poor project choices that result in stalled or incomplete projects (Gitau & Kimencu, 2019). To address these challenges, improved project selection is recommended to enhance project performance (Gitau & Kimencu, 2019). There are high levels of dissatisfaction with NG-CDF projects, indicating an urgent need for improvement in project selection and implementation processes (Njuguna & Kirima, 2022). Despite the critical role of stakeholder analysis, problem and risk appraisal in ensuring successful outcomes, there is a notable gap in the practical application and effectiveness of the project selection strategy within NG-CDF frameworks in Kenya. This study sought to address these issues by assessing the project selection strategy on the performance of NG-CDF projects in Kenya.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To assess the influence of project selection strategy on the performance of the NG-CDF projects in Kenya.

IV. HYPOTHESIS

H₀: Project selection strategy has no significant influence on the performance of NG-CDF projects in Kenya

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

The project selection strategy involves an exhaustive assessment of project ideas with active community engagement to ensure alignment with community needs and priorities. Professional competencies such as technical expertise and strategic thinking ensure an impartial selection process, supported by effective stakeholder communication (Setiawan & Fujiono, 2021). Needs assessment guides project identification and prioritization based on stakeholder requirements (Bahadorestani et al., 2020), while techniques like risk assessment and cost-benefit analysis optimize value within budget constraints (Mosaffaie & Salehpour Jam, 2021). Community involvement in project selection, alongside professional competencies like technical expertise and strategic thinking, is significant. Despite the comprehensive strategies in project selection, there remains a gap in understanding the practical effectiveness and challenges of these processes in aligning NG-CDF projects with community needs and priorities.

Project selection strategy profoundly impacts project performance, as success hinges on strategic alignment and efficient resource usage (Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020). While traditional metrics like time, cost, and scope adherence remain critical, contemporary views prioritize client satisfaction, adaptability, and long-term sustainability (Luhombo, 2022). Timeliness, resource efficiency, and risk management are vital for on-schedule, on-budget project completion (Unegbu et al., 2022). Aligning performance with scope ensures stakeholder satisfaction and quality outcomes, emphasizing scope management (Park, Lee & Kim, 2015). The project

selection strategy significantly impacts project performance, requiring strategic alignment and efficient resource utilization. A well-crafted project selection strategy is pivotal for goal achievement and optimal performance across the project lifecycle. The study aimed to delve into the effectiveness of project selection strategies for enhancing project performance, focusing on contemporary project management approaches.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework suggests that the project selection strategy, influenced by professional competency, need assessment, and budget allocation, is moderated by organizational culture, which in turn affects the performance of NG-CDF projects in terms of timeliness, cost and scope. This is summarised in Figure 1.

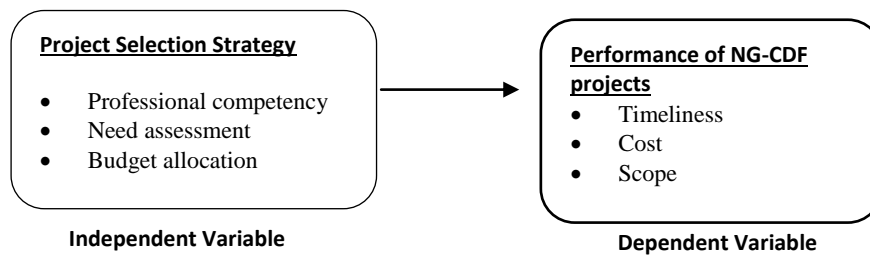


FIGURE I: PROJECT SELECTION STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE OF NG-CDF PROJECTS

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted in Kenya, focusing on the National Government Constituency Development Fund (NG-CDF) projects. It adopted a cross-sectional study design, which involved collecting data from a population at a specific point in time (Tolley et al., 2016). The target population was informed by the number of NG-CDF projects from 2017/2018 to 2021/2022 5-year period (Government of Kenya, 2022) which were 58,651 projects. Therefore the NG-CDF projects were the unit of analysis. The unit of observation which formed the target population comprised NG-CDF Fund Account Managers (290), Project Management Committee members (secretaries and community representatives – 117,302) and contractors (58,651) involved in NG-CDF projects totalling 176,243.

To determine the sample size, the researchers used the Krejcie and Morgan formulae of 1970, a widely accepted method for determining sample sizes in research studies. This formula considers factors such as the population size and the desired level of confidence. The sample size was 384 from a target population of 176,243. The sample size was distributed as follows NG-CDF Fund managers (2), Project Management Committee (PMC – 255) members, and contractors (127) involved in NG-CDF projects. Data collection was conducted using structured questionnaires, which were designed to gather information relevant to the research objectives. Structured questionnaires provided consistency in data collection by asking participants a set of predetermined questions.

The reliability of the data collected was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, a statistical measure used to evaluate the internal consistency of a questionnaire or survey (Izah, Sylva & Hait, 2023). This analysis helps ensure that the questionnaire items are measuring the same construct consistently. Validity, which refers to the accuracy and relevance of the data collected, was ensured through content and construct validation methods. Content validation involves assessing whether the questionnaire items adequately cover the topic of interest, while construct validation assesses whether the questionnaire measures the intended constructs accurately.

Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize and describe the characteristics of the data, such as means, frequencies, and percentages. Inferential statistics, on the other hand, were used to make inferences or predictions about the population based on the sample data. The study operationalized the hypotheses derived from the model as follows: H0: project selection strategy has no significant influence on the performance of NG-CDF projects in Kenya.

Throughout the research process, ethical considerations were taken into account to ensure the well-being and rights of the participants. This included obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality of responses and minimizing any potential harm or risks associated with participation in the study.

VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Project selection strategy was measured using three indicators: alignment to strategy, project feasibility and capacity to implement. Nine questionnaire items adapted from previous research (Gitau & Kemencu, 2019) assessed these indicators. Responses were gathered on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree), with results presented in Table I, showing percentages, means, and standard

deviations for each item.

The findings in Table 1 revealed that a majority of respondents (46.4%) strongly agreed that NG-CDF projects align with strategic plans, with an additional 21.4% agreeing. Conversely, 3.6% strongly disagreed and 14.3% disagreed, while 14.3% were neutral, resulting in a mean of 3.765 and a standard deviation of 0.5291. Furthermore, 58.2% of respondents agreed that NG-CDF project members align with community goals, though 10.3% strongly disagreed and 13.8% disagreed, yielding a mean of 3.632 and a standard deviation of 0.6021. Additionally, 48.3% strongly agreed and 31.6% agreed that project design and implementation reflect community priorities, with only 2.0% strongly disagreeing and 6.9% disagreeing, resulting in a mean of 3.921 and a standard deviation of 0.5120.

The findings in Table I revealed that a majority of respondents (41.4%) strongly agreed that comprehensive feasibilities are conducted to assess various aspects of projects before selection, with an additional 25.7% agreeing, resulting in a mean of 3.721 and a standard deviation of 0.5154. Furthermore, 34.5% strongly agreed and 37.6% agreed that potential project risks and mitigation measures are identified before implementation, giving a mean of 3.523 and a standard deviation of 0.6532. Additionally, 48.3% strongly agreed and 27.6% agreed that legal and regulatory aspects are considered before project selection, with a mean of 3.843 and a standard deviation of 0.5713.

The findings in Table I indicated that 84% of respondents believe the NG-CDF project management committee possesses highly competent and experienced expertise, with a mean of 3.961 and a standard deviation of 0.5082. Additionally, 63.9% of respondents agreed that mechanisms are in place for effective coordination and communication among stakeholders during project implementation, resulting in a mean of 3.661 and a standard deviation of 0.6124. Lastly, 72% of respondents agreed that sufficient physical infrastructure and logistical support are available for project activities, with a mean of 3.731 and a standard deviation of 0.5810.

TABLE I: PROJECT SELECTION STRATEGY

1= SD, 2= D, 3= N, 4= A, 5=SA		1	2	3	4	5	mean	Std dev.
		%	%	%	%	%		
Align to strategy								
1	The NG-CDF projects have been aligned with the strategic plans in place	3.6	14.3	14.3	21.4	46.4	3.765	0.5291
2	The NG-CDF projects have been aligned with the community goals and prioritise	10.3	13.8	17.6	27.2	31.0	3.632	0.6021
3	NG-CDF project design and implementation are adapted to the community's priorities	2.0	6.9	15.2	1.6	48.3	3.921	0.5120
Project Feasibility								
4	Comprehensive feasibility studies are conducted to assess the economic, technical, environmental and social aspects of the project before it is selected	3.4	13.8	14.2	40.9	27.9	3.807	0.6172
5	Potential project risks and their mitigation measures are identified before the project is implemented	10.3	10.3	17.2	31.0	31.0	3.637	0.7240
6	The committee takes into consideration the legal and regulatory aspects that may negatively affect the implementation of NG-CDF projects before selection	3.4	6.9	13.8	17.2	58.6	3.856	0.5790
Capacity to Implement								
7	The CDF committee has highly competent, and experienced expertise in implementing NG-CDF projects	3.0	5.9	7.1	31.0	53.0	3.961	0.5082
8	Mechanisms are put in place to ensure effective coordination and communication among all stakeholders during the project implementation.	14.0	13.8	8.3	25.4	38.5	3.661	0.6124
9	Sufficient physical infrastructure and logistical support necessary for project activities are available	2.5	6.8	18.7	42.0	30.0	3.731	0.5810

The findings from Table I indicate a generally positive perception among respondents regarding the alignment of NG-CDF projects with strategic plans, community goals and priorities. This aligns with literature emphasizing the importance of community-driven development initiatives like NG-CDF, which prioritize local

needs and interests (Williams et al., 2019; Barth & Koch, 2019). The high percentage of respondents agreeing with these statements suggests a strong belief in the effectiveness of NG-CDF projects in meeting community objectives, echoing the literature's emphasis on the significance of stakeholder alignment for project success (Khaemba & Sang, 2020; Aldea et al., 2019; Gupta & Koontz, 2019). However, the presence of some respondents disagreeing or remaining neutral highlights potential areas for improvement in ensuring better alignment between NG-CDF projects and community needs, underscoring the complexity of stakeholder perspectives and the importance of continuous monitoring and adaptation in project implementation (Musyoka, 2020; Ali, 2019). Therefore, respondents generally perceive NG-CDF projects as aligned with strategic plans and community goals. The high agreement percentage suggests confidence in NG-CDF effectiveness, echoing literature emphasizing stakeholder alignment for project performance. However, some respondents' disagreement or neutrality indicated room for improvement, underlining the complexity of stakeholder perspectives and the necessity for continual project implementation.

The findings from Table I highlight a favourable perception among respondents regarding the carefulness of project feasibility assessments, risk identification, and consideration of legal aspects in NG-CDF project selection. This aligns with existing literature advocating for comprehensive feasibility studies to ensure project viability and sustainability (Osman & Kimutai, 2019). The high percentage of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing with these statements suggests a recognition of the importance of proactive risk management and compliance with legal requirements in project implementation, consistent with literature emphasizing the significance of risk identification and legal considerations for project success (Bahadorestani et al., 2020; Koome, 2020). However, the presence of some respondents who disagree or remain neutral underscores the need for further attention to these aspects in NG-CDF project selection processes, highlighting the complexity of risk management and legal compliance in development initiatives (Nzuma, 2022; Ali, 2019). The findings indicated that respondents generally perceive NG-CDF project selection processes positively, emphasizing the importance of detailed feasibility assessments, risk identification and compliance with legal aspects. However, the presence of dissenting or neutral responses emphasised the need for continued focus on these areas to address the complexity of risk management and legal compliance in development initiatives.

The findings from Table I suggest a high level of confidence among respondents in the competence and expertise of the NG-CDF project management committee, as well as in the availability of mechanisms for effective coordination and communication among stakeholders during project implementation. This aligns with literature emphasizing the importance of skilled leadership and strong communication channels in successful project management within development frameworks like NG-CDF (Musyoka, 2020; Koome, 2020). Additionally, the majority agreement regarding the availability of sufficient physical infrastructure and logistical support underscores the significance of adequate resources for project activities, consistent with literature highlighting the importance of resource availability for project success (Osman & Kimutai, 2019). However, the presence of dissenting or neutral responses suggests potential areas for improvement in enhancing coordination, communication, and resource allocation within NG-CDF project implementation processes, emphasizing the need for continued attention to these aspects (Nzuma, 2022; Ali, 2019). The findings indicate strong confidence in the NG-CDF project management committee's competence and effective coordination mechanisms, echoing literature stressing skilled leadership and healthy communication for project success. Moreover, the agreement on resource availability underscored its importance. The dissenting or neutral responses suggested areas for improvement, highlighting the need for continued attention to coordination, communication and resource allocation.

INFERENTIAL STATISTICS

This study employs inferential statistics, specifically correlation and regression analyses, to investigate the relationship between project orientation strategies and the performance of NG-CDF projects in Kenya, ensuring precision and reliability in its conclusions.

TABLE II: CORRELATION MATRIX

		Project selection	Project performance
Project selection	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Project performance	Pearson Correlation	0.576**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings in Table II from recent research substantiate the critical role of project selection strategies

in determining the success of NG-CDF projects in Kenya. The highlighted correlation in the study ($r=0.576$, $p < 0.01$) confirms that a strong project selection strategy, alignment to strategy, project feasibility and community participation, significantly enhance project performance. This finding is consistent with the work of Gitau and Kimencu (2019), who also found positive effects of these components on project outcomes in a similar setting. Moreover, the passage notes a methodological difference between the two studies concerning the integration of community participation into the project selection strategy. Despite this variation, both studies converge on the crucial insight that effective project selection, particularly involving stakeholders, is essential for meeting project goals and aligning with community needs and strategic objectives (Williams et al., 2019; Barth & Koch, 2019). This coherence in findings across different studies emphasizes the foundational importance of careful project selection in achieving successful project outcomes.

REGRESSION OF PROJECT SELECTION STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE

In addition, in order to determine the amount of variation of project selection on the given amount of change in performance (predicted variable), a regression analysis was also carried out. The results in Table III revealed that project selection strategy has a positive and significant influence on the performance of NG-CDF projects in Kenya ($r=0.456$, $p < 0.01$). Hence, to establish the specific nature of influence, project selection, the second independent variable, was regressed with project performance and the results obtained were presented in Table III, and interpreted thereof.

TABLE III: PROJECT SELECTION STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE

Model Summary							
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics	
						F Change	Sig. F Change
1	.576 ^a	.332	.330	.65546	.332	76.110	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Project selection

The study findings as shown in Table III indicate the quantity of variance in project performance (the predicted variable) as explained by the given change in project selection strategy (the second predictor variable in the study). The results of the regression analysis gave a correlation coefficient of R-value of 0.576 and $R^2 = 0.332$. This infers that 33.2 per cent of the corresponding change in project performance could be explained by the project selection strategy. Furthermore, the results in Table III gave an F change value of 76.110, $p < 0.01$, a value that is quite sufficient to support the goodness of fit of the estimated regression model explaining the variation in project performance. This suggests a moderate positive correlation, signifying that improvements in project selection processes significantly enhance project outcomes. Similar studies found that the relationship between project selection and project performance is statistically significant and not due to random variations (Williams et al., 2019; Barth & Koch, 2019; Khaemba & Sang, 2020). Therefore, this confirms that project selection is a useful predictor for the performance of NG-CDF projects in Kenya. Table IV shows the unstandardized coefficients of the project selection strategy.

TABLE IV: PROJECT SELECTION COEFFICIENT

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.549	.190		15.096	.000
	Project selection	.519	.062	.576	9.131	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Project performance

Further, the unstandardized coefficients β value of the computed scores of the project selection strategy was 0.576 with a t-value of 9.131, at $p < 0.05$. Since the t-value is greater than +1.96, the estimated regression model in Table IV is significant and applicable. Similarly, with a $p < 0.05$ it implies that for every 5 per cent increase in project selection strategy, there was a predicted increase in the percentage of performance of the NG-CDF projects of zero. Therefore, having achieved the set objective, this study rejected the null hypothesis stating that; H_0 : Project selection strategy has no significant influence on the performance of NG-CDF projects in Kenya.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

The study showed a general perception of NG-CDF projects as aligned with strategic plans and

community goals, indicating confidence in NG-CDF effectiveness. However, some disagreement or neutrality highlighted potential areas for improvement in stakeholder alignment. Additionally, there was a positive perception regarding the carefulness of NG-CDF project feasibility assessments, risk identification and legal compliance, but dissenting or neutral responses suggest a need for further attention to these aspects. It was demonstrated that there was high confidence in the competence of the NG-CDF project management committee and the effectiveness of coordination and communication mechanisms, though improvements in these areas, along with resource allocation, are needed to address the concerns of some respondents.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

Implement procedures for active stakeholder participation in project selection and ongoing monitoring to ensure alignment with strategic goals and community needs. Enhance risk management and legal compliance in NG-CDF projects by conducting detailed feasibility studies, refining risk detection techniques and ensuring strict adherence to regulations. Improve project coordination, communication and resource allocation by establishing clear channels, providing training and optimizing resource allocation procedures to boost committee competency, effectiveness, and stakeholder satisfaction.

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