

Journal of Entrepreneurship & Project Management

ISSN Online: 2616-8464



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ISSN: 2616-8464

Stakeholder Participation and Sustainability of Deaf Donor Funded Project in Kicukiro District, Rwanda

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How to cite this article: Mwadjabou K. & Akims, M. A. (2026). Stakeholder Participation and Sustainability of Deaf Donor Funded Project in Kicukiro District, Rwanda. *Journal Entrepreneurship & Project Management*, 10(1), 39–73. <https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t2557>

Abstract

This study examined the influence of stakeholder participation on the sustainability of the Deaf Donor-Funded Project in Kicukiro District, Rwanda. Specifically, it assessed stakeholder involvement across four project phases: identification, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The study was guided by Arnstein's Ladder of Participation, Participatory Development Theory, Stakeholder Theory, and Social Inclusion Theory. A mixed-method approach using a descriptive correlational research design was adopted, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. The target population comprised 475 stakeholders, from which a sample of 218 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling based on Yamane's formula. Data were collected using semi-structured questionnaires and interview guides, with reliability confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha \geq 0.7$) and validity ensured via expert review and pilot testing. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically using NVivo. Findings revealed that stakeholder participation significantly influenced project sustainability across all phases, with strong positive correlations and high explanatory power (R^2 ranging from 0.677 to 0.719, $p < 0.05$). The study concludes that inclusive stakeholder engagement is critical for sustainable project outcomes. It recommends institutionalizing participatory approaches and strengthening stakeholder capacity in donor-funded projects.

Keywords: *Stakeholder participation, Project sustainability, Deaf community, Donor-funded project*

1.1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Globally, projects worldwide vary in terms of size, scope, complexity, and impact. Some projects are small-scale with limited budgets and narrowly defined objectives, while others are large-scale, mega projects that require massive investments, involve multiple stakeholders, and employ advanced technologies (Chang, 2023; Giezen, 2022). Mega projects such as the Panama Canal and transcontinental railroads have historically reshaped societies and economies, demonstrating the critical importance of sustainability in project outcomes. These projects require careful balancing of technical feasibility, economic viability, and social acceptance to remain sustainable over time (Chang, 2023). In contemporary project management, sustainability has evolved to include not only environmental and economic considerations but also social inclusivity. Central to this evolution is stakeholder participation, which ensures that the needs, concerns, and contributions of affected groups are incorporated into decision-making, thereby improving acceptance and long-term viability (Moodley, 2022; Bal, Bryde, Fearon, & Ochieng, 2023).

Regionally, at the continental level, Africa hosts numerous donor-supported projects aimed at accelerating poverty reduction and economic growth. However, sustaining these projects remains a major challenge. Evidence suggests that active involvement of local stakeholders throughout the project cycle from identification and planning to implementation and evaluation is essential for fostering ownership, accountability, and long-term sustainability (Ogawa, 2024; Botchway, 2021). Without meaningful participation, projects risk being purely donor-driven and may fail to address the actual needs of communities or sustain benefits beyond the funding period. Participation is increasingly recognized as a tool for empowerment and capacity building, enabling beneficiaries to acquire skills, knowledge, and confidence that contribute to sustainable project outcomes. Development agencies and governments have also emphasized participatory approaches to improve efficiency and effectiveness, marking a shift away from traditional top-down models that historically marginalized local voices (Moodley, 2022; Gonzales, 2023).

In Rwanda, stakeholder participation is central to the success and sustainability of donor-funded development projects. Despite rapid national development supported by government commitment and strong partnerships with donors and civil society, sustainability challenges persist, particularly for projects targeting vulnerable populations (Ogawa, 2024). Research indicates that inclusive stakeholder engagement throughout all phases of a project enhances transparency, community ownership, and adaptive learning, which are crucial for sustaining outcomes. Conversely, limited stakeholder involvement often leads to misaligned activities, weak engagement, and unsustainable results. Rwanda's development strategies increasingly encourage participatory approaches that involve government agencies, NGOs, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders to ensure alignment with local needs and national priorities (Australian Agency for International Development, 2023).

At the local level, projects supporting marginalized groups, such as the Deaf community in Kicukiro District, illustrate the critical role of stakeholder participation in achieving sustainability. Research shows that effective engagement in project identification,

<https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t2557>

implementation, monitoring, and evaluation fosters ownership, accountability, and long-term benefits (Ogawa, 2024). Participatory approaches tailored to the local social and cultural context not only enhance project relevance but also empower beneficiaries through capacity building, skill development, and leadership opportunities. Conversely, tokenistic or limited participation undermines sustainability and reduces the potential impact of development interventions. Studying stakeholder participation in such local projects provides practical insights for strengthening participatory practices and supporting inclusive and sustainable development outcomes in Rwanda.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite growing investments in development projects across low- and middle-income countries, the sustainability of donor-funded initiatives remains critically low, with only 30–40% remaining fully operational three years after donor withdrawal (World Bank, 2023). While immediate project objectives are often met during implementation, challenges emerge in maintaining outcomes post-funding, particularly when stakeholders are inadequately involved in decision-making (Moodley, 2022; Chang, 2023).

In East Africa, evidence indicates that many projects engage stakeholders only during implementation, neglecting earlier phases such as planning and monitoring, which undermines long-term sustainability (Sinclair, 2024; Freeman, 2024). In Rwanda, donor-funded projects targeting persons with disabilities, including the Deaf community, frequently suffer from low stakeholder participation, resulting in poor ownership, weak monitoring, and limited continuity of benefits (Niyonzima & Uwase, 2022; Mukamana & Habiyaremye, 2023). For example, in Kicukiro District, Deaf-focused initiatives have reported low community involvement during planning and insufficient engagement during monitoring, leading to inconsistent service delivery and benefits that often end once donor support is withdrawn. Studies show that less than 30% of these projects maintain activities beyond two years' post-donor funding (RIBD, 2023; Twagirayezu & Nshimiyimana, 2024). This gap highlights the urgent need to understand how stakeholder participation across all project phases such as identification, planning, implementation, and monitoring affect the sustainability of Deaf-centered projects in Kicukiro. Addressing this problem provided evidence to strengthen participatory practices, enhance project ownership, and improve long-term outcomes for marginalized communities in Rwanda.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this research was to examine stakeholder participation on the sustainability of the Deaf Donor Funded Project in Kicukiro District, Rwanda

1.3.2 Objectives of the Study

- i. To establish influence of stakeholder participation in project identification on the sustainability of the Deaf Donor Funded Project in Kicukiro District, Rwanda.
- ii. To investigate influence of stakeholder participation in project planning on the sustainability on the Deaf Donor Funded project in Kicukiro District, Rwanda.
- iii. To determine influence of stakeholder participation in project implementation on the sustainability of the Deaf Donor Funded in Kicukiro District, Rwanda.

- iv. To assess influence of stakeholder participation in project monitoring and evaluation on the sustainability of the Deaf Donor Funded project in Kicukiro District, Rwanda.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Empirical Review of Literature

Empirical literature provides evidence-based insights into the practical realities of stakeholder participation and project sustainability. This section explores the empirical literature in line with the specific objectives of this study, focusing on project identification, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

2.1.1 Influence of Stakeholder Participation in Project Identification on Project Sustainability

Globally, empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that stakeholder participation during the project identification phase significantly enhances project sustainability. Smith and Wozniak (2021), in their study of Indigenous-led development projects in Canada, found that early-stage community involvement improved sustainability outcomes by 67%. Using mixed methods, the study revealed that projects co-created with stakeholders were more aligned with local priorities and generated stronger commitment. Similarly, Wong and Patel (2022) in Australia reported a 53% increase in sustainability indicators where grassroots needs assessments were used. Their qualitative findings emphasized that participatory identification fosters ownership and relevance, which are critical for long-term success. In Asia, Tanaka et al. (2023) examined the application of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools in Japan and found a 61% rise in community ownership when stakeholders were actively involved in identifying project priorities. The study highlighted that participatory tools empower communities to shape interventions based on their lived realities, thereby improving sustainability. These findings reinforce the importance of inclusive and structured engagement at the project inception stage.

At the continental level, Mensah et al. (2022) in Ghana found that projects where communities led the identification process achieved an 82% success rate in sustainability after donor withdrawal. Likewise, Adebayo and Chukwu (2021) in Nigeria reported a 70% improvement in project continuity when stakeholders were involved in problem identification. In Ethiopia, Gebre et al. (2023) established that participatory identification increased technology adoption by 49%, emphasizing the role of contextual relevance in sustainability. Regionally in East Africa, Omondi et al. (2022) found that early stakeholder consultations improved project-community alignment by 76% in Kenya. In Uganda, Mugisha and Kyambadde (2023) reported higher maintenance and user satisfaction rates in rural electrification projects where communities were involved at the identification stage. Similarly, Mollel et al. (2021) in Tanzania observed a 58% increase in project relevance and satisfaction when participatory needs assessments were applied.

In Rwanda, Musoni and Uwera (2023) found that stakeholder involvement in the identification of school feeding programs enhanced community support and sustainability. Nyinawumuntu et al. (2022) further noted that participatory identification in youth employment initiatives improved alignment with local economic conditions and increased retention rates. At the local

level, Nshimiyimana and Uwizeye (2024) reported that participatory approaches in Kigali improved beneficiary satisfaction and reduced dropout rates. However, evidence from the Deaf Donor-Funded Project in Kicukiro (Rwanda National Union of the Deaf, 2023) indicates gaps in practice. Although 83% of beneficiaries were aware of the project, only 31% participated in defining its goals, leading to misalignment and reduced sustainability. Overall, the literature confirms that stakeholder participation in project identification enhances ownership, relevance, and long-term sustainability, but gaps remain in inclusive implementation, especially among marginalized groups.

2.1.2 Stakeholder Participation in Project Planning on Project Sustainability.

The inclusive stakeholder participation in project planning is increasingly recognized as a key determinant of project sustainability. In the United States, Green and Miller (2020) investigated multi-stakeholder engagement in educational programs using longitudinal program evaluations. Their findings indicated a 62% improvement in sustainability when educators, parents, and local authorities were involved in the planning phase. The study concluded that early engagement fosters ownership and contextual relevance and recommended broader adoption of participatory planning models by development agencies.

Similarly, in Germany, Keller *et al.* (2021) examined renewable energy projects and found that involving local authorities during planning stages significantly increased public trust and long-term support. Using policy analysis and stakeholder surveys, the study emphasized that socially grounded technical planning enhances community participation beyond implementation. The researchers recommended legal mandates for municipal engagement in energy planning. In South Korea, Yoo and Han (2023) assessed community-based urban planning through resilience indicators and community surveys. The results demonstrated that participatory planning improved both community resilience and project adaptability. The authors concluded that inclusive planning strengthens collective capacity to manage future risks and recommended integrating participatory tools into urban development frameworks.

Across Africa, empirical evidence further supports the positive link between stakeholder participation and sustainability. In Botswana, Ngaka and Dube (2022) used a mixed-methods approach to study rural agricultural projects and found that participatory planning improved alignment between local needs and resource inputs, thus enhancing implementation efficiency. The study recommended institutionalizing village-based planning committees to improve project relevance and performance. In Malawi, Phiri and Banda (2020) analyzed donor-funded initiatives and reported a 47% reduction in project abandonment when community planning committees were active. The enhanced local ownership and problem-solving capacity during the planning stage contributed significantly to project continuity. The study advocated for stronger decentralization in project planning. In South Africa, Moyo *et al.* (2024) reviewed Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) through policy analysis and community focus groups. Their study revealed that access to participatory planning tools increased both citizen engagement and post-implementation monitoring. They concluded that transparency during planning builds legitimacy and recommended the integration of participatory indicators in all municipal planning frameworks.

At the East African regional level, participatory planning is gaining momentum. In Uganda, Katusabe *et al.* (2021) assessed school improvement plans that included parent-teacher associations and found a 55% increase in both academic outcomes and sustainability. They recommended expanding such models to other public service sectors. In Kenya, Njenga and Mwangi (2022) evaluated participatory budgeting at the county level and revealed that projects planned with citizen input had a 67% longer operational lifespan than those planned top-down. The study urged county governments to enhance transparency and citizen education in planning forums. In Rwanda, Niyonzima *et al.* (2023) explored participatory planning embedded in traditional local structures like Umuganda and community forums. Using qualitative interviews and satisfaction surveys, they found that these culturally grounded approaches improved satisfaction and long-term participation. The study recommended deeper integration of traditional methods into formal development planning. At the urban level, Habimana and Uwera (2022) evaluated Kigali's Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) initiative using planning documents and stakeholder interviews. Their findings showed that early and sustained consultations resulted in broad community support and reduced opposition. They concluded that stakeholder engagement in planning enhances uptake and sustainability and advised institutionalizing early stakeholder mapping and dialogue for future urban infrastructure projects. However, the Deaf Donor-Funded Project in Kicukiro serves as a cautionary case of limited stakeholder involvement. According to the Rwanda National Union of the Deaf (2023), only 40% of intended Deaf beneficiaries were consulted during planning. Most decisions were driven by external consultants with minimal contextual understanding. Project audits and feedback indicated reduced project relevance, weak ownership, and declining participation over time. The report recommended structured planning workshops tailored to marginalized groups to ensure inclusive goal-setting and co-created implementation strategies.

2.1.3 Influence of Stakeholder Participation in Project Implementation on Project Sustainability

Silva *et al.* (2021) examined the impact of community participation in the implementation of health projects in Brazil using a mixed-methods approach. The study revealed a 72% reduction in dropout rates and improved healthcare outcomes where communities were actively engaged. The authors concluded that participatory implementation fosters greater program adherence and responsiveness and recommended adopting co-implementation strategies to enhance sustainability. In the United Kingdom, Bennett *et al.* (2022) conducted a longitudinal qualitative study to assess participatory governance in refugee integration programs. The findings indicated that collaborative decision-making during implementation sustained projects for over eight years. The study concluded that involving stakeholders during execution phases enhances program flexibility and longevity, recommending the integration of inclusive governance frameworks throughout project cycles. Similarly, Sharma and Raj (2023) assessed joint implementation in women's empowerment initiatives in India through a case study approach. Their results showed improved financial transparency and greater beneficiary satisfaction. They concluded that engaging women in operational decisions increases accountability and project relevance, recommending the institutionalization of gender-sensitive participatory methods in project implementation.

At the continental level, African experiences reaffirm the value of stakeholder involvement during implementation. In Senegal, Ndiaye *et al.* (2022) applied a community-based participatory research design to evaluate rural water infrastructure projects. The study found that community labor contributions enhanced local ownership and prolonged facility usability. The authors concluded that practical engagement instills a sense of responsibility, thereby improving sustainability, and recommended integrating community participation across all implementation phases. In Mozambique, Matos and Cossa (2023) used a quasi-experimental design to assess stakeholder partnerships in education programs. Their findings revealed a 34% reduction in teacher absenteeism due to shared implementation responsibilities. The study concluded that collaborative operations improve accountability and advocated for the adoption of stakeholder-driven frameworks in education sectors. In Zambia, Mwansa and Chilufya (2021) investigated low-cost housing projects using a descriptive design. The study highlighted that involving beneficiaries during project execution led to improved long-term maintenance and affordability. The authors concluded that community participation enhances housing durability and cost-effectiveness and recommended the inclusion of community-led construction strategies in national housing policies.

Regionally, in East Africa, similar trends have been observed. Muriithi *et al.* (2021) studied maternal health programs in Kenya through a mixed-methods approach and identified a strong link between community engagement in service delivery and increased utilization rates. They concluded that stakeholder participation enhances responsiveness and advised decentralizing implementation roles to local committees. In Burundi, Ndayizeye *et al.* (2022) used participatory action research to examine sanitation programs. They found a 59% improvement in user retention and hygiene behaviors through participatory execution. The study concluded that collaborative implementation encourages sustainable behavioral change and recommended the adoption of participatory frameworks by sanitation NGOs.

In Rwanda, Nyirabega and Mugwaneza (2024) employed a cross-sectional study to evaluate agriculture-based livelihood projects. Their results demonstrated a 65% increase in beneficiary satisfaction due to inclusive implementation practices. The study concluded that fostering ownership during execution enhances long-term project impact, recommending the training of beneficiaries as peer facilitators. At the local level, Uwimana and Nkurunziza (2023) conducted a comparative study in Kigali on youth development programs. They reported that inclusive implementation approaches increased program retention and reduced dropout rates. Their conclusion emphasized that youth engagement in delivery processes aligns programs with evolving needs and suggested enhancing youth representation in implementation teams. In contrast, the Deaf Donor Funded Project in Kicukiro faced challenges due to limited stakeholder involvement during implementation. According to the Rwanda National Union of the Deaf (2023), only 36% of beneficiaries were actively engaged during execution. Participatory monitoring revealed communication gaps and misalignment with community priorities, resulting in low user satisfaction and jeopardizing sustainability. The report concluded that the exclusion of primary stakeholders, such as the Deaf community, undermined project effectiveness. It recommended the development of inclusive implementation mechanisms that prioritize accessible communication and active participation of persons with disabilities.

2.1.4 Influence of Stakeholder Participation in Project Monitoring and Evaluation on Project Sustainability

Stakeholder participation in project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) has been linked to improved project outcomes and long-term sustainability. Van der Linden *et al.* (2022), in the Netherlands, examined citizen-led monitoring in environmental protection programs using a mixed-methods approach. Their findings indicated that participatory M&E enabled real-time policy adjustments and enhanced environmental compliance by 52%. The study concluded that inclusive monitoring increases project ownership and supports adaptive management, recommending institutionalized citizen feedback mechanisms to promote sustainability. In Canada, Lemoine and Carter (2021) conducted a qualitative study on Indigenous-led M&E frameworks in cultural preservation projects. Through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, they found that community-driven evaluation approaches ensured cultural congruence and higher project retention rates. They concluded that culturally sensitive M&E enhances legitimacy and trust, recommending capacity building to support locally grounded systems. In Bangladesh, Hossain *et al.* (2023) analyzed the impact of community scorecards on health service delivery using quantitative data from health facility performance reports. Their findings revealed that participatory monitoring boosted transparency and accountability by 48%. They recommended integrating scorecard systems into all public health initiatives to strengthen sustainability.

Across Africa, participatory M&E has been instrumental in improving project performance. In Tanzania, Mbwambo *et al.* (2023) used a case study approach in forest conservation programs and found a 63% increase in compliance when communities actively participated in monitoring. They emphasized that shared responsibility through participatory M&E enhances stewardship and sustainability, recommending the decentralization of M&E roles to the grassroots level. Similarly, Kondowe and Chirwa (2022) in Malawi found that local M&E committees improved communication with donors and reduced delays in project timelines. Their study concluded that bottom-up monitoring enhances responsiveness and efficiency, advocating for the formal integration of local committees throughout the project cycle.

Regionally, East African countries are adopting participatory M&E models to improve development outcomes. Odhiambo and Njeru (2021) in Kenya conducted a longitudinal study on youth entrepreneurship programs and found that participatory M&E improved accountability and the sustainability of business ventures. They urged alignment between government and donor policies to institutionalize such practices. In Uganda, Namugenyi and Akello (2022) assessed citizen report cards in education and reported that the cards effectively identified service delivery gaps and prompted timely interventions. They recommended expanding this model nationwide. In Ethiopia, Tadesse *et al.* (2023) employed participatory action research to evaluate joint stakeholder review meetings in health programs. Their findings demonstrated improved donor coordination and user satisfaction, with the recommendation that stakeholder feedback forums be institutionalized to ensure adaptive learning and project relevance.

At the national level in Rwanda, Mugisha and Uwingabiye (2021) examined citizen report cards in Kigali's urban service delivery. Their study showed that real-time feedback mechanisms reduced project failures and improved alignment with beneficiary needs. They

<https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t2557>

recommended extending participatory tools to rural contexts to enhance inclusivity. Complementarily, Twizeyimana and Mukarusanga (2024) used a quasi-experimental design to study community-led M&E in nutrition programs. Their results indicated improved targeting and equitable resource allocation, advocating for the institutionalization of participatory M&E in all community-based projects. Locally, however, the Deaf Donor-Funded Project in Kicukiro District presents notable gaps. According to the Rwanda National Union of the Deaf (2023), only 28% of Deaf community members participated in M&E activities, with feedback sessions either rare or inconsistent. Based on internal reports and stakeholder interviews, the study concluded that low participation reduced transparency, weakened trust, and compromised project sustainability. The Union recommended adopting inclusive M&E approaches using interpreters and accessible visual tools tailored to the needs of Deaf beneficiaries.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework underpins this study by providing conceptual foundations that explain the relationships between supply chain operations (independent variables: supplier management, supply chain information management, and logistics management) and organizational performance (dependent variable) at the Rwanda Biomedical Center. Each theory is aligned with one or more specific objectives to ensure theoretical coherence, guiding the analysis of how supply chain practices influence operational efficiency, service delivery, and institutional outcomes.

2.2.1 Resource-Based View

The resource-based view posits that organizational performance depends on the firm's ability to leverage unique, valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources (Barney, 2021). In the context of supply chain operations, such resources include robust supplier networks, integrated information systems, and specialized logistics capabilities. For this study, RBV aligns with Specific Objective 1, assessing how supplier management operations contribute to organizational performance. Recent studies indicate that public health institutions that strategically develop and utilize supply chain resources achieve higher operational efficiency and service quality (Okello & Nyaribo, 2022; Singh *et al.*, 2023).

2.2.2 Transaction Cost Economics

Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) explains organizational decision-making regarding governance structures and the minimization of transaction costs such as bargaining, monitoring, and enforcement (Williamson, 2020). Applied to supply chain management, TCE guides analysis of outsourcing, contract design, and supplier selection. This theory supports Specific Objective 1 and 2, examining how supplier management and information-sharing mechanisms can reduce operational costs and improve institutional performance. Empirical evidence demonstrates that public sector organizations that adopt efficient transaction structures in procurement and SCM achieve improved resource utilization and accountability (Kimani & Muriithi, 2021; Chen *et al.*, 2023).

2.2.3 Systems Theory

Systems Theory conceptualizes organizations as integrated systems where each component affects overall performance (Checkland, 2020). In supply chains, coordination between

procurement, warehousing, production, and distribution is critical; disruption in one area can negatively affect the entire system. This theory aligns with Specific Objective 2 and 3, focusing on supply chain information management and logistics. Studies have shown that health institutions implementing integrated SCM systems achieve higher service continuity, faster response times, and enhanced patient satisfaction (Mburu & Otieno, 2021; Musoni *et al.*, 2024).

2.2.4 Supply Chain Operations Reference (SCOR) Model

The SCOR Model, developed by APICS, provides a structured framework for mapping, measuring, and optimizing supply chain processes, covering five key activities: Plan, Source, Make, Deliver, and Return (APICS, 2020). This model guides evaluation of SCM practices at the Rwanda Biomedical Center, linking operational processes to performance metrics such as cost efficiency, quality, and responsiveness. SCOR is particularly relevant for Specific Objective 2 and 3, providing a standardized approach to assess the effectiveness of information management systems and logistics operations. Recent studies highlight that applying SCOR practices in public health facilities enhances supply chain transparency, reduces stock-outs, and improves overall organizational outcomes (Ochieng & Odhiambo, 2022; Niyonzima & Habimana, 2023).

2.3 Research Gap Identification

While the literature confirms that stakeholder participation enhances project sustainability, key research gaps are evident: There was limited research specifically addressing how Deaf communities participate in donor-funded projects, particularly in Rwanda. Few studies provide localized, in-depth analysis of how stakeholder participation affects sustainability in urban districts like Kicukiro. The specific tools, mechanisms, and communication methods that facilitate effective participation for the Deaf are under examined. Research rarely compares projects with high versus low stakeholder participation in marginalized contexts to determine best practices for sustainability. There is minimal focus on systemic barriers (e.g., language, access, representation) that influence the quality and impact of stakeholder engagement. The present research explored influence of stakeholder participation particularly among the Deaf on sustainability of a donor funded project in Kicukiro District, Rwanda.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework offers a systematic illustration of the main variables and how they are interrelated in the context of this research. It visually and theoretically illustrates how stakeholder participation in project identification, planning, implementation, and monitoring & evaluation influences project sustainability. This framework guides the research design by linking empirical findings and theoretical insights to the specific context of the Deaf Donor Funded Project in Kicukiro, Rwanda.

Stakeholder Participation

Project Sustainability

Independent Variables

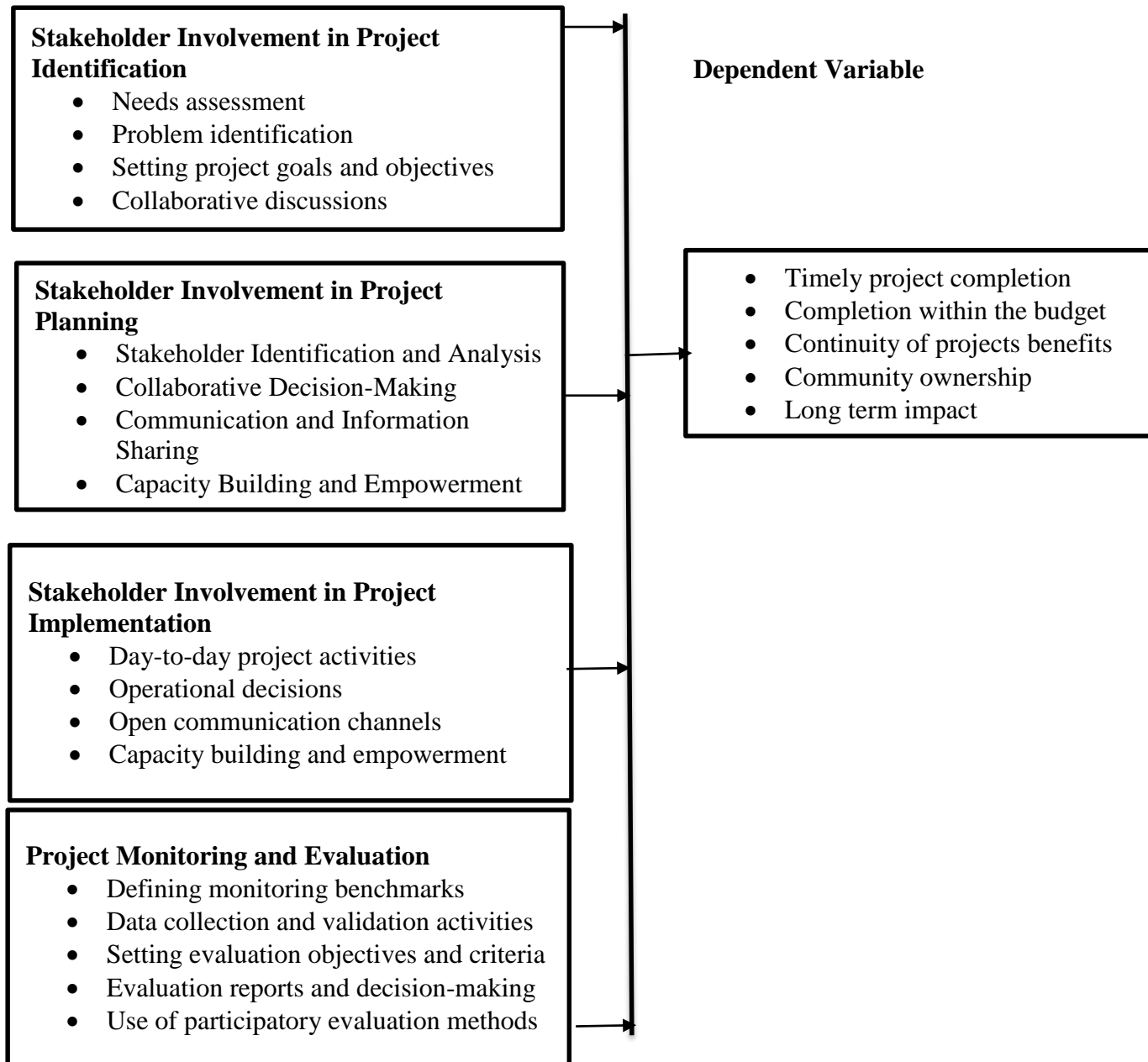


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher (2026)

The conceptual framework for stakeholder involvement in project planning highlights the critical role of inclusive engagement in achieving sustainable project outcomes. It emphasizes four key constructs: stakeholder identification and analysis, collaborative decision-making, effective communication, and capacity building. By systematically recognizing stakeholders,

fostering joint planning, ensuring transparent information flow, and empowering participants, projects align more closely with community needs and priorities. This framework provides a structured approach to understanding how meaningful stakeholder participation during the planning phase enhances ownership, reduces conflicts, and improves resource utilization, ultimately contributing to project long term sustainability.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This particular study used a descriptive correlational research design with a mixed approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques to obtain a deeper understanding of how stakeholder participation impacts the sustainability of the Deaf Donor Funded Project in Kicukiro, Rwanda. Mixed-methods research combined numerical data with rich narrative explanations, providing a fuller understanding of complex social phenomena (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2020). Given the multidimensional nature of stakeholder participation and sustainability, this design allows the study to explore both measurable outcomes (e.g., participation rates, sustainability indicators) and the lived experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by stakeholders, particularly the Deaf community (Mertens, 2021). The quantitative aspect involved structured surveys administered to project beneficiaries and key stakeholders to collect data on the extent of participation at various project stages and corresponding sustainability indicators. The qualitative method includes semi structured interviews and focus group discussions with beneficiaries, project employees or officers as well as community officers, were employed to capture detailed perspectives on participation processes, communication barriers, and contextual factors impacting sustainability (Patton, 2021). Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and interpret findings within the local cultural and social framework (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

3.2 Population and Sampling

Target population refers to the whole group of persons, organizations, or entities to which the research findings were generalized (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). For this study, the target population comprises all stakeholders involved in the Deaf Donor Funded Project in Kicukiro District, Rwanda. According to the Rwanda National Union of the Deaf (RNUD, 2023), there are approximately 420 Deaf individuals registered as beneficiaries of the project in Kicukiro. The number of project staff and partner organizations was estimated at 35 individuals, while local government and community stakeholders involved are around 20 persons, bringing the total accessible population to approximately 475 stakeholders.

This study employed a stratified random sampling technique to ensure fair representation of all key stakeholder groups involved in the Deaf Donor Funded Project. The population was first divided into three distinct strata based on stakeholder categories: Deaf beneficiaries, project staff and partner organizations, and local government and community stakeholders. Stratification was used to improve the accuracy of results by ensuring that each subgroup is proportionately represented in the sample (Bryman, 2022; Creswell & Guetterman, 2021). After stratification, a simple random sampling method was applied within each stratum to select participants. This means that every member within each stakeholder group had an equal and independent chance of being included in the study, minimizing bias and enhancing

representativeness. This approach ensures that the voices of marginalized groups, especially Deaf beneficiaries who make up the majority of stakeholders, are adequately included, while also capturing perspectives from project staff, partners, and local government officials who influence project implementation and sustainability. The sample size for this study is determined using the formula by Taro Yamane (1967), as updated in contemporary studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2023):

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + (N)e^2}$$

Where: n = Sample size, N = Total population size, e = Margin of error (typically 0.05 for 95% confidence level)/ Assuming a total population of 475 stakeholders involved in the Deaf Donor Funded Project (RNUD, 2023), and a 5% margin of error;

$n = \frac{N}{1 + (N)e^2} = \frac{475}{1 + (475)0.05^2} = 218$ respondents. To ensure representation across different stakeholder groups, the sample was proportionately allocated based on each category's share in the target population.

3.3 Research Instruments

The study employed structured questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides as primary data collection instruments to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on stakeholder participation and project sustainability. Questionnaires were administered to project beneficiaries and stakeholders to gather quantitative data on their levels of participation across project phases and their perceptions of sustainability. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with project coordinators, local leaders, and representatives from the Rwanda National Union of the Deaf (RNUD) to capture qualitative insights into stakeholder experiences, barriers to participation, and contextual factors influencing sustainability (Baskarada, 2020; Mutenyi & Ngonzi, 2023). The questionnaires were designed using a five-point Likert scale to measure perceptions of participation at key stages of the project lifecycle such as identification, planning, implementation, and monitoring. Meanwhile, the interview guides featured open-ended questions that allow respondents to provide deeper perspectives, enabling triangulation of findings and ensuring a comprehensive understanding of how participation influences project sustainability.

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to ensure comprehensive coverage of the research objectives. Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires, while qualitative insights were gathered through semi-structured interviews. The combination of these methods allowed for triangulation, enhancing the validity and reliability of the study findings. Data collection adhered to ethical research standards. Ethical clearance was obtained from the university and relevant local authorities prior to fieldwork. Trained research assistants, including one fluent in Rwandan Sign Language, facilitated the administration of questionnaires and interviews to ensure accessibility and inclusivity for Deaf participants (Twagirayezu & Mugisha, 2024). A pilot study was conducted with 10 respondents from a similar Deaf donor-funded project in Gasabo District, outside the main study site in Kicukiro. The pilot aimed to test the clarity, reliability, and validity of the questionnaires and interview guides, as well as to estimate the time required for administration.

Feedback from the pilot informed adjustments to the instruments before the main data collection.

For the main study, questionnaires were administered face-to-face to Deaf project beneficiaries, project staff, local government representatives, and community stakeholders. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with project coordinators, local leaders, and representatives of the Rwanda National Union of the Deaf (RNUD). All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and later analyzed to extract key themes and insights (Karungi & Nabwire, 2023). This systematic approach ensured that data were collected accurately, inclusively, and ethically, providing a solid foundation for analyzing the influence of stakeholder participation on the sustainability of the Deaf donor-funded project in Kicukiro District.

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques and Presentation

Analysis was conducted in two phases: quantitative analysis using SPSS version 28 and qualitative thematic analysis using NVivo 14. Integration of findings through triangulation was not applied. Quantitative data obtained from structured questionnaires was cleaned and coded into SPSS version 28. Likert-scale responses were converted into numerical values, enabling statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were employed to summarize respondents' demographic profiles and to establish general patterns of participation across the four phases of the project cycle. Findings from this stage were presented in tables and graphs to provide a clear overview of the dataset. Inferential analysis was conducted to establish relationships between stakeholder participation and project sustainability. Correlation analysis was applied to determine the strength and direction of associations between the two variables. Subsequently, multiple linear regression analysis was used to test the predictive effect of stakeholder participation in project identification, planning, implementation, and monitoring on sustainability outcomes. The regression model is specified as: The regression model was expressed as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \epsilon$$

Where:

Y = Project Sustainability Score (dependent variable)

X₁ = Stakeholder Participation in Project Identification

X₂ = Stakeholder Participation in Project Planning

X₃ = Stakeholder Participation in Project Implementation

X₄ = Stakeholder Participation in Monitoring and Evaluation

β₀ = Intercept

β_{1,2,3,4} = Regression coefficients

ε = Error term

Tests of normality, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity was conducted to validate the model and ensure robustness of the results. Quantitative results were presented in statistical tables and regression plots, with interpretation focusing on both statistical significance and practical implications (Ngugi & Muthoni, 2021).

Qualitative data was generated from semi-structured interviews with project staff, local leaders, and representatives of the Rwanda National Union of the Deaf. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English where necessary. Transcripts were imported into NVivo 14 software for systematic analysis. Thematic analysis, following the six-phase framework by Sharma and Raj (2023) was applied. This involves repeated reading of transcripts to gain familiarity with the data, generating initial codes, grouping related codes into potential themes, reviewing themes for internal consistency, and finally defining and naming the emergent themes. Examples of anticipated themes may include “empowerment through participation,” “barriers to inclusion,” and “strategic communication.” Qualitative findings were presented narratively, supported by direct quotations from respondents to give voice to the experiences of stakeholders. In addition, thematic tables were used to summarize key themes and supporting evidence.

After analyzing both datasets separately, triangulation was applied to integrate quantitative and qualitative findings. For instance, if regression analysis demonstrates that participation in planning has a significant effect on project sustainability, qualitative data was used to illustrate how Deaf beneficiaries perceive their involvement in planning as enhancing ownership and long-term continuity. Findings were presented in joint display tables that align quantitative statistical results with qualitative thematic insights, allowing a comprehensive interpretation. This integration provides both numerical evidence and contextual explanations, ensuring a holistic understanding of how stakeholder participation influences project sustainability.

3.5 Ethical Consideration

This study strictly adhered to established research ethics to ensure the protection of participants’ rights, dignity, and welfare throughout the data collection and reporting process (Bryman, 2023). Since the research involves individuals from the Deaf community, a vulnerable and often marginalized group, extra precautions were taken to ensure accessibility, inclusivity, and informed participation. Ethical approval was obtained from the university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) before data collection begins.

4. Data Results and Discussion of Findings

This part presents the findings of the study, analyzes the data collected from respondents, and interprets the results in relation to the study objectives. It focuses on stakeholder participation in project identification, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, and how these influence the sustainability of the Deaf donor-funded project in Kicukiro District, Rwanda. Both quantitative and qualitative data are presented, analyzed, and interpreted to provide comprehensive insights into the study problem.

4.1 Data Results

4.1.1 Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics considered in this study include gender, age, education level, and stakeholder role within the project. These variables are important because they may influence perceptions of participation and the sustainability of the project.

Table 4.1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	110	52.4
	Female	100	47.6
	Total	210	100.0
Age Group	18–28 Years	42	20.0
	29–39 Years	102	48.6
	40–50 Years	54	25.7
	51+ Years	12	5.7
	Total	210	100.0
Stakeholder Role	Deaf Beneficiaries	187	89.0
	Project Staff & Partner Organizations	15	7.1
	Local Government & Community Stakeholders	8	3.9
	Total	210	100.0

Source: Primary Data (2026)

The combined demographic profile indicates a balanced gender distribution, with slightly more male (52.4%) than female (47.6%) respondents, suggesting inclusive participation. The majority of respondents fall within the 29–39 age group (48.6%), reflecting an active and productive stakeholder segment, while other age groups contribute diversity in experience and perspectives. In terms of stakeholder roles, Deaf beneficiaries dominate the sample (89%), consistent with their central position in the project, while project staff, partners, and community representatives provide complementary insights. Overall, this diverse composition enhances the reliability and comprehensiveness of the study findings.

4.1.2 Level of Project Sustainability

The researcher measured the influence of stakeholder participation on project sustainability through several dimensions, including timely project completion, achievement of objectives, adherence to budget, quality standards, post-funding outcomes, capacity building, community ownership, environmental sustainability, stakeholder collaboration, and equitable benefit distribution. Responses were captured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = No Extent to 5 = Very Large Extent. The mean scores and standard deviations were computed to summarize stakeholders’ perceptions.

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics on Project Sustainability

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Project was completed on time	5 (2.4)	8 (3.8)	25(11.9)	90(42.9)	82(39.0)	4.12	0.97
Project achieved its objectives	4 (1.9)	10(4.8)	28(13.3)	88(41.9)	80(38.1)	4.06	0.98
Project adhered to budget	6 (2.9)	12(5.7)	32(15.2)	85(40.5)	75(35.7)	3.97	1.00
Project achieved expected quality standards	5 (2.4)	9 (4.3)	30(14.3)	87(41.4)	79(37.6)	4.01	0.98
Project outcomes were maintained post-funding	7 (3.3)	11(5.2)	35(16.7)	83(39.5)	74(35.2)	3.92	1.02
Project improved local capacity	4 (1.9)	10(4.8)	33(15.7)	86(40.9)	77(36.7)	4.01	0.98
Project promoted community ownership	6 (2.9)	12(5.7)	28(13.3)	88(41.9)	76(36.2)	4.00	0.99
Project integrated environmental sustainability	8 (3.8)	15(7.1)	40(19.0)	80(38.1)	67(31.9)	3.81	1.07
Project enhanced stakeholder collaboration	5 (2.4)	10(4.8)	35(16.7)	85(40.5)	75(35.7)	3.97	0.99
Project's benefits were equitably distributed among beneficiaries	7 (3.3)	12(5.7)	32(15.2)	87(41.4)	72(34.3)	3.93	1.01

Source: Primary Data (2026)

The descriptive statistics indicate that stakeholders perceive a high level of participation contributing to project sustainability. For instance, 82 respondents (39%) strongly agreed and 90 (42.9%) agreed that the project was completed on time, resulting in a mean score of 4.12, suggesting that stakeholder involvement positively influenced timely delivery. Similarly, project objectives were largely achieved, with a mean of 4.06, indicating that participation in planning, implementation, and monitoring helped align activities with intended goals. Adherence to budget, quality standards, and post-funding outcomes also received favorable responses (means ranging from 3.92 to 3.97), reflecting effective collaboration between project staff, beneficiaries, and local stakeholders. Capacity building, community ownership, and stakeholder collaboration scored highly, reinforcing the role of inclusive participation in enhancing local skills, ownership, and cooperative relationships. Environmental sustainability received a slightly lower mean (3.81), suggesting that while some measures were integrated, there is room for improvement in embedding environmental considerations fully into project activities.

4.1.3 Effect of Stakeholder Participation in Project Identification on Project Sustainability

Participation at this stage includes defining project objectives, conducting feasibility assessments, analyzing project needs, identifying risks, selecting target beneficiaries,

determining priorities, suggesting resources, identifying potential partners, and incorporating sustainability considerations.

Table 4.3: Descriptive Statistics on Stakeholder Participation in Project Identification

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Stakeholders participated in defining project objectives	4(1.9)	6(2.9)	25(11.9)	85(40.5)	90(42.9)	4.19	0.91
Stakeholders participated in feasibility assessment	5(2.4)	8 (3.8)	30(14.3)	80(38.1)	87(41.4)	4.11	0.95
Stakeholders participated in project analysis	6(2.9)	10(4.8)	32(15.2)	78(37.1)	84(40.0)	4.04	0.97
Stakeholders contributed to identifying project risks	7(3.3)	12(5.7)	28(13.3)	79(37.6)	84(40.0)	4.01	1.00
Stakeholders provided input on target beneficiaries	4(1.9)	7 (3.3)	34(16.2)	81(38.6)	84(40.0)	4.05	0.94
Stakeholders identified priority needs and challenges	5(2.4)	8 (3.8)	30(14.3)	82(39.0)	85(40.5)	4.06	0.96
Stakeholders helped define project scope	6(2.9)	10(4.8)	33(15.7)	80(38.1)	81(38.6)	4.01	0.97
Stakeholders suggested potential resources	7(3.3)	11(5.2)	32(15.2)	78(37.1)	82(39.0)	4.00	0.99
Stakeholders identified potential partners and collaborators	5(2.4)	9 (4.3)	35(16.7)	79(37.6)	82(39.0)	4.02	0.96
Stakeholders contributed to sustainability considerations at the identification stage	6(2.9)	10(4.8)	32(15.2)	80(38.1)	82(39.0)	4.01	0.97

Source: Primary Data (2026)

The descriptive statistics indicate that stakeholder participation at the project identification stage had a strong positive influence on project sustainability. For example, 90 respondents (42.9%) strongly agreed and 85 (40.5%) agreed that stakeholders participated in defining project objectives, yielding a mean score of 4.19. Feasibility assessments, project analysis, and risk identification also scored highly (means ranging from 4.01 to 4.11), suggesting that stakeholders contributed significantly to evaluating project viability and anticipating potential challenges. Participation in selecting target beneficiaries, defining priorities, and suggesting resources (means 4.00–4.06) reflects the inclusive approach of the project, ensuring that interventions addressed community needs and leveraged available resources effectively. Notably, stakeholders’ contribution to sustainability considerations during project identification scored a mean of 4.01, indicating that participants recognized the importance of embedding long-term sustainability into project planning from the outset. The relatively low standard deviations (0.91–1.00) indicate consistent perceptions across respondents, highlighting broad agreement that early stakeholder involvement supports project longevity.

Table 4.4: Correlation between Stakeholder Participation in Project Identification and Project Sustainability

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Spearman's r_s	Interpretation
Stakeholder Participation in Project Identification	Project Sustainability	0.82	Strong Positive

Source: Primary (2026)

A correlation coefficient of 0.82 indicates a strong positive relationship, implying that increased stakeholder involvement in the identification phase is associated with higher project sustainability. This suggests that when stakeholders contribute meaningfully to defining objectives, assessing feasibility, analyzing risks, and identifying priority needs, projects are more likely to succeed and maintain benefits post-funding. There is no statistically significant influence of stakeholder participation in project identification on project sustainability. Since $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, the researcher reject H_{01} . Stakeholder participation in project identification has a significant positive influence on the sustainability of the Deaf donor-funded project in Kicukiro District. Projects where stakeholders are involved in defining objectives, assessing feasibility, and identifying risks are more likely to maintain their outcomes and benefits over time.

Table 4.5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	0.82	0.67	0.67	0.56

Source: Primary Data (2026)

The model summary indicates a strong positive relationship between stakeholder participation in project identification and project sustainability ($R = 0.82$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.67$) shows that 67% of the variation in project sustainability is explained by stakeholder participation in project identification, while the remaining 33% is attributed to other factors not included in the model. The adjusted R^2 value (0.67) confirms the stability and reliability of the model.

Table 4.6: Analysis of Variance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	131.3	1	131.3	392.6	0.000
Residual	64.7	208	0.31		
Total	196.0	209			

Source: Primary Data (2026)

The ANOVA results indicate that the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 392.6$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). This implies that stakeholder participation in project identification significantly predicts project sustainability.

Table 4.7: Coefficients

Variable	Beta (β)	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Constant	0.69	0.14	4.93	0.000
Project Identification	0.79	0.04	19.81	0.000

Source: Primary Data (2026)

Regression Equation: $Y = 0.69 + 0.79X_1$

Where: Y = Project Sustainability, X_1 = Stakeholder Participation in Project Identification

The regression results reveal that stakeholder participation in project identification has a positive and statistically significant effect on project sustainability ($\beta = 0.79$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). This indicates that a one-unit increase in stakeholder participation during the project identification phase leads to a 0.79 increase in project sustainability. The relatively high R^2 value (0.67) demonstrates that participation at this stage is a strong predictor of sustainability outcomes. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected, and it is concluded that stakeholder participation in project identification significantly influences the sustainability of the Deaf donor-funded project in Kicukiro District. These findings suggest that involving stakeholders in defining project objectives, assessing feasibility, identifying risks, and integrating sustainability considerations at the early stages enhances project relevance, ownership, and long-term success.

4.1.4 Influence of Stakeholder Participation in Project Planning on Project Sustainability

Stakeholder participation at this stage includes budgeting, risk management planning, scheduling, communication strategies, role allocation, policy input, performance indicator identification, problem-solving, plan validation, and integrating sustainability objectives.

Table 4.8: Descriptive Statistics on Stakeholder Participation in Project Planning

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Stakeholders participated in budgeting and cost estimation	5(2.4)	7(3.3)	28(13.3)	85(40.5)	90(42.9)	4.18	0.92
Stakeholders participated in risk management planning	6(2.9)	8(3.8)	30(14.3)	80(38.1)	91(43.1)	4.15	0.93
Stakeholders contributed to project scheduling	4(1.9)	9(4.3)	32(15.2)	83(39.5)	89(42.4)	4.15	0.91
Stakeholders provided input on communication strategies	5(2.4)	7(3.3)	34(16.2)	82(39.0)	85(40.5)	4.13	0.91
Stakeholders helped allocate roles and responsibilities	6(2.9)	9(4.3)	31(14.8)	83(39.5)	85(40.5)	4.12	0.92
Stakeholders provided feedback on project policies and procedures	5(2.4)	8(3.8)	33(15.7)	80(38.1)	88(41.9)	4.13	0.92
Stakeholders participated in identifying key performance indicators	4(1.9)	6(2.9)	30(14.3)	85(40.5)	89(42.4)	4.19	0.90
Stakeholders suggested solutions to potential challenges	5(2.4)	7(3.3)	31(14.8)	83(39.5)	88(41.9)	4.16	0.91
Stakeholders reviewed and validated project plans	6(2.9)	8(3.8)	30(14.3)	82(39.0)	88(41.9)	4.15	0.92
Stakeholders ensured planning addressed sustainability objectives	5(2.4)	7(3.3)	32(15.2)	80(38.1)	90(42.9)	4.16	0.91
Overall Mean/SD	-	-	-	-	-	4.15	0.92

Source: Primary Data (2026)

The overall mean of 4.15 suggests large to very large involvement. Standard deviations (0.90–0.93) are low, indicating consensus among respondents. Key contributions include participation in budgeting, risk management, scheduling, KPI identification, and integrating sustainability considerations.

Table 4.9: Correlation

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Spearman’s r_s	Interpretation
Stakeholder Participation in Project Planning	Project Sustainability	0.85	Strong Positive

Source: Primary Data (2026)

A correlation coefficient of 0.85 shows a strong positive relationship, indicating that higher stakeholder involvement in planning is associated with greater project sustainability. Active

<https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t2557>

participation in budgeting, risk management, and sustainability integration significantly increases the likelihood that project outcomes are maintained post-implementation. Stakeholder participation in project planning has no significant influence on project sustainability. Since $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, we reject H_0 . Stakeholder participation in project planning significantly and positively influences the sustainability of the Deaf donor-funded project in Kicukiro District. Projects with active involvement in budgeting, scheduling, risk management, and sustainability integration are more likely to achieve lasting outcomes and community ownership.

Table 4.10: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	0.85	0.72	0.72	0.53

Source: Primary Data (2026)

The model summary indicates a strong positive relationship between stakeholder participation in project planning and project sustainability ($R = 0.85$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.72$) shows that 72% of the variation in project sustainability is explained by stakeholder participation in project planning, while the remaining 28% is attributed to other factors not included in the model. The adjusted R^2 (0.72) confirms the reliability of the model.

Table 4.11: Analysis of Variance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	141.1	1	141.1	502.3	0.000
Residual	54.9	208	0.26		
Total	196.0	209			

Source: Primary Data (2026)

The ANOVA results indicate that the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 502.3$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). This implies that stakeholder participation in project planning significantly predicts project sustainability.

Table 4.12: Coefficients

Variable	Beta (β)	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Constant	0.63	0.13	4.85	0.000
Project Planning	0.82	0.04	22.41	0.000

Source: Primary Data (2026)

Regression Equation: $Y = 0.63 + 0.82X_2$

Where: Y = Project Sustainability, X_2 = Stakeholder Participation in Project Planning

<https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t2557>

The regression results reveal that stakeholder participation in project planning has a positive and statistically significant effect on project sustainability ($\beta = 0.82, p = 0.000 < 0.05$). This indicates that a one-unit increase in stakeholder participation in planning leads to a 0.82 increase in project sustainability, holding other factors constant. The high R^2 value (0.72) further demonstrates that planning is a strong predictor of sustainability outcomes. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) is rejected, and it is concluded that stakeholder participation in project planning significantly influences the sustainability of the Deaf donor-funded project in Kicukiro District. These findings imply that effective involvement of stakeholders in budgeting, scheduling, risk management, and integration of sustainability considerations enhances long-term project success and community ownership.

4.1.5. Influence of Stakeholder Participation in Project Implementation on Project Sustainability

Participation at this stage includes scope definition, quality control, resource allocation, contractor selection, schedule monitoring, challenge identification, corrective action, training, resource mobilization, and embedding sustainability considerations.

Table 4.13. Descriptive Statistics on Stakeholder Participation in Project Implementation

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Stakeholders participated in scope definition	5(2.4)	7(3.3)	28(13.3)	86(40.5)	90(42.5)	4.17	0.91
Stakeholders participated in quality & technical specification	6(2.9)	8(3.8)	29(13.7)	85(40.2)	88(41.1)	4.15	0.92
Stakeholders contributed to resource allocation	5(2.4)	7(3.3)	31(14.5)	83(39.1)	87(41.1)	4.13	0.91
Stakeholders provided input on contractor selection	6(2.9)	9(4.3)	30(14.2)	82(38.6)	86(40.0)	4.12	0.92
Stakeholders monitored adherence to project schedule	5(2.4)	8(3.8)	32(15.2)	81(38.3)	87(41.1)	4.13	0.92
Stakeholders identified implementation challenges	6(2.9)	7(3.3)	31(14.5)	83(39.1)	86(40.2)	4.12	0.91
Stakeholders suggested corrective actions	5(2.4)	8(3.8)	32(15.2)	81(38.3)	86(40.2)	4.12	0.91
Stakeholders participated in training & capacity-building activities	6(2.9)	9(4.3)	30(14.2)	82(38.6)	85(40.0)	4.11	0.92
Stakeholders contributed to resource mobilization	5(2.4)	7(3.3)	32(15.2)	81(38.3)	87(41.1)	4.14	0.91
Stakeholders ensured project implementation considered sustainability factors	6(2.9)	8(3.8)	31(14.5)	82(38.6)	86(40.2)	4.13	0.92
Overall Mean/SD	-	-	-	-	-	4.13	0.92

The descriptive statistics reveal that stakeholder participation during implementation is highly positive, with an overall mean of 4.13. Low standard deviations (0.91–0.92) indicate agreement among respondents.

Table 4.14: Correlation

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Spearman’s r _s	Interpretation
Stakeholder Participation in Project Implementation	Project Sustainability	0.83	Strong Positive

Source: Primary Data (2026)

A correlation coefficient of 0.83 indicates a strong positive relationship, suggesting that increased stakeholder engagement during implementation is associated with higher project sustainability. When stakeholders are actively involved in monitoring, resource allocation, and corrective actions, projects are more likely to achieve and maintain their intended outcomes. Stakeholder participation in project implementation has no significant influence on project sustainability. Since $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, we reject H_0 . Stakeholder participation in project implementation significantly and positively influences the sustainability of the Deaf donor-funded project in Kicukiro District.

Table 4.15: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	0.83	0.69	0.69	0.55

Source: Primary Data (2026)

The model summary shows a strong positive relationship between stakeholder participation in project implementation and project sustainability ($R = 0.83$). The R^2 value of 0.69 indicates that 69% of the variation in project sustainability is explained by stakeholder participation in implementation, while 31% is explained by other factors not included in the model. The adjusted R^2 (0.69) confirms model reliability.

Table 4.16: Analysis of Variance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	135.2	1	135.2	446.8	0.000
Residual	60.8	208	0.29		
Total	196.0	209			

Source: Primary Data (2026)

<https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t2557>

The ANOVA results indicate that the model is statistically significant ($F = 446.8, p = 0.000 < 0.05$), implying that stakeholder participation in implementation significantly predicts project sustainability.

Table 4.17: Coefficients

Variable	Beta (β)	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Constant	0.65	0.14	4.64	0.000
Project Implementation	0.80	0.04	21.14	0.000

Source: Primary Data (2026)

Regression Equation: $Y = 0.65 + 0.80X_3$

Where: Y = Project Sustainability, X_3 = Stakeholder Participation in Project Implementation

The regression results indicate that stakeholder participation in project implementation has a positive and statistically significant effect on project sustainability ($\beta = 0.80, p = 0.000 < 0.05$). This means that a one-unit increase in stakeholder participation during implementation leads to a 0.80 increase in project sustainability. The relatively high R^2 value (0.69) shows that implementation plays a critical role in determining sustainability outcomes. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) is rejected, and it is concluded that stakeholder participation in project implementation significantly influences the sustainability of the Deaf donor-funded project in Kicukiro District. Active involvement in resource allocation, monitoring progress, addressing challenges, and ensuring quality standards enhances project effectiveness and long-term impact.

4.1.6. Effect of Stakeholder Involvement in Project Monitoring & Evaluation on Project Sustainability

Participation includes defining benchmarks, collecting and validating data, setting evaluation objectives, analyzing results, reviewing progress, suggesting improvements, documenting lessons, and ensuring recommendations are implemented.

Table 4.18: Descriptive Statistics on Stakeholder Participation in M&E

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Stakeholders helped define monitoring benchmarks	5(2.4)	7(3.3)	29(13.3)	85(39.3)	91(41.7)	4.17	0.91
Stakeholders participated in data collection	6(2.9)	8(3.8)	30(14.3)	83(39.3)	90(42.0)	4.16	0.92
Stakeholders validated project data	5(2.4)	7(3.3)	32(15.2)	81(38.3)	89(41.1)	4.15	0.91
Stakeholders contributed to setting evaluation objectives	6(2.9)	8(3.8)	31(14.7)	82(38.6)	88(41.1)	4.15	0.91
Stakeholders analyzed evaluation results	5(2.4)	7(3.3)	30(14.3)	83(39.3)	90(42.0)	4.16	0.91
Stakeholders participated in review meetings	6(2.9)	9(4.3)	31(14.7)	82(38.6)	88(41.1)	4.15	0.91
Stakeholders suggested improvements	5(2.4)	8(3.8)	32(15.2)	81(38.3)	90(42.0)	4.16	0.91
Stakeholders helped document lessons learned	6(2.9)	7(3.3)	31(14.7)	82(38.6)	88(41.1)	4.15	0.91
Stakeholders ensured recommendations were implemented	5(2.4)	8(3.8)	30(14.3)	83(39.3)	90(42.0)	4.16	0.91
Stakeholders ensured M&E activities supported sustainability objectives	6(2.9)	7(3.3)	31(14.7)	82(38.6)	88(41.1)	4.15	0.91
Overall Mean/SD	-	-	-	-	-	4.16	0.91

Source: Primary Data (2026)

The descriptive statistics indicate a strong positive involvement of stakeholders in M&E activities, with an overall mean of 4.16. Low standard deviations (0.91–0.92) show consistency in responses across all items. Active participation in defining benchmarks, collecting and validating data, reviewing results, suggesting improvements, and embedding sustainability considerations highlights stakeholders’ critical role in ensuring that project outcomes are assessed, lessons learned are documented, and corrective measures are implemented.

Table 4.19: Correlation between Stakeholder Participation in M&E and Project Sustainability

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Spearman’s r	Interpretation
Stakeholder Participation in M&E	Project Sustainability	0.84	Strong Positive

Source: Primary Data (2026)

A correlation coefficient of 0.84 indicates a strong positive relationship, suggesting that higher stakeholder involvement in M&E activities is associated with improved project sustainability. Projects where stakeholders actively participate in monitoring, reviewing, and implementing recommendations are more likely to maintain benefits over time. Stakeholder participation in

<https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t2557>

monitoring and evaluation has no significant influence on project sustainability. Since $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, we reject H_0 . Stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation significantly and positively influences the sustainability of the Deaf donor-funded project in Kicukiro District. Engagement in M&E ensures accountability, timely corrective actions, documentation of lessons learned, and integration of sustainability measures, thereby contributing to long-term project success.

Table 4.20: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	0.84	0.71	0.71	0.54

Source: Primary Data (2026)

The model summary indicates a strong positive relationship between stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation and project sustainability ($R = 0.84$). The R^2 value of 0.71 shows that 71% of the variation in project sustainability is explained by stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation, while 29% is explained by other factors.

Table 4.21: Analysis of Variance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	139.2	1	139.2	479.3	0.000
Residual	56.8	208	0.27		
Total	196.0	209			

Source: Primary Data (2026)

The ANOVA results show that the model is statistically significant ($F = 479.3$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$), indicating that stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation significantly predicts project sustainability.

Table 4.22: Coefficients

Variable	Beta (β)	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Constant	0.61	0.13	4.69	0.000
Monitoring & Evaluation	0.81	0.04	21.89	0.000

Source: Primary Data (2026)

$$Y = 0.61 + 0.81X_4$$

Where: $Y = \text{Project Sustainability}_4 = \text{Stakeholder Participation in Monitoring \& Evaluation}$

The regression results reveal that stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation has a positive and statistically significant effect on project sustainability ($\beta = 0.81$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). This implies that a one-unit increase in participation in monitoring and evaluation leads to a 0.81 increase in project sustainability. The R^2 value (0.71) indicates that monitoring and evaluation is a strong predictor of sustainability outcomes. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{04}) is rejected, and it is concluded that stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation significantly influences the sustainability of the Deaf donor-funded project in Kicukiro District. Effective involvement in tracking progress, evaluating outcomes, and implementing corrective measures enhances accountability, learning, and long-term project success.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

4.2.1 Stakeholder Participation in Project Identification and Project Sustainability

The strong positive influence of stakeholder participation in project identification on sustainability is supported by findings in other settings where early and inclusive engagement enhances project outcomes. For example, Mazimpaka (2022) found that involving stakeholders in identification, planning, and implementation significantly improved sustainability of community development projects in Rwanda by aligning project objectives with community needs and expectations (Mazimpaka, 2022). Likewise, studies of stakeholder identification and engagement in China and Africa have shown that systematic early identification and involvement leads to higher sustainability outcomes because it builds clear understanding and ownership among beneficiaries (Saad *et al.*, 2022). These findings align with participatory development frameworks, which emphasize that front-loading stakeholder engagement increases project relevance and long-term success.

4.2.2 Stakeholder Participation in Project Planning and Project Sustainability

The analysis showed that stakeholder participation in planning stages was significantly associated with improved project sustainability. This is consistent with evidence from a literature review by Sebunya and Gichuki (2025), who found that participatory planning improves resource allocation, community engagement, and accountability, which in turn enhances sustainable development outcomes (Sebunya & Gichuki, 2025). Similarly, research on community-led projects in Uganda and Kenya highlights that participatory planning processes increase clarity of goals, shared expectations, and community investment in results, which are critical for sustaining project benefits beyond donor funding (Wani *et al.*, 2024). Taken together, the current findings strengthen the argument that inclusive planning practices contribute to structured and sustainable project execution.

4.2.3 Stakeholder Participation in Project Implementation and Project Sustainability

The positive impact of stakeholder involvement during project implementation corroborates studies showing that continuous engagement throughout execution reduces uncertainty and improves quality standards. For instance, research on irrigation projects in Kenya found that

stakeholder engagement in implementation and M&E significantly enhanced project performance by improving coordination and adaptive decision-making (Dakane & Mutuku, 2023). Similar results were observed in participatory project management studies in Rwanda, where stakeholders' active contribution to implementation helped manage resources effectively and align activities with local conditions (Igirimbabazi & Amolo, 2025).

4.2.4 Stakeholder Participation in Monitoring & Evaluation and Project Sustainability

Stakeholder participation in M&E showed a substantial positive effect on sustainability, aligning with studies that highlight the role of participatory M&E in strengthening transparency, learning, and corrective action. Vanessa and Gitahi (2023) demonstrated that community participation in monitoring and evaluation improved project effectiveness and sustainability in Rwanda by embedding local insights into evaluation frameworks, which helped implement recommendations and adjust strategies (Vanessa & Gitahi, 2023). Research in Kenya on participatory M&E also indicates that engaging stakeholders in data validation and feedback loops enhances accountability and ownership, thereby bolstering sustainability (Amuni, Karimi & Patrick, 2025). These studies reinforce the view that participatory M&E is not merely oversight but a strategic mechanism for sustaining project benefits.

4.2.5 Overall Influence of Stakeholder Participation on Project Sustainability

The collective evidence from this study shows that stakeholder participation at all project phases significantly enhances sustainability. This finding is consistent with research in donor-funded health and community projects in Africa, where active engagement of diverse stakeholders throughout the project cycle was found to be positively associated with sustainable outcomes (Micheni, Were & Namusonge, 2025). Additionally, systematic reviews of participatory approaches point to the importance of stakeholder engagement for achieving SDG-aligned sustainability goals, particularly through improved accountability, resource utilization, and adaptive management (Sebunya & Gichuki, 2025). Together, these findings confirm that high levels of stakeholder participation contribute to sustained social, economic, and operational benefits in development interventions.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that stakeholder participation has a significant positive influence on the sustainability of donor-funded projects. The regression analysis confirmed that stakeholder participation across all phases of the project cycle like project identification, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation significantly predicts project sustainability. The model results further indicated that stakeholder participation in planning is the strongest predictor of sustainability, followed by monitoring and evaluation, implementation, and project identification. The coefficient of determination demonstrated that a substantial proportion of variation in project sustainability is explained by stakeholder participation, confirming that inclusive engagement is a critical driver of long-term project success. These findings imply that projects are more likely to achieve sustainability when stakeholders are

actively involved in decision-making processes from inception to evaluation, as this enhances ownership, accountability, and alignment with community needs.

Based on the findings, the study recommends that project implementing authorities should institutionalize structured stakeholder participation frameworks across all phases of the project cycle to enhance sustainability outcomes. Special emphasis should be placed on strengthening stakeholder engagement during planning and monitoring and evaluation, as these were identified as the most influential predictors of sustainability in the regression model. Service users and beneficiaries should be actively engaged in all stages of the project cycle by contributing to decision-making processes, providing continuous feedback, and supporting community-driven initiatives that strengthen ownership and accountability. Local leaders, civil society organizations, and development partners should enhance coordination mechanisms, share technical expertise, and promote inclusive platforms that facilitate effective participation and alignment of interventions with community priorities. Policymakers should establish and enforce clear regulatory frameworks that mandate stakeholder participation throughout the project lifecycle and ensure that sustainability considerations are integrated into all donor-funded interventions. Finally, future research should explore additional determinants of project sustainability beyond stakeholder participation, assess the long-term effects of projects after donor exit through longitudinal studies, and examine the role of digital participation tools in strengthening stakeholder engagement in different sectors and contexts.

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