



**INFLUENCE OF PROJECT STRENGTHENING ON PROJECT OUTCOMES IN UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES IN KENYA**

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## INFLUENCE OF PROJECT STRENGTHENING ON PROJECT OUTCOMES IN UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES IN KENYA

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### ABSTRACT

*This study addressed the influence of project strengthening on project outcomes within United Nations Agencies in Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive research design guided by cross sectional survey. The target population was Country Directors, Executive Directors, Program Directors, Project Directors, Project Managers and Program Managers from the ten (10) UN Agencies in Kenya. A census of 233 was derived from the population. A pilot was conducted to ascertain the reliability and validity of the instrument. Data collected from the respondents was captured in SPSS version 24 and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics (correlation analysis and multiple regressions) to establish hypothesized relationships between the variables. The moderating effect was tested using the Baron and Kenny model. The results of the analysis was presented in form of tables, graphs and charts for easier understanding of information. The output given from the findings indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between the components of Project Strengthening namely Availability of project funds, Monitoring and evaluation structures, Compliance to scope and Minimal Schedule variations and Project outcomes in UN agencies in Kenya. The findings also indicated that Project Strengthening has been a major contributor towards the Project outcomes in UN agencies in Kenya.*

**Key Words:** *Availability of Project Funds, Monitoring and Evaluation, Minimal Schedule variations , Project environment framework, United Nations' Agencies*

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## INTRODUCTION

In response to this growing need, Gillman (2016) notes that projects have evolved into an industry, with a plethora of organizations, all with different missions, mandates, and agendas. With the increase of actors, the relief system has met a series of challenges, including the need to both increase resources toward ends and to improve operational effectiveness and efficiency (Gilmann, 2016).

Despite efforts to confront these challenges, much criticism has been leveled at the system for failing to meet the basic requirements of affected populations in a timely manner, with the quality of response varying greatly from crisis to crisis (Stumpfenhorst & Oliver, 2011). Project Constraints and factors particular to action make realization of desired outcomes difficult. The difficulties of the operating environment, the need to act quickly in situations of immediate crisis, an organizational culture that values action over analysis and the fact that there is little consensus (UNOCHA, 2012).

Globally, assistance reached its record high in 2016, with US\$13 billion of aid from governments. This is nearly double that of the 2001 figure of US\$7.1 billion. The year 2015 marked a particularly important peak of aid with the Kashmir earthquake and particularly the Tsunami driving assistance well beyond the US\$10 billion mark. Although this dropped by a billion or so for the next two years, 2012's series of crises (the global food crisis, cyclones in Myanmar and Bangladesh and the Sichuan earthquake in China) drove assistance to beyond even the 2015 peak. This remained the case since, in part because of the continuing global financial crisis and high food prices (Bendell & Murphy, 2016).

Operational quality of interventions in the insecure context of South-Central Somalia was increased by increasing the number of distribution points to reduce travel time for beneficiaries, improving the

service at distribution points to reduce beneficiary waiting time, increasing the value of the vouchers, changing the value of cash distributed based on market price information and managing operational issues brought to agencies' attention through the feedback mechanism.

The activities of planning, implementing and controlling the efficient, cost-effective flow and storage of goods and materials as well as related information, from point of origin to point of consumption for the purpose of alleviating the suffering of vulnerable people complicates the realization of outcomes (Kamau & Sinigallia, 2013). In cases of emergencies, coordination and communication are vital. The organizations need to not only ensure that there is adequate and timely communication, their activities must also be well coordinated to ensure that they respond to the emergency in good time and with the appropriate supplies and personnel to remedy the situation and ensuring maximum impact of their activities.

The Kenya UNDAF presents the United Nations System's intended areas of collaboration with national, sub-national and local stakeholders for this period. It is the fourth generation UNDAF in Kenya, and it is the first in that country to adopt the Delivering as One (DaO) approach. The 2014-2018 Kenya UNDAF was designed to align with the GoK's national humanitarian priorities, the Millennium Humanitarian Goals (MDGs), and with other key internationally agreed humanitarian goals and principles (UNHG, 2017).

UNOCHA coordinates humanitarian response to expand the reach of humanitarian action, improve prioritization and reduce duplication, ensuring that assistance and protection reach the people who need it most. Through critical situational and gender-responsive analysis, OCHA provides a comprehensive picture of overall needs and helps a diverse set of

actors achieve a common understanding of the humanitarian context and a collective plan for the response. By doing so, OCHA influences timely decision-making to support more effective humanitarian response and emergency preparedness (Seybold, 2016).

### Statement of the Problem

Due to the magnitude of coordination and reorganization required at the local level to provide emergency assistance, the Government is not able to cope fully with the situation. Hence the Government of Kenya's appeal and request dated 11 July 2011 for the humanitarian emergency relief assistance. The UN agencies and NGOs in consultation with Government and donor partners, increased the Kenya Emergency Humanitarian Response Plan (EHRP) 2011 requirements by USD\$ 85 million in light of increasing humanitarian needs wrought by the severe drought. The 2011 EHRP is thus funded at 46 per cent with USD\$ 285 million received from the requested UDS\$611 million. Humanitarian actors, under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator, considered appealing to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) rapid-response window to support emergency interventions (UNOCHA, 2012).

### Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study was to establish the influence of project strengthening on project outcomes in United Nations Agencies in Kenya. The specific objectives were:-

- To establish the influence of Availability of project funds on project outcomes in United Nations' Agencies in Kenya
- To ascertain the influence of Monitoring and evaluation structures framework on project outcomes in United Nations' Agencies in Kenya.
- To determine the influence of Compliance to scope on project outcomes in United Nations' Agencies in Kenya.

- To examine the influence of Minimal Schedule variations on project outcomes in United Nations' Agencies in Kenya
- To establish the moderating effect of project environment on the relationship between project strengthening and project outcomes within United Nations' Agencies in Kenya.

### Research Hypotheses

- **H<sub>a1</sub>** There is a significant positive relationship between Availability of project funds and project outcomes within United Nations' Agencies in Kenya
- **H<sub>a2</sub>** There is a significant positive relationship between Monitoring and evaluation structures and project outcomes within United Nations' Agencies in Kenya.
- **H<sub>a3</sub>** There is a significant positive relationship between Compliance to scope and project outcomes within United Nations' Agencies in Kenya.
- **H<sub>a4</sub>** There is a significant positive relationship between Minimal Schedule variations and project outcomes within United Nations' Agencies in Kenya
- **H<sub>a5</sub>** Project environment has a positive moderating influence on the relationship between project strengthening and project outcomes within United Nations' Agencies in Kenya.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Review

#### Theory of Constraints

The basic premises of the Theory of Constraints assume that people can think, they are good and systems are simple (Kweyu, 2013). Yet, there must be something missing. Why do good, thinking people have so much trouble with projects? After all, projects are simply a set of tasks which must all be done within some precedence order before the project is complete. What is missing? It must be

something that is a hidden understanding of how project systems perform. Or, it must be something acting upon the project management system: good, thinking people that do things to actually make the problems worse.

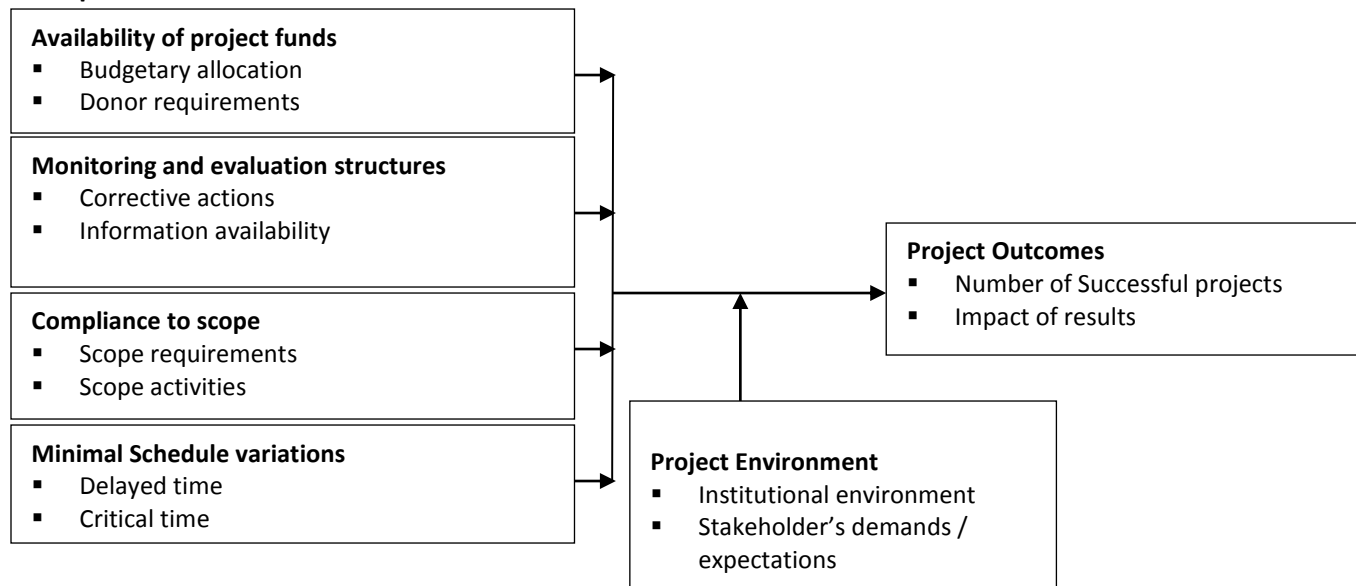
Theory of Constraints argues that an organization facing challenges in cost management, poor performance and chronic conflicts is as a result of poor management practices and lack of necessary intervention. Eliyahu developed the theory of constraints in the early 1980s to help organizations decide what to change, identify a desirable new condition and how to trigger the change. He recommended first identifying the main factors affecting budget estimates in an organization. He then suggested that the managers figure out how to handle the constraints or barrier to success within prescribed budget. By focusing on fixing the main problem, overall performance could be improved (Maxwell et. al, 2015).

### Project management systems Theory

Project management systems are plagued with misunderstanding of Interdependence versus Independence, Finite versus Limited Capacity and Strategic versus Individual Safety. Lecture and research are ineffective at convincing members of the project management community to come together to overcome these serious obstacles. Complex systems are defined as systems with numerous stakeholders, nonlinearities, multiple interdependencies and feedback systems (Kamau & Sinigallia, 2013).

Typical nonlinearities are often unanticipated changes in the scope of the project, the dismissal of project managers, shedding people with critical skills or the termination of credit arrangements with banks. The interdependencies are the relationships between project management, the suppliers and contractors, the clients and the other stakeholders. The feedback systems most common to the success and failure of project management are the rework cycles and their impact on both the demand for labour and the final budget and completion date (Kamau & Sinigallia, 2013).

#### Conceptual Framework



Independent Variable

Moderating Variable

Dependent Variables

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework.**

Source: (Author, 2019)

### **Project Strengthening**

The poor performance in building local capacity is widely acknowledged and it is not the purpose of this brief overview to accumulate further documentation of this failure. Neither is this review intended as a call to grand reform the system so as to put local organizations in the driver's seat. Other more extensive surveys in recent years have presented powerful arguments for such an overhaul (Jackson & Aynte, 2013). Perhaps the main message of these studies is that a long-term perspective is needed, with longer-term funding, partnerships and engagement in processes bridging the divide between and humanitarian programming. All these are essential components of a genuine commitment to ensuring that local institutions take on leading roles in assistance. There is no indication that such a fundamental change is coming.

These reviews have presented Southern/Eastern perspectives (Jackson & Aynte, 2013). For better or for worse, ALNAP is dominated by Northern organizations and therefore any attempt to speak on behalf of the South and East would ring hollow. Active Learning Network for Accountability's added value is rather in being able to contrast Northern perspectives with this Southern/Eastern critique within an analysis of the internal dynamics of the system. These different perspectives need to be brought together if a more constructive process is to emerge. There are real trade-offs that must be managed between the need for immediate service delivery and longer-term capacity building for service provision.

### **Project Outcomes**

Natural and man-made disasters have significantly increased in magnitude and frequency in recent years. This can be attributed to climate change and increase in terrorist activities in different parts of the world. According to the United Nations, natural disasters over the next years will become more severe, often and destructive (UNOCHA, 2012).

Within a year there are approximately 150,000 deaths and 200 million people who are impaired by the devastating consequences of crisis and natural disasters (GHP, 2017).

Kenya has had its fair share of natural disasters which include; drought, famine, floods, food insecurity, diseases and manmade disasters like war and conflict, particularly with the increase of terrorist activities in the country. An extensive relief community has developed since the Second World War (Svoboda, 2015). This includes multilateral agencies like the United Nations, World Food Programme, Oxfam, Care International, Mediciens sans Frontieres and The International Committee of the Red Cross. These international organizations are supported heavily by governments, multinational organizations, NGO's, corporates and individuals (GHP, 2017).

### **Empirical Review**

#### **Project Strengthening and Project Outcomes**

A study by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2012) acknowledges that in traditional approaches to disaster management, local capacity building is primarily seen to be something that should happen before emergencies. These investments include mitigation and preparedness, early warning systems and strengthening of relief skills. Sometimes the objectives are even broader. In disaster prone countries and regions, the strengthening of local NGOs in general is sometimes seen as a disaster-preparedness measure, regardless of the specific skills involved. Without belittling the quality and importance of current efforts, these investments are modest, at best.

Homes (2016) in their study highlight that methods are being developed to measure and therefore justify the importance of disaster-preparedness investments (Homes, 2016). The primary target group for the data produced through these methods is the humanitarian community, and herein lies the primary reason behind the preparedness deficit. The community may see the need for better disaster-preparedness, but its



reactive bias has meant that it is rarely ready to take a role in meeting this need.

Neither does it have the funding structures required for the long-term capacity-building investments that preparedness demands. Disaster mitigation and preparedness *must* be anchored in local institutional capacities. By contrast, the engagement of local organizations is *optional* in response. After a major disaster it is often forcefully argued that many more lives would have been saved if preparedness had been a major priority of donors (HAP, 2012).

Although humanitarian spending on risk reduction is rarely triggered by imperatives, Reform Project (2013) note that the response to the Indian Ocean tsunami may become an exception. Massive investments was made in building capacity for reducing future disasters, but it is not yet clear how far the community was involved in these programmes or how steadfast the commitments from the humanitarian community will prove to be. The outcomes of the plans currently being made for risk reduction initiatives was the biggest test ever of whether commitments to building capacities for risk reduction can be realized and sustained (Gujarat & Porter, 2016).

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design guided by cross sectional survey design to justify the relationship between the independent and dependent variables using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The research was guided by positivism philosophy whose key ideal is that social world exists externally, and that its properties should be measured through objective methods rather than being inferred subjectively through sensation, reflection and intuition (Orodho, 2011). This study was restricted to four (4) programmes and 14 projects implemented by 10 UN agencies in Kenya over the last four years. The study respondents included Country Directors, Executive Directors, Program Directors, Project Directors, Program

managers and Project managers (total=233) in charge of realization of the thirteen project.

Based on the objectives, this study adopted multiple regression which generated a weighted estimation to be used to predict values for the dependent variables from several independent variable values (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). The overall multiple regression models was:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where

Y = the value of variable dependent variable (Project Outcomes)

{ $\beta_i$ ; i = 1.2.3.4} = The coefficient of values representing the various independent variables.

$\beta_0$  = The Y intercepts which is a constant coefficient.

{ $X_i$  ; i = 1.2.3.4} = Values of the various independent (covariates) variables.

$\varepsilon$  = the error term

$X_1$  = Availability of project funds

$X_2$  = Monitoring and evaluation structures

$X_3$  = Compliance to scope

$X_4$  = Minimal Schedule variations

## FINDINGS

### Project Strengthening

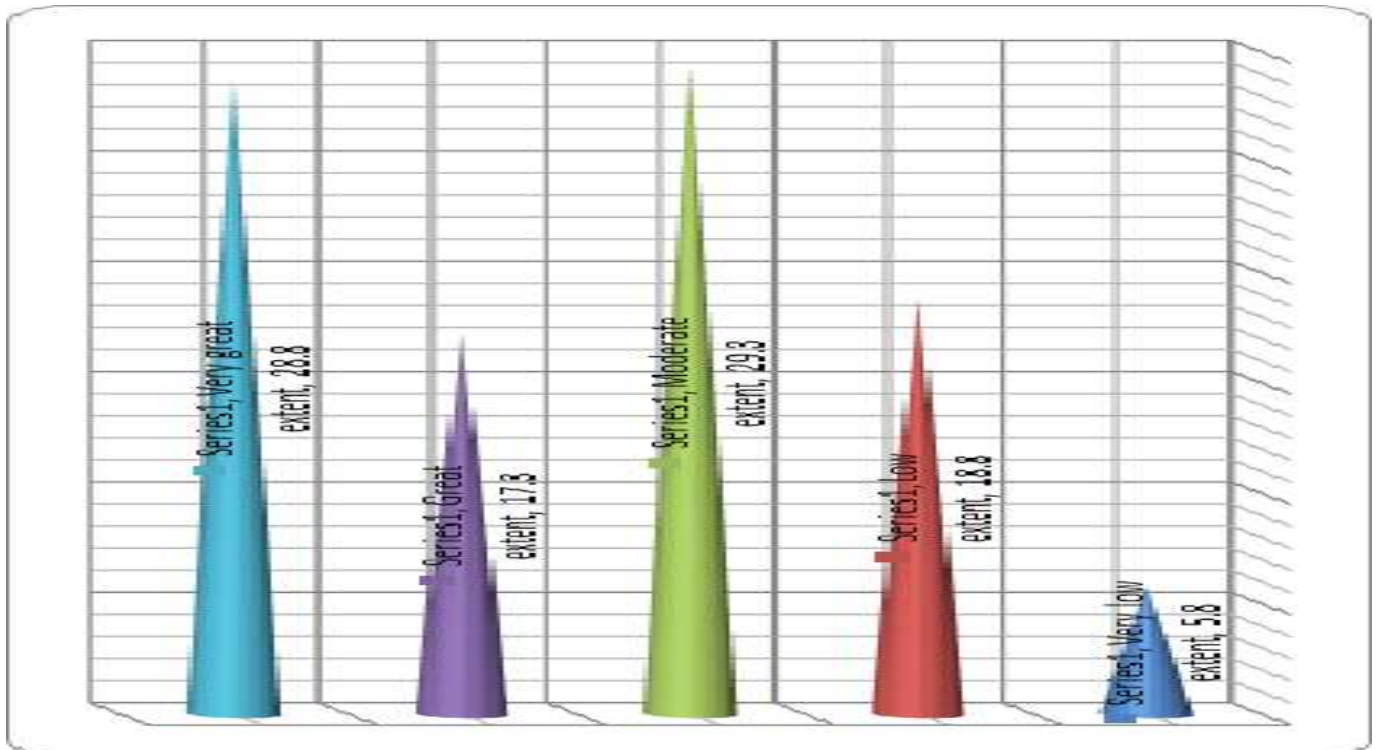
The study sought to investigate the influence of Project Strengthening on Project outcomes in UN Agencies. Specifically, the study focused on availability of project funds, monitoring and evaluation structures, compliance to scope and minimal schedule variations.

### Availability of project funds

The study sought to find out whether availability of project funds influences Project outcomes in UN agencies in Nairobi, Kenya. As indicated in figure 2, 29.3% of the respondents indicated that availability of project funds influence the Project outcomes in UN agencies to a very great extent, 17.3% indicated that availability of project funds influences the Project outcomes of UN agencies to a great extent, 29.3 %

indicated that availability of project funds influence the Project outcomes in UN agencies to a moderate extent, 18.8 % indicated that availability of project funds influence the Project outcomes in UN agencies to a low extent while 5.8 % indicated that availability of project funds influence the Project outcomes in UN agencies to a very low extent.

The findings related with those of Wyer and Mason (1999) who found that lack of availability of project funds is a much obstacle to delivery Project outcomes in UN agencies. The study findings show that availability of project funds contribute to a moderate and to a very great extent on the Project outcomes in UN agencies in Nairobi, Kenya.



**Figure 2: Extent Availability of project funds Influence the Project outcomes in UN agencies**

### Monitoring and evaluation structures

The study sought to evaluate the extent Monitoring and evaluation structures influence Project outcomes in UN agencies. Figure 3 indicated that 27.7% of the respondents indicated that Monitoring and evaluation structures influence the Project outcomes in UN agencies to a very great extent. 26.2% of the respondents indicated that Monitoring and evaluation structures influences the Project outcomes in UN agencies to a great extent.

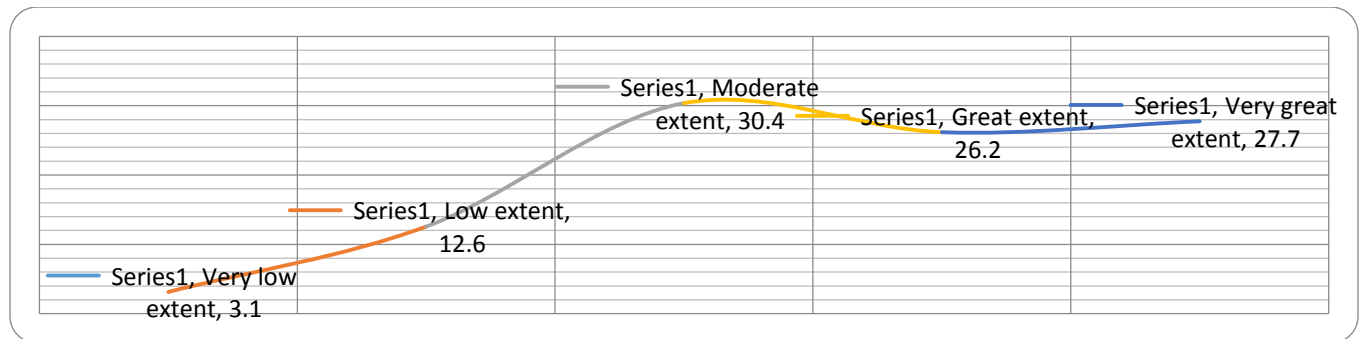
30.4 % of the respondents indicated that Monitoring and evaluation structures influence the Project outcomes in UN agencies to a moderate extent, 12.6 % of the respondents indicated that Monitoring and evaluation structures influence the Project outcomes in UN agencies to a low extent while 3.1 % of the respondents indicated that Monitoring and evaluation structures influence the Project outcomes in UN agencies to a very low extent.

The findings related with the findings of Edvinsson (2000), Stewart (1997), Brooking, (1996) who postulates that Monitoring and evaluation structures



are the foundation of Constrained Programming as everything in the current environment relies on the information and control. It was asserted that the Monitoring and evaluation structures in an agency are the most important asset, especially in terms of

innovation. According to the findings monitoring and evaluation structures are of great essence towards the Project outcomes in UN agencies in Nairobi, Kenya.



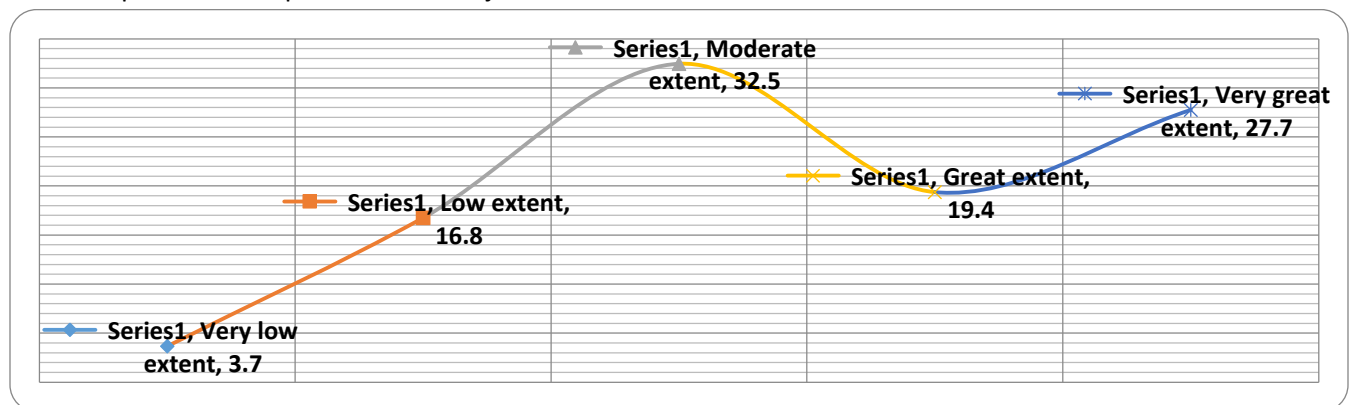
**Figure 3: Extent Monitoring and evaluation structures Influence the Project outcomes in UN agencies**

#### Compliance to scope

As indicated in figure 4 the study sought to establish the extent Compliance to scope influence the Project outcomes in UN agencies. 32.5 % of the respondents indicated that Compliance to scope influence the Project outcomes in UN agencies to a moderate extent, 27.7% of the respondents indicated that Compliance to scope influence the Project outcomes in UN agencies to a very great extent , 19.4% of the respondents indicated that Compliance to scope influences the Project outcomes in UN agencies to a great extent, 16.8 % of the respondents indicated that Compliance to scope influence Project outcomes

in UN agencies to a low extent. While 3.7% of the respondents indicated that Compliance to scope influence Project outcomes in UN agencies to a very low extent.

The findings corroborate with the findings of Svendsen (2014) who found that Compliance to scope is about increasing probability to succeed when creating and developing a project. The findings showed that the Compliance to scope is an important factor in the Project outcomes in UN agencies in Nairobi County.



**Figure 4: Extent that Compliance to scope influence the Project outcomes in UN agencies**

## Regression Analysis

### Linear regression model of Project outcomes in UN agencies and Project Strengthening

The linear regression analysis models the relationship between the dependent variable which is project outcomes in UN agencies in Kenya and independent variable which is Project Strengthening. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) and correlation coefficient (R) showed the degree of association between Project Strengthening and Project outcomes in UN agencies in Kenya. The results of the linear regression indicated that  $R^2=.789$  and  $R= .888$  this is an indication that there is a strong linear relationship

between Project Strengthening and Project outcomes in UN agencies in Kenya.

This implied that an increase in Project Strengthening such as monitoring and evaluation led to an increase in Project outcomes in UN agencies. Smallbone and Welter (2001) and Hisrich and Drnovsek (2002), found that Project Strengthening as measured positively impact on the Project outcomes in UN agencies. It can be inferred that Project outcomes in UN agencies is associated with availability of funds, monitoring and evaluation structures, compliance to scope and minimal schedule variations.

**Table 1: Model Of Project outcomes in UN agencies and Project Strengthening**

Model Summary	
R	R Square
.789	.888

The independent variable was Project Strengthening. As indicated in Table 1, the results of ANOVA test revealed that Project Strengthening has a significant effect on Project outcomes in UN agencies. Since the P value is actual 0.045 which is less than 5% level of

significance. This was depicted by linear regression model  $Y=B_0+B_1X_1+E$  where  $X_1$  is the Project Strengthening the P value was 0.045 implying that the model  $Y=B_0+B_1X_1+E$  was significant.

**Table 2: ANOVA: Project Strengthening**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.131	1	6.131	4.063	.045 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	285.199	201	1.509		
	Total	291.330	202			

a. Dependent Variable: Project outcomes

b. Predictors: (Constant), Project Strengthening

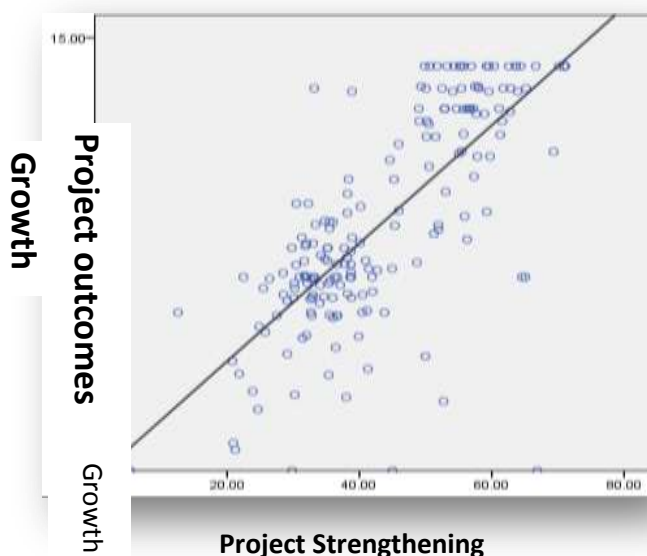
As indicated in The Table 3 there was positive gradient which reveals that an increase in Project Strengthening lead to increased Project outcomes in UN agencies. Cabrita and Bontis, (2012) indicate that Project Strengthening includes aspects such as time,

schedule and cost. Inferences can be drawn from the findings and literature that UN agencies should strengthen projects in order to realize successful outcomes.

**Table 3: Model: Project Strengthening**

Model		Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	
1	(Constant)	3.332	.165	.000
	Project Strengthening	.072	.036	.045

Figure 5 indicated the results of Project Strengthening on the Project outcomes in UN agencies in Kenya in a scatter diagram. The scatter diagram indicated a positive gradient which is an indicative that managerial influence the Project outcomes in UN agencies.



**Figure 5: Scatter Diagram on Project Strengthening**

## CONCLUSION

The study concluded that increasing levels of project strengthening would increase the levels of achievement of project outcomes. Further, the study concluded that project resources are an important factor that affects sustainability in urban renewal projects. The regression coefficients of the study showed that project resources have a significant positive influence on sustainability in urban renewal projects. This implied that increasing levels of project resources would increase the levels of sustainability in urban renewal projects. Finally, study concluded that Minimal schedule variations is also an important factor that influences project outcomes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommended that a project should embrace Project Strengthening, enhance Monitoring and Evaluation structures, redeploy Project team in a

timely manner, and incorporate sufficient Minimal schedule variations in order to achieve desired project outcomes in UN Agencies in Kenya. Specifically, the study recommended that humanitarian projects should realize that in the present project environment, constrained programming forms an important element of intangible assets of the UN agencies which should be reconfigured to ensure that the projects seize opportunities, are proactive in the market place, make new product and process innovations.

The study further recommended that UN agencies should embrace Compliance to scope as a necessary process to optimize HR in the project which drives the employees into creating new and more competitive products for increased project outcomes to be realized.

Understanding of Minimal schedule variations is a key ingredient of constrained programming to creating a solid relationship between and project and its customers. Project managers should possess technical, interpersonal, and conceptual skills to effectively plan, lead, organize and control the enterprise effectively leading to increased performance and consequently project outcomes.

## Areas for Further Research

This study concentrated on Project strengthening aspects of, Availability of project funds, Monitoring and evaluation structures, Compliance to scope, minimal schedule variances and their influence on project outcomes within UN agencies in Kenya. Since the focus is humanitarian projects, Future research will need to be carried out in other sectors.

Contextually, this study focused on 10 UN agencies that are part of humanitarian clustering. The methodology selected also was limited to questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. As such, there is need for future research to build on this by examining different geographical contexts, methodologies and instruments.

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