

Project Planning Performance and Sustainability of Community Development Programs of Social Protection in Rusizi District

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Abstract: This study investigated the relationship between project planning performance and the sustainability of community development programs within the social protection sector in Rusizi District, Rwanda. The primary objectives were to examine how evaluation meetings, project staff involvement, performance reporting, and performance target setting contribute to program sustainability. A descriptive correlational research design was employed, incorporating both quantitative method. Data were collected from a sample of 120 participants selected from a target population of 2,912 using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression. The findings revealed that evaluation meetings enhanced program relevance, transparency, and accountability, while motivated and well-trained staff significantly contributed to program effectiveness and continuity. Performance reports and stakeholder feedback were found to support evidence-based decision-making, and setting clear performance targets promoted strategic planning and long-term impact. Notably, a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.773$, $p = 0.000$) was found between project planning performance and program sustainability. The study concludes that effective planning practices such as inclusive participation, regular evaluation, and performance monitoring are critical for the long-term success of social protection programs. Recommendations were made to Rusizi District authorities, communities, households, and NGOs to strengthen planning and implementation frameworks for sustainable development.

Keywords: community development programs, Community Development Programs, social protection sector.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Community development projects (CDPs) represent a hopeful strategy for transitioning communities from dependency towards empowerment and sustainable development (Githua & Wanyoike, 2018; Njue & Chandi, 2019). These projects serve as a vital avenue for local communities to actively participate in decision-making, design processes, resource allocation, and project management. This active involvement provides communities with control over their comprehensive development initiatives, contributing to poverty reduction and economic improvement (Njue & Chandi, 2019).

Globally, Community Development Projects (CDPs) possess the potential to leverage local resources, structures, and networks for informed decision-making on community issues, aligning with the community's preferences and priorities (Njue & Chandi, 2019). This global phenomenon has garnered significant research attention, with examples such as India's emphasis on CDPs, locally referred to as "Panchayati" or rule by local councils, boasting 227,678 village panchayats (Mutua, 2020). The implementation of such programs has actively addressed crucial issues like access to clean water, girls' education, and basic healthcare facilities. Ethiopia's community development programs have similarly utilized participatory methods, tapping into local potential to revitalize resources and create job opportunities, thereby improving lifestyles through increased income (Njue *et al.*, 2019).

At the international level, the efficacy of project planning in community development programs is a topic of paramount importance. Numerous studies from across the globe underscore the vital role of robust project planning in ensuring the success and sustainability of community development initiatives (Herav, 2018) .

In various countries, the nexus between project planning performance and the enduring impact of community development programs has been explored. Understanding how effective planning strategies contribute to the overall sustainability of projects is crucial in the context of global efforts to address socio-economic challenges and enhance the well-being of communities (Antoniadis *et al.*, 2018).

At the regional level, Mamelani Projects spearheads the implementation of Community Development Projects (CDPs), with a primary focus on empowering young people and women in impoverished areas of the Western Cape, South Africa, aiming to catalyze proactive change and improve their lives (Mutua, 2020).

In rural Kenya, CDPs play a pivotal role in stimulating growth, with 431 projects benefiting over 10 million individuals, often initiated by donor organizations. Ngure (2019) highlighted the significance of effective project planning and change management in the East African context, emphasizing that failures in these aspects can significantly impact project execution and overall success (Ngure,2019).

In most Africa countries, several nations have grappled with the intricate dynamics of project planning in community development. Each region brings its unique challenges, opportunities, and cultural nuances that influence the success of such programs. The importance of tailoring project planning approaches to specific regional needs has been emphasized. As we transition from the international to regional scale, it becomes evident that a nuanced understanding of these variables is essential (Mburu *et al.*2017).

According to Jacob *et al* (2015), community engagement is the participation of the community in various aspects of the project to ensure project sustainability. The process is significant due to its ability to identify overlooked local knowledge, streamline efforts and gain acceptance, Muraguri, (2011). Community members who contribute to the revitalization planning process will understand well the process and will be more likely to support a project they had involvement in, thus creating a sustainable project. Community engagement provides an environment for residents to become informed about project affairs and to be actively involved in making decisions that ultimately affect their community (Witkin, 2019).

In Africa, and specifically in Rwanda, where community-driven initiatives are central to development agendas, the interplay between project planning performance and the sustainability of community development programs becomes a focal point for research and intervention (Witkin, 2021).

Rwanda, in recent years, has emerged as a model for sustainable community development in the African context. The government's commitment to grassroots-level projects and community involvement is notable. As Rwanda endeavors to achieve its development goals, the role of project planning in ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of community initiatives cannot be overstated. Investigating the specific challenges and successes in Rwanda's approach to project planning within the realm of community development offers a valuable case study. This localized examination allows for a nuanced understanding of the factors that contribute to or hinder the successful implementation and longevity of community development projects (Mukakibib, 2021).

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of project planning and sustainability in community development programs globally and regionally, there is a noticeable gap in research that comprehensively explores these dynamics in the context of Rwanda. This study aims to bridge this gap by delving into the specifics of project planning performance and its direct correlation with the sustainability of community development initiatives in Rwanda. According to Ministry of Local Government (2018).The findings are expected not only to contribute to the academic discourse on development studies but also to offer practical insights for policymakers, practitioners, and community leaders seeking to enhance the impact and longevity of their projects. By focusing on Rwanda, this research will provide a unique perspective that can inform not only local strategies but also contribute to the broader international dialogue on effective project planning and sustainable community development.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite the critical need to enhance project planning performance to ensure the sustainability of community development programs particularly those emphasizing social protection—the *Vision 2020 Umurenge Program (VUP)* in Rusizi District still faces challenges due to inadequate performance tools such as evaluation meetings, stakeholder involvement,

performance report assessments, and measurable metrics (Antoniadis *et al.*, 2018; World Bank, 2020). Although the program has delivered outcomes through Public Works (PW), Direct Support (DS), and Financial Support (FS), sustainability remains uncertain as shown by inconsistent beneficiary numbers: PW beneficiaries declined from 3,525 in 2022/2023 to 3,106 in 2023/2024 and 2,335 in 2024/2025; DS fluctuated from 4,876 in 2022/2023 to 4,618 in 2023/2024 and slightly up to 4,687 in 2024/2025; while FS decreased from 2,001 in 2022/2023 to 2,006 in 2023/2024 and sharply down to 1,696 in 2024/2025 (MINALOC, 2024). These variations reflect weaknesses in planning, misalignment with community needs, inadequate resources, and limited monitoring and evaluation (Ansell *et al.*, 2021; UNDP, 2019), leading to projects that provide short-term benefits but fail to guarantee long-term impact. This study therefore seeks to assess how project planning performance influences the sustainability of community development programs in Rusizi District and to propose practical solutions to strengthen the long-term effectiveness of VUP interventions.

1.3 Objective of the study

1.3.1 General objective

The general objective of the study was to examine the effect of project planning performance on sustainability of community development programs of social protection in Rusizi District

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- i. Assess the effect of evaluation meetings on sustainability of community development programs of social protection in Rusizi District.
- ii. Investigate the effect of project staff involvement on sustainability of community development programs of social protection in Rusizi District.
- iii. Examine the effect of Performance reports on sustainability of community development programs of social protection in Rusizi District.
- iv. Analyze the effectiveness of setting performance targets on sustainability of community development programs of social protection in Rusizi District.

1.4 Research Hypotheses

- H₀₁:** Evaluation meetings on citizen participation have no significant effect on sustainability of community development programs of social protection in Rusizi District.
- H₀₂:** Project staff involvement and the acquisition of public financial support have no significant effect on sustainability of community development programs of social protection in Rusizi District.
- H₀₃:** Performance reports have no significant effect on sustainability of community development programs of social protection in Rusizi District.
- H₀₄:** Setting performance targets has no significant effect on sustainability of community development programs of social protection in Rusizi District.

2. METHODS AND TOOLS

2.1 Research Design

This study used a descriptive research design to investigate the relationship between project planning performance and the sustainability of community development programs. It outlined the plan for collecting and analyzing data aimed at achieving the research objectives. The quantitative method was used to analyze and interpret the findings, and the study adopted a 95% confidence level. According to Phyllis (2014), a correlational research design refers to the assessment of the relationship among dependent, independent, and intervening variables. Correlational research design relies on evidence to determine whether a significant relationship exists between two variables, making it possible to estimate one variable based on available information about another. Through this analysis, the study examined the correlation between variables and the means by which they influenced the dependent variable (Phyllis, 2014). Cooper and Schindler (2011) defined descriptive studies as those aimed at explaining a phenomenon, estimating the proportion of a population with similar characteristics, and identifying relationships among variables. In this quantitative approach, data were collected using questionnaires.

2.2 Target Population

The target population in statistics refers to the specific population about which information is desired. According to Hamed (2016), a target population is a well-defined set of people, services, elements, events, groups of things, or households being investigated. According to Rwanda national Institute of statistics reported (2020-204) In this study, the target population included a total of 2,912 individuals, comprising beneficiaries of sustainable programs and employees involved in these programs at the cell and sector levels and district level as depicted in Table below;

Table 2.1 Population

Category of respondents	Total number	Sample size
Beneficiaries	2,829	37
SEDOs	93	66
Staff at sector level	16	16
Staff at District level	1	1
Total	2,939	120

Source: Researchers' own design, (2024)

2.3 Sample Design

2.3.1 Sampe Size

The sample size was determined using the Morgan Formula for sample size determination, resulting in a total of 120 respondents.

2.3.2 Sampling techniques

The sample was selected using both stratified random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. For the stratified sampling, the total population was divided into four distinct strata: sustainable development program beneficiaries, Social and Economic Development Officers at the cell level, managers at the sector level, and managers at the district level. Simple random sampling was used to select respondents from the group of program beneficiaries, while purposive sampling was employed to select managers at the district level, based on their relevance to the study.

2.4 Data Collection Methods

2.4.1 Data Collection Instruments

The researcher used a structured questionnaire, written in simple and clear language to facilitate the accurate collection of specific data. The questionnaire was a combination of interconnected questions arranged in a logical order, aimed at gathering information from the study's sample. It included both open-ended and close-ended questions. For close-ended questions, respondents were provided with predefined alternatives to choose from, while open-ended questions allowed them to express their personal opinions related to the research variables.

A preliminary test of the data collection tools and procedures was conducted to identify potential issues. This pilot study was carried out with selected staff and managers in Rusizi District, where questionnaires were administered and later reviewed for consistency and clarity. The pilot study enabled the researcher to become familiar with the research instruments and administration process, and to identify any items that required modification. The results of the pilot study helped correct inconsistencies and ensured that the instrument accurately measured the intended variables.

2.4.2 Procedures of Data Collection

During data collection, the researcher distributed the questionnaires to the respondents after clearly explaining the objectives of the study. The researcher allowed at least five working days for the respondents to complete the questionnaires. Since the sample size was 120 respondents, a total of 120 structured questionnaires were distributed. The researcher actively followed up with the participants and provided support as needed to ensure that all distributed questionnaires were completed and returned.

2.4.3 Reliability and Validity of Instrument

Validity

This study ensured that the tools used to collect data were logical, comprehensible, accurate, and appropriate for the research objectives. A validity index of 70% or above was considered to indicate an acceptable validity coefficient. According to Hamed (2016), validation of instruments is achieved with the assistance of departmental supervisors and other subject matter experts in the field of development studies. These experts reviewed the research tools, and based on their feedback, modifications were made, particularly to enhance the relevance and alignment of the instruments with the research objectives.

Reliability

According to Hamed (2016), reliability was a key concern in this study, focusing on the extent to which the instruments yielded consistent results when applied under similar conditions, thereby ensuring an accurate representation of the study population. To assess reliability, the data collection tools underwent pre-testing through a pilot study. The primary measure of internal consistency used was the Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient, particularly relevant given the use of Likert scale-based items.

In terms of internal consistency, although there are no universally fixed thresholds, many researchers accept a minimum reliability coefficient of 0.7. Some literature also suggests that a reliability coefficient of 0.6 or above is acceptable depending on the context. For this study, four reliability cutoff points were used to interpret the results: excellent reliability (0.9 and above), high reliability (0.7–0.9), moderate reliability (0.5–0.7), and low reliability (0.5 and below). These benchmarks guided the evaluation of the reliability of the instruments used during the research process.

2.5 Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis is the process of transforming raw data into meaningful information (Hamed, 2016). After the data had been collected through questionnaires, it was prepared for analysis through editing, handling of blank responses, coding, categorization, and entry into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 21. SPSS was then used to generate frequencies and tables for interpretation. The study employed inferential statistics, specifically correlation and regression analysis, to determine the relationships among variables. Multiple linear regression analysis was applied, using the appropriate statistical formula to evaluate the impact of independent variables on the sustainability of community development programs. $Y = \alpha + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \mu$

Y= Dependent variable – Sustainability of development program

α = Constant

μ = Error term which is assumed to be normally distributed with mean zero and constant variance

β_i : i =1,2,3 = The Coefficients representing predictors variables

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$ = Regression Coefficients

X_1 = Evaluation meetings,

X_2 = Project staff involvement,

X_3 = Performance reports

X_4 = Setting performance target

3. RESULTS

3.1 Socio-demographic characteristic of Respondents

Table 3.1 Gender Distribution

Items	Frequency	Percent
Male	68	56.7
Female	52	43
		.3
Total	120	100.0

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The gender distribution of respondents in the study indicates a slightly higher representation of males compared to females. Out of a total of 120 participants, 68 were male, representing 56.7% of the sample, while 52 were female, accounting for 43.3%.

This relatively balanced distribution suggests that both male and female perspectives were captured, although male respondents were somewhat more prevalent. The findings from the study can therefore be considered fairly representative in terms of gender, although any gender-based analysis or comparison should consider this slight imbalance

Table 3.2 Ages Distribution

Items	Frequency	Percent
18-27years	13	10.8
27-36years	9	7.5
36-45 years	52	43.3
45-54 years	36	30.0
54 years and above	10	8.3
Total	120	100.0

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The age distribution of respondents in the study on Project Planning Performance and Sustainability of Community Development Programs of Social Protection in Rusizi District reveals a concentration of participants in the middle-age categories. Specifically, the majority of respondents (43.3%) fall within the 36–45-year age group, followed by 30.0% in the 45–54-year group. This indicates that most participants are mature adults likely to have significant experience with or involvement in community development initiatives.

Younger respondents aged 18–27 make up 10.8% of the sample, while those aged 27–36 represent 7.5%, suggesting that younger adults are less involved in or less represented in the planning and sustainability of these programs. Additionally, only 8.3% of the participants are aged 54 and above, indicating relatively lower participation from older community members.

This age profile implies that community development programs in Rusizi District may largely rely on the contributions of individuals in their mid to late working years, possibly due to their active roles in local governance, implementation, or community leadership.

Table 3.3 Working Experience

Items	Frequency	Percent
Less than a year	28	23.3
1-5 years	42	35.0
5-10 years	37	30.8
Over 10 years	13	10.8
Total	120	100.0

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The table 3.3 describes on working experience of the 120 respondents involved in project planning and sustainability of community development programs in Rusizi District shows a diverse range of experience levels: 28 respondents (23.3%) have less than a year of experience. This group may include newly hired staff or individuals just starting their careers in community development, 42 respondents (35.0%) have worked for 1–5 years, representing the largest segment. These individuals likely have foundational experience and are actively involved in project activities, 37 respondents (30.8%) possess 5–10 years of experience, indicating a significant number of mid-level professionals who may bring practical insights and stability to the programs, 13 respondents (10.8%) have over 10 years of experience. Although a smaller group, they likely hold senior or leadership positions and contribute strategic perspectives on sustainability and planning.

The cumulative percentage reaches 100%, showing complete coverage of the target sample. Overall, 92 participants (76.6%) have at least 1 year of experience, suggesting that the study's findings are grounded in the perspectives of a fairly seasoned and informed group.

3.2 Presentation of Findings

Table 3.4 The effect of evaluation meetings on sustainability of community development programs of social protection in Rusizi District.

Statement	N	X	Std. D
Evaluation meetings help identify gaps that could threaten the long-term success of community development programs.	120	4.400	.943
The feedback from evaluation meetings is consistently used to improve program implementation.	120	3.966	.859
Regular evaluation meetings enhance accountability among stakeholders in social protection programs.	120	4.350	.643
Decisions made during evaluation meetings contribute to the long-term sustainability of community projects.	120	4.625	.535
Evaluation meetings encourage inclusive participation, which strengthens community ownership of development programs.	120	4.366	.53
Lessons learned from evaluation meetings are effectively integrated into future project planning.	120	4.291	.66
Evaluation meetings help ensure that community development programs remain relevant to local needs.	120	4.708	.474
There is a clear follow-up mechanism for action points discussed in evaluation meetings.	120	4.283	.470
Evaluation meetings foster collaboration among stakeholders, which supports program sustainability.	120	4.266	.718
Program beneficiaries are adequately represented in evaluation meetings.	120	4.408	.60106
Evaluation meetings are conducted regularly and consistently throughout the program lifecycle.	120	4.475	.60755
Evaluation meetings improve transparency, which increases trust and commitment among community members.	120	4.616	.48824
Valid N (listwise)	120		

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 3.4 presents findings on the effect of evaluation meetings on the sustainability of community development programs under social protection in Rusizi District. The data, based on responses from 120 participants, shows generally strong agreement with all statements, reflecting the perceived positive impact of evaluation meetings.

Respondents strongly agreed that evaluation meetings help ensure that community development programs remain relevant to local needs, with the highest mean score of 4.708 and a relatively low standard deviation (0.474), indicating consistent responses. Similarly, there was strong agreement that decisions made during evaluation meetings contribute to long-term sustainability, with a mean of 4.625 and a standard deviation of 0.535. Respondents also highly rated the role of evaluation meetings in improving transparency and trust among community members (M=4.616, SD=0.488) and promoting regular and consistent implementation throughout the program lifecycle (M=4.475, SD=0.608).

Evaluation meetings were seen as effective in identifying gaps threatening long-term success (M=4.400, SD=0.943), encouraging inclusive participation (M=4.366, SD=0.530), and fostering accountability (M=4.350, SD=0.643). Lessons learned were also reported to be effectively integrated into future planning (M=4.291, SD=0.660), and there was acknowledgement of a clear follow-up mechanism (M=4.283, SD=0.470) and collaboration among stakeholders (M=4.266, SD=0.718).

While the use of feedback to improve program implementation had a slightly lower mean (M=3.966, SD=0.859), it still indicates a positive perception. Overall, the high mean scores across all items reflect the important role evaluation meetings play in enhancing sustainability, inclusiveness, accountability, and transparency in community development programs in Rusizi District.

Table 3.5 The effect of project staff involvement on sustainability of community development programs of social protection in Rusizi District

Statement	N	X	Std. D
Staff are actively engaged in decision-making processes within the project	120	4.191	.435
There are opportunities for staff to contribute ideas and feedback on project initiatives	120	4.233	.604
I believe that the project leadership understands the skills and knowledge of the staff.	120	4.508	.549
The project provides adequate training and development opportunities for staff.	120	4.250	.489
Project staff demonstrate a high level of commitment to the goals of the community development program.	120	4.141	.981
Motivated project staff have contributed to the long-term success of the program.	120	4.591	.510
Trust between staff and the community improves the effectiveness of program implementation	120	4.166	.396
Good rapport between staff and the community has contributed to program sustainability.	120	4.150	.669
Staff consider local traditions and customs when implementing program activities.	120	4.108	.867
Staff provide timely and accurate information about program updates and changes.	120	4.433	.741
Valid N (listwise)	120		

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 3.5 outlines the effect of project staff involvement on the sustainability of community development programs within the framework of social protection in Rusizi District. The responses from 120 participants indicate a strong positive perception of staff involvement as a key factor in sustaining these programs.

The highest rated item was that motivated project staff have contributed to the long-term success of the program, with a mean of 4.591 and a standard deviation of 0.510, highlighting the crucial role of staff motivation in achieving sustainable outcomes. Similarly, participants strongly agreed that project leadership understands the skills and knowledge of staff, with a high mean score of 4.508 and a low standard deviation of 0.549, showing both agreement and consistency.

Staff's ability to provide timely and accurate information was also well acknowledged (M=4.433, SD=0.741), followed by the provision of adequate training and development opportunities (M=4.250, SD=0.489), and the presence of opportunities for staff to contribute ideas and feedback (M=4.233, SD=0.604). These findings emphasize that both empowerment and capacity building of staff are vital for project success.

Additionally, staff engagement in decision-making processes was rated positively (M=4.191, SD=0.435), and trust between staff and the community was seen as enhancing program effectiveness (M=4.166, SD=0.396). Likewise, good rapport between staff and the community and consideration of local traditions and customs were recognized as important for sustainability, with mean scores of 4.150 and 4.108 respectively.

The item with the lowest mean (4.141) but still a positive rating indicated that project staff demonstrate a high level of commitment, though the higher standard deviation (0.981) suggests some variation in responses.

The data in Table 3.5 reinforces that active staff involvement through motivation, communication, decision-making, cultural sensitivity, and leadership support significantly contributes to the long-term sustainability of community development programs in Rusizi District.

Table 3.6 The effect of performance reports on sustainability of community development programs of social protection in Rusizi District.

Statement	N	X	Std. D
Performance reports contribute to informed decision-making in the project	120	4.500	.799
The information in performance reports is relevant for making project-related decisions.	120	4.575	.816
Performance reports provide a clear understanding of the project's outcomes.	120	4.525	.888
Performance reports are used for benchmarking against similar projects.	120	4.541	.849
Project reports are shared with the community and stakeholders regularly	120	4.508	.766
Reports clearly communicate how funds and resources are used.	120	4.316	.673

Accountability in reporting helps identify and correct issues early, supporting long-term program success.	120	4.208	.732
Stakeholder contributions are visibly reflected in program decisions.	120	4.616	.700
Stakeholder feedback reports lead to improvements in program implementation	120	4.741	.692
Reports clearly show progress in staff and community training activities.	120	4.616	.831
Valid N (listwise)	120		

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 3.6 presents findings on the effect of performance reports on the sustainability of community development programs under social protection in Rusizi District, based on responses from 120 participants. The results indicate a strong consensus that performance reporting plays a critical role in enhancing sustainability.

The highest rated statement was that stakeholder feedback reports lead to improvements in program implementation, with a mean score of 4.741 and a standard deviation of 0.692, indicating that such feedback mechanisms are highly effective in refining and guiding the program. This is closely followed by the belief that stakeholder contributions are visibly reflected in program decisions and that reports clearly show progress in staff and community training activities, both with mean scores of 4.616, confirming the importance of transparency and stakeholder involvement.

Respondents also strongly agreed that the information in performance reports is relevant for project-related decisions (M=4.575, SD=0.816), and that benchmarking using these reports helps measure progress against similar projects (M=4.541, SD=0.849). The ability of performance reports to clarify project outcomes (M=4.525) and support informed decision-making (M=4.500) further reflects the strategic role these reports play in sustaining long-term program goals.

Additionally, regular sharing of project reports with stakeholders was confirmed with a mean of 4.508, showing commitment to transparency and engagement. Reports were also acknowledged for clearly communicating the use of funds and resources (M=4.316, SD=0.673), and for supporting early identification and correction of issues through accountability mechanisms (M=4.208, SD=0.732).

Overall, Table 3.6 demonstrates that performance reports significantly contribute to the sustainability of community development programs in Rusizi District by enhancing transparency, promoting data-driven decision-making, ensuring accountability, and integrating stakeholder input into project improvement.

Table 3.7 The effectiveness of setting performance targets on sustainability of community development programs of social protection in Rusizi District

Statement	N	X	Std. D
Diverse input from involved staff is considered when setting performance targets.	120	3.933	.932
The performance targets set are designed to promote effective project outcomes.	120	4.758	.788
Performance targets are aligned with sustainable practices and long-term goals	120	4.333	.919
The performance targets set for the program emphasize long-term sustainability.	120	4.408	.948
Performance targets are designed with an emphasis on the scalability and effectiveness of the program.	120	3.966	.859
Setting clear and achievable performance targets helps ensure that the program's benefits last beyond the initial implementation phase.	120	4.258	.750
The approach to setting performance targets takes into account the evolving needs of the community.	120	4.558	.867
Effective target setting leads to the development of more sustainable strategies within the program.	120	4.766	.764
Performance targets are set to ensure the efficient utilization of available resources (financial, human, and material).	120	4.241	.819
Clear targets help identify and secure additional resources to sustain the program in the long term.	120	4.400	.803
Setting performance targets encourages capacity-building activities that improve community and staff skills.	120	4.191	.812
The program includes clear performance targets for monitoring and evaluating progress.	120	4.583	.884
Valid N (listwise)	120		

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 3.7 Presents the findings on the effectiveness of setting performance targets in enhancing the sustainability of community development programs under social protection in Rusizi District, as perceived by 120 respondents. The overall responses indicate a strong consensus that performance target-setting significantly contributes to long-term program success.

The highest rated statement was that effective target setting leads to the development of more sustainable strategies within the program, with a mean score of 4.766 and a standard deviation of 0.764. This is closely followed by the belief that performance targets are designed to promote effective project outcomes (M=4.758, SD=0.788) and that the program includes clear targets for monitoring and evaluating progress (M=4.583, SD=0.884), emphasizing the strategic importance of performance targets in guiding implementation and sustainability.

Respondents also strongly agreed that the approach to setting targets considers the evolving needs of the community (M=4.558) and that such targets are aligned with sustainable practices and long-term goals (M=4.333). Furthermore, targets were seen to emphasize long-term sustainability (M=4.408) and assist in identifying and securing additional resources for the program (M=4.400), both key components of program continuity.

Other important aspects acknowledged include that performance targets encourage capacity-building activities (M=4.191) and help ensure efficient utilization of resources (financial, human, and material) (M=4.241). Additionally, clear and achievable targets were seen as essential to ensure benefits extend beyond the initial implementation phase (M=4.258).

However, the lowest mean score (3.933) was recorded for the statement that diverse input from involved staff is considered when setting performance targets, suggesting a potential area for improvement in participatory planning. Similarly, the statement about designing targets with a focus on scalability and effectiveness had a moderately lower mean (M=3.966), though still positive.

This table 3.7 illustrates that well-structured and community-responsive performance targets play a vital role in ensuring the sustainability, adaptability, and effectiveness of social protection programs in Rusizi District. While the overall perceptions are strongly favorable, there is room to enhance inclusivity in the target-setting process.

Table 3.8 Sustainability of community development programs of social protection

Statement	N	X	Std. D
I am satisfied with the outcomes of the sustainability program in meeting my needs as a beneficiary.	120	4.57	.846
The resources allocated to the sustainability program were used efficiently.	120	4.22	.703
I am confident in the long-term viability of the sustainability program in my district.	120	4.51	.721
The program demonstrates strong cost efficiency in its operations.	120	4.59	.761
The sustainability program has contributed to building skills and capacity in the community.	120	4.40	.667
The social protection programs have led to lasting improvements in the quality of life of residents.	120	4.45	.672
Community members are actively involved in planning and implementing social protection initiatives.	120	4.91	.527
Local institutions provide adequate support to sustain the program over time.	120	4.45	.743
The sustainability program receives consistent and reliable funding.	120	4.34	.727
The program adapts well to the changing needs of the community.	120	4.88	.552
I am satisfied with the outcomes of the sustainability program in meeting my needs as a beneficiary.	120	4.7917	.684
Valid N (listwise)	120		

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 3.8 presents respondents' perceptions regarding the sustainability of community development programs under social protection in Rusizi District, based on a sample of 120 participants. The results reveal a strong overall satisfaction and confidence in the long-term viability and impact of these programs.

The highest-rated statement was that community members are actively involved in planning and implementing social protection initiatives, with a mean score of 4.917 and a low standard deviation of 0.527, indicating a high level of agreement and consistency among respondents. Closely following this, participants agreed that the program adapts well to the changing needs of the community (M=4.883, SD=0.552), highlighting the program’s responsiveness and flexibility.

Respondents also expressed high satisfaction with the program in terms of meeting their needs, as seen in two identically phrased statements (likely a data entry duplication) with mean scores of 4.575 and 4.792, respectively. Additionally, there was strong agreement that the program demonstrates cost efficiency in its operations (M=4.592), and that there is confidence in the program’s long-term viability (M=4.517).

The program’s contributions to skills and capacity building (M=4.408) and its positive impact on the quality of life of residents (M=4.458) further reflect its sustainable and developmental nature. Respondents also acknowledged the adequate support from local institutions (M=4.458) and the presence of consistent and reliable funding (M=4.342), although the latter, while still positive, had a slightly lower mean, suggesting some variability in perceptions regarding financial reliability.

Efficiency in the use of allocated resources was also positively rated (M=4.225), though it had one of the lowest mean scores in the table, indicating room for improvement in resource management.

Table 3.8 Shows that the sustainability of social protection programs in Rusizi District is generally perceived as strong, with particularly high marks for community involvement, adaptability, cost-efficiency, and overall satisfaction. The only notable areas for potential enhancement are in ensuring consistently reliable funding and optimizing resource use.

Table 3.9 Correlation between impact of project planning performance and sustainability of community development programs of social protection

		Sustainability of community
Evaluation meetings	Pearson Correlation	.501**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	120
Project Staff Involvement	Pearson Correlation	.552**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	120
Performance reports	Pearson Correlation	.787**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	120
Setting performance targets	Pearson Correlation	.775**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	120

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

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 3.9 presents the correlation between various aspects of project planning performance and the sustainability of community development programs under social protection in Rusizi District. The data shows statistically significant positive correlations between all four planning components and program sustainability, with all p-values less than 0.01, indicating strong evidence of association.

The strongest correlation was found between performance reports and sustainability, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.787, suggesting a very strong positive relationship. This means that effective performance reporting is closely associated with increased sustainability of the programs.

This is closely followed by setting performance targets, which also shows a very strong correlation (r = 0.775). This indicates that clearly defined and strategic performance targets significantly contribute to the long-term success and continuity of community development programs.

Project staff involvement is also positively and significantly correlated with sustainability, with a moderate-to-strong correlation coefficient of 0.552, implying that active engagement and contribution from staff members support program sustainability.

Lastly, evaluation meetings show a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.501$) with sustainability, indicating that regular and effective evaluation sessions moderately enhance the long-term viability of the programs.

Table 3.9 highlights that all four project planning elements performance reports, performance targets, staff involvement, and evaluation meetings play crucial roles in supporting the sustainability of social protection programs. Among them, performance reporting and target setting have the greatest impact, making them key areas of focus for improving and sustaining community development initiatives.

Table 3.10 Overall Correlations between project performance and sustainability of community

		Sustainability of community
Project planning performance	Pearson Correlation	.773**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	120

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

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 3.10 presents the overall correlation between project planning performance and the sustainability of community development programs under social protection in Rusizi District. The results show a strong positive correlation, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.773 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

This strong correlation implies that improvements in project planning performance are closely associated with enhanced sustainability of community programs. In other words, when project planning is carried out effectively through elements such as clear goal setting, staff involvement, evaluation, and performance monitoring it significantly contributes to the long-term success and continuity of social protection initiatives.

Table 3.10 confirms that overall project planning performance is a key determinant of sustainability, reinforcing the importance of strategic, inclusive, and adaptive planning in achieving lasting impact in community development programs.

Table 3.11 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.873 ^a	.763	.754	.30000
a. Predictors: (Constant), Setting performance targets, Evaluation meetings, Performance reports, Project Staff Involvement				

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 3.11 Presents the model summary for a multiple regression analysis examining the relationship between four project planning components setting performance targets, evaluation meetings, performance reports, and project staff involvement and the sustainability of community development programs under social protection in Rusizi District.

The model shows a high multiple correlation coefficient (R) of 0.873, indicating a strong positive relationship between the combined independent variables and sustainability. The R Square value of 0.763 means that approximately 76.3% of the variance in the sustainability of community development programs can be explained by these four predictors. This suggests that the selected project planning variables are highly effective in predicting sustainability outcomes.

The Adjusted R Square value of 0.754 adjusts for the number of predictors in the model, providing a slightly more conservative estimate of the model's explanatory power. It still confirms that about 75.4% of the variability in sustainability is accounted for by the predictors.

The Standard Error of the Estimate (0.30000) indicates the average distance that the observed values fall from the regression line. A relatively small value here supports the model's accuracy in predicting sustainability outcomes.

Table 3.11 demonstrates that the combination of setting performance targets, evaluation meetings, performance reports, and project staff involvement provides a strong and statistically reliable model for explaining the sustainability of community development programs in Rusizi District.

Table 3.12 ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	32.972	4	8.243	91.591	.000 ^b
	Residual	10.260	114	.090		
	Total	43.232	118			

Source: Primary Data, 2025

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainability of community

b. Predictors: (Constant), Setting performance targets, Evaluation meetings, Performance reports, Project Staff Involvement

Table 3.12 presents the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results for the regression model that examines the effect of project planning components—setting performance targets, evaluation meetings, performance reports, and project staff involvement—on the sustainability of community development programs in Rusizi District.

The regression sum of squares is 32.972, and the residual sum of squares is 10.260, out of a total sum of squares of 43.232. This means that the regression model explains a large proportion of the total variance in sustainability.

With 4 degrees of freedom (df) for regression and 114 for residuals, the model yields a mean square of 8.243 for regression and 0.090 for residuals.

The F-statistic is 91.591, and the associated p-value is .000, which is highly statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This confirms that the overall regression model is a good fit for the data and that the combination of the four predictors significantly contributes to explaining the variance in the sustainability of community programs.

Table 3.12 shows that the regression model is statistically significant, providing strong evidence that evaluation meetings, project staff involvement, performance reports, and performance target setting have a meaningful impact on the sustainability of community development programs under social protection in Rusizi District.

Table 3.13: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.099	.320		-.309	.758
	Evaluation meetings	1.450	.187	1.005	7.756	.000
	Project Staff Involvement	-1.395	.199	-1.116	-7.022	.000
	Performance reports	.561	.096	.669	5.849	.000
	Setting performance targets	.393	.110	.451	3.578	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainability of community

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 3.13 Presents the coefficients of a multiple regression model analyzing how different project planning components influence the sustainability of community development programs in Rusizi District. The model includes four predictors: evaluation meetings, project staff involvement, performance reports, and setting performance targets. The constant (intercept) has a coefficient of -0.099 and is not statistically significant ($p = 0.758$), indicating that without the influence of the predictors, the baseline value of sustainability is negligible and not meaningful in this context.

Among the predictors, evaluation meetings had the strongest and most significant positive effect on sustainability, with a high unstandardized coefficient ($B = 1.450$), a standardized Beta of 1.005, and a highly significant p-value ($p = .000$). This implies that effective evaluation meetings greatly enhance program sustainability by identifying challenges, improving accountability, and facilitating informed decision-making. Similarly, performance reports ($B = 0.561$, $Beta = 0.669$, $p = .000$) and setting performance targets ($B = 0.393$, $Beta = 0.451$, $p = .001$) both have statistically significant positive impacts, indicating that good reporting practices and clear performance targets support better tracking, transparency, and long-term outcomes.

However, an unexpected finding is the negative coefficient for project staff involvement ($B = -1.395$, $Beta = -1.116$, $p = .000$). This result suggests that as currently practiced, increased staff involvement is associated with reduced sustainability of programs. This may point to challenges such as ineffective participation, poor coordination, or a mismatch between staff

roles and community expectations. Overall, while evaluation, performance monitoring, and goal-setting are positively linked to sustainability, there is a need to reassess how staff are engaged to ensure their involvement contributes constructively to long-term program success.

3.3 Discussion

3.3.1 Evaluation Meetings and Sustainability

Current findings reveal a strong consensus that evaluation meetings significantly contribute to the sustainability of community development programs. High mean scores across several indicators (e.g., relevance to local needs: $M=4.708$; transparency: $M=4.616$) show consistent and positive perceptions of evaluation meetings enhancing accountability, transparency, follow-up, and decision-making.

In contrast, earlier studies by Kadiho (2021) emphasized comparative models of evaluation meetings and their structural effectiveness in promoting citizen participation. While the prior studies focused more on the *format and long-term empowerment* of citizens, the current findings focus on the *outcomes* and immediate operational benefits such as consistency, trust, and collaboration.

Similarly, both sets of findings agree on the centrality of evaluation meetings in promoting sustainability through citizen involvement and empowerment. In addition, current data provide quantitative validation of their effectiveness, whereas previous studies relied more on quantitative and comparative frameworks.

3.3.2 Project Staff Involvement and Sustainability

Current results demonstrate that project staff motivation, knowledge, communication skills, and trust-building are key to sustaining programs. With the highest mean for staff motivation ($M=4.591$), the study shows that staff capacity and engagement directly correlate with positive community outcomes.

Similarly, earlier research by Smith et al. (2018) and Brown et al. (2018) established a positive and statistically significant relationship between staff involvement and public financial support. Both sets of studies converge on the idea that staff engagement is instrumental in enhancing program success and sustainability.

However, in contrast, while current findings focus on internal operational performance, earlier studies extended their scope to include external outcomes, such as funding acquisition and strategic alignment. Moreover, Patel et al. (2019) highlighted instances where low staff involvement was compensated by organizational reputation—an insight not captured in the current findings.

3.3.3 Performance Reports and Sustainability

The current study identifies that stakeholder feedback ($M=4.741$), transparency ($M=4.616$), and benchmarking ($M=4.541$) are critical to sustaining programs.

Comparatively, past studies by Smith et al. (2021) and Garcia et al. (2019) emphasized the role of transparency in enhancing citizen trust and engagement. Chen et al. (2020) further added that interactive reporting mechanisms (like online dashboards) significantly increased citizen participation compared to traditional methods.

In addition, both findings underscore the strategic role of reports in fostering accountability and trust, although the previous studies focus more on technological mechanisms and policy responsiveness, while current data stresses practical utility in project decision-making and staff training outcomes.

3.3.4 Performance Target Setting and Sustainability

The current research reveals strong support for performance target setting as a mechanism to enhance program sustainability, with top indicators including sustainable strategies ($M=4.766$) and outcome-focused targets ($M=4.758$).

Similarly, earlier studies by Antoniadis (2018) and Kinyua (2018) affirmed that performance targets historically led to economic empowerment and capacity building within social protection frameworks. Kadiho (2021) also found that targets helped build beneficiary capacity over time.

In contrast, while previous findings focus on historical trends and beneficiary perspectives, the current findings emphasize practical implementation features such as resource efficiency, monitoring, and responsiveness to evolving community needs.

In addition, the current findings provide a broader operational view, linking target setting not only to performance but also to resource mobilization and program adaptability—areas not deeply explored in prior literature.

In summary, current findings validate and expand upon previous literature by offering quantitative support for many previously observed trends, especially regarding evaluation meetings and staff involvement. While earlier studies leaned towards quantitative and structural analyses, current data provide statistical evidence and operational insights. The combination of these perspectives enriches our understanding of what drives the sustainability of community development programs under social protection frameworks.

3.3.5 Correlation between project planning and sustainability program

The results reveal a strong positive correlation between project planning and the sustainability of community development programs, as indicated by a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.773 and a p-value of 0.000, signifying statistical significance at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). This implies that effective project planning is closely associated with improved sustainability outcomes. Similarly, previous research has demonstrated the critical role of planning in project success. For example, Serrador (2013) found that planning explained 33–34% of variance in project performance, while Naeem *et al.* (2018) reported a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.553$, $p < 0.05$) between planning and project success.

The current findings affirm that when planning integrates clear objectives, staff participation, systematic evaluation, and performance monitoring, it significantly contributes to the long-term success and continuity of social protection initiatives. In comparison with earlier studies, this research provides stronger empirical support for the view that robust planning frameworks are essential in sustaining development programs. In addition, these findings support the broader consensus that strategic project planning serves as a key driver of sustainability (Meredith *et al.*, 2019).

4. CONCLUSION

The study, based on responses from 120 participants, revealed that multiple interrelated factors significantly contribute to the sustainability of community development programs under social protection in Rusizi District. Evaluation meetings were found to play a critical role by ensuring program relevance ($M=4.708$), promoting transparency and trust ($M=4.616$), and supporting consistent implementation. Similarly, project staff involvement emerged as a key factor, with high ratings for staff motivation ($M=4.591$), recognition of skills ($M=4.508$), and effective communication ($M=4.433$), all of which enhance program longevity and effectiveness. Performance reports were also highlighted as essential tools, especially stakeholder feedback reports that improve implementation ($M=4.741$) and support evidence-based decision-making. In addition, setting performance targets was shown to promote strategic planning, with top-rated aspects including guiding sustainable strategies ($M=4.766$) and achieving effective project outcomes ($M=4.758$). The overall perception of program sustainability was very positive, with active community involvement ($M=4.917$) and adaptability to changing needs ($M=4.883$) standing out. Importantly, the results showed a strong positive correlation between project planning performance and program sustainability ($r = 0.773$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that effective planning through goal setting, staff participation, evaluation, and monitoring significantly enhances the long-term success and continuity of social protection initiatives in the district.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Rusizi District should institutionalize regular evaluation meetings to strengthen transparency, promote accountability, and ensure that programs remain aligned with local development priorities.

Rusizi District authorities should invest in continuous training and motivation of project staff, enhancing their capacity to deliver sustainable outcomes through active participation and leadership.

The community should actively participate in planning, implementing, and evaluating development programs, ensuring inclusive and locally owned solutions for long-term sustainability.

Households in Rusizi should engage in program monitoring and feedback processes, sharing experiences and needs that can help tailor interventions effectively.

NGOs and development partners should align their interventions with district development plans, ensuring that performance targets and outcomes contribute to the sustainability of social protection programs and should support the development of user-friendly performance reporting tools, such as dashboards and simplified feedback mechanisms, to increase citizen engagement and transparency.

Rusizi District and NGOs should collaborate to set clear, measurable performance targets, promoting strategic planning, resource efficiency, and community accountability.

Community-based organizations should promote inclusion of vulnerable groups, including women, youth, and people with disabilities, in all aspects of program planning and execution.

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