

# Sustainability of Non Governmental Organization Funded Community Projects beyond Donor Support: A Case of Selected Projects in Chipata District, Zambia

Dr. Sunday Silungwe, PhD

**Abstract:-** Non Governmental Organizations use projects as a vehicle to deliver development in various areas, with the objective of improving the standard of living for impoverished communities. In the context of donor-funded development programs and projects, sustainability can be defined as: the continuation of benefits after major assistance from a donor has been completed. However, sustainability of the projects becomes a challenge after project closure when donors withdraw funding to the project. The general objective of the study was to establish the sustainability of Non-Governmental Organization funded community projects, beyond donor support and answer the general research question on: How sustainable were Non-Governmental Organization funded community projects, beyond donor support? Pragmatism was the philosophical view that underpinned the study and informed the mixed research method approach used. The convergent parallel strategy of the mixed research methods approach was used. The total population was project beneficiaries from four (4) selected community projects. The sample size was 76 respondents that were selected by simple random sampling, using project registers as sample frame. A questionnaire with open ended questions (qualitative) and closed questions (quantitative) was used to collect data. Qualitative data was analyzed by using the inductive process of building from the data to broad themes and then to interpretation. Quantitative data was analysed by using descriptive statistics, presented in Tables and Figures. Findings were that the community was engaged in the implementation process and operations of the project. Further, the community had put in place exit strategies for continuity of the project after donor support is withdrawn. Subsequently, the community benefited from the project. The conclusion was that there was continuation of project activities beyond donor support.

**Keywords:-** Community engagement, Exit strategy, Community benefits, Project sustainability.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Non Governmental Organizations use projects as a vehicle to deliver development in various areas, with the objective of improving the standard of living for impoverished communities (Jordan *et al.*, 2018; Lee, 2018; Lewis, 2016). In the context of donor-funded development programs and projects, sustainability can be defined as: the continuation of benefits after major assistance from a donor has been completed (Feil & Schreiber, 2017; Barbosa, 2015; Bolis *et al.*, 2015; Dempsey *et al.*, 2015; Giovannoni & Faitte, 2015). However, sustainability of the projects becomes a challenge after project closure when donors withdraw funding to the project (Ceptureanu *et al.*, 2018; Mayeka, 2018; Collins & James, 2018; Karamunya, 2018; Lungo *et al.*, 2017; Mbungua, *et al.*, (2017); Seppey *et al.*, 2017; Shivairo & Were, 2017; Kuria & Wanyoike, 2016; Hackee, 2015; Mutonga, 2015; Onio *et al.*, 2015). It is against this background that the study sought to establish sustainability of non-governmental organization funded projects, beyond donor support. The outline of the study comprises the introduction, research methodology, findings and discussion, and conclusion.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The general objective of the study was to establish the sustainability of Non-Governmental Organization funded community projects, beyond donor support and answer the general research question on: How sustainable were Non-Governmental Organization funded community projects, beyond donor support? Pragmatism was the philosophical view that underpinned the study and informed the mixed research method approach used. The convergent parallel strategy of the mixed research methods approach was used. The total population was project beneficiaries from four (4) selected community projects. The sample size was 76 respondents that were selected by simple random sampling, using project registers as sample frame. A questionnaire with open ended questions (qualitative) and closed questions (quantitative) was used to collect data. Qualitative data was analyzed by using the inductive process of building from the data to broad themes and then to interpretation. Quantitative data was analysed by using descriptive statistics, presented in Tables and Figures.

### III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings and discussion are based on the research questions that provide answers on: Establishing engagement of the community in the operations of the projects; identifying the exit strategies implemented by the projects; and establishing the benefits to the communities where projects are implemented. The outline of the findings and discussion is presented in three sections namely A, B, and C.

#### A. Section A

➤ How were communities engaged in the Operations of the Projects?

In order to answer the first research question, the following opinion was given by the respondents.

➤ *Community Members were Involved in Feasibility Study prior to Project Inception*

Table 1 indicates that the majority of the respondents, 52.6% strongly disagreed of being involved in a feasibility study prior to project inception while 5.3% disagreed and 13.2% were neutral. Further, 9.2% strongly agreed while 19.7% agreed. This shows that most of the time the community members were not involved in feasibility studies prior to project inception.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	40	52.6	52.6	52.6
	Disagree	4	5.3	5.3	57.9
	Neutral	10	13.2	13.2	71.1
	Agree	15	19.7	19.7	90.8
	Strongly Agree	7	9.2	9.2	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 1:- Community members were involved in feasibility study prior to project inception

Source: Field Data

➤ *A Consultative Meeting was held with the Community prior to Project Inception*

All the respondents, 100% agreed that the consultative meeting was held prior to the inception of the project as shown in Table 2. Further, the respondents indicated that they participated freely in the consultative meeting. This gives a clear indication of community involvement in consultative meeting before the inception of the project.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	49	64.5	64.5	64.5
	Strongly Agree	27	35.5	35.5	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 2:- A consultative meeting was held with the community prior to project inception

Source: Field Data

➤ *The Project was imposed by the Donor against the Community Needs*

As shown in Table 3, all the respondents, 100% disagreed that the project was imposed by the donor against their needs. This clearly indicates that the project met the needs of the community.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	42	55.3	55.3	55.3
	Disagree	34	44.7	44.7	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 3:- The project was imposed by the donor against the community needs

Source: Field Data

➤ *There was a Criterion by the Donor to Choose Project Beneficiaries*

The majority of the respondents, 71.1% agreed that there was a criterion by the donor for choosing the project beneficiaries while 28.9% disagreed as indicate in Table 4. This indicates that project beneficiaries were chosen on merit and need

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	Strongly Disagree	8	10.5	10.5	10.5
	Disagree	14	18.4	18.4	28.9
	Agree	23	30.3	30.3	59.2
	Strongly Agree	31	40.8	40.8	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 4:- There was a criterion by the donor to choose project beneficiaries

Source: Field Data

➤ *Community Members were involved at the Planning Stage of the Project*

Table 5 shows that all of the respondents, 100% disagreed that there were involved at the planning stage of the project. This shows that, in the projects that donors implemented, none of the community members were involved in planning of the project.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	Strongly Disagree	75	98.7	98.7	98.7
	Disagree	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 5:- Community members were involved at the planning stage of the project

Source: Field Data

➤ *Community Members were involved at the Activity Organizing Stage of the Project*

As presented in Table 6, the majority of the respondents, 97.4% agreed that they were involved at the activity organizing stage of the project. Further, the respondents explained the role they played at the activity organizing stage. This indicates that the community had a big role to play in the activity organization of the project.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	Neutral	2	2.6	2.6	2.6
	Agree	39	51.3	51.3	53.9
	Strongly Agree	35	46.1	46.1	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 6:- Community members were involved at the activity organizing stage of the project

Source: Field Data

➤ *Community Members were involved at Project Execution Stage*

As indicated in Table 7, all the respondents, 100% indicated that they were involved at the execution stage of the project. This indicates the community's willingness to participate in the project.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	Agree	36	47.4	47.4	47.4
	Strongly Agree	40	52.6	52.6	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 7:- Community members were involved at project execution stage

Source: Filed Data

➤ *Community Members were involved in the Monitoring and Evaluation of Project*

The majority of the respondents, 52.6% indicated that they were not involved in monitoring and evaluation of the project while 47.3 were in agreement as indicated in Table 8. Further, respondents gave an explanation of the roles they played in monitoring and evaluation of the project.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	Strongly Disagree	13	17.1	17.1	17.1
	Disagree	27	35.5	35.5	52.6
	Agree	3	3.9	3.9	56.6
	Strongly Agree	33	43.4	43.4	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 8:- Community members were involved in the monitoring and evaluation of Project

Source: Field Data

➤ *Community Members were involved at Project Closure Stage*

The majority of the respondents, 98.7% indicated that they were involved at the project closure stage while the minority, 1.3% was neutral as indicated in Table 9. Further, they gave an explanation for the role they played at the project closure stage. This indicates that there was membership participation at the closure of the project.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	Neutral	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
	Agree	34	44.7	44.7	46.1
	Strongly Agree	41	53.9	53.9	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 9:- Community members were involved at project closure stage  
Source: Field Data

*B. Section B*

➤ What were the exit strategies by the Projects?

To answer the second research question, the following opinion was given by the respondents.

➤ *Community Members received Training in the Projects Implemented*

As shown in Table 10, all the respondents, 100% indicated that they received training in the projects implemented. This clearly shows that the community members were fully knowledgeable about the projects implemented.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	Agree	28	36.8	36.8	36.8
	Strongly Agree	48	63.2	63.2	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 10:- Community members received training in the project implemented  
Source: Field Data

➤ *Community Members were able to Understand the Contents of the Training*

Table 11 presents that the majority of the respondents, 96.1% indicated that they understood the content of the trainings they received while the minority, 3.9% did not understand. The respondents indicated that there were measures undertaken by the leadership to make them understand the content of the training

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	Neutral	3	3.9	3.9	3.9
	Agree	36	47.4	47.4	51.3
	Strongly Agree	37	48.7	48.7	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 11:- Community members were able to understand the contents of the Training  
Source: Field Data

➤ *There was Community Leadership to Oversee the Management of the Projects*

All the respondents, 100% agreed that there was leadership present to oversee the management of the projects as indicated in Table 12. This shows that the projects were well managed.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	Agree	26	34.2	34.2	34.2
	Strongly Agree	50	65.8	65.8	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 12:- There was community leadership to oversee the management of the Project  
Source: Field Data

➤ *The projects were Managed Based on a Constitution*

All the respondents, 100% agreed that the projects were managed based on a constitution as indicated in Table 13. This indicates that there was the rule of law, followed in the management of the projects

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	25	32.9	32.9	32.9
	Strongly Agree	51	67.1	67.1	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 13:- The project is managed based on a constitution

Source: Filed Data

➤ *The Leadership was Chosen by Voting Using the Ballot System*

All the respondents, 100% agreed that the leadership was chosen using a ballot system as shown in Table 14. All of them gave at least an explanation for the election process. This shows that leaders were democratically elected.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	54	71.1	71.1	71.1
	Strongly Agree	22	28.9	28.9	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 14:- The leadership is chosen by voting using the ballot system

Source: Field Data

➤ *There were Fundraising Activities to Support Project Activities when Donor Funding Ends*

The majority of the respondents, 98.7% agreed that there were fundraising activities to support project activities when donor funding ends as presented in Table 15. Further, the respondents explained fundraising activities that they conducted.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
	Agree	27	35.5	35.5	36.8
	Strongly Agree	48	63.2	63.2	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 15:- There were fundraising activities to support project activities when donor funding ends

Source: Field Data

➤ *Project Members Paid Membership Fee*

As shown in Table 16, the majority of the respondents, 98.7% agreed that each member paid membership fee while the minority, 1.3% were neutral. Further, the respondents gave an explanation of the purpose for the membership fee. This shows that the projects were run by people who were recognized as members through membership subscription.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
	Agree	23	30.3	30.3	31.6
	Strongly Agree	52	68.4	68.4	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 16:- Project members paid membership fee

Source: Field Data

➤ *There was a Monitoring and Evaluation System in place*

The majority of the respondents, 60.5% agreed that there was a monitoring and evaluation system in place as presented in Table 17. Further, the respondents gave an explanation of how the monitoring and evaluation system was done. This indicates that the community members had their projects monitored and evaluated.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	8	10.5	10.5	10.5
	Disagree	13	17.1	17.1	27.6
	Neutral	9	11.8	11.8	39.5
	Agree	9	11.8	11.8	51.3
	Strongly Agree	37	48.7	48.7	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 17:- There was a monitoring and evaluation system in place

Source: Field Data

➤ *There were Factors that Affect Sustainability of the Project*

The majority of the respondents, 92.1% agreed that there were factors that affected the sustainability of the project while 6.6% were neutral and the minority, 1.3 disagreed as shown in Table 18. Further, the respondents mentioned the factors that affected sustainability of the project and explained how the project beneficiaries were managing. This shows that the projects were prone to challenges and the beneficiaries had to use different ways to manage them.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	Disagree	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
	Neutral	5	6.6	6.6	7.9
	Agree	45	59.2	59.2	67.1
	Strongly Agree	25	32.9	32.9	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 18:- There were factors that affect sustainability of the project  
Source: Field Data

C. Section C

➤ *How did the community members benefit from the projects?*

In order to answer the third research question, the following opinion was given by the respondents.

➤ *Project Members benefited from the Project*

As presented in Table 19, the majority of the respondents, 73.7% agreed that project members benefited from the project while 26.3% did not agree. Further, respondents explained various benefits that they received from the projects. This shows that the majority of the members benefited from the projects.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	Strongly Disagree	17	22.4	22.4	22.4
	Disagree	3	3.9	3.9	26.3
	Agree	15	19.7	19.7	46.1
	Strongly Agree	41	53.9	53.9	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 19:- Project members benefited from the project  
Source: Field Data

➤ *Non Project Members benefited from the Project*

As shown in Table 20, the majority of the respondents, 72.4% agreed that non-project members benefited from the project while 27.6% disagreed. To this effect, it can be concluded that non-project members had benefited from the project.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	Strongly Disagree	6	7.9	7.9	7.9
	Disagree	15	19.7	19.7	27.6
	Agree	26	34.2	34.2	61.8
	Strongly Agree	29	38.2	38.2	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 20:- Non project members have benefited from the project  
Source: Field Data

➤ *The Primary Project had produced other Secondary Projects*

The majority of the respondents, 46% disagreed that the primary project had produced secondary projects while 43.5% were in agreement and 10.5% were neutral as indicated in Table 21.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	Strongly Disagree	20	26.3	26.3	26.3
	Disagree	15	19.7	19.7	46.1
	Neutral	8	10.5	10.5	56.6
	Agree	16	21.1	21.1	77.6
	Strongly Agree	17	22.4	22.4	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 21:- The primary project had produced other secondary projects  
Source: Field Data



➤ *The Primary Project had continued after Donor Support withdrawal*

The majority of the respondents, 69.8% agreed that the primary project had continued after donor support was withdrawn while 37.6% disagreed and the minority, 2.6% were neutral as indicate in Table 22. Further, the respondents gave reasons for the continuity of primary projects.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
	Disagree	20	26.3	26.3	27.6
	Neutral	2	2.6	2.6	30.3
	Agree	23	30.3	30.3	60.5
	Strongly Agree	30	39.5	39.5	100.0
	Total	76	100.0	100.0	

Table 22:- The primary project had continued after donor support  
Source: Filed Data

➤ *Graphical Summary of Results*

Graphical summary of the results is described as follows:

➤ *Level of Engagement of the community in the operations of the projects*

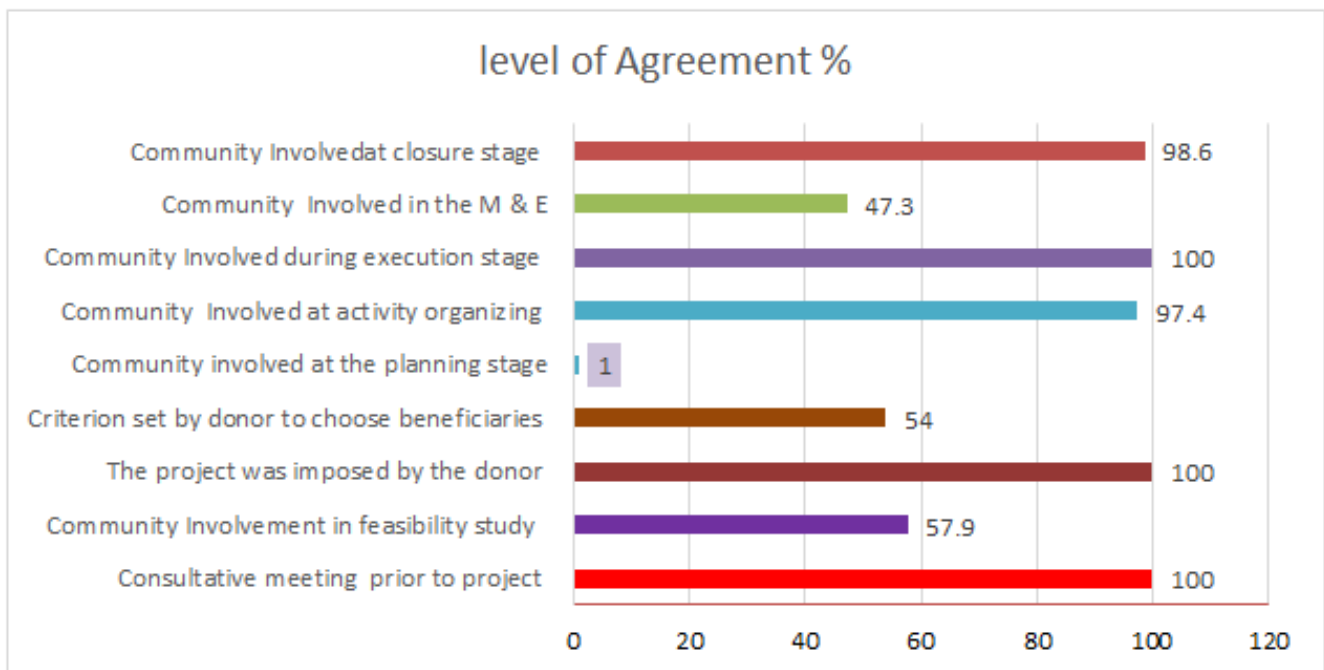


Fig 1:- Level of Engagement of the community in the operations of the project

➤ *Exit Strategies by the project*

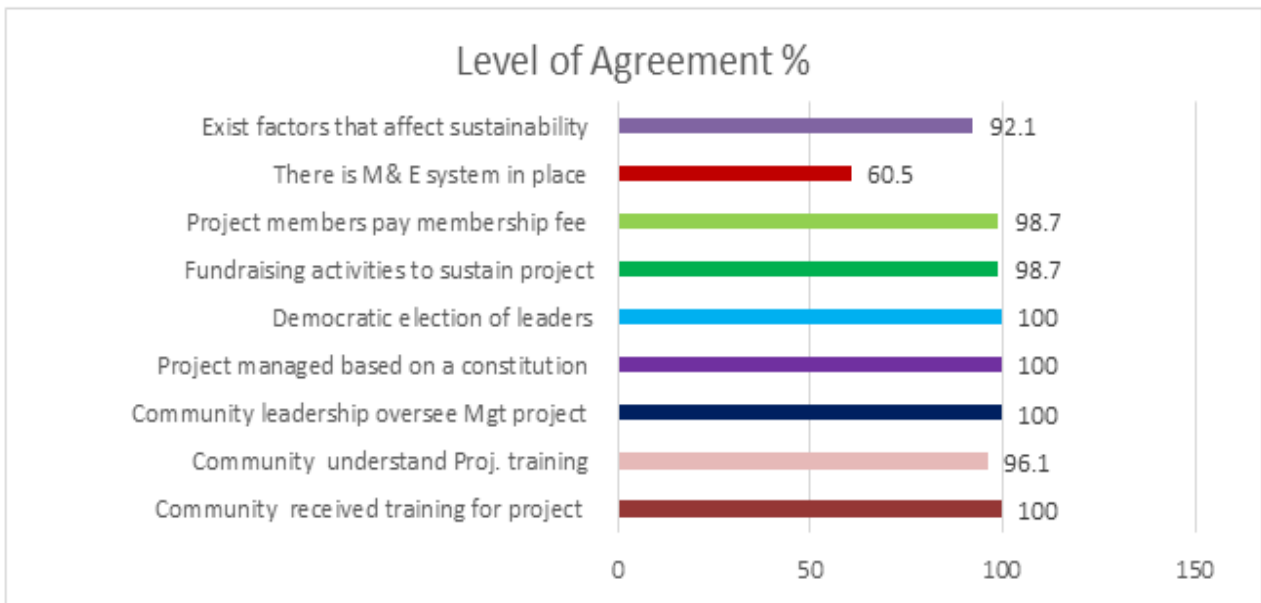


Fig 2:- Exit Strategies by the project  
Source: Field Data

➤ *Project Benefits to the Community*

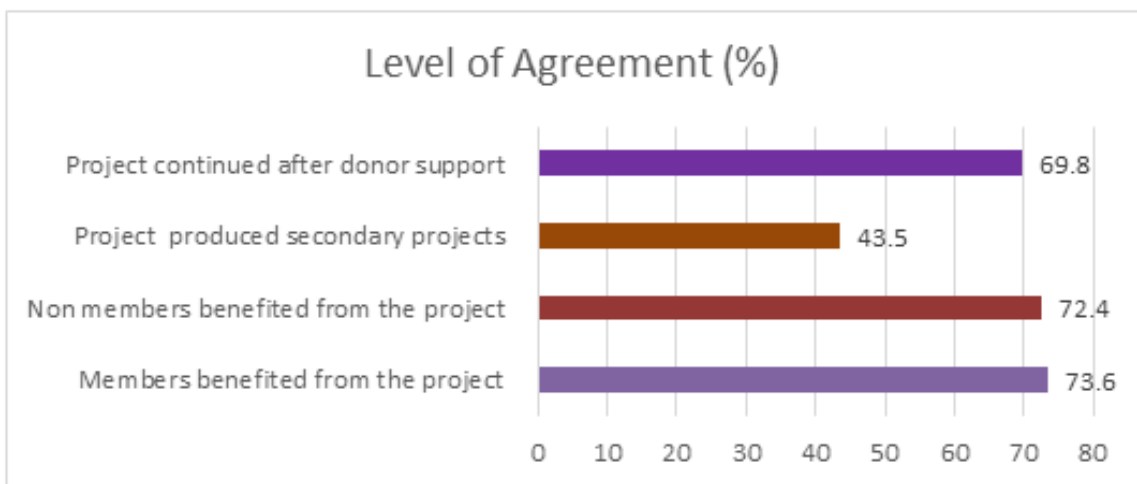


Fig 3:- Project Benefits to the Community  
Source: Filed Data

**IV. CONCLUSION**

The study concluded that the community was engaged in the implementation process and operations of the project. Further, the community had put in place exit strategies for continuity of the project after donor support was withdrawn. Subsequently, the community benefited from the project. Overly, there was continuation of project activities beyond donor support.

**REFERENCES**

[1]. Barbosa, G. S., Drach, P. R., Corbella, O. D. (2015), A Conceptual Review of the Terms Sustainable Development and Sustainability. International Journal of Social Sciences, v. III, n. 2, 2014

[2]. Bolis, I., Morioka, S. N., and Sznclwar, L. I. (2015), When sustainable development risks losing its meaning, Delimiting the concept with a comprehensive literature review and a conceptual model, Journal of Cleaner Production, v. 83, p. 7-20, 2015



- [3]. Ceptureanu, S.I., Ceptureanu, E.G., Luchian, I., and Luchian, I. (2018) Community Based Programs Sustainability. A Multidimensional Analysis of Sustainability Factors, Bucharest, Romania: Department of Management, The Bucharest University of Economic Studies,
- [4]. Collins, O., and James, R. (2018) Influence of Resource Mobilization on Sustainability of Women Group Projects in Vihiga County, Kenya. *International Journal of Economics, Business and Management Research*, Vol. 2, No. 04; 2018, ISSN: 2456-7760. Kenya: Kenyatta University
- [5]. Dempsey N, Bramley G, Power S, Brown C (2015) The social dimension of sustainable development: defining urban social sustainability. *Sustain Dev* 19:289–300
- [6]. Feil, A.A., and Schreiber, D. (2017) Sustainability and Sustainable development: Unraveling overlays and scopr of their meanings, Brazil: Organizational Management Center
- [7]. Giovannoni, E., and Fabiette, G (2015), What is Sustainability? A Review of the Concept and its Applications, Siena, Italy: University of Siena, Depatment of Business and Law.
- [8]. Hackee, E.S (2015) Towards Achieving Project Sustainability through Community Participation: Case Study of Donor Funded Projects in Morogoro-Tanzania: The Open University of Tanzania
- [9]. Jordan, L.P., Chui, C.H., and Forth, M.W (2018) Child Welfare Non-Governmental Organizatios in Hong Kong: Does advocacy work? [Journals.sagepub.com/home/isw](http://Journals.sagepub.com/home/isw). DOI: 10.1177/0020872818774109
- [10]. Karamunya, T.W. (2018) Assessment of the Contribution of Community Participation to Sustainability of Donor-Funded Boreholes in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands of Pokot South Sub-County, Kenya
- [11]. Kuria, E., and Wanyoike. D.M. (2016) Assessment of Factors Influencing Sustainability of Donor Funded Projects in Nakuru County, Kenya, *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*, Vol. IV, Issue 10, October 2016, ISSN 2348 0386. <http://ijecm.co.uk/> (Accessed 11<sup>th</sup> April, 2020)
- [12]. Lee, M.K.K. (2018) Effective Green Alliances: An Analysis Of How Environmental Nongovernmental Organizations Affect Corporate Sustainability Programs. DOI: 10.1002/csr.1674
- [13]. Lewis, D. (2016) Non-Governmental Organizations, Management, and Development, 10.4324/9780203591185
- [14]. Lungo, M.P., Mavole, J., and Martin, O. (2017) Determinants of Project Sustainability beyond Donor Support: Case of Caritas Norway Supported Governance Project in Mansa Diocese, Zambia, *Arts and Social Sciences Journal*, 8:3 DOI: 10.4172/2151-6200.1000278
- [15]. Mayeka, S. (2018) The Influence of Culture on Sustainability of Donor Funded Community Projects: A Case of World Vision Water Projects in Ngerengere Division, Tanzania: Mzumbe University
- [16]. Mbungua, P., Nyiva F., and Gathano, C.W. (2017) Sustainability of Community Based Projects in Archdiocese of Nairobi – Kenya, *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, Volume 7, Issue 10, October 2017, ISSN 2250-3153
- [17]. Mutonga, B.K (2015) Factors Influencing Sustainability of Donor Funded Community Water Projects: A Case of Kitui Central Constituency, Kitui County, Kenya: University of Nairobi
- [18]. Oino, P.G., Towett, G., Kirui, K.K., and Luvega, C. (2015), The Dilemma In Sustainability of Community-Based Projects in Kenya, *Global Journal of Advanced Research*, Vol-2, Issue-4 PP. 757-768, ISSN: 2394-5788
- [19]. Seppey, M., Ridde, V., Toure, L., and Coulibaly, A. (2017) Donor-funded project's sustainability assessment: a qualitative case study of a results-based financing pilot in Koulikoro region, Mali, *Journal of Globalization and Health*, 13:86 DOI 10.1186/s12992-017-0307-8.
- [20]. Shivairo, L.K., and Were, S. (2017) Factors Affecting Project Sustainability in Non-Governmental Organizations in Nairobi City County, Kenya. *International Journal of Novel Research in Humanity and Social Sciences*, Vol. 4, Issue 5, pp: (57-70), [www.noveltyjournals.com](http://www.noveltyjournals.com) (Accessed, 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2020)