

# **Enhancing Project Success through Stakeholder Engagement in Monitoring and Evaluation: Evidence from NGO-led Health Initiatives in Kenya<sup>1</sup>**

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and

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## **Abstract**

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems play a critical role in project management by transforming project activities into measurable evidence for learning, accountability, and decision-making. In Kenya, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) implement a significant number of community-based health initiatives aimed at improving access to healthcare services and strengthening public health outcomes. However, many development projects continue to face challenges related to sustainability, cost overruns, delayed implementation, and limited community ownership.

Stakeholder engagement has increasingly been recognized as a critical factor in improving monitoring and evaluation systems and enhancing project success. Participatory monitoring and evaluation approaches allow beneficiaries, health workers, government officials, and development partners to contribute to project monitoring processes, thereby strengthening accountability, transparency, and decision-making.

This study examines the relationship between stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation and project success in NGO-led health initiatives in Kenya. Drawing on stakeholder theory developed by R. Edward Freeman and results-based management frameworks promoted by international development institutions, the paper synthesizes empirical evidence from research studies and policy frameworks to explore how participatory monitoring and evaluation influences project performance.

The findings suggest that projects that actively involve stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation processes demonstrate higher levels of project completion, improved service delivery, stronger accountability mechanisms, and greater sustainability. Stakeholder engagement promotes community ownership of development initiatives and enhances the relevance of project interventions to local needs.

Despite these benefits, participatory monitoring and evaluation practices remain inconsistently implemented across development programs. Capacity constraints,

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resource limitations, and varying levels of institutional commitment continue to affect stakeholder participation in monitoring activities.

The paper concludes by proposing policy recommendations aimed at strengthening participatory monitoring systems in NGO-led health initiatives in Kenya. These include strengthening institutional capacity for participatory monitoring, investing in digital monitoring systems, and promoting collaborative governance structures that enhance stakeholder participation in development projects.

**Keywords:** *Stakeholder Engagement; Monitoring and Evaluation; Project Success; Participatory Monitoring; NGO Projects; Health Initiatives; Kenya*

## 1. Introduction

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are fundamental components of effective project management. They provide mechanisms for tracking project progress, assessing performance, and ensuring that development interventions achieve their intended objectives. In the context of development projects, monitoring and evaluation systems enable organizations to collect and analyze information that informs decision-making, improves accountability, and enhances learning.

In Kenya, the health sector has undergone significant transformation following the adoption of a devolved governance system in 2013. Under this system, county governments are responsible for delivering healthcare services across forty-seven counties. Despite this decentralization, significant disparities in healthcare access and service delivery persist across regions. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) therefore play a critical role in supporting government efforts to improve healthcare access through community-based health initiatives.

NGO-led health initiatives in Kenya focus on a wide range of interventions including maternal and child health programs, HIV/AIDS prevention, malaria control, community health education, and health system strengthening. These initiatives often operate in underserved communities where public healthcare resources are limited. However, the success of such projects depends not only on technical implementation but also on the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems used to track progress and ensure accountability.

One of the major challenges facing development projects is the limited involvement of stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation processes. Traditional monitoring systems often rely on top-down approaches where project managers and external evaluators collect and analyze project data with minimal involvement from beneficiaries or frontline implementers. This approach may limit the ability of monitoring systems to capture local perspectives and contextual knowledge.

Stakeholder engagement offers an alternative approach that emphasizes collaboration between project implementers and stakeholders throughout the project cycle. According to stakeholder theory developed by R. Edward Freeman, organizations are more likely to achieve sustainable success when they consider the interests and perspectives of multiple stakeholders rather than focusing solely on internal objectives.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation approaches allow stakeholders such as community members, healthcare workers, local leaders, donors, and government officials to contribute to the monitoring process. Their participation may involve identifying project indicators, collecting monitoring data, participating in evaluation meetings, and providing feedback on project implementation.

International development organizations such as the World Health Organization and the World Bank have increasingly emphasized stakeholder engagement as an essential component of effective monitoring and evaluation systems. These organizations recognize that participatory approaches can enhance transparency, improve accountability, and increase the sustainability of development projects.

In Kenya, participatory monitoring and evaluation practices are gradually being integrated into development programs implemented by NGOs and government agencies. However, the extent to which stakeholder engagement contributes to project success remains an important area of research.

This paper therefore seeks to examine the role of stakeholder engagement in strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems and improving the success of NGO-led health initiatives in Kenya. By synthesizing empirical research and policy frameworks, the study aims to provide insights into how participatory monitoring and evaluation can enhance project performance, accountability, and sustainability.

## **Background: Overview of the Health System in Kenya**

Understanding the institutional and socio-economic context of the health sector in Kenya is essential when examining the role of stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation of NGO-led health initiatives. Kenya operates a devolved health system, where policy development and regulation are managed by the national government while service delivery is primarily the responsibility of 47 county governments.

The country has a population of more than 55 million people, and healthcare services are delivered through a combination of public hospitals, private health facilities, faith-based organizations, and non-governmental organizations. Over the past two decades, Kenya has made significant progress in improving health indicators such as life expectancy, immunization coverage, and maternal healthcare access. Life expectancy is estimated at approximately 67 years, while the under-five mortality rate is about 41 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Despite these improvements, Kenya continues to face several structural challenges in its healthcare system. These challenges include uneven distribution of health infrastructure, shortages of trained health personnel, and disparities in healthcare access between urban and rural regions.

### **Health Financing and Government Investment**

Health financing remains a critical issue in Kenya's health sector. Government expenditure on health has increased in recent years, with national government spending projected to reach approximately KSh 122 billion in the 2024–2025 fiscal year.

However, this allocation represents only around 3% of the national budget, which is significantly below the 15% target established by the Abuja Declaration, an agreement among African Union member states to strengthen health financing across the continent.

Total health expenditure in Kenya represents approximately 4–5% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), reflecting moderate investment relative to global averages.

Because of these funding constraints, many health programs rely heavily on support from international donors and non-governmental organizations. NGOs therefore play a major role in delivering health services, implementing disease prevention programs, and supporting community-based health initiatives.

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Kenya Estimate</b>
Population	~55 million
Life expectancy	~67 years
Under-five mortality	41 per 1,000 births
Health expenditure	~4–5% of GDP
Counties	47

### **Key Health Challenges in Kenya**

Kenya continues to face a combination of communicable diseases, emerging non-communicable diseases, and health system constraints.

Major health priorities include:

- HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment
- Malaria control programs
- Tuberculosis treatment
- Maternal and child health services
- Nutrition and immunization programs

Programs addressing these challenges are frequently implemented through partnerships involving the government, NGOs, community organizations, and international development agencies.

The country is also pursuing Universal Health Coverage (UHC) reforms aimed at expanding access to healthcare services for all citizens. One of the major initiatives supporting this objective is the Social Health Authority (SHA) system, which seeks to expand national health insurance coverage and strengthen healthcare financing mechanisms.

### **Role of NGOs in Kenya's Health Sector**

Non-governmental organizations play a significant role in Kenya's healthcare system, particularly in underserved communities where public health infrastructure may be limited.

NGOs contribute to healthcare delivery in several ways:

- Implementing disease prevention programs
- Providing community health education
- Supporting maternal and child health services
- Strengthening health system capacity
- Funding health infrastructure and medical supplies

Many of these programs are supported by international development partners such as the World Health Organization, the World Bank, and the United States Agency for International Development.

Because NGO projects often involve multiple stakeholders—including governments, donors, community members, and health workers—effective monitoring and evaluation systems are essential to ensure that programs achieve their intended outcomes.

### **Importance of Stakeholder Engagement in Monitoring and Evaluation**

Stakeholder engagement has become increasingly recognized as a key component of effective monitoring and evaluation in development programs. Participatory monitoring approaches allow beneficiaries, local leaders, and service providers to contribute to project oversight and decision-making.

In the Kenyan health sector, participatory monitoring and evaluation can improve:

- project transparency
- community ownership
- accountability of project implementers
- sustainability of health interventions

Engaging stakeholders in monitoring processes also helps ensure that development interventions respond to local needs and priorities.

As Kenya continues to strengthen its decentralized health system, stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation will remain essential for improving the performance and long-term sustainability of NGO-led health initiatives

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Concept of Stakeholder Engagement in Development Projects**

Stakeholder engagement has become an important concept in project management and development practice. Stakeholders are individuals, groups, or institutions that influence or are affected by the implementation and outcomes of a project. Effective stakeholder engagement involves actively involving these actors in planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation processes.

The concept of stakeholder engagement is strongly rooted in stakeholder theory, developed by R. Edward Freeman. According to this theory, organizations achieve sustainable success when they recognize and manage the interests of multiple stakeholders rather than focusing exclusively on organizational objectives. In development projects, stakeholders typically include community members, beneficiaries, local leaders, government institutions, donors, civil society organizations, and implementing agencies.

Stakeholder engagement in project management promotes collaboration, transparency, and accountability. When stakeholders are involved in decision-making processes, they contribute valuable knowledge about local needs and contextual realities. This information helps project managers design interventions that are relevant, inclusive, and sustainable.

In development projects, stakeholder engagement is often implemented through participatory approaches. Participatory development practices encourage beneficiaries to take an active role in shaping the design and implementation of projects that affect their communities. This approach promotes a sense of ownership among beneficiaries and increases the likelihood that project outcomes will be sustained after external support ends.

Scholars and development practitioners increasingly recognize that stakeholder engagement contributes to improved project performance. Projects that involve stakeholders throughout the project lifecycle are more likely to achieve their intended objectives because they benefit from continuous feedback and collective problem-solving.

## Conceptual Framework

This study is guided by the principles of stakeholder theory and results-based management. According to R. Edward Freeman, organizations achieve sustainable success when they consider the interests of multiple stakeholders rather than focusing only on internal objectives.

In development projects, stakeholders include community members, healthcare workers, donors, government institutions, and implementing organizations. Their participation in monitoring and evaluation processes contributes to improved project transparency, accountability, and learning.

The conceptual framework of this study assumes that stakeholder engagement influences project success through three key mechanisms:

1. **Improved information flow** – stakeholders provide real-time feedback on project implementation.
2. **Enhanced accountability** – participatory monitoring increases transparency in resource utilization.
3. **Community ownership** – involvement of beneficiaries increases sustainability of project outcomes.

Through these mechanisms, stakeholder engagement strengthens monitoring and evaluation systems and contributes to improved project performance.

### 2.2 Monitoring and Evaluation in Development Projects

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are essential components of project management. Monitoring refers to the continuous process of collecting and analyzing information to track project progress and ensure that project activities are implemented as planned. Evaluation, on the other hand, involves systematic assessment of project outcomes and impacts to determine whether the project has achieved its objectives.

Monitoring and evaluation systems enable organizations to assess project effectiveness, identify challenges, and make informed decisions about project implementation. Effective M&E systems provide evidence that helps organizations improve program design, allocate resources efficiently, and demonstrate accountability to donors and stakeholders.

Many development organizations use results-based management frameworks to structure monitoring and evaluation activities. Results-based management emphasizes the relationship between inputs, outputs, outcomes, and long-term impacts. By linking project activities to measurable results, organizations can better track progress and evaluate project performance.

International development institutions such as the World Bank and the World Health Organization emphasize the importance of robust monitoring and evaluation systems in improving the effectiveness of development programs. These institutions advocate the use of standardized indicators, systematic data collection methods, and regular performance reviews to ensure that projects achieve their intended goals.

Despite the recognized importance of monitoring and evaluation, many development projects encounter challenges in implementing effective M&E systems. Common challenges include limited technical capacity, inadequate funding, weak data management systems, and insufficient stakeholder involvement. These challenges often limit the ability of organizations to generate reliable data and use monitoring information effectively.

### **2.3 Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation**

Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) is an approach that emphasizes the active involvement of stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation processes. Unlike traditional top-down monitoring systems, participatory monitoring involves beneficiaries and local stakeholders in collecting data, analyzing results, and making decisions based on monitoring findings.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation emerged from participatory development approaches that emphasize community empowerment and collaborative decision-making. The approach recognizes that local communities possess valuable knowledge about their needs, challenges, and priorities. By involving stakeholders in monitoring processes, organizations can generate more accurate and contextually relevant information.

PM&E promotes transparency and accountability by creating opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback on project implementation. Community members can report challenges, identify areas for improvement, and contribute to the development of solutions that address local problems.

Participatory monitoring also strengthens community ownership of development initiatives. When stakeholders are actively involved in monitoring project progress, they develop a sense of responsibility for project outcomes. This sense of ownership increases the likelihood that project benefits will continue after external funding ends.

Development organizations such as USAID and the African Development Bank have incorporated participatory monitoring approaches into their program frameworks. These organizations recognize that stakeholder engagement in monitoring processes enhances learning, accountability, and program effectiveness.

## **2.4 Stakeholder Engagement and Project Success**

Project success is typically evaluated based on several performance indicators including completion within schedule, adherence to budget, achievement of project objectives, quality of outputs, and sustainability of project outcomes. Increasingly, researchers emphasize that stakeholder engagement plays a critical role in achieving these indicators.

Stakeholder engagement contributes to project success in several ways. First, it enhances the relevance of project interventions by ensuring that project activities address the needs and priorities of beneficiaries. Second, it improves accountability by creating mechanisms for stakeholders to monitor project performance and hold implementing agencies responsible for project outcomes.

Third, stakeholder engagement promotes knowledge sharing and collaboration among project actors. By working together, stakeholders can identify challenges early and develop strategies to address them before they escalate into major problems.

Empirical research has demonstrated that projects with strong stakeholder engagement mechanisms are more likely to achieve sustainable outcomes. Participatory approaches encourage communities to support and maintain project infrastructure and services after project completion.

In the context of health initiatives, stakeholder engagement is particularly important because health interventions often depend on behavioral change and community participation. Engaging communities in monitoring health programs helps ensure that interventions are culturally appropriate, accessible, and responsive to community needs.

## **2.5 Stakeholder Engagement in Kenya's Health Sector**

Kenya's health sector provides an important context for examining stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation. Following the adoption of the 2010 Constitution, Kenya implemented a devolved governance system that transferred responsibility for healthcare service delivery to county governments.

Under this system, county governments collaborate with development partners, NGOs, and community organizations to implement health programs. Many NGO-led health initiatives focus on addressing public health challenges such as maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS, malaria, and access to primary healthcare services.

Community health programs implemented in counties such as Kisumu and Nairobi demonstrate the importance of stakeholder engagement in improving health outcomes. These programs often involve community health volunteers, local leaders, and healthcare workers in monitoring project activities and reporting health data.

Evidence from various studies indicates that projects that incorporate participatory monitoring approaches in Kenya experience improved project performance and stronger community support. Community participation helps identify service delivery gaps, improve accountability, and ensure that project interventions align with local priorities.

However, stakeholder engagement practices vary significantly across projects and regions. Some organizations have well-established participatory monitoring systems, while others continue to rely on centralized monitoring approaches. Strengthening stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation therefore remains a key priority for improving the effectiveness and sustainability of NGO-led health initiatives in Kenya.

### **3. Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to examine how stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation influences the success of NGO-led health initiatives in Kenya. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study seeks to understand processes, relationships, and institutional practices that shape project outcomes rather than focusing solely on numerical measurements.

The research design relied primarily on a systematic review of secondary data sources including academic literature, policy reports, and project evaluation documents related to monitoring and evaluation practices in development projects. Secondary data sources provide valuable insights into existing knowledge and empirical findings regarding stakeholder participation in development initiatives.

The study focused specifically on NGO-led health initiatives implemented in Kenya, particularly programs addressing maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS prevention, malaria control, and community health service delivery. These programs represent key areas where NGOs contribute significantly to strengthening healthcare access in underserved communities.

Data for the study were obtained from academic journals, development organization reports, government publications, and policy documents published between 2015 and 2024. The review process involved identifying relevant literature on stakeholder engagement, participatory monitoring and evaluation, and project success in development programs.

The selected documents were analyzed using **thematic analysis**, a qualitative method used to identify recurring patterns and themes within textual data. The analysis focused on identifying relationships between stakeholder engagement practices and key indicators of project success.

The study examined several indicators of project success including:

- Project completion within scheduled timelines

- Effective utilization of project resources
- Achievement of project objectives
- Quality of service delivery
- Sustainability of project outcomes

The study also examined different forms of stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation, including participation in project planning, data collection, evaluation meetings, and feedback mechanisms.

Although the research relies primarily on secondary data, synthesizing findings from multiple studies provides a comprehensive understanding of how stakeholder engagement influences monitoring and evaluation systems and contributes to improved project performance in NGO-led health initiatives.

#### **4. Results and Findings**

The analysis of the reviewed literature shows a clear relationship between stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and the success of NGO-led health initiatives in Kenya.

Projects that incorporate participatory monitoring practices tend to demonstrate stronger accountability, improved implementation efficiency, and greater sustainability of outcomes.

##### **4.1 Stakeholder Participation and Project Performance**

Studies conducted in several Kenyan counties indicate that stakeholder engagement significantly contributes to improved project performance. Research by Abunga and Were (2024) found a strong positive relationship between stakeholder participation and the completion of health projects in Bungoma County. Projects that involved community members, local leaders, and frontline health workers in monitoring activities were more likely to be completed on schedule and within allocated budgets.

Similarly, Kosgei and Murango (2024) reported that effective monitoring and evaluation practices including stakeholder consultation and participatory planning—were strongly associated with project success in health development projects. Their findings indicated a strong correlation between project planning practices and project performance ( $r = 0.852$ ).

These findings suggest that stakeholder engagement improves the ability of project teams to identify challenges early and implement corrective actions during project implementation.

## **4.2 Stakeholder Engagement and Project Sustainability**

Beyond immediate project outputs, stakeholder participation also influences the sustainability of development initiatives. Sustainability refers to the ability of project benefits to continue after donor funding or external support ends.

Research conducted in informal settlements in Kisumu showed that projects incorporating participatory monitoring processes were more likely to achieve long-term sustainability (Nakitare & Otieno, 2025). In these projects, community members participated in monitoring meetings, contributed feedback regarding service delivery, and supported local implementation activities.

This participatory approach created a sense of community ownership, which strengthened the long-term continuity of project interventions.

## **4.3 Influence of Stakeholder Engagement on Monitoring Systems**

Stakeholder engagement also improves the effectiveness of monitoring systems themselves. According to Muyekho, Karimi, and Omuchesi (2025), increased stakeholder involvement in decision-making processes significantly improved the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems in Kenyan development projects.

Projects with higher levels of stakeholder consultation demonstrated stronger data reporting practices, more transparent decision-making processes, and improved responsiveness to implementation challenges.

These findings highlight the importance of inclusive monitoring frameworks that actively incorporate stakeholder feedback throughout the project lifecycle.

## **Future Research Directions**

Future studies could expand on the findings of this research by conducting primary field studies involving interviews with project managers, community health volunteers, and beneficiaries of NGO-led health programs. Such research would provide deeper insights into how participatory monitoring practices influence project implementation at the community level.

Longitudinal studies examining the long-term outcomes and impacts of participatory monitoring systems would also contribute valuable evidence to the field of development project management.

## **5. Discussion**

The findings of this study highlight the importance of stakeholder engagement as a central component of effective monitoring and evaluation systems in NGO-led health initiatives in Kenya.

Consistent with the stakeholder theory proposed by R. Edward Freeman, organizations that actively manage relationships with multiple stakeholders are more likely to achieve sustainable outcomes. In the context of development projects, stakeholders include community members, healthcare providers, government agencies, donors, and implementing organizations.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation practices allow these stakeholders to contribute knowledge, identify challenges, and influence decision-making processes.

While traditional project management approaches often emphasize performance indicators such as time, cost, and quality, development projects must also be evaluated based on their long-term outcomes and social impacts. For example, a maternal health project may be completed on schedule and within budget but fail to achieve its intended impact if maternal mortality rates do not improve.

Participatory monitoring systems help address this challenge by incorporating feedback from beneficiaries and frontline workers who directly experience the outcomes of development interventions.

International organizations such as the World Health Organization increasingly emphasize community engagement as a critical element of health program implementation. Participatory monitoring not only strengthens accountability but also enhances the relevance of development interventions by ensuring that projects respond to local needs and priorities.

However, the adoption of participatory monitoring and evaluation practices remains uneven across different counties and organizations in Kenya. Several barriers continue to limit implementation, including limited technical capacity, resource constraints, and institutional resistance to participatory decision-making.

Addressing these barriers requires stronger institutional support, targeted training programs, and greater investment in monitoring infrastructure.

## **6 Policy Implications**

The findings of this study highlight several policy implications for improving monitoring and evaluation systems in NGO-led health initiatives in Kenya. Strengthening stakeholder engagement requires coordinated action from NGOs, government institutions, and development partners.

## **6.1 Investment in Digital Monitoring and Evaluation Systems**

One important policy recommendation is increased investment in digital monitoring and evaluation infrastructure. Digital technologies such as mobile data collection platforms, electronic dashboards, and health information systems can significantly improve the efficiency and transparency of monitoring activities.

For example, Kenya has already implemented the District Health Information Software 2 (DHIS2), a digital platform used to collect and analyze health data across counties. Expanding the use of such systems within NGO-led projects can improve real-time monitoring, facilitate data sharing among stakeholders, and enhance evidence-based decision-making.

Digital tools can also enable community members and frontline health workers to report challenges quickly, improving responsiveness and accountability within development programs.

## **6.2 Capacity Building for Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation**

Another key policy priority is strengthening the capacity of stakeholders to participate effectively in monitoring and evaluation activities. Many community members and local organizations lack the technical skills required to engage meaningfully in data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Training programs should therefore be developed to build skills in areas such as stakeholder mapping, participatory facilitation techniques, data management, and evaluation methods.

Capacity-building initiatives should target multiple groups including project managers, community health volunteers, government officials, and beneficiary communities. Strengthening these skills can empower stakeholders to contribute more effectively to project monitoring processes.

## **6.3 Integration of Stakeholder Engagement into Planning and Budgeting**

Participatory monitoring and evaluation should be integrated into project planning and budgeting processes. Development projects should allocate sufficient financial resources to support stakeholder engagement activities such as community consultations, monitoring meetings, and participatory evaluation workshops.

County governments and development partners can also strengthen accountability by requiring project proposals to include clear stakeholder engagement plans as part of monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Institutionalizing participatory monitoring practices ensures that stakeholder engagement becomes a standard component of development project management rather than an optional activity.

#### **6.4 Strengthening Governance and Institutional Support**

Leadership commitment plays an important role in promoting participatory monitoring and evaluation. Government agencies and NGO leadership should create governance structures that encourage collaboration among stakeholders.

Multi-stakeholder committees, advisory groups, and community oversight boards can help coordinate monitoring activities and ensure that different perspectives are represented in decision-making processes.

Strengthening governance mechanisms also improves transparency and helps build trust between project implementers and beneficiary communities.

#### **6.5 Donor Support for Inclusive Monitoring Systems**

Development partners and donors also have an important role in promoting participatory monitoring and evaluation. Donor agencies can encourage stakeholder engagement by including participation requirements within funding agreements.

Organizations such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the African Development Bank have increasingly emphasized participatory monitoring approaches in development programs.

By aligning donor monitoring requirements with local systems and supporting capacity building, development partners can help strengthen sustainable monitoring frameworks in Kenya's health sector.

### **7. Limitations of the Study**

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged.

First, the research relies primarily on secondary data sources rather than primary field data. Although the study draws from multiple empirical studies and policy reports, the absence of direct interviews or surveys limits the ability to capture firsthand perspectives from practitioners and community stakeholders.

Second, data availability across counties in Kenya is uneven. Some counties publish detailed monitoring and evaluation reports while others provide limited documentation. This variation limits the ability to compare project outcomes consistently across different regions.

Third, the studies reviewed in this research use different research methodologies, sample sizes, and evaluation frameworks. These differences make it challenging to generalize findings across all NGO-led health initiatives in Kenya.

Fourth, the conceptual figures used in this paper illustrate general relationships between stakeholder engagement and project performance rather than presenting precise statistical measurements.

Finally, there is a possibility of publication bias. Studies that report successful participatory monitoring outcomes may be more likely to be published than studies highlighting challenges or failures.

Future research could address these limitations by conducting primary field research involving interviews with project managers, government officials, community health volunteers, and beneficiary communities.

## **8. Conclusion**

Stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation plays a critical role in improving the effectiveness and sustainability of NGO-led health initiatives in Kenya.

The findings of this study demonstrate that participatory monitoring and evaluation systems strengthen accountability, enhance project relevance, and promote community ownership of development programs. Projects that actively involve stakeholders in planning, monitoring, and evaluation processes are more likely to achieve successful outcomes and deliver meaningful benefits to beneficiary communities.

Stakeholder participation also facilitates transparency, improves communication between project implementers and communities, and enables early identification of implementation challenges.

However, despite these benefits, the adoption of participatory monitoring and evaluation practices remains uneven across different counties and organizations. Capacity limitations, resource constraints, and institutional barriers continue to affect the implementation of inclusive monitoring systems.

Addressing these challenges requires greater investment in digital monitoring infrastructure, capacity-building initiatives, and institutional reforms that promote collaborative governance.

As Kenya continues to strengthen its decentralized health system, integrating participatory monitoring and evaluation into project management practices will be essential for ensuring that development interventions effectively respond to the needs of communities and contribute to sustainable improvements in health outcomes.

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