

ABSTRACT

In sub-Saharan Africa, about 250 million people (67%) lack safe accessible water while 81% of the rural population lacks sanitation facilities (Rose and Vincent 1999). People spend 40 billion hours every year just walking for water. Women and children usually bear the burden of water collection, walking miles to the nearest source. Along their long walk, they are subjected to a greater risk of harassment and sexual assault. According to National Water Policy (2002) despite significant investment in the Rural Water Supply in Kenya since the early 1970s, presently only about 45% of the rural population has access to a reliable water supply service. However, due to poor operation and maintenance that may be contributed by lack of ownership, over 30% of the rural water supply schemes are not functioning. The involvement of all community members including women, youth and the poor is of critical importance in rural water supply and sanitation projects. Project implementers should consider the views, opinions and perspectives of the community in development projects for it to remain sustainable. This study seeks to link community participation and sustainability of water services in rural area. The purpose of the study was to assess community participation in design, implementation and management of Kiambai Water and Sanitation Project. The objectives of the study were; to examine the level of community participation in the design of Kiambai Water and Sanitation Project, to examine the level of community participation in the implementation and management of Kiambai water and sanitation project and to determine challenges to sustainability of Kiambai water and sanitation project at Kaksingri location. The study was anchored on the descriptive research design, data collection techniques included; interviews and questionnaires. The study used simple random sampling to select 270 household from the target populations of 2,250 households. The data obtained was analyzed using descriptive statistical tools and the results presented in form of frequency tables, pie charts and bar graphs. The findings were that the benefits associated with proper community participation included an assurance of the continuity of the project, timely maintenance/repairs, harmony/conflict management, a strong sense of ownership of the projects, better service delivery and expansion of the project. The study also established that even though consultations were found to have been made, it was minimal and therefore the community was not given enough opportunity to impact meaningfully on the water and sanitation project. Three main indicators of sustainability; social, institutional and technical aspects were interrogated. On the social aspect the respondents identified inadequate participation of community members, poor material quality, design flaws and unskilled operators as the main cause of failure. On Institutional sustainability they identified frequent break-downs, unskilled operators and poor remuneration. On technical sustainability the tariffs were found to be unstable and insufficient to cover the running costs and impossible to adjust. From these findings the research concluded that the failure of Kiambai Water and sanitation project was due inadequate community participation in design, implementation and management of the water project. The study recommends that water projects ought to be community centered and responsive, not supply driven projects; before implementation of any community based project, community must be educated on current government policy on community participation and involvement in decision-making in the project cycle.