

Influence of Stakeholder Participation on Performance of Donor Funded Agricultural Projects: The Case of Agricultural Commercialization Cluster (ACC) undertaken by Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA)

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LETTER OF CERTEFICATION

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ACRONYMS

ACC: Agricultural Commercialization Cluster

ADLI: Agricultural Development Led Industrialization

ATA: Agricultural Transformation Agency

CDF: Consultancy Development Fund

EGC: Economic Growth Corridor

FGD: Focus Group Discussion

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GoE: Government of Ethiopia

GTP: Growth and Transformation Plans

IAIP: Integrated Agro-Industrial Park

IR: Interview Respondent

ISGWID: Integrated Shallow Ground Water Irrigation Development

KII: key informant interviews

LFSDP: Livestock and Fisheries Sector Development Project

M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation

MoA: Ministry of Agriculture

MCDP: Community Development Program

MoALR: Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Resources

MoTI: Ministry of Trade and Industry

MSP: Multi-Sector Platforms

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

PASDEP: Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty

PLC: Project Life Cycle

PMO: Program Management Office

REPP: Renewable Energy Power Providers

SNNPR: Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

Stakeholder participation is increasingly becoming important in achieving high project implementation performance. However, there is limitation of studies on how stakeholder participation approach is being implemented towards Ethiopian development projects such as agricultural transformative projects. This study therefore intends to assess the effect of stakeholder participation at all stages of a project lifecycle (PLC) on the performance of Ethiopian agricultural projects considering ATA ACC program as a case. The study employed mixed research method. Quantitative data was collected through survey questionnaires applied to 250 staffs of implementing organization, focal persons of long-term government owners and representatives of donor agencies participating in 19 projects under ACC program, using census. A semi-structured interview was utilized to gather qualitative data from 5 high profile personnel of the three organizations. Accordingly, a response rate of 76.8% was obtained for the questionnaire, while 100% was obtained for the interviews. Descriptive statistics and Linear Regression were used to determine the level and importance of stakeholder participation, as well as the relationship and influence of stakeholder participation on performance. The qualitative data was examined using thematic content analysis, and the quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS V.26. The findings revealed that participation in all stages of a PLC, including initiation, planning, execution, and monitoring and evaluation has a significant effect on project performance by improving sense of ownership, stakeholder empowerment, project acceptability, and leadership accountability. Finally, the study concludes by providing recommendations to organizations undertaking similar projects that are looking to improve project performance.

Keywords: Stakeholder Participation, Project Performance, Ethiopian Agricultural Projects, ATA.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

As the project environment changes and becomes more complex, the successful implementation of any project necessitates the collaboration of all key stakeholders in order to generate innovative ideas and maximize investment (Bryson et al., 2013; Kelly, 2001). These actors have varying levels and forms of investment and participation in various aspects of the project in which they are involved, as described by Atkin & Skitmore (2008). These actors, also known as project stakeholders, may influence the success or failure of one or all components a project. A stakeholder then is one (or group) who has a certain interest in a project (Fleming, 2009; Glicken, 2000; Project Management Institute, 2017). In general terms, people who constitute stakeholders include those who can get affected or can affect the development, design, implementation, and evaluation of a project or activity (B. L. Smith, 2003).

Participation is inextricably related to sustainable development, and it cannot be realized without a wide spectrum of actors and approaches (Green & Chambers, 2006). The concept stakeholder participation has been described in various ways to include a process by which interested parties influence and participate in development initiatives, as well as the decisions and resources that influence them (World Bank Group, 1996). As Stiglitz et al. (2002) pointed out, participation can occur at any stage of the project cycle. It could entail identifying challenges, designing, and implementing solutions, monitoring results, and evaluating performance, among other things. If the levels of involvement in different stages of a project are enhanced proactively and consistently, as Olamigoke & Emmanue (2013) claim, the results are more likely to fit local conditions, ensure community control, increase project sustainability, promote public cohesion, and increase social learning. Further, Ngowi & Mselle (1998) have also argued that stakeholder participation keeps communities better informed, increases trust, builds beneficiary capacity in relation to a project, effectiveness in project design and implementation, and leads to a better match of project services with beneficiary needs and constraints, enables costs sharing, and improved project efficiency.

Therefore, stakeholder participation should be considered critical to ensure high project implementation success. Hence, it is in this context that the researcher aims to investigate the influence of stakeholder participation in performance of donor funded agricultural transformational projects.

1.2. The Case Program

The ACC is a five-year program of the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) coordinated by the ATA. It focuses on ten priority commodities, including five major grain crops (wheat, maize, tef, sesame, and malt barley) and five horticulture crops (tomato, onion, mango, banana, and avocado), in a geographically clustered and integrated approach that is currently implemented in four states: Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, and Tigray (ATA, 2020).

The ACC is an impactful, market-driven and value chain approach that will contribute to the transformation of agriculture and improvement of the livelihoods of Ethiopian farmers while adhering to the principles of inclusion and sustainability. It focuses on the integration of activities across various government and non-governmental actors and across the value chain to support smallholder farmers and boost their productivity, as well as the building of market links and improved implementation effectiveness. It is designed to not only enhance the livelihoods of Ethiopia's smallholder farmers, but also to enable them to collectively achieve commercial farming status, with easy access to a full range of agricultural technologies and inputs, as well as technical support. It will also facilitate linkages with markets such as agri-food processors, breweries, and other buyers, creating a value chain that will encourage continuous improvement of production and productivity (ATA, 2010).

To maximize the potential impact, the ACC focuses on 31 geographic clusters comprised of 300 woredas across the four major agricultural regions. The program contains 60 interventions and 19 projects aimed at increasing land productivity while decreasing degradation, improving domestic and international market access, increasing agro-processing and value-added activities, and creating off-farm job opportunities. Additionally, this program includes a pilot project on the use

of sophisticated shallow ground-water mapping technology; the Integrated Shallow Ground Water Irrigation Development (ISGWID) project covers 49 woredas, of which 16 also produce ACC priority crops and 33 are additional woredas (ATA, 2020).

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Organizations undertaking agricultural transformation projects are expected to adopt early stakeholder involvement approach, which results in the right conditions for various stakeholders to participate meaningfully throughout all phases of each project cycle, increasing the chances of successful project execution, organizational success, and buy-in for the organization's future key initiatives (Franzén et al., 2015).

However, according to the ATA's annual performance report for the 2020 budget year, 25 (68%) of the 37 operational projects were on track, 6 (16%) were slightly overdue, and 6 (16%) were significantly delayed (ATA, 2020). Most of the reasons for the delay as cited in the report are inability to reach out to various stakeholders through workshops and trainings, limited involvement of some partners' staff in the implementation and evaluation processes, donors' loss of interest in continuing to provide the necessary fund, a lack of sense of ownership among major stakeholders, and prolonged discussions with stakeholders for effective delivery and utilization. If left unchecked, these issues will have a significant effect on the projects' budget, donors' trust in the project, timeliness of execution, and negative beneficiary reactions to the project. Eventually, they will lead to a project failure and will have detrimental effect on the organization's ability to successfully undertake future projects.

Early stakeholder involvement in a project, beginning with the initiating stage, could be a possible remedy for fragmented stakeholder participation that lacks interdependence and integration (Martinez & Olander, 2015). The researcher envisages that proactive, coordinated and consistent early stakeholder engagement lays the groundwork for gaining and maintaining benefits, which includes allowing room for creative solutions and extensive exchange of ideas, resulting in a more effective design and improved implementation, building relationships based on trust and

transparency, as well as minimizing risks and maximizing opportunities to create and protect value for the project and beneficiaries at large (Martinez & Olander, 2015; Reed, 2008). This, in turn, further improves the effectiveness and efficiency of organizations' implementation capability while ensuring the satisfaction of beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

Despite the importance of stakeholder participation, no study has been carried out to investigate the effect of stakeholder participation on the performance of agriculture transformation projects undertaken by ATA. It is based on this assumption that this study will conduct empirical research to assess the effect of stakeholder involvement on the performance of agriculture transformation projects, with the intention of promoting voluntary, involved, dedicated, consistent and coordinated stakeholder participation through all stages of a project cycle.

1.4. Research Questions

The main research question, the study sought to answer was:

What is the effect of stakeholder participation on the performance of donor funded agriculture projects in the ATA ACC program case?

The sub-questions were:

1. What influence does stakeholder participation in project initiation has on performance of donor funded agriculture projects?
2. What influence does stakeholder participation in project planning has on performance of donor funded agriculture projects?
3. What influence does stakeholder participation in project execution has on performance of donor funded agriculture projects?
4. What influence does stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation has on performance of donor funded agriculture projects?

1.5. Objective of the Study

1.5.1. General Objective

The main objective of this quantitative study was to assess the influence of stakeholder participation on the performance of donor funded agricultural projects taken ATA ACC program as a case.

1.5.2. Specific Objectives

The following were specific objectives of the study:

1. To examine how stakeholder participation in project initiation influences performance of donor funded agricultural projects.
2. To examine how stakeholder participation in project planning influences performance of donor funded agricultural projects.
3. To examine how stakeholder participation in project execution influences performance of donor funded agricultural projects.
4. To examine how stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation influences performance of donor funded agricultural projects.

1.6. Scope of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to assess the influence of stakeholder participation on the performance of agriculture transformation projects.

The study focused on 19 donor funded projects under the ACC program that are implemented by the ATA in Amhara, Oromia, SNNP and Tigray regions of Ethiopia between the year 2018 and 2021.The researcher limited the study to 192 respondents which included donors representatives, staffs of implementing agency performing on ACC program projects in the ATA's headquarters and regional offices, as well as projects' long term government owners (MoA and MoTI) federal and regional representatives, and hence did not include views of all stakeholders, particularly beneficiaries.

Each of the respondents was contacted using either their corporate or personal email accounts to complete a short questionnaire to evaluate stakeholder participation in four stages of the PLC namely, initiation, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. While the study acknowledged several important project performance metrics, it only looked at time, cost, and project sustainability.

1.7. Significance of the Study

This study will provide new insights into the benefits of engaging stakeholders throughout the PLC on the performance of agriculture transformation projects, particularly their sustainability.

In this regard, this study will allow the organization in charge of project management (ATA) and the project team to look at a problem from a different perspective and identify potential risks before they become challenges to the project or business. These enable the ATA and the team to make better decisions and increase the chance of completing a project successfully.

In addition to this, the evidence presented in this study will encourage the donor community to continue funding similar development projects as they effectively achieve their political objectives. It also allows them to provide a range of additional resources, such as social networks, expertise, and knowledge. Moreover, Government entities and institutions involved in agriculture, may also consider the result of this study to review their current project management methodology and improve their implementation effectiveness.

Finally, the analysis that is presented in this study may provide useful information for future research into the development of evidence-based stakeholder engagement best practices that are tailored to specific development interventions, beneficiaries, and purposes.

1.8. Limitation of the Study

The limitations of every research, according to Too (2009), will clarify the context of the findings and serve as directions for future research, so they need to be acknowledged. The limitations related to this research are briefly outlined as follows:

- Difficulty in obtaining access to some of the high-profile respondents, particularly steering committee members and program directors who are project sponsors.
- Lack of willingness, genuineness, and commitment from some respondents to provide the researcher with accurate and complete information, which has a significant impact on the quality (accuracy, completeness, consistency, and reliability) of the data obtained.
- The survey conducted in this research relied entirely on views of internal stakeholder groups including senior directors, project managers, project sub-grant team, program analysts, project team members, and few external stakeholder groups such as donors and projects long term owners' representatives. Considering the perspectives of other stakeholders such as, beneficiaries, could provide a more complete picture of participation level in the entire community of stakeholders. This, in part, could enhance the reliability of the findings of the study.

1.9. Definitions of Terms

Stakeholder: Any group or individual that "can affect or is affected by the achievement of a organization's objectives" (Freeman, 2010, p. 46).

Stakeholder participation: A process where individuals, groups and organizations choose to take an active role in making decisions that affect them (Rowe & Frewer, 2004).

Project Performance: The extent to which a project accomplishes its objectives, in this case, time, cost, and sustainability (Caccamese & Bragantini, 2012).

Project Sustainability: The capacity to sustain a desired level of output or service for an extended period. A project is called sustainable when a continued utilization of its results can be assured after the completion of the project (Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010).

Project Life Cycle: The project life cycle describes the stages a project goes through as it progresses from start to finish. A standard project typically has the following four major phases (each with its own agenda of tasks and issues): initiation, planning, implementation, and closure/ monitoring and evaluation (M&E) (KC, 2020).

1.10. Organization of the Study

The study comprises five respective chapters in which the researcher clearly states the entire process of the study, this includes:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides the background to the main concepts of the thesis and discusses the justification for the research along with a statement of purpose and objectives. This is then, followed by a brief description of the significance and outcomes of the research.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

This chapter presents the theoretical foundation of the main concept of stakeholder participation and its effects on performance of agriculture transformation projects under ACC program by reviewing relevant literatures on the topic. It also establishes the conceptual framework of the study, which identifies the relevant independent and dependent variables for stakeholder participation in different stages of a PLC and project performance, respectively, and maps out how they might relate to one another.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

In this chapter, the design and methodology that would be applied in the research process would be addressed. Moreover, the justification for employing those methods and research design is then explained.

Chapter 4: Results and discussion

This chapter would present and interpret the findings of the study.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

CHAPTER TWO: RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the existing related theoretical and empirical literature on the most important concept of stakeholder participation and examines its effect on project performance. Published literature addressing stakeholder participation and project performance is critically reviewed in order to understand the current state of knowledge, identify the research gap, and develop the theoretical concepts that will underpin this study. It also provides a framework for establishing the significance of the study, as well as a standard for comparing the findings of a study to other findings.

The rest of the chapter is organized as follows: the first section presents the theoretical review of the study. Then followed by the empirical review section, which examines related previous empirical studies conducted both in and outside of Ethiopia. Finally, following a thorough review of the literature, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks are developed, and the study gap is determined.

2.2. Theoretical Review

This review looks at existing theories, concepts, knowledge and their relationships on stakeholder participation and project performance and which, thereby help in better understanding of the study in question while at the same time putting forth a justification for the current study. It also attempts to show how the dependent and independent variables of the study are established under stakeholder participation theories and frameworks.

2.2.1. Stakeholder Participation

During the various stages of a development project, from planning to implementation to monitoring & evaluation, a vast number of interests will be affected, both positively and

negatively. Representatives of these interests are referred to as the project's stakeholders. A stakeholder then can be defined as a person or group of people who has a vested interest in the success of a project and the environment within which the project operates (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Freeman, 1994; Post et al., 2002). Vested interest is defined as having possession of one or more of the stakeholder attributes of power to influence, legitimacy of stakeholder relationships or urgency of the stakeholder's claim (Mitchell et al., 1997). In general terms, people who constitute stakeholders include those who can get affected or can affect the development, design, and implementation of a project or activity (B. L. Smith, 2003).

The concept of stakeholder participation has been variously conceived to include a process where individuals, groups and organizations choose to take an active role in making decisions that affect them (Rowe & Frewer, 2004; Wilcox, 2003). By considering participation as early as possible and throughout the process, as well as systematically representing relevant stakeholders, the results are more likely to fit local circumstances, improve project sustainability, encourage self-reliance among the participants, increase the numbers of people who potentially can benefit from development and enhance social learning. It keeps communities better informed, increases trust, understanding, and support for a project (Boon et al., 2013; Reed, 2008).

2.2.2 Participation, Background, and Interpretation

Participation as noted by Reed (2008) in neighborhoods and community groups, which has been a tradition in our culture, is re-emerging as a solution to many social challenges after going through a series of recognizable phases which include raising consciousness in the late 1960s, integrating local viewpoints in data collection and planning in the 1970s, increasing use of it as a standard in the sustainable development agenda of the 1990s, the subsequent critique of participation and disillusionment over its limitations and failings and; finally to a growing ‘‘post-participation’’ consensus over best practice, learning from the mistakes and successes. Because of this long history of development and the different contexts in which it has been applied, it is difficult to encapsulate it within one definitive term, leading rise to a wide range of interpretations.

The first interpretation which considers participation as an active process by which beneficiary or client groups influence the direction and execution of a development project with a view to enhancing their well-being in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance, or other values they cherish. Oakley (1991) tried to explain participation in terms of economic incentives to participate and be rewarded by some tangible economic benefit as explained. He goes on to say that participation in this context often takes the form of some kind of input or contribution into a project in order to enhance its chances of success and, correspondingly, personal economic benefit.

The other interpretation, which focuses on rural development, is widely influential among government and international agency supported development projects. According to this interpretation, participation includes people's involvement in decision-making processes, in implementing programs, their sharing in the benefits of development programs and their involvement in efforts to evaluate such programs (Conyers, 1985). It helped launch a whole form of analysis which took decision-making, implementation, benefits and evaluation as the key elements in the process of participation.

The last one, which focuses on non-governmental organizations (NGO) whose approach to involvement has been less tied to the notion of immediate economic gain, is concerned with coordinated attempts by groups and movements of those previously excluded from such control to increase control over resources and regulatory structures in given social circumstances (Smith C, 1998).

Besides the above efforts to distinguish definitions of participation, Oakley (1991) further indicates other broader approaches which we can use to help differentiate alternatives within such an all-embracing concept. One major form of differentiation is to distinguish between participation as a means or an end.

Participation as a means implies the use of participation to achieve some predetermined goal or objective. In other words, participation is a way of harnessing the existing physical, economic, and

social resources of rural people in order to achieve the objectives of development programs and projects. Participation as a means stresses the results of participation, in that the achieving of predetermined targets is more important than the act of participation. This is also evident in the power dynamics that exist between the grassroots, or target community, and aid/governmental organizations. Consequently, as Parfitt (2004) points out, project design (including definition of project goals and targets) and management are mostly left in the hands of conventional authorities, while those mobilized to participate will simply rally around to work towards the predetermined goal

In contrast to participation as a means, participation as an end is an active and dynamic form which enables people to play an increasing role in development activities. It is essentially a process which unfolds over time and whose purpose is to develop and strengthen the capabilities of rural people to intervene more directly in development initiatives. As many critics of participation argue, such a process may not have predetermined measurable objectives or even direction, rather it is a permanent feature of any development project, an intrinsic part which grows and strengthens as the project develops (U. Kothari, 2001; Mohan & Stokke, 2000; Oakley, 1991; Parfitt, 2004).

All of these interpretations and approaches offer an alternative basis for distinguishing among the numerous available methods and approaches for stakeholder participation, as well as a basis for selecting the methods that are likely to be most appropriate to the purpose of the work in a given context.

2.2.3. The Arguments for Participation, Benefits, and Cautions

Stakeholder participation in project management has been identified as one of the cardinal principles of good project management and good governance in recent times (Bingham et al., 2005; Edwards & Woods, 2017). Today all government development programs in all ministries apply participatory approaches which have not only increased interdisciplinary interest but have also exerted influence in social development policy and planning circles, both at micro and macro levels (Mulwa, 2008). Similarly, Kumar (2002) has noted that all major development organizations,

including multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, have reached a near consensus that development cannot be sustainable and long-lasting unless stakeholders' participation is made integral to the development process. However, there is a growing concern among some researchers, mainly from a practical point of view, that stakeholder participation is not living up to many of the claims that are being made (Oakley, 1991; Uphoff, 1986; Van der Helm, 2007).

Participation in development projects is regarded as important and has many benefits. It allows people to build their capacities and identify and own the project. This leads to efficiency and sustainability. Kumar (2002) has identified several factors which he considers as benefits that come with participation of stakeholders in a project. First, he claims that participation ensures efficient utilization of resources. It can, for example, help minimize misunderstanding or possible disagreements, saving time and resources that would otherwise be wasted on professional staff explaining or convincing people of a project's benefits. Participation also is cost effective since, if beneficiaries are taking responsibility for a project, then inexpensive outside resources will be required, and highly paid professional staff will not get tied down in the detail of project administration.

Second, stakeholders' participation increases effectiveness; projects can be finalized at a reasonable quality, within the established budget and schedule; it can also improve project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and leads to a better match of project services with beneficiary needs and constraints. Participation further increases effectiveness by giving them a say in determining the project's objectives and strategies.

Third, participation reduces dependency and increases self-reliance. With active involvement and participation in the process of development interventions, it is possible to break the mentality of dependence and promotes self-awareness and confidence and allows beneficiaries to examine their problems and think positively about solutions.

Fourth, stakeholder's participation can be a potent way of ensuring the flow of the benefits to the beneficiaries. Most government and many agencies directed or supported development projects reach only a limited, and usually privileged, number of rural people. Participation will extend this coverage in that it will bring more rural people within the direct influence of development activities. It will increase the numbers of rural people who potentially can benefit from development and could be the solution to broadening the mass appeal of such services.

Finally, as Boon et al. (2013) points out, participation is a fundamental human right that can boost trust, self-esteem, and allow participants to participate more actively in society through the skills they gain through participation.

Although stakeholder participation has been promoted as a way to improve project implementation, it should be noted that it comes with its own problems. As Boon et al. (2013) argued, participation is expensive in terms of administrative and advisory resources, which has both human and financial implications. One of the reasons for its high cost is the cost of preparation and implementation delays caused by the need to consult and negotiate with the relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, stakeholders can experience consultation fatigue as they are increasingly expected to participate in participatory processes that are not always well-run, and as they feel that their participation yields little reward or capacity to influence decisions that affect them. This, in turn, creates ambiguity and delays decisive action, especially when combined with the presence of non-negotiable roles or actors with veto power (Burton et al., 2004; U. Kothari, 2001; Vedwan et al., 2008).

Uphoff (1986) further strengthened the preceding argument by referring to stakeholder participation in development projects as "pseudo-participation," which occurs more in rhetoric than in reality. He also noted that there is a lot of lip service to the notion of participation but less commitment to the changes in direction and style that would be required to implement it.

2.2.4. Stakeholder Participation in PLC

It is argued that in order to ensure effective stakeholder participation, as well as to provide answers to questions such as who should be involved, at what stage in the project life cycle, to what degree and how they should be involved, the project organization must have commitment and a systemic approach to include a broad range of stakeholders at various levels to collaboratively participate in the decision-making process (Martinez & Olander, 2015).

Accordingly, Reed (2008) established a variety of best practice features for achieving participation success. One of the features that contributes to effective and efficient project implementation is engaging relevant stakeholders as early as possible and throughout the process. Participating stakeholders at different points of a project's lifecycle are directly and reciprocally connected to the project's performance. This should be taken into account right from the start, from project inception and planning to execution and monitoring and evaluation.

2.2.4.1. Stakeholder Participation in Project Initiation Phase

Project initiation is the first step of any development project cycle, which begins when a project concept is conceived and ends when the project is officially approved, usually in the form of a signed project charter (Kloppenborg et al., 2006). It is at this stage that project needs are identified, possibilities are explored, the project background is assessed, relationships are fostered, trust is built, partnerships are established, and alternatives are designed. It also provides opportunity to start building the norm of participation in which all stakeholders work together to shape the project in order to address the project's objectives.

According to Williams (2008), decisions taken during the initiation process relate to existing strategies and determine the overall framework through which the project will develop in the future. Furthermore, early stakeholder participation allows for more innovative solutions and an intense exchange of ideas, which leads to better results as it brings interested parties and their interests on board (Aapaoja et al., 2013; Elmahroug et al., 2014; Pheng, 2018; Tammer, 2009).

Following the suggestion of Amadi (2017) and Menoka (2014), a systematic and complete stakeholder identification and classification should take place during project initiation to better balance all points of view, including competing and diverging interests. This information, as noted by L. W. Smith (2000), then used to identify and understand the needs and expectations of major stakeholders both within and outside the project environment. It also revealed the characteristics of project advocates and opponents, their interrelationships and interfaces, and the potential risks the project can face.

When stakeholders are involved in determining their needs, they are better able to reach a shared understanding of an issue, approach it as important as it is, and commit to solving it (Petersen et al., 2003). Early project stakeholder participation fosters positive communication and ownership, which can lead to increased credibility, transparency, and early awareness of constraints, eventually enhancing project performance (Di Maddaloni & Davis, 2017). Furthermore, it allows projects to make use of the stakeholders' knowledge base (Aapaoja et al., 2013).

2.2.4.2. Stakeholder Participation in Project Planning Phase

Project planning is arguably the most important phase of a project, and it has a significant influence on the project performance (Globerson & Zwikael, 2002; Zwikael, 2009). It begins after the initiation phase and it is the stage where the project plans are documented, the project deliverables and requirements are defined, and the project schedule is created to meet the project's objective. It is generally the stage at which the entire project is planned. It entails putting together a series of plans that includes the scope plan, work breakdown structure, project scheduling plan, resource plan, budget plan, procurement plan, risk management plan, quality plan, and communication plan. These plans describe how the project will be executed, monitored, and controlled, and closed (Project Management Institute, 2017). Furthermore, as stated by Williams (2008), they establish directions for the course of actions, time and resource estimate for the activities to be performed, and a framework for management review and control.

In most cases, development projects span several public organizations, private businesses, donor agencies, and ownership boundaries. Furthermore, apart from the technical specifications, the entire planning processes are completely reliant on the identification and decomposition of stakeholder needs and expectations into product, service, or outcome requirements (Project Management Institute, 2017). As a result, the planning stage necessitates the participation of several stakeholders of varying interests in order to deliver the projects on time, on value, within budget and scope, and exceeding stakeholders' expectations. (Brody, 2003; Matu et al., 2020).

Affirming the above point, Yaffee et al. (1996) claimed that participation and collaboration of key stakeholders was the single most important factor that enabled projects to reach quality outcomes.) Innes (1996), Ndegwa et al (2017), and Ochieng & Sakwa (2018) also recommended to scale up stakeholder participation during the planning process since it is an essential mechanism for increasing collaboration and support, cultivating trust, and allowing for more successful outcomes that met a broader set of interests. It is further noted by Brechin et al (1991), that enhancing participation in planning and development efforts assists on developing and acquiring a sense of ownership over a proposal and ensures that all interests are represented in the final project plan.

2.2.4.3. Stakeholder Participation in Project Execution Phase

The Project Execution phase is typically the longest phase of the project management life cycle, during which the project plan is put into action to produce the expected deliverables. It involves coordinating people and resources, assessing risks effectively, managing stakeholder expectations, and integrating and performing the activities of the project plan (Al-Agele & Ali, 2017; Duncan, 1996).

As several researchers have pointed out, project implementation calls for active participation of various stakeholders in project activities. This makes it possible to carry out planned project activities in an effective and efficient manner. This includes quality assurance, budget control, team development, and change of request (Olander & Landin, 2005; Pheng, 2018).

Quality assurance is one of the project activities that can be strongly influenced by stakeholders and has a direct effect on project performance. According to Hutchins (2000), stakeholders can influence quality in two ways. First in determining project requirements by providing their needs as inputs. And second by assessing the consistency of the project results and deliverables in terms of how well they fulfill the needs and desires of the stakeholders. In both cases, stakeholder involvement helps to ensure product or service meets the project's intended goals and has value to the beneficiaries, and that the beneficiaries will use the product or service as it was originally intended.

Similarly, as noted by Nokes & Kelly (2007), stakeholder participation has an impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of the budgeting process, as well as the equitable distribution of funds, by proposing innovative ideas that streamline duplicated administrative processes, and save cost. Moynihan (2003) further asserts that stakeholders' input can provide information that helps managers enhance project budgeting processes, either by better resource allocation decisions or better budgeting approach choices.

The other activity that is highly influenced by stakeholder involvement is team building process. According to Jaafar & Yusof (2019), it has been found that different key stakeholders, such as project manager, project sponsor and consultants/service providers, are heavily involved in the formation of teams and assigning of task to teams. In this process, the project manager together with other key stakeholders play a crucial role in the development of the respective team and setting roles and targets to the team which were assigned and scheduled in the planning phase.

In their study, Jaafar & Yusof (2019) also mention change of request as yet another process that faces significant levels of intervention from key stakeholders. Modification of project plans, budget variance calculations, and resource approval are just a few of the activities where stakeholders have a greater contribution to achieve the objectives of the phase.

2.2.5.3. Stakeholder Participation in Project Monitoring and Evaluation Phase

Project monitoring and evaluation involve efforts to systematically collect, consolidate performance information, and assess measurements and trends to generate improvements (Gumz & Parth, 2007; Project Management Institute, 2017). While they are perceived as being related, it is clear that they have distinct functions and roles to play in the life cycle of project delivery, though they are complementary. (Callistus & Clinton, 2018; Otieno, 2000).

As Callistus & Clinton (2018) indicate, monitoring is the regular systematic collection and analysis of information to track the progress of program implementation against pre-set targets and objectives. It provides information on the progress of work at any given time (and overtime) in relation to the planned or desired targets and outcomes, which is descriptive in intent. It is primarily concerned on efficiency, and the use of resources. On the other hand, evaluation is the objective assessment of an ongoing or recently completed project, program or policy, as well as its design, implementation, and results. It analyzes why intended results were or were not achieved, assesses specific casual contributions of activities to results, examines implementation process, explores unintended results, provides lessons, highlights significant accomplishments or program potential, and offers recommendations for improvement. Evaluation looks at the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of an intervention and addresses issues of causality.

Despite their differences, according to Tache (2011), monitoring and evaluation are inseparable management functions. This means that the monitoring function will not be complete in measuring performance until the monitored information has been evaluated to establish the extent of success or failure during project implementation. Hence, M&E is part of a similar process that is implemented in all phases of the project lifecycle and on all project components such as operations, budget, performance, risk, and objectives, among others (Kusek & Rist, 2004).

It is evident that over time, there has been a greater universal acceptance of involving all key stakeholders in the M&E process for evaluating outcomes, identifying hindrances and challenges surrounding the projects, reflecting on project accomplishments, and recommending solutions

based on local realities (Coupal, 2001). Also, Makuwira (2004) asserts that effective participation of stakeholders in M&E of projects and programs can improve transparency, accountability, project and program sustainability, and ensure positive community level stakeholder attitude to projects.

Furthermore, as stated by Umhlaba Development Services (2017), monitoring and evaluation of development activities allows government officials, donor agencies, and civil society to learn from past experiences, improve service delivery, plan and allocate resources, and demonstrate outcomes as part of transparency and accountability to key stakeholders. Hence, active, committed, and well-informed stakeholders in project M&E is useful to the organizations as it significantly increases beneficiary satisfaction, which in turn improves project performance as a whole (Coulter & Coulter, 2008; Nyaguthii & Oyugi, 2013).

Finally, carefully choosing and encouraging stakeholders to engage in the project strengthens their sense of ownership and involvement in the project, which leads to its success (Aaltonen, 2011; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004).

2.2.5. Project Performance

Success in project management has been traditionally measured against time, cost, and quality. This method was based on the mere assumption that only the three constraints affected the performance of a project (Caccamese & Bragantini, 2012; Shenhar & Dvir, 2007). However, many researchers suggested that, in addition to the triple constraints, other factors should be considered in measuring the performance of a project (Ahsan & Gunawan, 2010; Atkinson, 1999). Shenhar et al (2002) further explained the issue, stating that knowledge of project management must adapt a more project specific approach to measure and judge project success as the constraints are heavily influenced by the nature and context of the projects.

In general, public sector development projects or programs are intended to provide public services such as increasing agriculture productivity and commercialization, alleviating poverty, and

improving living conditions, protecting the environment and basic human rights, assisting victims of natural or man-made disasters, developing capability, and establishing basic physical and social infrastructure (Khang & Moe, 2008). Although there are some hard elements within development projects, they are often concerned with soft issues such as social or human development. (Crawford & Bryce, 2003). The soft objectives of development projects are usually much less visible and measurable compared to other projects such as industrial or commercial. The intangibility of development project objectives and deliverables, as well as cultures and attitudes of the many parties involved in the development projects, such as the lender or donor, the government, the client, stakeholders, a project management or coordination unit and a multitude of contractors present a unique challenge in measuring the performance of the projects that require adaptation of the existing project management body of knowledge (Khang & Moe, 2008).

To address the above challenge, Diallo & Thuillier (2004) proposed a comprehensive set of success criteria that includes beneficiary satisfaction, development sustainability, conformation of products and services produced, achievement of project objectives, completion of the project on time and within budget, obtaining a high national profile, and having a good reputation among principal donors. Out of these criteria, only the most effective ones, time, cost, and sustainability are considered in this study for a more realistic and balanced performance assessment. While the term "sustainability" has a broad meaning that differs depending on the context, it is mostly defined by the extent to which it addresses the interests of the stakeholder communities (Litz, 1996). Accordingly, it can be defined in this study as the ability for a project to remain feasible even after external funding has been withdrawn (Hansmann, 2010; Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010). With this definition, it is considered as something that is inherently good since it accounts for the well-being of the stakeholders.

2.3. Empirical Review

The empirical review examines previous empirical studies that have been conducted on stakeholder participation and its influence on agricultural project performance in order to identify gaps, learn about the key findings and methodology employed, and any observed best practices

that can help answer the research question. The review is organized based on the geographic proximity to the country of interest in the study, starting with the international, then Africa, and lastly Ethiopia.

Heravi et al.(2015) conducted a study in Australia to examine the extent of stakeholder involvement in the planning process of construction building projects. To effectively investigate the level of involvement, the authors conducted a series of literature reviews and identified and categorized five significant phases involved in the planning process. Data was collected from 200 companies working in the residential building sector in Australia through questionnaire-based survey. The survey focused on the perceptions of four key stakeholder groups involved in medium and high-rise residential building projects: owner/developer, construction/project management, designer and contractor. Using descriptive statistical analysis, the study revealed that contractors have the lowest level of contribution during early project stages, implying the need for project leaders and owners to adopt improved decision-making strategies and design a plan to enhance the effectiveness of stakeholder involvement from the beginning of the project to its completion stages to ensure the project's success.

Even though the research indicated in its suggestion the importance of involvement of key stakeholders from the beginning to completion stage of a project, it failed to establish their (stakeholders) contribution at all phases of the project life cycle. In addition, it focused only on the construction sector and relied solely on the perspectives of four stakeholder groups. Considering the opinion of other project members such as, subcontractors, suppliers and surrounding social environment could provide a more complete picture of involvement level in the whole community of stakeholders.

Another similar study, conducted by Waris et al. (2019), revealed that the ten constructs (activities) of stakeholder engagement, namely effective communication, continuous consultation, understand intention and behavior, implement plans, build good relationships, analyze changes, risk mitigation, compromise conflicts, understand project success and good project governance, have a positive direct relationship with renewable energy projects success. The aim of the study was to

investigate the relationship between ten identified constructs of stakeholder engagement and renewable energy projects success in Malaysia. The study adopted a quantitative research methodology and data was collected through survey questionnaires applied to the 200 Renewable Energy Power Providers (REPPs) located in in Malaysia, using stratified random sampling. REPPs were selected as targeted respondents due to multi-disciplinary roles as project providers, energy service providers, technology providers, project consultant, and acts as the main contractor for interconnections. The study utilized the R-squared (R2) of regression analysis to determine the significance of stakeholder engagements critical constructs on renewable energy project success.

Waris et al. (2019) examined the effect of stakeholder engagement on project performance in its entirety without integrating it to the different stages of a project lifecycle. Adopting a project lifecycle perspective on stakeholder engagement broadens our understanding of the potential of the constructs to influence the success of a project, as projects normally create a dynamic context for stakeholder engagement as they move through different phases during their lifecycle.

Following the same path, Matu et al. (2020) conducted a similar study in Kenya that examined the influence of stakeholder participation in project initiation on successful completion of urban road transport infrastructure projects. It employed pragmatic research paradigm to facilitate mixed research methods. 309 respondents were sampled using purposive and simple random sampling procedures. The study applied both descriptive and inferential statistics for the data analysis and revealed that participation in project initiation had a strong positive correlation with project completion. Although all stages of the project cycle are important, the study focused on the initiation stages only. This must be expanded to incorporate the remaining stages of a project lifecycle in order to obtain a complete view of the situation.

In contrast to the previous study, Magassouba et al. (2019) attempted to address the influence of stakeholder involvement at all stages of a project's lifecycle. The purpose of the study was therefore, to examine the influence of stakeholder involvement in project identification, planning, implementation and monitoring on development project performance within organizations in Guinea. By conducting an exploratory research, the researchers found out that stakeholder

involvement in project identification, planning, implementation and monitoring enhances the chance of project success, though their findings need to be further validated through rigorous evaluation. As a result, this research used a quantitative research method to acquire a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

To explain the above findings further and emphasizing its significance, Wamugu & Ogollah (2017) conducted an explanatory study following an entirely different research strategy and design. The aim of the study was to assess the role of stakeholder participation on the performance of constituency fund development projects in Kenya, a case of Mathira East Constituency. The study considered stakeholders' participation in four stages of the project lifecycle such as initiation, planning, implementation, and monitoring and control. The population was the entire Consultancy Development Fund (CDF) project initiated in Mathira East Constituency in the year 2013/2014. Sample from the population was obtained using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The study adopted a descriptive research design, whereby both quantitative and qualitative data was collected using a questionnaire and interview from Mathira East constituency.

The study used descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the data and reached the conclusion that participation in CDF project initiation, planning, implementation, and monitoring and control has a positive and significant effect on project performance. Most notably, participation in project initiation activities such as identification screening and selection is the most critical because it is at this stage that stakeholders can have the highest influence on performance of CDF projects. In assessing project performance, the study was limited to tangible project performance indicators, such as timely completion, quality output and efficiency in budget utilization. However, the study should also consider intangible indicators like development sustainability while measuring performance of projects, particularly development projects.

In Ethiopia, several studies have attempted to examine the relationship between stakeholder participation and project performance from different perspective in the Ethiopian context, despite the fact that they are not closely related to the issue of this study. One of these is a case study carried out by Gurmu et al. (2017) with the aim of assessing the practices and challenges of

stakeholder management on Mission for Community Development Program (MCDP) projects. The study used a descriptive research approach and relied heavily on primary data, in addition to the secondary data sources, obtained from the field utilizing structured and semi-structured questionnaires, as well as focus group discussions and key resource person discussions. Data was collected from 30 stuff members of MCDP organization, including 1 CEO, 1 Program Manager, 4 Project Managers, 7 Project Coordinators, 11 Frontline Project Staff and 6 key resource persons using census techniques. Structured questionnaire was used to get information from CEO, Program Manager and Project Managers, whereas Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was used to provoke information from Project Coordinators, Frontline Staff and key resource persons.

The study discovered various challenges such as low commitment, conflicting interests, personal benefit seeking, ineffective communication, low understanding of different issues, deviation from common agreement, unrealistic expectations and high cost of management that had an impact on the performance of the projects in the organization. In addition, lack of institutionalized stakeholder management was identified as one of the critical factors to achieve effective result of project performance.

The other is a research titled "Analysis of stakeholders roles and connections in the feed value chain in Ethiopia" by Bezabih et al. (2020). The study was a qualitative research type and carried out in Ethiopia’s Amhara and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People’s Region (SNNPR), aimed to empirically examine stakeholder roles and relationships and the implications of these on the development of feed value chains in Ethiopia. Qualitative data was collected from 65 respondents through focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) with existing stakeholders in the feed value chain. The data was analyzed using Thematic and content analyses techniques.

The analyses revealed that in order to upgrade and improve the country's fodder value chain's performance, key stakeholders such as research institutes and woreda bureaus of agriculture must be involved in creating and maintaining woreda-level forage development platforms.

2.4. Theoretical Foundation

This study is anchored on two theories: Stakeholder theory and theory of Constraints. These theories provide vital theoretical foundation on the subject of the study by relating the study theme with study variables. They also serve as a framework for constructing research hypotheses and interpreting research findings.

2.4.1. Stakeholder Theory

The stakeholder theory is a theory of organizational management and business ethics that emphasizes the interconnected relationships between a business and its customers, suppliers, employees, investors, communities, and others who have a stake in the organization (Freeman, 1994; Walsh, 2005). The theory argues that a firm should provide value for all stakeholders, not just for shareholders (Lin, 2018). It addresses morals and values in managing an organization, such as those related to corporate social responsibility, market economy, system theory, organizational theory, and social contract theory.

According to Donaldson & Preston (1995), the theory has three distinct aspects that are interconnected and mutually supportive: descriptive, instrumental, and normative. The descriptive approach is used to describe and explain the relationship between an organization and its stakeholders. The instrumental approach, in conjunction with descriptive/empirical data, is used to identify the connections that exist between the management of stakeholder groups and the achievement of corporate goals (most commonly profitability and efficiency goals). The normative approach examines the function of the corporation and identifies the "moral or philosophical guidelines for the operation and management of the corporation."

Hence, the stakeholder theory can be used in this study for explaining the interaction between stakeholder involvement and organizations' goal as it emphasizes the building and maintenance of sustainable stakeholder participation as the key to firm performance (Wicks et al., 1994). It also serves as a basis for identifying, classifying, and categorizing stakeholders, as well as examining

the conditions under which these parties should be treated as stakeholders to ensure better outcomes.

2.4.2. Theory of Constraints

Theory of Constraints is a management paradigm that views any manageable system as being limited in achieving more of its goals by very small number of constraints (Dani, 2006). A constraint, according to Mackey & Barney (2005) is anything that prevents the system from achieving its goals. The idea behind the theory is to find and manage that constraint and evaluate performance with improvements in place; thus, it can be used for optimizing project processes to boost overall project performance.

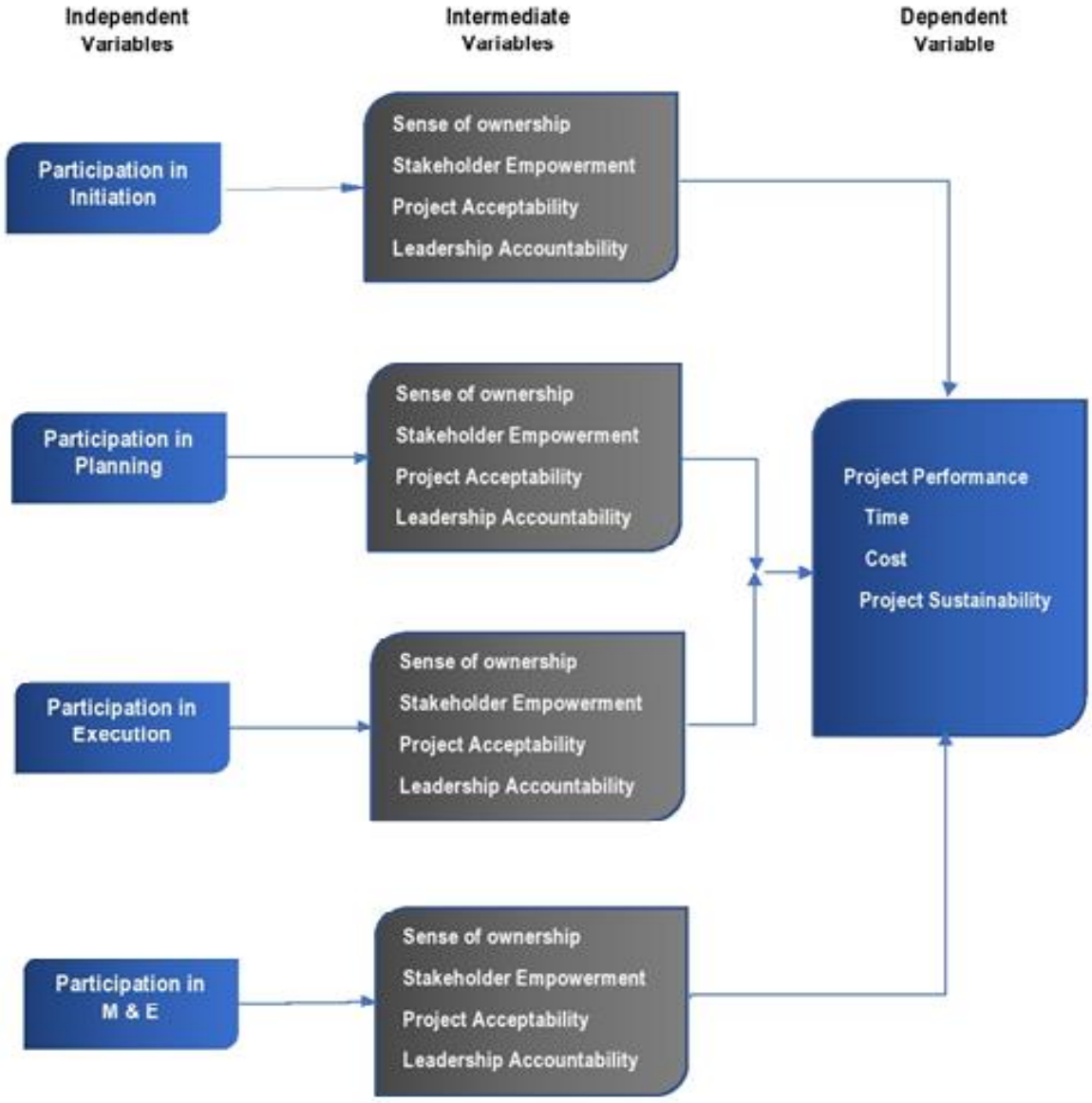
In the project management context, the theory of constraints can be used to plan more efficiently the various activities that are part of the project life cycle. As a result, it provides a framework for this study to examine the role stakeholders in optimizing various project activities to improve overall project performance.

2.5. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework upon which the study was based, with stakeholder participation in project initiation, planning, implementation, monitoring, and control as the study's independent variable. Sense of ownership, stakeholder empowerment, project sustainability, and leadership accountability were the intermediate variables for each independent variable. Project constraints such as time, cost, and sustainability would constitute the study's dependent variable.

The intermediate (latent) variables for each independent variable were measured by evaluating the 20 activities that represent the 4 independent variables. Project performance, the dependent variable was assessed in terms of cost, time, and project sustainability, which was influenced by the latent variables of each independent variable - sense of ownership, stakeholder empowerment, project acceptability, and leadership accountability.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Adapted from Wamugu & Ogollah (2017).

2.6. Research Gap

The researcher may have learned from literature review, ATA's annual performance report and researcher's own experience that fragmented stakeholder participation at various stages of ATA's donor funded agricultural projects has a significant effect on the projects' budget, donors' trust in the project, timeliness of execution, and negative beneficiary reactions to the project. If left unchecked, this will result in projects failure and will have detrimental effect on the organization's ability to successfully undertake future projects.

Such a lesson emphasizes the importance of, and need for, a thorough examination of the influences of stakeholder participation throughout each project lifecycle on project performance. However, the perspective that fully embrace stakeholder participation at all stages of the project life cycle is missing from much of the literature, particularly those conducted in Ethiopian context.

In order to bridge this gap, this research focuses on assessing the influence of stakeholder participation at all stages of the project life cycle, namely initiation, planning, execution, and monitoring and evaluation, on the performance of donor-funded agricultural projects in the case of ATA's ACC program. This brings in some missing knowledge in the relationship between stakeholder participation and project performance in Ethiopia. It also encourages the use of intangible indicators such as sustainability in addition to the standard time and cost indicators for measuring the performance agricultural development projects in order to arrive at a more realistic and balanced performance assessment.

2.7. Hypothesis

Stakeholder participation in project initiation and project performance

Effective stakeholder participation in the initiation phase of a project enhances a shared understanding of an issue, approaches it as important as it is, and commits to solving it (Petersen

et al., 2003). It also reveals the characteristics of project advocates and opponents, their interrelationships and interfaces, and the potential risks the project can face (L. W. Smith, 2000).

Early project stakeholder participation fosters positive communication and ownership, which can lead to increased credibility, transparency, and early awareness of constraints, eventually enhancing project performance (Aapaoja et al., 2013; Di Maddaloni & Davis, 2017).

H01 = Stakeholder participation in project initiation phase has no significant effect on the project performance.

H1 = Stakeholder participation in project initiation phase has a significant effect on the project performance.

Stakeholder participation in project planning and project performance

Globerson & Zwikael (2002) and Zwikael (2009) identified a positive relationship between project planning and project performance. According to Williams (2008), planning establishes directions for the course of actions, time, and resource estimate for the activities to be performed, develops the specification of project end products, determines the methods to be used to deliver the project end product and provides framework for management review and control. Apart from the technical specifications, the entire planning processes are completely reliant on the identification and decomposition of stakeholder needs and expectations into product, service, or outcome requirements (Project Management Institute, 2017).

As a result, the planning stage necessitates the participation of several stakeholders of varying interest interests in order to reduce distrust of the project process or outcome, strengthen commitment to project objectives and processes, and boost credibility. These, in turn, play a significant role in completing projects on time, on budget, and on scope while exceeding stakeholders' expectations (Brody, 2003; Matu et al., 2020).

H02 = Stakeholder participation in project planning phase has no significant effect on the project performance.

H2 = Stakeholder participation in project planning phase has a significant effect on the project performance.

Stakeholder participation in project implementation and project performance

The Project Execution phase is typically the longest phase of the project management life cycle, during which the project plan is put into action to produce the expected deliverables. It involves coordinating people and resources, assessing risks effectively, managing stakeholder expectations, and integrating and performing the activities of the project plan (Al-Agele & Ali, 2017).

As Olander & Landin (2005) pointed out, project implementation calls for active participation of various stakeholders in project activities. This makes it possible to carry out planned project activities in an effective and efficient manner.

H03 = Stakeholder participation in project implementation phase has no significant effect on the project performance.

H3 = Stakeholder participation in project implementation phase has a significant effect on the project performance.

Stakeholder participation in project monitoring and evaluation, and project performance

It is evident that over time, there has been a greater universal acceptance of involving all key stakeholders in the M&E process for evaluating outcomes, identifying hindrances and challenges surrounding the projects, reflecting on project accomplishments, and recommending solutions based on local realities (Coupal, 2001). Also, Kelly (2001) asserts that effective participation of

stakeholders in M&E of projects and programs can improve transparency, accountability, project and program sustainability and ensure positive community level stakeholder attitude to projects.

Hence, active, committed, and well-informed stakeholders in project M&E is useful to the organizations as it significantly increases beneficiary satisfaction, which in turn improves project performance as a whole (Coulter & Coulter, 2008; Nyaguthii & Oyugi, 2013).

H04 = Stakeholder participation in project monitoring and evaluation phase has no significant effect on the project performance.

H4 = Stakeholder participation in project monitoring and evaluation phase has a significant effect on the project performance.

2.8. Summary

The chapter examined literatures that provide a theoretical and empirical underpinning for stakeholder participation and how it influences project success, particularly public development initiatives. Although there is an agreement among researchers that stakeholder participation has an impact on public development projects, there is a tendency to analyze it only using traditional parameters such as time, cost, and quality rather than factors specific to public development projects that are less visible and intangible such as sustainability. Moreover, the researchers focused solely on the positive effects of participation and ignored the negative effects it could have on the project.

Therefore, this study sought to find out how stakeholder participation influences project performance using time, cost, and sustainability parameters.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology employed in this study, including the research philosophy, research approach, research design, the sampling technique, the data collecting methods, the instrument utilized to gather data, as well as the statistical tools employed in processing the data. It explains how the researcher collected the necessary data for this study, as well as how the data were processed, interpreted, and presented in the most straightforward manner feasible.

3.2. Research Philosophy

Choosing an appropriate research philosophy is an important part of the research methodology as it contains important assumptions about the way in which the researchers view the world (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). These assumptions help the researchers to clarify the research design in terms of what type of evidence is required and how it should be gathered and interpreted to provide optimum answers to the research questions (Johnson & Clark, 2006). Additionally, as Saunders et al. (2009), pointed out, by thinking philosophically and reviewing various research paradigms, researchers can begin to recognize the limitations of the different paradigms, allowing them to select the most appropriate research design for their purposes.

Accordingly, this study attempted to take a pragmatic paradigm, which is a combination of positivist (concerned with observable social reality/facts) and interpretivist (based on understanding human nature and their varying role as social actors) philosophies to address the research question. The Pragmatic paradigm focuses on the research question, the research consequences, and the utilization of multiple data gathering methods to address the research questions (Tashakkori et al., 1998). Thus, this paradigm is geared towards what works best for the particular research question rather than what might be considered absolutely and objectively true or real (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

3.3. Research Approach

The research approach influences design and provides an opportunity to consider benefits and limitations of various approaches available to the researcher. Two types of approaches are available- deductive and inductive. Deductive approach is concerned with developing a hypothesis (or hypotheses) based on existing theory, and then designing a research strategy to test the hypothesis, while an inductive approach involves the search for pattern from observation and the development of explanations – theories – for those patterns through series of hypotheses (Saunders et al., 2009; Wilson, 2014).

This study uses deductive research approach as it aims to explain and test the causal relationships between concepts and variables through hypotheses about how stakeholder participation in different project life cycle stages influences the performance of agriculture transformation projects. It also provides the means to operationalize the concepts in such a way that facts to be measured quantitatively, as well as research findings can be generalized to a certain extent (Babbie, 2020; Snieder & Larner, 2009).

3.4. Research Purpose

Among the four research purposes of exploration, description, explanation, and application, this study followed an explanatory research to achieve the objective of this study- which is to assess the influence of stakeholder participation on the performance of donor funded agriculture transformation projects. This sort of research is considered appropriate for this study as it enables the researcher to establish the causal relationship between stakeholder participation and performance of a project by employing various quantitative analysis techniques such as graphs, charts, and statistics. Furthermore, it allows the researcher to collect qualitative data in order to explain the reason why stakeholder participation influences the performance a project. This widens the range of the study and provides a deeper understanding of the problem.

3.5. Research Strategy

A Research Strategy is a step-by-step plan of action that guides the researcher's thoughts and actions, allowing the researcher to conduct research in a systematic and timely manner to accomplish the study's objectives (Walliman, 2010). It enables a researcher in describing the rationale of the study as well as selecting the appropriate data collection and analysis procedure. There are different research strategies from which to choose. Some of them are experiment, survey, case study, and action research. Selecting the right one is greatly influenced by the research question(s) and objectives, the extent of existing knowledge, the amount of time and availability of other resources, as well as your own philosophical underpinnings (Saunders et al., 2009). Thus, the researcher adopted a case study strategy to conduct this study.

3.5.1. Case Study Strategy

By using a case study as a research strategy, researchers can gain a rich understanding of the context of the problem under study and the processes being put into practice (Morris & Wood, 1991). Robson (2002) defined case study as ‘a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence. Yin (2009) further explained the meaning of it as a comprehensive research strategy that can be used for either descriptive or explanatory purposes to describe a situation, or to test explanations for why specific events have occurred, although case studies tend to be used more for the exploratory purposes. In the explanatory research, the case study can therefore be used to make causal inferences.

Hence, for this research, the researcher chose a case study strategy since it provides in-depth explanation of how contemporary phenomena of stakeholder participation in the real-world context (the ACC) influences the performance of agriculture transformation projects. In addition, the strategy has been found to be a practical alternative solution when there is a time and fund limitation to obtain big sample data in order to implement the study’s specific objectives and answer the research questions.

3.6. Research Method

Since employing a case study as a research strategy necessitates using more than one source of data, this study used mixed method research, in which quantitative data plays the primary role, with qualitative data supplementing it (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

Mixing two methods provides broader insights into the subject of investigation than would be possible using the predominant method alone. It also allows the strengths of each type to cover the limitations of the other; for example, the detail provided by the qualitative approach can lend support and understanding to the quantitative data. Moreover, mixing methods in research is more realistic, as it allows participants to use both numbers and words in their responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Thus, in this study, both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analysis procedures are used to answer the research questions and better evaluate the extent to which the research findings can be trusted, and inferences made from them (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

3.7. The Time Dimension

Regarding the time sequence of data collection, research design is classified into two types: cross-sectional research (involves collecting data at one point in time) and longitudinal research (collects data over an extended period) (Babbie, 2020).

Due to time constraints, this study used a cross-sectional research since it aims to explain a particular phenomenon, namely the relationship between stakeholder participation and project performance as they exist in a defined ACC population at a specific point in time.

3.8. Study Population, Sample and Unit of Analysis

3.8.1. Target Population

According to Creswell & Clark (2017), a target population (universe) is the complete group of individuals or things to whom the researcher seeks to generalize the study findings. Donors, program steering committee members, implementing agency's (ATA) program directors, project managers, program sub-grant team, analysts and various project team members performing on ACC program projects in the ATA's headquarters and regional offices, as well as projects' long term government owners (MoA and MoTI) federal and regional representatives, are the study's target group. There are 250 people in total in the target population.

3.8.2. Sampling Technique

Data from the target population was collected using various methods in the studies. Some opted to utilize the census approach, which involves looking at the entire population, while others employed other sampling techniques to choose some elements from the population.

This study employed a census method, which is costly and time-consuming, yet it is a recommended method when the population is heterogeneous and the size is known, as in this study. Furthermore, since it collects and analyses data from every possible case or group member of the population, it reduces sampling error and produces an accurate and reliable representative result (Saunders et al., 2009).

To overcome the drawbacks of the method, the study used an email questionnaire, which is well known for its low cost and convenience of collecting data from a large number of respondents in a short period of time.

3.8.3. Unit of Analysis

According to Dolma (2010), a unit of analysis is the entity about which the researcher seeks to say something about at the end of the study, and it is regarded the focus of the study, within which

most factors of causality and change exist. It is primarily determined by the study's research question.

For this study, the unit of analysis was the agricultural projects under the ACC program, which are implemented by Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA).

3.9. Data Collection Method

Research that adopts a case study approach typically combines data collection methods and sources. The use of multiple data collection techniques and sources strengthens the credibility of outcomes and enables different interpretations and meanings to be included in data analysis, a process known as triangulation (R. K. Yin, 2009).

This study relied on self-administered closed ended questionnaire and face-to face semi-structured interviews as data collection method.

3.9.1. Self-administered Questionnaire

Self-administered close ended questionnaire employed to collect primary data from various stakeholders of the program. The indicators of stakeholder participation were measured using a five-point Liker scale, where higher values indicated stronger participation.

The study adopted a standard questionnaire developed by Wamugu & Ogollah (2017) and tested the questionnaire items on four conveniently selected respondents to see if there was any confusion about the items and if they had any suggestions for improvement. The researcher used an online survey tool called Google Forms to format and distribute the questionnaire to respondents via their company or personal email accounts.

3.9.2. Semi-structured Interview

This study used a semi-structured face-to-face interview, which enables the researcher to seek explanations for quantitative responses received from questionnaire. This type of interview was chosen because it is open and the questions are loosely structured, allowing respondents to express themselves fully. It also enables the researcher to follow interesting and unexpected points raised by participants to collect further information on those points (R. K. Yin, 2009).

The interviews were guided with the help of predetermined questions aimed to extract information of research interest (Schwab, 2013).

3.10. Source of Data Collection

To obtain relevant data for this study, both primary and secondary data sources were used.

3.10.1. Primary Data Source

Primary data is a type of data that is collected by researchers directly from main sources through questionnaires, interviews, etc. for the first time (C. R. Kothari, 2004). For this study, primary data was collected from donors, program steering committee members, implementing agency's (ATA) program directors, project managers, program sub-grant team, program analysts and various project team members performing on ACC program projects in the ATA's headquarters and regional offices, as well as projects' long term government owners (MoA and MoTI) federal and regional representatives.

3.10.2. Secondary Data Source

Secondary data is the data that has already been collected through primary sources and made readily available for researchers to use for their own research. The data could be collected for a specific project or for general usage with no defined research objective, as in the case of organizations annual performance report (C. R. Kothari, 2004).

Accordingly, in order to identify and answer the research questions, this study used secondary data sources such as ACC program projects documents, journal articles, books, ATA annual and quarter progress reports, ATA web portal and other documents related to the topic of the study that are considered to be highly valid and well-referenced in academic articles.

3.11. Data Analysis

The statistical analysis on the quantitative data set was performed in two steps. In the first step, the characteristics of the dataset was organized, described, and summarized using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation.

Following that, inferential statistics such as Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression were employed to analyze the relationship and influence of stakeholder participation on project performance, thereby verifying the four hypotheses.

Quantitative data collected from the respondents was coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The qualitative data from the interview was analyzed manually using a thematic analysis, which involves summarizing and organizing data into meaningful groups (tagging with codes) in order to uncover a theme or pattern that correspond with the research questions. This, in combination with quantitative analysis, provides additional useful insight and a greater understanding of the research problem, allowing it to be addressed in as real a manner as is possible.

3.12. Ethical Considerations

As the study used email questionnaires, which are regarded as intrusive and are blamed for infringing on respondents' privacy, the researcher ensured respondents' confidentiality and anonymity by separating or modifying any personal identifying information provided by participants from the data and protecting it from being discovered by others. To further protect respondents and other humans who may be influenced by this study, the researcher addressed additional critical ethical consideration aspects such as obtaining full consent from participants

prior to the study, avoiding the use of offensive, disrespectful, immoral, discriminatory, or other unacceptable language in the formulation of questionnaire and interview questions, and avoiding any deception or exaggeration about the aims and objectives of the study (Bell et al., 2018).

3.13. Validity and Reliability

Reliability and validity are concepts used to evaluate the quality and credibility of a research. They indicate how well a method, technique or test measure something. Reliability is about the consistency of a measure, and validity is about the accuracy of a measure (Oktavia et al., 2018).

3.13.1. Validity

Validity refers to how accurately a method measures what it is intended to measure. If research has high validity, which means it produces results that correspond to real properties, characteristics, and variations in the physical or social world. Generally, it is assessed by checking how well the results correspond to established theories and other measures of the same concept.

The following are the most commonly utilized measures of validity that can be employed to ensure the validity of this research.

3.13.1.1. Content Validity

Content validity assesses the extent to which the measurement covers all aspects of the concept being measured (Haynes et al., 1995). In this study, content validity is ensured by developing and refining the model and constructs using multiple sources of data, including previous studies and expert interviews, as well as consulting assigned advisor to ensure that the model and constructs are relevant to and representative of the targeted constructs (Sireci, 1998).

3.13.1.2. Construct Validity

Construct validity is a measure of the instrument's property, ensuring that the method of measurement corresponds to the constructs the study wishes to measure (Westen & Rosenthal, 2003). It refers to the extent to which a study investigates what it claims to investigate.

To achieve construct validity in this study, the researcher, in consultation with the appointed advisor, ensures that the indicators and measurements are carefully developed based on relevant existing knowledge and by triangulating multiple data sources to look at the same phenomenon from different perspectives (Yin Robert, 1994).

3.13.1.3. Internal Validity

It refers to the causal relationships between variables and results. It makes the conclusions of a causal relationship credible and trustworthy (Saunders et al., 2009).

To establish the internal validity of this study, the researcher constructed the following plausible causal argument that is rigorous enough to support the research results: first, develop a clear research framework that demonstrates the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Two, compare empirically observed patterns to projected patterns or patterns established in previous studies and situations. Third, verify findings by adopting multiple perspectives from stakeholder participation theory and existent literature (Gibbert et al., 2008).

3.13.1.4. External Validity

External validity refers to the extent to which results from a study can be applied (generalized) to other situations, groups, or events (Saunders et al., 2009). Case studies like this one do not involve in making inferring conclusion from sample data to a population (Numagami, 1998; Yin Robert, 1994). Instead, they compare the results of the study to a previously developed theory. In this sense, the case study, like survey, does not represent a "sample," and the purpose of doing a case

study must be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) rather than to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization) (R. K. Yin, 2009).

To improve the external validity of this study, as recommended by R. Yin (2010), the researcher provided a clear justification for choosing the case study and adequate details on the case study environment, as well as a logical and reasonable argument for how these findings might be applied to similar situations.

3.13.2. Reliability

Reliability refers to the absence of random error (mostly caused by participant error and bias), enabling subsequent researchers to arrive at the same insights if they conducted the study along the same steps again (Quintão et al., 2020).

To minimize these errors and enhancing the reliability of this study, the researcher followed a rigorous research ethical practices to keep interview and questionnaire participants identity anonymous. Moreover, it was attempted to dispatch questionnaires and conduct interviews at a more ‘neutral' time when employees might be expected to be neither on a ‘high' anticipating the weekend nor on a ‘low' with the work week ahead of them. To further ensure the reliability of the study, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient test was done to check the internal consistency of the Likert-type scale used in collecting respondents’ data. Accordingly, the alpha coefficient for the variables was 0.9, indicating that the variables have relatively high internal consistency (scales having a reliability coefficient of 0.7 or higher is considered as having high internal consistency) (Gliem & Gliem, 2003).

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents analysis and discussion of study findings as described in the research methodology to answer the research questions. The analysis focused on the objectives of the study, which sought to establish the influence of stakeholder participation on performance of donor funded Agricultural Projects in the case of ATA's ACC program. The study used a variety of techniques to analyze the information gathered from the study's participants, including descriptive analysis, correlation matrix, multiple linear regression, and thematic content analysis.

The chapter includes the response rate, demographic characteristics of respondents, an analysis of study findings, discussion, and interpretation. Analysis of quantitative data was done using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 26.0, whereas manual thematic content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. These information were organized into groups based on the research objectives, and the results were presented in tables and figures.

4.2. Response Rate

The study used questionnaires and key informant interviews as tools for data collection. The study targeted to collect data from 255 respondents, 250 using questionnaire and 5 via semi-structured interview (one from donor agencies, one from government owners and three from implementing organization). The target for the interviews was 100%, while 192 respondents were able to respond to the questionnaires, resulting in a 76.8% response rate. According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), a response rate of 70% or higher is considered adequate, so a 76.8% response rate was sufficient for data analysis. This response rate was good enough to conduct a thorough and in-depth analysis of the research objective.

Table 1: Questionnaire Response Rate

	Target Size	Successfully Responded	Response Rate
Questionnaire	250	192	76.8%
Semi-structured Interview	5	5	100%
Total	255	197	

Source: Survey Results and Own Computation, 2021

4.3. Demographic of the Respondents

The study analyzed the demographic profile of the respondents to determine if they were psychologically and educationally prepared to provide satisfactory information on study variables. Accordingly, the respondents were asked to respond to their ages, educational level, gender, and experience in projects under the ACC program. The information collected from the target population was processed using SPSS version 26.0 and summarized in the tables below to determine the maturity, knowledge and level of understanding of the respondents.

4.3.1. Age of the Respondents

Table 2: Age of the respondents

Age of Respondents	Frequency	Percent
25 – 35 Years	79	41.1
36 – 45 Years	82	42.7
46 – 55 Years	25	13.0
Above 55 Years	6	3.1
Total	192	100

Source: Survey Results and Own Computation, 2021

As shown in Table 2, it can be noted that majority of the respondents were in their mid-life stage, with 42.7% being between the ages of 36 and 45, and 41.1% being between the ages of 25 and 35.

This implies that most of the respondents were mature enough and had sufficient life experience to understand the complex aspects that influence the success of a project.

4.3.2. Gender of the Respondents

Table 3: Gender of the respondents

Gender of Respondents	Frequency	Percent
Female	72	37.5
Male	120	62.5
Total	192	100

Source: Survey Results and Own Computation, 2021

As shown in Table 3, 62.5% of respondents were male, while the remaining 37.5% were female. This implies that the views of both men and women (though in small number) are considered in this study. This is significant because they are exposed to and affected in different ways in different situations.

4.3.3. Education Level of the Respondents

Table 4: Education level of respondents

Education level of Respondents	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor	114	59.4
Master	74	38.5
PhD	4	2.1
Total	192	100

Source: Survey Results and Own Computation, 2021

As shown in Table 4, a large proportion of the respondents (59.4%) had Bachelor's degree, while 38.5% had Master's degree. The remaining 2.1% held a PhD. This shows that all the respondents

had the necessary education level to understand and provide reliable responses to questions about stakeholder participation and project performance.

4.3.4. Experience of Respondents in the ACC Program

Table 5: Experience of respondents in the ACC program

Experience of respondents in the ACC program	Frequency	Percent
< 1 Year	13	6.8
1 – 2 Years	74	38.5
> 2 Years	105	54.7
Total	192	100

Source: Survey Results and Own Computation, 2021

The table above depicts the experience of respondents in the ACC program. Most respondents, 54.7%, have been participating in the ACC program for more than two years. The remaining 38.5% of respondents have been in the program for one to two years, while only 6.8% have worked for less than a year. This indicates that majority of respondents have sufficient knowledge of the program to make an informed and objective response.

4.3.5. Roles of the Respondents in the ACC Program

Table 6: Roles of respondents in the ACC program

Roles of respondents in the ACC program	Frequency	Percent
Implementing Organization	131	68.2
Donor Agency	10	5.2
Long-term gov't Owner	51	26.6
Total	192	100

Source: Survey Results and Own Computation, 2021

As shown in Table 6, a high number of the respondents (68.2%) were members of the implementing organization, whereas 26.6% were long-term government owner focal persons. Donor agencies' representatives accounted for the remaining 5.2%.

4.3.6. Project Stakeholders Meetings Frequency

Table 7: Project stakeholders group meetings frequency

Roles of respondents in the ACC program	Frequency	Percent
Once a month	26	13.5
Once per three months	40	20.8
When need arises	89	46.4
Never met	37	19.3
Total	192	100

Source: Survey Results and Own Computation, 2021

As depicted in Table 7, 46.4% of respondents reported they hold stakeholder meetings as needed, while 20.8% reported they meet once per three months. Only 13.5 percent reported they met every month, while 19.3 percent reported they never met.

4.4. Descriptive Analysis

In this section, the study present quantitative descriptions of the research constructs in a manageable form by providing short summaries about the measures of the constructs. It also investigates and analyzes the necessary assumptions about the relationship between the variables, thus making the researcher ready for conducting further statistical analyses.

4.4.1. Outliers and Normality

The study employed skewness and kurtosis to verify whether the data is normally distributed or not. Skewness is an indicator of normality and measures the symmetry of the distribution, while kurtosis determines the degree of presence of outliers in the distribution. Hair et al (2006). The

table below summarizes the skewness and kurtosis of both the independent and dependent variables.

Table 8: Skewness and Kurtosis

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Initiation	192	4.1732	.55132	-.323	.175	-.337	.349
Planning	192	4.3346	.58308	-.799	.175	.501	.349
Execution	192	4.2956	.56299	-.260	.175	-.632	.349
M&E	192	4.2865	.40688	.763	.175	-.766	.349
Project Performance	192	4.1719	.59470	-.876	.175	.782	.349
Valid N (listwise)	192						

Source: Survey Results and Own Computation, 2021

The seriousness of skewness and kurtosis of the distribution can be measured or assessed by using Fisher's skewness and kurtosis coefficient (Kellar & Kelvin, 2012). If the fisher's skewness values are between -1.96 and 1.96, the results indicate that the distribution is not statistically different from the normal distribution. (Kellar & Kelvin, 2012). As indicated in Table 8, the study's Fishers skewness and kurtosis coefficients were between -1.96 and 1.96, indicating that the data was free of skewness and kurtosis issues.

4.4.2. Stakeholders Participation in the ACC Projects

Table 9: Stakeholders Participation in the ACC projects

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Project Initiation		
Need Assessment	2.39	1.406
Proposing Solutions	2.54	1.310
Project Identification	2.16	1.268
Stakeholder Identification	2.66	1.412
Initiating Project Request	2.27	1.313
Overall		
	2.40	**1.19**
Project Planning		

Setting Objectives	2.48	1.511
Scope Setting	2.67	1.445
Scheduling	2.92	1.399
Budgeting	2.67	1.389
Risk Identification	2.90	1.413
Establishing quality assurance and control system	2.74	1.340
Stakeholder engagement strategy	2.86	1.355
Overall		
	2.74	**1.26**
Project Execution		
Developing teams and assigning of tasks to teams	2.92	1.502
Procuring and deploying resources, including personnel	2.70	1.430
Implementing project management plans and deliver result	3.22	1.378
Monitoring and reviewing progress	3.57	1.151
Revising project plans and calculation of variations in project budgets	3.17	1.446
Overall		
	3.11	**1.15**
Project M&E		
Developing monitoring and evaluation criteria and tools such as Logical Framework (Logframe) and theory of change (TOC))	2.28	1.204
Monitoring project progress such as spending and quality	3.06	1.168
Performing baseline, midterm, final, terminal and impact evaluations	2.32	1.193
Documenting and disseminating lessons learned	2.84	1.222
Overall		
	2.62	**1.00**

Source: Survey Results and Own Computation, 2021

Table 9 summarized the involvement of key stakeholders in each of the four phases of the project cycle of the ACC program. It was noted that the highest level of involvement was during project execution phase with a mean of 3.11 and std. deviation of 1.15. This was followed by participation

in the planning and monitoring and evaluation phases, with the initiation phase having the least stakeholder participation with a mean of 2.40 and std. deviation of 1.19.

4.4.3. Factors Determining Level of Stakeholders Participation

Table 10: Factors determining level of stakeholder participation

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Tangible Benefits	192	3.73	1.135
Flexibility of Organization Procedures	192	3.50	.960
Stakeholder Empowerment	192	3.86	.930
Valid N (listwise)	192		

Source: Survey Results and Own Computation, 2021

Table 10 summarized the factors that determines the level of stakeholder participation in the ACC projects. As indicated in the above table, stakeholder empowerment had the greatest influence on the level of participation, with the highest mean of 3.86. The level of tangible benefits came in second, followed by the flexibility of organizational procedures in third. However, none of the respondents could mention any additional factors.

4.4.4. Importance of stakeholder participation in ACC projects

Table 11: Importance of stakeholder participation in ACC projects

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Participation in Initiation		
Increased project acceptability	3.88	.680
Created sense of ownership of the project	4.01	.641
Held project leadership accountable	2.82	1.053
Contributed to stakeholder empowerment	4.00	.638

Participation in Planning		
Increased project acceptability	2.88	.066
Created sense of ownership of the project	2.89	.068
Held project leadership accountable	2.79	.059
Contributed to stakeholder empowerment	2.86	.064
Participation in Execution		
Increased project acceptability	2.87	.066
Created sense of ownership of the project	3.49	.053
Held project leadership accountable	2.86	.065
Contributed to stakeholder empowerment	2.88	.067
Participation in M&E		
Increased project acceptability	2.92	.068
Created sense of ownership of the project	2.88	.066
Held project leadership accountable	2.02	.065
Contributed to stakeholder empowerment	2.37	.045

Source: Survey Results and Own Computation, 2021

Table 11 summarized the importance of stakeholder participation across the four phases of the project cycle of the ACC program. It was noted that the majority of respondents believed that stakeholder participation in project initiation was the most important factor in ensuring sense of ownership. Following that was stakeholder empowerment, which had a mean of 4.00. With a mean of 3.88, project acceptability was ranked third, while project leadership accountability was ranked last with 2.82.

Likewise, stakeholder participation in planning was found to have the greatest influence on sense of ownership, followed by project acceptability, then stakeholder empowerment, and finally, leadership accountability which was found to be the least.

In case of execution, stakeholder participation has the greatest influence on sense of ownership with a mean of 3.49. After that, stakeholder empowerment. Then came project acceptability, which was followed by leadership accountability with a mean of 2.86.

When it comes to project M&E, it was once again observed that participation has an effect on key terms that contribute to project success. With the mean of 2.92, the most impacted was project acceptability. Following that were a sense of ownership, stakeholder empowerment and leadership accountability, with mean scores of 2.88, 2.37, and 2.02, respectively.

Based on the findings, stakeholder participation in all four phases, with the exception of monitoring and evaluation, had the greatest influence on sense of ownership. Leadership accountability was the least affected.

4.4.5. Influence of stakeholder participation on project performance

Table 12: Influence of stakeholder participation on project performance

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Timely Completion	192	3.00	.068
Cost	192	2.93	.067
Project Sustainability	192	3.00	.068
Valid N (listwise)	192		

Source: Survey Results and Own Computation, 2021

As demonstrated in Table 12, almost all respondents agreed that stakeholder participation influenced all the performance parameters chosen for this study, namely time, cost and sustainability. The mean of the three indicated that stakeholder participation had the greatest impact on project sustainability and time, while it had the least impact on cost.

4.4.6. Barriers to Stakeholder Participation in ACC projects

Table 13: Barriers to Stakeholder Participation in ACC projects

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Rigid Organization Policy	192	3.27	192
Lack of Project Management Skill	192	3.59	192
Stakeholders Conflict	192	3.37	192
Inadequate Resource	192	2.66	192
Poor knowledge of stakeholder management	192	3.58	192
Lack of Institutional Arrangements	192	3.59	192
Valid N (listwise)	192		192

Source: Survey Results and Own Computation, 2021

As shown in Table 13, the most significant barrier to effective participation was lack of project management skill and lack of institutional arrangements, with a mean score of 3.59, while inadequate resource was the least, with a mean of 2.66. Others, in order of importance, were poor knowledge of stakeholder management, conflict between stakeholders, and rigid organization policy.

4.4.7. Ways to improve Stakeholder Participation

Table 14: Ways to improve Stakeholder Participation

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Capacity building and empowerment of stakeholders	192	.98	.124
Provide incentives for participation	192	.52	.501
Training in project management skills	192	.71	.453
Increase funding	192	.28	.448
Valid N (listwise)	192		

Source: Survey Results and Own Computation, 2021

The most effective way to improve participation, as indicated in Table 14, is through capacity building and empowerment, with a mean of 0.98. This is followed by training in project management skills. Providing incentives and increasing funding are the least effective ways to improve participation, with a mean of 0.52 and 0.28, respectively.

4.4.8. Correlation Analysis

The primary purpose of the study was to investigate the influence stakeholder participation on the performance of donor funded agricultural projects. The independent variables were initiation, planning, execution, and monitoring and evaluation. The dependent variable was project performance. The study used bivariate Pearson's coefficient of correlation (usually denoted by small letter r) to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between each independent variable and dependent variable. Values ranging from 0.3 to 0.7 (-0.3 to -0.7) indicate a moderately positive (negative) relationship. Values between 0.7 and 1.0 (-0.7 and -1.0), on the other hand, indicate a strong positive (negative) relationship. A value of 0 indicates that the two variables are completely independent of one another (Burns & Burns, 2008). The result is depicted in the table 15 below:

Table 15: Correlation Matrix for the Study Variables

		Initiation	Planning	Execution	M&E	Project Performance
Initiation	Pearson Correlation	1	.762**	.538**	.686**	.735**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N		192	192	192	192
Planning	Pearson Correlation		1	.800**	.775**	.811**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	.000	.000
	N			192	192	192
Execution	Pearson Correlation			1	.641**	.731**
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000	.000
	N				192	192
M&E	Pearson Correlation				1	.713**
	Sig. (2-tailed)					.000

	N	192
Project Performance	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	192

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

Source: Survey Results and Own Computation, 2021

The result of the analysis showed that there is a positive correlation between participation in initiation and project performance with a value of 0.735, implying that increasing initiation participation would increase project performance. Moreover, since the value is between 0.7 and 1.0, the correlation is strong.

Similarly, there is a strong positive relationship between project performance and participation in planning, execution, and monitoring and evaluation, with values of 0.811, 0.731, and.0713, respectively.

4.5. Regression Analysis

The study employed multivariate regression analysis to estimate and infer causal relationships between the dependent and independent variables. The study's dependent variable was project performance, whereas the independent variables were participation in project initiation, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

4.5.1. Multi-Collinearity

Multi-collinearity is the occurrence of high inter-correlations among two or more independent variables in a multiple regression model and provide redundant information about the response. It was measured by VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) and Tolerance. If the VIF value exceeds 10.0 or the tolerance is less than 0.2, then there is a problem with multi-collinearity (Hair Jnr et al., 2010; Ringle et al., 2015).

Table 16: Multi-Collinearity

Model		Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
1	Initiation	.381	2.627
	Planning	.181	5.525
	Execution	.345	2.898
	M&E	.374	2.676

a. Dependent Variable: project performance

Source: Survey Results and Own Computation, 2021

As the multi-collinearity statistics table indicated, the VIF values are less than 10 and the tolerance values are greater than 0.2. This indicates that the study's independent variables were free of any multi-collinearity issues.

4.5.2. Regression Model

The model summary and ANOVA tables below examined whether the independent variables, initiation, planning, execution, and monitoring and evaluation, when taken as a set, predict the dependent variable, project performance.

Table 17: Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.852[a]	.726	.720	.48064

a. Predictors: (Constant), M&E, Planning, Execution, Initiation

Source: Survey Results and Own Computation, 2021

Table 18: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	114.614	4	28.653	124.031	.000[b]
	Residual	43.200	187	.231		
	Total	157.814	191			

a. Dependent Variable: Project Performance
b. Predictors: (Constant), M&E, Planning, Execution, Initiation

Source: Survey Results and Own Computation, 2021

As indicated in the Tables 17 and 18, the regression model (with F = 124.03, Sig. = 0.000 < 0.001, R^2 = 0.73) was found to be significant. This suggests that the independent variables initiation, planning, execution, and monitoring and evaluation can predict project performance significantly and they account for 73% of the variance in project performance when all the independent variables taken together as a group. The remaining 27% can be explained by factors not considered in this study.

4.5.3. Coefficients of independent variables

Table 19: Coefficients of independent variables

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-1.141	.234		-4.876	.000
	Initiation	.450	.094	.298	4.807	.000
	Planning	.319	.110	.261	2.905	.004
	Execution	.421	.098	.280	4.306	.000
	Monitoring and Evaluation	.221	.109	.127	2.025	.044

a. Dependent Variable: Project Performance

Source: Survey Results and Own Computation, 2021

The above coefficient table examines each of the independent variables independently whether a given independent variable was significant on its own right. As a result, all the independent variables, initiation, planning, execution, and monitoring and evaluation are statistically significant

as their sig values (initiation sig = 0.000, planning sig = 0.004, execution sig = 0.000, and monitoring and evaluation sig = 0.044) are less than 0.05.

This implies that, since participation in initiation, planning, execution, and monitoring and evaluation were statistically significant, they account for a significant amount of unique variance in project performance. Or put it differently, the amount of variance that each independent variable account for, predicts, or explains in project performance unique to itself, is significant, i.e., each variable explains something in project performance that the others do not.

Consequently, the study came up with the following regression equation:

$$\mathbf{Y = -1.141 + 0.450X_1 + 0.319X_2 + 0.421X_3 + 0.221X_4}$$

Where: Y is Project performance

X_1 is participation in Initiation

X_2 is participation in Planning

X_3 is participation in Execution

X_4 is participation in Monitoring and Evaluation

From the regression equation established, assuming all factors (participation in Initiation, Planning, Execution, and Monitoring and Evaluation) fixed at zero, project performance would remain at unit of -1.141. It also shows that, assuming everything else remained constant, a unit increase in participation in initiation would increase project performance by a value of 0.450.

Similarly, as participation in planning increases by 1 unit, project performance is expected to increase by 0.319. It may also be derived from the equation that a single unit growth in participation in execution leads to 0.421 improvement in project performance. Likewise, a unit increase in monitoring and evaluation would result in a 0.221 increase in project performance.

This therefore implies that all the four variables have a positive relationship with project performance, with monitoring and evaluation contributing the least and participation in initiation contributing the most.

4.6. Hypothesis Testing

As indicated in Table 19, since participation in initiation has a unique significant effect on project performance, the null proposition, $\mathbf{H_{01}}$, is rejected and the alternative hypothesis, $\mathbf{H_1}$, is accepted.

Similarly, since participation in planning has a unique significant effect on project performance, the null proposition, $\mathbf{H_{02}}$, is rejected and the alternative hypothesis, $\mathbf{H_2}$, is accepted.

Likewise, since participation in execution has a unique significant effect on project performance, the null proposition, $\mathbf{H_{03}}$, is rejected and the alternative hypothesis, $\mathbf{H_3}$, is accepted.

Finally, the result of the regression analysis also indicated a unique significant effect of participation in monitoring and evaluation on project performance, the null proposition, $\mathbf{H_{04}}$, is rejected and the alternative hypothesis, $\mathbf{H_4}$, is accepted.

4.7. Findings of Qualitative Analysis

This section presented the qualitative findings after conducting an in-depth thematic analysis on the data collected from the interviews by organizing it around two themes: importance of stakeholder participation in all stages of a PLC to project performance, and barriers to effective participation and ways to improve the participation, which are all important in answering the research questions. The major stakeholders that this study focuses on are directors and project managers of implementing organization, as well as focal persons of donor agencies and long-term owners of the projects.

4.7.1. Importance of Stakeholder Participation to Project Performance

When asked about the importance of participation in all stages of a PLC in improving the performance of a project, all respondents agreed that meaningful participating in all stages of a PLC is critical in improving accountability and sense of ownership, which in turn is essential for enhancing all metrics of project performance, particularly project sustainability; however, the level of participation and the type of stakeholders participating in each stage should be tailored to a project's specific needs. Here are some remarks from some of the interviewees that support this point of view:

"I believe that actively participating in all stages of the project would increase one's sense of ownership over the project. This sense of ownership, along with accountability, will have a tremendous impact on the project's performance, as well as develops confidence and trust with the donors and lays a solid platform for working on future project with them." [IR_4]

"The level of involvement in digital agricultural projects compared to traditional agricultural projects is significantly different. In the former case, since it is difficult to exactly specify most of the criteria at the outset, an iterative approach such as agile is required, which needs continuous client interaction throughout the development process. Hence, unlike the traditional type projects, there is high level of participation in the execution stage than planning and initiation stages." [IR_2]

It is evident from the response that in order to have a positive impact on project performance, the level of participation need to be determined based on the type of project at hand.

4.7.2. Barriers to Effective Participation and How to overcome them

Respondents were asked to provide their opinions on the barriers that that prevent key stakeholders from effectively participating in all stages of agricultural projects. The majority of respondents

cited a lack of interest in agricultural projects as a major obstacle. This issue is explained by the focal persons of long-term owner of one of the projects under the ACC program:

"Even though we had an excellent involvement in the project's initiation and planning phases, our involvement was literally limited in the execution phase due to the lack of commitment of our higher managers who are also members of the steering committee of the project. This could be due to the managers' competing interests in how to proceed with the project implementation." [IR_3]

In response to questions about how to overcome the barriers, a project manager from implementing organization suggested that stakeholders need to incorporate participation in their job description and consider it as one of their tasks and responsibilities. He states:

"To participate effectively and contribute to the project's success, stakeholders should view it as one of their major duties rather than something they do on the side." [IR_1]

Supporting this idea, a director who coordinates and oversees three projects under his supervision emphasized that

"Stakeholders must plan together, participate in their share of tasks, and report to a pre-determined follow-up meeting to not only improve project execution capability, but also to build capacity of stakeholder to ensure continuity and sustainability of the project." [IR_5]

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the research, conclusions drawn from key findings, recommendations for ATA, and suggestions for further research based on the findings.

5.2. Summary of Findings

Organizations undertaking agricultural transformation projects are expected to adopt early stakeholder involvement approach, which results in the right conditions for various stakeholders to participate meaningfully throughout all phases of each project cycle, increasing the chances of successful project execution, organizational success, and buy-in for the organization's future key initiatives. Thus, it is crucial to evaluate stakeholder participation at all stages of a project as a critical factor in project performance.

The research evaluated the influence of stakeholder participation on the performance of donor funded agricultural projects in the case of ATA ACC program. To accomplish this main objective, secondary, as well a primary data was collected from employees of implementing organization, donor agencies and long-term government owners working at various corporate levels and located at federal and regional bureaus; and the data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods.

In response to the first research question, the study found out that when key stakeholders are involved in need assessment, proposing solutions, project identification, and stakeholder identification, it would increase sense of ownership and stakeholder empowerment. This finding agrees with Di Maddaloni & Davis (2017), who stated that involving stakeholders during the initiation phase would foster innovative solutions, positive communication, and ownership, which could lead to increased credibility, transparency, and early awareness of constraints, ultimately leading to better project performance.

Likewise, the study revealed that participating stakeholders in various activities of planning such as setting project objectives, scope setting, scheduling, budgeting, and so on, boosts a sense of project ownership and acceptability. This in effect greatly contributes to successful completion of a project. This is in line with the findings of several well-known researchers in the area, who stated that the planning stage, being the most important phase of a project at which directions for the course of actions, time and resource estimate for the activities to be performed, as well as a framework for management review and control are established, necessitates the participation of several stakeholders of varying interests in order to deliver the projects on time, on value, within budget and scope, and maintain sustainability of a project (Globerson & Zwikael, 2002; Matu et al., 2020; Zwikael, 2009). This answered the study's second research question, "How does stakeholder participation in project planning influence performance of donor funded agricultural transformation projects?"

Correspondingly, the study attempted to address the third research question by investigating the involvement of stakeholders in the execution stage. As a result, it was discovered that the participation has a significant positive impact on their sense of ownership and empowerment. These, according to Al-Agele & Ali (2017) and Olander & Landin (2005), in turn, enable them to carry out planned activities such as quality assurance, budget control, team development, and change of request in an effective and efficient manner, all of which are fundamental in successfully providing the expected deliverables.

Lastly, the findings of the study confirmed that participating in the M&E process of monitoring project spending and quality, evaluating outcomes, identifying hindrances and challenges surrounding the projects, reflecting on project accomplishments, and recommending solutions based on local realities has an effect on key terms of project acceptability and sense of ownership, which contribute to project success. This, as asserted by Coulter & Coulter (2008) and Nyaguthii & Oyugi (2013) , can promote transparency, accountability, project sustainability and assure positive beneficiaries attitude towards projects, which therefore, makes the project a success.

5.3. Conclusions

Considering stakeholder participation as early as possible, proactively, and consistently, in all stages of development projects would improve project performance and ensure project sustainability. This study sought to examine the impact of stakeholder participation on the performance of those projects designed and implemented by ATA to unlock the systemic bottlenecks impeding Ethiopian agriculture transformation. The findings obtained from the study showed that involving stakeholders from the start of the project life cycle in a proactive and coordinated manner would improves project acceptability, sense of ownership, stakeholder engagement, and leadership accountability. This, in turn, further improves the effectiveness and efficiency of organizations' implementation capability while ensuring the trust and satisfaction of beneficiaries, donors and other stakeholders.

Managing stakeholder participation in a coordinated manner that demonstrates interdependence and integration may provide organizations undertaking development projects with increased chances of successful project execution, organizational success, and buy-in for the organization's future key initiatives.

5.4. Recommendations

In reference to the findings, conclusions, and suggestions derived from the literature review, it is evident that stakeholder participation has an impact on the performance of agricultural projects. The study, therefore, makes the following recommendations to organizations undertaking similar projects in order to enhance project success rates even further and avoid any detrimental effect on their ability to successfully undertake future projects.

- Organizations should manage stakeholder participation in concerted and organized manner in order to get the most out of it.
- Organizations should develop a healthy and positive attitude toward stakeholder participation, despite the fact that it is time demanding and sometimes costly.

- Organizations should make their internal policies and procedures flexible in order to accommodate input from project stakeholders.
- Stakeholders should be capacitated and empowered by providing training, particularly in project management skills in order to participate meaningfully.

5.5. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The limitations related to this research and suggestions for future research are briefly outlined as follows:

- The survey conducted in this research used only perceptions of three stakeholder groups including long-term government owner, implementing organization, and donor agencies. Taking into account the perspectives of other project stakeholders such as, beneficiaries, unions and farmers associations, agricultural suppliers and surrounding social environment could provide a more complete picture across the entire community.
- The research considered only the three performance parameters such as time, cost and sustainability. Considering more intangible parameters, such as 'beneficiary satisfaction' and 'having a good reputation among principal donors', that measures the soft objectives of the projects, could be used to realistically quantify and judge project performance.
- The research used ATA's ACC program as a case. This forced the study to consider only the perspectives of those stakeholders who involved to the program directly or indirectly. To explore a broader perspective, it is crucial to engage wider range of stakeholders who has been involved in other types of developmental projects.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Participants,

I am a postgraduate student at Addis Ababa University, School of Commerce under the Department of Project Management. I am carrying out an academic study on the **INFLUENCE OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION ON PERFORMANCE OF DONOR FUNDED AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS: THE CASE OF AGRICULTURAL COMMERCIALIZATION CLUSTERS (ACC) PROGRAM UNDERTKAEN BY ETHIOPIAN AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION AGENCY (ATA)** for partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Project Management.

The questionnaire is divided into three sections: section I provides demographic information, sections II deals with stakeholder participation and section III contains questions related to influence of stakeholder participation on project performance.

I kindly request you to participate in this survey by providing honest responses to all questions listed below. The survey is brief and will only take about 15 to 20 minutes to complete. Your participation in the survey is completely voluntary and all your responses will be kept confidential. No personally identifiable information will be associated with your responses to any reports of these data.

Please click the link below to go to the survey Web site (or copy and paste the link into your Internet browser).

https://forms.gle/8NdvCjsv7qqoNrCdA

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION RESEARCH SURVEY

SECTION I - PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Gender

- ◯ Female
- ◯ Male

2. Age

- ◯ Below 25 Years
- ◯ 25 - 35 Years
- ◯ 36 - 45 Years
- ◯ 46 - 55 Years
- ◯ Over 55 Years

3. Education

- ◯ Diploma and Less
- ◯ Bachelor
- ◯ Masters
- ◯ PhD

4. Please specify your role in the ACC program.

5. How long have you been a stakeholder in the ACC program?

- ◯ Less than 1 Year
- ◯ 1- 2 Years
- ◯ More than 2 Years

6. How frequently do you meet as a project stakeholder group?

- ◯ Once per three months
- ◯ Once a month
- ◯ When need arises
- ◯ Never met

SECTION II - STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION LEVEL

This section requires information about your current level of participation in various activities throughout the project lifecycle phases.

7. Indicate the level of your participation on Initiation phase of the projects under ACC program in which you have been involved.

	None	Little	Moderate	Considerable	Very High
Needs assessment	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Proposing solutions	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Project identification	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Stakeholder Identification	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Initiating project requests	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

8. Indicate the level of your participation on Planning phase of the projects under ACC program in which you have been involved.

	None	Little	Moderate	Considerable	Very High
Settling project objectives/goals	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Scope planning	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Schedule planning	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Budgeting	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Risk identification	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Establishing quality assurance and control system	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Stakeholder engagement strategy	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

9. Indicate the level of your participation on Execution phase of the projects under ACC program in which you have been involved.

	None	Little	Moderate	Considerable	Very High
Developing teams and assigningoff tasks to teams	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Procuring and deploying resources, including personnel	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Implementing project management plans and deliver result	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Monitoring and reviewing progress	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Revising project plans and calculation of variations in project budgets	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

10. Indicate the level of your participation on Monitoring and Evaluation phase of the projects under ACC program in which you have been involved.

	None	Little	Moderate	Considerable	Very High
Developing monitoring and evaluation criteria and tools such as Logical Framework (Logfframe) and theory off change (TOC)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Monitoring project progress such as spending and quality.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Performing baseline, midterm, final, terminal and impact evaluations	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Documenting and disseminating lessons learned	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

11. What factors, in your opinion, determine the level of stakeholder participation inthe projects under ACC program you have been involved?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Tangible benefits	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Flexibility off organization procedures	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Levell off stakeholder empowerment	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

12. Other,

_____

SECTION III - INFLUENCE OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION IN PROJECT PERFORMANCE

This section requires your opinion on the influence stakeholder participation has on project performance.

13. Indicate how stakeholder participation in the Project Initiation phase influences performance of projects under ACC program.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Increased project acceptability by stakeholders	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Created a sense of ownership of the project by stakeholders	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Enabled stakeholders to hold project leadership accountable	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Contributed to stakeholder empowerment	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

14. Indicate how stakeholder participation in the Project Planning phase influences performance of projects under ACC program.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Increased project acceptability by stakeholders	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Created a sense of ownership of the project by stakeholders	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Enabled stakeholders to hold project leadership accountable	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Contributed to stakeholder empowerment	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

15. Indicate how stakeholder participation in the Project Execution phase influences performance of projects under ACC program.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Increased project acceptability by stakeholders	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Created a sense of ownership of the project by stakeholders	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Enabled stakeholders to hold project leadership accountable	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Contributed to stakeholder empowerment	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

16. Indicate how stakeholder participation in the Project Monitoring and Evaluation phase influences performance of projects under ACC program.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Increased project acceptability by stakeholders	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Created a sense of ownership ofthe project by stakeholders	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Enabled stakeholders to hold project leadership accountable	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Contributed to stakeholder empowerment	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

17. Indicate the extent to which stakeholder participation influences the following performance parameters.

	None	Low	Moderate	Strong	Very Strong
Timely completion	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Cost implication	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Project Sustainability	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

18. What are some of the barriers to effective stakeholder participation?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Rigid organization policies	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Technicality off some processes/lack off project management skills	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Conflict between stakeholder	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Inadequate resource	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Poor knowledge off stakeholder management	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Lack of institutional arrangements	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

19. Other,

_____

20. How can stakeholder participation be improved?

- [ ] Capacity building and empowerment of stakeholdersGive
- [ ] incentives for participation
- [ ] Training in project management skillsIncrease
- [ ] funding

Other: _____

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDELINE

(FOR DONORS, IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION AND OWNER REPRESENTATIVES)

Introduction

The purpose of this semi-structured interview is to collect qualitative data which enables the researcher to seek explanations for quantitative responses received from questionnaire, thereby allowing him to fully answer the research questions. The interview questions are designed with the study purpose in mind and expressed in such a way that there is no specific term that needs to be defined for the interviewees.

Interviewees are supposed to be selected from the implementing organization's top and middle management levels, as well as representatives or focal persons from long-term government owners and donor agencies, in order to possess a broad range of expertise and experience managing a variety of projects. To ensure that all the comments and responses suggested by interviewees are captured, a digital audio recorder will be used to record the interview. The interviews are scheduled to take place between July 20th and August 10th, 2021.

Interview Questions

Evaluating stakeholder participation in Project Lifecycle (PLC) phases

1. Do you participate in the ACC program?
2. What are some of the ways you participated during the following phases of the project cycle?
    i. Initiation
    ii. Planning
    iii. Implementation
    iv. Monitoring and Evaluation
3. How would you describe your level of participation?
4. What methods does the project use to get input from stakeholders on its performance?

Evaluating stakeholder participation in influencing performance

1. How do you think your level of involvement influence project performance?
2. Comment on the influence your participation has on the following performance parameters
    i. Project completion time
    ii. Project cost
    iii. Project sustainability

Identifying barriers to effective participation

1. What are some of the barriers to your effective participation?
2. How do you overcome those barriers?

Identifying factors to improve participation

1. How can your participation in projects be improved?
2. Do you suggest any approaches that can improve the effectiveness of stakeholder participation in the project?
3. How those approaches for better participation can be made possible? In what phases of the PLC?

Interview sessions' timing

Phase 1 - Introduction Phase: Introduction to the research (5 mins)

- Introduce the researcher and purpose of the research
- Assure the confidentiality of the interviews.
- Ask for permission to record the interview.

Phase 2 - Implementing Phase: Interview Questions (43 mins)

- Questions are available in the “interview question” section

Phase 3 - Closing Phase (2 mins)

- Check with interviewees about the possibility of contacting them again if the need arises

Source: Adapted from (Heravi Torbati, 2014).

APPENDIX C

LIST OF PROJECTS UNDER ACC PROGRAM

1. 8028 Farmer Hotline (IVR/SMS)
2. Agricultural Investment Mapping (AIM)
3. Agricultural One Stop Shop (AOSS) project
4. Agriculture Trade & Investment Promotion (ATIP)
5. AgriHub
6. Business Training at Farmer Training Centers (BT@FTC)
7. Climate Smart Innovation at Farmers Training Centers (CSI @ FTC)
8. Cooperative Based Seed Production (CBSP)
9. Direct Seed Marketing (DSM)
10. Enabling Next Generation Agriculture Researchers through Engaging Seasoned Scientists (ENGARESS)
11. Farmer Production Clusters (FPC) Digitization
12. Horticulture
13. Innovation Validation
14. Input Voucher Sales (IVS) System
15. Integrated Shallow Ground Water Irrigation Development (ISGWID)
16. Mechanization Service Center (MSC)
17. National Market Information System (NMIS)
18. RuSACCO Capacity Building
19. Tef Improvement Project (TIP

Source: (ATA, 2010).