



**Addis Ababa University School of Commerce  
Graduate Studies Program  
Department of Project Management**

**ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT SOFT SKILLS IN THE  
PROJECT SUCCESS:  
A CASE STUDY ON THE JOINT PROGRAMME RURAL WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT**

*By: Tsega Gebre-Iyesus*

*Advisor: Teklegiorgis Assefa (Assistant professor)*

**A Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement  
For the Degree of Masters in Project Management**

**November 2018  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

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## DECLARATION

I, Tsega Gebre-Iyesus, hereby declare that the project work entitled “**Assessment of the Importance of Project Management Soft Skills in the Project Success: A case study on the Joint Programme Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment**” is my own original work and has not been submitted for any degree in any other university. It is offered for the award of the degree of Master of Project Management from Addis Ababa University.

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## ENDORSEMENT

This is to certify that the project work prepared by Tsega Gebre-Iyesus entitled: “**Assessment Of The Importance Of Project Management Soft Skills In The Project Success: A case study on the Joint Programme Rural Women’s economic empowerment**” is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Project Management complies with the regulations of the university and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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## *Acronyms and Abbreviations*

Joint Programme Rural Women's Empowerment Project (JP-RWEE)

Community Conversation (CC)

Project Management (PM)

Project Management Institute (PMI)

Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK)

## **ABSTRACT**

*The ability to effectively manage projects and programs has become an increasingly important skill. However, many project managers are not able to successfully lead projects due to a deficiency of the necessary project management skills. Many projects suffer not from technical delivery, but from a lack of the soft skills that practitioners need to execute a project. The study focuses on the Joint Programme Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE) which was developed by four non-government organizations to accelerate economic empowerment of rural women in Afar and Oromia. Soft competencies such as emotional intelligence, leadership, communication have significant influence when dealing with people. These important skills are often overlooked at the project management processes, and it is important to understand what these skills entail. The study uses descriptive research method of data analysis to analyze both primary and secondary data sources. The primary source includes interviews, questionnaires and the researcher's observation. While secondary sources are books, journals, company reports and websites respectively. The study applies non-probability sampling technique. Questionnaires have distributed for 25 farmers association male and female members, 6 coworkers, 12 government and non-government partners officials to draw a sample from respondents. In addition, self-assessment and co-workers assessment conducted in order to analyze the practice of project management basic skills. The researcher's personal observation was also used to collect additional qualitative data. The general objective of this study is evaluating the soft skills used in a selected project, and assessing the impact of soft skills in the success/failure of any project. The findings of the research indicates that core competencies that help achieve a success especially in humanitarian projects are soft-skills. The researcher recommends few actions to be taken in order to capitalize these skills.*

*Key words: Soft-skills, Hard-skills, Project Management, Core competencies*

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Project Management as a whole has taken on new meanings in the last few decades; it has been said that project management is the new form of ‘general management’ (Pant, Baroudi 2008). The need for faster deadlines, increased use of teams, and decreased budgets have turned a project manager position into a conundrum of different skills. These skills include project management skills (outlined by the PMBOK®), technical talents of specific trade such as IT or architecture, as well as, soft skills. The incorporation and harmony of each of these skill sets are most often identified as the difference between a transformational or transactional leader. A transactional leader is a leader contingent on reward and manages by exception, which focuses on mistakes (Jensen, Kohn, Rilea, Hannon, Howells 2007). Contradictorily, a transformational leader is one who is comprised of, “idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration” (Jensen, Kohn, Rilea, Hannon, Howells 2007). A transactional leader would have both project management and technical skills. The crucial difference between transactional leaders and transformational leaders is the addition of soft skills.

Since most projects involve people to complete tasks, project managers who have strong soft skills have a higher degree of success in completing their projects. Commonly referred to as “soft skills”, interpersonal skills include leadership, communication, emotional intelligence, negotiation, expectations management, influencing, problem solving, and decision-making. Soft skills are largely intangible, not associated with a deliverable or a concrete output, and are generally employed without the use of tools or templates.

“Hard skills”, that is, the more technical aspects of the project manager’s role, generally involve the creation of a tangible deliverable such as a work breakdown structure, project schedule, critical path diagram, earned value reports, project budgets, and so forth. These skills are more technical in nature, and they often incorporate the use of tools such as scheduling software, spreadsheets, modeling tools, and a myriad of deliverable templates available.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The Joint Programme Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment (JP-RWEE) was developed by four humanitarian organizations to accelerate economic empowerment of rural women in two regions, Afar and Oromia, in Ethiopia.

The JP-RWEE was launched in 2013 as a five year global Joint Programme to support a results-oriented collaborative effort among the partners to promote the economic empowerment of rural women in Ethiopia. The JP-RWEE will target directly 2,000 pastoralist women in the regions of Oromo and Afar, and indirectly 12,000 household members, as well as over 14,000 community members, 80 rural women run producers’ cooperatives, 3,000 women members of rural savings and credit cooperative and 5,000 women members of producer’s cooperatives.

In such humanitarian activities, the effective use of soft skills make us more human in nature. Soft skills are skills that are intangible and include traits such as emotional intelligence, communication, problem solving, and conflict management (Marando 2012). Pant and Baroudi discuss in the International Journal of Project Management, that “the project management discipline still appears to place greater emphasis on hard skills at the expense of the softer human skills” (Pant, Baroudi 2008).

The Project Management Book of Knowledge has been one of the literary anchors for project management since 1987 (PMI®, 2013). Project Management Book of Knowledge explains soft skills as, ‘valuable assets when developing the project team’. Taking the context at its literal word, project managers should only ‘people skills’ when forming a team. Once the core team has been developed, project managers are to rely only on the technical data to push a project towards a success. This is solidified by the hundreds of additional pages of the Project Management Book of Knowledge that focus exclusively on the technical aspects of project management. This is merely a vague interpretation of what soft skills are and the breadth of their importance throughout all project management processes.

Gillard writes, “the skills required for project managers are now often divided fifty-fifty into traditional hard skills... and soft skills” (Gillard 2009). One must consider how the project managers can be near greatness at all, without fifty percent of the skills required.

Therefore, the study assess the soft skills applied in JP-RWEE project and its influence to the success of the project, evaluates the challenges and suggests the possible solutions if problems identified.

### **1.3 Basic Research Questions**

The researcher believes the significance of soft skills in project management has impact for the success/failure of the project. Thus, the entire effort of the paper revolves around seeking answers to the following basic questions:

- What is the practice of Soft-skills in JP-RWEE?
- How effective are soft skills practices in the JP-RWEE Project management?
- What innovative/creative way implemented by the project?
- What is the significance of soft skills in the success/failure of project management?

### **1.4 Objective of the Research**

#### *1.4.1 General Objective*

The general objective of this study is assessing the soft competencies practice in managing the JP-RWEE project and their associated impact on the success/failure of any project.

#### *1.4.2 Specific Objectives*

The study specifically addresses the following specific issues.

- Assesses the practice of soft skills in JP-RWEE;
- Evaluates how effectively these soft skills implemented in the JP-RWEE Project;
- Asses the innovation/creativity of JP-RWEE while implementing soft skills, if any;
- Evaluates the significance of soft skills in the success/failure of the project.

## 1.5 Significance of the Study

The study may alert the coordinators of JP-RWEE to give required attention on usage of soft skills in the similar projects that will be implemented in another part of the country. Besides the result of this research may have the below listed benefits.

- ✚ The study enlightened the impact of soft skills practice in the success/failure of any project and methods that exploit the benefit and overcome the problem.
- ✚ Identifying areas that may need development in order to enhance the effectiveness of project management.
- ✚ Would enable the would be managers to be aware of what is expected of them and provides the basis for applying soft skills as supplement to their knowledge.
- ✚ Would give a clue for other researchers who want to do further study in the area and to conduct detailed researches on the problem.

## 1.6 Scope of the Study

JP-RWEE has similar project that are being implemented in Afar region. The findings of the research would be more successful if it were conducted widely by including all projects. However, due to time and resource constraints, the study is limited in one of the Oromiya region project only.

## 1.7 Organization of the Study

The study incorporates five chapters. The first chapter deals with the problem and its approach. The second chapter represents the review of related literature review. The third chapter presented the methods and procedures used while gathering the data. Chapter four sorted out the analysis of the collected data using descriptive method of data analysis. The fifth chapter has wind up the study with summary of findings, conclusion and recommendation.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

*This chapter introduces the basic concepts of project management, soft skills and hard skills that support the study from theoretical and empirical point of view of the impact of soft skills in project management.*

#### 2.1 Theoretical Review

##### **Project and Project Management**

According to Project Management Book of Knowledge [2008] Guide which is considered as a standard definition, project is a *'temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product or service.'* Project is considered as achievement of a specific objective while; project management is a process of planning, scheduling and controlling of a project to meet the objectives. This doesn't include the critical human relations and project evaluation performed after project completion. Project brings about change and the management of change in an efficient way is realized as project management [APM, 2006, p.2].

**Project management** is the planning, organizing and managing the effort to accomplish a successful project. A **project** is a one-time activity that produces a specific output and or outcome. This is in contrast to a **programme**, an ongoing process, such as a quality control program, or 2) an activity to manage a number of multiple projects together.

#### 2.2 Soft skills for project managers

A 2017 study conducted by the Project Management Institute (PMI®) known as Pulse of the Profession®, revealed that possessing hard skills alone is no longer sufficient in today's increasingly competitive job market.

Hard skills in project management include creating work breakdown structures, a project budget, earned value assessments and critical path diagrams. Hard skills are technical in nature and involve the use of knowledge and tools to complete high-level tasks. These types of skills are easy to teach and quantify. It often involves the learner learning or improving a skill without having to unlearn a previous skill.

*Soft skills* on the other hand are subjective and undefined. It often deals with our relationship with people such as conflict resolution, communication, listening problem solving, etc. The subjective nature of soft skills makes it difficult to measure; however, results are eminent from final output such as the effectiveness of communication in an organization, relationship among team members, problem solving skills, etc. In a data-driven world, these skills have been somewhat de-emphasized. That’s a mistake when it comes to project management, where a combination of soft and hard skills is necessary.

As earlier mentioned, hard skills can be easily learned and defined. Oftentimes, the nature of the project would determine the hard skill is required. General hard skill required by a project includes ability to use project management software, schedule planning, effective documentation (charts, technical writing, sketching), etc. Essentially, most all of the hard skills in project management, cannot be implemented without applying a soft skill as well (Marando 2012). This point is reiterated in the table below.

Table 2.1: Hard Skills that lead to the use of Soft Skills

Hard skills that lead to	The use of Soft Skills
Completed schedules	Decision-making, negotiation
Budget Concerns	Communication, expectations management, negotiation
Risk management	Critical observation; adaptability
Change Requests	Adaptability; conflict resolution
Project Team Building	Leadership; strong work ethic; empathy
Diminished Resources	Problem-Solving; emotional intelligence; leadership
Poorly identified tasks	Decision-making; strong work ethic

The following are basic soft skills that apply directly to project management and the success of the project and the project team.

### 2.2.1 Leadership Capability

A popular argument in today's management world is the difference between leaders and managers. Although a lot of theories have been postulated trying to distinguish a leader from a manager, there is no clear-cut difference between these two as most of their duties are often interrelated. A good manager should have good leadership skills and be able to create a balance between leadership and management.

Good leaders have the ability to set a clear vision and inspire project team members to follow that vision. They have the ability to set goals, communicate them effectively and inspire people to successfully meet those goals.

As a leader, it is important to understand how teams work, and what the characteristics of a good team are. Teams are a constantly changing dynamic force in which objectives are discussed, ideas are assessed and decisions are made in an effort to reach previously set goals. Before working on a particular project, tasks and goals should be clearly defined and understood by everyone on the team. This, along with assigning tasks based on each team member's capabilities, is the responsibility of a leader.

### 2.2.2 Communication Skills

It is said that 90% of a project manager's time is consumed in communicating with stakeholders and the team members. Project managers are required to interact with and influence a wide range of stakeholders, including their project teams and project sponsors.

Successful project managers will effectively use e-mail, face-to-face meetings and status reports to communicate their ideas; they get decisions made and resolve problems with difficult stakeholders in a respectful and empathetic manner. They also understand the need to openly communicate project timescales/deadlines in advance, as well as to clearly articulate and champion the overall value of a project.

Many projects have failed due to poor communication amongst project team members or between the project manager and the team. Most projects demand multi-level communication with different stakeholders. A good project manager has an ability to communicate to stakeholders at different levels of hierarchy. Effective communication skills are, by far, one of the most important attributes project managers must possess as they interact with multiple stakeholders.

### 2.2.3 Conflict Management

Conflict Management is the practice of recognizing and dealing with disputes in a rational, balanced and effective way. Conflict management implemented within a business environment usually involves effective communication, problem resolving abilities and good negotiating skills to restore the focus to the company's overall goals.

Conflicts are inevitable, especially when managing a large group of people. Conflict can arise from the output of hard skills, such as budget, scope, schedules, and quality. These conflicts can include goal incompatibility, staffing resources, cost constraints, task uncertainty, performance trade-offs, and more. Unless a soft skill is used to lessen the conflict, the sources of the conflict may go unaddressed (Marando 2012).

There are five general techniques for resolving conflict. Each technique has its place and use:

- 1)**Withdraw/avoid.** Retreating from an actual or potential conflict situation; postponing the issue to be better prepared or to be resolved by others.
- 2)**Smooth/accommodate.** Emphasizing areas of agreement rather than areas of difference; conceding one's position to the needs of others to maintain harmony and relationships.
- 3)**Compromise/reconcile.** Searching for solutions that bring some degree of satisfaction to all parties in order to temporarily or partially resolve the conflict. This approach occasionally results in a lose-lose situation.

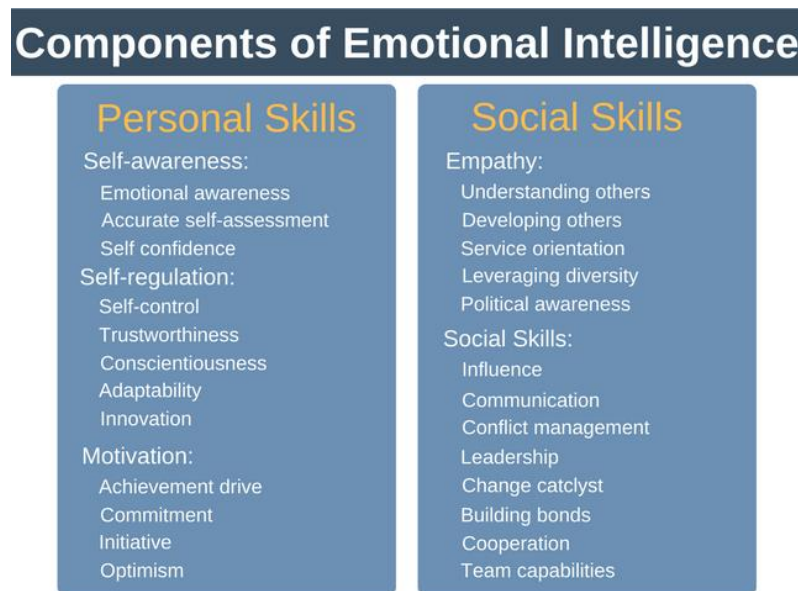
4)**Force/direct.** Pushing one’s viewpoint at the expense of others; offering only win-lose solutions, usually enforced through a power position to resolve an emergency. This approach often results to a win-lose situation.

5)**Collaborate/problem solve.** Incorporating multiple viewpoints and insights from differing perspectives; requires a cooperative attitude and open dialogue that typically leads to consensus and commitment. This approach can result in a win-win situation.

Understanding the dynamics of conflict management may help the project manager in overseeing the project and its success.

### 2.2.4 Emotional Intelligence

According to the Oxford dictionary, emotional intelligence is defined as, “the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one’s emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationship judiciously and empathetically” (Oxford Definition of emotional intelligence).



The study of emotional intelligence is divided into five categories: self-awareness, social-awareness, empathy, self-management, and social skills. Let’s examine each of the five components within the framework in more detail so we obtain a basic understanding of all the components that make up emotional intelligence.

Figure 2.1. Emotional Intelligence

#### *2.2.4.1 Self-awareness:*

People with high emotional intelligence are aware of and understand their emotions. They understand their strengths, but they also understand their weaknesses and work on them to improve them. The sub-skills of self-awareness are:

- **Emotional Awareness:** being able to recognize our own emotions and the impact they have on how we behave.
- **Accurate Self-Assessment:** being reflective enough to have awareness of our relative strengths and weaknesses.
- **Self-Confidence:** having belief in our own abilities. This confidence means we are not scared to take a contrary view if we believe it is the right thing to do.

#### *2.2.4.2 Self-regulation:*

Self-awareness allows us to be aware of our emotions, but it is self-regulation that gives people with a high EI the ability to control their emotions and behavior. The sub-skills of self-regulation are:

- **Self-Control:** our ability to manage our negative or disruptive emotions and stay positive and in control.
- **Trustworthiness:** we are relied upon as being honest and truthful.
- **Conscientiousness:** refers to taking accountability for our own actions and workplace performance, and not blaming others for any shortcomings.
- **Adaptability:** makes us adept at handling change, and gives us the ability to manage the different and often conflicting demands on our time.
- **Inventiveness:** our ability to both seek out and create new ideas.

#### *2.2.4.3 Motivation:*

Being able to motivate others is a core function of leadership and has become an essential skill for project managers. Motivation is known as the “will to act.” Everyone has motivational forces inside them, and as a manager it is important to understand what those are for each team member so as to tap into that and influence their behavior in a positive way.

- **Achievement Drive:** a measure of our desire to deliver and meet results, and our desire to want to do succeed.
- **Commitment:** our commitment to meet the goal both for ourselves and our team. Being prepared to make a personal sacrifice to ultimately meet our goal.
- **Initiative:** our get-up-and-go and our ability to hustle to get things done.
- **Optimism:** our ability to remain positive and continue pursuing our goals despite the obstacles that arise. This gives us the ability to bounce back from setbacks.

#### *2.2.4.4 Empathy*

Empathy is the ability to sense other people's emotions, along with the ability to imagine what the other person is thinking or feeling. People with empathy are good at listening, managing relationships, respecting the feelings of others, and understanding the agendas and motivations behind people's words and actions. The sub-skills of empathy are:

- **Understanding Others:** our ability to get under the skin and understand how another person sees and experiences a situation.
- **Developing Others:** our ability to understand the strengths and weaknesses of others, and then create a plan to help them develop their weaker areas.
- **Service Orientation:** refers to our capacity to anticipate and then meet customers needs.
- **Leveraging Diversity:** how strongly we see diversity as a positive, and even create opportunity through it.
- **Political Awareness:** understanding the power networks that exist within groups and knowing how to work within these structures.

#### *2.2.4.5 Social Skills*

People with good social skills are easy to talk with and know when to make eye contact and smile. They are often considered to be great team players because they put the interests of others ahead of their own. The sub-skills of social skills are:

- **Influence:** our ability to persuade and build consensus amongst co-workers.
- **Communication:** the ability to clearly communicate with others through the most appropriate channel.
- **Conflict Management:** the ability to manage and resolve disagreements.

- **Leadership:** our ability to get others motivated by our vision and want to achieve it.
- **Change Catalyst:** our ability to recognize quickly that change is needed, and then our capacity to initiate and manage that change.
- **Building Bonds:** our capacity to build and maintain mutually beneficial connections to others.
- **Cooperation:** our ability to work with others as part of a team to achieve a shared goal.
- **Team Capabilities:** our competence in building a team spirit and to bringing often diverse team members together.

### Soft Skills in Relation to the Project Management Process

According to the PMBOK® by the Project Management Institute®, there are five process groups; initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, and closing (PMI®, 2013). The following are the main aspects of each process and its predisposition towards soft or hard skills (Marando 2012).

**Table 2.2: Soft Skills in Relation to the Project Management Process**

<b>Project Phase</b>	<b>Soft-skill</b>	<b>Hard Skill</b>
<b>Initiating:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describing ideas and opportunities to those who influence and authorize projects</li> <li>• Dialogue needed to reach consensus regarding project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing concise and clear project charters</li> </ul>
<b>Planning:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determining measurable project objectives and outcomes</li> <li>• Establishing team organization and procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accounting for constraints and their impact</li> </ul>
<b>Executing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Filtering information to the appropriate level of detail for the audience</li> <li>• Identifying, evaluating, prioritizing, and communicating risks and issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring timely, accurate, candid information</li> </ul>
<b>Monitoring &amp; Controlling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report on work that has been done, and is currently in progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change management, including implementation of contingency plans</li> </ul>
<b>Closing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessing and communicating success criteria</li> <li>• Persuading team and management to prioritize lessons learned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effectively transferring responsibilities</li> </ul>

Each of the process groups contains hard skills that are vital steps needed to complete the process, but also include the soft skills that cannot be overlooked needed to in turn complete the hard skills. The interpersonal skills offer an advantage to the project manager in achieving the hard skills more swiftly, than without the soft skills.

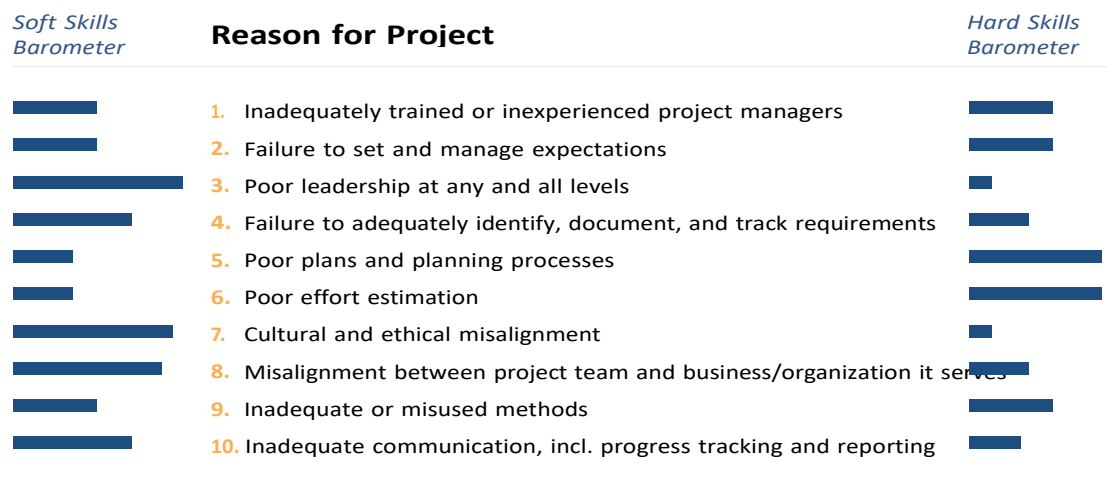
### **Community Conversation**

Community Conversations (CC) is one of the ways that JP-RWEE is planning to increase awareness and secure some practical change over the issues of women economic empowerment and technology use. This CC involves dialogical approach which involve series of dialogues on issues that are understood to pose challenge and obstacle to women's and men's daily lives. The aim of conducting community conversation is to promote understanding of deeper structural issues concerning women's participation, benefit and control, women's rights and create better understanding of discriminatory practices, how they manifest and impact women's access and benefit from opportunities, as well as how they claim rights, entitlements and benefits in their daily life. Through engaging in dialogue, women and men are expected to mutually learn and decide on what should be done to overcome those challenges. Community members engaged in the discussion are also expected to come up with resolutions (social contracts) on emerging changes with the aim of sustaining and expanding the changes.

## 2.3 Empirical Evidences

### Comparing Soft Skills and Hard Skills

Studies by the Standish Group, Gartner, and others all point out the same fact: projects very often fail. They are late, over-budget, and/or they fail to deliver the product they were designed to produce.



*Figure 2.2. Comparing Soft Skills and Hard Skills*

Shown above is a list of top ten reasons for project failure, assimilated from research published by the Standish Group<sup>1</sup> and gantthead.com contributors<sup>2</sup>. Along the left and the right sides of this list, we have two barometers with a rough estimate of the degree to which soft skills or hard skills contribute to each failure factor. The barometer levels are not intended to be exact by any means, and they are based on the author’s subjective classifications.

Based on the data above, even the top reasons for failure do not exclusively represent one set of skills or the other. It’s the combination of both skill sets of the project manager that push the project away from failure and toward success. The application of soft skills in daily project management tasks is why this category should be a primary focus in project management education.

## 2.4 Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical and empirical evidences the researcher develops the questions that will clarify the relationship of variables in the implementation of soft skills and its impact.

It is almost a consensus that good project managers need both soft skills and hard skills. Without soft skills, project managers cannot lead their teams; without hard skills, they cannot lead the projects. Thus, the conceptual framework demonstrates the mixed use of soft skills and hard skills has significant influence to the success of the project.

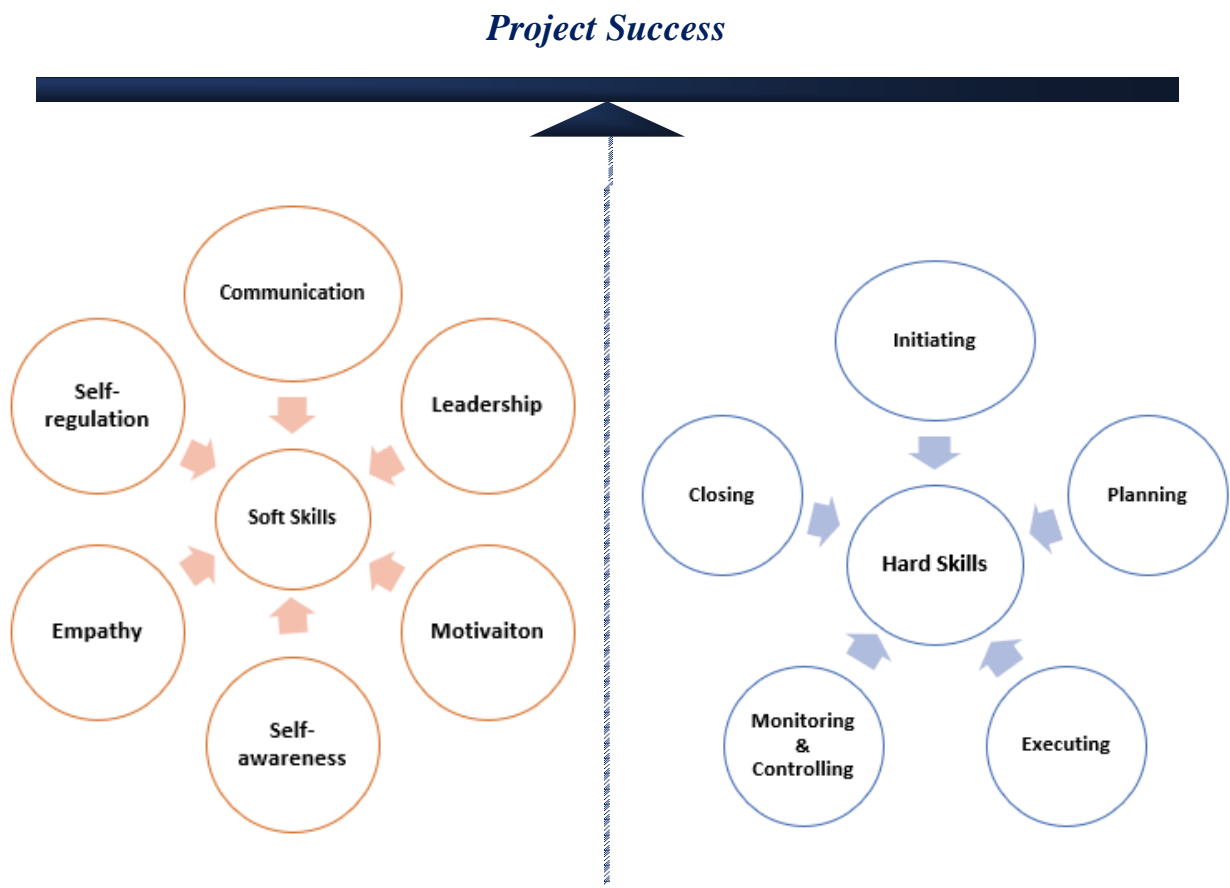


Figure 2.3: Soft Skills + Hard Skills = Project Success

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. Research methodology

This chapter explains the methods and procedures that are used to answer the research questions stated in the first chapter of this study. The chapter incorporates the research design and approach, data collection procedure, population, sample size and sampling techniques, data sources and collection techniques, method of data analysis and ethical considerations,

#### 3.1 Research Design and Methodology

The research adopted the following methodology:

- A number of soft skills from the various authors identified. These skills were used for the development of an assessment tool to evaluate the effectiveness of soft skills practices in JP-RWEE project management.
- An assessment tool (questionnaire) accompanied by semi-structured interviews developed to facilitate the process of evaluating soft skill practices in the JP-RWEE.

##### 3.1.1 Survey Method

A survey questionnaire was selected as measuring instrument for this research. For the government officials, electronic mail was used as method of distribution for the questionnaire. For the farmers' association members, the researcher was able to attend number of their community conversation programs and had the opportunity to distribute the questionnaire in person. The questionnaires were translated to Oromifa and Amharic language to enable the respondents understand the question. In addition, some technical words have been explained when required.

### 3.1.2 Construction of the research questionnaire

The research questionnaire was divided into the following parts:

- **Personal details of the respondent:** such as job title or position, geographic location and contact details.
- **Self-Assessment of the JP-RWEE project manager:** The general project management questions were taken from Mind Tools website (Mindtools).
- **Co-workers, government and non-government partners assessment:** questions concerning soft skills in the specific organization identified.
- **Members of the principal beneficiaries assessment- Project Retrospection:** assessing the effectiveness of a recently completed JP-RWEE project with which the respondent was involved.

Although project management hard skills were included in the questionnaire for comparative results, the major focus in the research questionnaire is on the practice of soft skills in the project management.

Secondary data was collected through a detailed literature reviews including project management books, some scientific and recent project management journals, thesis works and other related topics from library and internet.

## 3.2 Sample and Sampling Technique

As the researcher was restricted by time, money and workforce limitations, it was almost impossible to randomly sample the entire population. Thus, the study applies non-probability sampling techniques where samples are selected on the basis of their accessibility and the purposive personal judgment of the researcher.

As the case study focuses on the JP-RWEE project, out of 1,200 farmers members, 25 members (10 male and 15 female) were participated on the survey to assess the effectiveness of a recently completed JP-RWEE project with which the respondents were principal beneficiaries.

Also the working project manager, 6 co-workers and 12 government and non-government organization partners evaluated the project and the project manager using the assessment to enable the researcher give a more true alignment of what the individual project manager thinks of himself or herself as well as what the co-workers and partners perceive when managing the project. The position of the partners representatives are project managers, team leaders and middle level management who were directly involved and responsible for the JP-RWEE project.

### **3.3 Source and Method of Data Collection**

Both primary and secondary data sources were used when collecting information. The primary source includes questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and the researcher's observation. While secondary sources are company reports and websites.

### **3.4 Validity and Reliability**

In order for the results from a study to be considered valid, the measurement procedure must first be reliable. Thus, the data collection techniques employed in this study were triangulation to enable the researcher measure the consistency of the scoring conducted by the participants of the assessment.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

The study uses descriptive method of data analysis when analyzing both primary and secondary data sources. The data analyses includes a profile of the respondents and preliminary data analyses. The response rate and an illustration of the respondents were first provided. The questionnaire also provides choices of possible answers that respondents can simply mark on it. At the end, using open-end question assembles their general opinion on the strength and weakness of the project and possible solutions.

### **3.6 Ethical consideration**

The researcher have taken the ethical and moral accepted conditions while collection primary and secondary data. Thus, respondents have participated voluntarily and based on informed consent prior to the study. Offensive, discriminatory, or other unacceptable language were not used in the formulation of Questionnaire and Interview. Besides, privacy and anonymity or respondents kept confidential. Respondents were provided sufficient information in order to understand the implications of their participation and to reach a fully informed decision. Works of other authors used in the paper have been acknowledged.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter describes the general information of the respondents, analysis and interpretation of the data collected using the assessments.

#### 4.1 General Information of Respondents

22 Female and 18 Male respondents were participated in the assessments.

The educational background of the partners and co-workers is stated in the chart below. Whereas the educational background of the farmer association members is below 12 grade.

Since all questionnaires were returned, the response rate is 100%.

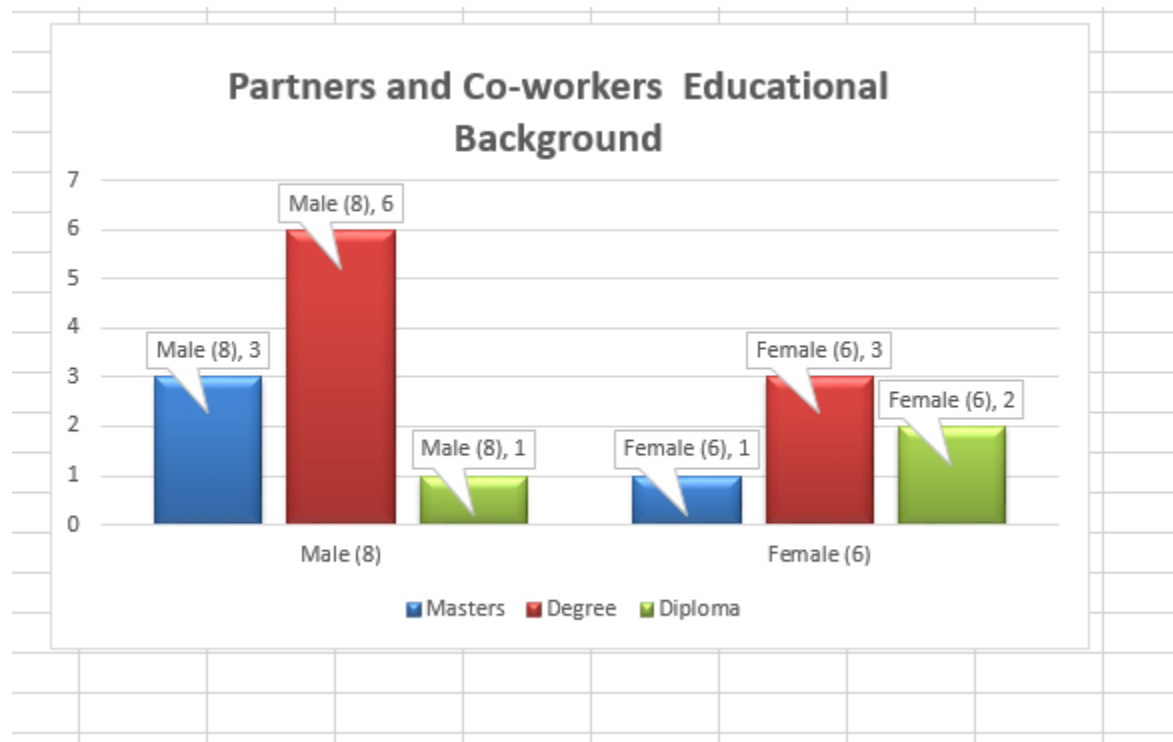


Figure 4.1: Partners and Co-workers Educational Background

Source: Own Survey, 2018

## 4.2 Analysis of Document Review

The major highlights of the essential findings are described below in summarized form so that the reader would grasp it without going to the details.

### Analysis of the Project Manager Self -Assessment

According to mindtools, the result of the Project manager self-assessment lies between 75-100%. This shows that the project manager is an accomplished project manager. The success of the JP-RWEE project relies on the innovative approach of establishing a community conversation program which applies the basic soft-skills.

### Analysis of Co-workers, Government and Non-Government Partners Assessments

Table 4.1: Assessment filled by partners and co-workers Male (10) & Female (8)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Don't Know
<b>The project manager/team:</b>	(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)
a) clearly communicated the vision and goals of the project to the members	77.78	22.22	0.00	0.00	0.00
b) effectively use the e-mail, face-to-face meetings and status reports to communicate their ideas	66.67	22.22	11.11	0.00	0.00
c) able to persuade and build consensus amongst co-workers.	72.22	16.67	11.11	0.00	0.00
d) able to manage and resolve disagreements.	55.56	16.67	5.56	0.00	22.22
e) able to recognize quickly that change is needed, and then our capacity to initiate and manage that change.	44.44	27.78	27.78	0.00	0.00
f) capable to build and then maintain mutually beneficial connections to others.	61.11	22.22	16.67	0.00	0.00
g) identifies project team members' strengths and delegates responsibilities to complete tasks accordingly.	72.22	16.67	11.11	0.00	0.00

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Don't Know
h) tries to understand how his team members situation/ feeling	83.33	16.67	0.00	0.00	0.00
i) I am comfortable about opening up to the project manager my concerns, issues and constructive suggestions	66.67	22.22	11.11	0.00	0.00
j) I am satisfied with the outcome of the project	77.78	22.22	11.11	0.00	0.00
k) The CC has make a significant change in the target community communication skills	72.22	11.11	5.56	0.00	11.11
l) The CC has significantly improved the livelihood of the target community	50.00	33.33	11.11	0.00	5.56
m) The target community acknowledged the benefit of the Project	88.89	11.11	0.00	0.00	0.00
n) The workshops/trainings provided by the JP-RWEE has added value to the community	38.89	33.33	16.67	11.11	0.00

Source: Own Survey, 2018

In average 87.7% respondents agreed that:

- the project manager effectively practiced basic soft-skills such as (leadership, communication and emotional intelligence);
- the project significantly improved the attitude and livelihood of the community;
- confirms that the project is successful in engaging the community to develop belongingness and own the project.

On the other hand, only 9.92% of respondents disagreed with the capability of the Project management and success of the project.

23% of respondents stated that the project manager is not efficiently utilize some of the basic hard-skills such as time and budget management. The project was delayed by 8 months and the overall budget exceeds by 20%.

The findings confirmed that the major strength of the project is the soft-skills applied than the hard skills.

## Analysis of the principal beneficiaries assessments - Project Retrospection

As the case study focuses on the JP-RWEE project, questionnaires delivered to 10 male and 15 female farmers association members to assess the effectiveness of a recently completed project with which the respondents were principal beneficiaries.

The researcher was also able to witness some significant stories by the members.

Table 4.2: Assessment filled by farmers association members (15 female & 10 male)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Don't Know
<b>The project manager/team:</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
a) The vision and goals of the project clearly and effectively communicated to the members	77.78	22.22	0	0	0
b) The project manager/team closely follow-up and value the members ideas	66.67	22.22	11.11	0	0
c) The PM/team respect the culture and norms of the region	83.33	16.67	0	0	0
d) I am comfortable about opening up to the project manager my concerns, issues and constructive suggestions	72.22	27.78	0	0	0
e) I am satisfied with the outcome of the project	77.78	22.22	0	0	0
f) The CC has make a significant change in my communication skills	88.89	11.11	0	0	0
g) The CC helped me develop my self confidence	66.67	33.33	0	0	0
h) The CC has improved my communication with my spouse and family	83.33	16.67	0	0	0
i) The workshops/trainings provided by the JP-RWEE team has significantly changed my attitude towards gender equality	66.67	27.78	5.56	0	0
j) My income has increased due to the knowledge/skillset I have gained from the workshops/trainings/CCs	83.33	11.11	5.56	0	0

Source: Own Survey, 2018

80 -92% of female respondents agreed that:

- the Community Conversation program inspired and capacitate them to take a role in different administration tasks in their associations.
- They are able to generate their own income, and have significant story to share regarding their improvement.

70 -85% of male respondents agreed that:

- after the CC, there were able to understand sharing the burden of their wives in the household activities has nothing to deal with culture rather it is a sign of civilized and responsible gentleman;
- giving an opportunity to income generating activities makes their wives improved their livelihood, makes their family happy and lightened their burden of expense.

75-98% of both male and female respondents agreed that:

- they will continue the existing CC program and manage the project by themselves even if the project phase out and there is no more support form the stakeholders.
- They prioritize the trainings and CC programs better helped them than the fund/loan if they have to choose only one.
- the project should incorporate two more Woreda's as they are requesting to get same support. these respondents strongly agreed to implement similar project in the other part of the region/country
- about the benefit of the Community Conversation Prgoram which is the unique innovative of this project to enable members discuss on their association and community issues on a bi-weekly basis.
- the CC has make a significant change in their communication skills, it helped them develop self-confidence and leadership skills.
- the project has significantly changed their livelihood and the women income generating activities.

Only 2.82% of respondents do not agree the project is successful.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Summary of Findings**

The overall result of the assessments shows that the project manager is an accomplished project manager. The success of the JP-RWEE project relies on the innovative approach of establishing a community conversation program which applies the basic soft-skills.

As JP-RWEE is planning to implement similar project in the other regions of the country; the project manager/team should take consideration on the following strength and weakness of the project.

Innovative idea of establishing community conversation program in which women members got the change to speak their mind; men members got the opportunity to understand the burden and the contribution of the women; and both were able to discuss on any issues that could support the community and the individual members; the trainings and workshop conducted focused on putting the men and women on the other shoe to enable them understand the impact of harmful culture; strength the family bond and gender equality; and the revolving fund minimizes the dependency attitude and inspired members to wisely invest the loan in order to repay timely and get additional benefits are the strong side of this project. Though the project was successfully strong in applying the soft skills, budget overruns as well as 8 months delay was the grey area of the project that requires attention when implementing similar projects in the other regions of the country.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

This research focused on assessing the impact of soft skills on the success of a project.

The primary function of a project manager is to deliver the project within the agreed project constrain and the organizational goals. While hard skills are always attributed to technical duties and soft skills attributed to leadership roles, these roles are often interrelated and it is impossible to separate them. Both hard and soft skills are more important, but we should have a full understanding of both skill sets and know when to use either of them in order to achieve efficiency.

Though the JP-RWEE project incorporated both hard skills and soft skills, the result of the assessments shows the positive effects of soft skills on a project's success.

The following are the outcomes:

1. Providing an indication that there is an association between soft skills and project success.
2. Managers must consider developing newer soft skills and strategies that can be used for project success.
3. Managers must reconsider the essential interpersonal skills and qualities that they think exist in their behavior in order to boost them.

### **5.2 Recommendations**

The researcher recommends the following specific actions to be undertaken.

- Accommodating resources for project managers and team to enroll on online trainings on soft competencies, follow-up their accomplishments and reward those who score high.
- Providing in-country/out-country advanced trainings that focus on basic soft-competencies;
- Arranging experience-sharing workshops with other government and non-government humanitarian organizations.
- Dedicating full-time project manager as running more than one project simultaneously could affect the efficiency of the Project Manager.

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## Annex I

**Addis Ababa University School of Commerce  
Department of Project Management**

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**Self-assessment to be filled by the project manager**

I would like to thank you for your willingness and cooperation in filling out this questionnaire. This questionnaire is prepared to help write a research paper for the partial fulfillment of Masters Degree in Project Management. The aim of this questionnaire is to gather relevant data on the “**Assessing the importance of project management soft skills in the project success: A case study on the Joint Programme Rural Women’s Empowerment (JP-RWEE) project**”. The supply of your honest answer will really contribute to the success of the research. Any information you provide will be used only for academic purpose. Therefore, please express all your replies in the essence of this concept. Thank you.

**REMARKS:**

- Please do not write your name.
- Filled questionnaires will be kept confidential.
- Please do not hesitate to request if clarification/further explanation needed.
- Please use the back page or other attached paper if you have any relevant information.

**PART 1: PERSONAL INFORMATION**

1. Gender:            Male                       Female
2. Age:                20-27       28-35       36- 43       44 & above
3. Educational Back ground:
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Below 12 <sup>th</sup> grade <input type="checkbox"/>    | Diploma holder <input type="checkbox"/>      |
| 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade complete <input type="checkbox"/> | Degree holder <input type="checkbox"/>       |
| Certificate holder <input type="checkbox"/>              | Above degree holder <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. Your position/title \_\_\_\_\_

**Please read each statement in this section and decide whether you agree or disagree with the statement by putting a tick (✓) mark against your choice**

For this questionnaire the following rating scale responses are prepared:

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>I Don't Know</b>
<b>The project manager/team:</b>						
a) When a project begins, I work with its sponsor to negotiate and agree specific deliverables.						
b) At the start of a project, I formally outline what, why, who, how, and when with a Project Initiation Document – so everyone can understand how the elements of the project fit together						
c) I outline clear expectations for the project team, and I manage their individual and collective performance as part of the overall project evaluation process.						
d) When a project gets behind schedule, I work with my team to find a solution rather than assign blame.						
e) I keep all project stakeholders informed and up-to-date with regular meetings and distribution of all performance reports, status changes, and other project documents.						
f) I present project status information in an easy-to-use and easy-to-access format to meet stakeholders' information needs.						
g) When assigning tasks, I consider people's skills and interests.						
h) I doubt myself and my ability to succeed.						
i) I expect my people to work harder than I do						
j) When someone is upset, I try to understand how he or she is feeling.						
k) I feel threatened when someone criticizes me.						
l) The target community acknowledged the benefit of the Project.						
m) The workshops/trainings provided by the RWEE has added value to the community						
n) I am satisfied with the outcome of the project						

1. Do you believe this project is successful? If so, what are the major factors:

---

2. What would you do differently if you manage similar project in another area of the country?

---

3. What are the challenges you face while managing this project?

---

4. Is there anything else you would like to share about the project?

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**Thank you!**

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## Annex II

**Addis Ababa University School of Commerce  
Department of Project Management**

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**Questionnaire to be filled by  
Government Organizations Partners and Co-workers**

I would like to thank you for your willingness and cooperation in filling out this questionnaire. This questionnaire is prepared to help write a research paper for the partial fulfillment of Masters Degree in Project Management. The aim of this questionnaire is to gather relevant data on the “Assessing the importance of project management soft skills in the project success: A case study on the Rural Women Empowerment (RWEE) project”. The supply of your honest answer will really contribute to the success of the research. Any information you provide will be used only for academic purpose. Therefore, please express all your replies in the essence of this concept. Thank you.

**REMARKS:**

- Please do not write your name.
- Filled questionnaires will be kept confidential.
- Please do not hesitate to request if clarification/further explanation needed.
- Please use the back page or other attached paper if you have any relevant information.

**PART 1: PERSONAL INFORMATION**

1. Gender:            Male                       Female
2. Age:                20-27       28-35       36- 43       44 & above
3. Educational Back ground:
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Below 12 <sup>th</sup> grade <input type="checkbox"/>    | Diploma holder <input type="checkbox"/>      |
| 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade complete <input type="checkbox"/> | Degree holder <input type="checkbox"/>       |
| Certificate holder <input type="checkbox"/>              | Above degree holder <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other \_\_\_\_\_

5. Your position/title \_\_\_\_\_

**Please read each statement in this section and decide whether you agree or disagree with the statement by putting a tick (√) mark against your choice**

For this questionnaire the following rating scale responses are prepared:

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>I Don't Know</b>
<b>The project manager/team:</b>						
a) clearly communicated the vision and goals of the project to the members						
b) effectively use the e-mail, face-to-face meetings and status reports to communicate their ideas						
c) able to persuade and build consensus amongst co-workers.						
d) able to manage and resolve disagreements.						
e) able to recognize quickly that change is needed, and then our capacity to initiate and manage that change.						
f) capable to build and then maintain mutually beneficial connections to others.						
g) identifies project team members' strengths and delegates responsibilities to complete tasks accordingly.						
h) tries to understand how his team members situation/ feeling						
i) I am comfortable about opening up to the project manager my concerns, issues and constructive suggestions						
j) I am satisfied with the outcome of the project						
k) The CC has make a significant change in the target community communication skills						
l) The CC has significantly improved the livelihood of the target community						
m) The target community acknowledged the benefit of the Project						
n) The workshops/trainings provided by the RWEE has added value to the community						

1. Do you believe this project is successful? If so, what are the major factors:

---

2. How likely is it that you would recommend this project to another area of the country?

---

3. Is there anything else you would like to share about the project?

---

**Thank you!**

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## Annex III

**Addis Ababa University School of Commerce  
Department of Project Management**

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**Questionnaire to be Filled by Randomly Selected  
Farmers Association Male (10) & Female Members (15)**

I would like to thank you for your willingness and cooperation in filling out this questionnaire. This questionnaire is prepared to help write a research paper for the partial fulfillment of Masters Degree in Project Management. The aim of this questionnaire is to gather relevant data on the **“Assessing the importance of project management soft skills in the project success: A case study on the Rural Women Empowerment (RWEE) project”**. The supply of your honest answer will really contribute to the success of the research. Any information you provide will be used only for academic purpose. Therefore, please express all your replies in the essence of this concept. Thank you.

**REMARKS:**

- Please do not write your name.
- Filled questionnaires will be kept confidential.
- Please do not hesitate to request if clarification/further explanation needed.
- Please use the back page or other attached paper if you have any relevant information.

**PART 1: PERSONAL INFORMATION**

1. Gender:            Male                       Female
2. Age:                20-27       28-35       36- 43       44 & above
3. Educational Back ground:
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Below 12 <sup>th</sup> grade <input type="checkbox"/>    | Diploma holder <input type="checkbox"/>      |
| 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade complete <input type="checkbox"/> | Degree holder <input type="checkbox"/>       |
| Certificate holder <input type="checkbox"/>              | Above degree holder <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Please read each statement in this section and decide whether you agree or disagree with the statement by putting a tick (✓) mark against your choice

For this questionnaire the following rating scale responses are prepared:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Don't Know
<b>I have observed that the following activities are practiced by RWEE:</b>						
a) The vision and goals of the project clearly and effectively communicated to the members						
b) The project manager/team closely follow-up and value the members ideas						
c) The PM/team respect the culture and norms of the region						
d) I am comfortable about opening up to the project manager my concerns, issues and constructive suggestions						
e) I am satisfied with the outcome of the project						
f) The CC has make a significant change in my communication skills						
g) The CC helped me develop my self confidence						
h) The CC has improved my communication with my spouse and family						
i) The workshops/trainings provided by the RWEE team has significantly changed my attitude towards gender equality						
j) My income has increased due to the knowledge/skillset I have gained from the workshops/trainings/CCs						

1. Please mention two strong and two weak qualities about the RWEE?

<b><u>Strong:</u></b>	<b><u>Weak:</u></b>
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____

2. What is the primary benefit that your received form this project?  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. What would you use as an alternative if RWEE project phase-out?  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. How likely is it that you would recommend this project to another area of the region?  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Is there anything else you would like to share about the project?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you!**

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