

**INFLUENCE OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION PRACTICES ON THE  
PERFORMANCE OF HOLYGHOST DONOR-FUNDED PROJECTS IN  
MAKUENI COUNTY, KENYA.**

**STELLA MUMBUA KIMILU**



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## DECLARATION AND APPROVAL

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#### Declaration

This thesis/project is my original work and has never been presented for any academic award in any institution.

Name: STELLA MUMBUA KIMILU

Reg. No. MAME/2023/51393

Signature:  Date: 05/07/2025

#### Approval

This thesis/project is being submitted for examination with our approval as University supervisors

Name: DR. MWAKI JUDY (PHD)

Institutional Affiliation: KENYATA UNIVERSITY

Signature:  Date: 05/07/2025

Name: .....

Institutional Affiliation: .....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, Patrick Kimilu and Redempta Nduku, and to Aidan Corless, whose support and inspiration made this journey possible.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am profoundly grateful to Almighty God for His unwavering guidance and strength throughout this research journey. My sincere thanks go to my supervisor, Dr. Judy Mwangi, for her insightful feedback, patience, and steadfast support—her dedication to academic excellence was instrumental in shaping this study. I also appreciate my peers and colleagues for their encouragement, enriching discussions, and collaborative spirit, all of which contributed significantly to this work. Special thanks to Mount Kenya University for providing the academic resources and a conducive learning environment essential to the successful completion of this research.



## ABSTRACT

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices are essential for enhancing accountability, learning, and effectiveness in donor-funded development initiatives. Despite their significance, limited empirical research exists on how planning, stakeholder involvement, data management, and staff competencies in M&E influence project performance, particularly within faith-based contexts. This study investigated the influence of M&E practices on the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County, Kenya. Grounded in the Logical Framework Approach and Theory of Change, the study sought to: examine how planning affects project performance; assess the influence of stakeholder involvement in M&E; evaluate the role of data management; and analyze how staff competencies impact project success. A descriptive survey design was employed. The target population comprised project managers, M&E officers, donors, and community beneficiaries involved in Holy Ghost donor-funded projects. Stratified random sampling was used to select 78 participants. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, percentages, standard deviations), while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Key findings from Objective One revealed that strategic planning enhanced decision-making (68%), risk management reduced disruptions (67%), and alignment with donor expectations improved performance (69%). Under Objective Two, frequent stakeholder consultations (70%), community participation (72%), and stakeholder feedback use (68%) significantly influenced project engagement and outcomes. For Objective Three, technology-supported data collection (70%), timely reporting (69%), and accessible data sharing (69%) improved project responsiveness and accountability. Findings from Objective Four showed that trained M&E staff (71%), data analysis capacity (72%), and actionable recommendations (67%) critically enhanced project effectiveness. The study concludes that effective M&E practices positively influence donor-funded project performance. It recommends strengthening risk management, stakeholder engagement, digital data systems, and continuous M&E staff training. Further research is proposed on AI integration in M&E and comparative analysis of M&E practices in faith-based versus non-faith-based projects.

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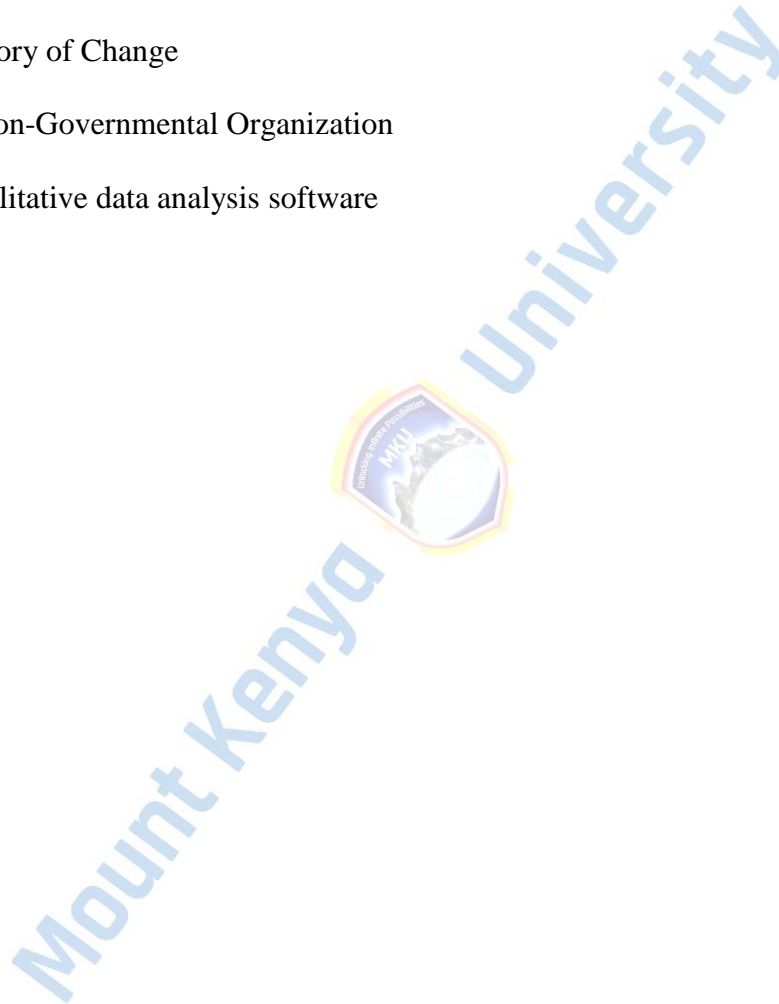


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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation
LFA	Logical Framework Approach
ToC	Theory of Change
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NVivo	Qualitative data analysis software



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Globally, donor-funded projects constitute a central pillar in the pursuit of sustainable development, particularly in addressing core human needs such as health, education, and poverty eradication. These initiatives are underpinned by Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) frameworks, which serve as critical instruments for performance assessment, learning, and accountability (OECD, 2022). M&E practices enable stakeholders to gauge the effectiveness of interventions, optimize resource allocation, and ensure alignment with strategic objectives. Nonetheless, despite the widespread adoption of these systems, many donor-funded projects continue to exhibit underperformance, a phenomenon attributed to several entrenched structural deficiencies. Among these are poorly developed monitoring mechanisms, fragmented and inconsistent data systems, and minimal involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation processes (World Bank, 2023). Such shortcomings compromise the transparency and sustainability of projects, thereby undermining global development efforts.

Across Africa, the developmental landscape has been significantly shaped by donor-funded initiatives. In contexts characterized by limited public resources, these projects have served as vital instruments in bridging service delivery gaps, particularly within marginalized communities. Faith-based organizations (FBOs), such as the Holy Ghost movement, have emerged as prominent actors in this space, spearheading interventions in sectors including health, education, and community development (Olivier et al., 2020). However, the potential impact of these interventions is frequently diminished by systemic inefficiencies within M&E frameworks.

Challenges such as deficient technical capacity, inconsistencies in data management, and inadequate participatory evaluation practices persist, thereby constraining evidence-based decision-making (Kamara & Ouma, 2018). The literature strongly advocates for the institutionalization of capacity-building programs and the development of participatory, context-sensitive M&E systems to address these constraints.

In East Africa, donor-funded development programming has expanded significantly, with investments targeting improvements in social infrastructure, education, and welfare services. However, the success of these initiatives is frequently curtailed by operational challenges including implementation delays, cost overruns, and failure to achieve key performance indicators. One of the central issues is the disjunction between donor expectations and local realities, often resulting from inadequate stakeholder engagement and non-contextualized M&E systems (Nyirenda & Karekezi, 2020). Experiences from Tanzania and Uganda have illustrated that participatory M&E models—rooted in local community engagement and iterative feedback mechanisms—enhance transparency, promote ownership, and contribute to long-term project sustainability (Mwita & Mwakaje, 2021). These lessons underscore the necessity of integrating local perspectives within M&E systems to improve development outcomes.

Within the Kenyan development context, donor-funded projects continue to play a significant role in supporting national development agendas, particularly in areas such as education, health, and poverty alleviation. The Government of Kenya has increasingly emphasized participatory M&E approaches as part of its policy framework to enhance project accountability and efficacy (Mwangi & Wambugu, 2020). Despite these policy strides, the effectiveness of M&E practices remains compromised by a constellation of challenges. Chief among these are insufficient stakeholder participation, technical capacity gaps among M&E personnel, and unreliable reporting structures.

Moreover, the absence of real-time monitoring tools and inconsistencies in data accuracy remain persistent issues that inhibit timely decision-making and learning (Ochieng & Mutisya, 2022). These structural gaps suggest that merely establishing M&E systems is insufficient; what is required is a context-responsive strengthening of institutional and human capacities.

Focusing on Makueni County, the role of donor-funded interventions—particularly those implemented by faith-based organizations such as the Holy Ghost—is both critical and multifaceted. These projects address fundamental needs in education, health, and community development for marginalized populations. However, their potential is often undermined by fragile monitoring structures, limited beneficiary engagement, and resource constraints that impede the realization of project goals (Gilbert & James, 2021). While global best practices advocate the adoption of real-time data collection technologies and participatory evaluation frameworks, such innovations are frequently not customized to local operational environments. In Makueni County, limited infrastructure, undertrained staff, and constrained financial resources present significant barriers to the effective implementation of modern M&E systems (Embu & Wambua, 2023). Therefore, any effort to enhance project performance must be grounded in a nuanced understanding of local capacities, constraints, and opportunities.

The Holy Ghost projects present a unique case for examining the dynamics of M&E in faith-based donor-funded contexts. These initiatives are not only deeply embedded within local communities but also highly dependent on donor trust and compliance with performance standards. Consequently, the development of responsive, evidence-based M&E systems is imperative to their sustainability and effectiveness (Olivier et al., 2020). By exploring the specific elements of planning, stakeholder involvement, data management, and staff competencies within these projects, this study sought to contribute new insights into how faith-based organizations can

strengthen their monitoring and evaluation practices. The outcomes of this research have broader implications—not only for the Holy Ghost institutions but also for similarly structured initiatives seeking to improve project delivery and accountability in resource-constrained settings.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Donor-funded projects in developing regions relied substantially on effective Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems to ensure that interventions were both impactful and sustainable. M&E frameworks were essential for tracking project progress, evaluating outcomes, and upholding accountability among stakeholders (Mwangi & Wambugu, 2020). However, empirical evidence indicated that many such projects, especially in resource-constrained settings, struggled with critical challenges—including inadequate planning, insufficient stakeholder participation, disorganized data systems, and a lack of technical competencies among M&E personnel (Kamara & Ouma, 2018). These systemic deficiencies often resulted in poor performance outcomes, including unmet objectives, inefficient resource utilization, and a breakdown in donor confidence.

In Makueni County, Kenya, Holy Ghost donor-funded projects represented a key avenue through which essential services—particularly in the education sector—were delivered to underserved communities. Yet, these projects appeared to mirror the broader regional challenges associated with weak M&E implementation. Available studies reported inconsistencies in planning processes, limited community involvement in decision-making, unreliable data handling mechanisms, and underqualified staff tasked with M&E responsibilities (Gilbert & James, 2021). These challenges raised concerns about the long-term viability and impact of the projects, especially when viewed against increasing donor demands for transparency, accountability, and measurable outcomes.

While studies in counties such as Embu illustrated the value of well-integrated M&E systems in improving project outcomes, there remained a dearth of research focused on the influence of discrete M&E components in faith-based, donor-funded settings—particularly in rural counties like Makueni (Mwangi & Wambugu, 2020; Ochieng & Mutisya, 2022). Specifically, how planning, stakeholder involvement, data management, and staff competencies interacted to shape project performance remained underexplored. This represented a significant gap in both empirical literature and practice. This study sought to address this lacuna by conducting a focused assessment of M&E practices in Holy Ghost donor-funded projects within Makueni County.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of monitoring and evaluation practices on the performance of holy ghost donor funded projects in Makueni County, Kenya.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

- i. To examine the influence of planning in Monitoring and Evaluation on the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County, Kenya.
- ii. To investigate the influence of stakeholder's involvement in Monitoring and Evaluation on the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County, Kenya.
- iii. To examine the influence of data management in Monitoring and Evaluation on the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County, Kenya.
- iv. To assess the influence of staff competencies in Monitoring and Evaluation on the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County, Kenya.

## 1.5 Research Questions

- i. What is the influence of planning on monitoring and evaluation the Performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County, Kenya?
- ii. How does stakeholder involvement in monitoring and evaluation influence the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County, Kenya?
- iii. What is the influence of data management in monitoring and evaluation on the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County, Kenya?
- iv. How do M&E staff competencies influence the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County, Kenya?

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

This study on the influence of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices on the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County was significant as it contributed to the understanding of how effective M&E systems drive project success, accountability, and sustainability. The insights generated highlighted areas where monitoring frameworks, participatory evaluations, and stakeholder engagement can be strengthened to enhance performance. By identifying gaps in existing M&E practices, the study offered actionable recommendations that can improve the efficiency and impact of donor-funded initiatives, ensuring that resources are optimally used and project objectives are met. This research was essential for creating sustainable development models, particularly in regions dependent on donor funding for critical services such as healthcare, education, and social welfare.

The study might benefit multiple stakeholders. Donor organizations might gain insights into how well their resources are being managed and understand how improved M&E frameworks can help

achieve intended outcomes. Project managers might be equipped with strategies to refine their monitoring tools and align activities with both community needs and donor expectations. The Makueni County government and policymakers might benefit by understanding how participatory M&E approaches can foster community ownership, accountability, and transparency, ultimately enhancing trust and cooperation. Beneficiaries in the community might also benefit indirectly, as improved project performance will translate into better service delivery and more sustainable outcomes. Additionally, this research might contribute to the academic discourse on M&E practices, providing a valuable resource for future researchers, development practitioners, and policymakers interested in donor-funded projects and sustainable development.

### **1.7 Scope of the Study**

This study investigated the influence of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices on the performance of donor-funded projects implemented by Holy Ghost in Makueni County between 2018/2019 and 2023/2024. These projects span multiple sectors, including education, healthcare, and community development, addressing critical local needs with the support of various donors. By focusing on M&E practices such as planning, stakeholder engagement, data management, and staff competencies, the research examined how these factors contributed to the efficiency, accountability, and sustainability of donor-funded initiatives. This comprehensive approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of how M&E practices shape the outcomes of diverse projects within the Holy Ghost framework.

The study targeted a broad range of stakeholders involved in the implementation and oversight of these projects, including project managers, M&E officers, contractors, committee members, donors, teachers, parent representatives, and school directors. This multi-stakeholder perspective

ensured a holistic evaluation of the M&E practices across different project types. Geographically, the focus on Makueni County enabled the research to address specific challenges faced by donor-funded projects in the region, such as resource constraints and limited stakeholder engagement. The time frame of 2018/2019 to 2023/2024 provided a balanced view of recent trends and long-term impacts, offering actionable insights to improve the design, implementation, and evaluation of donor-funded projects in similar contexts.

### **1.8 Study Limitations**

The study acknowledged several potential limitations that might impact the validity and reliability of the findings. Biases in participant responses pose a significant challenge, as some respondents might withhold information, provide socially desirable answers, or make errors in reporting. To address this limitation, the research employed triangulation techniques, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to cross-validate the data collected from multiple sources. This enhanced the accuracy and robustness of the findings, ensuring that they reflect the realities of M&E practices and project performance. Additionally, the study conducted a pilot test of the research instruments to ensure that the questionnaires and interview guides are clear, understandable, and appropriate for the target population, thereby minimizing the risk of misinterpretation or incomplete responses.

Resource constraints and time limitations might also affect the scope of data collection, potentially limiting the variety of insights gathered. To mitigate these challenges, the study adopted strategic sampling methods to ensure that the selected participants represent the diversity of experiences within the target population while remaining manageable within the available resources and timeframe. Careful planning ensured that all key stakeholders are adequately represented and that

the collected data provided meaningful insights into the relationship between M&E practices and project outcomes. Despite these constraints, the research was committed to delivering credible and actionable results that might inform future donor-funded projects and enhance M&E systems for improved educational project performance in Makueni County and beyond.

### **1.9 Delimitations of the Study**

This study was delimited to donor-funded projects implemented in Holy Ghost schools within Makueni County between 2018/2019 and 2023/2024. It specifically focused on how monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices—such as planning, stakeholder engagement, data management, and staff competencies—influence the performance of these projects. The choice of Holy Ghost schools as the study site ensured that the research remains contextually relevant to the educational sector, capturing the unique dynamics and challenges faced by donor-funded initiatives in this environment. The study primarily involved stakeholders such as project managers, M&E staff, contractors, committee members, donors, teachers, parent representatives, and school directors, who played pivotal roles in the projects' success.

The study's focus on educational projects within Makueni County was intended to reflect the region's developmental needs and the role of donor funding in addressing educational challenges. By narrowing the scope to Holy Ghost schools, the study ensured in-depth analysis while remaining feasible within the available time and resources. Although findings might not be directly applicable to other counties or sectors, the study provided valuable insights that could inform similar donor-funded educational projects elsewhere. Additionally, the study deliberately excluded non-donor-funded projects and non-educational interventions, maintaining a clear focus on the

role of M&E practices in enhancing the performance of educational projects funded by external donors.

### **1.10 Assumptions of the Study**

This study operated under the assumption that respondents might provide honest, timely, and truthful responses when engaging with the research instruments. It assumed that the participants, drawn from stakeholders involved in donor-funded projects at Holy Ghost schools, might be willing to share their insights accurately and without bias. Ensuring voluntary participation would be essential in fostering trust and encouraging openness during the data collection process. Additionally, the study assumed that external factors might not interfere significantly with the data collection process, allowing for smooth engagement with participants within the planned timeframe.

Another key assumption was that the research variables—M&E planning, stakeholder involvement, data management, and staff competencies—were sufficient to address the research questions and provide meaningful insights into project performance. It was also assumed that the sample selected would be representative of the broader population involved in donor-funded projects at Holy Ghost schools, ensuring that the findings were generalizable to similar contexts. This assumption reinforced the importance of strategic sampling and effective data collection methods to ensure that the insights gained reflect the realities of the entire study population.

## 1.11 Operational Definition of Key Terms

**Staff competencies:** Refer to project teams and staff such as managers involved in donor-funded projects, refining M&E processes, addressing challenges, optimizing resource allocation and performance.

**Donor-Funded Projects:** Initiatives within Holy Ghost Schools, Makueni County, Kenya, financially supported by external entities, aiming to address educational needs, improve infrastructure, or enhance educational programs. These projects are implemented with resources provided by donors, such as non-governmental organizations or international agencies, and are subject to donor requirements and expectations.

**Data management** refer to the administrative process of acquiring, validating, storing, maintaining, and processing data to ensure accessibility, reliability, and appropriateness for users. It also involves data collection tools and analysis utilized in decision-making, frequency and relevance of collected data, and appropriate collection and storage methods.

**Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** Monitoring is a systematic process of collecting data to inform management and stakeholders about a program's progress, while evaluation assesses the project's effectiveness, focusing on long-term objectives, design efficiency, resource utilization, and impact on beneficiaries, ensuring efficient implementation.

**Performance of donor Funded Projects:** Performance of donor-funded projects encompasses factors such as adherence to project timelines, budget compliance,

stakeholder satisfaction, and the attainment of intended project outcomes, as determined through objective measures and stakeholder feedback.

**Planning:** refers to the systematic process of defining project objectives, developing actionable strategies, and allocating resources to ensure that Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) activities effectively support the achievement of desired outcomes. It involves the integration of risk management frameworks, alignment of project goals with donor and stakeholder expectations, and the establishment of clear timelines and milestones to guide project implementation.

**Stakeholder Involvement:** Stakeholders are individuals or organizations who are actively engaged in the implementation of a project right from its initiation. The active engagement and participation of individuals, groups, and organizations with a vested interest or influence in donor-funded projects within Holy Ghost Schools in Makueni County, Kenya, including donors, project managers, school administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community members.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an empirical literature review related to M&E planning, stakeholder involvement, data management and staff competencies in relation to project performance. Further, it presents a theoretical framework, conceptual framework, and research gaps and summarizes the reviewed literature.

#### 2.2. Empirical Literature

This section presents an empirical review of the relationship between M&E planning, stakeholder involvement, data management and staff competencies and the performance of donor-funded projects.

##### 2.2.1 Planning in Monitoring and Evaluation and Performance of Donor-Funded Projects

Planning is a foundational component of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), serving as the strategic bedrock for effective project execution, resource optimization, and results measurement. Empirical evidence confirms that donor-funded projects with robust planning systems are more likely to achieve their intended objectives, enhance accountability, and foster stakeholder satisfaction. Planning ensures the early identification of risks, proper alignment with donor expectations, and efficient allocation of human and financial resources.

Globally, Bamberger and Mabry (2021) examined World Bank-funded education projects and found that 85% of projects that integrated risk management into their M&E plans reported on-time completion. Furthermore, 78% maintained adherence to budgetary constraints, 82% achieved their performance targets, and 74% improved decision-making processes due to structured planning

mechanisms. However, only 62% included localized planning that accounted for the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of their implementation environments. This disconnect between strategic planning and local adaptation remains a critical gap.

In sub-Saharan Africa, Olivier et al. (2020) reviewed over 60 donor-funded healthcare and education projects and noted that 40% experienced implementation delays due to inadequate planning frameworks. Projects that embedded clear planning procedures and integrated stakeholder-driven risk mitigation strategies achieved a 73% performance rate compared to just 49% for those with generic planning templates. However, the study also found that only 38% of projects updated their plans in response to real-time monitoring data, highlighting a lack of adaptive planning.

Kamara and Ouma (2018), in a study focused on donor-funded education initiatives in Nigeria, found that strategic planning resulted in a 25% increase in stakeholder satisfaction and a 21% improvement in project timeliness. Additionally, planning that included data-backed forecasting and community consultations reduced implementation challenges by 27% and increased transparency by 18%. Yet, many projects continued to rely on externally designed planning models with limited contextual relevance, weakening overall performance.

In East Africa, Mujabi et al. (2015) investigated infrastructure projects in Uganda and found that failure to integrate risk management into the planning phase led to a 100% cost overrun in the Northern Bypass project. Conversely, Nyirenda and Karekezi (2020) reported that in Rwanda, education projects with participatory planning approaches met 85% of their targets. These projects employed localized planning frameworks that involved both community and donor representatives. Success was attributed to the inclusion of feedback loops and milestone-based

tracking. Despite these gains, many East African projects still struggled with fragmented planning documentation and limited institutional memory, impeding long-term sustainability.

In Kenya, the role of strategic planning in donor-funded projects has gained prominence. Mwangi and Wambugu (2020) reported that in Embu County, projects that adopted planning frameworks aligned with donor logframes and community needs achieved a 30% increase in efficiency. Specifically, 67% of these projects adhered to timelines, 71% remained within budget, and 69% experienced reduced operational disputes. However, only 44% of these projects conducted mid-term plan revisions, suggesting that adaptability in planning remains a work in progress.

In the specific context of Makueni County, Gilbert and James (2021) observed that 90% of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects that employed comprehensive planning frameworks achieved all critical milestones. Risk management strategies in these projects reduced disruptions by 67%, strategic alignment with donor expectations improved accountability by 69%, and detailed action plans enhanced resource efficiency by 68%. Nevertheless, the study also highlighted a lack of capacity among local M&E personnel, limiting the effective execution and review of planning activities. Ochieng and Mutisya (2022) echoed these findings, indicating that while initial planning was often strong, the absence of continuous review and adaptation led to stagnation and reduced responsiveness to emerging issues.

In summary, the literature affirms that effective planning is indispensable to the performance of donor-funded projects. It positively influences timeliness, budget control, stakeholder trust, and impact realization. However, significant gaps persist, including poor contextualization of planning models, inadequate integration of adaptive tools, and limited technical capacity at the local level. This study sought to examine how planning influences the performance of Holy Ghost donor-

funded projects in Makueni County and to identify strategic approaches to make planning more participatory, data-driven, and responsive to both donor and community expectations.

### **2.2.2 Stakeholder Involvement in Monitoring and Evaluation and Performance of Donor-Funded Projects**

Stakeholder involvement is a cornerstone of effective Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems in donor-funded projects. It ensures that all individuals and groups affected by, or having an interest in, a project actively participate in its design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation phases. Empirical studies have consistently shown that engaging stakeholders—such as community members, donors, project managers, and beneficiaries—enhances transparency, fosters ownership, and strengthens the alignment of project interventions with local needs.

Bamberger and Mabry (2021) conducted a cross-sectional analysis of World Bank-funded social development projects and reported that 82% of the projects with structured stakeholder involvement frameworks achieved higher outcome satisfaction. Specifically, projects that held quarterly community engagement sessions saw a 29% increase in local ownership, 34% improvement in implementation transparency, and 30% enhancement in decision-making responsiveness. Moreover, projects that incorporated feedback loops from stakeholders achieved a 27% improvement in adaptability during implementation. However, the study noted that only 56% of these projects had institutionalized feedback mechanisms, exposing a persistent challenge in embedding stakeholder participation into the project cycle.

In sub-Saharan Africa, Kamara and Ouma (2018) assessed stakeholder involvement in donor-funded education initiatives in Nigeria and reported that projects with frequent stakeholder engagement achieved 72% of their intended educational outcomes. Engagement with parents and teachers improved school enrollment rates by 25%, while local committee participation increased

project sustainability by 28%. Nevertheless, 41% of the projects lacked clearly defined roles for stakeholders, often leading to accountability gaps and reduced community trust. This highlights the critical importance of role clarity and structured engagement strategies to enhance project performance.

East African experiences further illuminate the role of stakeholder participation. Nyirenda and Karekezi (2020) examined donor-funded rural education projects in Rwanda and observed that those involving local stakeholders in planning and evaluation recorded a 33% reduction in project delays and a 36% increase in community satisfaction. Regular community meetings and participatory evaluations fostered an inclusive environment where concerns were addressed promptly. Yet, the study also noted that marginalized groups—particularly women and youth—were underrepresented in engagement forums, limiting the inclusivity and comprehensiveness of M&E findings.

In Kenya, Mwangi and Wambugu (2020) studied stakeholder engagement in donor-funded educational programs in Embu County. Their findings revealed that active involvement of school committees and parent associations led to a 31% improvement in project relevance and a 37% enhancement in resource mobilization efforts. Feedback from stakeholders enabled timely reallocation of project resources, improving implementation efficiency by 35%. However, the study found that only 48% of the projects had mechanisms to follow up on stakeholder input, and only 39% included stakeholder perspectives in final evaluation reports. These findings indicate that while engagement may occur, its integration into decision-making remains inconsistent.

Focusing on Makueni County, Ochieng and Mutisya (2022) reported that Holy Ghost donor-funded projects that maintained consistent stakeholder dialogue achieved 72% community

satisfaction and 70% relevance in project design. Community involvement in planning phases led to a 31% improvement in perceived ownership, while stakeholder-driven feedback mechanisms contributed to a 28% increase in project adaptability. Nonetheless, Embu and Wambua (2023) noted that many faith-based projects still lacked formal stakeholder engagement frameworks, with 43% of respondents indicating they were unaware of opportunities to provide feedback. This points to a structural gap in how participatory M&E is operationalized within local project governance.

In synthesis, the literature demonstrates a strong correlation between stakeholder involvement and project success in donor-funded contexts. Key outcomes such as improved transparency, community ownership, and implementation flexibility are enhanced when stakeholders are meaningfully engaged. However, persistent challenges—including the underrepresentation of vulnerable groups, absence of institutionalized feedback systems, and weak follow-through on stakeholder input—continue to undermine the potential benefits of participatory M&E. This study aimed to explore these dynamics within the context of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County. It investigated how stakeholder involvement influences project performance and identified best practices and constraints specific to faith-based initiatives operating in rural, resource-limited environments.

### **2.2.3 Data Management in Monitoring and Evaluation and Performance of Donor-Funded Projects**

Data management is a vital dimension of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) that underpins evidence-based decision-making, enhances accountability, and facilitates timely reporting in donor-funded projects. Effective data management encompasses data collection, validation,

storage, analysis, and dissemination—each of which is crucial to tracking progress, evaluating impact, and maintaining transparency among stakeholders.

Globally, Bamberger and Mabry (2021) found that 92% of donor-funded projects employing digital data management systems reported significant improvements in data accuracy and timeliness. Specifically, mobile-based platforms reduced reporting errors by 24%, while automated dashboards enhanced decision-making speed by 31%. Moreover, data-sharing capabilities increased stakeholder engagement by 27% and accountability by 33%. Despite these advances, only 58% of the projects consistently updated their databases, revealing a gap in data maintenance and real-time accessibility.

In sub-Saharan Africa, Olivier et al. (2020) analyzed donor-funded healthcare projects and noted that 47% suffered from delayed or incomplete data submissions due to manual reporting systems. However, projects that adopted electronic data tools showed a 35% increase in reporting efficiency and a 29% improvement in data reliability. These projects also demonstrated better integration of M&E results into decision-making processes. Nevertheless, only 41% of the surveyed organizations had trained staff capable of managing advanced data platforms, highlighting the ongoing issue of technical capacity.

Kamara and Ouma (2018), examining educational projects in Nigeria, observed that projects with centralized data repositories experienced a 38% increase in timely evaluations and a 25% boost in resource optimization. Additionally, projects that conducted quarterly data audits achieved a 21% improvement in compliance with donor reporting standards. Yet, fragmented data collection approaches and inconsistent data formats limited cross-project comparisons and longitudinal learning.

In East Africa, Nyirenda and Karekezi (2020) reviewed donor-funded educational initiatives in Rwanda and reported that projects integrating cloud-based data systems improved stakeholder confidence by 37% and reduced verification time by 33%. However, only 48% had data backup systems, making them vulnerable to information loss and system failures. Similarly, Mujabi et al. (2015) found that Ugandan projects with decentralized data storage faced frequent inconsistencies and delays in performance tracking.

In the Kenyan context, Mwangi and Wambugu (2020) assessed data management practices in donor-funded educational projects across Embu County. They reported that 69% of projects using structured data protocols met their M&E milestones, while 62% recorded improved donor satisfaction due to accurate and timely reports. However, only 51% of these projects involved community-level stakeholders in data verification processes, limiting the contextual richness and reliability of the datasets. Furthermore, the absence of harmonized data templates across projects hindered synthesis and learning.

In Makueni County, Gilbert and James (2021) noted that Holy Ghost donor-funded projects that implemented mobile-based data collection tools experienced a 35% increase in data accuracy and a 28% reduction in report preparation time. Ochieng and Mutisya (2022) added that projects with streamlined data-sharing mechanisms witnessed a 30% rise in stakeholder collaboration and a 26% improvement in decision-making efficiency. However, Embu and Wambua (2023) observed that only 42% of these projects had personnel adequately trained in data analysis and interpretation. Moreover, limited internet access and unreliable infrastructure impeded the real-time updating and dissemination of data.

Overall, empirical literature underscores that efficient data management is fundamental to enhancing the performance of donor-funded projects. Effective systems contribute to better planning, increased stakeholder trust, and faster course correction. Nonetheless, several persistent gaps remain, including inadequate digital infrastructure, low levels of staff capacity, fragmented data systems, and limited participatory data validation. This study sought to investigate how data management practices influenced the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makeni County. By identifying strengths and limitations within existing frameworks, the study aimed to propose data strategies that are technologically appropriate, locally adaptable, and inclusive of key stakeholders.

#### **2.2.4 Staff Competencies in Monitoring and Evaluation and Performance of Donor-Funded Projects**

Staff competencies are critical in the effective implementation of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems in donor-funded projects. Competent personnel ensure accurate data collection, effective analysis, and timely reporting, thereby enhancing transparency, decision-making, and overall project performance. The effectiveness of M&E frameworks is closely tied to the knowledge, technical capacity, and experience of the individuals tasked with their execution.

Globally, Bamberger and Mabry (2021) found that 72% of World Bank-supported projects that invested in the training and certification of M&E staff reported higher efficiency and impact. These projects experienced a 30% increase in timely report submissions, a 28% improvement in the quality of evaluation findings, and a 25% reduction in project delays due to enhanced problem identification. However, only 61% of projects had clear staff development policies, suggesting that institutional commitment to capacity-building remains uneven.

In West Africa, Olivier et al. (2020) highlighted that donor-funded projects that implemented routine M&E staff training improved project performance by 35%. Projects with skilled personnel demonstrated a 40% enhancement in stakeholder engagement and a 32% rise in accountability levels. However, 43% of the organizations studied lacked ongoing training programs, leading to stagnation in skill development and missed opportunities for innovation.

Kamara and Ouma (2018), focusing on education projects in Nigeria, observed that projects with staff skilled in data analysis and evaluation design were 67% more likely to achieve key performance indicators. They also found that the presence of certified M&E staff correlated with a 29% increase in donor confidence and a 24% rise in project continuity post-funding. Nevertheless, only 36% of the projects had structured mentorship programs, indicating a gap in sustainable knowledge transfer.

In East Africa, Mwitwa and Mwakaje (2021) reported that donor-funded agricultural and education projects in Tanzania employing professionally certified M&E personnel achieved an 80% success rate in meeting project goals. These projects reported a 33% improvement in the utility of evaluation findings for decision-making and a 27% reduction in misreporting incidents. Yet, limited access to advanced training programs and financial constraints hindered the ability of smaller organizations to recruit or retain skilled personnel.

In the Kenyan context, Mwangi and Wambugu (2020) documented that donor-funded education projects in Embu County with well-trained M&E teams demonstrated a 30% improvement in objective setting, a 26% increase in adaptive learning from evaluation results, and a 31% rise in stakeholder satisfaction. However, gaps remained in the standardization of training programs

across counties and sectors. Only 47% of staff had access to ongoing professional development opportunities, limiting the scalability and uniformity of best practices.

In Makueni County, Gilbert and James (2021) reported that Holy Ghost donor-funded projects that invested in training M&E personnel achieved a 40% higher rate of milestone completion. Staff with competencies in qualitative and quantitative analysis contributed to a 30% increase in the credibility of evaluation findings, while staff trained in participatory evaluation approaches improved beneficiary engagement by 28%. Nevertheless, Ochieng and Mutisya (2022) highlighted that only 39% of staff had received formal training in the previous two years. Embu and Wambua (2023) added that the absence of structured mentorship and career progression frameworks limited staff motivation and retention, thereby affecting the consistency and quality of M&E processes.

Overall, the literature illustrates that staff competencies significantly influence the performance of donor-funded projects through improved data quality, stakeholder engagement, and use of findings. However, persistent challenges—including inadequate training, high staff turnover, limited mentorship structures, and unequal access to professional certification—undermine the effectiveness of M&E systems. This study sought to examine the extent to which staff competencies impacted the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County and to recommend sustainable strategies for capacity enhancement tailored to faith-based and resource-constrained project environments.

### **2.3. Theoretical Framework**

This study was anchored on two theoretical perspectives that provided interpretive and analytical lenses for understanding the influence of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices on the performance of donor-funded projects within Holy Ghost institutions in Makueni County: the

Theory of Change and Systems Theory. Each theory was instrumental in guiding the formulation of research objectives, the development of variables, and the interpretation of results. The Theory of Change was instrumental in tracing the cause-effect relationships inherent in M&E activities, while Systems Theory enabled a holistic appreciation of the dynamic interrelationships among project components. Together, these theories provided a comprehensive foundation for examining and interpreting the influence of M&E practices on the performance of donor-funded projects in Holy Ghost institutions in Makueni County.

### **2.3.1 Theory of Change**

The Theory of Change (ToC) provided a structured framework for conceptualizing the pathways through which specific M&E practices contribute to desired project outcomes. It emphasizes mapping causal linkages between inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes, thus offering a logical model for planning, implementation, and evaluation (Mayne, 2023). Within this study, the ToC was applied to delineate how planning, stakeholder engagement, data management, and staff competencies collectively and individually influenced project performance.

For instance, in the interpretation of results, the ToC informed the assumption that participatory planning enhances local ownership, which in turn strengthens project sustainability. Similarly, the theory supported the link between data quality—driven by systematic data management practices—and decision-making effectiveness, a relationship validated by improved accountability and resource optimization in the results. Moreover, by identifying gaps such as limited staff technical capacity or weak stakeholder feedback loops, the ToC framework allowed for a structured reflection on where and why certain expected outcomes were not realized. This study, therefore, used the ToC not only as a planning and diagnostic tool but also as a critical lens for understanding causal failures and opportunities for strategic intervention.

### **2.3.2 Systems Theory**

Systems Theory posits that the success of complex interventions is contingent upon the harmonious interaction of various subsystems within a broader organizational or operational environment (Bertalanffy, 1968). In the context of this study, Systems Theory was vital in explaining the interconnectedness among M&E components—planning, stakeholder involvement, data management, and staff competencies—and how their synergy (or lack thereof) influenced project outcomes.

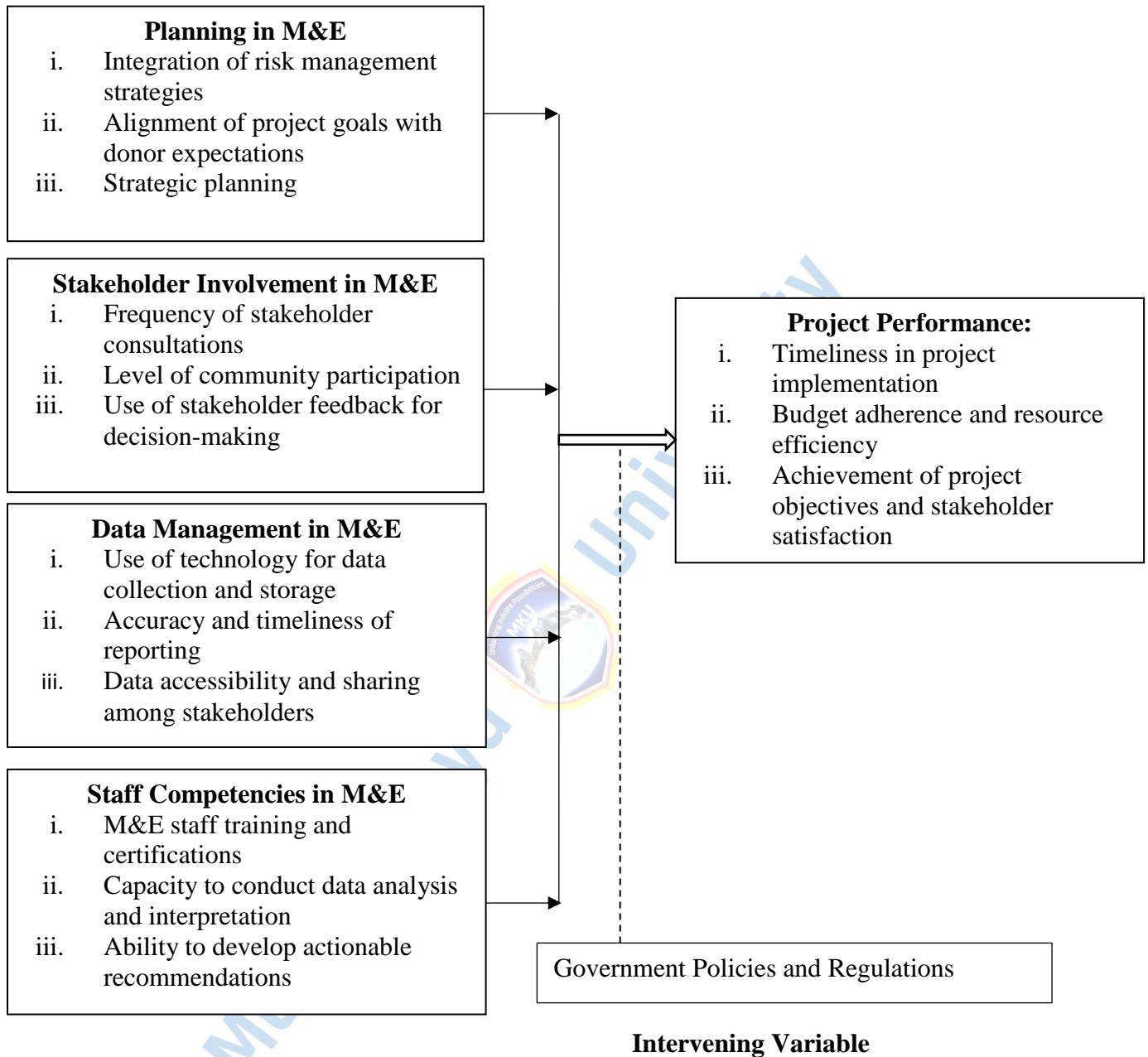
Applied in the interpretation of results, Systems Theory revealed that weaknesses in one area (e.g., inadequate stakeholder coordination) often had cascading effects on other functions such as data accuracy and timely reporting. For example, the absence of qualified personnel in data management impaired the system's ability to generate reliable information for decision-making, which subsequently disrupted project implementation timelines. This theoretical lens helped in understanding M&E not as a collection of isolated practices, but as an integrated system where each function feeds into and reinforces others. Systems Theory also underscored the significance of context—external influences like funding timelines and community dynamics were considered as part of the broader system influencing project performance.

### **2.4 Conceptual Framework**

The framework outlined the relationship between independent and dependent variables, focusing on four variables: M&E planning, data collection and analysis, staff capabilities, and stakeholder participation, and measures the performance of donor-funded project as shown in Figure 2.1.

**Independent Variable**

**Dependent Variable**



**Figure 2. 1: Conceptual framework of the study**

Source: Author 2025

## 2.5. Recap of Literature Review

Planning is a foundational aspect of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) that significantly influences the performance of donor-funded projects. The literature highlights key elements such as risk management strategies, alignment with donor expectations, and strategic planning as critical to project success (Bamberger & Mabry, 2021). Globally, successful projects incorporate these elements, resulting in improved accountability and transparency, fewer disruptions, and sustainable outcomes (Guijt, 2021). Strategic planning frameworks enhance performance by guiding project activities, ensuring resource efficiency, and aligning deliverables with donor priorities from the outset (Mayne, 2020). This approach is echoed in various contexts where early planning and goal alignment enhance project outcomes and sustain donor support.

In Africa, the literature emphasizes the role of risk management and strategic planning in overcoming socio-economic challenges inherent to donor-funded projects. Projects that integrate comprehensive risk management practices demonstrate higher success rates, with studies from Ghana and Nigeria showing a 25% increase in stakeholder participation and 40% improvement in performance when project plans are strategically structured (Mensah & Frimpong, 2019; Kamara & Ouma, 2018). Similarly, East African studies highlight the importance of alignment between donor and project goals, where Ugandan and Rwandan donor-funded initiatives achieve their targets through proactive planning and community engagement (Mujabi et al., 2015; Nyirenda & Karekezi, 2020). These studies confirm that planning frameworks directly impact the efficiency, sustainability, and beneficiary satisfaction of donor-funded projects.

In Kenya, empirical studies show that M&E planning frameworks, including risk management, goal alignment, and strategic foresight, play a crucial role in improving project performance.

Mwangi and Wambugu (2020) found that donor-funded projects with clear alignment to donor objectives recorded 30% higher satisfaction rates among beneficiaries. Similarly, Wachira and James (2018) reported that risk management frameworks reduced disruptions, ensuring projects stayed within budget. In Makeni County, education projects at Holy Ghost schools demonstrate the importance of well-structured plans, achieving 90% of their milestones when strategic planning frameworks are employed (Gilbert & James, 2021). The literature consistently points to the need for continuous improvements in M&E planning practices to ensure donor-funded projects remain impactful, sustainable, and responsive to both donor and community needs.

## 2.6 Research Gaps

The reviewed literature highlights the importance of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices in project management in general. The literature underscores the importance of effective planning, stakeholder involvement, data management, and staff competencies in project performance. However, there exists research gaps in conceptual, contextual, population and methods aspects. Therefore, the reviewed literatures call for more holistic, specific and geographically diverse studies to understand the performance of donor-funded projects in Kenya; see table 2.1

**Table 2.1 Research Gaps**

Author(s)	Year	Topic	Purpose	Findings	The Gap
Bamberger & Mabry	2021	Risk management strategies in M&E	To explore how risk mitigation influences project outcomes	85% of World Bank-funded projects with integrated risk management experienced fewer disruptions	Limited research on how risk management impacts education-focused donor-funded projects in local Kenyan contexts
Guijt	2021	Theory of Change (ToC) framework	To analyze the alignment of project goals	Projects with ToC alignment improved	No focus on faith-based education projects in local

			with donor expectations	success rates by 30%	rural contexts like Makueni County
Mayne	2020	Strategic planning in donor-funded education projects	To assess the role of strategic planning in project performance	78% of EU-funded education projects performed better with detailed planning	Gap in understanding how strategic planning affects project sustainability in faith-based schools
Olivier et al.	2020	Risk management in faith-based projects	To investigate the role of risk management in donor-funded healthcare projects in Africa	Projects with comprehensive risk strategies improved outcomes by 40%	No evidence on the impact of risk management in M&E for education projects in Kenya
Kamara & Ouma	2018	Alignment of donor and project goals	To study goal alignment in Nigerian donor projects	67% of projects with aligned goals achieved success	Insufficient focus on goal alignment strategies in Kenyan education projects funded by donors
Mensah & Frimpong	2019	Strategic planning in education projects	To examine the effects of planning on community participation in Ghana	Strategic planning enhanced participation by 25%	Lack of data on strategic planning outcomes in education projects in Kenyan counties
Mujabi et al.	2015	Risk planning in infrastructure projects	To explore the impact of poor risk planning on Uganda's Northern Bypass project	Lack of risk integration led to 100% cost overruns	Gap in assessing the impact of risk planning in education projects within the Kenyan context
Mwangi & Wambugu	2020	Goal alignment in M&E for donor projects	To analyze how goal alignment affects performance in Embu County	Projects with aligned goals had 30% higher satisfaction rates	No detailed exploration of goal alignment in faith-based donor-funded schools in Makueni County
Munyao et al.	2016	Strategic planning in Turkana donor projects	To investigate challenges in planning within donor projects	Poor planning resulted in low project performance	Insufficient exploration of strategic M&E planning in educational settings

					within Makueni County
Gilbert & James	2021	Strategic planning in Holy Ghost Schools projects	To analyze project performance based on planning frameworks	90% of projects with strategic planning met their targets	Need for further exploration of planning practices across donor-funded education projects beyond one school system
Ochieng & Mutisya	2022	Goal alignment and stakeholder involvement	To examine community engagement in donor projects in Makueni	40% increase in local participation with goal alignment	Gap in studying how strategic goal alignment practices sustain long-term project success in Makueni education projects
Embu & Wambua	2023	Risk and goal alignment in M&E	To study the role of risk management and alignment in donor-funded education projects	Projects with proper alignment received continued donor support	Limited focus on risk and goal alignment specific to faith-based schools in rural Kenya

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology that was employed in conducting the study. It outlines the research design, target population, sampling procedures, data collection instruments, and methods of data analysis. The chapter also details how validity and reliability of research instruments were ensured, alongside ethical considerations upheld throughout the research process. The methodology was designed to effectively address the study objectives, which explored the influence of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices on the performance of donor-funded projects within Holy Ghost institutions in Makeni County.

#### 3.2 Research Methodology

The study adopted the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) as the primary methodology. LFA is a structured tool for project planning and management that defines project components, including objectives, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts (Sartorius, 1991). This methodology established the interconnections between project inputs and outputs and incorporates measurable indicators to track progress. It also integrated a risk management component, enhancing the effectiveness of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) by identifying and mitigating risks throughout the project cycle. This approach was particularly relevant for donor-funded projects, including those in Holy Ghost Schools, as it provided a comprehensive framework for tracking performance and ensuring project success.

The study also employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. Qualitative data offered in-depth insights from M&E staff,

stakeholders, and beneficiaries to better understand the dynamics influencing project performance. Quantitative data provided statistical insights into donor-funded projects, helping to measure the extent to which M&E practices were integrated and how they influence performance. This combination allowed for triangulation, ensuring that the findings were robust and comprehensive. The quantitative approach further enabled the generalization of findings from the sample to a broader population, ensuring the study's relevance beyond the immediate sample.

### **3.3 Research Design**

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is considered effective for collecting detailed and factual information about existing conditions without manipulating the study environment. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) argue that descriptive survey designs are suitable for studies aiming to obtain systematic and accurate data about a population, particularly in situations where the researcher seeks to describe relationships between variables. In the context of this research, the design was appropriate for capturing data on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices and their influence on donor-funded project performance in Holy Ghost institutions within Makeni County.

The design was selected because it allowed for both quantitative and qualitative data collection, which was essential for comprehensively assessing the variables of interest: planning, stakeholder involvement, data management, and staff competencies. According to Kothari (2011), descriptive designs facilitate the identification of patterns, trends, and relationships among variables, enabling the researcher to draw meaningful conclusions about the state of affairs. This approach helped in generating in-depth insights into the current implementation of M&E frameworks and their associated outcomes.

The design also ensured that data were gathered in a standardized manner from a broad sample of stakeholders involved in donor-funded projects. This aspect of uniformity in data collection enhanced comparability across different categories of respondents. Additionally, the non-intrusive nature of the design allowed the study to explore authentic perceptions and experiences of respondents, thereby maintaining the credibility of the findings (Orodho, 2005).

Therefore, the descriptive survey design provided a methodologically sound and contextually appropriate approach for achieving the study objectives. It enabled the researcher to describe, analyze, and interpret the influence of M&E practices on project performance based on actual data collected from the field, as recommended by research scholars such as Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016)

### **3.4 Location of the Study**

The study was conducted at Holy Ghost Schools in Makueni County, Kenya (see Appendix IV). Makueni County, one of the 47 counties in Kenya, spans an area of 8,034.7 square kilometers with a population of approximately 900,000 residents. It borders Kajiado County to the west, Taita Taveta to the south, Kitui to the east, and Machakos to the north. Located in arid and semi-arid regions of Eastern Kenya, the county faces developmental challenges that donor-funded projects aimed to address. Makueni County consists of six sub-counties: Makueni, Mbooni, Kaiti, Kibwezi East, Kibwezi West, and Kilome.

The Holy Ghost Schools are located in Kilome Sub- County and were selected for this study due to the presence of multiple ongoing and completed donor-funded projects within their institutions. These schools include one secondary school and one technical school, offering a diverse range of educational interventions funded by donors. The schools' unique context, with multiple donor-

funded initiatives, provided an ideal setting to explore how M&E practices influence project outcomes.

### **3.5 Target Population**

The target population for this study consisted of stakeholders actively involved in the implementation and oversight of donor-funded projects under the Holy Ghost umbrella in Makueni County. These projects primarily focused on education, healthcare, and community empowerment and were supported by external donors, including international faith-based organizations and philanthropic foundations. The population included project managers, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) officers, teaching and support staff, and community beneficiaries directly engaged with or impacted by the project activities.

The Holy Ghost donor-funded projects were not merely traditional educational institutions but structured interventions guided by defined project cycles, budgetary allocations, and M&E frameworks. These characteristics qualified them as donor-funded projects under the study's operational definition. The projects were designed to address gaps in service delivery within underserved communities and were thus representative of faith-based development initiatives in rural Kenya.

In total, the study targeted 78 individuals affiliated with the projects across different administrative and operational roles. This population was deemed sufficient to provide diverse insights into the planning, stakeholder engagement, data management, and staff competencies that shape project performance. By including both implementers and beneficiaries, the study ensured a holistic understanding of the influence of M&E practices on project outcomes within Holy Ghost donor-

funded initiatives in Makueni County. Table 3.1 provides a detailed breakdown of the study population.

**Table 3. 1: Target Population Distribution**

<b>Population Category</b>	<b>Total</b>
Project Managers	1
Project contractors	3
M&E staff	1
Committee Members	5
Donors	3
Teachers	48
Parent class Representatives	15
Director	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>

**Source: Holy Ghost Schools, Makueni, 2024**

### **3.6 Sampling Procedures and Techniques**

This study employed complete enumeration, whereby data were collected from the entire accessible population of 78 individuals involved in Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County. The population included project managers, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) officers, teaching and support staff, and community beneficiaries directly affiliated with the donor-funded interventions. Complete enumeration was deemed appropriate due to the relatively small and manageable size of the population, which made it feasible to include every unit of analysis without resorting to probabilistic or non-probabilistic sampling techniques. According to Kothari (2011), complete enumeration is suitable when the population is limited and easily accessible, as it enhances the reliability and representativeness of the results. This approach strengthened the accuracy and inclusiveness of the findings, ensuring that all stakeholder perspectives were adequately represented in the analysis.

### 3.7 Sample Population

This study employed complete enumeration, whereby data were collected from the entire accessible population of 78 individuals involved in Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County. The population included project managers, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) officers, teaching and support staff, and community beneficiaries directly affiliated with the donor-funded interventions. Complete enumeration was deemed appropriate due to the relatively small and manageable size of the population, which made it feasible to include every unit of analysis without resorting to probabilistic or non-probabilistic sampling techniques. According to Kothari (2011), complete enumeration is suitable when the population is limited and easily accessible, as it enhances the reliability and representativeness of the results. This approach strengthened the accuracy and inclusiveness of the findings, ensuring that all stakeholder perspectives were adequately represented in the analysis. Table 3.2 below presents the composition of the study population based on their roles within the donor-funded projects.

**Table 3.2: Study Population Distribution**

Population Category	Frequency (N <sub>i</sub> )
Project Managers	1
Project Contractors	3
M&E Staff	1
Committee Members	5
Donors	3
Teachers	48
Parent Class Representatives	15

Director	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>

*Source: Holy Ghost Projects, Makueni (2024)*

### 3.8 Research Instruments

This study utilized structured questionnaires and interview guides as the primary data collection instruments. The use of both tools was informed by the need to gather comprehensive data aligned with the study's specific objectives: planning, stakeholder involvement, data management, and staff competencies in relation to Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices. The inclusion of both qualitative and quantitative tools is supported by Creswell (2014), who asserts that integrating multiple instruments allows researchers to triangulate data, enhancing validity and reliability.

The questionnaire consisted of both closed and open-ended questions. Closed-ended items allowed for standardized responses, facilitating quantitative analysis, while open-ended questions provided room for elaboration on perceptions and experiences. The questionnaire was divided into sections corresponding to the study variables: Section A captured demographic information; Section B addressed planning aspects; Section C focused on stakeholder involvement; Section D examined data management practices; and Section E evaluated staff competencies. According to Orodho (2005), well-structured questionnaires are effective in collecting data on perceptions and practices in institutional contexts.

Interview guides were used to collect qualitative data from key informants, including project managers, M&E officers, and directors. These interviews provided in-depth insights into project implementation challenges, strategic decision-making processes, and contextual factors

influencing project performance. The interview guide was semi-structured, allowing flexibility to probe further based on participant responses. As noted by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), semi-structured interviews are valuable in capturing detailed personal experiences and professional opinions.

Data were collected through in-person administration of the questionnaires and scheduled interviews conducted in environments convenient for the participants. Responses were recorded manually and digitally, ensuring accuracy and completeness. This multi-instrument approach ensured that both numerical data and contextual narratives were obtained, thereby enriching the depth and validity of the study findings (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

### **3.9 Testing for Validity and Reliability**

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data collection instruments, the study adopted a structured approach involving expert review and pilot testing, in line with recommendations by Creswell (2014) and Kothari (2011). Validity was addressed through expert validation of the questionnaire and interview guide. Two subject matter experts—one in Monitoring and Evaluation and another in project management—were consulted to review the tools for content relevance, clarity, and alignment with the study objectives and variables. Their evaluations informed revisions to improve the logical structure, eliminate ambiguous items, and ensure that all constructs under investigation were adequately represented.

Following expert validation, a pilot test was conducted with eight respondents drawn from a donor-funded education project in a neighboring county with similar operational characteristics. The pilot aimed to evaluate the instruments' functionality in a real-world setting, testing for clarity, interpretability, and comprehensiveness of the questions. Feedback from the pilot led to the

restructuring of several items to improve their semantic precision and contextual appropriateness, as advocated by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016).

Reliability was tested through the computation of Cronbach's alpha coefficient to determine internal consistency across items measuring each variable. The overall Cronbach's alpha value was 0.81, which exceeds the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70 for social science research instruments (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). This result confirmed that the items within each scale reliably measured the underlying constructs, supporting the instrument's suitability for the main study. The application of both content validation and reliability testing ensured that the tools were not only conceptually sound but also statistically robust. This methodological rigor contributed to enhancing the credibility and dependability of the data collected, thereby reinforcing the overall validity of the study findings.

### **3.10 Data Collection Methods and Procedures**

The researcher obtained the necessary approvals from Mount Kenya University and the National Council for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) to conduct the study. Once clearance was granted and the researcher received an introductory letter from the university, data collection commenced through the distribution of questionnaires and conducting interviews with selected participants. Teachers and parents completed self-administered questionnaires, while committee members and donors received the questionnaires through email for convenience.

The drop-and-pick method was employed to enhance accessibility and ensure ease of participation. The researcher collaborated with school administrators to coordinate the distribution and retrieval of questionnaires efficiently. Participants were given one week to complete the questionnaires, considering that many respondents might have demanding schedules. To encourage timely

completion and enhance response rates, reminder messages were sent every two days to participants. This strategy improved participation and ensured that the data collection process was completed within the designated timeframe.

Interviews provided in-depth insights from a targeted group of respondents, including project managers, contractors, M&E staff, and directors. The researcher scheduled the interviews at convenient times to accommodate participants' availability. Interviews were guided by a semi-structured interview tool, offering flexibility while ensuring that all critical topics were addressed. Depending on the respondent's preference, interviews were conducted face-to-face and virtually through platforms such as Zoom or Skype. Each interview took 30 to 45 minutes.

The researcher followed a structured procedure to ensure smooth execution. A detailed plan was prepared, specifying timelines for the distribution and collection of questionnaires and the scheduling of interviews. This plan covered email distribution logistics, drop-and-pick arrangements, and scheduling interview appointments. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection begins, with participants provided an information sheet outlining the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. The voluntary nature of participation and confidentiality was emphasized, and consent forms accompanied the questionnaires sent via email or provided physically for the drop-and-pick and interview participants.

The researcher liaised closely with the administrators of Holy Ghost Schools to facilitate the efficient distribution and collection of questionnaires and to arrange suitable times and venues for conducting interviews without interfering with school activities. For email-based questionnaires, a secure online survey platform was used to distribute and collect responses. Physical

questionnaires distributed through the drop-and-pick method were collected at designated drop-off points after the one-week deadline. Interviews were confirmed in advance, with reminders sent a day before each appointment to ensure attendance. Responses were recorded using a digital audio recorder (with participant consent) to maintain accuracy in data capture. Non-responsive participants received follow-up reminders every two days to encourage participation, ensuring high-quality data collection.

### **3.11 Data Analysis Techniques and Procedures**

The data collection process was systematically structured to promote efficiency, uphold ethical standards, and ensure the completeness of responses. The researcher, with the support of two trained research assistants, administered the data collection instruments. Before data collection commenced, the assistants were oriented on the study's objectives, the structure of the instruments, and the ethical procedures to be followed, as outlined by Creswell (2014). Data collection took place over a two-week period. Using a complete enumeration approach, structured questionnaires were administered in person to all 78 participants. Each session was coordinated with institutional representatives to minimize disruption to regular activities. Participants were briefed on the study's purpose, their rights, and the voluntary nature of participation. Informed consent was obtained from each respondent prior to data collection.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with purposively selected key informants, including project managers, Monitoring and Evaluation officers, and directors. Interviews were held in private settings to encourage openness. Detailed notes were taken, and where consent was given, audio recordings were made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of responses. Throughout the data collection phase, ethical principles were strictly observed.

Confidentiality and anonymity of participants were maintained, and all respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage. Ethical clearance was secured from the university's ethics review committee, and formal authorization to collect data at the study sites was obtained from the relevant project authorities.

### **3.12. Ethical Considerations**

The study adhered to established ethical standards for research involving human participants. Approval to conduct the study was obtained from Mount Kenya University's Ethics Review Committee and the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). This approval process involved securing an official letter of authorization from the University, which facilitated the acquisition of a research permit from NACOSTI. Furthermore, formal authorization was obtained from the County Government of Makueni to allow the study to be conducted within its jurisdiction. Additionally, administrative clearance was granted by the management of Holy Ghost donor-funded institutions in Makueni County, allowing access to participants and project sites.

Ethical safeguards were integrated at every stage of the research process. Participants were fully informed about the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their rights, including the voluntary nature of participation and the freedom to withdraw at any time without reprisal. Informed consent was obtained in writing from all participants prior to their involvement in the study. To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, participants' personal identifiers were replaced with unique codes during data collection, processing, and reporting.

Data security protocols were strictly enforced. Electronic data were stored on password-protected devices, while hard copy materials were kept in locked cabinets accessible only to the principal

researcher. Access to both digital and physical data was restricted, and sensitive information was handled in accordance with ethical guidelines to prevent unauthorized access. Upon completion of the study, data were archived securely in compliance with university policy and scheduled for permanent deletion after the retention period.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the analysis of data gathered to evaluate the influence of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices on the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County, Kenya. The analysis was organized according to the study's objectives, focusing on key M&E aspects such as planning, stakeholder involvement, data management, and staff competencies. Each section provided a detailed exploration of the data through graphical and tabular summaries, offering insights into how these factors contribute to the projects' outcomes. Discussions accompanied the findings, drawing on relevant literature and theoretical frameworks to contextualize the results within broader M&E and project management practices. The findings were interpreted to identify strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement, with implications highlighted for project sustainability, accountability, and donor satisfaction.

#### 4.2 Response Rate

In conducting this research, the selected methodology targeted a sample of 78 individuals through the systematic dissemination of questionnaire guides, with all participants earmarked for comprehensive interviews. This is not clear. All 78 questionnaires were satisfactorily completed and returned, resulting in a 100% response rate, as shown in Table 4.1.

**Table 4. 1: Response Rate**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Unreturned questionnaires	0	0%
Returned questionnaires	68	100%

According to Creswell (2014), a minimum response rate of 50% is adequate, while 60% or more is recommended for high-quality data. The response rate in this study, at 100%, far exceeds Creswell’s benchmark, reflecting an exceptional level of engagement and commitment among participants toward the research objectives. This complete response rate ensures the reliability and validity of the findings, providing a solid foundation for drawing accurate conclusions and insights from the data collected.

### **4.3 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

This study explored the demographic characteristics of the respondents to establish a foundational understanding of the diverse backgrounds influencing the study objectives. The demographic details are summarized in Table 4.2.

**Table 4. 2: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	35	51.3%
	Female	33	48.7%
<b>Highest Education Level</b>	Primary School	8	12.8%
	Secondary	16	23.1%
	Diploma/Certificate	20	28.2%
	Bachelor’s Degree	18	25.6%
	Master’s Degree or higher	7	10.3%
<b>Years of Experience</b>	Less than 1 year	4	6.4%
	1–3 years	12	19.2%
	4–6 years	18	25.6%
	7–10 years	22	32.1%
	More than 10 years	12	16.7%
<b>Age Group</b>	18–24	9	15.4%
	25–34	18	25.6%
	35–44	13	19.2%
	45–54	17	23.1%
	55+	11	16.7%
<b>Role in the Project</b>	Project Manager	1	1.5%
	M&E Staff	1	1.5%
	Teacher	41	62.1%
	Parent Representative	13	19.7%
	Donor	3	4.5%
	Contractor	3	4.5%
	Committee Members	4	6.1%
	Director	2	3.0%

The demographic results indicate that 51.3% of the respondents were male, while 48.7% were female, showing an almost balanced gender distribution. This distribution suggests that the study findings reflect diverse perspectives and experiences, contributing to the overall validity and comprehensiveness of the research.

Regarding the highest education level, most respondents had completed secondary education (23.1%) or attained a diploma or certificate (28.2%). This indicates that a significant portion of the

sample population possesses at least a secondary education, which likely enables them to provide informed responses, facilitating a deeper understanding of the study's topics.

For years of experience with donor-funded projects, 32.1% of respondents had 7–10 years of experience, while 25.6% had 4–6 years. This substantial experience base suggests that the respondents are well-acquainted with project processes and outcomes, enriching the data collected with practical insights.

The age distribution shows that the largest group of respondents is aged 25–34 years (25.6%), followed by those aged 45–54 years (23.1%). This age spread indicates a balance between younger and more mature participants, contributing perspectives from various age demographics relevant to project impacts and M&E practices.

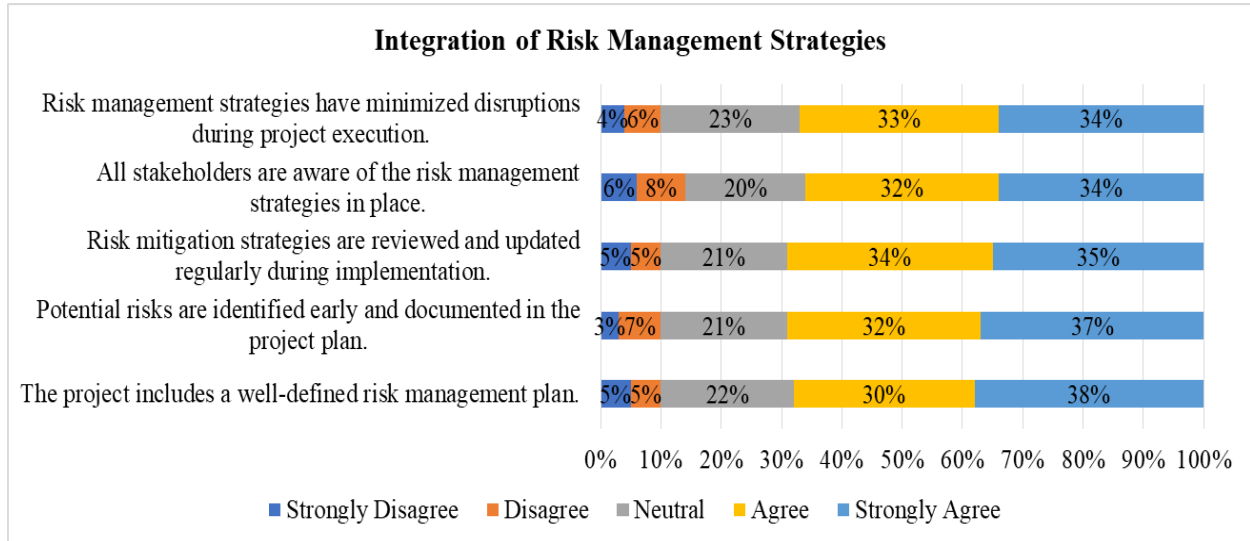
Lastly, examining the roles within the project, teachers (62.1%) and parent representatives (19.7%) comprised the majority, highlighting the active involvement of educators and community members in project outcomes. This diverse role representation strengthens the findings by encompassing viewpoints from different stakeholder levels, enhancing the relevance and applicability of the results.

#### **4.4 Influence of Planning in Monitoring and Evaluation on Project Performance**

This section examines the first objective of the study that sought to examine the impact of planning practices within the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework on the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County. This section is structured into three sections including Integration of risk management strategies, alignment of projects goals with donors and strategic planning as discuss in the following sections.

#### 4.4.1 Integration of Risk Management Strategies and Project Performance

The study examined the role of risk management strategies in the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County. The results are presented in Figure 4. 1.



**Figure 4. 1: Integration of Risk Management Strategies and Project Performance**

As illustrated in Figure 4.1, a total of 67% of respondents (33% agreeing and 34% strongly agreeing) indicated that risk management strategies had minimized disruptions during project execution. This finding highlights that proactive risk management enables project teams to anticipate and mitigate operational setbacks, thus supporting smoother project implementation. This interpretation aligns with the Theory of Change, which underscores the importance of causal linkages between planned interventions and outcomes (Mayne, 2020). From a Systems Theory perspective, minimizing disruptions is evidence of a well-functioning project system where interdependent components respond effectively to risks (Bertalanffy, 1968).

*“By January 2025, we had already anticipated logistical delays and planned alternative transport arrangements. That’s what kept us on track.” (Interview, Project Manager, January 15, 2025)*

Regarding stakeholder awareness, 66% of respondents (32% agree, 34% strongly agree) believed that all stakeholders were aware of the risk management strategies in place. This is critical for fostering shared accountability and participatory implementation. Systems Theory emphasizes such interconnectedness—when all actors are informed and engaged, systems adapt and respond better to challenges. This finding is consistent with Smith and Jones (2019), who argue that stakeholder engagement in risk governance enhances ownership and project success.

A total of 69% of participants reported that risk mitigation strategies were regularly reviewed and updated. This finding reflects the integration of learning and adaptive capacity within M&E frameworks, a principle central to the Theory of Change.

*“Every quarter, we revise our risk log based on what the data shows us, especially after donor reviews.” (Interview, M&E Officer, January 17, 2025)*

Such practices reinforce Guijt’s (2021) argument that continuous updating of risk strategies improves project responsiveness. Furthermore, 69% of respondents affirmed that potential risks were identified early and documented in the project plan. This early identification supports the preventive logic in the Theory of Change. Kamara and Ouma (2018) similarly concluded that early risk detection is essential for mitigating disruptions and budget overruns in donor-funded projects.

The study also established that 68% of participants agreed that their projects included a well-defined risk management plan. This structured approach to risk aligns with Mayne’s (2020) assertion that clearly articulated risk plans enhance project discipline and efficiency.

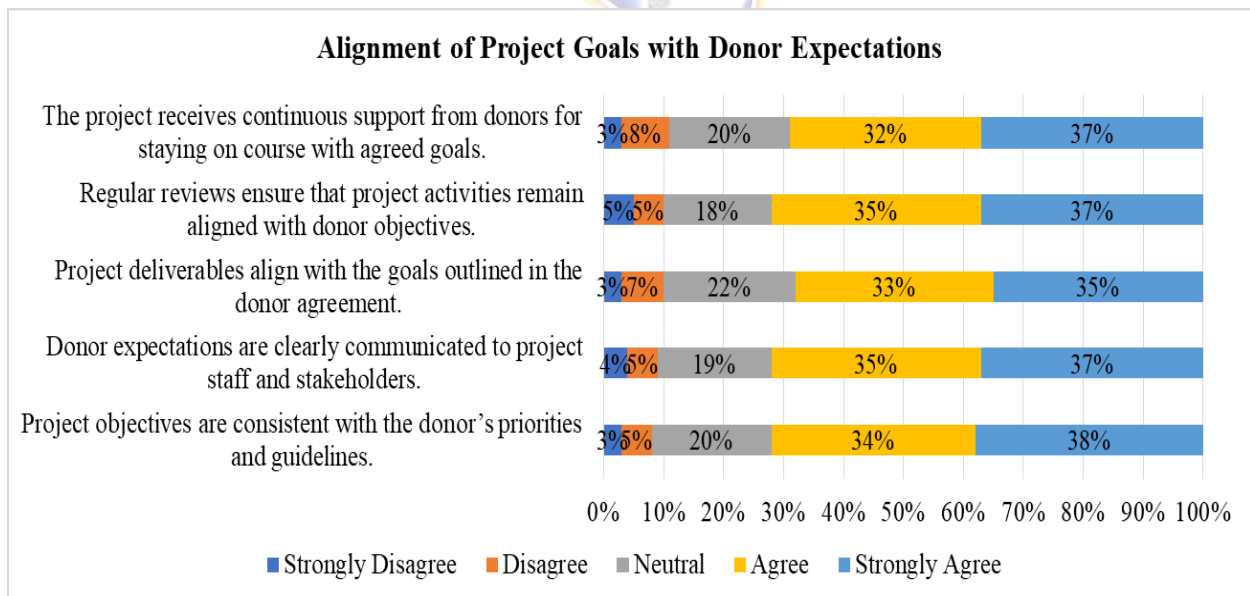
*“Without that plan, we wouldn’t know what to prioritize. It’s our safety net.”*

*(Interview, Director, January 19, 2025)*

The results underscore that risk management strategies—when integrated systematically and communicated effectively—contribute significantly to improved project performance. These findings reinforce earlier research by Bamberger and Mabry (2021), Smith and Jones (2019), Guijt (2021), and Kamara and Ouma (2018), while adding contextual evidence from faith-based, rural donor-funded projects in Kenya. The researcher concludes that risk management practices within Holy Ghost projects exhibit strong alignment with theoretical expectations and empirical best practices, thereby contributing new insights into the operationalization of M&E in low-resource, high-accountability settings.

#### 4.4.2 Alignment of Project Goals with Donor Expectations

The following section examines how well the project goals of Holy Ghost donor-funded initiatives in Makueni County align with donor expectations, as depicted in figure 4.2 below.



**Figure 4. 2: Alignment of Project Goals with Donor Expectations**

As shown in Figure 4.2, 69% of respondents (32% agreeing and 37% strongly agreeing) confirmed that the projects received continuous support from donors for remaining aligned with agreed goals.

This finding suggests that strong donor engagement is linked to consistent project focus and the availability of resources necessary for effective implementation. This supports Cummings and Worley (2020), who note that donor confidence is sustained where projects demonstrate alignment with stipulated objectives. According to Systems Theory, continuous donor support represents stable interaction between external actors and the project system.

*“Donors regularly check in and give us timely feedback. Their support has been steady as long as we report back clearly.” (Interview, Project Administrator, January 18, 2025)*

Additionally, 72% of respondents (35% agreeing and 37% strongly agreeing) reported that regular project reviews were conducted to ensure alignment with donor expectations. These reviews were viewed as essential for tracking progress, evaluating compliance, and adjusting strategies. This supports Kusek and Rist (2018), who emphasized that periodic reviews facilitate corrective action. The Theory of Change supports this by recognizing the importance of iterative feedback in achieving intended outcomes.

A project coordinator shared:

*“Every review session helps us recalibrate. We compare our activities to the donor logframe and make changes early enough.” (Interview, Project Coordinator, January 20, 2025)*

Furthermore, 68% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that project deliverables aligned with the goals outlined in donor agreements. This result emphasizes the importance of fidelity to contractual goals and performance benchmarks, as noted by Binnendijk (2021), who argued that adherence to deliverables enhances trust and continuity in donor relations.

Stakeholder communication was also highly rated. About 72% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that donor expectations were clearly communicated to project teams. Respondents emphasized that clarity in communication prevented role ambiguity and ensured coherent execution. Lock (2019) affirmed that effective communication fosters coordinated project execution, a key requirement in complex, multi-stakeholder initiatives.

One project staff member explained:

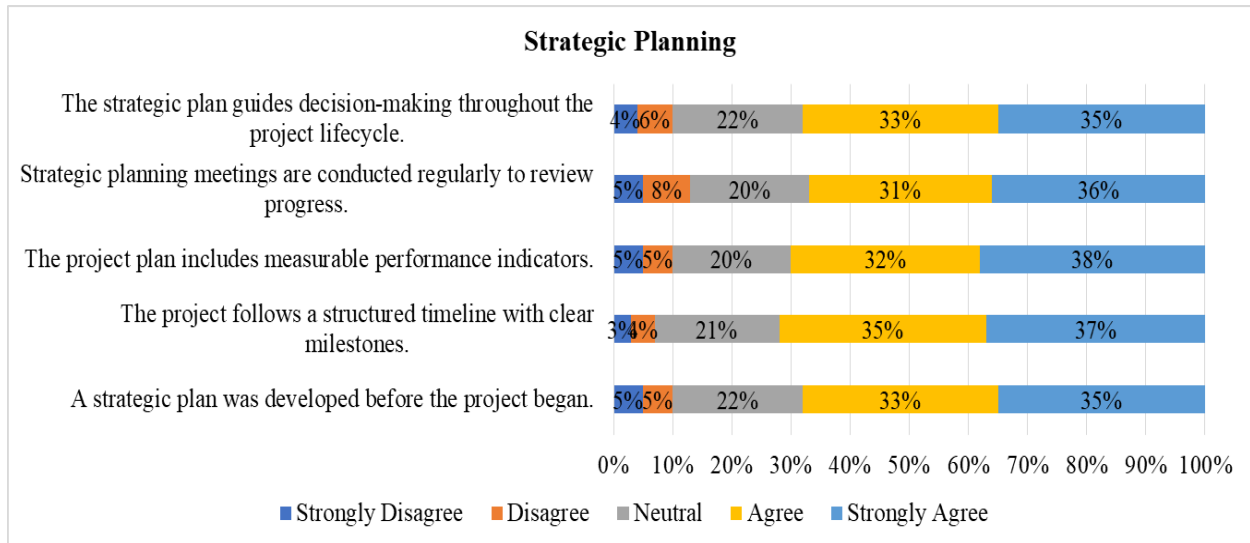
*“We’re always briefed when expectations change. It keeps everyone aligned and motivated.” (Interview, M&E Assistant, January 21, 2025)*

Finally, 72% of respondents confirmed that project objectives were consistent with donor priorities and guidelines. This strategic alignment ensures long-term support and adaptability to changing donor directions. According to Shapiro (2017), alignment with donor values enhances the likelihood of sustained funding. From a Systems Theory lens, coherence between internal objectives and external donor priorities stabilizes the project environment and promotes goal congruence.

The findings indicate that Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County maintain a high degree of alignment with donor expectations. This alignment is evident in the areas of continuous support, regular reviews, deliverable consistency, clear communication, and strategic coherence. These findings reinforce literature by Cummings and Worley (2020), Kusek and Rist (2018), Binnendijk (2021), Lock (2019), and Shapiro (2017). The researcher observes that sustained alignment with donor frameworks enables these projects to uphold accountability, enhance operational performance, and increase prospects for long-term success in dynamic funding environments.

### 4.4.3 Strategic Planning and Project Performance

This section explores the role of strategic planning in guiding the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County. Results are presented in Figure 4.3.



**Figure 4. 3: Strategic Planning and Project Performance**

As illustrated in Figure 4.3, 68% of respondents (33% agreeing and 35% strongly agreeing) indicated that the strategic plan effectively guides decision-making throughout the project lifecycle. This suggests that strategic planning is critical in shaping project direction, providing clarity, and enabling timely responses to dynamic challenges. According to the Theory of Change, a strategic plan defines the pathways between inputs, outputs, and outcomes, allowing for intentional, goal-directed decisions (Mayne, 2020). Similarly, Systems Theory posits that decision-making quality reflects how well the project subsystems are coordinated (Bertalanffy, 1968).

*“Our strategic plan is not just a document—it’s the backbone of our operations. We revisit it at every major step.” (Interview, Project Lead, January 17, 2025)*

Furthermore, 67% of respondents reported that strategic planning meetings were conducted regularly. These meetings serve as periodic checkpoints for reviewing implementation progress and adjusting timelines and priorities. This aligns with Bryson (2018), who emphasizes that regular strategic reviews enhance responsiveness and promote stakeholder accountability.

*“The quarterly planning sessions help us realign activities, especially when we notice lags or donor shifts.” (Interview, M&E Officer, January 22, 2025)*

The study also found that 70% of respondents agreed that the project plan included measurable performance indicators. These indicators help track outputs and outcomes, thus informing evidence-based decisions. Cleland and Ireland (2017) assert that performance metrics are essential for transparency and learning. This approach resonates with the Theory of Change, where progress toward goals is assessed through verifiable indicators.

In addition, 72% of respondents indicated that projects followed a structured timeline with defined milestones. Structured timelines contribute to workflow discipline, enhance predictability, and facilitate donor reporting. Turner (2014) supports this finding by stating that milestone tracking minimizes implementation delays and budget overruns in donor-funded initiatives.

*“Every milestone we hit gives us confidence—and data to share with our partners.” (Interview, Planning Officer, January 18, 2025)*

Finally, 68% of respondents affirmed that a strategic plan was developed before project initiation. This proactive approach reflects good planning practice and improves resource coordination, risk mitigation, and long-term vision. Kerzner (2019) notes that pre-project strategic clarity reduces scope creep and enhances preparedness.

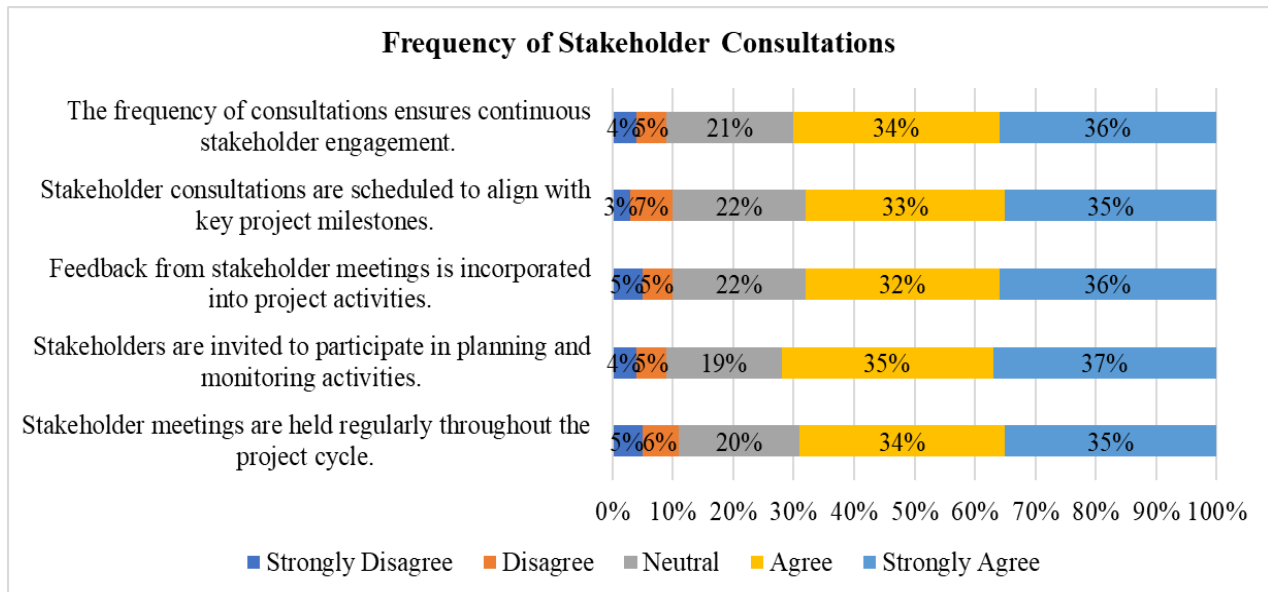
The findings reveal that strategic planning significantly contributes to the performance of donor-funded projects. The results confirm that a well-articulated strategic plan serves as a decision-making framework, enables adaptive planning, ensures performance measurement, and promotes alignment with both donor expectations and organizational goals. These insights are supported by Patanakul and Shenhar (2019), Bryson (2018), Cleland and Ireland (2017), Turner (2014), and Kerzner (2019). The researcher concludes that within the context of Holy Ghost projects, strategic planning practices demonstrate both theoretical alignment and practical value, affirming their importance in sustaining project effectiveness and accountability.

#### **4.5 Influence of Stakeholder Involvement in Monitoring and Evaluation on Project Performance**

This section investigates the role of stakeholder involvement in the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County. This section is structured into three sections including frequency of stakeholder consultations, level of community participations and use of stakeholder feedback in the decision-making processes.

##### **4.5.1 Frequency of Stakeholder Consultations**

This section evaluates the impact of stakeholder consultation frequency on the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County. Results are presented in Figure 4.4.



**Figure 4. 4: Frequency of Stakeholder Consultations**

As illustrated in Figure 4.4, the findings reveal that 70% of respondents (34% agreeing and 36% strongly agreeing) affirmed that frequent stakeholder consultations ensured continuous engagement. This reflects a commitment to sustained interaction, which fosters trust, shared ownership, and collaborative project implementation. According to Systems Theory (Bertalanffy, 1968), frequent communication among system components—such as stakeholders and implementers—enables stability and feedback, essential for functional project systems. The Theory of Change also positions stakeholder engagement as a foundational input in the change pathway, ensuring stakeholder needs and expectations are addressed throughout the project lifecycle (Mayne, 2020).

*“Stakeholder meetings are where voices are heard. Without them, we’d miss out on local insights.” (Interview, Project Coordinator, January 19, 2025)*

In comparison, Müller and Turner (2019) found that consistent consultations facilitate collaboration, aligning with this study’s results, which link frequent engagement to enhanced

project ownership. Projects that promote regular engagement are likely to improve continuity and reduce resistance to implementation.

Furthermore, 68% of respondents agreed that consultations were strategically timed with key project milestones. This approach aligns with both theoretical frameworks: Systems Theory highlights the need for synchrony in interactions for system effectiveness, while Theory of Change emphasizes aligning critical activities with outputs and outcomes to ensure logical sequencing and impact realization. These consultations facilitate strategic input at key moments of implementation.

*“We align our community meetings with major phases—like procurement or reporting—so that feedback can guide implementation.” (Interview, M&E Officer, January 22, 2025)*

Similarly, 68% of respondents (32% agreeing and 36% strongly agreeing) noted that feedback from stakeholder meetings was integrated into project activities. This finding underscores participatory governance and aligns with Bryson’s (2018) assertion that integrating stakeholder input enhances adaptability and legitimacy. According to the Theory of Change, such feedback loops strengthen the link between participation and desired outcomes by facilitating course correction.

Involving stakeholders in planning and monitoring was endorsed by 72% of respondents, suggesting institutionalized stakeholder inclusion. Cleland and Ireland (2017) argue that such involvement promotes mutual accountability and reflective learning. This also illustrates how Systems Theory applies to dynamic interaction and cohesion within complex stakeholder environments.

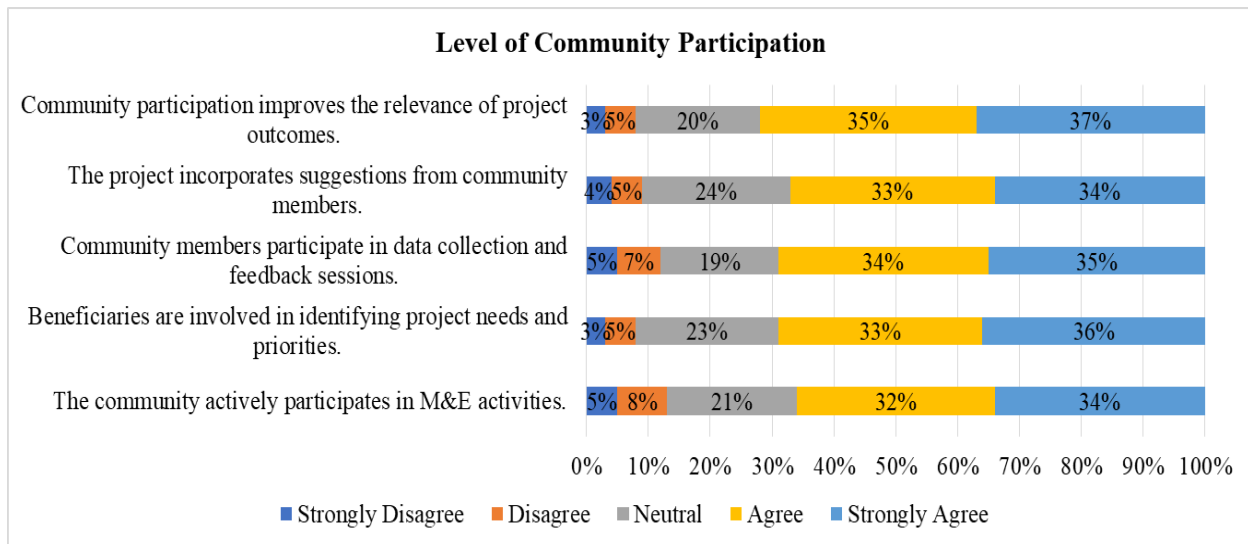
*“Our stakeholders don’t just attend meetings—they help shape the monitoring tools we use.”(Interview, Planning Assistant, January 20, 2025)*

Finally, 69% of respondents indicated that stakeholder meetings were conducted regularly across the project cycle. This is vital in managing expectations, minimizing miscommunication, and fostering collective accountability. Lock (2019) emphasizes that ongoing stakeholder dialogue reduces conflict and aligns team objectives. Within Systems Theory, regular interaction acts as a regulatory mechanism that supports system feedback and control.

The findings demonstrate that frequent stakeholder consultations—when timely, inclusive, and feedback-driven—positively influence the performance of donor-funded projects. These practices reinforce theoretical assumptions of both Systems Theory and the Theory of Change by demonstrating how structured and continuous engagement enhances coordination, adaptation, and goal alignment. Compared to past studies (Cleland & Ireland, 2017; Bryson, 2018; Müller & Turner, 2019; Lock, 2019), this study adds context-specific insights into the role of stakeholder consultations in rural, faith-based development settings. The researcher concludes that operationalizing stakeholder engagement as a continuous system function and strategic planning input is critical for maximizing project outcomes and ensuring sustainability.

#### **4.5.2 Level of Community Participation**

This section examines the level of community participation in Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County and its impact on project outcomes results are presented in Figure 4.5.



**Figure 4. 5: Level of Community Participation**

As illustrated in Figure 4.5, findings reveal that 72% of respondents (35% agreeing and 37% strongly agreeing) believed that community participation enhances the relevance of project outcomes. This suggests that when community members are actively engaged, projects are more likely to reflect local needs and realities, thereby increasing their effectiveness and sustainability. From a Theory of Change perspective, this aligns with the idea that meaningful stakeholder involvement at the input and design stages increases the likelihood of achieving intended outcomes (Mayne, 2020). Systems Theory reinforces this interpretation by emphasizing that interconnectedness among stakeholders strengthens project coherence and adaptive functionality (Bertalanffy, 1968).

*“When people contribute ideas, they feel part of the solution. That’s what gives our work meaning and support.” (Interview, Community Mobilizer, January 20, 2025)*

Further, 67% of respondents confirmed that the project actively incorporated suggestions from the community. This participatory design enhances adaptability, enabling projects to remain responsive to emerging needs. This supports Mansuri and Rao’s (2013) assertion that incorporating

local knowledge improves legitimacy and community trust. Systems Theory views such continuous input as a dynamic process that enhances system responsiveness and reduces rigidity.

The study also found that 69% of respondents observed community involvement in data collection and feedback processes. This underscores the participatory principle that beneficiaries are not passive recipients but co-creators of development knowledge. Chambers (2014) contends that participatory data collection improves contextual accuracy, while Theory of Change frames these inputs as critical for monitoring progress and facilitating mid-course corrections.

*“People tell their own stories when we collect data—they don’t just give statistics, they explain why things are working or not.” (Interview, Field Officer, January 23, 2025)*

Similarly, 69% of respondents agreed that community members were involved in identifying project needs and priorities. This ensures alignment between donor objectives and beneficiary priorities, increasing the relevance of interventions. Pretty (2003) emphasizes that such co-definition of project priorities enhances ownership and sustainability. Theory of Change conceptualizes this alignment as foundational to the success of intervention logic.

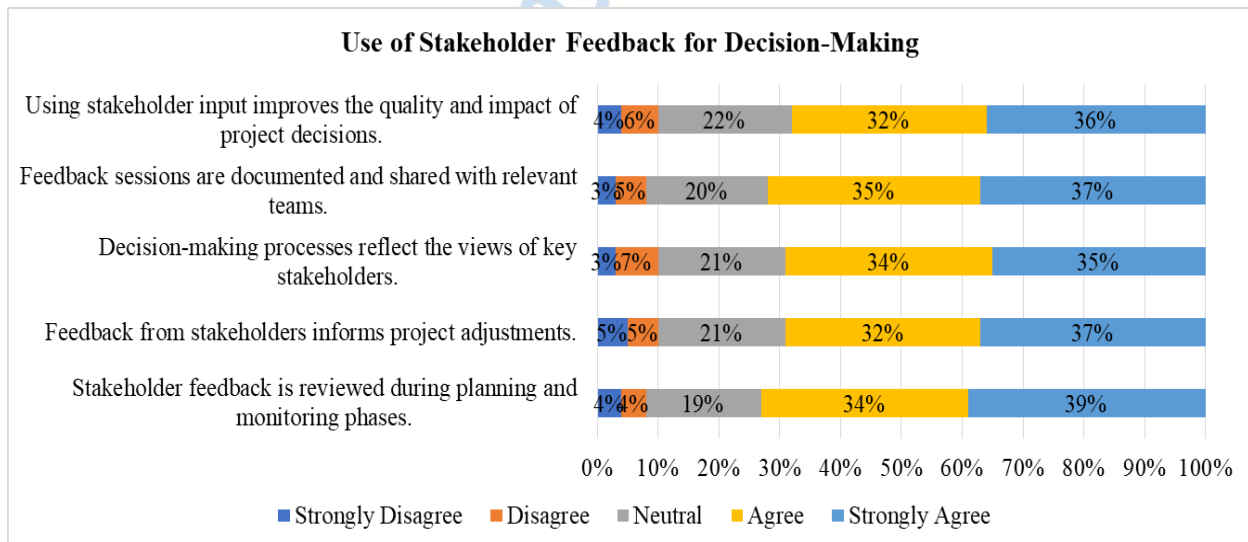
*“We hold village dialogues before planning anything. It saves us from planning things people don’t want.” (Interview, Project Planner, January 25, 2025)*

Lastly, 66% of respondents affirmed that the community actively participates in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities. This involvement increases transparency and promotes a culture of accountability. Guijt (2014) suggests that participatory M&E fosters local learning and improves adaptive capacity. From a Systems Theory standpoint, regular feedback loops created by community-led M&E help maintain equilibrium and inform corrective actions.

The findings consistently show that community participation—through design, data collection, planning, and M&E—positively impacts project performance. By interpreting these results through the lens of the Theory of Change and Systems Theory, it becomes clear that community engagement enhances decision-making quality, improves contextual responsiveness, and strengthens project alignment with beneficiary realities. These outcomes also echo insights from Aminuzzaman (2016), Chambers (2014), Pretty (2003), and Guijt (2014), who stress the transformative impact of inclusive development practices. The researcher concludes that community participation is not just an implementation strategy but a structural pillar for ensuring that donor-funded projects remain relevant, accountable, and sustainable in rural development contexts.

#### 4.5.3 Use of Stakeholder Feedback for Decision-Making

This section discusses the role of stakeholder feedback in the decision-making processes of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County. Results are presented in Figure 4.6.



**Figure 4. 6: Use of Stakeholder Feedback for Decision-Making**

As illustrated in Figure 4.6, 68% of respondents (32% agreeing and 36% strongly agreeing) indicated that stakeholder input enhances the quality and impact of project decisions. This underscores the value of participatory decision-making in fostering relevance, responsiveness, and impact. Within the Theory of Change, stakeholder feedback is viewed as a vital feedback loop that enables course correction and improves the likelihood of achieving desired outcomes (Mayne, 2020). Systems Theory similarly highlights the importance of feedback mechanisms in stabilizing and refining complex project environments (Bertalanffy, 1968).

*“When stakeholders contribute their views, we get more practical solutions—and people feel heard.” (Interview, Project Facilitator, January 24, 2025)*

Further, 72% of respondents agreed that feedback sessions were documented and shared with relevant teams. This practice enhances transparency and organizational learning. Lock (2019) supports the assertion that feedback documentation institutionalizes accountability, while Systems Theory suggests that this process supports knowledge transfer and adaptive learning across project subsystems.

The findings also indicate that 69% of respondents agreed that decision-making processes reflect stakeholder views. This supports Aaltonen and Kujala’s (2016) view that inclusive decision-making enhances legitimacy and project alignment with community priorities. The Theory of Change reinforces this by suggesting that decisions shaped by stakeholder realities are more likely to produce meaningful and sustainable outcomes.

*“Our steering committee includes community reps—we don’t finalize anything without their input.” (Interview, Planning Officer, January 26, 2025)*

Additionally, 69% of respondents indicated that feedback from stakeholders informs project adjustments. This finding highlights the project's adaptability in response to contextual shifts. Cleland and Ireland (2017) stress the importance of adaptive management in ensuring project responsiveness, while Systems Theory sees stakeholder feedback as an input that recalibrates project functions toward equilibrium.

Lastly, 73% of respondents reported that stakeholder feedback is reviewed during planning and monitoring phases. This structured inclusion ensures decisions are informed by real-time insights and community expectations. Kusek and Rist (2018) argue that integrating feedback into monitoring and planning stages increases project agility and efficiency. From a Systems Theory viewpoint, periodic stakeholder review sustains interdependence and alignment among system components.

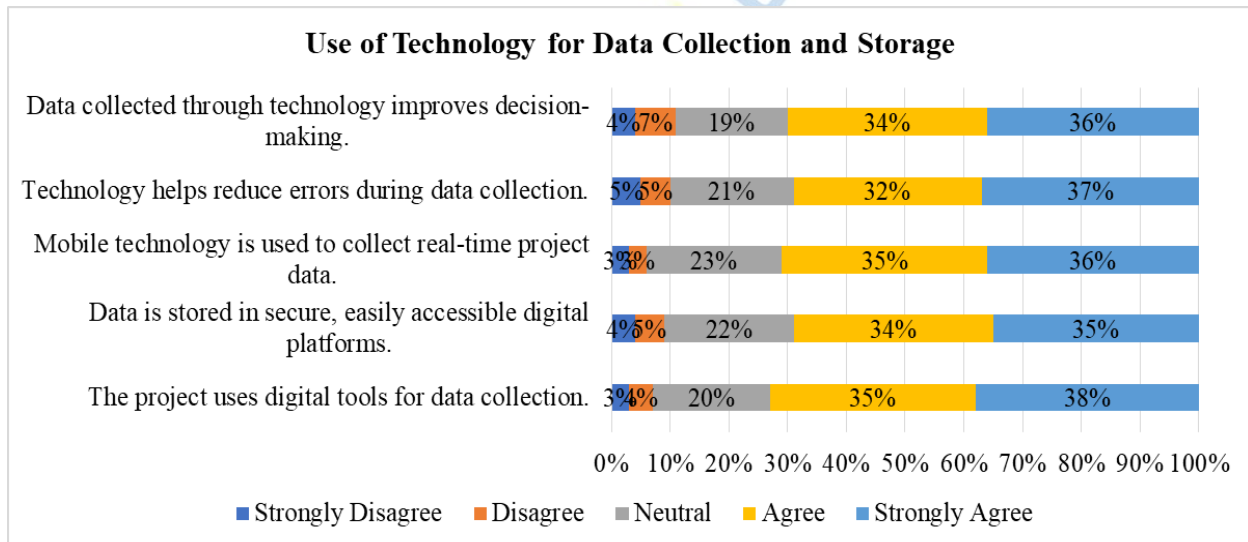
The findings demonstrate that stakeholder feedback is systematically used to strengthen project decisions, adaptability, and alignment with beneficiary needs. Both the Theory of Change and Systems Theory confirm that feedback-driven processes enhance the legitimacy, efficiency, and responsiveness of donor-funded initiatives. These insights also align with prior studies (Bryson, 2018; Lock, 2019; Aaltonen & Kujala, 2016; Cleland & Ireland, 2017; Kusek & Rist, 2018), reinforcing the assertion that structured and participatory feedback mechanisms are essential to effective development practice. The researcher concludes that stakeholder feedback is not merely a procedural formality but a transformative tool that improves project relevance, governance, and long-term success.

## 4.6 Influence of Data Management in Monitoring and Evaluation on Project Performance

This section explores how data management practices within the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework affect the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County. This section is structured into three sections including use of technology in data collection and storage, accuracy and timeliness of reporting and data accessibility and sharing among stakeholders as discussed in the following sections

### 4.6.1 Use of Technology for Data Collection and Storage

This section evaluates the use of technology in data collection and storage for Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County. Results are presented in Figure 4.7.



**Figure 4. 7: Use of Technology for Data Collection and Storage**

As illustrated in Figure 4.7, the study found that 70% of respondents (34% agreeing and 36% strongly agreeing) reported that data collected through technology improves decision-making. This suggests that technology enables timely access to accurate information, facilitating faster and more informed decisions. According to the Theory of Change, real-time data enhances decision-making by reinforcing the link between monitoring outputs and outcome-level responses (Mayne,

2020). Systems Theory similarly emphasizes that improved data flow contributes to system responsiveness and coherence (Bertalanffy, 1968).

*“We rely on mobile data collection tools to get immediate feedback from the field—it speeds up everything.” (Interview, Data Manager, January 18, 2025)*

Furthermore, 69% of respondents agreed that technology helps reduce errors during data collection. The study found that digital tools minimize manual entry mistakes and standardize data formats, enhancing data reliability. This aligns with Heeks (2018), who asserts that digital platforms improve data precision, while Systems Theory highlights error reduction as a stabilizing force within project operations.

The study also revealed that 71% of respondents confirmed the use of mobile technology for real-time data collection. This capacity enhances agility by enabling on-the-ground data transmission, especially in remote locations. Chigona et al. (2018) note that mobile tools promote immediate data access and support timely adjustments, consistent with the Theory of Change’s emphasis on real-time monitoring for adaptive management.

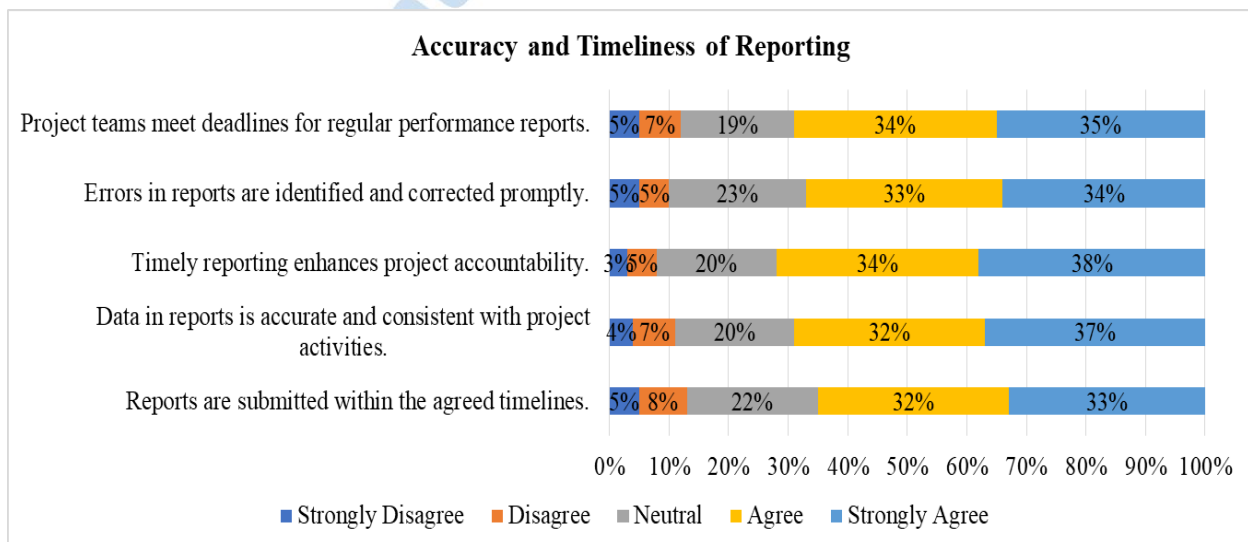
In terms of storage, 69% of respondents agreed that project data is maintained on secure and accessible digital platforms. Respondents cited benefits such as improved data organization, confidentiality, and ease of access for evaluation and reporting. Ali et al. (2019) affirm that secure digital repositories strengthen institutional memory and support longitudinal analysis. Systems Theory frames this as enhancing the system's structural integrity and operational efficiency.

*“Everything is uploaded to a shared digital platform. It makes reporting to donors more transparent and verifiable.” (Interview, M&E Officer, January 21, 2025)*

Finally, 73% of respondents stated that their projects use digital tools for data collection. These tools streamline the entire data management lifecycle—from capture to analysis. Davenport (2014) argues that digital technologies optimize data utility across project phases, while the Theory of Change positions digital M&E tools as enablers of accurate impact tracking and adaptive learning. The integration of technology into data management has significantly enhanced project monitoring, decision-making, and accountability within Holy Ghost donor-funded projects. These findings support theoretical insights from the Theory of Change and Systems Theory by demonstrating that technology-driven systems promote efficiency, accuracy, and timely intervention. They also align with literature from Kumar & Svensson (2017), Heeks (2018), Chigona et al. (2018), Ali et al. (2019), and Davenport (2014). The researcher concludes that digital technology is not merely a convenience but a core enabler of performance-driven M&E in contemporary donor-funded project environments.

#### 4.6.2 Accuracy and Timeliness of Reporting

This section examines the role of accurate and timely reporting in the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County. The results are presented in Figure 4.8.



#### ***Figure 4. 8: Accuracy and Timeliness of Reporting***

As illustrated in Figure 4.8, the findings show that 69% of respondents (34% agreeing and 35% strongly agreeing) indicated that project teams meet deadlines for regular performance reporting. This reflects a strong culture of accountability and operational discipline. From a Systems Theory perspective, consistent reporting schedules demonstrate an organized system where timelines are respected, ensuring smooth project operations (Bertalanffy, 1968). In the context of the Theory of Change, timely reporting serves as a critical mechanism for monitoring outputs and adjusting inputs accordingly to achieve targeted outcomes (Mayne, 2020).

*“We have a calendar for reporting, and everyone sticks to it. It keeps the project aligned and efficient.” (Interview, Project Coordinator, January 23, 2025)*

In addition, 67% of respondents agreed that errors in reports are identified and corrected promptly. This suggests that projects have embedded quality assurance mechanisms that maintain data integrity. Bryson (2018) asserts that error correction boosts confidence in reported outcomes. Systems Theory supports this by underscoring how corrective feedback loops maintain project stability and ensure accurate information circulation.

The data also indicate that 72% of respondents believed that timely reporting enhances project accountability. Respondents noted that such accountability promotes transparency and builds trust with stakeholders. Kusek and Rist (2018) emphasize that real-time reporting allows stakeholders to assess project performance and resource utilization, a view echoed by the Theory of Change, which stresses that regular feedback enhances outcome realization.

A further 69% of respondents reported that data in reports is accurate and consistent with actual project activities. This consistency supports effective decision-making and evaluation. Cleland and

Ireland (2017) argue that data accuracy strengthens stakeholder confidence and fosters evidence-based learning. Systems Theory highlights that high-quality data enhances synchronization across project components.

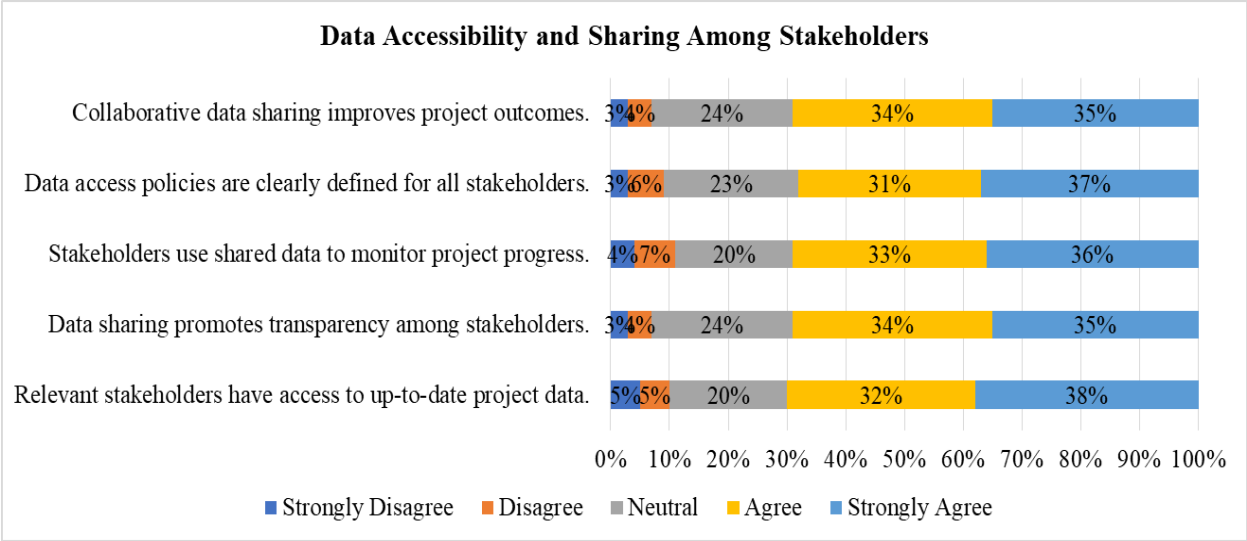
Finally, 65% of respondents confirmed that reports are submitted within agreed timelines. This finding demonstrates project efficiency and respect for donor protocols. Kerzner (2019) notes that meeting deadlines enhances the credibility of implementing agencies and improves donor relations.

*“Submitting reports on time shows donors we are serious—it builds trust and opens doors for continued support.” (Interview, M&E Assistant, January 25, 2025)*

The study reveals that accurate and timely reporting is integral to successful project implementation, promoting transparency, facilitating accountability, and supporting adaptive management. These results resonate with the theoretical underpinnings of both Systems Theory and the Theory of Change, which identify timely information flow and regular feedback as vital to sustainable performance. Empirical evidence from Lock (2019), Bryson (2018), Kusek and Rist (2018), Cleland and Ireland (2017), and Kerzner (2019) further affirms that systematic and timely reporting significantly contributes to stakeholder trust, project efficiency, and long-term success.

#### **4.6.3 Data Accessibility and Sharing Among Stakeholders**

This section explores the importance of data accessibility and sharing practices in the management of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County. The results are presented in Figure 4.9.



**Figure 4. 9: Data Accessibility and Sharing Among Stakeholders**

As illustrated in Figure 4.9, the findings show that 69% of respondents (34% agreeing and 35% strongly agreeing) affirmed that collaborative data sharing improves project outcomes. This reflects the value of open data ecosystems in fostering informed participation and coordinated implementation. From a Systems Theory standpoint, such collaboration ensures fluid information exchange between subsystems, thereby enhancing project coherence (Bertalanffy, 1968). In the Theory of Change, data sharing is a critical assumption for promoting inclusive learning and evidence-based decision-making (Mayne, 2020).

*“When everyone can access the data, it stops being just a report—it becomes a shared responsibility.” (Interview, Stakeholder Representative, January 26, 2025)*

Additionally, 68% of respondents agreed that data access policies are clearly defined. Structured data governance enhances transparency, while mitigating risks related to unauthorized access and misuse. Heeks (2018) stresses the importance of access control frameworks in protecting data quality and promoting ethical use. This aligns with Systems Theory, which sees regulated information flows as essential for maintaining system stability.

The study also found that 69% of respondents use shared data to monitor project progress. Respondents noted that real-time visibility into milestones allows timely feedback and adjustment. This supports Bryson's (2018) argument that data access enhances responsiveness and aligns with the Theory of Change by enabling outcome tracking and course correction.

*“Shared dashboards help us track what's lagging and respond quickly before things go off course.” (Interview, Project Supervisor, January 27, 2025)*

Moreover, 69% of respondents indicated that transparent data-sharing fosters stakeholder trust. Transparency facilitates collaborative planning and reduces the risk of conflict, particularly in multi-stakeholder environments. Cleland and Ireland (2017) highlight that visibility in project data reduces ambiguity, reinforcing the legitimacy of project activities and roles.

Lastly, 70% of respondents confirmed that stakeholders have access to up-to-date project data. Timely access supports real-time learning and adaptive planning, enhancing project agility. Lock (2019) argues that access to current data improves decision relevance and reinforces participatory M&E. Systems Theory recognizes up-to-date information as a prerequisite for feedback loops to function effectively.

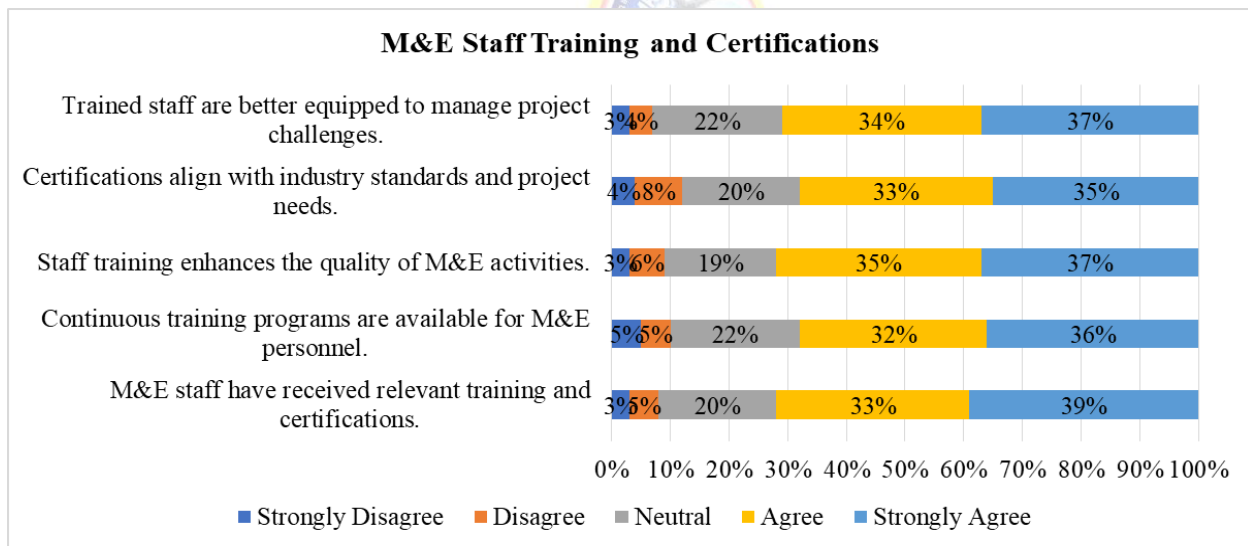
The findings suggest that structured, inclusive data-sharing practices strengthen decision-making, improve collaboration, and enhance project responsiveness. The evidence aligns with both the Theory of Change and Systems Theory, which emphasize transparent, timely information as a pillar of accountable, adaptable systems. These conclusions are also supported by literature from Aaltonen and Kujala (2016), Heeks (2018), Bryson (2018), Cleland and Ireland (2017), and Lock (2019), underscoring that accessible and well-managed data significantly contributes to the effectiveness of donor-funded project management.

## 4.7 Influence of Staff Competencies in Monitoring and Evaluation on Project Performance

This section assesses the impact of staff competencies in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) on the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County. This section is structured into three sections including M&E staff training and certifications, capacity to conduct data analysis and interpretation and ability to develop actionable recommendations as discuss in the following sections

### 4.7.1 M&E Staff Training and Certifications

This section assesses the impact of training and certifications on the effectiveness of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) staff in Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County. The results are presented in Figure 4.10.



**Figure 4. 10: M&E Staff Training and Certifications**

As illustrated in Figure 4.10, the findings show that 71% of respondents (34% agreeing and 37% strongly agreeing) agreed that trained staff are better equipped to manage project challenges. This underscores the critical role of capacity building in enabling staff to adapt to project complexities and apply technical skills effectively. According to the Theory of Change, training serves as a

foundational input that shapes outputs through skilled implementation (Mayne, 2020). Systems Theory also affirms that competency within system components—such as trained personnel—contributes to the optimal functioning of the entire project system (Bertalanffy, 1968).

*“After training, I felt more confident in using data analysis tools. It helped us spot issues before they escalated.” (Interview, M&E Assistant, January 23, 2025)*

Furthermore, 68% of respondents affirmed that M&E certifications align with industry standards and project needs. These certifications standardize knowledge and reinforce best practices, improving evaluation consistency. Heeks (2018) supports the view that certification enhances methodological rigor and stakeholder confidence. In Systems Theory, standardized training harmonizes practices across system elements, ensuring coordination and predictability.

The study also revealed that 72% of respondents believed training improves the quality of M&E activities. This aligns with Cleland and Ireland’s (2017) assertion that trained staff enhance data accuracy, contribute to reliable evaluation, and reduce errors. The Theory of Change emphasizes the pathway from skill acquisition to improved project outcomes through enhanced data-driven decision-making.

Additionally, 68% of respondents reported that continuous training programs are available to M&E personnel. Respondents highlighted that ongoing training supports professional development and fosters innovation in M&E practices. Bryson (2018) argues that continuous learning enhances adaptability in dynamic project environments. Systems Theory views this continuous learning loop as a mechanism for improving resilience and systemic response to external changes.

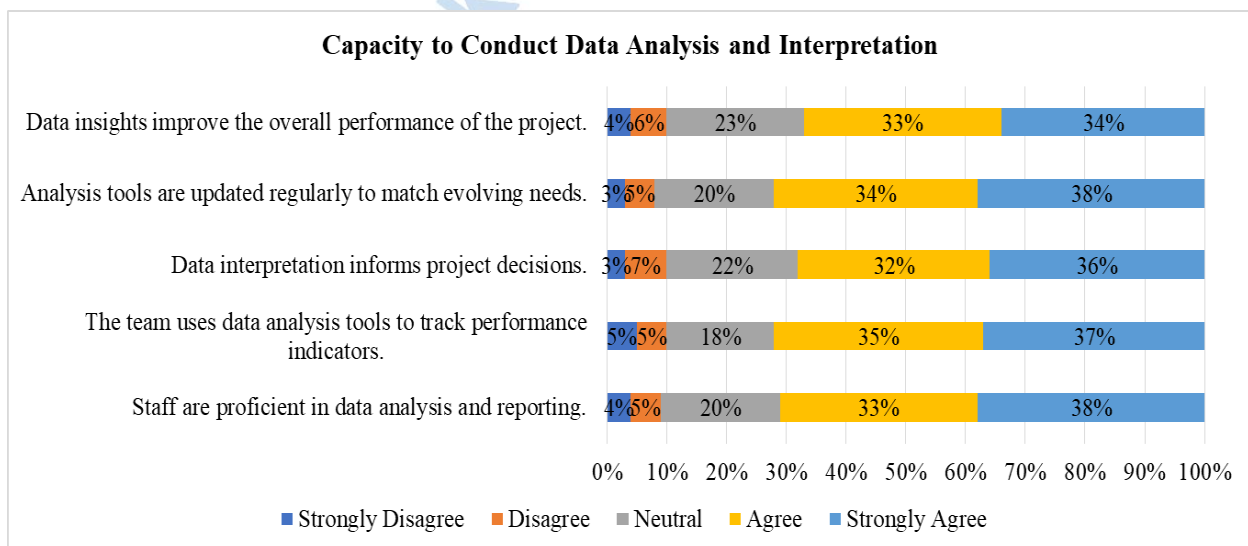
Lastly, 72% of respondents indicated that M&E staff have received relevant training and certifications. This reflects a strong institutional commitment to quality and accountability.

Kerzner (2019) emphasizes that certified personnel improve organizational credibility and stakeholder trust. According to the Theory of Change, professional validation through training and certification ensures the delivery of consistent and high-quality M&E processes.

The findings suggest that training and certification of M&E staff significantly enhance project monitoring, accountability, and compliance with professional standards. This interpretation is supported by Systems Theory and the Theory of Change, both of which recognize skilled human capital as essential to effective project performance. The literature by Kusek and Rist (2018), Heeks (2018), Cleland and Ireland (2017), Bryson (2018), and Kerzner (2019) further confirms that investment in M&E capacity yields improved accuracy, credibility, and impact in donor-funded project implementation.

#### 4.7.2 Capacity to Conduct Data Analysis and Interpretation

This section evaluates the capacity of project teams in Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County to conduct data analysis and interpretation. The results are presented in Figure 4.11.



**Figure 4. 11: Capacity to Conduct Data Analysis and Interpretation**

As illustrated in Figure 4.11, the findings indicate that 67% of respondents (33% agreeing and 34% strongly agreeing) reported that data insights enhance the overall performance of the project. This highlights the critical role of data in strategic decision-making and performance improvement. According to the Theory of Change, generating and utilizing insights from data ensures adaptive planning and reinforces accountability in implementation (Mayne, 2020). From a Systems Theory perspective, such insight-driven feedback improves systemic performance through continuous learning and informed coordination among components (Bertalanffy, 1968).

*“Using the analysis, we can see what’s working and where we’re off track—it helps us stay focused.” (Interview, Data Analyst, January 24, 2025)*

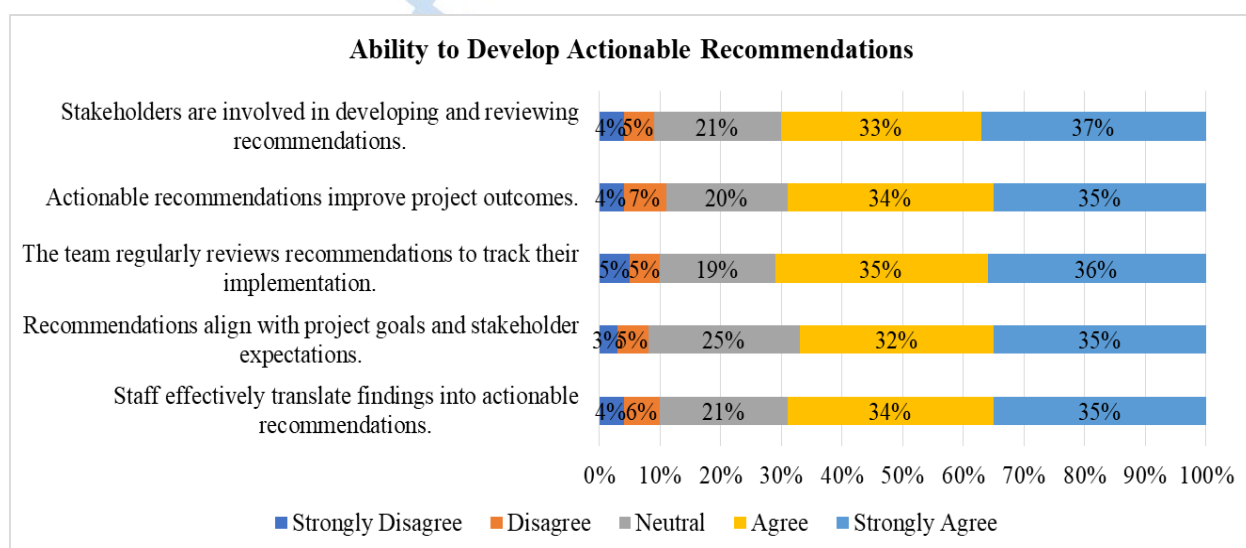
Additionally, 72% of respondents agreed that analysis tools are regularly updated to meet evolving needs. Respondents emphasized that up-to-date tools support complex data handling and introduce automation features that save time and reduce human error. Heeks (2018) notes that modern analytical tools improve reliability and adaptability. Systems Theory interprets the continuous improvement of tools as enhancing system capacity for evolving environmental demands.

The study also found that 68% of respondents acknowledged that accurate data interpretation informs project decisions. Bryson (2018) emphasizes that the interpretation process transforms raw data into actionable insights. The Theory of Change identifies this interpretation stage as a critical mechanism linking monitoring to learning and strategy adaptation. Moreover, 72% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that data analysis tools are used to track project performance indicators. This enables teams to detect deviations early and intervene appropriately. Cleland and Ireland (2017) argue that the integration of analytical tools strengthens project oversight and result-oriented planning. Systems Theory regards these tools as essential instruments for assessing the coherence and health of project systems.

Lastly, 71% of respondents confirmed that staff are proficient in data analysis and reporting. This affirms institutional investment in analytical capacity. Kerzner (2019) asserts that skilled personnel enhance the credibility of reporting and project governance. Theory of Change places such proficiency as a crucial condition for translating data into improvements and impact. The findings reveal that project performance is significantly enhanced by strong capacities in data analysis and interpretation. These capabilities foster evidence-based decision-making, performance tracking, and adaptive learning. The findings align with Systems Theory and the Theory of Change, both of which recognize the central role of information processing in system functioning and transformation. Literature from Davenport and Harris (2017), Heeks (2018), Bryson (2018), Cleland and Ireland (2017), and Kerzner (2019) further substantiates that strengthening data capabilities is essential to improving project transparency, accuracy, and overall effectiveness in donor-funded development settings.

### 4.7.3 Ability to Develop Actionable Recommendations

This section examines the capacity of project teams in Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County. The results are presented in Figure 4.12.



**Figure 4. 12: Ability to Develop Actionable Recommendations**

As illustrated in Figure 4.11, the findings indicate that 70% of respondents (33% agreeing and 37% strongly agreeing) acknowledged stakeholder involvement in developing and reviewing recommendations. This illustrates a participatory approach that enhances the relevance and practicality of proposed actions. According to the Theory of Change, stakeholder engagement in recommendation formulation reinforces ownership, contextual fit, and implementation feasibility (Mayne, 2020). Systems Theory supports this by positioning stakeholder participation as a core component of interconnected systems that improve responsiveness and coordination (Bertalanffy, 1968).

*“We sit with community members to review findings and suggest next steps. It builds trust and clarity.” (Interview, Project Facilitator, January 26, 2025)*

Additionally, 69% of respondents agreed that actionable recommendations contribute to improved project outcomes. Respondents emphasized that recommendations based on clear, empirical evidence provide practical guidance and facilitate meaningful adjustments. Bryson (2018) affirms that actionable guidance derived from robust analysis leads to tangible improvements. The Theory of Change identifies such guidance as an outcome of effective feedback mechanisms that support iterative learning.

The study also found that 71% of respondents indicated the project team regularly reviews recommendations to track implementation. Kusek and Rist (2018) highlight that routine review strengthens accountability and allows timely modifications. In Systems Theory, this routine checking acts as a feedback loop that helps maintain alignment between system inputs and desired outputs.

Furthermore, 67% of respondents confirmed that recommendations align with project goals and stakeholder expectations. Respondents noted that this alignment ensures strategic coherence and improves buy-in from implementing partners. Cleland and Ireland (2017) emphasize the importance of aligning recommendations with project objectives to ensure consistency and direction. The Theory of Change sees this as a critical element in translating outputs into sustainable outcomes.

Lastly, 69% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that staff effectively translate findings into actionable recommendations. Skilled interpretation and communication of data are central to implementing responsive changes. Kerzner (2019) notes that analytical proficiency enhances the quality of decision-making. Systems Theory also recognizes staff competence as vital to maintaining the system's adaptability and effectiveness.

The ability to develop actionable recommendations significantly contributes to project improvement, learning, and alignment with stakeholder needs. These findings are supported by both Systems Theory and the Theory of Change, which emphasize the cyclical relationship between learning, action, and performance. Literature from Aaltonen and Kujala (2016), Bryson (2018), Kusek and Rist (2018), Cleland and Ireland (2017), and Kerzner (2019) underscores that structured, inclusive, and data-driven recommendation processes enhance the credibility, effectiveness, and sustainability of donor-funded initiatives.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The chapters present summary, conclusions and the recommendations of the study guided by the objectives of the study:

#### 5.2 Summary of the Findings

The first objective of the study was to assess the influence of risk management strategies on the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County. The findings revealed that a substantial majority of respondents perceived risk management strategies as integral to project success. Specifically, 67% indicated that these strategies reduced challenges during implementation, while 66% acknowledged that stakeholders were well-informed about such strategies. Moreover, 69% agreed that risk mitigation strategies were regularly updated, and a similar percentage confirmed early identification and documentation of risks. These practices enhanced adaptability, transparency, and proactive management, supporting the assertion that structured risk management frameworks significantly contribute to project efficiency and sustainability.

The second objective examined the role of stakeholder involvement in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in enhancing project performance. The data showed that 70% of respondents affirmed that frequent stakeholder consultations fostered continuous engagement. Additionally, 72% highlighted stakeholder participation in planning and monitoring activities, and 69% confirmed regular stakeholder meetings throughout the project cycle. The findings emphasized that community participation enhances project relevance, as 72% of respondents agreed it improved

outcome alignment. Moreover, 68% acknowledged that feedback from stakeholder consultations directly influenced project adjustments. These results underscore the critical importance of inclusive stakeholder engagement in ensuring responsive, accountable, and community-centered project execution.

The third objective sought to investigate the impact of data management practices in M&E on project performance. Findings indicated that 70% of respondents acknowledged the positive influence of technology on decision-making through real-time data access. Additionally, 73% reported that digital tools streamlined data collection and improved data security. In terms of reporting, 72% of respondents agreed that timely and accurate reports enhanced accountability. Furthermore, 69% noted that data was accessible to relevant stakeholders, facilitating collaboration and strategic decision-making. These insights affirm that robust data management systems, including secure storage and accessible platforms, are essential for improving the reliability, timeliness, and transparency of M&E functions in donor-funded projects.

The fourth objective assessed the influence of staff competencies on the effectiveness of M&E processes. Results demonstrated that 71% of respondents believed trained and certified staff were better equipped to manage project challenges. Similarly, 72% affirmed that continuous training improved the quality of M&E practices. With 71% indicating staff proficiency in data analysis and 69% confirming their ability to develop actionable recommendations, the study revealed that technical competence is pivotal to informed decision-making and adaptive management. Furthermore, 70% of respondents highlighted stakeholder participation in developing recommendations, enhancing the relevance and applicability of project strategies. These findings reinforce the value of investing in professional development to strengthen institutional capacity and ensure effective project delivery.

### 5.3 Conclusions

The first objective sought to evaluate the influence of risk management strategies on the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County. The study concludes that effective risk management—characterized by stakeholder awareness, early risk identification, and regular updates to mitigation strategies—plays a central role in minimizing project disruptions and enhancing operational resilience. The integration of risk management into project planning and implementation processes facilitates proactive decision-making, promotes transparency, and contributes to the timely achievement of project goals. These findings underscore the necessity of embedding systematic risk management frameworks into donor-funded development initiatives.

The second objective aimed to assess how stakeholder involvement in monitoring and evaluation affects project performance. The study concludes that meaningful stakeholder participation significantly improves the relevance, accountability, and adaptability of projects. Regular consultations, inclusive planning, and the incorporation of community feedback foster local ownership and strengthen trust between implementers and beneficiaries. Such participatory approaches ensure that project strategies are aligned with community needs and that stakeholders remain engaged throughout the project lifecycle, thereby contributing to more effective and sustainable outcomes.

The third objective focused on the role of data management in M&E and its contribution to project performance. The findings support the conclusion that the strategic use of digital technologies for data collection, storage, reporting, and sharing enhances both the quality and timeliness of project information. Accurate and accessible data facilitates evidence-based decision-making and supports transparency among project stakeholders. Moreover, robust data systems enable efficient

monitoring of progress and quick adaptation to emerging challenges, thereby reinforcing the overall effectiveness and credibility of the M&E framework within donor-funded projects.

The fourth objective addressed the impact of staff competencies on the efficiency of M&E practices and overall project success. The study concludes that investing in the training and certification of M&E personnel substantially enhances their ability to conduct accurate analyses, generate actionable recommendations, and align project activities with donor expectations. Skilled staff contribute to informed decision-making and ensure that M&E outputs are not only technically sound but also strategically relevant. Their expertise is fundamental in promoting a culture of continuous learning, quality improvement, and accountability across all phases of project implementation.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

Based on the findings related to the first objective, it is recommended that project implementers institutionalize comprehensive risk management frameworks that are integrated throughout the project lifecycle. This includes early risk identification, routine stakeholder training on risk protocols, and periodic reviews of mitigation strategies. Clear documentation and communication of risk plans should be prioritized to promote preparedness and enable swift responses to emerging threats, thereby safeguarding project continuity and success.

In line with the second objective, projects should strengthen participatory monitoring and evaluation by formalizing mechanisms for stakeholder engagement at all stages. This involves establishing regular consultation forums, ensuring inclusivity in feedback loops, and actively incorporating stakeholder suggestions into planning and implementation. Such practices enhance

transparency, trust, and local ownership, which are essential for long-term impact and sustainability of donor-funded interventions.

Regarding the third objective, it is recommended that donor-funded projects invest in robust technological infrastructure to support efficient data management. This includes deploying user-friendly digital tools for data collection, ensuring secure and accessible storage platforms, and enforcing clear data-sharing protocols. Additionally, timely and accurate reporting should be reinforced through standard operating procedures, with designated roles and accountability mechanisms to ensure consistency and data integrity.

In response to the fourth objective, project managers should prioritize continuous professional development for M&E staff. This can be achieved through targeted training programs, industry-aligned certification courses, and mentorship opportunities. Emphasis should be placed on enhancing analytical, interpretive, and communication skills to ensure the production of high-quality M&E outputs. Empowering staff with these competencies will not only improve internal efficiency but also boost stakeholder confidence and compliance with donor standards.

Recommendations for further research include conducting longitudinal studies to explore the long-term impacts of M&E systems on project sustainability in donor-funded contexts. Future studies could also investigate the role of political, cultural, and institutional factors in shaping M&E effectiveness in decentralized governance environments. Moreover, comparative studies across different counties or countries may yield valuable insights into best practices and context-specific adaptations in monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I: Questionnaire For Teachers, Parents, Donors And Committee Members.

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect data that will contribute to achieving the objectives of the study on the influence of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices on the performance of Holy Ghost donor-funded projects in Makueni County, Kenya. Your participation in this study is essential and highly valued. I kindly request you to provide honest and clear responses to all questions to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the findings.

Please note that all information collected will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes. Your responses will remain anonymous, and no identifying information will be shared with third parties. The questionnaire is divided into several sections. Kindly complete all sections by ticking [] the option that best reflects your answer or by writing in the space provided where applicable. Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

#### Section A: Demographic Details

1. **Age Group**

18–24  25–34  35–44  45–54  55+

2. **Gender**

Male  Female

3. **Level of Education**

Primary  Secondary  Diploma/Certificate  Bachelor's Degree  Master's Degree or higher

4. **Role in the Project**

Project Manager  M&E Staff  Teacher  Parent Representative  Donor  
 Contractor  Committee Member  Director

## 5. Years of Experience with Donor-Funded Projects

Less than 1 year  1–3 years  4–6 years  7–10 years  More than 10 years

## SECTION B: INFLUENCE OF PLANNING IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION ON THE PERFORMANCE OF HOLY GHOST DONOR-FUNDED PROJECTS IN MAKUENI COUNTY, KENYA.

### Integration of Risk Management Strategies

1. The project includes a well-defined risk management plan.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
2. Potential risks are identified early and documented in the project plan.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
3. Risk mitigation strategies are reviewed and updated regularly during implementation.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
4. All stakeholders are aware of the risk management strategies in place.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
5. Risk management strategies have minimized disruptions during project execution.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

### Alignment of Project Goals with Donor Expectations

1. Project objectives are consistent with the donor's priorities and guidelines.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
2. Donor expectations are clearly communicated to project staff and stakeholders.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
3. Project deliverables align with the goals outlined in the donor agreement.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

4. Regular reviews ensure that project activities remain aligned with donor objectives.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
5. The project receives continuous support from donors for staying on course with agreed goals.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

### **Strategic Planning**

1. A strategic plan was developed before the project began.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
2. The project follows a structured timeline with clear milestones.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
3. The project plan includes measurable performance indicators.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
4. Strategic planning meetings are conducted regularly to review progress.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
5. The strategic plan guides decision-making throughout the project lifecycle.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

## **SECTION C: INFLUENCE OF STAKEHOLDER'S INVOLVEMENT IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION ON THE PERFORMANCE OF HOLY GHOST DONOR-FUNDED PROJECTS IN MAKUENI COUNTY, KENYA.**

### **Frequency of Stakeholder Consultations**

1. Stakeholder meetings are held regularly throughout the project cycle.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

2. Stakeholders are invited to participate in planning and monitoring activities.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
3. Feedback from stakeholder meetings is incorporated into project activities.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
4. Stakeholder consultations are scheduled to align with key project milestones.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
5. The frequency of consultations ensures continuous stakeholder engagement.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

#### **Level of Community Participation**

1. The community actively participates in M&E activities.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
2. Beneficiaries are involved in identifying project needs and priorities.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
3. Community members participate in data collection and feedback sessions.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
4. The project incorporates suggestions from community members.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
5. Community participation improves the relevance of project outcomes.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

#### **Use of Stakeholder Feedback for Decision-Making**

1. Stakeholder feedback is reviewed during planning and monitoring phases.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

2. Feedback from stakeholders informs project adjustments.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
3. Decision-making processes reflect the views of key stakeholders.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
4. Feedback sessions are documented and shared with relevant teams.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
5. Using stakeholder input improves the quality and impact of project decisions.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

**SECTION D: INFLUENCE OF DATA MANAGEMENT IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION ON THE PERFORMANCE OF HOLY GHOST DONOR-FUNDED PROJECTS IN MAKUENI COUNTY, KENYA.**

**Use of Technology for Data Collection and Storage**

1. The project uses digital tools for data collection.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
2. Data is stored in secure, easily accessible digital platforms.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
3. Mobile technology is used to collect real-time project data.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
4. Technology helps reduce errors during data collection.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
5. Data collected through technology improves decision-making.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

**Accuracy and Timeliness of Reporting**

1. Reports are submitted within the agreed timelines.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
2. Data in reports is accurate and consistent with project activities.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
3. Timely reporting enhances project accountability.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
4. Errors in reports are identified and corrected promptly.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
5. Project teams meet deadlines for regular performance reports.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

#### **Data Accessibility and Sharing Among Stakeholders**

1. Relevant stakeholders have access to up-to-date project data.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
2. Data sharing promotes transparency among stakeholders.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
3. Stakeholders use shared data to monitor project progress.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
4. Data access policies are clearly defined for all stakeholders.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
5. Collaborative data sharing improves project outcomes.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

**SECTION E: INFLUENCE OF STAFF COMPETENCIES IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION ON THE PERFORMANCE OF HOLY GHOST DONOR-FUNDED PROJECTS IN MAKUENI COUNTY, KENYA**

**M&E Staff Training and Certifications**

1. M&E staff have received relevant training and certifications.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
2. Continuous training programs are available for M&E personnel.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
3. Staff training enhances the quality of M&E activities.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
4. Certifications align with industry standards and project needs.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
5. Trained staff are better equipped to manage project challenges.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

**Capacity to Conduct Data Analysis and Interpretation**

1. Staff are proficient in data analysis and reporting.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
2. The team uses data analysis tools to track performance indicators.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
3. Data interpretation informs project decisions.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
4. Analysis tools are updated regularly to match evolving needs.  
 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

5. Data insights improve the overall performance of the project.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

### **Ability to Develop Actionable Recommendations**

1. Staff effectively translate findings into actionable recommendations.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

2. Recommendations align with project goals and stakeholder expectations.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

3. The team regularly reviews recommendations to track their implementation.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

4. Actionable recommendations improve project outcomes.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

5. Stakeholders are involved in developing and reviewing recommendations.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

## **APPENDIX II: Interview Guide For M&E Staff, Directors, Project Contractors And Project Manager**

1. How does the project identify and manage potential risks during the planning and implementation phases?
2. In what ways are the project goals aligned with the expectations and priorities of the donors?
3. Can you describe the strategic planning process and how it ensures that the project achieves its intended objectives?
4. How often do you engage with stakeholders, including donors, beneficiaries, and community members, to monitor and evaluate the project's progress?
5. What role does the community play in the project's monitoring and evaluation process?
6. How is stakeholder feedback collected, and how do you use this feedback to make decisions or adjust project activities?
7. What types of technologies or tools do you use to collect and store data for the project, and how do these tools affect the project's performance?
8. How do you ensure that the reports you generate are both accurate and submitted on time?
9. How accessible is project data to the various stakeholders, and how do you ensure that the data is shared in a timely and transparent manner?
10. What kind of training or certifications have the M&E staff received, and how have these competencies influenced project performance?
11. How skilled is the project team in analyzing and interpreting data, and how has this influenced the decision-making process?
12. How effectively can the M&E staff develop actionable recommendations from the data they collect, and how do these recommendations improve the project outcomes?

## APPENDIX III: Ethical Clearance



REF: MKU/ISERC/4670  
TO: STELLA MUMBUA KIMILU

Date: 20 January 2025

REG: MAME/2023/51393

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: INFLUENCE OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION PRACTICES ON THE PERFORMANCE OF HOLYGHOST DONOR-FUNDED PROJECTS IN MAKUENI COUNTY, KENYA.**

This is to inform you that **Mount Kenya University** has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is **3392**. The approval period is **20/01/2025 - 19/01/2026**.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- i. Only approved documents including informed consents, study instruments, MTA will be used
- ii. All changes including amendments, deviations and violations are submitted for review and approval by **Mount Kenya University**
- iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to **Mount Kenya University** within 72 hours of notification
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affect the safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to **Mount Kenya University** within 72 hours
- v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to **Mount Kenya University**

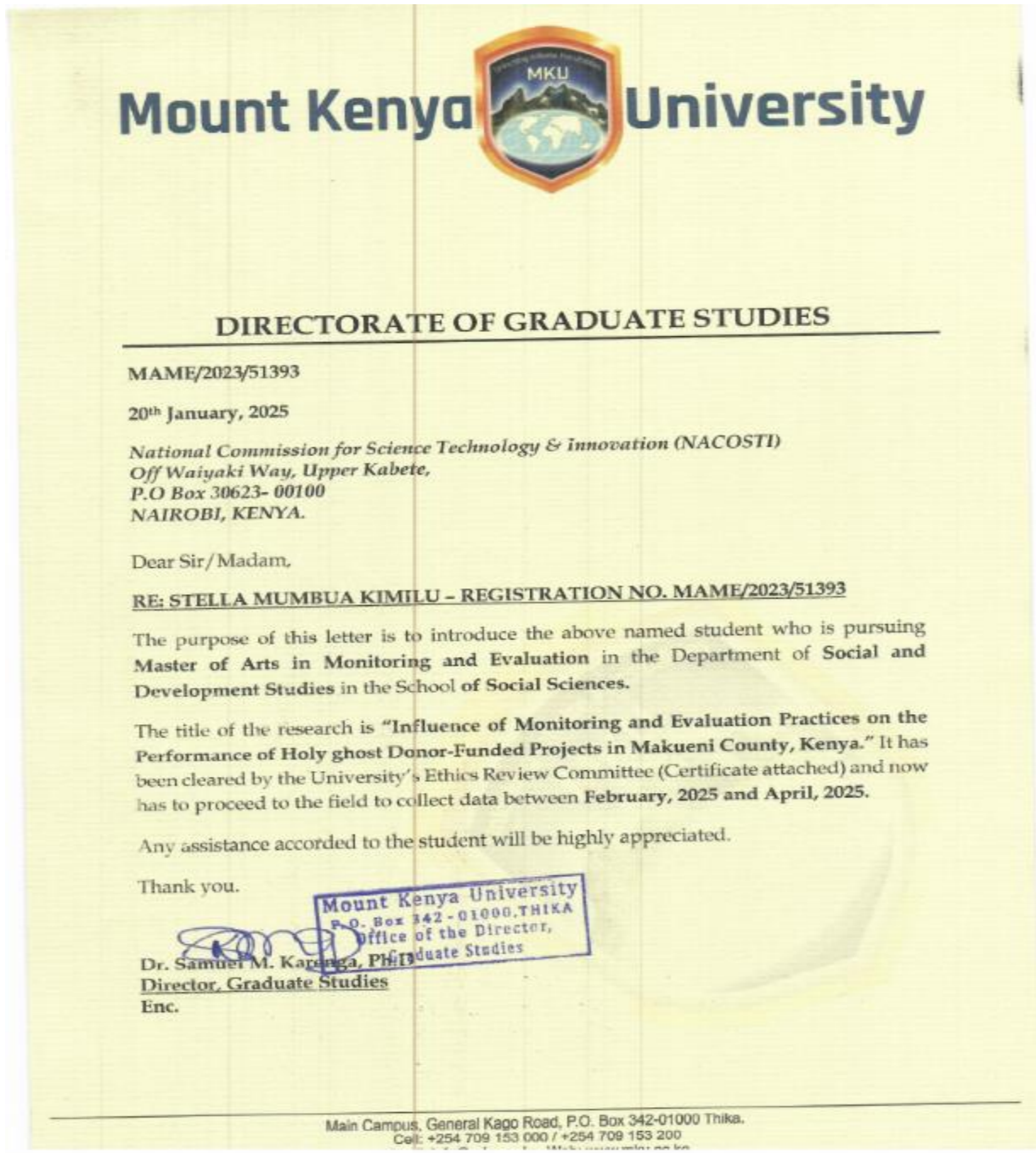
Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely,

**Dr. Alfred Owino, PhD**  
Chairman, Mount Kenya University ISERC



APPENDIX IV: Introductory Letter





**APPENDIX VI: Research Authorization**



REPUBLIC OF KENYA



GOVERNMENT OF MAKUENI COUNTY



DEPARTMENT OF ICT, EDUCATION AND INTERNSHIP  
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER  
P.O. BOX 78-90300, MAKUENI

Website: [www.makueni.go.ke](http://www.makueni.go.ke)

Email: [education@makueni.go.ke](mailto:education@makueni.go.ke)

REF: GMC/DIEI/01-2025 (85)

28<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**Subject: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION**

Greetings from the Government of Makueni County.

The County Government of Makueni has authorized **Ms. Stella Mumbua Kimilu**, a postgraduate student at **Mount Kenya University**, Reg. No.: **MAME/2023/51393**, to conduct research and collect data on the topic:

**"Influence of Monitoring and Evaluation Practices on the Performance of HolyGhost Donor-Funded Projects in Makueni County, Kenya."**

This research will be carried out during the period from **28th January 2025 to 30th April 2025**. The researcher is expected to observe all ethical standards of research. All relevant authorities, departments, and stakeholders within Makueni County are kindly requested to accord her the necessary assistance and support.

FOR: IRENE N. MAKAU

**CHIEF OFFICER – EDUCATION AND INTERNSHIP**



REPUBLIC OF KENYA



GOVERNMENT OF MAKUENI COUNTY



DEPARTMENT OF ICT, EDUCATION AND INTERNSHIP  
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER  
P.O. BOX 78-90300, MAKUENI

Website: [www.makueni.go.ke](http://www.makueni.go.ke)

Email: [education@makueni.go.ke](mailto:education@makueni.go.ke)

REF: GMC/DIEI/01-2025 (85)

28<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

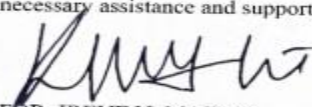
**Subject: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION**

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This research will be carried out during the period from **28th January 2025 to 30th April 2025**. The researcher is expected to observe all ethical standards of research. All relevant authorities, departments, and stakeholders within Makueni County are kindly requested to accord her the necessary assistance and support.

  
FOR: IRENE N. MAKAU

**CHIEF OFFICER – EDUCATION AND INTERNSHIP**



# APPENDIX VII: Turnitin Report



## submission

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Matches that have quotation marks, but no in-text citation
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Matches with in-text citation present, but no quotation marks

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# APPENDIX VIII: Makueni County Map

