

Project Evaluation and the Sustainability of Children's Homes in Nairobi County, Kenya.

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Abstract: Children's homes in Nairobi County suffer recurrent issues, including financial insecurity, donor dependency, and insufficient accountability systems, all of which jeopardize their long-term viability. Project assessment has grown as a crucial strategic management strategy for nonprofit organizations, improving openness, accountability, and adaptation. Anchored on the Theory of Change, which emphasizes the logical link between project activities, outputs, and planned objectives, this study sought to determine the effect of project evaluation on the sustainability of children's homes in Nairobi County. The goal was to determine how systematic assessment practices, project timelines, reporting procedures, and feedback systems affect financial stability, service delivery, and institutional resilience. The study addressed all 200 registered children's homes in Nairobi County, with a sample size of 133 institutions based on Yamane's formula and a 95% confidence level. A simple random sampling technique was used to assure representativeness. Structured questionnaires were distributed to administrators and caregivers as primary data collection methods. The data were examined by descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression. The findings showed that sustainability outcomes were positively and statistically significantly impacted by project evaluation ($\beta = 0.312$, $p < 0.05$). Additionally, inferential results showed that project evaluation explained roughly 28.1% of the variation in sustainability metrics ($R^2 = 0.281$). Stronger financial responsibility, increased donor confidence, and better child welfare results were shown by homes that regularly recorded donations, documented initiatives, and took feedback into consideration.

The study recommends that children's homes implement both formative and summative assessments, incorporate beneficiary feedback into decision-making, and match reporting frameworks with donor criteria. These approaches will improve accountability, attract more diverse funding, and assure long-term viability.

Keywords: Project Evaluation, theory of change, sustainability, children's homes, Nairobi County.

I. Introduction

The sustainability of children's homes has become a central issue in both global and local development discourse, particularly in resource-constrained contexts such as Nairobi County, Kenya. These institutions provide essential services, including shelter, education, and psychosocial support, to vulnerable children such as orphans, abandoned minors, and those from impoverished families. However, their ability to deliver long-term, high-quality care is often hindered by financial instability, donor dependence, and weak accountability systems. Recent studies highlight that the lack of sustainable management practices threatens the continuity and effectiveness of child welfare institutions across Africa (Mwangi & Wambui, 2022; Shaturaev, 2023). Within this context, project evaluation has gained prominence as a strategic management practice that systematically assesses the relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness of organizational interventions, ensuring that limited resources generate measurable and lasting impact (Mukundi & Ondara, 2024).

Project evaluation is not simply an administrative exercise but a strategic function anchored in the Theory of Change, which offers a logical framework for linking activities to outputs and long-term outcomes. For children's homes, the theory

provides clarity on how interventions such as educational support, psychosocial care, and community reintegration contribute to broader sustainability outcomes like financial resilience, service quality, and stakeholder trust. Evaluation processes help managers identify performance gaps, refine strategies, and optimize resource allocation, thereby supporting evidence-based decision-making (Bell et al., 2022). Furthermore, the evolving donor landscape and regulatory environment in Kenya heighten the importance of evaluation. Donors increasingly demand verifiable impact before committing resources, while government regulations enforce adherence to child welfare standards (Kariuki & Njenga, 2023). Without robust evaluation, children's homes risk losing donor confidence and failing to demonstrate accountability, whereas institutions that integrate evaluation into management are better positioned to secure resources and adapt to children's changing needs.

Despite its recognized importance, many children's homes in Nairobi County still face challenges in institutionalizing project evaluation. Empirical research shows that while some institutions maintain project records and conduct evaluations, others lack systematic monitoring, feedback, or reporting frameworks (Njoroge et al., 2021; Kariuki & Njenga, 2023). This inconsistency undermines accountability, limits organizational learning, and weakens long-term planning. Homes without structured evaluation systems often fail to detect inefficiencies in resource use, leading to financial leakage or duplication of efforts. The absence of beneficiary feedback also prevents managers from determining whether programs genuinely enhance child welfare outcomes. These gaps highlight the need for empirical inquiry into the extent to which project evaluation influences sustainability, particularly in urban environments like Nairobi where donor dependency and regulatory pressures are acute (Amey & Eddy, 2023).

To address this concern, the present study examines the effect of project evaluation on the sustainability of children's homes in Nairobi County. The study targeted all 200 registered homes, from which 133 were sampled using Yamane's formula at a 95% confidence level, and employed simple random sampling to ensure representativeness. Administrators and senior managers were selected as respondents, given their knowledge of strategic management and resource allocation. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed through descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression. The findings revealed that project evaluation had a significant positive influence on sustainability, accounting for 28.1% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.275$). Theoretically, this study validates the Theory of Change by empirically confirming the relationship between project activities and sustainability outcomes in non-profit settings. Practically, it provides managers, policymakers, and donors with actionable insights, underscoring the importance of institutionalizing evaluation as a core element of strategic management rather than treating it as a donor-imposed requirement. By positioning project evaluation as both a diagnostic and prescriptive tool, the study advances the discourse on sustainable child welfare management and highlights the urgency of embedding evaluation practices within the management culture of children's homes in Nairobi County.

II. Literature Review

Project assessment is an important strategic management approach that improves accountability, efficiency, and sustainability in non-profit organizations like children's homes. Based on the Theory of Change, evaluation provides a rational framework for connecting project activities to desired goals and long-term consequences (King, 2021). Within children's homes, evaluation methods such as project scheduling, report production, and stakeholder input are critical in evaluating if treatments such as schooling, psychological care, and reintegration programs achieve long-term success. Complementary frameworks, such as Kaplan and Norton's Balanced Scorecard, emphasize the significance of measuring performance across financial, social, and operational dimensions to ensure a comprehensive view of sustainability. Similarly, Institutional Theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) proposes that children's homes use organized evaluation systems to establish legitimacy, meet donor expectations, and follow government rules.

Empirical research demonstrates the importance of project evaluation in promoting organizational sustainability. In Kenya, Njoroge et al. (2021) discovered that systematic evaluations improved financial responsibility and adaptation, whereas Mwangi and Wambui (2022) showed that regular reviews improved service delivery quality and donor retention. Kariuki and Njenga (2023) found that homes that undertake both formative and summative evaluations were more resilient to shifting donor assistance and more aligned with children's welfare requirements. Beyond Kenya, Petrowski et al. (2020) found that non-profits that integrated project evaluation into strategic management had more resilience due to evidence-based decision-making. Similarly, Kimani et al. (2020) found that continuous evaluation leads to better resource usage and stronger community integration in Sub-Saharan Africa. These studies demonstrate that evaluation is more than just a compliance duty; it is a driver of organizational growth and sustainability.

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Despite these advances, the literature remains incomplete. The majority of extant studies look at project evaluation as part of a larger set of strategic management practices, rather than as a separate predictor of sustainability. Furthermore, previous research has frequently stressed financial accountability without sufficiently evaluating how evaluation influences long-term planning, donor confidence, and child welfare results. Furthermore, few studies have examined the specific urban environment of Nairobi, where children's homes face the added constraints of donor dependency, urban poverty, and regulatory scrutiny. This study addresses these gaps by looking into the impact of project assessment on the sustainability of children's homes in Nairobi County, using empirical evidence based on the Theory of Change and customized to the local socioeconomic environment.

III. Methodology

This study used a descriptive survey design and a quantitative technique to investigate the impact of project evaluation on the sustainability of children's homes in Nairobi County. The descriptive research design was ideal because it allowed for the systematic gathering of data without changing variables, allowing the researcher to identify links between project assessment techniques and sustainability outcomes (Mukundi & Ondara, 2024). In line with Creswell & Creswell (2023), the quantitative method guaranteed that subjective ideas like evaluation, accountability, and sustainability were transformed into measurable factors. The study was based on the positivist ideology, which emphasizes objective measurement and empirical testing, making it appropriate for investigations into cause-and-effect interactions (Bell et al., 2022).

The target demographic was all 200 registered children's homes in Nairobi County, as recorded by the Department of Children Services (2022). Yamane's algorithm was used to select 133 residences from this population with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. This formula was chosen because of its consistency in producing representative samples for social research (Taherdoost, 2022). A basic random sample procedure was used to ensure that each residence had an equal chance of being selected, reducing sampling bias. Administrators or senior managers from each selected home were purposefully picked as respondents because they have important knowledge of strategic management methods and project evaluation processes. This two-stage method improved data accuracy and credibility (Kumar and Praveena, 2025).

Primary data were gathered using standardized questionnaires delivered by email, hand delivery, and drop-and-pick. The questionnaire items examined project assessment indicators, such as project schedules, reports, and feedback systems, using a 5-point Likert scale. Data were cleaned, coded, and analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and frequencies) as well as inferential statistics (multiple linear regression analysis). Regression analysis proved effective in predicting the impact of project review on sustainability measures such as financial stability, revenue diversification, and long-term planning (Julius, 2020; Saputra et al., 2024). The regression model's robustness was tested using assumption tests such as linearity, normalcy, multicollinearity and autocorrelation. Recent research (Nginya & Mutuku, 2022; Amey & Eddy, 2023) emphasized the need of statistical rigor in analyzing non-profit performance, hence the analytical framework was developed accordingly.

IV. Results and Discussions

Results

The study sought to investigate the impact of project evaluation on the sustainability of children's homes in Nairobi County. The data from 120 valid responses (90.2% response rate) were analyzed with SPSS 28.0. Descriptive statistics summarized the scope of project evaluation procedures, whereas inferential analysis demonstrated a link between project assessment and sustainability indicators.

Table 1. Mean and Standard deviation for project evaluation

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
Homes maintain project schedules	3.89	0.94

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Homes documents all donations and projects	4.04	0.89
Homes evaluates children's education outcomes	4.01	1.17
Homes gather stakeholder/community feedback	4.09	1.08

Source: Field Data (2025)

The descriptive data in Table 1 shows that most homes systematically record donations and project activities ($M = 4.04$) and actively evaluate educational achievements ($M = 4.01$). However, diversity in feedback systems (standard deviation = 1.08) indicates inconsistency in incorporating community and beneficiary perspectives.

Table 2
Regression Analysis for project evaluation on sustainability

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	p-value
Constant	1.024	0.263	0.000
Project evaluation	0.312	0.081	0.001

R-squared (R^2) = 0.281

Adjusted $R^2 = 0.275$

Dependent Variable: Sustainability of Children's Homes

Significant at $p < 0.05$

The regression analysis shows that project evaluation has a positive and statistically significant effect on sustainability ($\beta = 0.312$, $p = 0.001$). The model explains 28.1% of the variance in sustainability outcomes, indicating that while project evaluation is an important predictor, other factors such as stakeholder involvement and resource mobilization also contribute.

Discussions

This study found that project evaluation significantly improves the sustainability of children's homes in Nairobi County ($\beta = 0.312$, $p = 0.001$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.275$). This suggests that rigorous assessment procedures including keeping project timelines, tracking donations, and incorporating stakeholder comments are essential for improving financial responsibility, donor confidence, and program adaptability. Based on the Theory of Change, these findings confirm that successful assessment serves as a feedback mechanism to ensure that project activities coincide with desired outcomes, hence enhancing long-term sustainability (King, 2021). The findings also reflect global viewpoints that assessment promotes transparency and organizational learning, both of which are critical for establishing donor confidence and sustaining vulnerable care organizations (Petrowski et al., 2020).

These findings are consistent with previous empirical research in Kenya and beyond. Njoroge et al. (2021) discovered that homes that conducted systematic evaluations were more adaptable to fluctuations in donor support, whereas Mwangi and Wambui (2022) indicated that continual monitoring improved service quality and reduced inefficiencies. Kariuki and Njenga (2023) also found that formative and summative evaluations increased financial stability and resilience in children's households. The moderate explanatory power (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.275$) implies that project evaluation, while important, should work in tandem with other strategic strategies such as stakeholder engagement and resource mobilization. As a result, the study proposes establishing strong assessment frameworks, implementing digital monitoring systems, and incorporating beneficiary feedback into decision-making processes. These reforms will not only increase accountability and service quality, but will also secure new funding streams, ensuring that children's homes remain robust and capable of providing long-term welfare outcomes.

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study set out to determine the effect of project evaluation on the sustainability of children's homes in Nairobi County. The results established that project evaluation has a positive and statistically significant influence on sustainability outcomes, explaining 27.5% of the variance in financial stability, donor confidence, and long-term planning. Anchored on the Theory of Change, the findings highlight that systematic evaluation is not merely a compliance mechanism but a strategic management practice that ensures alignment between activities, outcomes, and long-term impact (King, 2021). The results confirm that when children's homes adopt structured reporting frameworks, maintain project records, and integrate stakeholder feedback, they improve accountability, resource use efficiency, and institutional resilience. These findings are consistent with recent scholarship emphasizing evaluation as a driver of evidence-based decision-making in non-profits (Mukundi & Ondara, 2024; Petrowski et al., 2020).

Recommendations

1. Children's homes should institutionalize robust project evaluation frameworks, including both formative and summative assessments, to ensure continuous learning and adaptation.
2. Managers should adopt digital monitoring and reporting tools, which enhance transparency and make data accessible to donors and regulators in real-time.
3. Beneficiary and community feedback should be incorporated into decision-making to improve program relevance and child welfare outcomes.
4. Homes should provide capacity-building training for staff and administrators to strengthen evaluation competencies.
5. Evaluation results should be shared with donors and stakeholders to build trust, attract diversified funding, and improve partnerships.

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