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Stakeholder Engagement in Monitoring and Evaluation and the Performance of the Parish Development Model: Evidence from Kilak North Constituency, Uganda

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Abstract: The Parish Development Model (PDM) is a flagship socio-economic transformation initiative of the Government of Uganda, aimed at accelerating poverty reduction and improving livelihoods through community-driven development at the parish level. This study examined the influence of stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) on the performance of the Parish Development Model (PDM) in Kilak North Constituency, Uganda. Guided by Empowerment Evaluation Theory, the research adopted a descriptive research design. The study targeted 340 Parish Development Model (PDM) program staff and drawn data from 184 PDM program staff through simple random sampling and 20 key informants purposively sampled. Data collection tools included a structured Likert-scale questionnaire and an interview guide. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSS version 25, while qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis. Findings reveal that while stakeholder representation across community sectors and commitment from local leaders are relatively strong, active participation, communication, resource support, and grievance redress mechanisms remain weak. The overall composite mean of 3.02 indicates a moderate but uneven level of stakeholder engagement. Inclusivity and leadership provide a foundation for success, yet structural barriers such as inadequate resources, limited transparency, and weak feedback mechanisms, undermine meaningful participation. The study concludes that stakeholder engagement in PDM's M&E processes is more symbolic than substantive, limiting its potential to enhance accountability, transparency, and program effectiveness. It recommends strengthening communication, expanding capacity-building initiatives, ensuring adequate resourcing, and institutionalizing grievance mechanisms, with particular attention to mitigating elite capture and addressing the post-conflict dynamics of Kilak North. The findings contribute to the literature on participatory governance and provide actionable insights for policymakers and practitioners seeking to optimize the PDM's role in Uganda's Vision 2040 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Key Words: Stakeholder Engagement, Monitoring and Evaluation, Performance, Parish Development Model

1.1 Study Background

Globally, stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) has gained prominence as an essential approach for strengthening accountability, ensuring inclusivity, and enhancing the sustainability of development interventions. Actively involving stakeholders—ranging from beneficiaries, local leaders, policymakers, and development partners—ensures that M&E not only tracks progress but also reflects the perspectives and priorities of those directly affected (Estrella & Gaventa, 2020). Stakeholder

engagement is therefore increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of participatory development and evidence-based decision-making in programs such as the Parish Development Model (PDM).

International development organizations such as the World Bank, UNDP, and OECD have long emphasized the role of participatory approaches in M&E as a way of fostering ownership, improving data quality, and strengthening policy responsiveness (World Bank, 2019; UNDP, 2021; OECD, 2022). This paradigm shift highlights that effective M&E is not only about technical tools and systems but also about inclusive processes where multiple actors contribute to program learning and accountability.

In Africa, however, the evolution of M&E systems has been uneven. While many countries have institutionalized national M&E frameworks, challenges such as weak institutional capacity, limited participation of grassroots actors, and donor-driven approaches remain prevalent (Engel et al., 2018; Cloete, 2020). These challenges limit the extent to which M&E processes capture local realities and inform responsive program adjustments.

In Uganda, the Parish Development Model (PDM) was launched in 2022 as a flagship strategy to accelerate socioeconomic transformation by shifting households from subsistence to commercial production (Office of the Prime Minister [OPM], 2022). The model is built around seven pillars—Production, Infrastructure and Economic Development, Financial Inclusion, Social Services, Mindset Change, Parish-Based Management Information Systems, and Governance (ISER, 2022). Central to its success is the meaningful involvement of communities, civil society, and local leaders in program monitoring and evaluation to ensure transparency, inclusivity, and accountability.

Despite its ambitious design, Uganda's M&E systems continue to face challenges such as weak institutional coordination, limited stakeholder participation, and poor feedback mechanisms (Kusemererwa & Mugume, 2021; Basheka, 2023). These challenges are especially pronounced in rural and marginalized areas such as Kilak North Constituency in Amuru District, where infrastructural gaps and limited resources hinder effective stakeholder engagement in M&E processes.

As the PDM is rolled out in selected parishes in Kilak North, questions arise about how effectively stakeholders are engaged in M&E processes, and whether this inclusivity influences program performance. Stakeholder engagement can help prevent misallocation of resources, reduce risks of fraud, enhance transparency, and strengthen public trust in government-led programs (Mutabazi, 2023).

This study, therefore, seeks to examine the role of stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation and its influence on the performance of the PDM in Kilak North Constituency. The study is both timely and relevant, particularly in light of Uganda's Vision 2040 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which emphasize participatory governance, inclusive development, and poverty eradication through localized strategies such as PDM (National Planning Authority [NPA], 2020).

1.2 Statement of the problem

Despite Parish Development Model (PDM) ambitious objectives, the effectiveness of the PDM in achieving sustainable development outcomes remains uncertain. A critical factor influencing the success of the PDM is stakeholder engagement in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) processes. Effective stake-

holder engagement ensures that local communities are actively involved in assessing and refining development interventions, thereby enhancing the relevance and impact of the PDM (National Planning Authority, 2023). However, there is scantiness of empirical research examining the relationship between stakeholder engagement in M&E and the performance of the PDM, particularly within specific constituencies such as Kilak North Constituency in Uganda. This gap in knowledge hinders the development of context-specific strategies to optimize stakeholder participation and, by extension, the success of the PDM. Kilak North Constituency, characterized by its unique socio-economic dynamics, presents an opportunity to investigate how localized stakeholder engagement practices influence the outcomes of the PDM (World Bank, 2024). Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining the influence of stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation on the performance of the Parish Development Model in Kilak North Constituency, Uganda. The findings aim to inform policy and practice, providing evidence-based recommendations to enhance stakeholder involvement and improve the effectiveness of the PDM in achieving its developmental goals (Ministry of Local Government, 2022; National Planning Authority, 2023).

1.3 Study objective

To examine the influence of stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation on the performance of the Parish Development Model in Kilak North Constituency, Uganda.

1.4 Justification of the study

This study is justified on both theoretical and practical grounds. From a theoretical perspective, it addresses a critical gap in understanding the role of stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and its influence on the performance of development initiatives. Although M&E is widely acknowledged as central to any program's success, limited empirical evidence demonstrates how stakeholder participation strengthens accountability, transparency, and sustainability within Uganda's Parish Development Model (PDM). By situating the analysis in Kilak North Constituency in Uganda, the study contributes to new learning on participatory development, results-based management, and rural transformation, offering context-specific insights into inclusive governance mechanisms. Practically, the study aligns with pressing development priorities at both global and national levels. At the global scale, it engages directly with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to poverty reduction, food security, health, education, decent work, and institutional accountability. Nationally, it supports Uganda Vision 2040 by emphasizing stakeholder-driven M&E processes as pathways for infrastructure development, human capital enhancement, and economic resilience. Importantly, the study provides actionable evidence for policymakers, development practitioners, and local leaders on how participatory M&E can enhance service delivery, increase household income and strengthen ownership, and ensure the sustainability of rural development interventions such as the Parish Development Model (PDM).

1.5 Significance of the study

Academically, this study provides new empirical evidence on how stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes influences the effectiveness of Uganda's Parish Development Model (PDM). It contributes to the literature on participatory governance, accountability, and results-based management, particularly in rural African contexts where such research remains limited. The findings will also serve as a reference point for future researchers and scholars interested in understanding the role of M&E in enhancing service delivery, raising household incomes and welfare, and promoting transparency and accountability.

Practically, the study offers insights that can inform policymakers in refining PDM implementation guidelines and establishing stronger accountability mechanisms to minimize corruption and inefficiencies. The evidence generated can be applied by both Central and Local Governments of Uganda in designing training workshops for local government officials—such as Chief Administrative Officers, Sub-County Senior Administrative Officers, Parish Chiefs, community leaders, and SACCO leaders—on best practices in M&E. By emphasizing community engagement, transparency, and accountability, these trainings can improve the overall effectiveness of PDM projects. Furthermore, the findings directly support Uganda’s national development agenda, particularly Vision 2040, while also aligning with global priorities such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

1.6 Scope of the study

This study examined government-implemented Parish Development Model (PDM) projects in Kilak North Constituency, Uganda, focusing on 14 selected parishes. The constituency was purposively chosen due to persistent challenges in PDM implementation, including funding delays, corruption, and weak monitoring systems (Omagor, 2024; GoU, 2021). The analysis was restricted to government-led interventions, thereby excluding PDM initiatives by NGOs and private actors. The study assessed key PDM performance indicators—namely, access to social services, service delivery quality, household income and welfare. The temporal scope covered 2022–2025, a period marked by recent reforms and ongoing implementation challenges. Methodologically, the research employed a descriptive mixed-methods design, combining quantitative data from a Likert-scale questionnaire with qualitative insights from interviews involving local government officials, parish chiefs, SACCO leaders, PDM implementers, and community members.

1.7 The Conceptual Framework

Independent variable

Dependent variable

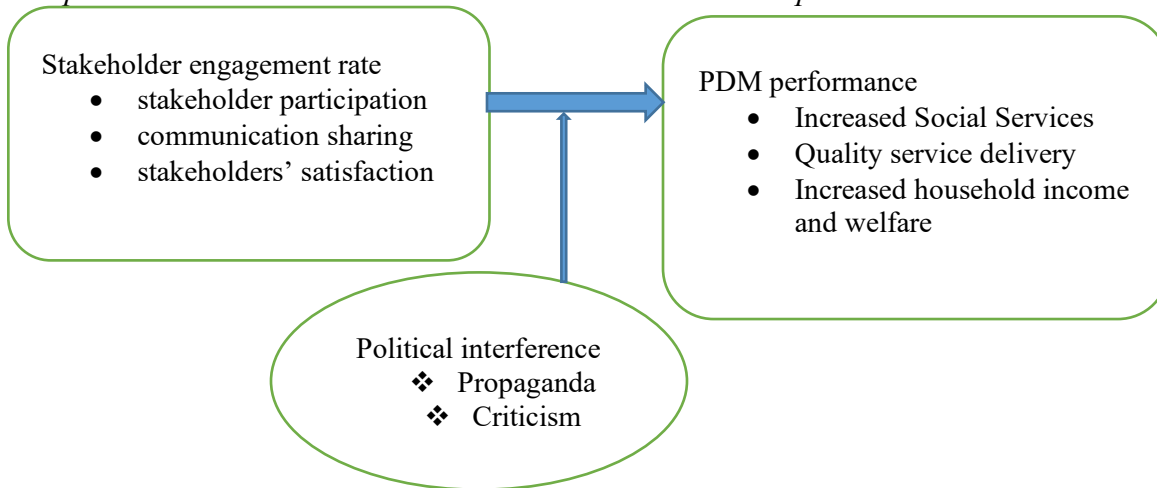


Figure 1: *The Conceptual Framework*

Source: *Own conceptualization, 2024*

1.8 Literature review

This section presents the theoretical and empirical review on the role of stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation processes and the performance of the Parish Development Model (PDM).

1.8.1 Theoretical review

Empowerment Evaluation Theory guided this study. Empowerment Evaluation Theory, developed by David Fetterman in the 1990s (Eval Community Consortium, 2014), positions evaluation as a participatory and capacity-building process. Rather than relying solely on external assessments, it emphasizes stakeholder involvement in all phases of evaluation—formulating questions, collecting and analyzing data, and applying findings. The approach seeks to equip stakeholders with evaluative skills, thereby fostering informed decision-making, continuous learning, and program improvement (Fetterman, 1994). This theory is particularly relevant to participatory monitoring and evaluation (M&E) within the Parish Development Model (PDM). By engaging government officials, parish chiefs, SACCO leaders, PDM implementers, and beneficiaries, empowerment evaluation promotes community ownership of the process, transparency in outcomes, and accountability in implementation. Importantly, it reframes beneficiaries as active participants rather than passive recipients, enabling them to assess project impact and contribute to the refinement of strategies. The principles of community ownership, capacity building, and continuous improvement make empowerment evaluation well-suited for assessing the PDM framework's contribution to poverty eradication. However, the approach is not without limitations. Its reliance on internal stakeholder perspectives may introduce bias and neglect external factors such as policy shifts or macroeconomic changes (Better Evaluation, 2022). Moreover, unequal power relations among stakeholders can constrain participation, undermining the inclusivity the theory aspires to achieve.

1.8.2 Empirical review

Stakeholder Engagement in Monitoring and Evaluation and the Performance of the Parish Development Model (PDM)

Stakeholder engagement is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in development initiatives. Globally, it is conceptualized as a participatory process that enhances transparency, accountability, and program outcomes (Reed, 2008). Bryson (2004) highlights that effective engagement aligns diverse stakeholder interests, builds trust, and fosters sustainable outcomes. Stakeholders—including government officials, civil society organizations, private sector actors, and community beneficiaries—play pivotal roles in planning, implementation, and evaluation (World Bank, 2014). However, the literature consistently notes challenges in managing diverse and sometimes conflicting stakeholder expectations, with factors such as limited time, interest, cultural differences, and resistance undermining engagement (Trappett, 2023). While these challenges are recognized, few studies rigorously examine how engagement strategies are adapted in dynamic, multi-stakeholder contexts, indicating a gap in methodological application at the global level.

In the African context, participatory development is widely promoted as a mechanism to enhance project ownership and sustainability (Mansuri & Rao, 2013). Nevertheless, research reveals that mere inclusion does not guarantee meaningful participation. Cleaver (2001) critiques conventional participatory approaches for often overlooking power imbalances, elite capture, and entrenched social hierarchies, which can compromise intended outcomes. Empirical studies support these observations: in South Africa, Ebeozien et al. (2023) found that inadequate stakeholder engagement in construction projects resulted in inefficiencies and delays, while in Kenya, rural development programs suffered from low productive participation, contributing to underperformance and resource wastage (Benard, 2016). These findings suggest that while stakeholder engagement is necessary for effective development, its quality, depth, and responsiveness to local contexts are critical determinants of success—a nuance often underexplored in the literature.

Within Uganda, the Parish Development Model (PDM) exemplifies a structured attempt to operationalize stakeholder engagement in development programs. PDM emphasizes inclusive participation across seven pillars, including financial inclusion, mindset change, quality services, transparency, accountability, and governance (MoFPED, 2021). The Ministry of Land (2022) has developed comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement Plans (SEPs) to guide communication, consultation, and participation. However, studies reveal that these frameworks are inconsistently applied across regions, undermining their potential effectiveness (ActionAid Uganda, 2023). This gap between policy and practice highlights a recurring critique in the literature: while engagement frameworks exist, implementation often fails due to logistical constraints, low capacity, or insufficient attention to local sociopolitical dynamics. Where engagement has been systematically implemented—through regular parish-level meetings, feedback mechanisms, and capacity-building initiatives—project outcomes such as loan disbursement efficiency and completion rates improved significantly (Opiyo, 2023). This evidence underscores the importance of translating policy intentions into meaningful, context-sensitive engagement practices.

Northern Uganda, particularly Kilak North constituency, illustrates the intersection of post-conflict dynamics and stakeholder engagement. Historical marginalization, mistrust of state interventions, and inadequate sensitization have limited community participation in development initiatives (Okot, 2021). Baseline assessments indicate that decision-making is often dominated by elite actors, while the majority of community members remain unaware of their roles in PDM implementation (Twaweza East Africa, 2022). This reinforces critiques in the literature about elite capture and superficial inclusion, emphasizing that without targeted efforts to democratize participation, even well-designed engagement plans may fail to achieve their intended outcomes. Conversely, when parish-level stakeholders are actively engaged, evidence shows tangible improvements in transparency, accountability, and service delivery, suggesting that structured, sustained, and inclusive engagement can overcome historical and structural barriers.

A synthesis of the literature reveals several critical insights. First, stakeholder engagement is necessary for effective M&E and program performance, but its mere presence does not guarantee success; the quality, depth, and inclusivity of engagement are pivotal. Second, there is a notable gap in empirical research directly examining the link between stakeholder engagement intensity and PDM performance, especially in post-conflict contexts. Third, while frameworks and plans such as SEPs exist, implementation gaps persist due to logistical, cultural, and political constraints. Finally, successful engagement strategies are those that combine structured processes, capacity-building, and feedback mechanisms while actively addressing power imbalances and local sociocultural realities. These findings underscore the need for research and practice to move beyond formal inclusion toward meaningful, context-sensitive participation that directly enhances development outcomes.

1.9 Research Methodology

Research Design: The study adopted a descriptive research design to accurately capture the prevailing situation through systematic analysis of the variables under investigation. This approach facilitated a deeper understanding of stakeholders' engagement in monitoring and evaluation and its influence on the performance of the Parish Development Model (PDM) in selected parishes within Kilak North Constituency, Uganda.

Target Population: The target population comprised 340 Parish Development Model (PDM) program staff drawn from 14 selected parishes. These figures were obtained from official Amuru District records by compiling the staff numbers from each selected parish. In addition, the study included 20 key PDM

informants, such as parish priests, traditional chiefs, and leaders of local NGOs, who were engaged to provide deeper insights into the program's implementation.

Table 1: Target Population

Classifications	Target population
Key PDM Informants	20
PDM Program Staff	340
Total	360

Source: Author 2024

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques: This study employed probability and non-probability sampling techniques, specifically simple random and purposive sampling. Simple random sampling was used to select PDM program staff to ensure equal representation, while purposive sampling was applied to identify key informants considered critical to the Parish Development Model (PDM), including parish priests, traditional chiefs, NGO leaders, Local Council III chairpersons, area Members of Parliament, and leaders of Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations (SACCOs). The sample size for PDM program staff was determined using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula, $n = N / (1 + N(e^2))$, where n is the sample size, N is the population size, and e is the margin of error. With a study population of 340 and a margin of error of 0.05, the resulting sample size was 184 respondents.

Table 2: Sample Distribution

Classifications	Target population	Sample size	Sample technique
Key PDM Informants	20	20	Purposive sampling
PDM Program Staff	340	184	Simple random sampling
Total	360	204	

Source: Author 2024

Data collection instruments and techniques: This study employed a mixed-methods approach, using both quantitative and qualitative instruments to capture comprehensive insights on stakeholder engagement in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and its influence on the Parish Development Model (PDM). A structured Likert-scale questionnaire was used to generate quantitative data on the extent and perceived impact of stakeholder participation. The instrument was selected for its simplicity, standardized response options, and ease of statistical analysis. For qualitative data, an interview guide was administered to 20 purposively selected stakeholders, including community leaders, parish chiefs, Savings and Credit Cooperative (SACCO) leaders, project managers, and government officials. This method was chosen for its cost-effectiveness, suitability for participants with diverse literacy levels, and ability to elicit rich, context-specific perspectives. Two trained moderators conducted the interviews to ensure consistency and reliability. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 25 to produce frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, while qualitative data were examined through thematic content analysis of transcribed and coded interviews. The integration of these techniques enhanced validity and reliability through triangulation, providing both statistically grounded trends and in-depth contextual understanding of stakeholder engagement in PDM.

1.10 Study Findings

Questionnaire and interview response rate

Out of the 184 questionnaires administered to sampled PDM program staff, 155 were completed and returned, yielding a response rate of 84%. According to Wu, Zhao, and Fils-Aime (2022), a response rate of 50 percent is considered satisfactory in descriptive research design, while Holtom, Baruch, Aguinis, and Ballinger (2022) note that rates above 50 percent are acceptable, 60 percent excellent, and 70 percent very good. On this basis, the 84 percent achieved in this study can be regarded as excellent, reflecting strong cooperation from respondents and enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings. Furthermore, all 20 interviewees participated in the study, resulting in a 100 percent interview response rate. This complete participation not only corroborated the survey data but also provided in-depth qualitative insights that strengthened the overall findings.

Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

The study sought to collect demographic information from respondents, focusing on gender, age, and level of academic qualification. This helped establish the diversity of participants and their potential influence on the implementation and monitoring of the Parish Development Model (PDM).

Respondents' gender: The findings revealed a gender imbalance, with male respondents (67.6%) significantly outnumbering female respondents (32.4%). This suggests that men were more engaged in PDM activities compared to women, raising concerns about inclusivity and gender equity in local development programs.

Respondents' age bracket: The majority of respondents were within the 41–50 years age bracket (39.4%), followed by those aged 31–40 years (27.6%). Younger respondents below 20 years constituted only 7.6%, while 10.6% were aged 51 years and above. This distribution implies that most participants were in their middle adulthood years, a period often associated with peak economic productivity and active involvement in community initiatives.

Respondents' level of Education: With respect to education, most respondents had attained at least a diploma, with 36.5% holding bachelor's degrees and 27.6% holding diplomas. Certificate holders accounted for 22.4%, while a smaller proportion had master's degrees (8.8%) or other qualifications (4.7%). These results indicate that the majority of respondents were literate and possessed the capacity to comprehend and respond effectively to study questions, enhancing the credibility of the data collected. Overall, the demographic profile suggests that PDM in Kilak North Constituency is primarily driven by educated, middle-aged men, while women and youth remain less represented. This has implications for inclusivity, sustainability, and the equitable distribution of program benefits.

Thematic Findings

Stakeholder engagement in the monitoring and evaluation process and performance of PDM

The study investigated the influence of stakeholder engagement in the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) process on the performance of the Parish Development Model (PDM) in Kilak North Constituency, Uganda. The findings from the descriptive analysis are presented below.

Table 3: The respondents' insights on the impact of stakeholder engagement in the M&E process on PDM performance

Statements (on stakeholder engagement rate in monitoring and evaluation process)	SD F ,%	D F %	N F %	A F %	SA F %	Mean	Standard Deviation
Stakeholders from all community sectors are represented in PDM activities.	7 (4.1%)	13 (7.6%)	0 (0%)	82 (48.2%)	68 (40.0%)	4.12	1.03
Regular updates on PDM implementation are provided to the community.	92 (54.1%)	52 (30.6%)	5 (2.9%)	11 (6.5%)	10 (5.9%)	1.79	1.15
Stakeholders are actively involved in implementing PDM activities.	87 (51.2%)	64 (37.6%)	0 (0%)	19 (11.2%)	0 (0%)	1.71	0.94
Community leaders are committed to the success of the PDM.	0 (0%)	5 (2.9%)	4 (2.4%)	81 (47.6%)	80 (47.1%)	4.39	0.68
Stakeholders received adequate training to fulfill their roles in the PDM.	17 (10.0%)	29 (17.1%)	5 (2.9%)	54 (31.8%)	65 (38.2%)	3.71	1.39
Resources (like financial, technical) are available to support stakeholder involvement.	54 (31.8%)	41 (24.1%)	0 (0%)	46 (27.1%)	29 (17.1%)	2.74	1.55
The implementation of PDM activities is transparent.	42 (24.7%)	35 (20.6%)	0 (0%)	37 (21.8%)	56 (32.9%)	3.18	1.65
There is a clear grievance redress mechanism for PDM-related issues.	44 (25.9%)	59 (34.7%)	0 (0%)	43 (25.3%)	24 (14.1%)	2.67	1.45
Overall composite Mean and Standard Deviation						3.02	1.46

Field data: 2025

Based on the findings in this variable, the statement that “Stakeholders from all community sectors are represented in PDM activities” had an average score of 4.12 and a standard deviation of 1.03. Data collected from respondents revealed the following distribution: 7 (4.1%) strongly disagreed, 13 (7.6%) disagreed, 0 (0.0%) were neutral, 82 (48.2%) agreed, and 68 (40.0%) strongly agreed. These results suggest that the majority of respondents perceive stakeholder representation across community sectors as adequate, indicating inclusivity in PDM activities.

The statement that “regular updates on PDM implementation are provided to the community” received a mean score of 1.79 with a standard deviation of 1.15. Respondent distribution showed that 92 (54.1%)

strongly disagreed, 52 (30.6%) disagreed, 5 (2.9%) were neutral, 11 (6.5%) agreed, and 10 (5.9%) strongly agreed. These findings highlight a significant deficiency in communication and information sharing with the community, indicating that regular updates on PDM activities are largely lacking. For the statement that “stakeholders are actively involved in implementing PDM activities”, the mean score was 1.71 (SD = 0.94). Distribution data indicated that 87 (51.2%) strongly disagreed, 64 (37.6%) disagreed, 0 (0.0%) were neutral, 19 (11.2%) agreed, and 0 (0.0%) strongly agreed. These results suggest limited active participation of stakeholders in the execution of PDM activities, pointing to challenges in engagement during implementation.

The statement that “community leaders are committed to the success of the PDM” had a mean of 4.39 and a standard deviation of 0.68. No respondents strongly disagreed, 5 (2.9%) disagreed, 4 (2.4%) were neutral, 81 (47.6%) agreed, and 80 (47.1%) strongly agreed. This indicates strong commitment from community leaders, which can serve as a critical driver for successful PDM implementation.

The statement that “stakeholders received adequate training to fulfill their roles in the PDM”, the mean score was 3.71 with a standard deviation of 1.39. Respondent distribution was: 17 (10.0%) strongly disagreed, 29 (17.1%) disagreed, 5 (2.9%) neutral, 54 (31.8%) agreed, and 65 (38.2%) strongly agreed. The data suggest that most stakeholders received adequate training, although a notable minority felt training was insufficient, pointing to a need for enhanced capacity-building efforts.

The statement that “resources (e.g., financial, technical) are available to support stakeholder involvement” had a mean of 2.74 (SD = 1.55). The distribution was 54 (31.8%) strongly disagreed, 41 (24.1%) disagreed, 0 (0.0%) neutral, 46 (27.1%) agreed, and 29 (17.1%) strongly agreed. These findings indicate that resource availability to support stakeholder engagement is perceived as moderate to insufficient, suggesting constraints that may hinder effective participation.

The statement that “the implementation of PDM activities is transparent”, the mean score was 3.18 with a standard deviation of 1.65. Distribution revealed 42 (24.7%) strongly disagreed, 35 (20.6%) disagreed, 0 (0.0%) neutral, 37 (21.8%) agreed, and 56 (32.9%) strongly agreed. This indicates moderate perceptions of transparency, suggesting that while some respondents perceive openness in PDM activities, others feel there is room for improvement.

The statement that “there is a clear grievance redress mechanism for PDM-related issues” had a mean of 2.67 (SD = 1.45). Respondents’ distribution showed 44 (25.9%) strongly disagreed, 59 (34.7%) disagreed, 0 (0.0%) neutral, 43 (25.3%) agreed, and 24 (14.1%) strongly agreed. These findings suggest that the presence and clarity of grievance redress mechanisms are perceived as limited, which may affect stakeholder confidence and accountability in the PDM process.

The overall composite mean of stakeholder engagement across all statements was 3.02 with a standard deviation of 1.46. This indicates a moderate level of engagement overall, with considerable variability across different aspects of participation, communication, resources, and transparency. These quantitative findings are reinforced by the qualitative data. As one interviewee explained: “*stakeholder engagement in PDM’s M&E process is generally low and the participation sometimes is perfunctory with low interest. Genuine engagement would require stakeholders’ involvement in developing indicators, reviewing results, and making decisions on corrective measures.*” (Respondent number 10).

Discussion of findings

The study highlights both progress and challenges in stakeholder engagement within the Parish Development Model (PDM), when viewed through the lens of Empowerment Evaluation Theory that guided this study. Findings show that stakeholder representation across community sectors is generally adequate ($M = 4.12$), reflecting inclusivity and community ownership. This resonates with empowerment evaluation's emphasis on participation (Fetterman, 1994) and global evidence that broad representation enhances accountability (Reed, 2008). However, representation does not equate to active participation. Stakeholders reported low involvement in implementation ($M = 1.71$) and limited access to regular updates ($M = 1.79$), suggesting that participation is often passive and information sharing weak—patterns consistent with critiques of tokenistic engagement (Cleaver, 2001).

The results also indicate strong commitment from community leaders ($M = 4.39$), positioning leadership as a key driver of PDM success. Yet, this strength risks being undermined by unequal power relations and elite dominance, as also noted in Ugandan studies (Twaweza East Africa, 2022). Similarly, while most stakeholders received training ($M = 3.71$), gaps in capacity building remain, reflecting inconsistencies between policy frameworks such as SEPs and their uneven implementation (ActionAid Uganda, 2023). Structural constraints further limit engagement. Resource availability was rated moderate to insufficient ($M = 2.74$), while transparency ($M = 3.18$) and grievance redress mechanisms ($M = 2.67$) were perceived as weak. These limitations echo wider African experiences where lack of resources, feedback systems, and institutional trust hinder participatory development (Benard, 2016; Ebenozien et al., 2023). Overall, the composite mean of 3.02 reflects a moderate but fragmented level of engagement. Inclusivity, leader commitment, and training provide a foundation, but weak communication, resource gaps, and limited redress mechanisms constrain genuine empowerment. These findings confirm that in post-conflict contexts like Kilak North, the quality and depth of engagement, not its mere presence, determine the effectiveness of participatory M&E.

1.10 Conclusion

This study examined stakeholder engagement in the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) process of the Parish Development Model (PDM) in Kilak North constituency, using Empowerment Evaluation Theory as the guiding framework. The findings demonstrated that while stakeholder representation is broad and community leaders show strong commitment, active participation, communication, and resource support remain limited. Training efforts have built some capacity, but gaps persist in consistency and inclusivity. Transparency and grievance redress mechanisms are also perceived as weak, undermining accountability. Overall, stakeholder engagement in PDM's M&E processes can be described as moderate but uneven with positive elements such as inclusivity and leadership offset by structural and relational barriers. These results underscore that empowerment in evaluation is not simply about representation but requires sustained involvement, adequate resources, and mechanisms to balance power and ensure accountability. Without addressing these gaps, the PDM's contribution to poverty eradication risks being curtailed by superficial participation and implementation shortfalls.

1.11 Recommendations

To strengthen community engagement and accountability, it is recommended that communication be improved through regular parish-level updates via meetings, radio, and noticeboards, while promoting active participation by involving stakeholders in designing indicators, reviewing results, and decision-making processes. Capacity-building should be standardized, with expanded training in evaluative skills

and participatory methods. Addressing resource gaps through adequate financial and technical support is essential, alongside institutionalizing clear and accessible grievance mechanisms to improve accountability. Efforts should also focus on mitigating power imbalances by empowering marginalized groups to influence decisions and reduce elite capture. Finally, engagement strategies should be context-sensitive, particularly in post-conflict areas, to rebuild trust and ensure inclusivity.

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