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Funding Diversification and Performance of Education Projects Implemented by Non-Profit Organizations in Dadaab Refugee Complex, Kenya

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The performance of education projects is integral in protracted situations where refugees hope to find durable solutions to displacement from their countries. The Dadaab refugee complex is one such area that hosts thousands of school-going populations who rely on the performance of education projects. Studies have shown that a significant number of projects fail due to a myriad of challenges, including poor management strategies, which delay the project implementation and completion within the constraints of time while minimizing cost overruns. However, there are limited studies that have linked funding diversification to the performance of projects in emergency settings. Even though several studies on the performance of education projects have been conducted globally, there exist significant conceptual, methodological, and contextual inconsistencies that necessitate the present study to bridge these knowledge gaps. This study examined the influence of funding diversification on the performance of education projects implemented by Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) in the Dadaab refugee complex in Kenya. The study was anchored on the charitable triad theory. The research adopted a descriptive survey design. A census approach selected all 20 education projects. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents directly engaged in implementing the education programs in the Dadaab refugee complex. The unit of observation included 6 school principals, 22 head teachers, 20 learning centre heads, 36 boards of management (BOM) members, 20 education officers/coordinators, 15 program managers, and 2 Dadaab education directors. The study used descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analyses to explain the relationship between funding diversification and project performance. Data was then presented in the form of frequency distribution tables. The study findings were that even though funding diversification had a positive relationship with the performance of education projects ($r=0.799$), it was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.039$, $p = 0.728$). To improve funding diversification, there is a need for establishing multi-functional teams that conduct participatory assessments

to inform communities' and NPOs' needs and match them with each donor type's rationale to support education programs.

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INTRODUCTION

Ensuring the sustainability of education projects in refugee settings like Dadaab requires ongoing improvement in project performance and effective funding strategies. Success in such projects is typically measured by timely completion, adherence to budgets, and satisfaction of stakeholder needs (Ali et al., 2014; Westland, 2015). For education projects, strong performance increases the likelihood of continued resource inflows, which is crucial as donor fatigue and funding withdrawal are common challenges facing non-profit organizations (Almagtome et al., 2019).

Globally, non-profits have adopted funding diversification as a key strategy to sustain project outcomes by securing support from multiple donors (Ketola, 2016; Kluczevska, 2019). Ketola (2016) and Kluczevska (2019) perceive funding diversification as critical for reducing reliance on single sources and mitigating the risks associated with fluctuating donor priorities. In countries such as Canada, Australia, and the United States, regulatory frameworks influence how charitable donations are managed; however, effective

financial planning by project implementers remains essential for long-term success (Phillips et al., 2021).

In Africa, and particularly in Sub-Saharan regions, education projects frequently depend on external aid due to persistent poverty, resource shortages, and limited government capacity (Asare et al., 2022). International organizations and local partners support education as a pathway to social and economic mobility for marginalized populations. Despite these efforts, education exclusion rates remain high, especially among refugee children facing barriers such as school fees and lack of resources (UNESCO, 2019; UNESCO, 2021).

Kenya hosts a substantial refugee population, with the Dadaab complex being a focal point for educational interventions by organizations like UNHCR, Save the Children, and Windle International Kenya (UNHCR, 2021; Whitaker, 2020). While government initiatives have expanded access to primary and secondary education, many refugee children remain underserved. In protracted refugee contexts such as Dadaab, education offers a critical opportunity for children to build futures

beyond displacement. However, the sustainability of these educational programs depends on diversified funding models that can withstand shifts in donor engagement and ensure continuous project performance. Therefore, this study examines the influence of funding diversification on the performance of education projects in the Dadaab refugee complex.

Funding Diversification

Funding diversification is the expansion of the NPOs' resource pool to have more than one funder per project. The concept of funding diversification is best measured through the number of donors and fundraising mechanisms (Lobato et al., 2021). According to Chapman et al. (2022), the three actors: donors, beneficiaries, and fundraisers, need to be considered when defining the concept of funding diversification because they have interlinkages, and each influences the other. In their charitable triad theory, a triadic experience involves the three actors who influence charity decisions. They propose an aggregate score that captures the beneficiaries, donors, and fundraisers' opinions to compute funding diversification. The present study adopted the following indicators to measure funding diversification and its influence on the performance of education projects: donor retention rates, number of donors supporting projects, and fundraising for education projects.

Project Performance

Almagtome et al. (2019) underscore the need for project performance through effective monitoring, diversification of funds, and accessibility to social finance programs. Almagtome et al. (2019) studies corroborate what Carvalho and Rabechini (2017) explicate about the performance of funded projects from a manager's point of view. According to the authors, sound project management strategies reduce unnecessary expenditures, increase opportunities, and facilitate NPOs' success. Nevertheless, for a project to be successful, it calls

for a resolute commitment by NPOs and additional resources.

According to Pitagorsky (2015), the measurement of project performance refers to the pathway of identifying the progress that alerts the project manager of early warnings of impediments that are likely to stand in the path of achieving project success. He posits that when measuring specific project performance based on the implementation of activities, the overall performance needs to be factored in against the budget forecasts and timelines. He expounds on the easiest way to measure project performance by tracing the timelines, costs, and scopes. However, a closer look at project performance is not as straightforward as Pitagorsky states. The NPOs need to first establish the project evaluation parameters and identify key performance indicators. Watt (2014) elucidates that a well-performing project is completed on time, burns all financial resources, and realizes the desired outcomes need to be rated based on the time. He used the indicators of time, customer satisfaction, budget, and quality of output to establish project performance. There exists a direct association between project delays and supervision capacity, management support, and project design aspects (Ondari & Gekara, 2015).

In the global space, project performance remains an area of concern because of the dynamics in socioeconomic and geopolitical challenges (Sahi, 2019). Even in developed nations, project performance has slacked off amid the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, many projects were unable to be finished within the designated timeframe. Nevertheless, with technological advancements, the world is a global village where project leads could borrow a leaf from their counterparts on effective strategies and good practices that improve local project performance.

Africa's project failure continues to breed expectations from project beneficiaries. In recent

years, numerous NPOs have indicated a need for project extensions while maintaining hope for the beneficiaries. Unfortunately, most of the time, the donors do not grant extensions in the implementations, resulting in unfulfilled promises. Buyani's (2015) studies on South African humanitarian projects reported delays attributed to a myriad of challenges. Some of these challenges included insufficient financial resources, poor management, inadequate project risk assessments, and limited stakeholder engagement, all of which led to poor project performance. There is a need for effective strategies to improve project performance. This study, therefore, explored how funding diversification influences the performance of educational projects. This study focused on four indicators of project performance, that is, cost, time, quality of output, and students' enrolments.

Statement of the Problem

Many Non-Profit Organization (NPO) projects in Kenya's refugee contexts fail due to weak financial strategies during implementation. While qualified project teams are important, sound financial planning and management are essential for successful project delivery (Alshammari, 2020). Reports from the Auditor General and various researchers highlight frequent project failures in areas like Turkana and Dadaab, often linked to underspending and financial mismanagement (Auditor General, 2020; Wardeh & Marques, 2021). For instance, Turkana County left \$47 million of its development budget unused in 2018-2019, resulting in stalled initiatives (Auditor General, 2020).

In Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps, more than half of the livelihood projects have not been completed as intended, largely due to financial mismanagement (Lunalo, 2017). Dadaab, which shelters over 250,000 refugees, many of them school-aged, relies on education projects to meet critical needs. However, poor project performance has contributed to high dropout rates and

insufficient educational facilities (UNHCR, 2021; Bellino, 2021). These issues are worsened by donor fatigue, often triggered by concerns over financial oversight (Catana & Brilha, 2020).

A literature search showed previous studies often lack contextual relevance, as they focus on non-emergency settings or different types of projects, making their findings less applicable to the Dadaab refugee context (Von Schnurbein & Fritz, 2017; Muluh et al., 2019; Ndombi et al., 2020). This research seeks to address contextual, methodological, and population gaps and inconsistencies by investigating how diversified funding strategies influence the performance of education projects in Dadaab, to improve educational outcomes for refugee children.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The influence of funding diversification on the success of education projects has been a focal point of various studies. Crisan and Dan (2018) explored revenue diversification strategies for non-profit organizations (NPOs), emphasizing the critical role financial resources play in successful project implementation. They identified financial limitations as a significant challenge for NPOs globally. Through a case study of two organizations running education programs, they found that these organizations sourced funds from diverse avenues such as fundraising, individual donors, charitable organizations, and foundations. Their findings highlighted that funding diversification is crucial for project performance, providing stability and resilience even when some donors withdraw support. This strategy ensures a continuous flow of funds, which is vital for the successful implementation of education projects. However, the study's methodological reliance on a limited sample presents a population gap, suggesting a need for broader research to generalize findings across more NPOs. This study addresses this gap by employing a descriptive survey method to engage a wider range

of stakeholders, assessing the impact of diversification on financial limitations in education programs.

Conversely, Von Schnurbein and Fritz (2017) presented a different perspective on funding diversification. Their research on 200 Swiss organizations suggested that entities relying on a single donor grew faster and executed projects more successfully than those with multiple donors. They argued that diversification could lead to conflicts among donors, each contributing minimally, assuming others would contribute more. This misperception might result in perceived excess funds, leading to potential mismanagement and embezzlement. In contrast, donor concentration facilitates effective fund tracking and reduces conflicts, ensuring project success. While offering valuable insights, the contextual focus on Switzerland limits the applicability of these findings to other regions. This study seeks to explore the influence of funding diversification in the context of education projects in Kenya's Dadaab refugee complex, addressing this contextual gap.

Muluh et al. (2019) highlighted challenges in sustaining donor-funded projects in rural areas, focusing on community issues such as education access and gender-based violence. Using an agribusiness approach, they identified socioeconomic challenges hindering project sustainability, including financial constraints that affected empowerment and evaluation efforts. The authors advocated for funding diversification to ensure adequate funding and enhance project success. Adequate funds would enable project managers to procure resources, hire personnel, and effectively monitor project progress. However, their focus on agricultural projects necessitates further investigation into how funding diversification impacts education projects, an area this study aims to address.

Biancone and Radwan (2018) examined revenue generation methods for non-profits, noting the limitations of relying solely on grants, especially for educational institutions in emergency areas like Kakuma and Kalobeyei. They found that grant dependency could lead to revenue fluctuations due to the cyclical nature of grant availability. Grants often have fixed timelines, causing peaks and troughs in funding. Similarly, Martínez-Martínez et al. (2021) explored grant funding's effectiveness, concluding that grants cover only specific costs, restricting their use for other projects. These studies suggest that organizations must diversify funding sources to ensure financial stability. However, their findings, derived from different contexts, may not be directly applicable to Kenyan education projects, particularly in emergency settings. This study seeks to explore whether overreliance on a single funding source hinders project implementation in the Dadaab refugee complex.

In summary, these studies underscore the importance of funding diversification in enhancing education project performance. While Crisan and Dan advocate for diversification to ensure stability, Von Schnurbein and Fritz caution against potential conflicts and mismanagement. Muluh et al. highlight the necessity of diversified funding to overcome socioeconomic barriers, and Biancone and Radwan (2018) emphasize the risks of grant dependency. Despite offering valuable insights, gaps in population, context, and methodology in previous studies indicate a need for further research in the unique environment of Kenya's refugee camps. This study aims to fill these gaps by examining the impact of funding diversification on the performance of education projects in the Dadaab refugee complex, providing insights into effective financial strategies for sustainable project outcomes.

Theoretical Framework

Chapman et al. (2022) proposed a new and integrated theory called the Charitable Triad (CT) theory to explain three crucial beliefs. The first is that giving is a triadic experience since it involves fundraisers, beneficiaries, and donors who influence charity decisions. The second belief is that fundraisers, beneficiaries, and donors are necessary but not enough to promote contributions. Third, giving is relative because fundraisers, beneficiaries, and donors interact and influence charitable decisions. Manthé and Bilgihan (2023) used the CT theory to demonstrate how NPOs strive to balance their fundraising objectives from different donors and their mission statements. Pfeiffer (2023) used the CT theory to review the effectiveness of charitable appeals by organizations.

The CT theory has a direct bearing on the influence of funding diversification on project performance.

The researcher uses the theory to explain the need for NPOs to expand their resource pool to have more than one donor funding an education program. Since the proponents of the CT theory underscore that donors are necessary but not sufficient to give, funding diversification becomes a proactive approach to overcome donor fatigue. Also, beneficiaries influence giving by donors, and so the more the number of donors NPOs fundraise from, the more successful the project becomes.

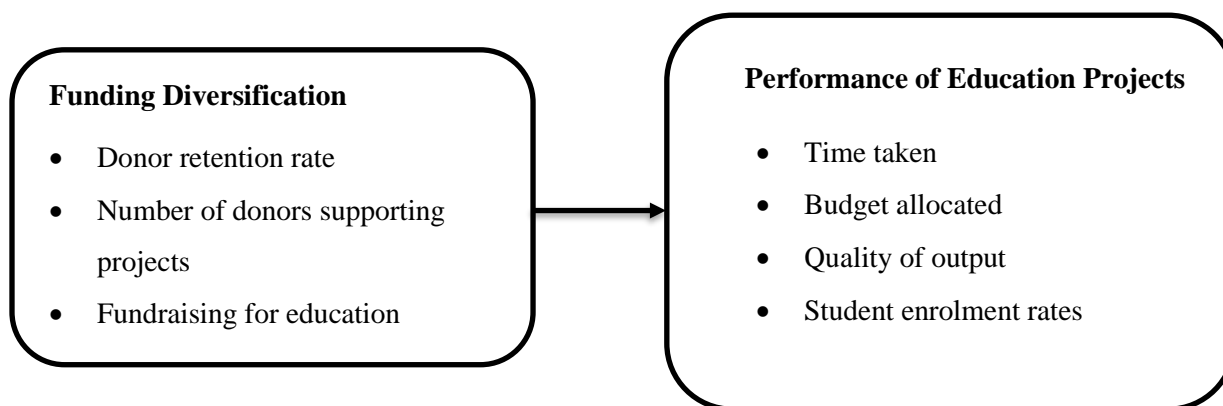
Conceptual Framework

The researcher measured funding diversification using donor retention rate, number of donors supporting projects, and fundraising for education projects. In this study, funding diversification is hypothesized to influence the performance of education projects, measured by indicators such as time taken, budget allocated, quality of output, and student enrolment rates.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Independent Variable

Dependent Variable



METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive research design to examine the influence of funding diversification on the performance of education projects within the Dadaab refugee complex. The descriptive research design allowed data collection and quantitative

analysis of different funding sources and their impact on project outcomes.

The research focused on 20 education projects across the Dagahaley, Hagadera, and Ifo camps, which include 28 schools (22 primary, 6 secondary) and 20 learning centres. A census approach was

used, involving all 121 identified stakeholders to ensure comprehensive representation. Respondents included 6 school principals, 22 head teachers, 20 learning center heads, 36 Board of Management (BOM) members, 20 education officers/coordinators, 15 program managers, and 2 Dadaab Directors of Education.

Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires developed from a review of relevant literature and expert feedback. The instrument included closed-ended and Likert-scale items addressing types and sources of funding, as well as key project performance indicators such as completion rates, budget adherence, infrastructure quality, and student enrollment. The questionnaire was piloted with 12 respondents: 2 each from BOM members, Principals, Head Teachers, Learning Centre Heads, Education Officers, and Program Managers. The 12 respondents were sampled purposively from the Kakuma refugee camp to ensure clarity and validity, and necessary adjustments were made before full deployment. Data was coded and analyzed using SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize and tabulate the data. Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated to assess the relationship between funding diversification and project performance, with statistical significance set at $p < 0.05$.

Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the research process. The researcher obtained the research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and the University of Nairobi's Faculty of Business and Management Sciences. All participants provided informed consent, and confidentiality was strictly maintained in line with the best research practices. Data was securely stored and only used for this study.

To manage the large area of the Dadaab complex, two research assistants helped collect data in each camp. Data collection timelines were made flexible. Participants were assured their responses would remain confidential and anonymous.

RESULTS

The researcher used donor retention rate, the number of donors supporting the projects, and fundraising for education projects to measure funding diversification. To analyze the performance of education projects, the researcher measured the dependent variable based on the time taken, budget allocated, quality of output, and student enrollment rates. The study established the number of donors funding each education project in the Dadaab refugee complex. The summary of the findings is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of Donors Funding Education Projects

Number of Donors	Frequency	Percentage
1 donor	80	70.2
2 donors	26	22.8
More than 2 donors	8	7.0
Total	114	100.0

Table 1's findings indicate that over two-thirds of educational initiatives are supported by a single donor. Only one-third of those have two donors or more. These results demonstrate that most NPOs' education initiatives in Dadaab camps are funded

exclusively by one source and have not diversified. This may help to explain their sustainability issues because the project always fails when there is donor fatigue. These results corroborate research on financial diversification conducted by Crisan and

Dan (2018) and Martínez-Martínez et al. (2021), who emphasize the importance of this strategy for ensuring project success and sustainability even in the rare instances of donor withdrawal.

Respondents were asked to score their level of agreement regarding the following statements. Table 2 below provides a summary of the findings.

Table 2: Respondents on Funding Diversification

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Having more than one donor is important to realize the desired success of education programs.	-	3.5%	22.8%	54.4%	19.3%	3.89	.748
Fundraising is critical for sustaining education projects.	-	-	-	35.7%	64.3%	4.64	.483
Retention of donors has played a significant role in funding education projects	8.6%	7.1%	28.6%	51.4%	4.3%	3.36	.993
Different donors have regularly funded education projects	21.1%	40.4%	29.8%	5.3%	3.5%	2.30	.981
The NPOs in refugee camps have developed long-term agreements with the donor(s)	5.7%	50.0%	41.4%	1.4%	1.4%	2.33	.631
There is consistent support from individual donors in the Dadaab refugee complex	21.1%	52.6%	26.3%	-	-	2.05	.692
Every Education Project in the refugee camp has more than one donor funding them	47.4%	38.6%	10.5%	3.5%	-	1.70	.801
The practice of having more than one donor influences the implementation of sustainable education programs	-	-	-	49.1%	50.9%	4.51	.504
Aggregate Mean and Standard Deviation					3.10	.729	

From Table 2 above, 54.4% of respondents agreed that having multiple donors improved the sustainability and success of the educational projects ($M=3.89$, $SD=0.748$). More than half (51.4%) agreed that donor retention played a significant role in funding education projects [$M=3.36$, $SD = 0.993$]. Additionally, 64.3% strongly agreed [$M=4.64$, $SD=0.483$] that

fundraising had maintained educational programs while 40.4% disagreed that different donors had regularly funded education projects [$M=2.30$, $SD=0.981$]. Furthermore, 47.4% of respondents disagreed that NPOs in refugee camps have more than one donor, and 50.0% disagreed that long-term PPAs with donors to continue funding their projects [$M=2.33$, $SD=0.61$]. A significant number of

respondents (50.9%) strongly agreed that the sustainability and success of a project are impacted by multiple donors ($M=4.51$, $SD=0.504$).

Additionally, the descriptive analysis produced a standard deviation of 0.729 and an aggregate mean of 3.10. These findings suggest that there was limited funding diversification for educational initiatives. Consequently, there were no significant differences in the responses regarding funding diversification, as indicated by the Standard Deviation. Thus, the results support the claims made by Crisan and Dan (2018) that sufficient funding from a variety of sources enables educational institutions to carry out academic and co-curricular activities that support students' learning. The results also support Martínez-Martínez et al. (2021) conclusions that funding diversification helps NPOs to generate money for project operations.

The results of the study showed that the performance of education programs in the refugee

camps was greatly impacted by funding diversification. The results are consistent with research conducted by Osman and Dahlan (2019) regarding the provision of high-quality education in refugee camps. Their study found a positive correlation between the availability of high-quality education for Eritrean refugees seeking asylum in Sudan and the funding of refugee education programs by multiple donors. It was suggested that organizations should have multiple donors to prevent learning disruptions and the resulting financial shortages caused by donor withdrawal. The study supports Bellino's (2021) findings regarding multiple donors, which provide a buffer against donor fatigue for non-profit organizations.

Respondents were requested to rate how they agreed with the following statements based on the performance of education projects. The results are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3: Responses on Performance of Education Projects

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Education projects are executed and completed within the allocated time	8.8%	78.9%	7.0%	5.3%	-	2.09	.606
Learning centers in the camps experience low student enrolment rates	21.4%	24.3%	54.3%	-	-	2.33	.812
The completed education projects used the allocated financial resources.	-	-	12.3%	61.4%	26.3%	4.14	.611
Successful education projects have increased students' enrolment	-	-	1.8%	64.9%	33.3%	4.32	.506
Completed projects have increased refugee access to education in the camps	-	-	-	14.3%	85.7%	4.86	.352
Completed projects have increased the quality of education in the camps	1.8%	1.8%	5.3%	54.4%	36.8%	4.23	.780
Aggregate Mean and Standard Deviation						3.66	.611

Findings from Table 3 show that 78.9% of the respondents disagreed that Education projects are executed and completed within the allocated timeframe [$M=2.09$, $SD=0.606$]. Concerning the Learning centres in the camps and how they experience low student enrolment rates, 54.3% were neutral, unlike the rest who disagreed and strongly disagreed [$M=2.33$, $SD=0.812$]. Additionally, 61.4% of the respondents agreed that the completed education projects used the allocated financial resources [$M=4.14$, $SD=0.611$]. Also, 64.9% agreed that Successful education projects increased students' enrolments [$M=4.32$, $SD=0.506$]. A significant 85.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that completed projects had increased refugee access to education. To further support refugee learners and empower their communities, 54.5% of the respondents agreed that completed projects had increased the quality of education in the camps [$M=4.23$, $SD=0.780$].

The combined mean and standard deviation were [$M= 3.66$; $SD= 0.611$]. This implies that the majority of the respondents tend towards a neutral opinion on the performance of education projects by NPOs in the camps, even though some respondents agreed and strongly agreed on specific statements. Since the standard deviation was slightly above 0.5, the data is implied to be distributed slightly above the mean with a few variations in the responses. The study results align with Crisan and Dan's (2018) findings that education programs in emergency settings fail due to overdependence on one donor, hence limiting the implementation of the project activities.

Similarly, descriptive statistics established that having multiple funders or donors improves the success rate of education projects, and so does fundraising. The results showed that the performance of education programs in the Dadaab refugee complex was greatly impacted by funding diversification. A Pearson correlation analysis indicated that funding diversification had a positive

relationship with project performance ($r=0.799$, $p=0.000$). Even though the Pearson correlation analysis showed a positive relationship between funding diversification and the performance of education projects, regression analysis demonstrated that it was not a significant predictor of project performance ($\beta = 0.039$, $p = 0.728$) since its p-value was greater than 0.05.

DISCUSSIONS

Research findings mirror Muluh et al. (2019) studies on social financing that highlighted the need for communities to diversify their funding sources to assist NPOs in sustaining projects. Crisan and Dan (2018) found that NPOs rely on diverse revenues and that funding diversification increases the funds available for organizations to implement their projects. Studies have shown that funding diversification is desirable because it fosters the stability of organizations. Funding diversification protects NPOs from the negative impact of losing a few donors, as a variety of funding sources ensures continued financial support. The success of education projects relies on funding availability. Therefore, implementers of education programs should adopt the best fiscal and programmatic strategies to assure the stakeholders of adequate funds to facilitate the implementation of education projects. One such approach involves the concept of funding diversification.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study found that funding diversification influences project performance in the Dadaab refugee complex. However, funding diversification is not a significant predictor of the performance of education projects. This implies that NPOs should not rely heavily on multiple donors to improve the performance of the projects. The study concluded that the effective adoption of financial strategies is the best way to foster project success in education in emergencies, particularly in Dadaab refugee camps.

NPOs should move beyond simply diversifying funding and focus on strong financial strategies. The study suggests creating multi-functional teams to conduct participatory assessments, identifying and aligning community needs with each donor type's motivations for supporting education programs. Actively involving beneficiaries in planning, monitoring, and decision-making through participatory methods is essential for effective project implementation. As such, the participatory approach increases project acceptance, ownership, and empowerment, motivating refugees and host communities to sustain educational initiatives.

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