

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FUNDING AND THE
PERFORMANCE OF PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED BY
COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN MAYOM
COUNTY, SOUTH SUDAN**

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study: The study examined the relationship between funding and the performance of projects implemented by Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in Mayom County, South Sudan. The study was guided by the Resource Based View (RBV) Theory, which explains how organizational resources can be effectively managed to enhance performance.

Statement of the Problem: CBOs in Mayom County operate in a fragile environment characterized by funding instability, insecurity, logistical challenges, and weak institutional structures. These challenges have contributed to delayed project implementation and failure to achieve intended project objectives, creating a need to establish how funding relates to project performance.

Research Methodology: The study adopted a cross sectional survey research design. The target population was 51,745 individuals comprising 3 project managers, 99 operational staff, 51,625 community beneficiaries, and 18 community leaders. Quantitative data were collected using

structured questionnaires, while qualitative data were obtained through semi structured interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with SPSS version 27, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically.

Findings: The findings showed that favourable funding conditions were associated with better descriptive project outcomes, although none of the funding indicators had a statistically significant relationship with timely project completion at the 5% significance level. Projects receiving funding on time recorded 29.5% timely completion compared with 19.2% among those without timely funding. Similarly, financial flexibility was associated with 30.4% timely completion compared with 16.7% where such flexibility was absent.

Conclusion: The study concludes that funding remains an important resource for the implementation of CBO projects in Mayom County, although its relationship with timely project completion was not statistically significant. Project performance is therefore influenced by funding together with other organizational and contextual factors.

Recommendations: The study recommends that development partners and donors should provide predictable and flexible funding arrangements to enable CBOs to respond effectively to the fragile operating environment. It further recommends that CBOs should strengthen financial management, accountability, and reporting systems to enhance efficient utilization of resources and build donor confidence.

Keywords: *Funding, Project performance, Community-based organizations (CBOs), Mayom County, South Sudan.*

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The performance of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) refers to the extent to which these entities achieve their objectives in social service delivery, community development, and empowerment initiatives (Nordin *et al.*, 2024). Performance is commonly assessed through three interrelated dimensions: project completion within time and budget, achievement of stated objectives, and beneficiary satisfaction (World Bank, 2022). Globally, successful CBO-led projects have improved livelihoods in diverse regions such as India and Brazil, where strong funding mechanisms have driven positive outcomes (OECD, 2021). CBOs play a critical role in social and economic development as important service providers and as a lifeline for vulnerable

groups. Grassroots efforts in the United States are led and funded by the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) programme (Bass & Avolio, 2021).

In India, the strong performance of the self-help groups is based on participatory governance and financial inclusion (Chambers, 2021). Participatory budgeting (OECD 2021) has been used by CBOs to advance urban development in Brazil. In conflict situations like South Sudan, however, CBOs face difficulties in raising resources to effectively implement project (UNECA, 2023). Some lessons can be learned from successful experiences at the global level, which can be used for context-specific strategies in fragile contexts, however, direct translation is not always possible. Skilled CBOs are beginning to deliver health and education services in Mayom County, a result of the work of CARE International (2023) and UNDP South Sudan (2023), but more than 60% of CBO-led programmes are not meeting their timelines and objectives, facing logistical challenges, funding gaps and security constraints. Child malnutrition is another example that CARE's nutrition programmes have only accessed 40% of their target beneficiaries due to delays in donor funding and security concerns (CARE International, 2024).

The part played by CBOs has grown considerably over the past decades, especially when it comes to dealing with inefficiencies in governmental and international systems. They grew in significance in the late 20th century with the introduction of the neoliberal policies that focused on local solutions to socio-economic problems (Halperin, 2020). The effectiveness of CBOs was the subject of debate, as it was found to be more or less effective in different parts of the world. CBOs play a crucial role in filling gaps in service delivery in Africa, especially in regions where the state has minimal presence. With good support, they make a major contribution to the health and well-being of the community. For instance, the interventions led by CBOs led to an improvement in access to primary health care by 40% in rural Nigeria (Olabisi *et al.*, 2021).

In Kenya, CBOs have been associated with higher school enrolment in education support programmes (Njeri, 2022). But they are sometimes limited by unreliable funding, limited institutional support and lesser volunteerism (Nkrumah & Mensah, 2023). The African Union (2020) considers CBOs as a key component to the implementation of Agenda 2063, with outcomes differing across countries based on the political and structural contexts. The study, therefore, examines the association between funding, with project performance among CBOs with a particular focus being in Mayom County, South Sudan.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There is a lack of background studies that systematically examine the factors that affect the performance of community-based organization (CBO) projects in highly fragile situations like Mayom County, South Sudan. Although CBOs play a key role in filling service gaps in conflict-affected areas, they have a variable capacity to achieve goals and are not well studied. If they are not really targeting their interventions to the specific issues they will encounter especially access to funding, they will not be very effective in addressing vulnerabilities, and progress will be slow. This study aims to address this gap by identifying and analyzing the key factors contributing to CBOs' performance in Mayom County.

The performance constraints experienced by CBOs in Mayom County are very high due to unstable funding. This often led to missed targets and delayed outcomes for projects. According to recent reports by UNDP South Sudan (2023) and Relief Web (2023), less than half of all CBO-led projects in the region, such as health and education projects, failed to achieve their goals due to logistical challenges, security concerns, and funding delays. However, the critical needs of the CBOs in Mayom are not met, such as child malnutrition, with one in three children acutely malnourished (CARE International, 2023). Likewise, the percentage of school enrolment remains at 40% in rural areas, in part due to inadequate support from local leaders and CBOs (UNDP, 2023).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The research objective of the study was to examine the relationship between funding and performance of projects implemented by community-based organizations in Mayom County, South Sudan.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was guided by the Resource Based View (RBV) Theory developed by Barney (1991), which explains organizational performance based on the resources available to an organization and how effectively such resources are acquired, allocated, managed, and utilized. The theory holds that organizations can achieve improved performance when they possess valuable resources and deploy them effectively toward achieving organizational objectives. In the context of Community Based Organizations, funding represents a critical organizational resource because it supports

project planning, procurement, implementation, monitoring, and continuity of activities. Its contribution to project performance depends on factors such as adequacy of funds, timeliness of disbursement, diversity and reliability of funding sources, and efficiency in financial management. These dimensions correspond with the study's conceptualization of funding as the main independent variable.

The theory was related to the study objective, which sought to examine the relationship between funding and the performance of projects implemented by Community Based Organizations in Mayom County, South Sudan. The RBV provided a basis for explaining how adequate, timely, reliable, and effectively managed financial resources could enhance timely project completion, achievement of project objectives, beneficiary satisfaction, and efficient resource utilization. Conversely, inadequate, delayed, or inflexible funding could constrain implementation and contribute to project delays, reduced activities, and failure to achieve intended outcomes. Therefore, RBV established the theoretical connection between funding as an organizational resource and project performance as the expected outcome, making it appropriate for explaining the relationship examined in the study.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Funding is one of the most key factors to the success and sustainability of community-based organization (CBO) projects, especially in fragile and conflict-affected areas. Adequate and timely funding allows for effective planning, execution, and monitoring, while inconsistent or inadequate funding can lead to delays, limited scope, and poor quality. Some research (e.g., Al Maalouf *et al.*, 2025) has shown that fundraising is competitive, but these studies have tended to concentrate on resource acquisition rather than the effect resources have on implementation. The results are based upon Lebanese NGOs in a politically unstable setting in the middle-range of income. In contrast, grassroots CBOs in South Sudan suffer from even higher institutional gaps and personal insecurity. Likewise, Huffstetler *et al.* (2022) highlight the dangers of donor withdrawal, but their understanding is more relevant in middle-income settings, and the grassroots dynamics of fragile states have been explored less.

The findings by Avedi *et al.* (2020) are in stable counties in Kenya, which have relatively well-functioning governance structures. However, in volatile areas such as Mayom County, the administrative measures are difficult to implement regularly as the regions are subjected to recurrent violence, displacement and ad hoc donor behavior. Similarly, Ndibaru and Ongwae

(2023) promote financial planning for sustainability, but it is not easy to implement in the South Sudan institutional environment where long-term planning is limited by the irregularity in funding cycles. The same is true of the studies conducted by Kivanguli (2019) and Kiambi and Njeri (2023), respectively, in Kenya's stable settings. In contrast, in South Sudan, CBOs experience unpredictable donor funding and insecurity, making flexible financial models appropriate for post-conflict settings (Olima, 2015). Therefore, the evidence found in stable contexts in Africa must be critically considered before it can be transferred as is.

Several studies provide insights that are more relevant to the South Sudanese context, notably on the funding issues CBOs face. Deng and Kuol (2022) agree that donor funding is inconsistent, which is impacting service delivery in counties, such as Mayom, but in a more general way. The work of Willitts-King *et al.* (2020) underscores the negative impacts of donor mistrust and limited funding sources on local autonomy and sustainability, particularly in fragile situations where other funding sources are limited. Likewise, Belaid *et al.* (2020) associate short-term, piecemeal funding with sub-optimal institutional learning and durable effects. This is consistent with the situation in South Sudan. In support of this, Save the Children International (2023) revealed that irregular disbursements hindered planning and implementation in the grassroots projects undertaken in South Sudan.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.

The conceptual framework shows that there is a direct relationship between independent variable (funding) and the Dependent Variable (performance of projects implemented by community-based organizations (CBOs)).

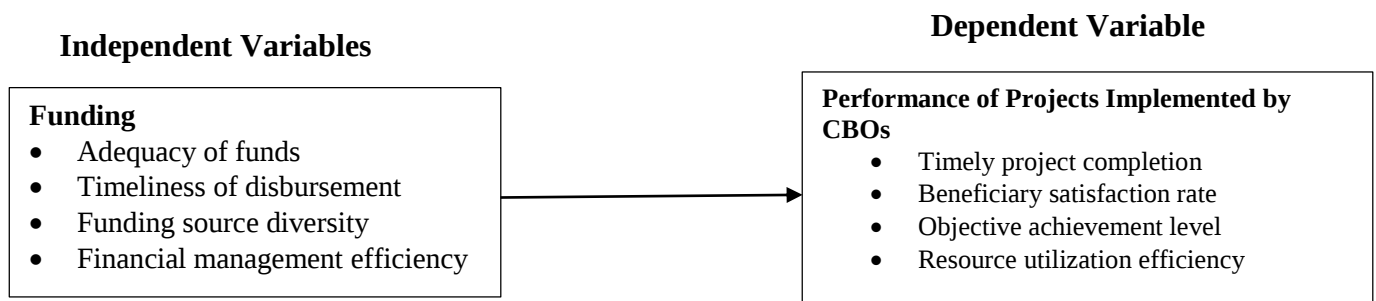


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: Author (2025)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design to examine the relationship between funding and the performance of projects implemented by Community Based Organizations in Mayom County, South Sudan. The study was conducted in Mayom County, Unity State, an area characterized by insecurity, displacement, food insecurity, seasonal flooding, and limited access to basic services. The target population comprised 51,745 individuals drawn from Coalition for Humanity, Rural Community Development Initiative, and Child's Destiny and Development Organization. These included 3 project managers, 99 operational staff, 51,625 community beneficiaries, and 18 local community leaders. The study focused on stakeholders who were directly involved in or affected by CBO implemented projects within the county.

structured questionnaires containing closed-ended questions, five-point Likert scale items, and multiple-choice questions, while qualitative data were collected from project managers and community leaders using semi-structured interview guides. The instruments were reviewed by three experts for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the conceptual framework, while piloting resulted in minor wording and formatting adjustments. Reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, while qualitative data were transcribed and analyzed thematically using NVivo. Both inductive and deductive approaches were applied in developing themes. Data collection commenced after ethical clearance from St. Paul's University and authorization from the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission in South Sudan.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Response Rate

The researcher tried to find out the responses of the respondents to the research instruments. Table 1 presents data on the questionnaires filled out and returned by the respondents. The percentage of the 300 questionnaires filled out of the 320 sent to the respondents was acceptable, with 7 questionnaires being incorrectly filled out, 13 were non-responsive, and 300 were filled out satisfactorily. Furthermore, out of the 79 projects recommended by Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), a 50% return rate is adequate for analysis and reporting, while Kothari (2012) recommends a 60% rate as sufficient.

Table 1: Response Rate

Sample Size	Valid Responses	Response Rate (%)
396	300	75.7
79	70	88.6

Source: Author, (2025)

3.2 Funding and Project Performance

In fragile and conflict situations, the ability to carry out community-based organization (CBO) projects successfully and sustainably is highly dependent on funding. Timely funding allows for good planning, execution, and monitoring, and when funding is inconsistent or inadequate, it can lead to delays, limited scope, and poor quality. Therefore, cross-tabulation results for project funding and performance of CBO-led projects presented below in Table 2 provide insights on project funding and performance.

Table 2: Percent distribution of respondents according to their view on funding and project performance.

Funding Indicator	Response	Completed on Time (%)	Not Completed on Time (%)	<i>p</i> value	Decision
Funding received on time	No	19.2	80.8	.340	Not significant
	Yes	29.5	70.5		
Funds adequate for all project activities	No	22.2	77.8	.694	Not significant
	Yes	26.9	73.1		
Funding delays caused implementation delays	No	36.8	63.2	.194	Not significant
	Yes	21.6	78.4		
Funding sources reliable and predictable	No	22.7	77.3	.699	Not significant
	Yes	27.1	72.9		
Financial flexibility to reallocate funds	No	16.7	83.3	.211	Not significant
	Yes	30.4	69.6		
Funding gaps caused outputs to be scaled down	No	30.4	69.6	.527	Not significant
	Yes	23.4	76.6		
Donors responsive to changing funding needs	No	25.0	75.0	.921	Not significant
	Yes	26.1	73.9		
Financial reports produced and shared	No	20.0	80.0	.489	Not significant
	Yes	28.0	72.0		

Source: Author (2025).

Statistical vs. Contextual Significance.

The analysis of the connection between funding and project performance shows a complicated and nuanced pattern which is not linear or direct in a statistical sense, but is contextually embedded. All the *p*-values for the different funding-related variables analyzed are above 0.05, so none of them are considered statistically significant. At first glance, this seems to imply that project completion timelines are not directly influenced by the appropriateness and responsiveness of

funding timeliness, adequacy, reliability, and flexibility. But when taken with the qualitative evidence and literature available, a more compelling and coherent explanation can be drawn.

The proportion of projects that have been completed in a timely fashion is higher for projects implemented by organizations that reported on-time funding (29.5%) than for projects not receiving funds on time (19.2%). On the other hand, 80.8% of the projects that experienced delayed funding were not finished on time. This association is not statistically significant ($p = 0.340$), but in the expected direction based on project management theory. Qualitative responses reinforce this pattern strongly, as funding issues are clearly and distinctly mentioned. One respondent reported that “funding accessibility has been insufficient and unreliable, inadequate and inflexible,” and another one reported, “Funding has been inadequate, inadequate and lacks flexibility for the projects implemented by the CBOs in Mayom County.” These verbatim reports indicate that late and limited funding is occurring regularly as an operating issue, reducing variability among projects and potentially weakening the ability to statistically detect the issue.

Likewise, projects reported as being adequately funded performed slightly better (26.9% on time) than projects with inadequate funding (22.2%), and more than 70% of projects in both funding categories were reported as delayed ($p = 0.694$). This is complemented by some qualitative responses. Receiving adequate funding was a persistent problem, as was the challenge of insufficient funding and project funding that is not flexible for project implementation. This is why there is no correlation at all between what is considered adequate funding and significantly better project timelines: the basic funding level for projects is still structurally limited.

The greatest contrast in descriptions was for funding delays and implementation disruptions. The proportion of projects that experienced funding delays in the past year was slightly higher for those that were late (78.4%) than for those that were not (63.2%), but the difference was not statistically significant ($p = 0.194$). This was also directly reiterated in the qualitative stories about funding, which indicated that delays are not uncommon and are accepted as a fact of life. Within this environment, organizations can plan and implement to buffer against the risk of funding changes, which can diminish the statistical impact of delays on performance.

CONCLUSION

The study found that funding was a necessary but not statistically significant factor related to project performance for Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in Mayom County.

Descriptively, projects that got their funding on time, had sufficient resources, and were sustained with reliable and flexible funding sources invariably demonstrated marginally improved completion performance compared to those with funding constraints. But no donor indicator was found to be statistically significantly associated with project completion within the planned timeframe in all indicators from the donor side, including: timeliness, adequacy, predictability, flexibility, donor responsiveness, funding gaps, and financial reporting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that development partners and donors should provide CBOs in Mayom County with more predictable and flexible funding arrangements rather than relying mainly on short term financing. Funding should be released in a timely manner and with sufficient flexibility to allow CBOs to adjust budgets when emergencies or unexpected implementation challenges arise. Such arrangements should strengthen project continuity, improve planning, and reduce disruptions associated with delayed or inadequate funding in the fragile operating environment of Mayom County. Community Based Organizations should also strengthen their internal financial management and governance systems to improve the effective utilization of available resources. They should maintain clear financial records, prepare regular financial reports, and share relevant accountability information with donors and other stakeholders. Stronger financial controls and transparent reporting should help build donor confidence, enhance accountability, and improve the ability of CBOs to manage limited resources efficiently while supporting better project implementation and sustainability.

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