



# Grievance Management and Project Performance: A case of the Second Kampala Institutional and Infrastructure Development Project

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## ABSTRACT

The study examined the influence of grievance management on the performance of World Bank Funded Projects taking a case of the Second Kampala Institutional and Infrastructure Development Project (KIIDP 2) of Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), Uganda. Specifically, the study established the effect of grievance identification, investigation and resolution on the performance on KIIDP 2. The study adopted a mixed cross-sectional survey research design, and data collected from a sample of 103 respondents using questionnaires and interviews. Findings revealed that grievance management in areas of (identification, investigation and resolution) had a positive significant influence on performance of KIIDP 2 of KCCA, Uganda. The study recommended first, that KCCA, together with her contractors, to build staff capacity on grievance redress, put an end to grievance book for registration and widely adopt to automated, ICT-based grievance registration and record-keeping mechanism. Secondly, KCCA should put in place grievance management committees in time, right at the start of all donor funded projects.

**Key words:** Grievance management, Project performance, World Bank

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## I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

There is an increasing need to use projects for enhanced service delivery in both the public and the private sectors (Bergman et al., 2013). However, many projects fail to achieve the performance expectations to the chagrin of the project management team and stakeholders. That is why the determinants of project performance have attracted interest among management scholars. In the context of the World Bank-funded projects between 1990 and 2000, the project failure rate was 50% in Africa, and by 2010, an independent evaluation rated 39% of World Bank projects to have underperformed on the time, cost and quality expectations (Youker, 1999; Chauvet, et al., 2010; Ika, Diallo & Thuillier, 2012).

Earlier efforts to project management and performance had not focused on grievance management until after the 1980s. Grievance management arose from, and was justified by, endless delays that undermined the performance of donor-funded projects, and left project beneficiaries complaining. In Uganda, grievance management in public service projects has not been given much attention, mainly because, historically, most stakeholders had been neglected (Basheka 2015; Ntayi and Eyaa, 2010).

Conceptually, grievance management is defined as the management or handling of employee complaints or dissatisfaction through a formal grievance handling system. It is a strategy devised by the organisation to address any genuine or imaginary cause of dissatisfaction or injustice which an employee experiences about his or her job, including the organizational management policies and procedures as well as aspects of the external environment (Reiss, 2012; Caroline & Vermijs, 2017). The process of grievances management involves identification or receiving of complaints, investigation of grievances and addressing or resolving of grievances or complaints

The link between grievance management and project performance has theoretical foundations in the stakeholder engagement theory by Freeman (1984). This theory postulates that accomplishment of organizational deliverables highly relies on management of the relationships among organizational managers

and employees as well as the general citizenry that the organization serves, throughout the project life-cycle. This notion has been widely supported in empirical studies such as Leonald (2015). Consistently, a variety of empirical studies have linked project performance with grievance management (Hamilton, 2013; Bridgeman, Natalie and Hunter, 2008; Collier, 2017; Gross and Guerrero, 2010; Brewer, 2016; Nigam et al., 201; Potts, 2012; Schedler and Frida, 2017; Schedler and Friday, 2017; Winkler and Lynn, 2012 Rees, Caroline, and Vermijs, 2018, Khanaki & Hassan Zadeh, 2010; McDonald and John's, 2016; Rees, Caroline, and Vermijs, 2018; Kemp, et al., 2018; Kemp, et al., 2018; Folger, Poole and Stutman, 2015; Dalton, 2010; Elia, 2015). Although out interest is not to provide an intensive review of these studies, we generally note that the studies open insight into the significance of having appropriate grievance management characterized by a proper grievance identification process, investigation and resolution mechanisms to enhancing project performance or success. Consequently, the need for managing grievances towards enhancing project performance has gained prominence. The concept of project performance has been generally defined with reference to the timeliness of the achievement of project targets, the cost at which project targets are achieved, and the quality of the outputs, all relative to set timelines, costs and quality standards (Joshua, 2014; UN, 2004).

In contextual terms, this article not only seeks to expand the empirical debate on grievance management and project performance but also seeks to ascertain the linkage between these two variables in the context of the Kampala Institutional and Infrastructure Development Project-2 (KIIDP 2) that faces critical performance gaps. KIIDP 2 is implemented by KCCA with an aim to enhance the infrastructural and institutional capacity of KCCA to improve urban mobility in Kampala. The project targets the construction and upgrading of key roads, junctions and drainages in order to improve mobility in the city as well as a city addressing model and revaluation of properties. The project is funded by the World bank through the International Development Association (IDA) to the Government of Uganda.

Despite efforts to institutionalize grievance management by establishment of grievance management characterized by structures, role definition, complaint receipt and resolution procedure, project performance remain unsatisfactory. For instance, on value for money, whereas the project surpassed its targeted number of beneficiaries by 12% in the first 2 years, surpassed by 5% its targeted number of people within 500 meters of an all-season road, and had 9 in every 10 intended beneficiaries satisfied with all the project outputs, the project exceeded the planned time schedules by at least two months. In temporal, service delivery terms, Batch 1 construction projects exceeded the planned project time of 18 months by 7 months. In terms of quality, the road edge interfaces were eroded, and about half of the beneficiaries were dissatisfied with the drainage system. The Anecdotal Report (2018) attributed these weaknesses in project performance to a number of challenges, including the mechanisms employed in grievance management (KIIDP 2, MTE Report, 2018). This article therefore explores grievances management and addresses a key question of whether it affects performance of world projects taking a case of the KIIDP2. The article specifically address the following questions

- i) *What is the influence of grievance identification strategies on the performance of KIIDP 2 of KCCA, Uganda?*
- ii) *What is the influence of grievance investigation process on the performance of KIIDP 2 of KCCA, Uganda?*
- iii) *What is the influence of grievance resolution mechanisms on the performance of KIIDP 2 of KCCA, Uganda?*

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

This article leverages on empirical findings generated from stakeholders views on grievance management and performance of the KIIDP2 project. Specifically, a statistically representative sample of 53 KIIDP2 Grievance Redress Committee members and 43 project beneficiaries were randomly selected. These randomly selected responds completed a questionnaire that provided quantitative data that was subjected to regression analysis to test the hypothesis "*grievance management (identification strategies, investigation process and resolution mechanisms) significantly influences project performance*". As a matter of triangulation and in a bid to draw deeper insights into grievances management and performance of the KIIDP2 project, key informant interviews were conducted on 6 purposively selected top management officials. The emerging views of key informants were subjected to thematic analysis. Key emerging findings from analysis of the data are presented in the subsequent section.

## **III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

We first describe the stakeholders perspectives on grievance management at KIIDPs in terms of grience identification strategies, investigation process and resolution mechanisms before we dive into their implication to project performance in line with the key questions pursued in this article.

### 3.1 Grievance management at KIIDPs and performance of KIIDPs

KIIDP 2 KCCA has established grievance management committees, headed/chaired by a Mayor at the Division and the Director, Gender and Community Services at the Authority level. The Committees are responsible for receiving, investigating and resolving grievances from persons adversely affected by the road works and, to some extent, the construction workers. Complaints which are not resolved at the Division Committee level are forwarded to the Authority Committee. At the Authority level, the Committee consists of the Directors for Legal, Engineering and Technical services, Health and Environment, Physical Planning and Gender and Community Services as well as the Project Coordinator, KIIDP 2 as an Ex-official. This is the second stage for grievances redress, and should the Authority Committee fail to resolve a grievance, the (PAP) is advised to resort to the courts of law. A total of 256 workers during the month of August, 2017 were trained in aspects relating to worker rights, human rights, public consultation and sensitization, as well as grievance redress for workers.

The analysis of grievance identification strategies obtained key insights with regard to whether an aggrieved person had a to present a grievance, the reception given to the grievance, how well the assessment of social and environmental impacts was done, whether stakeholders were consulted on discrepancies in implementation of the project and the sharing information on project progress. Descriptive statistics and qualitative views of key informants revealed that all the aggrieved parties have a right to present their grievance to the Grievance Redress Committees. The Grievance Redress Committees welcomes all forms of grievance related to KIIDP 2. In addition, stakeholders were consulted to identify any form of discrepancies in the implementation of the project. Most of the information regarding the progress of the project is duly shared with the communities where the project is being implemented. Redress Committees endeavour to identify all aggrieved parties, even those who fear to complain. However, an assessment of social and environmental impacts was not clearly done to establish to remedy grievances that would emerge during KIIDP 2 implementation. To emphasize the gaps in assessment of social and environmental impacts, one of the key informants had this to say;

*“An environmental and social impact assessment was conducted at the beginning of the project through which the environmental impact assessment plan was developed. The plan helps in monitoring aspects such as air quality, pollution, and noise and ensure that during implementation, all the monitored aspects are maintained in the acceptable levels and do not have a negative impact on the community. Other aspects monitored include storm water monitoring and gas emission for instance when storm water flows into a resident’s property and causes damages, does the resident know where to report? If the noise produced by machines is too loud, do communities know that it’s a problem and it can be reported? It is during the engagement of community stakeholders that the procedures and channels of reporting of grievances are shared with the stakeholders. For example, during the implementation of batch 1 roads along Kiira Kabira road, one of restaurant business owner registered a grievance of loss of business due to the increased levels of dust and as a result of the civil works [A4G, “Not His real name”]*

Regarding grievance investigation, descriptive findings and qualitative views revealed that the grievance redress committees have clear systems that ease receiving of grievances. The committee had a clear system for recording grievances received. However, the committees were found to be composed of staff whose training and experience in social and environmental management is *wanting*. In addition, the Grievance Redress Committees of KIIDP 2 were found to lack a written procedure for handling grievances with no responsibilities assigned for each step as well as for management oversight. The grievance registration book, the Social Development Officer is in charge of receiving and registering grievance. The kind of information that is there is basically bio-data: name, date of birth, age, marital status, place of residence, next of kin, date of registration of the incident etc. There is also a provision where a complainant ticks when he or she is satisfied with the way his or her complaint has been handled and the case is closed. In addition when a complainant is dissatisfied, the grievance log provides a section where when a complainant is dissatisfied, the issue is referred to the next level. To affirm the issue of lack of a clear procedure of for grievance management, some key informant had this to say;

*“At this stage, I must be open to you that we do not have such a detailed written procedure or policy on management of grievances. Actually, it’s a good insight that both the contractor and KCCA as the client should think of and consider establishing one so as to ease the whole process and further offer clarity.....”* [A4G, “Not His real name”]

Further still, the committee lacked adequate funding to fulfil their obligations. There is no specific budget attached to grievance redress on the project. Like I mentioned earlier, the people that handle the redress of grievances are formally employed for other responsibilities and Grievance redress and management is just one of the other tasks that they have to perform.

Regarding grievance resolution, descriptive findings and qualitative views generally revealed that Grievance Redress Committees are very transparent when resolving grievances in relation to KIIDP 2. The committees are always accountable to all stakeholders when resolving grievances in relation to the project. In addition, there are appropriate remedies which always devised to address grievances and rarely do grievances in relation to KIIDP 2 proceed beyond Grievance Redress Committees to courts of law. There is a fair hearing of grievances at Grievance Redress Committees and the aggrieved are given a chance to be represented. The committees make interpretations and decisions in the presence of both the compliant and the accused, rendering the entire process of grievance management patently transparent. In affirmation, some respondent had this to say;

*“I would say it’s really transparent. First of all, the committee gives a chance to both the complainant and the accused to express themselves. Moreover, the committee is composed of representatives of local workers, foreign workers, and a translator for interpretation in the event of language barrier and gives an opportunity for the complainant or accused to ably be heard in a language that they are comfortable expressing themselves in. Also, after hearing from both parties, there are moments when the committee brings in both parties, for example, if the grievance is between a supervisor and his subordinate, you bring them both to the hearing after each of them has presented his side of the story and the committee is set to pronounce its verdict. In my opinion, this is evidence that the process is transparent.” [A2W, “Not Her real name”]*

However the critical gap in dispute resolution was the fact that KIIDP 2 project had a mechanism that prevents retribution and permits access to other remedies. In other words, according to the majority of these respondents, the project has no mechanisms for preventing vengeance on the part of an aggrieved party or for allowing an aggrieved party to seek redress from other sources, including courts of law. This was further shared an example of a court case by PAP during face – face interviews that;

*“You meet a Project Affected Person that says no, I don’t want the project works to extend into my property, I am not comfortable with you extending the road to this part, .....Particularly, right now on Kabusu-Bunamwaya Lweza Road, a one Ssenyonjo sued us Over trespass. As much as in the initial stages awareness and sensitization is done with relevant stakeholders, grievances such as this of trespass may sometimes not avoided, so there are always some people that hinder project works from continuing due to a number of reasons.” [TYR, “Not His real name”]*

### 3.2 Grievance management and performance of KIIDPs

A regression analysis model was estimated to determine the significance and magnitude of effect of grievance management and performance of KIIDPs. Table below presents the model results

**Table: Regression model results**

	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	p-value
(Constant)	.129	.391			
Grievance Identification Strategies	.296	.063	.395	4.686	.000
Grievance Investigation Process	.288	.073	.329	3.935	.000
Grievance Resolution Mechanism	.324	.068	.402	4.762	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Project Performance; Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>=0.355; F-statistic=18.279; Sig=0.000

**Source:** Primary Source (2020).

The coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) was 0.355 indicating that the fitted model with grievance identification strategies, grievance investigation process and grievances resolution mechanisms explained 35.5 % of the variation in KIIDPs. The analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results showed that the p-value for the F-statistic was 0.000 and less than 5% significance level implying that grievance management (identification strategies, grievance investigation process and grievances resolution mechanisms) had a significant effect on performance of KIIDPs.

Regarding magnitude of effect, the regression coefficient for the effect of grievance identification strategies on performance of KIIDPs was 0.395 and its respective probability value (p-value) was 0.000 which

was less than 5% significance level. This result indicated that having a proper grievance identification strategy would enhance performance of KIIDPs by 39.5%. On the other hand, the regression coefficient for the effect of grievance investigation process was 0.329 and its respective probability value (p-value) was 0.000 which was less than 5% significance level. This result indicated that having a good grievance investigation process would enhance performance of KIIDPs by 32.9%. Finally, the regression coefficient for the effect of grievance resolution mechanisms was 0.402, highest among three and statistically significant ( $p < 0.005$ ). Hence, having proper grievance resolution mechanisms would enhance performance of KIIDPs by 40.2%. The magnitude of coefficient underscores a much more influence of grievance resolution mechanisms on KIIDP performance than grievance identification strategies and grievance investigation process.

#### **IV. DISCUSSIONS**

The significance of grievance identification to performance of KIDDP is consistent with previous findings. For example, Bridgeman, Natalie and Hunter (2008) revealed that the poor performance of most road construction and maintenance projects was attributed to project managers being unaware of the grievances within and outside, leading to failure of these projects in terms of delays in completing the projects, poor quality of output, and excessive project costs. Moreover, Collier (2017) also established that, in Ghana, failure to receive grievances by grievance committees had ruined the overall goal of grievance management instituted by donor or implementing agencies, and this had adversely affected the overall goal of donor-funded projects. No wonder, Collier (2017), therefore, recommended that there was a need to institute a platform for transparently receiving grievances, and mechanisms for resolving them.

Similarly, Gross and Guerrero (2010) also found that effective identification of grievances in a project automatically enhances project performance. In the same vein, Brewer (2016) argues that registering grievances from the community is a very vital task in community development projects, that calls for willingness of management and decision-making departments to welcome as many ideas and opinions as they can. Perhaps more specifically, Nigam et al., (2011) and Potts (2012) also confirm that grievance identification significantly influences the performance of projects.

The effect of grievance investigation process to performance of KIDDP2 is also in tandem with finding of many other studies, such as those by Schedler and Friday (2017) whose study sought to establish why many donor-funded projects in Malaysia led them to recommend that it was necessary to adhere to the investigation process when addressing grievances within a project. In these authors' opinion, by adhering to established grievance investigation procedures, a project can obtain reliable data on the basis of which appropriate decisions, including those regarding resource allocation; can be made to enhance project performance. In the same study, Schedler and Friday (2017), also argued that prompt investigation of grievances is the basis for improved project performance in time and costs involved.

The same study finding on the association between grievance investigation and project performance also echoes the study by Winkler and Lynn (2012) which found that the performance of donor-funded projects largely depends on the existence and use of a proper system for identifying and registering grievances within each project. According to these authors, this is because grievances are inevitable and they permeate all projects. That is why the same authors further argue that any successful donor-funded project must have a clear grievance investigation system in place. Similarly, Winkler and Lynn (2012) cite empirical testimony from World Bank (2014a) according to which all its projects in Myanmar had positively transformed the lives of citizens because they had proper and active grievance investigation systems through which community members' grievances were registered and managed. Similar findings were made by Rees, Caroline, and Vermijs (2018) and Khanaki & Hassan Zadeh (2010).

Finally, the significance of grievance resolution mechanisms to performance of the KIDDPs is also in agreement with findings of other studies such as McDonald and John's (2016) in the construction industry in South Africa. McDonald and John ascertained that although many project-implementing agencies institute grievance teams and give them budgets to do the work of grievance resolution, unless such teams are composed of competent and experienced members, they cannot deliver the expected outcomes. In the opinion of these two authors, grievance-hearing committees need to have members who are good at arbitration, negotiation and persuasion.

In the same vein, Rees, Caroline, and Vermijs (2018) contend that a competent team or hearing or resolution committee highly determines the ultimate costs and quality of a project. In this connection, Kemp, Deanna, and Nora Gotzmann (2018) also found that the degree of transparency in the process of resolving a grievance highly affects project performance in long run. For his part, Kemp, et al., (2018) argues that before a resolution or final verdict is given, it is important that the team considers all possible evidence. Similar grievance-resolution mechanisms were also recommended by Folger, Poole and Stutman (2015), Dalton (2010) and Elia (2015) as means of enhancing project performance.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

This article sought to determine the effect of grievance management ((identification strategies, investigation process and resolution mechanisms) on performance of KIDDPs. Based on the regression model results, the study concludes that grievance management significantly affect performance of KIDDPs. Findings from the study have provided further insights that although KCCA has put in place a dispute management system, some critical gaps still exist in identification, investigation and resolution of disputes which undermine effectiveness of dispute management in as far as improving performance of KIDDP2 projects is concerned.

Specifically, an assessment of social and environmental impacts is not clearly done to establish to remedy grievances that would emerge during KIIDP2 implementation. The expertise of grievance management committee members is wanting due to lack of adequate training and experience in social and environmental management is wanting. In addition, there is no written procedure for handling grievances and no responsibilities assigned for each step as well as for management oversight. In addition, when a complainant is dissatisfied, the grievance log provides a section where when a complainant is dissatisfied, the issue is referred to the next level. Finally, KIIDPs lack mechanisms for preventing vengeance on the part of an aggrieved party or for allowing an aggrieved party to seek redress from other sources, including courts of law

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper recommends the following:

First, that there is need to establish grievance management committees in time, right at the start of the project, because grievances arise very early in the project cycle, and the committees must be composed of people who are good at arbitration, negotiation and persuasion.

It is recommended that besides the existing Social Development Officer that receives and registers grievances, the authorities should also have a full-time and well-trained grievance management officer for the project, capable of devoting all his/her work time to receiving and managing conflicts; and the same officer should be given special funding to facilitate his/her operations.

KCCA together with her contractors should build staff capacity on grievance redress, and replace the current methods of registering grievances and keeping grievance-management records manually in a book, with a computerized grievance-registration and record-keeping system.

The grievance-management committee is also encouraged to quickly identify, investigate and provide balanced remedies where necessary to the aggrieved so as to reduce the time wastage in courts of law when PAPs are seeking legal remedies.

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