

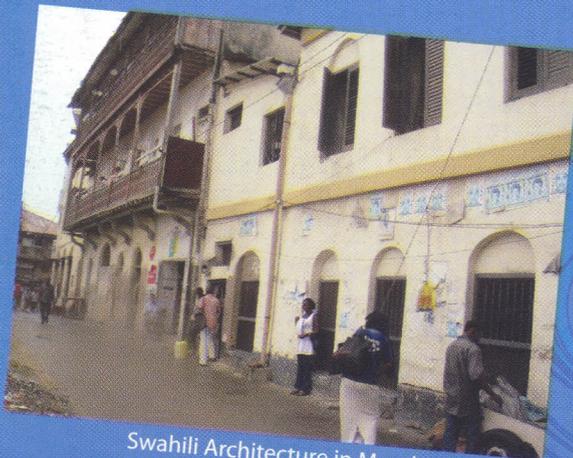
Encroachment of the Nairobi River Riparian Zone by Physical Developments



Residential Estates in Nairobi



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# Africa

## HABITAT

### REVIEW 6 (2012)

## Architecture and Urbanism in East Africa

Journal of School of the Built Environment, University of Nairobi

## An Analysis of the Causes of Failures in the Implementation of Projects in Kenya

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Received on 7<sup>th</sup> August, 2010; received in revised form 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2012; accepted on 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2012.

### Abstract

*Project implementation is the actualization of the sequences of activities that are designed to achieve the aims of the project. It is the phase in which the project deliverables are physically built and delivered to the customer. When the implemented project does not operate or deliver within the specified parameters, failure is said to occur within the system. This paper investigates the causes of failure in the implementation of health, roads and power projects in three planning regions within the Republic of Kenya. Data collected from the field related to starting and completion due dates, levels of resource utilization, stakeholder participation, level of financial and physical implementation, authority hierarchy, causes of failure and possible solutions to the observed causes of failure. The study found that only 20.8 per cent of the projects were implemented on time and budget, while 79.2 per cent of all the projects exhibited some degree of failure. Further, the managerial positions of the implementing agents were found to be heavily overburdened by too many bureaucratic positions which do not enhance authority delegation. The major causes of failure were found to include insufficient implementing capacity, poor project management, weak project design and political interference. Solutions to the identified causes of failure include adaption of capacity enhancing practices and good governance principles.*

**Key words:** project, implementation, project management, failure

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### INTRODUCTION

A project may be defined in terms of its distinctive characteristics. Every project has a definite beginning and end point. Thus, it is a temporary endeavor bound by time, budget, resources and specifications.

According to Stevenson (2007), a project is a non-repetitive set of activities, directed towards a unique set of goals, with a limited time-frame. In general, project implementation is a sequential multi-stage process, with various phases which are inter-linked by feedback loops.

The aim of implementation is to actualize the physical and non-physical elements of the project, thus satisfying the customers' needs. Implementation is guided by a set of project plans which have been created at the project conception and planning stage (Figure 1).

### THEORY

#### The Project Implementation Process

Project conception and planning constitutes the phase, during which an idea emerges, as one tries to solve some specific problem. To get the desired solutions, one may decide to do so via the implementation of the formulated plans. Deliverables are the expected outputs over the life-cycle of the project. They are selected and specified in Figure 1. Scheduling is the process of laying out the actual activities in the time order in which they are to be performed. In phase three, the project resources which may be in the form of funds, manpower management talents or technological skills are allocated and the project is executed.

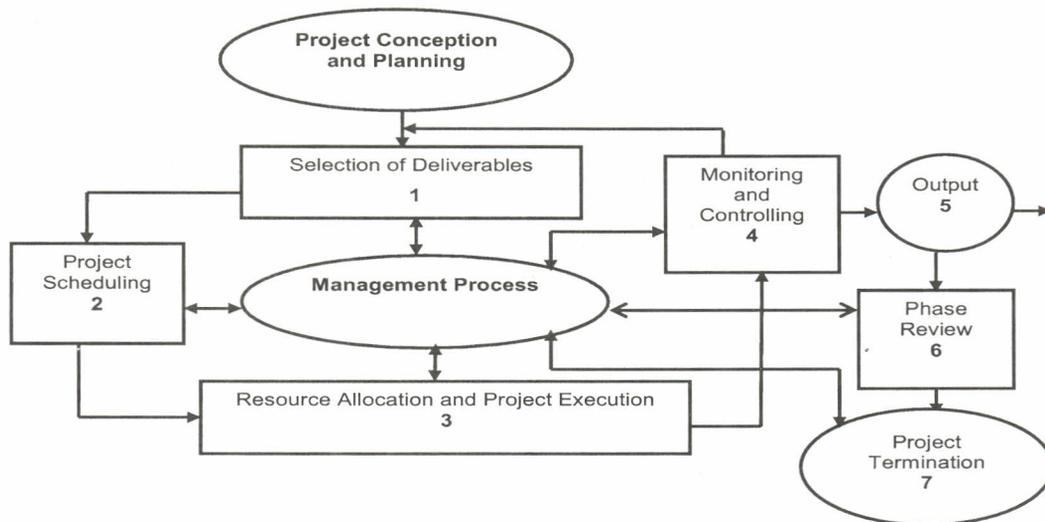
Monitoring and controlling are processes that assess the activities, to ensure that they are being accomplished as planned and any significant deviations from the chosen

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route are corrected (Figure1). It is immediately after this phase that the defined outputs from the project are delivered to the customer.

Phase review is a check process that assesses whether the project has achieved its stated objectives. If it has, then the project can proceed. The entire implementation

process is performed within a management environment that addresses the factors of time, cost, manpower, materials and risks. The feedback loops are installed so that revision updating, accommodation and shifting of resources can be effected. A successful implementation is achieved when all the phases have been effected through\*the most cost-effective manner.



**FIGURE 1**  
 The process of project implementation  
 Source: Westland 2007

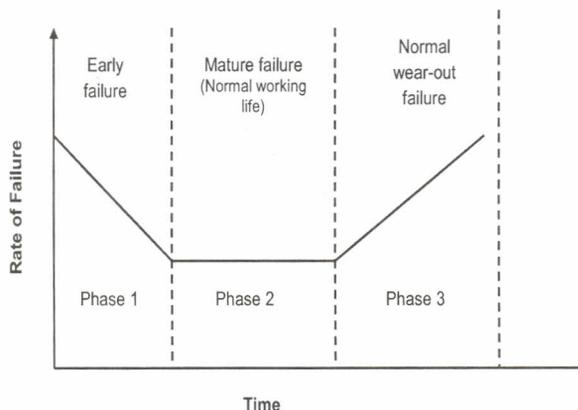
**Failure in the Implementation process**

Failure refers to a situation when a working system or component is not operating at all, or when operation and output are below optimal capacity. It occurs when the vision and mission of the project have not been satisfactorily fulfilled. Panneerselvan (2006) presents the general failure-rate model for any operating system as in the Bath-Tub function shown in Figure 2.

In phase one of the Bath-Tub model, there is the likelihood of the presence of failure due to unfamiliarity with system components, design defects, misfits during system assembly, friction between moving parts, operator induced failures and inexperience on the part of the operator.

In phase two, the weaknesses of phase one will have been isolated and rectified. Thus, the system will be up and running normally in the mature operational phase, reliability will be established and the phase with low constant-failure rate reached. Towards the end of the life-cycle of the project, wear-out due to ageing creeps in and failure-rate increases. It is at this phase where frequent corrective maintenance activities are needed

before the system reaches the stage of termination. As can be seen in Figure 1, the project implementation process is a feed-back system and is therefore subject to the failure model indicated by the Bath-Tub model in Figure 2. A weakness or failure in one phase, component or element can induce failure in one of more components within the rest of the system.



**FIGURE 2**  
 Bath-Tub Failure Function  
 Source: Panneerselvan 2006