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**EFFECTIVENESS OF FEEDBACK MECHANISMS IN CDAs
OFFICES AND YOUTH GROUPS:A CASE STUDY OF NYERI
TOWN CONSTITUENCY YOUTH ENTERPRISE SCHEME (C-
YES), KENYA**

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to establish the effectiveness of Feedback mechanisms in CDAs offices and Youth Groups.

Methodology: A descriptive survey research design was used. Questionnaires were used to collect data. A population of 260 respondents was chosen, consisting of 200 youth groups and 60 CDAs. A sample size of 50% was chosen. The sample was 130 individuals divided into 100 youth groups and 30 CDAs. The tool for analysis was S.P.S.S; a Windows based statistical Package for social science. Presentation of the findings was done in tabulated and graphical formats.

Results: Findings indicated that the feedback mechanisms between youth groups and CDAs are not effective and this may have a bearing on the successful disbursement of youth funds. This conclusion was reached because both groups disagreed acknowledging the receipt of letters, emails, replying of emails, returning calls left on voice mail and confirmation of attendance or non- attendance to organized meetings.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Following study results, it was recommended that the stakeholders ensure that both groups have feedback mechanisms that will ensure that there are effective communication channels. The groups should agree on the channels of communication to use for example if they prefer emails, telephone, SMS and social media.

Keywords: *Feedback mechanisms, CDAs offices and Youth Groups.*

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Scholars in the communication field have defined communication differently. The term Communication has been derived from the Latin word “Communis”, meaning to share. Rao(1966) defines it as “a social process-the flow of information, the circulation of knowledge and ideas in human society, the propagation and internalization of thoughts”.

Communication requires a sender, a message, and an intended recipient, although the receiver need not be present or aware of the sender's intent to communicate at the time of communication. Thus, communication can occur across vast distances in time and space. Feedback is critical to effective communication between parties.

To put this into the perspective of the topic of this research undertaking, i.e. the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms between CDAs and Youth Groups: A case study of Nyeri town constituency Youth Enterprise Scheme (C-Yes), there must be interaction between the CDAs and youth groups, both exchanging progressive ideas on how best to utilize the fund. In other words, the communication channels used by CDAs must reflect Nyeri town constituency youth communication perspective and provide for feedback from the youth.

Feedback is a process in which information about the past or the present influences the same phenomenon in the present or future. As part of a chain of cause-and-effect that forms a circuit or loop, the event is said to "feedback" into itself. Ramaprasad (1983) defines feedback generally as "information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way", emphasizing that the information by itself is not feedback unless translated into action. Feedback mechanism - the action or means used to subsequently modify the gap, feedback loop - the complete causal path that leads from the initial detection of the gap to the subsequent modification of the gap.

Feedback mechanisms provide organizations with data and perceptions from primary stakeholders about the quality and effectiveness of their efforts. An ideal feedback process involves the gathering of feedback and the communication of a response, which forms a 'feedback loop.' However, the language and terminology used to describe feedback systems in international assistance organizations varies, and few organizational reports and websites explicitly refer to feedback mechanisms or feedback loops.

The Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) was started by the Government of Kenya in June 2006 as one of the various strategies to address unemployment among the youth. The official launch of the fund was done in February 2007. The Fund was then transformed into a state corporation in May, 2007. It was greeted with optimism by the youth, especially the jobless and those struggling with small enterprises.

The Youth Enterprise Development Fund was conceived as a strategic move towards arresting unemployment which is virtually a youth problem. The Fund targets all forms of youth owned enterprises, whether owned individually, as a company, in groups, in cooperatives or any other legal forms of business ownership; Seventy five percent (75%) of those unemployed are the youth. The Government of Kenya set aside one billion shillings to roll out this initiative (www.yedf.go.ke).

The Fund was gazetted on 8th December 2006 to provide the necessary legal framework to govern its use and operations. The Fund facilitates youth employment through enterprise development and structured labour export. The 11-member Advisory Board of the Fund was gazetted on 31st January 2007 and is 60 percent private sector dominated.

The Youth Enterprise Fund was officially launched on 1st February 2007 by President Mwai Kibaki. This launch marked the beginning of the Fund disbursement process to the Youth enterprises through financial intermediaries and the Constituency Enterprise Scheme (www.yedf.go.ke).

However, since the Fund was established on the eve of an election year, there were those who thought it was a political gimmick to influence voting patterns. Thus there were cases of youth

withdrawing their applications when they learnt that they had to repay any loan advanced to them.

The Fund's vision is to have a sustainable and growing fund, economically empowering Kenyan Youth while its mission is to increase economic opportunities for, and participation by Kenyan Youth, through enterprise development and strategic partnerships.

The Fund is mandated to provide loans to existing micro-finance institutions (MFIs), registered non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in micro financing, and savings and credit co-operative organizations (SACCOs) for on-lending to youth enterprises. The Fund facilitates investment in micro, small and medium enterprises oriented commercial infrastructure such as business or industrial parks, markets or business incubators that will be beneficial to youth enterprises.

The YEDF is mandated to perform the following functions: Provide funding and business development services to youth owned or youth focused enterprises; Provide incentives to commercial banks through appropriate risk mitigation instruments to enable them increase leading and financial services to youth enterprises; Provide loans to existing micro-finance institutions, registered non-governmental organizations involved in micro financing, and savings and credit co-operative organizations for on-lending to youth enterprises; Attract and facilitate investment in micro, small and medium enterprises to develop linkages with large enterprises; Facilitate marketing of products and services of youth owned enterprises in both domestic and international markets; Facilitate employment of youth in the international labour market; and Carry out any other activities relevant to its principal mandate. Source: (www.yedf.go.ke)

According to the Ministry of Youth Affairs report during the Fund's 5th anniversary in 2012, to date, the Fund has advanced loans worth 5.96 billion shillings to 157,538 youth enterprises. Out of the amount, 614.8 million shillings has been advanced to 13,341 group projects while 66.1 million shillings. Without casting aspersions on the Government, there is always a tendency to exaggerate the effectiveness of state achievements on monetary expenditure and hence the motivation to carry out this research undertaking to establish the actual state on the ground.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The important role of communication has been demonstrated in many instances in the history of mankind. The mythical story of the tower of Babel is used in many different contexts. It is a story that demonstrates human folly as far as communication is concerned. In the biblical story, the builders of the Tower of Babel failed in their mission of building the tower because of poor communication. Therefore, stating that communication plays a pivotal role in sensitizing people on opportunities or threats within their social, political, economic and cultural environment is belaboring the point.

The problem is that the youth enterprise fund seems to have missed the wisdom of good communication as indicated by the various challenges the youth groups are facing in accessing the youth funds. The Youth Development Fund Status Report (2009) has highlighted that the absorption and uptake rate of youth funds especially in areas with poor financial infrastructure. Maro (2011) asserts that a cross section of youths in Mombasa cited unemployment and inability to access social and economic programs such as the Youth Enterprise Development Fund as some of the issues that continue to frustrate them. The youths cited bureaucracy in the process of

applying for loans and stringent conditions which were making it difficult for the youths to access the loans from the fund. Gudda and Ngoze (2011) assert that North Eastern, have recorded relatively low uptake of loans through financial intermediaries. The main reason has been lack of adequate coverage by small Enterprise Oriented Financial institutions and lack of awareness of the products that are available. Njoroge (2011) argues that some regions such as North Eastern, parts of Rift Valley and Coast Province where loan uptake is still low.

However, the reviewed studies by Njoroge (2011), Gudda and Ngoze (2011), The Youth Development Fund Status Report (2009), Maro (2011) failed to address the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms in CDAs offices and Youth groups. The failure to address the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms forms the research gap of this study. This study hypothetically argues that the low uptake of youth funds is due to poor communication. It is with this in mind that the study attempts to assess the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms in CDAs and Youth groups.

1.3 Research Objective

The objective of this study was to establish the effectiveness of the feedback mechanism used by CDAs offices and Youth groups.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Uses and Gratification Theory

The first theory that the study was based on is “Uses and Gratification Theory” which is associated with two communication scholars, namely: Blumler and Katz. This is because the target group beneficiaries of the youth enterprise development Fund, the youth, should be pricked by their needs or wants to seek information on how to improve their economic standing.

The theory takes a more psychological approach to looking at media use. Blumler and Katz believe that there is not merely one way that the populace uses media. Instead, they believe there are as many reasons for using the media, as there are media users.

According to the theory, media consumers have a free will to decide how they will use the media and how it will affect them. Blumler and Katz values are clearly seen by the fact that they believe that media consumers can choose the influence media has on them as well as the idea that users choose media alternatives merely as a means to an end. Uses and Gratification Theory is the optimist’s view of the media. The theory takes out the possibility that the media can have an unconscious influence over our lives and how we view the world.

Uses and Gratification theory attempts to explain why people use the mass media. The theory further attempts to explain the uses and functions of the media for individuals, groups, and society in general. At the core of Uses and Gratification Theory lies the assumption that audience members (in this case the youth), actively seek out the mass media to satisfy individual needs.

Users and gratification theory adopts a psychological perspective as opposed to a mechanistic perspective of looking at media. The Psychological perspective looks at the media and media messages as a source of influence within the context of other influences. The media consumers are not passive but active and most importantly this perspective underscores the role of social

and psychological elements in mitigating the mechanistic effects. In this case the media does not just affect an audience member; rather, the audience member makes use of the media and media messages depending on their social or psychological disposition. According to Rubin (2002) the social and the psychological environment constrain the media messages. This perspective looks at U&G as a psychological communication paradigm that assesses how media users use the media rather than the direct effect the media has on the users (Rubin 2009).

Another strand of the users and gratification relates to the functional approach. The functional approach is anchored on Katz's (1959) premise that the media messages cannot influence a person who has no use for it. It was further reinforced by Klapper (1963) who noted that much of the research that sought to find out whether some effects of the media do or do not occur yielded few clear-cut answers. Within this perspective, a number of scholars have noted functional uses of the media messages and their gratifications. Horton and Wohl (1956) found out that television provided viewers with a sense of parasocial relationship with media personalities. Early studies by Lazarsfield and Merton (1948), point out that the media conferred status and ethicized its viewers.

The psychological and functional approaches/perspectives have yielded a number of researches that have attempted to determine the gratifications sought and obtained from the media messages. According to Miller (2005), the determination of these gratifications has led to development of typologies of gratifications as tabulated below.

Katz et al. (1974) developed the typology of helpfulness which broadly falls within the broader personal identity typology as seen above. According to him, the media strengthened the understanding of self, friends or others and even the society. It also helped strengthen the status of individuals within the society. So, the prime question is, what use and gratification does the youth derive from media in relation to information on youth funds.

Table 1: Typology of gratifications sought and obtained from media. Reprinted from Miller (2005).

Gratification category	Examples
Information	Finding about relevant events in immediate surroundings, society, and world; Satisfying curiosity and general interest; Learning, self-education; Gaining a sense of security through knowledge.
Personal identity	Finding reinforcement for personal values; Finding models of behavior; Identifying with valued others (in the media); Gaining insight into one's self.
Integration and Social interaction	Gaining insights into circumstances of others' empathy; Having a substitute for real-life companionship; Helping to carry out social roles; Enabling one to connect with family, friends, and society.
Entertainment	Escaping, or being diverted from problems; Relaxing; Getting intrinsic cultural or aesthetic enjoyment; Filling time; Emotional release.

2.2 Empirical Review

CDA (2011) conducted study on feedback mechanisms in international assistance organizations and concluded that Feedback mechanisms provide organizations with data and perceptions from primary stakeholders about the quality and effectiveness of their efforts. An ideal feedback process involves the gathering of feedback and the communication of a response, which forms a 'feedback loop.' However, the language and terminology used to describe feedback systems in international assistance organizations varies, and few organizational reports and websites explicitly refer to feedback mechanisms or feedback loops. Likewise, in e-mail correspondence and phone conversations, many staff of aid organizations did not necessarily use this term. Instead, most reported on and described various processes and mechanisms that they utilize to solicit opinions and feedback from recipients of aid about their work, including: participatory methods and processes for assessments, program design, monitoring and evaluation; real-time evaluations; accountability frameworks and mechanisms; complaints and response mechanisms; listening exercises; perceptions studies; social audits; social performance management systems; community score cards; citizen report cards; constituency feedback, story-telling, and others.

Agencies also use different terms to describe those whom they are seeking feedback from, including: recipients, beneficiaries, participants, primary and/or affected stakeholders, affected populations, clients, constituents, partners, rights holders, customers, disaster-affected people, and primary change agents, among others.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey research design was used. A questionnaire was used to collect data. A majority of the questions were closed ended and a few were open-ended. A population of 260 respondents was chosen, consisting of 200 youth groups and 60 CDAs. A sample size of 50% was chosen. The sample was 130 individuals divided into 100 youth groups and 30 CDAs. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The tool for analysis was S.P.S.S; a Windows based statistical Package for social science. Presentation of the findings was done in tabulated and graphical formats.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Response rate

Table 2 shows the response rate results for the study.

Table 2: Response Rate

	Successful	Unsuccessful	Total
Youth group leader	60-60%	40-40%	100
Community Development Assistant	20-67%	10-33%	30
Total	80-62%	50-38%	130

Table 2 reveals that a total of 60 (60%) of questionnaires from the youth group leader category were returned while 40(40%) questionnaires from the same category were not returned. Meanwhile, a total of 20 (67%) of questionnaires from the community development assistant category were returned while 10(33%) questionnaires from the same category were not returned. An overall response rate for the two categories was 62%. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response rate of more than 50% is adequate for analysis. Babbie (2004) also asserted that return rates of 50% are acceptable to analyze and publish, 60% is good and 70% is very good. The achieved response rate was almost 62% which implies that the response rate was good.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The study also sought to find out the demographic characteristics of the youth group leaders and the community development assistants.

4.2.1. Gender of Respondents

The study sought to establish the gender of the respondents. Figure 1 presents the results.

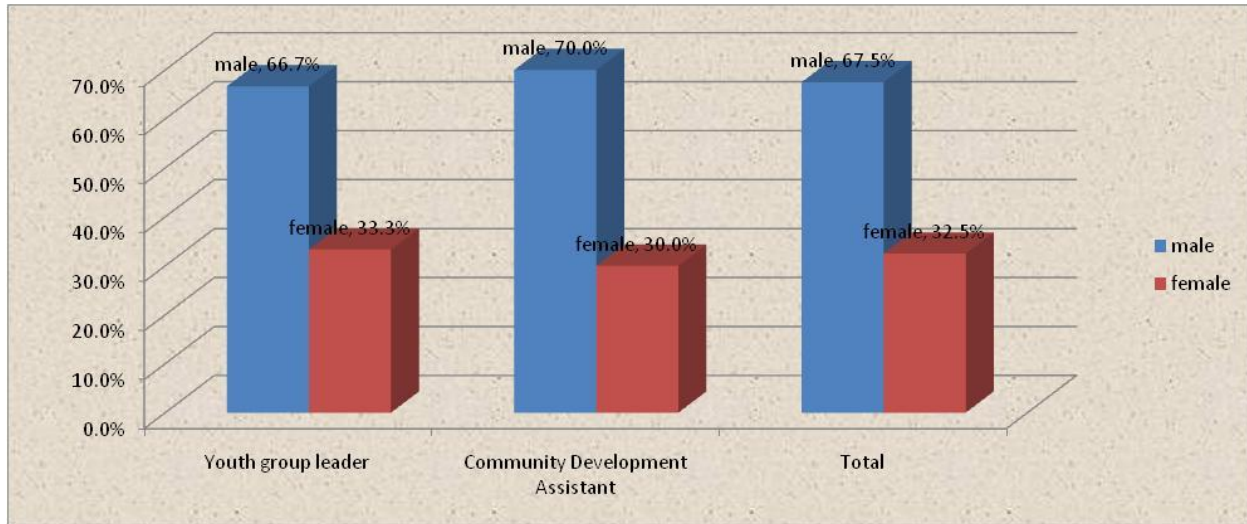


Figure 1: Gender of the Respondents

Figure 1 indicates that the majority (67.7%) of respondents from the youth group leaders' category were male while a further (33.3%) were female. Furthermore, the majority (70%) of respondents from the community development assistant were male, while (30%) were female. Overall, the majority (67.5%) of respondents were male while 32.5% were female. The finding reveals that although the constitutional gender balance of 1/3 is being observed, females are less likely to join youth groups. In addition, the results imply that females are less likely to be employed as community development assistants compared to males.

4.2.2 Age of Respondent

The study sought to establish the age of respondents. Results are as shown in table 3. Cross tabulation results in table 3 reveal that the majority (67%) of youth group leaders were 18 to 30 years of age. In addition, (33%) of youth group leaders were aged 31 to 35 years. Meanwhile, the majority (65%) of respondents in the community development assistant category were above 35 years of age, while a further (35%) of community development assistants were of 31 to 35 years of age. Overall, the majority (50%) of respondents from both categories were 18 to 30 years of age. Meanwhile (34%) were 31 to 35 years of age and a further (16%) were above 35 years of age. The findings indicate that the community development assistants (CDAs) are not youths and this may have an influence on the communication effectiveness between CDAs and youth group leaders.

Table 3: Age of Respondents

Category of respondent	18 to 30 yrs	31 to 35yrs	Above 35yrs	Total
Youth group leaders	40-67%	20-33%	0-0%	60
Community Development Assistant	0-0%	7-35%	13-65%	20
Total	40-50%	27-34%	13-16%	80

4.2.3 Education Level of Respondents

The study sought to establish the education level of respondents. Results are as shown in figure 2.

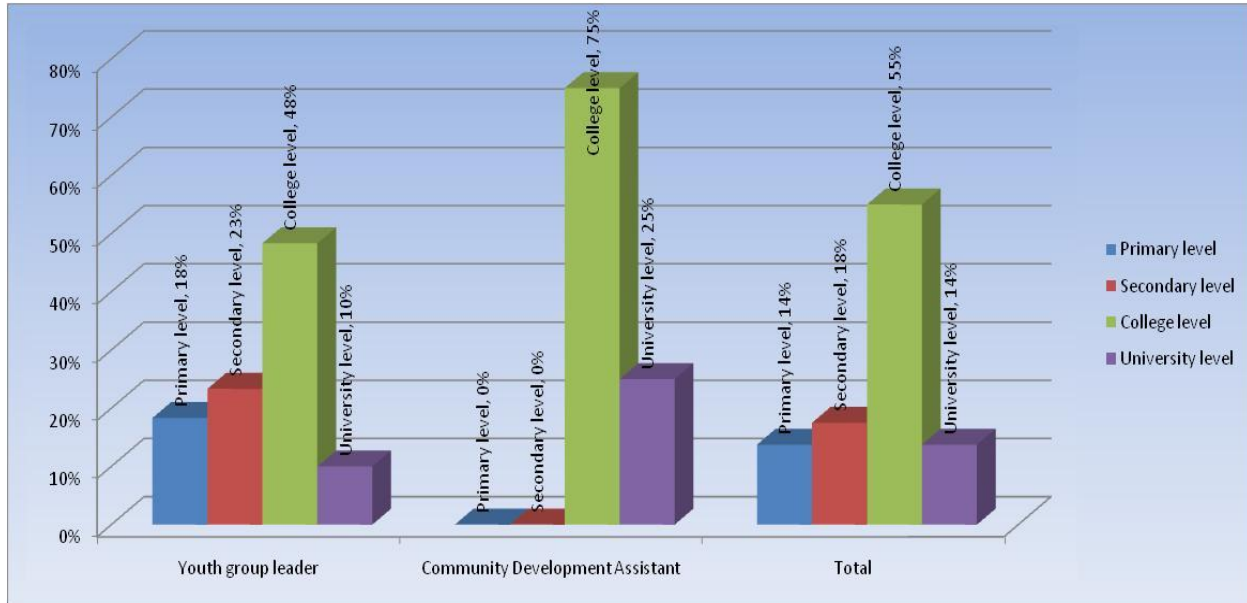


Figure 2: Education Level of Respondents

Results in figure 2 show that (48%) of respondents in the youth group leaders’ category had college level of education. Meanwhile, 10% of youth group leaders had university level of education bringing to a total (58%) of youth group leaders with college and university education. Meanwhile, (75%) of community development assistants had college level of education while a further 25% had university level of education, bringing to a total (100%) of CDA with college and university education. Overall, the majority (55%) of respondents in both categories had college level of education, (14%) had university level of education, (18%) had secondary level of education while a further 14% had primary level of education. The findings imply that both youth group leaders and CDAs are well educated and this may have an influence on the effectiveness of communication, however, one cannot tell whether the youth group members are also as educated as their leaders.

4.2.4 Group Size

The study sought to establish the group size. Findings are shown in figure3.



Figure 3: Group Size

Findings in figure 3 indicate that a majority (62%) of youth group leaders indicated that their groups had more than 31 members. Meanwhile, (18%) indicated that their groups had less than 10 members, (13%) had 21 to 30 members and (7%) had 11 to 20 members. The size of the group may have a bearing on the effectiveness of communication and it is expected that smaller groups experience more effective communication compared to larger groups.

4.2.5 Period of Operation

The study sought to establish the period of operation of the youth groups. Findings are as shown in figure 4. Findings in figure 4 indicate that (43%) had been in operation for over 5 years. Meanwhile, 34% had been in operation for 3 to 5 years while 23% have been in operation for less than 2 years. The findings imply that youth groups have been in operation for a considerable length of time and this may have influenced the effectiveness of communication.

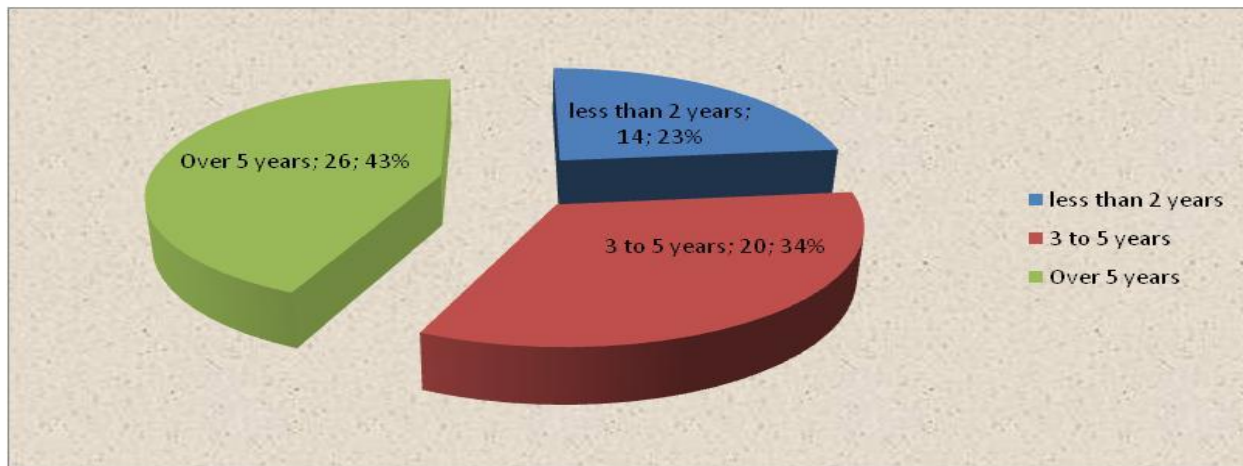


Figure 4: Period of Operation

4.2.6 Legal Status

The study sought to establish the legal status of the groups. Findings are shown in figure 5.

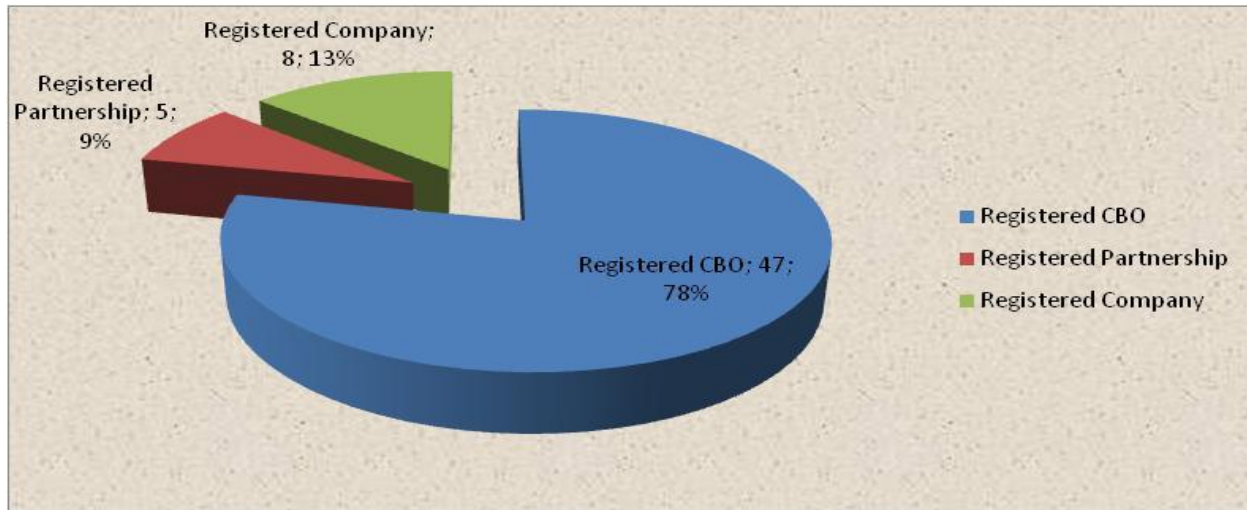


Figure 5: Legal Status of Group

Findings in figure 5 indicate that a majority (78%) of youth groups are registered as community based organizations CBOs. Meanwhile, 13% are registered companies while a further 9% are registered partnerships. The legal status may have a bearing on the effectiveness of communication with companies showing more effective communication compared to CBOs and partnerships.

4.3 Feedback Mechanisms

The study sought to find out the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms taking into consideration by the youth group leaders and the community development assistant. Results in table 4 indicate that Youth group leaders disagreed (mean score of 2.35) that CDAs acknowledged receipt of letters while CDAs also disagreed (mean score of 2.20) with the statement youth group leaders acknowledged receipt of letters. The finding implies that feedback from CDAs to youth group and from youth group to CDA is not effective.

Youth group leaders disagreed (mean score of 2.20) that CDAs acknowledged receipt of emails while CDAs also disagreed (mean score of 2.10) with the statement that youth group leaders acknowledged receipt of emails. The finding implies that feedback from CDAs to youth groups and from youth group to CDAs is not effective.

Youth group leaders disagreed (mean score of 2.20) that CDAs reply to letters and emails while CDAs also disagreed (mean score of 2.10) with the statement that youth group leaders do reply to emails and letters. The finding implies that feedback from CDAs to youth group and from youth group to CDAs is not effective.

Youth group leaders disagreed (mean score of 2.25) that CDAs return calls left on voice mail while CDAs also disagreed (mean score of 2.15) with the statement that youth group leaders do return calls left on voice mail. The finding implies that feedback from CDAs to youth group and from youth group to CDAs is not effective.

Youth group leaders disagreed (mean score of 2.33) that CDAs confirm attendance or non-attendance of meetings while CDAs also disagreed (mean score of 2.45) with the statement that

youth group leaders do confirm of attendance or non-attendance of meetings. The finding implies that feedback from CDAs to youth groups and from youth groups to CDAs is not effective.

The overall implication is that feedback mechanisms between youths and CDAs are not effective and this may have a bearing on the successful disbursement of youth funds.

Table 4: Feedback Mechanisms

	Respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Acknowledging receipt of letters	Youth group leaders	60	2.35	1.351	.174
	Community Development Assistants	20	2.20	1.281	.287
Acknowledging receipt of emails	Youth group leaders	60	2.20	1.299	.168
	Community Development Assistants	20	2.10	1.410	.315
Replying to emails	Youth group leaders	60	2.30	1.280	.165
	Community Development Assistants	20	2.15	.988	.221
Returning calls left on voicemail	Youth group leaders	60	2.25	1.114	.144
	Community Development Assistants	20	2.15	.875	.196
Confirmation of attendance or non-attendance of meetings	Youth group leaders	60	2.33	1.284	.166
	Community Development Assistants	20	2.25	.967	.216

5.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study sought to find out the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms taking into consideration the youth group leader and the community development assistant. Results indicate that Youth group leaders disagreed (mean score of 2.35) that CDAs acknowledged receipt of letters while CDAs also disagreed (mean score of 2.20) with the statement youth group leaders acknowledged receipt of letters. The finding implies that feedback from CDAs to youth group and from youth group to CDAs is not effective.

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Youth group leaders disagreed (mean score of 2.33) that CDAs confirm attendance or nonattendance to meetings while CDAs also disagreed (mean score of 2.45) with the statement that youth group leaders do confirm attendance or nonattendance to meetings. The findings imply that feedback from CDAs to youth groups and from youth groups to CDAs are not effective.

The overall implication is that feedback mechanisms between youths and CDAs are not effective and this may have a bearing on the successful disbursement of youth enterprise development funds.

5.2 Conclusions

The study sought to find out the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms taking into consideration the youth group leader and the community development assistant. Following the study results it was possible to conclude that the feedback mechanisms between youth groups and CDAs are not effective and this may have a bearing on the successful disbursement of youth funds. This conclusion was reached because both groups disagreed acknowledging the receipt of letters, emails, replying of emails, returning calls left on voice mail and confirmation of attendance or non- attendance to organized meetings.

5.3 Recommendations

Following study results it is recommended that the stakeholders ensure that both groups to have feedback mechanisms that will ensure that there are effective communication channels. The groups should agree on the channels of communication to use for example if they prefer emails, telephone, sms and social media

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