PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND THE PERFORMANCE OF AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS: A CASE OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL INTENSIFICATION AND FOOD SECURITY PROJECT (SAIP) IN RWAMAGANA DISTRICT, RWANDA (2019-2022)

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ABSTRACT :   This study sought to investigate the influence of project management practices on the performance of Sustainable Agricultural Intensification and Food security Project in Rwamagana District, Rwanda. Specific objectives were to find out the influence of project planning on the performance SAIP project in Rwamagana District; to identify the influence of Project implementation on the performance of SAIP project in Rwamagana District; to establish the influence of stakeholders' participation on the performance SAIP project in Rwamagana District; and to examine the influence of Project monitoring and evaluation on the performance of SAIP project in Rwamagana District. The researcher applied descriptive and correctional research designs. Primary data were collected from102 respondents (Project Manager, Project Team, Director of Agriculture Unit, Sector agronomist, Representative of cooperatives, Representative of water user association, Youth Group Leader and farmer promoters) using different research methods such as questionnaires, interviews and observation. Descriptive and regression analysis were utilized to analyze quantitative data using SPSS 20.0. The results were presented using graphs and tables. Results revealed that project planning ($\beta1=0.191$, p-value $0.029<0.05$ and $t=2.214$) has a positive and statistical significant influence on the performance of the project. The results also indicated that project implementation ($\beta2=0.396$, p-value $0.001<0.05$ and $t=3.339$) has a positive and statistical significant influence on the performance of the project. Findings proved that stakeholders' participation ($\beta3=0.169$, p-value $0.033<0.05$ and $t=2.160$) has a positive and statistical significant influence on the performance of the project and Project monitoring and evaluation ($\beta4=0.228$, p-value $0.013<0.05$ and $t=2.538$) has a positive and statistical significant influence on the performance of the project. Based on these findings, the study recommended the effective planning for all project activities, stakeholders should be involved in every step of the project life cycle. Monitoring and evaluation has to be done at every step of project implementation for project to cover the scope, to be completed within time and budget with desirable quality output and therefore achieve beneficiaries' satisfaction.

Key words: Project Planning; Project Implementation; Stakeholder Participation; Project Monitoring and Evaluation; Performance of Agricultural Projects and Sustainable Agricultural Intensification and Food Security Project (SAIP); Rwanda.

I.   INTRODUCTION
1.1 Background of the study
The performance of agricultural projects depends on their ability to establish integrated information and control systems, facilitating efficient planning, resource availability, stakeholder participation, instruction, monitoring, and accurate handling of vast amounts of data to enhance problem-solving and decision-making processes (Thilmany,2019).

Furthermore, project performance is measured by its ability to achieve project objectives within the specified timeframe and budget, significantly influencing the overall realization of the organization and customer satisfaction (Muthoka,2014). However, Turner and Muller (2015) note a lack of proactive approach among those involved in project management when it comes to addressing uncertainties. Consequently, this oversight often leads

to project delays and budget overruns due to the failure to anticipate potential risks. The insufficiency of information and ineffective project management not only result in cost overruns and completion delays but also increase the likelihood of premature termination before the project is finished.

Rwanda has accomplished an impressive 30% to 50% higher success rate for projects concerning agriculture than anticipated. The nation has taken important steps towards the reduction of poverty, as the international poverty line has gone down from 77.2% in 2001 to 55.5% in 2017. However, the success of agriculture projects in Rwanda continues to face challenges, as some projects experience delays and others are completed behind schedule, resulting in limited incomes. It is worth noting that out of the 110 projects initiated between 2012 and 2015 in Rwanda, encompassing livestock farming, horticultural farming, beekeeping, and home economics, 32 projects were ultimately terminated due to various project management challenging issues (MINAGRI, 2018).

1.2　　　Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study was to assess the influence of Project Management Practices on the performance of Agricultural Projects at Sustainable Agricultural Intensification and Food security Project (SAIP) in Rwamagana District, Rwanda.

While Specific Objectives were to:

i. Find out the influence of project planning on the performance of Sustainable Agricultural Intensification and Food Security Project (SAIP) in Rwamagana District.

ii. Identify the influence of Project implementation on the performance of Sustainable Agricultural Intensification and Food security Project (SAIP) in Rwamagana District.

iii. Establish the influence of stakeholders' participation on the performance of Sustainable Agricultural Intensification and Food security Project (SAIP) in Rwamagana District.

iv. Examine the influence of Project monitoring and evaluation on the performance of Sustainable Agricultural Intensification and Food security Project (SAIP) in Rwamagana District.

1.3 Research Hypotheses

H_{01}: Project planning does not significantly influence the performance of Sustainable Agricultural Intensification and Food Security Project (SAIP) in Rwamagana District, Rwanda.

H_{02}: Project implementation has no statistically significant influence on the Sustainable Agricultural Intensification and Food Security Project (SAIP) in Rwamagana District, Rwanda.

H_{03}: Stakeholders' participation doesn't significantly influence the performance of Sustainable Agricultural Intensification and Food Security Project (SAIP) in Rwamagana District, Rwanda.

H_{04}: Project monitoring and evaluation does not significantly influence the performance of Sustainable Agricultural Intensification and Food Security Project (SAIP) in Rwamagana District, Rwanda.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical framework

This study was guided by two theories: planning theory and stakeholder theory.

Theory of Planning

The project planning process provides a comprehensive explanation, encompassing various knowledge areas. These processes are classified into two categories: core processes and facilitating processes. The basic processes described by Johnston and Brennan (1996) include scope planning, scoping, activity definition, resource planning, activity sequencing, activity duration estimation, cost estimation, schedule development, cost budgeting, and project plan development. These processes generate project plans, which are utilized as inputs for the executing processes.
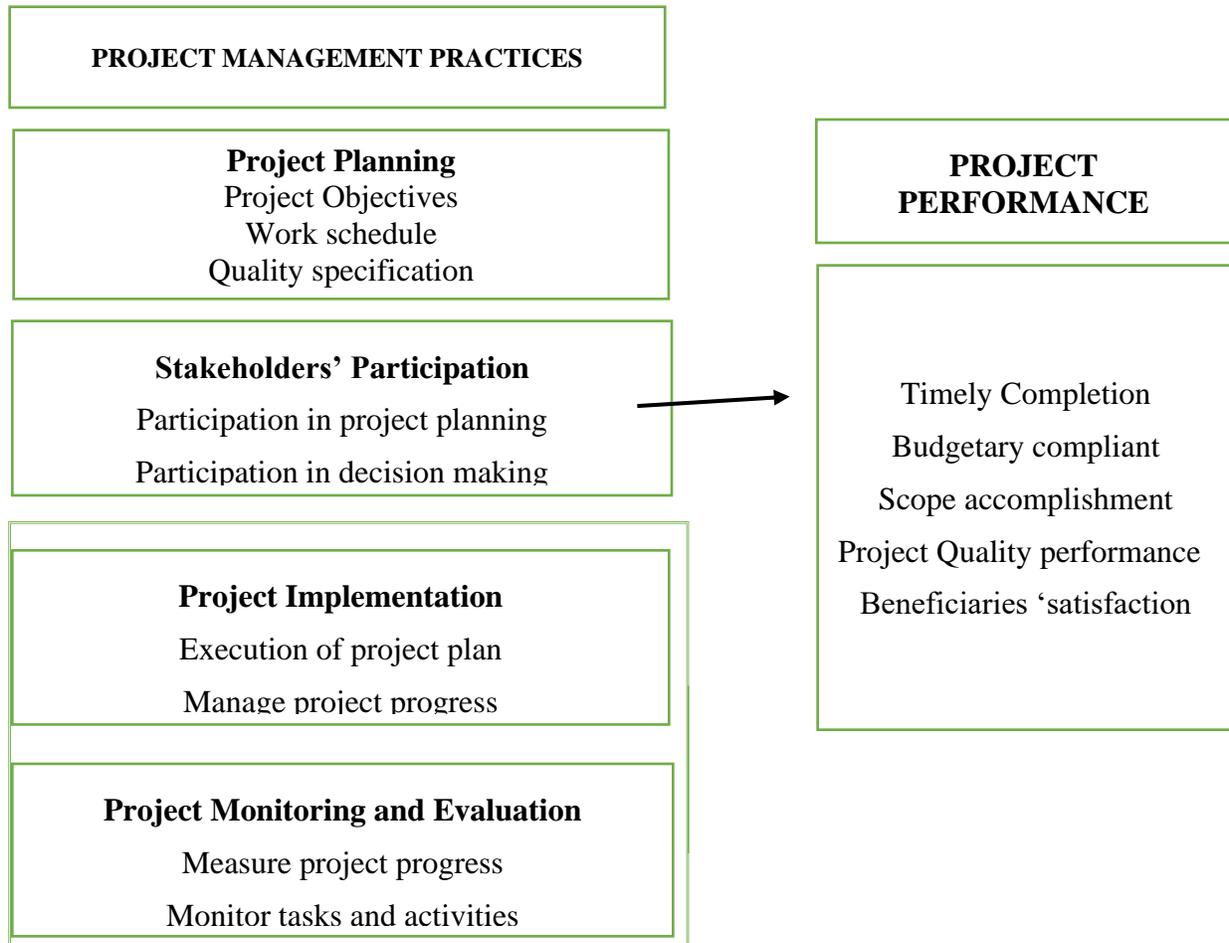
Stakeholder Theory

The stakeholder theory emphasizes the significance of a firm's focus on various partner groups involved in the organization's daily operations. Freeman (1984) introduced the Stakeholder theory, suggesting that managers have a responsibility to ensure a positive and cooperative relationship with customers, business partners, suppliers, and contractors. Furthermore, stakeholders, who have influence over the organization, can contribute to creating value chains for customers, vendors, communities, and financiers.

Empirical Review

A report by Multiple Release Custom (2015), the study on the planning phase in projects at Britain says that a project manager should consider the six schedule management processes. According to the findings, the program creation process; It includes

details and sequence of activities, resource estimation and time estimate for the job. This study concludes that the planning phase will end with approval of the project management plan, completion of project evaluation, and agreement to move on to the next phase. However, the study's focus on planning is primarily limited to paperwork, overlooking the essential integration of other management practices such as implementation and monitoring & evaluation (M&E) in ensuring the successful execution of any project.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Project Planning Project Objectives Work schedule Quality specification

Stakeholders' Participation Participation in project planning Participation in decision making

Project Implementation Execution of project plan Manage project progress

Project Monitoring and Evaluation Measure project progress Monitor tasks and activities

PROJECT PERFORMANCE

Timely Completion Budgetary compliant Scope accomplishment Project Quality performance Beneficiaries 'satisfaction

Conceptual Framework

 Figure1: The conceptual framework illustrating the relationship between project management practices and Agriculture projects performance

  INDEPENDENT VARIABLES   **DEPENDENT VARIABLES**

Source: Researcher, *2023*

Figure1: The conceptual framework above shows the interrelationships among variables. The independent variable in this study is project management, which encompasses indicators of success such as proper project management practices, including proper planning, project implementation, stakeholders' participation, and monitoring and evaluation. These indicators are considered as management practices that the researcher aims to demonstrate how they influence the dependent variable, which is project performance.

III.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used descriptive and correlational research designs. The research relied on primary data, which was gathered using questionnaires, interview and observation. Targeted population was composed of 102 respondents including 92 SAIP Staffs, 1 Director of Agriculture Unit at Rwamagana District, 1Sector Agronomist, 4 cooperative representatives working with SAIP, 1water user association representative, 1 youth group leader and 2 farmer promotors. When the population under study is less than 300, the sample size is universal (Amin, 2005). Since all elements related to the project are required for this study, a census sampling method was utilized and thus the whole population was considered.

Table1: Research Population

Category	Target Population	Sampling Technique
Project Manager	1	**census sampling**
Project Team	91	
Director of Agriculture Unit	1	
Sector Agronomist	1	
Cooperative representative	4	
Water Users Association representative	1	
Youth Group Leader	1	
Farmer Promoters	2	
Total	102	

Source: Researcher, *2023*

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Data analysis

Data were processed and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. Note that, the researcher applied descriptive statistics to analyze quantitative data and Multiple linear regression was adopted to indicate the significance of each independent variable.

The researchers applied statistical test such as a t-test to test the research hypothesis with significance level of p-value 0.05 and a 95% Confidence Interval (95% CI) so as to assess the statistical significance and precision of the findings. Pearson's correlation and regression coefficients were utilized to test the hypothesis

Descriptive statistics

Measures such as means, frequencies, and standard deviations were employed to analyze the factors that affect the project performance. These statistical indicators provide valuable insights into the central tendencies, distribution, and inconsistency of the data, allowing for a comprehensive examination of the factors affecting project performance.

Correlational analysis

Description of Spearman correlation coefficient measures the extent to which, as one variable increases, the other variable tends to increase, without requiring that increase to be represented by a linear relationship.

Multiple linear regression model

The multiple regression model was employed to evaluate the impact of multiple predictor variables on the performance of agricultural projects (dependent variable). This model allowed the researcher to examine the statistical significance of the independent variables in relation to the explained variable.

Model specification: The following econometric model will used as follow:

$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$; β_0 = Constant {β_i; i=1,2,3 and 4}: Regression coefficients representing various independent variables {X_i; i=1,2,3 and 4}: Values of various independent variables. Where: Y = Dependent

variable (project performance of SAIP), X1= Project Planning, X2= Project implementation, X3= Stakeholders 'participation, and X4=Project Monitoring and evaluation and; ε/u = Error term/ Unobserved factors.

Test of significance of regression model
The regression model was on the amount of change the independent variable is associated with the changes on the dependent variable, when the two variables are tested. The research hypothesis was tested using F-test from ANOVA. Regression model is for finding out how best the goodness of fit in the gradient of the regression line and the amount of change and by how much, if any in a study. This is important because the null hypothesis is usually upheld valid first until it is disapproved or rejected.

Reliability and validity of the measurement instruments
Face validity was established where tools and questions were chosen rationally, an appropriate way to find out what is being measured, content validity was focused on the extent to which the contents of an instrument correspond to contents of the theoretical concept designed to measure according to Dessler & Lewis (2001). The reliability was ensured by testing the instruments for the reliability of values (Alpha values) as recommended by Cronbach's Alpha coefficients. Cronbach recommends analysis for Alpha values for each variable under study.

Findings on Descriptive Statistics
Findings in this section are presented in accordance with research objectives which are stated as: To find out the influence of project planning on the performance of SAIP project; to identify the influence of Project implementation on the
performance of SAIP project; to establish the influence of stakeholders' participation on the performance of SAIP project and to examine the influence of Project monitoring and evaluation on the performance of SAIP project.

Reliability Statistics Results
Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency or reliability that is how closely related a set of items are as a group and indicate that research instrument used was very reliable.

Table 2: Checking reliability

	Reliability Statistics	
	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Project Planning	0.737	8
Project Implementation	0.843	6
Stakeholders' Participation	0.765	6
Project Monitoring and Evaluation	0.823	10
Average	0.792	4

Source: Primary Data (2023)

From the results in Table 2, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were higher than 0.7 for the independent variables. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for Project planning (0.737), project implementation (0.843), stakeholders' participation (0.765) and monitoring and evaluation (0.823). This implies that there was internal consistency for four variables, thus high reliability among the variables of project management practices in measuring the performance of SAIP and indicates that the research instrument used was very reliable

Correctional analysis
The main purpose of this study was to examine the influence of project management practices on the performance of Sustainable SAIP Project. The result is depicted in the table 3.

Table 3: Findings on Correlation Coefficients matrix between variables

		Project Planning	Project Implementation	Stakeholders Participation	Project Monitoring & Evaluation	Performance of agricultural projects
Project Planning	Pearson Correlation	1	.920**	.876**	.865**	.900**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	102	102	102	102	102
Project Implementation	Pearson Correlation	.920**	1	.899**	.931**	.935**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	102	102	102	102	102
Stakeholders Participation	Pearson Correlation	.876**	.899**	1	.863**	.888**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	102	102	102	102	102
Project Monitoring and Evaluation	Pearson Correlation	.865**	.931**	.863**	1	.907**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	102	102	102	102	102
Performance of agricultural projects	Pearson Correlation	.900**	.935**	.888**	.907**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	102	102	102	102	102

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary Data (2023)

From the findings in Table 3 Pearson's correlation coefficients (r=0.90), (r=0.935), (r=0.888), and (r=0.907) revealed that there was a very high positive and significant relationship (sig=0.000<0.005) between project planning, project implementation, stakeholders' participation and monitoring and evaluation and performance of agricultural project respectively. This positive relationship indicates that a directional change in the project management practices lead to the same directional change in performance of agricultural project.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

The study needed to examine the influence of independent variables on dependent variable and multiple regression model was used for this purpose.

Model Summary

Regression analysis was used to examine and explore the influence of independent variables (Project Management Practices) on the dependent variable (Performance of SAIP) in Rwamagana District, Rwanda.

Table 4: Model Summary

			Model Summary	
Mode	**R**	**R Square**	**Adjusted R Square**	**Std. Error of the Estimate**
1	0.948a	0.898	0.894	0.253

a. Predictors: (Constant), Project Monitoring and Evaluation, Stakeholders Participation, Project Planning, Project Implementation

Source: Primary Data (2023)

Findings from Table 4 shows that R=0.948 which is represented by 95%. This implies that project management practices have strong influence on the performance of SAIP project. The coefficient of determination given by R^2=0.898 indicates that the four independent variables that were studied, jointly explain 89.8% of the performance of Sustainable Agricultural and Food Security Project (SAIP). This therefore means that other factors not studied in this research contribute 10.2% of the performance of SAIP project.

Test of significance of the model

Table 5: ANOVA Results

	ANOVAᵃ				
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	54.892	4	13.723	214.163	.000ᵇ
Residual	6.216	97	.064		
Total	61.108	101			

a. Dependent Variable: Project Performance
b. Predictors: (Constant), Project Monitoring and Evaluation, Stakeholders Participation, Project Planning, Project Implementation

Source: Primary Data (2023)

As per findings, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) in Table 5 was used to determine the linear relationship among the variables under studies. Applying this method, the sum of squares, degrees of freedom (df), mean square, value of F (Calculated) and its significant level was obtained. The significance value is 0.000 which is less than 0.05 level of significance, thus the model is statistically significance in predicting the performance of SAIP project. The F calculated at 5% level of significance was 214.163 and greater the F critical (value=2.48), this indicates that the overall model was significant in predicting project management practices influence on performance of SAIP project.

Multiple Linear regression analysis

Multiple regression analysis was used in order to assess the influence of multiple predictor variables on the dependent variable. It was also used to test the significance of the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable. The present study adopts the following model: $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$ and was transformed into: $Y = -0.162 + 0.191(PP) + 0.396 (PI) + 0.169(SP) + 0.228(PM\&E) + \varepsilon$ β_0 = Constant, $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$ are Beta coefficients;

The Y is dependent variable (performance of Sustainable Agricultural Intensification and Food Security Project (SAIP)); X1= Project Planning, X2= Project implementation, X3= Stakeholders 'participation, and X4=Project Monitoring and evaluation; ε = Error term/other unobserved factors which is assumed to be distributed with mean zero and constant variance.

Table 6: Regression results

	Coefficientsᵃ				
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-0.162	.164		-0.988	.325
1 Project Planning	0.232	.105	0.191	2.214	.029
Project Implementation	0.390	.117	0.396	3.339	.001
Stakeholders Participation	0.176	.081	0.169	2.160	.033
Project Monitoring and Evaluation	0.260	.103	0.228	2.538	.013

a. Dependent Variable: Agricultural Project Performance

Source: Primary Data (2023)

As shown in Table 6, at 5% level of significance, all project management practices were statistically significant as their p values are less than 0.05.
From the findings, project management practices had a positive statistical significant influence on the performance of SAIP project in Rwamagana District with coefficient of regression values β1=0.191, β2=0.396, β3=0.169, β4=0.228 respectively.
Note that, project planning had a β1=0.191, p-value 0.029<0.05 and t=2.214 revealed that there was a positive statistical significant influence of project planning on the performance of SAIP project. Therefore, the study rejected the null Hypothesis that

stated project planning does not significantly influence the performance of SAIP project. These findings are in line with Adeyemi, (2013) findings indicated that project planning had a significant relationship with project quality, success and technical success. The study showed that project planning must be number one phase undertaken to enable any project to succeed and it was recommended that project management should primarily focus on this phase.

Findings also revealed that Project implementation had a $\beta 2=0.396$, p-value $0.001<0.05$ and $t=3.339$ which indicated that there was a positive statistical significant influence of project implementation on the performance of SAIP project. Therefore, the study rejected the null Hypothesis that indicated project implementation has no statistically significant influence on the performance of SAIP project.

These findings support the results of Lencucha et al. (2020), that stated the project implementation phase helps to implement and accomplish the activities described in the project management plan which leads to project success.

Stakeholders' participation ($\beta 3=0.169$, p-value $0.033<0.05$ and $t=2.160$ showed that there was a positive statistical significant influence of stakeholders' participation on the performance of SAIP project in Rwamagana. This signifies that the increase of one unit in stakeholders' participation assuming project planning, project implementation and monitoring and evaluation are kept constant would lead to an increase of the performance of SAIP project in Rwamagana District, Rwanda by 16.9%. Therefore, the study rejected the null Hypothesis that stated stakeholders' participation doesn't significantly influence on the performance of Sustainable Agricultural Intensification and Project monitoring and evaluation had a $\beta 4=0.228$, p-value $0.013<0.05$ and $t=2.538$ revealed that there was a positive statistical significant influence of project monitoring and evaluation on the performance of SAIP project in Rwamagana District, Rwanda. Therefore, the study rejected the null Hypothesis that stated project monitoring and evaluation does not significantly influence the performance of SAIP project. These findings are in line with Kule and Umugwaneza (2016), found that M&E is significantly correlated with project performance in Rwanda.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.Conclusion
The study concludes that the combination of project planning, project implementation, stakeholders' participation and monitoring and evaluation influence on the performance of Sustainable Agricultural

Intensification and Food security Project (SAIP) in Rwamagana District, Rwanda and jointly accounted 89.8% as represented by R^2 at 95% confidence interval. From the correlational analysis findings, the study concludes that there was a very high positive and significant relationship (sig=0.000<0.005) between project planning, project implementation, stakeholders' participation and monitoring and evaluation and performance of agricultural project as resented by their Pearson's correlation coefficients (r=0.90), (r=0.935), (r=0.888), and (r=0.907) respectively. This positive relationship indicates that a directional change in the project management practices lead to the same directional change in performance of agricultural project. This study concludes that project management practices influenced the SAIP project as proved by Timely completion of Project, completion with budget, quality specifications, scope accomplished and beneficiaries' satisfaction.

6. Recommendations
Diverse policy recommendations can be extracted from the findings of this study.

- ❖ Project coordinators are advised to fully integrate producers during the whole project life cycle as beneficiaries that will undertake the project to avoid rolling down already planned projects that may base on their needs.
- ❖ All stakeholders should be given the opportunity to participate in each phase of the project cycle, as it is clear that participation affects performance. Monitoring and evaluation should be done at every step of project implementation, not as a one-time event. This will help identify gaps and deviations from overall project goals and correct them in a timely manner to ensure successful quality implementation.
- ❖ The Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources and project sponsors should also increase grants and loans to farmers to improve financing activities that will improve rapid management access to projects and supervision of project groups through the construction of better roads and communication networks. Finally, sponsors should work on clear ways of marketing farmers' products.
- ❖ Finally, sponsors should work on clear ways of marketing farmers' products. Most farmers were left to find ways to sell their crops on their own, with some selling their produce at very low prices. Both the government and non-governmental organizations should be held responsible for providing marketing

information through media, posters and emails, and if possible, set up centers like effective cereal boards to help farmers sell their produce at better prices.

IV. ACKNOWELDGEMENTS

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