

Why do projects fail in Africa?

Access to new resource related to project failures added to PMWL



Resource provided by [Daisy Ongutu](#)

14 June 2020 – Kisumu, Kenya – Access to a new resource has been added to the PM World Library (PMWL) related to project failures. The new resource is titled “**Why do projects fail in Africa?**”, a special edition of the *Journal of African Business* in 2014, edited by Lavagnon Ika and Jan Saint-Macary that contains multiple articles on the topic of project failure in Africa.

“Why do projects fail in Africa?” explores the practice of project management in project settings as diverse as development projects themselves; from ICT to agriculture and infrastructure, from perspectives of the African Union to the context of countries such as Ghana, South Africa and Tanzania. This research focused on projects that were unsuccessful, to varying degrees and for different reasons. Project failure in Africa is a topic that may trigger passionate responses that can also be thought provoking. Perhaps because Africa itself is seen as a dichotomy: at best a business opportunity, at worst hopeless.

One of Lavagnon’s concerns is why Africa’s project management problems are mostly studied by non-African men. By many measures, things in Africa are getting better not just for the very rich but also for the very poor and prospects seem brighter. Notwithstanding this “Africa rising” narrative, there is much work to do as development has been unevenly shared. While investment projects are not surprising in the world’s most resource-rich continent, big projects in Africa are no longer only resource based.

Yet while Africa is replete with brilliant, impeccable, colourful and well written development visions, policies, programs, plans and projects, many observers point out that abandoned, failed or poor performing projects are paramount in Africa and that they have even thwarted its development. Like elsewhere in the world, projects in Africa are often late and over budget. Failure rates of the projects seem to be in excess of 50%. The NEPAD project in South Africa, Jatropha project in Tanzania, and ICT projects in South Africa are just some of the examples of projects mentioned in the study.

Projects in Africa fail not only because of mismanagement but also because of the sheer complexity of these specific project settings. Specifically, projects fail because of lack of competency or knowledge in project management and also because of corruption, poor policy planning and implementation and their complex contexts. In the face of many “unknown unknowns” and where success and failure are not “black and white” issues, they have to learn not only to think out of the box but also to learn from failure in order to succeed more often. Africa is too big to follow one script.

To access this new resource, go to the Applications and Hot Topics in P/PM section of the library at <https://pmworldlibrary.net/applications-and-topics/>, scroll down and click on

PMWL Research Result

“project failures”, scroll down to resource. Must be a registered trial, student or full member and logged-in to access.

This new resource provided through the PMWL university research internship program; [to learn more, click here](#)

For PMWL Post

Ika, L. and Saint-Macary, J. (2014): “**Why do projects fail in Africa?**” special edition of the Journal of African business on 17th November 2014. Available online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/15228916.2014.956635> ([Ogutu](#))

Where to post in the library: <https://pmworldlibrary.net/project-failure/>