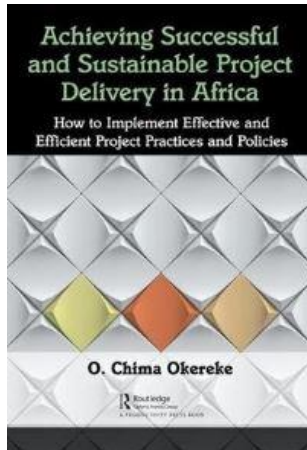# PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW

Book Title: ***Achieving Successful and Sustainable Project Delivery in Africa***

Author: **Dr. Okoro Chima Okereke**

Publisher: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, Productivity Press

List Price: $79.95 Format: Hardcover, 274 Pages

Publication Date: April 2020   ISBN: 9780367437626

Reviewer: **Allan Langat, PMP**

Review Date: December 2020

Introduction

A short list of data and observations around failed and abandoned projects in some African countries are given at the outset. In one country, audits reveal that 11,886 of government project failed in a period of 40 years translating to about 300 failed projects per year. In another country a director general of a government procurement unit stated that there were 19,900 government projects in various stages of abandonment. In a third country, on 30 December 2011 citizens of a large African city were shocked when the government announced the failure and abandonment of a 10 million housing project between the government and a foreign company.

The statistics around the success rate of projects are generally grim and the book goes into extensive detail on what these failures are, how they happened and what project management gaps caused them. Public enterprise projects affected generally had a common problem of poor project implementation without any forecast of income generation capability of the project deliverables. Important definitions are also covered for example successful projects are those that are completed within expected time and budget thereby producing expected deliverables.

Sustainable project delivery is the planning, monitoring and controlling of project delivery such that it considers and maintains the support processes and deliverables for the planned lifecycle of the project and perhaps the most prominent word in the publication being corruption which is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. This comes out as a rampant factor or contributor of project failure.

The author's main objective for this book is to help prepare African public and private companies to conduct their project effectively and efficiently so that they will be

successful in producing deliverables which are sustainable and can operate profitably throughout their planned lifetime. Specifically, goals identified for the publication are listed as below

- New projects to be completed on time and on budget.
- Project deliverables should be operated competitively in the market.
- During planning stage, ensure there is resource arrangement for deliverables after they have been commissioned into service.
- There should be estimates of income the deliverables will generate during its lifetime.
- There should be a timeline for the income to be produced.
- Income generated should be such that the product becomes financially self-sustaining.

Overview of Book's Structure

The book is broken down into 5 sections each covering the topics below

Section 1: Failed Projects and Project Deliverables in Africa

Some examples of failed projects are discussed along with a root cause analysis of why they failed. Examples provided are in three different countries namely Nigeria's steel industry, Ghana's failed housing project and South Africa's failure in the telecommunications industry. These are covered in good detail.

Section 2: Failures in industry

In this section the Author drills down into sector specific examples in industries such as water projects, electricity and power supply and its trickledown effect on economic growth, renewable energy projects in Africa and lastly the impact of low investments in Africa within these areas. Africa as a continent is rich in renewable energy natural resources and has great potential in becoming a gold mine in clean energy through its abundance of solar and wind resources but political instability, poor infrastructure and financial management have crippled it from achieving its true potential.

Section 3: Definition of problems, review and suggestions for solutions

There are three main themes covered in this section namely lack of investment resources, poor planning and poor project management. Problems of corruption, zero productivity and poor return on investment (ROI) and failed governance which has majorly contributed to the failed projects in the continent of Africa.

Section 4: A framework for successful management of projects, programmes and portfolios using OPM, PPM lifecycle & PMO

The author gives a suggested framework along with a description of its components. Definitions are given of project portfolio management, programme management, project management life cycle. This is potentially the most impactful section in terms

of solutions and the way forward to improve on status quo. The last chapter in this section covers the transition from project to operations and maintenance which enables the benefits and values of the deliverables to be harvested. Organisations often have multiple project deliverables to release to customers and can often get caught up in translation when the deliverables are not transitioned to the appropriate support teams. Transition support needs to be provided for released deliverables and this section covers this aspect quite well.

Section 5: Summary of suggestions for the achievement of success and sustainability in project delivery

To close off the author provides a tabular guideline for the use of the recommended framework. Each topic covered in the book along with the chapter are listed in this section (page 196) which is helpful as a quick reference guide for a reader seeking to quickly locate what chapter a topic discussion is covered in. These range from the preparation of vision and mission statements to the transitioning stage where implementation and transitioning of project to operations and maintenance teams is done.

Highlights

There are good case-based examples in the book that highlight the magnitude of failures discussed as below. The author describes in good detail what these are along with the project management principles that can be adopted to improve on the situation. Some examples in summary are discussed below.

In Nigeria their Iron and steel industry was planned to be a catalyst for industrialisation and had a very promising start between 1979 and 1983. Major buildings and erections were made. Before project abandonment 98 % of the project was completed. This was a big dent to Nigeria's development as this project was the backbone of President Shagari 20-year industrialization project plan. Core reasons for the failure identified were inability of the investing company to generate funds for their operations and its dependence on federal government for their funding. The government subsequently failed to continue their funding operations spelling doom for the project.

In South Africa, project failures covered include the Nelson Mandela Bay metropolitan municipal metro bus project, failure in telecommunications industry and that of Microsoft's digital villages in the black township of Soweto. Some of the common themes among all these failures were poor requirements management, lack of attention to detail, dysfunctional decision making, failure to engage decision makers and high staff turnover levels.

In Ghana, many Ghanaians were shocked when they heard on 30 December 2011 about the failure and abandonment of the $10 billion housing project between the government of Ghana and STX Engineering and construction limited of South Africa. The project consisted of 200,000 houses to be constructed in five years. The failures were attributed to ineffective government management, corruption, lack of

accountability, unofficial middlemen, delay in payments, incompetent leadership among others.

Highlights: What I liked

For anyone with no prior background to the state of African economic projects or the influence and impact of corruption on economic development, this book uses great tangible examples to inform and educate. The main highlights however for me come from the discussions around the solutions that can be implemented to change what is currently happening in the continent. Having been born and raised in Kenya myself I gathered some great insights from the book when the author discussed potential process solutions that would be great mitigating factors for the widespread project failures experienced in the continent.

I particularly liked the discussions centred on solutions that can be implemented to increase project success in Chapter 12 of the book. The components suggested for implementation are the adoption of vision and mission, goals organisation strategy, strategic objectives and tactics, adoption of organisational project management, project management office in three major forms of enterprise or strategic project management office (EPMO), project portfolio management office (PPMO), programme management office (PgMo) and Project Management office (PMO). These components when adopted well enough would guarantee the identification of areas for performance improvement, set benchmarks against industry and competitors, set targets, identify trends for forecasting and planning and provide an evaluation on the effectiveness of changes.

From my own perspective a lot of government projects depend on the political willpower of the governments implementing them and the less political interference in a project the higher the chances of success. The ideas presented in the book can help reduce such political interference in practical sense as it does not leave much room for a non-methodical approach of dealing with issues that arise during a project and also strengthens process rather than individual project stakeholder influence. Government regimes are limited to the term periods they are elected into power but major projects can outlast any single government. It is important to follow these principles suggested to ensure multiyear success even beyond the life of a government regime.

Who might benefit from the book?

I found some good insights in the book that inform as well as educate on why projects fail. One of the ways to change a society is to educate the masses on what really goes on when the government does not deliver to taxpayers. This book can therefore be useful to African citizens either as an educative tool or a catalyst to demand for change from their governments. Once the population understands that majority of the failures are controllable, they would definitely demand better from their leaders.

Government mandated bodies such as departments in charge of planning and development would also find this book useful. There are great examples of how other countries are handling their projects as well as best practice suggestions on overall project management and how those principles can contribute to success. The will to implement these suggestions can make a huge difference for the continent of Africa and its citizens. Private companies seeking to do successful projects can also borrow in the same breath as government bodies from the lessons in the book. Majority of their large-scale operations would be similar in scope to those of government projects.

Conclusion

The principal goal of the book is to advise public, private and international organisations conducting projects in Africa on how to prepare themselves, their business enterprises to solve the problems that cause project failure or abandonment of project deliverables. It also recommends the necessity for a vision, mission and strategic objectives to be the basis and anchor of successful business plans. Most importantly, the suggested frameworks could be adopted as good foundational structures for projects to address discussed problems, guarantee higher success rates of projects and sustainable delivery of project objectives in Africa.

For more about this book, go to: https://www.routledge.com/Achieving-Successful-and-Sustainable-Project-Delivery-in-Africa-How-to/Okereke/p/book/9780367437626

Editor's note: This book review was the result of a partnership between the publisher, PM World and the PMI Dallas Chapter. Authors and publishers provide the books to PM World; books are delivered to the PMI Dallas Chapter, where they are offered free to PMI members to review; book reviews are published in the PM World Journal and PM World Library. PMI Dallas Chapter members can keep the books as well as claim PDUs for PMP recertification when their reviews are published.

If you are an author or publisher of a project management-related book, and would like the book reviewed through this program, please contact Editor@pmworldjournal.com.

About the Reviewer

Allan Langat, PMP

North Texas, USA

Allan Langat is a Technical project manager with 10 + years' experience in software implementations, sql data integrations and financial CRM systems in the research sales and trading space. He is PMP certified and an Oracle Certified Associate professional. Allan enjoys working with technical and non technical teams to translate user requirements into technical artifacts for development and vice versa.

He can be reached on email at allan.langat@gmail.com and on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/allanlangat