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# Project Planning and Development Project Implementation in Bo District Council Sierra Leone

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**Abstract**

Development projects depend on the translation of planned objectives into deliverables that respond to community needs. This study examines the relationship between project planning and implementation outcomes in Bo District Council, Sierra Leone, with attention to scope definition, scheduling, resource and budget planning, risk management, stakeholder participation, and monitoring arrangements. The manuscript describes a cross-sectional approach using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, but the fieldwork dates, project coverage, achieved sample, measurement procedures, and analyses require verification against the study records. The literature provides a rationale for distinguishing planning practices from financing, procurement, technical capacity, and relational conditions that may affect implementation. However, the available study documentation does not provide numerical estimates, interview excerpts, or project records sufficient to establish the direction, magnitude, or uncertainty of the relationship in the council. A local empirical conclusion therefore remains pending verified results.

**Keywords:** planning; implementation; development; governance; participation; monitoring; procurement; risk

# Perencanaan Proyek dan Implementasi Proyek Pembangunan di Dewan Distrik Bo Sierra Leone

**Abstrak**

Proyek pembangunan bergantung pada penerjemahan tujuan yang direncanakan menjadi keluaran yang menjawab kebutuhan masyarakat. Penelitian ini mengkaji hubungan antara perencanaan proyek dan hasil implementasi di Dewan Distrik Bo, Sierra Leone, dengan memperhatikan penetapan lingkup, penjadwalan, perencanaan sumber daya dan anggaran, pengelolaan risiko, partisipasi pemangku kepentingan, serta pengaturan pemantauan. Naskah menjelaskan pendekatan potong lintang menggunakan kuesioner dan wawancara semiterstruktur, tetapi waktu pengumpulan data, cakupan proyek, sampel aktual, prosedur pengukuran, dan analisis memerlukan verifikasi berdasarkan catatan penelitian. Literatur memberikan dasar untuk membedakan praktik perencanaan dari kondisi pembiayaan, pengadaan, kapasitas teknis, dan hubungan antaraktor yang dapat memengaruhi implementasi. Namun, dokumentasi penelitian yang tersedia belum menyajikan estimasi numerik, kutipan wawancara, atau catatan proyek yang memadai untuk menetapkan arah, besaran, maupun ketidakpastian hubungan tersebut di dewan distrik. Karena itu, kesimpulan empiris lokal masih menunggu hasil yang terverifikasi.

**Kata kunci:** perencanaan; implementasi; pembangunan; pemerintahan; partisipasi; pemantauan; pengadaan; risiko

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## INTRODUCTION

Development projects translate public priorities into infrastructure and services. Their implementation requires clear objectives, sequenced activities, available resources, assigned responsibilities, and a means of detecting departures from agreed plans. A schedule can describe intended progress, but implementation also depends on whether financing, procurement, technical capacity, and stakeholder cooperation allow that schedule to be followed. For local councils, the central question is therefore how planning relates to delivery under the conditions in which projects actually operate.

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Existing research supports examining this relationship without assuming that every planning activity has the same value. Dvir et al. (2003) distinguished requirements definition and technical specifications from administrative procedures. Their findings suggest that the substance of early project definition matters, rather than the mere presence of planning documents. Wang and Gibson (2010) also linked preproject planning with cost and schedule performance in construction. These settings differ from local government development projects, so their results provide a rationale for inquiry rather than an estimate applicable to Bo District Council.

The African development literature draws attention to institutional and relational conditions. Diallo and Thuillier (2005) examined trust and communication among development project stakeholders. Ika and Donnelly (2017) distinguished contextual, institutional, and project management conditions for capacity building projects. Together, these studies suggest that planning should be examined alongside the ability of organizations and partners to implement it. They do not establish that an improved planning score alone guarantees better outcomes.

Sierra Leone's Medium Term National Development Plan 2024–2030 provides a policy context for connecting local priorities with national development objectives (Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, 2024). The plan does not establish the performance of any particular Bo District Council project. Claims about local delivery, delays, resource constraints, or beneficiary satisfaction consequently require council records or fieldwork evidence.

More recent development research reinforces the need to define success before examining its determinants. Chasanah et al. (2024) identify both short-term and long-term criteria in the international development literature, alongside human, managerial, project, and environmental determinants. This distinction matters for council projects because the administrative completion of an activity does not necessarily demonstrate that a service remains useful to its intended community. The present inquiry therefore treats delivery efficiency and development relevance as related but distinguishable concerns. Evidence of one should not automatically be used to claim achievement of the other, especially where the observation period ends at construction or handover.

Direct evidence on planning also depends on the setting and the competence of those responsible for delivery. Irfan et al. (2021) examine planning and project manager competencies in public sector projects in Pakistan, reporting positive relationships with project success. Mesera et al. (2024), studying public projects in Jimma, Ethiopia, similarly examine initiation and planning alongside execution, monitoring, and closure. These studies support asking which practices are present and how they relate to outcomes. They do not justify transferring a coefficient, an explanatory percentage, or a claim of causation to a different council whose project portfolio and institutional arrangements have not yet been documented.

Evidence from South Sudan brings risk and participation into the same discussion. Elly (2023) examines project planning, stakeholder involvement, risk management, and perceived project success among nongovernmental organizations. The reported relationships provide a regional comparison for the dimensions considered here, while the organizational setting differs from a statutory local council. For Bo District Council, a risk register, a contingency allocation, and the actual response to an unexpected event should be distinguished. A statement that risks were considered is less informative than a record showing the risk, responsible person, planned response, and subsequent action. This operational distinction follows from the present analytical framework rather than representing a finding about the council.

Procurement is another plausible link between plans and implementation. Kamewor Tetteh et al. (2025) examine procurement capabilities and planning in Ghanaian construction firms and report a

relationship with project success. This directs attention to whether a council can turn approved requirements into timely contracts, materials, and services. A budgeted activity may remain undelivered when procurement and financing schedules are inconsistent. Conversely, a procurement delay does not by itself prove that the original scope was poorly defined. An informative comparison should establish the sequence of approvals, expected funding, procurement milestones, and delivery before attributing an implementation problem to planning quality.

Research on project constraints offers a further reason to avoid a single explanation. Deep et al. (2022) distinguish project constraints, governance constraints, and stakeholder-induced constraints in Indian highway projects. Moza and Paul (2024) identify several underlying critical success factors in contemporary Indian construction. Although these settings involve different scales and institutions, both contributions support considering several dimensions of implementation together. In the council setting, funding timeliness, technical capacity, project complexity, and contract arrangements are candidate explanations to be checked against records. They should not be retrospectively treated as measured controls merely because they are discussed in the literature or mentioned in an interview.

Stakeholder participation also requires more precise treatment than a count of meetings. Samwel et al. (2023) examine stakeholder management in Kenyan public projects, while Nnadi and Oyama (2023) investigate stakeholder involvement in Nigerian road construction. These studies make participation relevant to the inquiry, but their reported patterns do not establish which groups influenced decisions in Bo. The present framework distinguishes identification, consultation, influence over choices, and responses to concerns. Council officials, contractors, and intended beneficiaries can evaluate the same activity differently. Where beneficiary views were not collected, staff assessments should be described as staff perceptions rather than evidence of community satisfaction or ownership.

Differences between internal and external perspectives have empirical significance. Maqbool et al. (2022) distinguish internal and external stakeholder satisfaction in renewable energy projects in Pakistan. Their analysis cautions against assuming that one respondent group represents all stakeholder interests. Daboun et al. (2023) examine relationship management through contractual measures, team interactions, and top management actions in construction. Ghuzdewan et al. (2023) address interrelationships among key stakeholders' performance. Taken together, these sources justify asking how coordination occurs across organizational boundaries. They also support recording disagreements and unresolved concerns, rather than summarizing all accounts as a shared assessment of success without showing the evidence.

Public management capacity includes the conduct of leaders and teams. Khan et al. (2023) report relationships between public leadership, team building, and project success, using manager–subordinate responses. This provides a reason to consider how responsibilities are communicated and coordinated without making leadership an unmeasured explanation for every outcome. Turner's (2022) account of organizational behaviour research likewise places people and organizations within the project management field. For the present study, these perspectives complement scheduling and budgeting by directing attention to how actors use a plan. The relevant empirical question remains whether such processes were observed, reported, or documented in the projects actually included.

Governance concerns the arrangements through which project decisions are made and reviewed. Unterhitzenberger and Moeller (2021) approach project governance through organizational justice, drawing attention to fairness as well as formal direction and control. In a local council, an analytically useful question is whether participants understand decision rules and can raise concerns about changes affecting them. This is different from assuming that compliance with an approval procedure guarantees a fair outcome. Interviews and documentary evidence can help separate stated procedures from reported

experiences. Such evidence must still be attributed to its source, particularly where participants occupy positions with different access to decisions and information.

The relationship between a project and its permanent organization can generate additional tensions. Hagebakken et al. (2025), in a Norwegian local authority, show how competing institutional logics and perceived tensions shape a project team's interpretation of its work. The case is relevant as an explanation to investigate, not as a description of Sierra Leone. It suggests asking whether a project competes with routine service responsibilities for staff, time, or decision authority. Where this occurs, implementation may depend on arrangements outside the written project plan. Establishing whether those tensions apply in Bo requires accounts and records from the council rather than an assumption based on geographic or organizational similarity.

Formal frameworks and information exchange offer a related organizational perspective. Badewi (2022) studies institutionalized project management frameworks in transformation projects, and Hadi et al. (2022) examine knowledge transactions and brokerage through a project management office. These contributions concern organizational arrangements that may enable project actors to use information and coordinate decisions. They do not imply that Bo District Council operates a project management office or has adopted the frameworks studied elsewhere. The practical analytical issue is whether responsibilities, reporting routes, and access to project information are sufficiently clear to connect planning with action, including the escalation of problems that individual project staff cannot resolve.

Monitoring requires resources as well as indicators. Letsolo et al. (2022) investigate monitoring and evaluation budget allocation in a socioeconomic empowerment project in Lesotho. Their work highlights why a monitoring provision in a plan should be distinguished from the availability of resources to carry it out. In the present framework, monitoring arrangements concern the baseline, indicator definitions, reporting frequency, and assignment of responsibility. Implementation evidence concerns whether reports were produced, reviewed, and followed by action. Conflating these stages would risk recording a monitoring practice as both a predictor and an outcome. Any scoring procedure therefore needs to explain which stage each questionnaire item or record represents.

A plan may also change legitimately during implementation. Bourne et al. (2023) discuss moving goals and governance in megaprojects, showing why context and evolving objectives matter when assessing performance. Although council projects may be smaller, the measurement implication is relevant: original commitments, authorized revisions, and actual delivery should be retained separately. A project should not be classified as timely simply because its completion date was repeatedly moved. Equally, an approved change that addresses a newly documented community need should not automatically be classified as failure. The explanation requires the dates, authority, reasons, and consequences of the change, rather than a final rating detached from the decision history.

Sustainability broadens this assessment beyond immediate delivery. Chow et al. (2021) examine sustainable project management, planning, and success in Malaysian manufacturing, while El Mourabit and El Moudden (2024) investigate success factors in Moroccan public and private projects. These settings support considering organizational and longer-term dimensions while also demonstrating the limits of a universal success measure. Ćirić Lalić et al. (2022) compare traditional, agile, and hybrid approaches across dimensions of project success. Their findings provide a reason to examine context and outcome definitions before recommending a particular management approach. They do not establish that importing a methodology would improve development outcomes in the council.

Digital tools may affect access to evidence and participation, but their presence should not be equated with planning quality. Tumpa and Naeni (2025) examine professionals' perceptions of digital technology for decision-making and stakeholder engagement in sustainable infrastructure governance,

while retaining a role for human oversight. For a council study, this suggests documenting whether records are accessible, current, and connected to decisions, regardless of whether they are electronic or paper based. A shared platform could assist coordination, yet incomplete or inconsistent records would still limit evaluation. No claim about digital adoption, capability, or benefits in Bo District Council is made without corresponding local evidence.

These strands of literature motivate an inquiry into how substantive planning practices operate within a local public organization. They support a framework that distinguishes plan content, implementation conditions, recorded delivery, and stakeholder assessments. The intended contribution is consequently a carefully bounded local comparison, rather than confirmation that planning is always sufficient for success. It will depend on establishing which projects and participants were included, how the planning dimensions were measured, which outcomes were observed, and how alternative explanations were examined. Until those requirements are met, the framework provides a basis for investigation and transparent reporting rather than a tested explanation of the council's performance.

This study focuses on the relationship between specific planning practices and implementation outcomes within the council. Its potential contribution is a documented local comparison that separates planning quality from implementation constraints and distinguishes respondents' perceptions from recorded project performance. The contribution depends on reporting the project frame, measurement procedures, and empirical results transparently. Geographic specificity alone does not establish a new theory or method.

The study asks three questions. First, how are the principal dimensions of planning represented in the projects studied? Second, what relationship is observed between those dimensions and implementation outcomes? Third, how do financing, procurement, technical capacity, and stakeholder relationships help explain agreements or discrepancies between planned and actual delivery? These are analytical questions; the current revision does not presume their answers.

## LITERATURE AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

### Planning quality and implementation outcomes

Project planning includes defining what a project should deliver, identifying dependencies, estimating costs and resources, assigning responsibilities, anticipating risks, and specifying monitoring arrangements. These practices should be measured independently of the outcome. Defining an effective plan as a plan belonging to a successful project would make the proposed relationship circular.

Implementation success also requires explicit criteria. Completion dates and expenditure describe delivery efficiency, while technical quality, achievement of intended outputs, and beneficiary assessments describe other aspects of performance. A project can meet a revised deadline while missing its original commitment, or meet construction targets while failing to provide a useful service. Original baselines, authorized revisions, actual delivery, and stakeholder perceptions should therefore be distinguished.

### Evidence and limits of transfer

The literature does not justify a universal claim that greater formal planning always improves every outcome. Dvir et al. (2003) found different relationships for different planning components. Wang and Gibson (2010) used construction project information to model cost and schedule performance. Their results support operational measurement of planning and delivery, but neither study removes the need for local evidence.

Idoro's study of Nigerian construction clients found differences in planning practices between public and private projects and a limited relationship between planning and performance (Idoro, 2009). This provides a useful qualification to an exclusively positive account. Differences across studies may reflect project types, measures, respondent perspectives, institutional arrangements, or analytical choices. Such explanations remain possibilities until they are investigated rather than established reasons for any Bo District Council result.

Diallo and Thuillier (2005) show why communication and trust deserve attention in development project analysis. Ika and Donnelly (2017) similarly situate managerial practices within wider institutional conditions. In this study, participation refers to a documented opportunity to influence project choices and receive responses, rather than attendance at a meeting alone. Funding availability and procurement capacity are treated as separate conditions rather than being absorbed into a broad definition of planning quality.

## Proposed relationships

The analytical framework links the six planning dimensions in Table 1 with delivery outcomes. Funding timeliness, procurement processes, technical capacity, and project characteristics may account for variation in outcomes alongside planning. Any such variables must be defined and supported by the available records before analysis. A moderation or mediation claim requires an appropriate design, adequate independent observations, and a specified statistical test; it cannot be inferred from a general discussion of constraints.

**Table 1.** Proposed measures to check against the original instruments

| Dimension | Observable evidence | Important distinction |
|---|---|---|
| Scope definition | Agreed outputs, requirements, responsibilities and change records | Measure planning content separately from success |
| Scheduling | Baseline milestones, dependencies and updates | Separate original and revised dates |
| Resources and budget | Cost estimates, staffing and funding arrangements | Separate plans from actual disbursement |
| Risk management | Identified risks, responsible persons and responses | Separate recorded preparation from recalled confidence |
| Stakeholder participation | Input into decisions, feedback and responses | Attendance alone does not establish influence |
| Monitoring arrangements | Indicators, baselines, reporting and escalation rules | Separate planned monitoring from monitoring carried out |
| Implementation outcomes | Dates, expenditure, quality, outputs and beneficiary assessments | Separate recorded outcomes from perceptions |

Note. This is a proposed audit framework, not a validated scale or a report of measures already administered. Each indicator requires author verification against the actual study instruments and records.

The principal proposition is that higher planning quality may be associated with better implementation outcomes. A second proposition is that a documented plan may be insufficient when implementation conditions prevent it from being followed. These propositions organize the analysis and do not constitute findings. Their value is to make the proposed explanation open to contradiction by project records and participant accounts.

# METHODOLOGY

## Design and study coverage

The submitted manuscript describes a cross-sectional approach combining questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. However, it does not document their execution. The final report should identify the unit of analysis explicitly. If several people reported on the same project, the number of questionnaires is not the number of independent projects. If the inquiry covered one project only, it cannot estimate a between-project relationship for the council's portfolio.

## Population and sampling

Council officers, project managers, technical personnel, contractors, and other participants are named as potential respondents in the source. Their inclusion in the achieved sample must be verified. Probability sampling should be claimed only if a documented random selection procedure was used. Purposive interview selection should be described separately, including the reason for selecting informants and the actual basis for ending recruitment.

## Measures and data sources

Table 1 offers a proposed measurement structure for checking the original instruments. It must not be described as a validated instrument administered in this study unless the records establish that fact. Where records are available, planned and actual costs, dates, outputs, and quality assessments should be distinguished from retrospective ratings. Definitions of approved changes, incomplete projects, and missing records must be reported consistently.

## Analysis

Descriptive reporting should give counts and denominators for categorical variables and suitable summaries for continuous or ordinal variables. If association tests are justified by the design and sample, the final report should identify the coefficient used, analytical sample, estimate, uncertainty, and relevant assumptions. Correlation and regression are different analyses and should not be listed interchangeably. Six planning dimensions should not automatically be entered into a model when the number of independent projects cannot support the specification.

For multiple reports about one project, aggregation or an appropriate clustered analysis requires justification. A small or nonprobability sample may support a descriptive case study but limit inference. Interview analysis should explain transcription or recording, coding, theme development, researcher involvement, discrepant accounts, and how quotations were selected. Integration should identify where interviews support, qualify, or contradict questionnaire or record-based patterns. These are reporting requirements, not analyses performed during this editorial revision.

# RESULTS

The source manuscript provides general statements about planning, delays, resources, risk management, and stakeholder involvement. It does not provide a respondent distribution, project-level dataset, statistical output, interview excerpts, or a documented coding trail. These statements have therefore not been retained as verified empirical results. The following reporting structure identifies what the authors must supply before this section can be completed.

**Table 2.** Required empirical reporting structure

| Result component | Minimum information needed | Current status |
|---|---|---|
| Project coverage and respondents | Eligible and included projects, respondent roles, invitations, responses and exclusions | Not supplied |
| Planning dimensions | Item definitions, scores or documented practices, denominators and missingness | Not supplied |
| Implementation outcomes | Original baselines, approved changes and actual delivery or clearly identified perceptions | Not supplied |
| Association analysis if justified | Independent sample, coefficient or model, estimates, uncertainty and diagnostics | Not supplied |
| Interview analysis | Informant selection, coding process, themes, excerpts and contrary accounts | Not supplied |

Note. These are reporting requirements. The table contains no observed results and must be replaced or completed with verified evidence before resubmission.

# DISCUSSION

## Interpretation of the local evidence

The literature offers alternative interpretations to assess against the local evidence. A stronger relationship for scope definition than for administrative scheduling would be consistent with the component-specific emphasis of Dvir et al. (2003), while cost and schedule patterns could be compared with Wang and Gibson (2010). A weak relationship would also be informative and should be discussed alongside Idoro (2009). None of these comparisons establishes what happened in Bo District Council.

If the local accounts document financing or procurement obstacles despite detailed plans, the interpretation should distinguish plan quality from the conditions required to implement it. Relational explanations can be considered in light of Diallo and Thuillier (2005), and institutional explanations in light of Ika and Donnelly (2017). The evidence should determine which explanation is credible; citations cannot supply missing observations.

## Contribution and practical implications

The potential theoretical contribution is to clarify when the relationship between planning and delivery is constrained by implementation capacity in a local government setting. This would extend contextual understanding only if the study measures those conditions and examines competing explanations. It should not be described as a tested model before the evidence is available.

As practice options, the council could review whether each project has an agreed scope, a feasible schedule, a financing plan tied to expected disbursements, assigned risk responsibilities, stakeholder feedback arrangements, and a monitoring baseline. These options follow the analytical framework and literature. Their priority and expected benefits for this council remain to be established by the completed study. Recommendations should be linked to observed problems, responsible actors, and feasible actions once the results are verified.

## Limitations

The current draft is limited by the absence of the underlying empirical record. For the completed study, additional limitations may include a small or nonprobability sample, retrospective perceptions, common sources for planning and success ratings, missing administrative records, and clustering within projects. Authors must identify which limitations apply. Cross-sectional evidence cannot establish temporal order

or rule out better resourced projects both planning more thoroughly and performing better. Findings from one council should not be generalized to all local governments without justification.

## CONCLUSION

The reviewed literature supports investigating the relationship between substantive planning practices and development project implementation. It also indicates that institutional and relational conditions deserve attention. The supplied manuscript does not yet establish the direction or magnitude of this relationship in Bo District Council. A defensible local conclusion requires a documented sample, transparent measures, verifiable results, and a discussion grounded in those results. The final conclusion and abstract must be rewritten after those requirements are met.

## DECLARATIONS

### Acknowledgements

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### Conflicts of interest

A declaration of competing interests was not specified in the available manuscript documentation.

### Funding

Funding information was not specified in the available manuscript documentation.

### Author contributions and data availability

Author contribution and data availability statements require confirmation against the actual study roles, records, and participant consent conditions.

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