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Analysis of performance of public funded irrigation projects

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The purpose of this study was to analyse performance of irrigation projects with the view to improve their performance. The research focused on identifying the critical performance determinants, quantification of performance of projects, identification of factors causing poor performance of projects and proposing mitigation measures. To achieve study objectives, opinion on aspects of performance was sought from 26 irrigation technical staff in the public sector and quantification of performance of 16 selected projects was carried out. It has been established that irrigation industry in Tanzania has performed poorly over many years. Performance assessment at various levels of the sector is ad hoc and focuses mainly on the construction phase of projects. Results indicated that the key performance indicators cover various aspects of performance of irrigation projects, the main area of concern being hydraulic or water performance. The critical performance determinants include adequacy, profit, and user participation in management. The traditional time and cost performance indicators and several other currently used indicators do not contribute significantly to performance improvement. Results further indicated that the main factors causing poor performance of projects include inadequacy of budgetary allocations, lack of maintenance of facilities and inadequate capability of local contractors. However, these factors are interrelated with other factors. Mitigation measures proposed include proper planning of various aspects of the project, allocation of adequate resources for various activities, involving all stakeholders in all stages and capacity building of various players in the sector. The study recommends establishment and application of performance measurement/ assessment system, monitoring and evaluation of projects at all phases and implementation of the suggested mitigation measures. Benchmarking of projects in Tanzania is also recommended for project performance improvement.