



Walden University  
**ScholarWorks**

---

Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies

Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies  
Collection

---

2017

# Strategies for Improving Utilization of Maternal Health Program Funds in Ghana

Dorothy Esi Awotwi  
*Walden University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Business Commons](#)

---

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu](mailto:ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu).

# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Dorothy Esi Awotwi

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
and that any and all revisions required by  
the review committee have been made.

## Review Committee

Dr. Craig Martin, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Roger Mayer, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Z Al Endres, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer  
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2017

Abstract

Strategies for Improving Utilization of Maternal Health Program Funds in Ghana

by

Dorothy Esi. Awotwi

MBA, University of Ghana, 1998

BA, University of Ghana, 1993

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

October 2017

## Abstract

Effective utilization of donor resources for maternal health remains a challenge in Ghana. The purpose of this descriptive multiple case study was to identify strategies and processes that recipient partners use to improve the utilization of maternal health program funds. Harrod and Domar's aid-to-investment-to-growth model, Collier's game theory, and Martens' agency theory on aid effectiveness informed the conceptual framework of the study. The study included face-to-face semistructured interviews with 7 program and project managers from 7 UNFPA recipient institutions in Ghana. Data analysis involved assembling, rearrangement, categorizing, and interpreting the data. Member checking and methodological triangulation of interview data with evidence from administrative documents of the 7 recipient institutions occurred to assure the validity of this study's findings. Three themes emerged: clearly identifying and effectively implementing program and project budget support mechanisms, implementing robust aid effectiveness management processes, and utilizing effective project management practices. Findings indicated institutional capacity strengthening, developing and using control mechanisms, and mitigation of funds disbursement delays and activity implementation delays as derivative pathways for maximizing utilization of maternal health program funds. The findings provide potential lessons for similar organizations' improving funds utilization by project management practitioners to sustain or increase donors' interest and mitigate development programs' funding gaps. Implications for social change include the potential for maternal mortality reduction to improve the wellbeing and quality of life of rural, poor, and marginalized women and children in Ghana.

Strategies for Improving Utilization of Maternal Health Program Funds in Ghana

by

Dorothy Esi. Awotwi

MBA, University of Ghana, 1998

BA, University of Ghana, 1993

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

October 2017

## Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my parents Patrick and Juliana, who raised me with skills of humility, integrity, hard work, determination, perseverance, and selflessness which positioned me to be a positive example for my workplace, church, and community. My mother often provided me with strength and encouragement throughout this doctoral study journey. I am eternally grateful for the unparalleled support from my sisters Efua, Bokua, and Otwiwa; you have been solid rocks. To my adorable daughter, Nhyira who as a toddler demonstrated her support for me by sitting beside my desk to watch me type my manuscript; I am thankful to you.

I appreciate all the support from my brothers Lord, Patrick, John, and Kwesi; sister -in-law Ellen, and other relations, especially my uncle William and aunt Maria, who have been a source of inspiration to me. To my uncle Fr. Martin, and other clergy- Fr. Edward and Fr. Clement, I am eternally grateful for all the prayers and counsel you provided especially when the journey was rough. To my Vincentian brothers and sisters, especially James, I thank you for your unflinching support.

## Acknowledgments

I am eternally grateful to God for granting me grace, guidance, patience, and favor to realize my dream of completing this DBA program. My sincere appreciation goes to my doctoral committee chairman, Dr. Craig Martin for his phenomenal support throughout this doctoral study journey. Dr. Craig, I appreciate all the guidance, inspiration, reassurance, coaching, and motivation you provided; God bless you. Special acknowledgements go to Dr. Roger Mayer, my second committee member, and Dr. Al Endres, the university research reviewer (URR) whose vigilant reviews helped me to improve the quality of my study to fully meet the DBA rubric standards. I also acknowledge my former colleagues of UNFPA Ghana Country Office, especially Dr. Ben Treveh, and my confidants, for all the support they provided to help me complete the DBA program.

## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	iv
Section 1: Foundation of the Study.....	1
Background of the Problem .....	1
Problem Statement .....	2
Purpose Statement.....	3
Nature of the Study .....	3
Research Question .....	5
Interview Questions .....	5
Conceptual Framework.....	6
Operational Definitions.....	8
Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations.....	8
Assumptions.....	8
Delimitations.....	9
Significance of the Study .....	10
Contribution to Business Practice.....	10
Implications for Social Change.....	11
A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature.....	12
Characteristics of Financial Aid.....	13
Management Practices for Increasing Aid Effectiveness.....	20
Project Management Practices.....	30
Funds Utilization.....	38



Transition .....	42
Section 2: The Project.....	43
Purpose Statement.....	43
Role of the Researcher .....	44
Participants.....	47
Research Method and Design .....	50
Research Method .....	50
Research Design.....	52
Population and Sampling .....	55
Ethical Research.....	59
Data Collection Instruments .....	61
Data Collection Technique .....	63
Data Organization Technique .....	66
Data Analysis .....	67
Reliability and Validity.....	70
Reliability.....	70
Validity .....	72
Transition and Summary.....	75
Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change .....	76

Introduction.....	76
Presentation of the Findings.....	76
Theme 1: Clearly Identifying and Effectively Implementing Program and Project Budget Support Mechanisms.....	78
Theme 2: Robust Aid Effectiveness Management Practices .....	84
Theme 3: Using Effective Project Management Practices .....	102
Applications to Professional Practice .....	127
Implications for Social Change.....	129
Recommendations for Action .....	130
Recommendations for Further Research.....	133
Reflections .....	134
Conclusion .....	136
References.....	138
Appendix A: Introductory Letter .....	166
Appendix B: Interview Protocol .....	168
Appendix C. Letter of Cooperation .....	169
Appendix D: Initial Contact E-mail.....	171
Appendix E. Interview Questions .....	172

## List of Tables

Table 1. Participants' Responses to Themes.....	78
Table 2. Participants' Responses to Aid Effectiveness Subthemes.....	85
Table 3. Participants' Responses to Project Management Subthemes.....	103

## List of Figures

Figure 1. NVivo cluster analysis of emerging themes .....77

Figure 2: Donor Funding Mechanisms.....81

## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Donor partner effort to increase development assistance does not always correlate with recipient partner fund utilization (Lucian, 2014). Ghana attained lower middle-income status in 2010 as a result of the rebasing of the economy and commercial oil exploration (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). Ghana's lower middle-income status has led to a gradual loss of concessional finance and aid from donors (Resnick, 2015). The new status reduces the range of development assistance available for program support, resulting in a resource gap in development finance (United Nations Development Program, 2015). Notwithstanding the country's financial resource gap, some sectors that benefit from the limited development assistance are unable to utilize it fully. The United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA's) development assistance to the Government of Ghana (GOG) contributes to strengthening maternal health interventions in the country. Though the development assistance from UNFPA is crucial for maternal health programming in Ghana, some beneficiary institutions are unable to utilize fully the program support funds from UNFPA (UNFPA, 2013).

### **Background of the Problem**

Government health care expenditure for countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including Ghana, is below the World Health Organization's (WHO) target of 15% of the national health budget (Ejughemre, 2013b). Donor development assistance to the health sector is of primary importance in Ghana and other sub-Saharan African countries (Ejumhemre, 2013a). However, the ability to utilize donor resources fully remains a challenge in countries such as Ghana (The Global Fund, 2016). UNFPA, given the

resource gap, maintains an annual funding allocation to the GOG through recipient partners implementing maternal mortality reduction programs (UNFPA, 2013).

Notwithstanding UNFPA's resource mobilization efforts, some government and nongovernment agencies fail to utilize fully the funds UNFPA provides to Ghana (UNFPA, 2013).

The effective utilization of donor funds requires compliance with robust management principles and systems (Dabelstein & Patton, 2013). The management of donor funds involves five key principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and Accra Agenda for Action (2008). These principles are: (a) ownership, (b) alignment, (c) harmonization, (d) managing for results, and (e) mutual accountability (Dabelstein & Patton, 2013). Therefore, donor and recipient countries are required to comply fully with these five principles to assure the continuation of aid flows (Dalil et al., 2014).

### **Problem Statement**

Donor partner efforts to increase development assistance have not directly translated into utilization by recipient partners (Tătulescu & Pătruți, 2014 ). Between 2011 and 2013, nearly 70% of recipients of maternal health program support funds failed to utilize, on average, a quarter of their total funding allocation (UNFPA, 2013). The general business problem is the nonmaximal utilization of maternal health program funds by recipient partners leads to missed opportunities for reducing maternal mortality. The specific business problem is some program and project managers of recipient institutions

lack strategies and processes for facilitating the maximal utilization (at least 97%) of maternal health program funds.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive multiple case study was to identify strategies and processes that recipient partners use to achieve maximal utilization (at least 97%) of maternal health program funds. The target population comprised program and project managers from seven organizations that utilized UNFPA maternal health program support funds fully in Ghana between 2011 and 2013. The identification of strategies facilitating maximal utilization of donor funds has the potential of contributing to positive social change by resolving the paradox of nonoptimal utilization of funds amidst the limited availability of resources (Tătulescu & Pătruți, 2014). Project management practitioners could learn effective funds utilization strategies to attain maternal mortality reduction program objectives in Ghana and improve the wellbeing and quality of life of the rural poor, particularly women.

### **Nature of the Study**

A qualitative methodology was applicable for this study. A qualitative methodology is appropriate when there is a problem or issue to explore, the results of which generate words rather than numbers for data analysis (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). The selection and use of the qualitative method of inquiry should enable exploration of the behavioral strategies that successfully enable maximal utilization of donor funds (Yin, 2014). The qualitative methodology involved the identification and exploration of the funds utilization and management processes recipient partners employ.

The data collection processes for qualitative inquiry involves interviews (Yin, 2014); the output of these data collection processes were word and phrases demonstrating actual solutions to the specific business problem.

Numbers and statistical tests apply to quantitative and mixed methods (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013); these methods do not provide insights into human experiences or perceptions. The mixed method includes a qualitative component that could enhance the depth of research findings (Gambrel & Butler, 2013). However, utilizing the mixed method concurrently can be complex and time-consuming for a single researcher (Caruth, 2013). The qualitative methodology was, therefore, most appropriate for my study.

The preferred design for this study was the multiple case study. The multiple case study design entails the analysis and in-depth description of a contemporary phenomenon within a bounded system (Yin, 2014). The case study design was appropriate compared to other designs because my objective for conducting this study was to identify and explore contextual conditions relevant to the maximal utilization of donor funds. Other designs, such as phenomenology, are appropriate when the researcher explores the meanings of lived experiences of individuals in a particular event (Achakul & Yolles, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Ethnographic researchers usually focus on long-term behavior patterns in cultural contexts (Mutchler, McKay, McDavitt & Gordon, 2013). Grounded theory researchers develop new theories based on the findings from exploring the processes or interactions involving a group of individuals (Moss, Gibson, & Dollarhide, 2014). Yin (2014) posited that using a case study was most appropriate for achieving an understanding of the positive nature of behavior to suggest for possible future use by



others. I selected the case study design to understand the strategies that aided the maximal fund utilization by the successful recipient partners.

### **Research Question**

The qualitative multiple case study provided an excellent opportunity to explore a phenomenon regarding funds utilization by recipient partners. The research questions related to some of the central issues of project management practices and the aid effectiveness principles. The following research question guided the study: What strategies and processes do recipient partners employ to achieve a maximal utilization (at least 97%) of maternal health program funds?

### **Interview Questions**

I used the following interview questions to address the research question above:

1. What is your understanding of maternal health program funding mechanisms in Ghana?
2. What are the obligations of donor and recipient institutions on maternal health program funding in Ghana?
3. How has the performance of those obligations of donor and recipient institutions reflected on the actual effectiveness of aid for maternal health programs in Ghana?
4. Describe the project management methodologies and practices you employ in implementing donor-supported maternal health programs.
5. How do the project management methodologies and practices reflect your strategies for maximizing fund utilization?

6. Describe the threats or challenges to utilizing donor-supported maternal health program resources
7. Describe how your project team has addressed those threats and challenges in utilizing maternal health program resources to obtain a high implementation rate.
8. Reflecting on your experiences in managing donor-supported resources, recommend if any, changes to the maternal health program fund utilization strategies that can further enhance benefits to your institution and other aid recipients.
9. Describe any other issue you would like to add in understanding the capacity issues regarding maternal health program funds utilization by recipient institutions within the aid-effectiveness structure.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework that I used in this study was the aid effectiveness framework. Aid effectiveness stems from the concept of advancing effective partnership between donors, recipient governments, and implementing partners (White & Morrissey, 1997). Aid effectiveness concepts emerged with the Harrod-Domar model of aid-to-investment-to growth. Harrod (1939) and Domar (1946) posited that aid was expected to positively influence savings and investment, and in turn, positively affect the economic growth of a developing country. Application of the model requires approaches to encourage savings and decrease an economy's capital output ratio (Harrod, 1939; Domar, 1946). Collier, Guillamunt, Guillamunt, and Gunning (1997) posited that the use of inducement as the dominant objective of donor conditionality yielded policy

disagreements and unsatisfactory economic growth outcomes in developing countries. Therefore, Collier et al. proposed a game-theoretic approach by relinquishing the donor inducement conditionality and adopting consensual relationships between donor and recipient partners. Martens, Mummert, Murrell, and Seabright (2002) also analyzed the agency-theory approach to the interplay between donor and recipient partners. Martens et al. contended the recipient's compliance with aid agreements was subject to *moral hazard* and *adverse selection*, resulting in inefficient aid expenditure.

The 2005 Paris Declaration outlined the management practices donors and recipient countries should adopt to improve the quality of aid and its effect on development (OECD, 2005). Two key issues formed the basis for endorsing the Paris Declaration principles by donors and recipient countries. These issues are the amount and timing of aid (aid predictability) and the effectiveness of aid in producing development results at the country level (OECD, 2005). Donor and recipient governments designed the five aid effectiveness principles to promote development and overcome impediments to the effectiveness of aid (OECD, 2005). These five aid effectiveness principles are: (a) ownership, (b) alignment, (c) harmonization, (d) managing for results, and (e) mutual accountability. Therefore, within the context of the predictability and effectiveness of aid, the donor partners agree with the recipient partner or country on the program of intervention. The donors and recipients also agree on the appropriate funding mechanism(s). Donor and recipient partners expect such agreements to facilitate the efficient expenditure of resources within a scheduled period to achieve the agreed development result (OECD, 2009).

## **Operational Definitions**

The purpose of the research was to explore the strategies that facilitate the maximal utilization of donor funds by recipient partners. The terms relate to financial aid and fund utilization issues.

*Donor partner:* A donor partner is a country, multilateral, or private organization that provides grants, loans, or technical support to developing countries, including government, and nongovernment agencies (Bayer & Urpelainen, 2013).

*Implementation rate:* The implementation rate refers to the proportion of budgeted resources utilized in a project life cycle (UNFPA, 2012a).

*Maximal fund utilization:* Maximal fund utilization refers to the execution of a minimum of 97% of allocated program resources (UNFPA, 2012a).

*Recipient partner:* A recipient partner is a country, government, or nongovernment agency that receives financial support or development assistance (OECD, 2014).

## **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are aspects of a study that researchers believe to be true, given the population, statistical tests (as applicable), and research design (Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2013). A key assumption regarding this study was that the participants responded to all research questions and provided the necessary and accurate responses in a manner that was credible and truthful in the context of the question asked. The participants also had

and demonstrated a comprehensive and objective understanding of project and funds management strategies.

### **Limitations**

The limitations relate to potential weaknesses or restrictions that are not within the researcher's control, and which can affect the study design and results (Madsen, 2013). One limitation of this study was the time constraints in conducting interviews given the respondents' demanding work schedules. In addition, there was a risk of participants' misinterpretation of the concepts and terms that related to maternal health program funds management.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations refer to the scope and boundaries of the study that can affect the transferability of the study's results (Firmin, Bouchard, Flexman, & Anderson, 2014). The purpose of this proposed study was to explore the strategies that facilitate the maximal utilization of maternal health program funds by recipient partners. The design of this multiple case study limited the scope of the study to beneficiaries of maternal health program funds. The target population comprised program and project managers from seven organizations that utilized UNFPA maternal health program support funds fully in Ghana between 2011 and 2013. The focus of this study was to describe the fund utilization strategies of program and project managers of institutions that received funding support from UNFPA who agreed to participate in the study. Program and project managers of institutions that were not beneficiaries of UNFPA funds in Ghana did not participate in the study.

## **Significance of the Study**

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The potential importance of the completed study will be in achieving an understanding of the strategies that facilitate the maximal utilization of maternal health program funds in Ghana by recipient partners. Successful development outcomes are largely dependent on the efficiency, integrity, and effectiveness of managing and spending resources (Kopinak, 2013). Understanding the strategies accounting for the recipient partners' ability to utilize fully development aid could contribute to the realization of successful development outcomes. Studies regarding the management practices and funding types or mechanisms on the recipient partners' capacities to maximize resource expenditure are limited. The few available studies relate more to the multidonor budget support funding type (Mukuni & Price 2013) than other funding types such as project aid using government systems--the funding type that UNFPA employs. Furthermore, several authors (Dalil et al., 2014; Hechler & Tostensen, 2012) recommended the conduct of targeted research on the Paris Declaration management principles with particular reference to mutual accountability and alignment.

As an employee of a funding agency in Ghana, I observed a need to enhance the funds utilization capacities of government and nongovernment organizations implementing development projects and programs. Therefore, the study findings contained both strategic and tactical management approaches that could facilitate funds disbursement and maximal utilization by donor and recipient partners respectively. Hence, both program and project managers could garner useful fund utilization strategies

to further enhance benefits to their institutions and other aid recipients. The results of the study may contribute to the knowledge base of development assistance in Ghana. In addition, the study findings will be a reference point for project management practitioners to (a) learn lessons, (b) improve the funds management capacities in their respective organizations, and (c) facilitate maximal fund utilization to sustain or increase donors' interest.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Protecting the health of mothers during reproduction guarantees their contribution to the entire process of economic and social development at the family, community, and national level (Kirigia, Mwabu, Orem, & Muthuri, 2014). The maternal mortality rate in Ghana is high, with a record of 319 deaths per 100,000 live births (WHO, 2015).

Maternal mortality exacerbates poverty at the family level and negatively impacts the nonhealth Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at the national level (Kirigia et al., 2014). In 2010, maternal deaths in 45 African countries led to a total nonhealth GDP loss of USD 4.5 billion (Kirigia et al., 2014).

Domestic and external investment in maternal mortality-reducing interventions provides a means for gaining significant economic returns. The results of the study could contribute to improving management strategies and practices to enable maximal utilization of maternal health program funds. The maximal utilization of maternal health program funds can result in the attainment of maternal mortality reduction program objectives; especially among the rural poor. The achievement of those objectives will: (a)

contribute to poverty reduction at the family level, (b) improve the quality of life of the rural poor, and (c) positively impact the nonhealth GDP at the national level.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

The purpose of conducting this study was to identify strategies and processes that recipient partners use to achieve maximal utilization (at least 97%) of maternal health program funds. The literature review should increase the understanding and provide similar and contrasting arguments on the phenomena regarding development assistance. The literature review comprises mainly contemporary peer-reviewed research on the aid effectiveness spectrum and the management of development resources. I present the literature under four parameters: (a) characteristics of financial aid, (b) management practices for increasing aid effectiveness, (c) project management practices, and (d) funds utilization.

As a means to identify the potential gaps or opportunities regarding the utilization of donor-supported program funds, I began with a search of the literature on financial aid. The strategy for the literature review was to research peer-reviewed and scholarly works from online libraries and databases. The primary online libraries included the Walden University Library and the United Nations Library. Other online databases and search engines utilized included ABI/INFORM, Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, ProQuest Dissertations and Thesis, SAGE Full-Text Collections, and Science Direct. In addition, I gathered literature from institutional websites, published materials, and textbooks.

Keywords in the search criteria included: *financial aid*, *donor funding mechanisms*, *aid effectiveness principles*, and *project management practices*. The



literature review includes 89 citations. Ninety-two percent of the total sources were published within 5 years of the expected 2017 year of CAO approval of my study. Ninety-eight percent of the total sources were peer-reviewed. The references also contain two nonpeer-reviewed sources given their relevance to the research problem.

### **Characteristics of Financial Aid**

Donors' development assistance or financial aid to government and nongovernment organizations is through different forms. The Official Development Assistance (ODA) definition includes emphases on five elements of financial aid, namely: (a) type of aid flows, (b) source, (c) recipients, (d) development purpose, and (e) concessional character (OECD, 2014). Mukuni and Price (2014) posited that the forms or types of financial aid included: (a) balance of payment support, (b) sector budget support, (c) project aid using government systems, and (d) multilateral aid. Financial aid to development projects was initially through the project-based approach (Giri, Khatiwada, Shrestha, & Chettri, 2013). According to Mukuni and Price (2014), the project-based approach did not promote the recipient countries' ownership of development processes. Therefore, in 2006, donor and recipient partners agreed to shift from projects-based approach to budget support to counter the weaknesses of the project-based approach to development aid (Mukuni & Price, 2014). Under the budget support modality (BSM), donor partners channel aid through recipient country systems (Mukuni & Price, 2014).

The World Bank initiated the BSM, which was launched with the aim to support national development poverty reduction strategies (Molenaers, 2012; Langan, 2014). The BSM is a financial support mechanism involving the pooling of donor funds with a

recipient government's national revenues (Langan, 2014). Molenaers (2012) stated the BSM was (a) fungible, (b) designed to support medium- and long-term development strategies, and (c) lowered transaction costs given the integrated and coordinating approach to donor support as outlined in the aid effectiveness principles. Notwithstanding Molenaers' justification on the benefits of BSM, Mukuni and Price (2014) observed that some funding agencies still preferred the project-based aid. According to Mukuni and Price, with the project-based aid the donor partners had more say in the work plans and budgets for the respective projects.

Molenaers (2012) conducted a qualitative study to contextualize the use of the BSM. Molenaers compared the policies and practices of five donors with the guidelines for applying the BSM. Molenaers observed the donors used two approaches: budget support for strengthening technocratic development and budget support for technocratic and democratic governance reforms. The BSM as a lever for technocratic reforms facilitates aid predictability and consistency given the linkages between funds disbursement and agreed on targets (Molenaers, 2012).

**Donor conditionality.** Conditionality remains a primary characteristic of financial aid to developing countries (Acht, Mahmoud, & Thiele, 2015; Collier et al., 1997; Milner, Nielson, & Findley, 2016). Collier et al. (1997) presented five objectives of donor conditionality, namely: (a) inducement, (b) selectivity, (c) paternalism, (d) restraint, and (e) signaling. Inducement involves the offering of aid to change the policy environment of a recipient country (Collier et al., 1997). Selectivity relates to aid allocation to specific countries with policy environments that align with the donors' goals

(Collier et al, 1997). Paternalism refers to the donors' restriction of aid expenditure in a recipient country to particular goods and services (Collier et al, 1997). Restraint relates to donors' maintenance of a policy environment favorable to them in a recipient country (Collier et al., 1997). Signaling refers to the donors' recognition of their control over private sector decisions as a signal for policy improvement in a recipient country (Collier et al., 1997).

Collier et al. (1997) noted the inducement objective was the dominant donor conditionality for aid to recipient countries. According to Deitrich (2013) and Milner et al. (2016), donors employ inducement tactics to advance their goals for development, reform, or democracy promotion. The inducement tactics include: (a) alteration in funds disbursement modalities and delivery channels, (b) withholding of aid flows, and (c) threats to suspend development assistance to a recipient country (Acht et al., 2015; Milner et al., 2016). The political economies and diplomatic preferences of donor countries influence the different aid policies and inducement tactics that the respective donors employ (Arel-Bundock, Atkinson, & Potter, 2015; Deitrich, 2016).

Milner et al. (2016) and Wamboye, Adekola, and Sergi (2013) stated donors provided financial aid using geostrategic or nongeostategic conditions. The geostrategic condition indicates the disbursement of aid is dependent on a recipient country's political or institutional environment (Wamboye et al., 2013). Galárraga, Wirtz, Santa-Ana-Tellez, and Korenromp (2013) conducted a qualitative study to explore the domestic and donor resources for HIV programming. According to Galárraga et al., the sustenance of reasonable commitments by donor and recipient governments is crucial for maximizing

health outcomes. Galárraga et al. analyzed the World Bank and UNAIDS data on health expenditures and estimated resource needs for HIV and AIDS in 84 countries. Galárraga et al. identified imbalances in expected and actual domestic and donor contributions for HIV and AIDS programming. The imbalances in the expected and actual contributions are a reflection of the challenge of the use of political considerations as a basis for financial support by some donors (Galárraga et al., 2013).

Regarding the nongeostategic condition, Wamboye et al.(2013) posited that a donor's provision of financial aid to a country was irrespective of the country's political situation or institutional environment (Wamboye et al., 2013). Whereas some individual donor countries justify providing financial aid by employing geostrategic conditions; several multilateral donors employ nongeostategic conditions when providing development assistance (Wamboye et al., 2013). Galarraga et al. (2013) recommended the disbursement of donor funding according to country needs and funding gaps to maximize the beneficial effect of HIV treatment and programming.

Wamboye et al. (2013) argued financial aid based on geostrategic conditions yielded neutral effects on growth. Financial aid based on nongeostategic conditions yields growth-enhancing effects (Wamboye et al., 2013). However, the nonconsideration of political underpinnings or democratic shortcomings by donors might generate negative perceptions about the donor (Molenaers, 2012). According to Molenaers, the public and other political groups in recipient countries might perceive that donors indifferent to democratic shortcomings support governments that lack legitimacy. Donors may use a threat to indicate their concerns about democratic shortcomings (Molenaers, 2012).

Nonetheless, the withdrawal of aid as a sanction might negatively affect other areas of technocratic reforms (Molenaers, 2012).

Sjostedt (2013) assessed the application of aid to international development policy. Sjostedt observed different perspectives on the criteria for development assistance by donors, for example, whether to give aid to recipients that perform well by the donors' standards or give aid to recipients who have the greatest need. Sjostedt recommended future research for identifying strategies to address the criteria for development assistance. Grépin, Fan, Shen, and Chen (2014) suggested the use of objective criteria for allocating aid to recipient partners. Traditional and nontraditional donor partners must avoid imposing their priorities on the recipient partners (Grépin et al., 2014).

**Game-theoretic aid model.** Collier et al. (1997) proposed adopting consensual relationships between donor and recipient partners to yield efficient aid expenditure. Game theorists (Collier et al., 1997; McLean, 2015) proposed a strategic interplay between donors and recipients to secure positive outcomes from aid flows. Breeveld, Hermans, and Veenstra (2013) noted application of the game-theoretic model enabled identification of the specific choices of donors and recipients and the consequences of those choices. Analysis of those choices, strategies, and preferences available to the donors and recipients is critical to foster mutually beneficial outcomes (Breeveld et al., 2013). According to McLean (2015), using a game-theoretic model enables decision making by donors and recipients to address diverging preferences and interests.

Bi and Zhou (2014) explored the level of payoffs with the cooperative and noncooperative game-theoretic models. To use the noncooperative game-theoretic model

requires employing strategies for maximizing payoffs by individual players (Bi & Zhou, 2014). According to Bi and Zhou, players that use the noncooperative game-theoretic models yield undesirable payoffs. However, using the cooperative game-theoretic model enables highly beneficial payoffs among all players (Bi & Zhou, 2014).

McLean (2015) presented varied arguments on the application of cooperative and noncooperative game-theoretic models to financial aid agreements between donors and recipients. McLean developed a game-strategic statistical model to explore the decision-making nature and causal relationships between donors and recipients of environmental aid. McLean listed three categories of environmental aid recipients, namely: (a) unconditionally cooperative, (b) conditionally cooperative, and (c) uncooperative. According to McLean, unconditionally cooperative and uncooperative recipients that place value on environmental protection maintain their co-financing commitments to projects irrespective of the donors' incentives. However, decision making on the co-financing commitments by conditionally cooperative recipients' is dependent on the donor's incentives. According to McLean, conflicting interests of donors and recipients and uncertainties about the recipients' commitment hinders their level of cooperation. Therefore, strategic interactions between donors and the three categories of recipients are critical to yield mutually beneficial outcomes (McLean, 2015).

**Agency-theoretic aid model.** Agency theorists (Agarwal, Goel, & Vashishtha, 2014; Namazi, 2013; Roach, 2015) maintain the principal-agent approach to contractual agreements helps to align the interests of all players. Similarly, McLean (2015) recognized the value of the principal-agent model in addressing the divergent preferences

of donors and recipients. Namazi (2013) posited the principal-agent model was pertinent to addressing management control systems in contractual arrangements. However, limitations such as moral hazards, information asymmetry, and adverse selection threaten the achievement of desired outcomes of the contractual agreements (Roach, 2015). These limitations occur when a principal or agent engages in noncompliance activities at the expense of the other party (Roach, 2015). Namazi recommended further research to analyze the relevance of the agency theory.

**Alternative mechanisms for mobilizing financial resources.** Several authors continue to advocate for alternative mechanisms for donor funding (Grépin et al., 2014; Katz, Routh, Bitran, Hulme, & Avila, 2014). Katz et al. conducted an exploratory study for identifying the alternative mechanisms for resource mobilization that could replace donor resources for HIV programs. Katz et al. reviewed the literature of potential nondonor funded resources for national HIV responses and Global Fund documentation and data from 17 low and middle-income countries. Katz et al. identified parameters that included: (a) the funding source, (b) the financing agent, (c) the quantity of resources, and (d) enabling and risk factors. In addition, Katz et al. identified four recurring and one-time alternate sources of funding. These sources of funding were: (a) earmarked levy for HIV from country budgets, (b) health insurance and other risk-pooling schemes, (c) debt conversion, and (d) concessionary loans. Katz et al. observed the repayment of concessionary loans was challenging as most low-income countries had HIV programs costing between 0.5% and 4% of the GDP.

Katz et al. (2014) proposed countries consider four important alternatives including concessionary loans as a means to replace HIV donor funding in specific contexts. In addition, Katz et al. recommended close multisectoral collaboration, particularly with the Ministry of Finance, to ensure efficiency of the resource mobilization design. However, Katz et al. emphasized fully synchronizing new financing mechanisms for HIV investments with economic growth to yield high social benefits.

Ejughemre (2013a) raised similar concerns as those of Katz et al.(2014) on the sustainability of projects heavily dependent on donor funds. Ejughemre emphasized the need for recipient countries to implement workable and sustainable policies for the gradual exit from donor funding for health interventions. The policy implementation options include: (a) reprioritizing public expenditures, (b) increasing private sector participation, (c) adding local research for health care financing options, and (d) tackling corruption (Ejughemre, 2013a; Ejughemre, 2013b; Hope, 2013). Such measures, according to Ejughemre, facilitate self-sufficiency and self-reliance, hence avoiding total dependence on donor support.

### **Management Practices for Increasing Aid Effectiveness**

Aid effectiveness is a critical metric for both funding agencies and recipient countries (Karini, 2013). The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) contains five underlining principles for development assistance: (a) ownership, (b) alignment, (c) harmonization, (d) managing for results, and (e) mutual accountability. Ownership means developing countries set their development strategies, improve their institutions, and tackle corruption (Dabelstein & Patton, 2013; OECD, 2005). Alignment involves donor



countries' supporting recipient countries' development strategies through the use of local systems and structures (Dabelstein & Patton, 2013; OECD, 2005). With harmonization, donor countries and organizations coordinate their actions, simplify procedures and share information to avoid duplication (Dabelstein & Patton, 2013; OECD, 2005). Managing for results entails recipient countries and donors agreeing on performance management and measurement techniques (Dabelstein & Patton, 2013; OECD, 2005). Mutual accountability makes both donors and recipients collectively responsible for the achievement of the recipient countries' development results (Dabelstein & Patton, 2013; OECD, 2005). The Accra Agenda for Action (2008) and Busan (2011) partnership agreements emphasized and reaffirmed global commitments to (a) assure aid predictability, (b) strengthen country ownership and systems, and (c) untie aid restrictions (Dabelstein & Patton, 2013).

Wamboye et al. (2013) presented three broad views on the effectiveness of financial aid to developing countries. The broad views are: (a) the takeoff hypothesis, (b) conditionality requirement, and (c) quality aid argument. The takeoff hypothesis viewpoint means that an increased, reasonable, and a sustained flow of foreign aid can help countries overcome financial gaps and mobilize additional resources for self-sustained growth (Wamboye et al., 2013). The conditionality requirement viewpoint involves arguments that developing countries with good fiscal, monetary, and trade policies yield more effective results from foreign aid than countries without such policies (Wamboye et al., 2013). The viewpoint on the quality of aid deals with the arguments that foreign aid under the nongeostategic considerations is more effective than foreign

aid under geostrategic considerations (Wamboye et al., 2013). Dalil et al. (2014) presented similar arguments and mentioned three major issues that usually arose between donors and recipient partners. The issues are: (a) inadequate aid, (b) untimely disbursement of aid to recipient countries, and (c) ineffective aid (Dalil et al., 2014).

Dabelstein and Patton (2013) evaluated the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness by examining the history of international agreements that resulted in (a) the Paris Declaration, (b) the significance of the declaration, and (c) the relevance of the declaration. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the reforms achieved or not achieved to guide donors and recipient countries in enhancing aid effectiveness (Dabelstein & Patton, 2013). Dabelstein and Patton analyzed the conclusions of four high-level forums on aid effectiveness to assess the efficacy of the Paris Declarations for catalyzing aid reforms and assess the actual progress in implementing the five aid effectiveness principles. Dabelstein and Patton concluded the Declaration was a landmark international agreement that provided a significant, practical, and action-oriented roadmap for achieving specific targets.

Notwithstanding Dabelstein's and Patton's (2013) justification on the benefits of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, Wamboye et al. (2013) provided an alternate approach for examining the effectiveness of aid. Wamboye et al. conducted a quantitative study to assess the effectiveness of foreign aid on the economic growth of least developed countries (LDCs). Wamboye et al. considered two dimensions of aid; quantity and quality. The measurement of the quantity of aid was through an analysis of the net official flows from development assistance committee (DAC) donors and multilateral

agencies; as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the respective LDCs. The DAC donors comprised bilateral aid, including aid from France and the United Kingdom. The multilateral agencies comprised six United Nations Agencies. The agencies included: (a) UNFPA, (b) World Food Program (WFP), and (c) United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Other agencies were: (a) United Nations Development Program (UNDP), (b) United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), and (c) the United Nations Transition Authority (UNTA). Given the unavailability of data, Wamboye et al. used source based variables as proxies for quality of aid.

Wamboye et al. (2013) concluded both the quantity and the quality of aid positively or negatively affected the economic growth of Africa's LDCs. The bilateral and multilateral aid enhanced economic growth in LDCs with British legal origin (Wamboye et al., 2013). Regarding the multilateral agencies, aid from UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, and UNFPA recorded statistically significant positive effects on former British colonies (Wamboye et al., 2013). Aid from UNHCR and UNTA, however, retarded economic growth on British colonies (Wamboye et al., 2013). Wamboye et al. observed some growth retarding effects for LDCs with French legal origin.

Dalil et al. (2014) questioned whether impressive health outcomes implied aid had been effective. Using the five principles of aid effectiveness as a basis, Dalil et al. analyzed the health sector funding from donors in Afghanistan to assess the effectiveness of donor aid. Dalil et al. concluded donor aid to the Afghan health sector had been effective. The clear, realistic, and consistent leadership role the health ministry demonstrated among stakeholders indicated adherence to the ownership principle (Dalil

et al., 2014). Concerning the principle of alignment, Dalil et al. observed that there were sufficient coordination and collaboration among donors in aligning assistance to the Afghan health sector strategy. Collaborative decision-making between the health sector and donors facilitated a geographic approach to donor financing and the coverage of health interventions (Dalil et al., 2014). Joint performance monitoring of health sector activities and the use of multiple data sources by donors and government partners facilitated focusing on, and tracking of, results (Dalil et al., 2014). The open dialogue between the Afghan health sector, donors, and stakeholders fostered strong relationships that sustained mutual accountability (Dalil et al., 2014).

Bakoup (2013) suggested that in general, the budget support approach had a positive effect on all key aid effectiveness determinants. Barakat, Rzeszut, and Martin (2011) reviewed 233 reports on multidonor trust funds, and observed that ownership showed more positive than negative effects; however, the remaining four principles showed nearly equal positive and negative effects. The DAC peer reviews under the harmonization principle suggested the excessive fragmentation of aid hindered aid effectiveness (Lawson, 2013). However, Brown and Swiss (2013) observed little evidence that fragmentation of development assistance impeded aid effectiveness. Several reasons account for donor partners' varying preferences for aid fragmentation. The reasons include: (a) limited absorptive capacity of recipients, (b) trade and diplomatic interests, and (c) consequences of ending long-standing relationships (Brown & Swiss, 2013). Brown and Swiss concluded that donors need to increase exploring effective strategies for making aid effective and to reduce concerns about fragmentation.

Cabral, Russo, and Weinstock (2014) identified weaknesses of some aid effectiveness principles. Cabral et al. assessed the quality of South-South technical cooperation practices by emerging donors within the prevailing aid-effectiveness paradigm. Cabral et al. observed the Brazilian technical cooperation was demand driven and offered solutions that were tailored to meet the needs of governments from recipient countries. However, contrary to the objectives of the harmonization principle of aid effectiveness, the engagement with other development actors at the recipient country was either limited or nonexistent. Cabral et al. also observed an alignment of the technical cooperation from Brazil with country strategies and processes. However, the alignment was on an ad-hoc basis. In addition, Cabral et al. noted the monitoring and evaluation of technical cooperation programs were weak; constraining a focus on results. Furthermore, Cabral et al. observed policy frameworks and tracking systems on cooperation delivery at the country level; thereby compromising transparency and constraints in addressing accountability requirements in the beneficiary countries. According to Cabral et al., the practice of the Brazilian cooperation in health deviated from the aid effectiveness principles. Cabral et al. also concluded the standards for conducting development cooperation within the aid effectiveness architecture were inadequate.

Dalil et al. (2014) identified lessons emerging from the partnerships between the donors and recipient countries that facilitated the effectiveness of aid. The capacity of the recipient government to respond to the financial and audit requirements of the donor avoided disagreements on reporting procedures (Dalil et al., 2014). Secondly, evidence-based allocation of aid and technically sound consistency with government priorities

demonstrated potential for success; leading to donor confidence in the recipient government (Dalil et al., 2014).

Dalil et al. (2014) recommended further research on the nature of the relationships between recipient partners and donors on health outcomes as a means to identify factors for improving foreign aid. Cabral et al. (2014) suggested further research to identify appropriate ways of conducting development cooperation. Barakat et al. (2011) also recommended conducting research on alignment, mutual accountability, and the development of uniform guidelines for practice to improve aid effectiveness. Barakat et al., Cabral et al., and Dalil et al.'s recommendation for further inquiry on the aid effectiveness principles indicate the need for further data and strategic information on the effectiveness of the five Paris Declaration principles.

Donor and recipient partners collectively contribute to coordination issues within the aid effectiveness structure (Alenoghena, Aigbiremolen, Abejegah, & Eboreime, 2014; Leiderer, 2013). Sjostedt (2013) conducted a qualitative case study to assess partner country ownership to development strategy within the new aid architecture. Sjostedt observed tensions particularly in the area of conflicting goals between the donor and the recipient country at different levels, resulting in the nonadherence to country ownership by the donor. Although donors and Ghana's health sector promoted harmonization and alignment, Pallas, Novignon, Aikins, and Ruger (2015) observed prevailing tensions between donor harmonization and country ownership. Pallas et al. conducted a qualitative case study to investigate donor and recipient partners' reactions to the proliferation of donor support to Ghana's health sector. The application of the harmonization principle

strengthened the donors' bargaining power, limiting the recipient agency's ability to negotiate with individual donors (Pallas et al., 2015). However, the limited ability of donors to address attribution and accountability of pooled resources could lead to competition and support of stand-alone projects to increase donor visibility (Lawson, 2013; Pallas et al., 2015). Further research is necessary to identify innovative aid disbursement and policy implementation strategies to enhance accountability and coordination amongst donor and recipient partners (Leiderer, 2013; Sjostedt, 2013).

Hechler and Tostensen (2012) reviewed existing literature and analyzed the experiences of operationalizing the mutual accountability principle in Africa. Hechler and Tostensen suggested the strengthening of mutual accountability through risk assessments of countries and recipient organizations. In addition, Hechler and Tostensen recommended the performance monitoring of civil servants through two strategies, namely: performance contracts and using a strong anticorruption lens in reviewing mutual accountability concepts and practices. Dalil et al. (2014) also emphasized the need for accountability of donor funds by governments, NGOs, and relevant stakeholders. According to Dalil et al., good governance, democracy, and transparency ensured predictability of aid flows. Furthermore, transparency between donor and recipient partners is crucial to enable proper tracking of resources and measuring the effect of development assistance (Grépin et al., 2014). Kopinak (2013) raised concerns on the erratic, unpredictable, donor disbursements that negatively affected project outcomes. According to Kopinak, sustainable development is dependent on a flexible, predictable, timely, and sustained release of donor funds.

Notwithstanding the role of aid predictability in sustainable development, the recipients' points of view are critical for measuring the effectiveness of a donor-funded program. Barakat et al. (2011) suggested clear communication with stakeholders was essential for improving aid effectiveness. Adusei-Asante (2013) provided similar viewpoints after investigating the outcomes of a World Bank-funded community based rural development project implemented in Ghana from 2005 to 2011. According to Adusei-Asante, three factors were crucial for facilitating the operationalization and effectiveness of aid. The factors are: (a) the political and cultural realities of a recipient country, (b) the theories and complex concepts that drive aid programs, and (c) critical discussion of the decentralization theories that buttress aid programs. Similarly, Thamhain (2013) posited that processes that yielded effective cross-cultural collaboration and communication among stakeholders enabled the effective management of complex project situations.

Relationship agreements and contracting methods influence the effectiveness of partnerships for sustainable development. Dolo (2013) investigated the key issues and factors that influenced the successful relationship agreements with traditional practices. The findings revealed three key common determinants of successful outcomes in both relationship agreements and traditional contracting methods: (a) cost efficiency, (b) trust, and (c) communication. The findings also supported the hypothesis that a variety of underlying elements associated with relationship agreements and traditional contracting influenced partnering success.



Kopinak (2013) analyzed the roles of, and linkages between, humanitarian assistance and the effectiveness of development aid. In addition, Kopinak determined the issues that influenced the effectiveness and sustainability of humanitarian interventions within the aid effectiveness structure. Kopinak identified donor accountability as a threat to achieving humanitarian project outcomes. Kopinak observed the nonexistence of enforceable criteria for determining the agencies that qualified to be recipients of donor funds. In addition, Kopinak suggested the achievement of cost-effective quality services involve not only an investigation of the legitimate legacy of the recipient agencies, but a balanced approach to capacity assessment – strength, coping, resilience, and challenges.

Kopinak's (2013) conclusion of nonenforceable criteria in selecting agencies as recipient partners is not applicable to all donor partners or development agencies. Some development agencies such as UNFPA adopt stringent measures for selecting recipient partners using a balanced approach to capacity assessments similar to Kopinak's recommendations. The purpose of the capacity assessment is twofold: to assess the capacity gaps of the potential recipient partners, and to assess the level of risk for managing UNFPA funds (UNFPA, 2012a). The level of risk of a potential recipient partner determines the preferred type of funding modality from which the recipient partner will benefit (UNFPA, 2012a). Recipient partners that demonstrate an adequate technical capacity and a low risk for managing UNFPA funds apply the direct cash transfer modality (UNFPA, 2012a). A key requirement for such partners is the total expenditure of the quarterly disbursements from UNFPA as agreed in their annual work plans.

## **Project Management Practices**

Project management practices influence the utilization of funds within the project cycle (Keng'ara, 2014). Wells (2012) conducted a qualitative multiple case study to explore the benefits of four project management methodologies (PMMs) to project teams, managers, projects, and organizations. The four methodologies were: (a) Projects in Control Environments, version 2 (PRINCE2), (b) in-house structured PMM, (c) gate-phased PMM, and (d) gate-phased PMM that an *agile* approach replaced. Alternate tools project teams use in planning and implementing projects include the cause-effect diagrams, provisional budget, and brainstorming techniques (Vacar, 2013).

Wells (2012) identified a unidirectional approach to the implementation of PMMs. About 48% of the respondents indicated PMMs were of no benefit; the PMMs hindered their project delivery (Wells, 2012). Factors accounting for not using PMMs and tools included: (a) inadequate financial resources, (b) limited or no interest among project teams, and (c) limited knowledge about project management (Vacar, 2013). Nonetheless, Wells posited that the traditional structural PMMs were beneficial, depending on the type of PMM and the level of the team members' involvement in the project. The benefits of PMMs also depend on the levels of (a) experience, (b) authority, (c) accountability, and (d) overall responsibility of the individual on the project team.

Wells (2012) cautioned the benefits of PMMs were diminishing and could potentially yield unintended consequences at the project level that could hinder project success (Wells, 2012). However, Joslin and Müller (2015) explored the relationship between PMMs and project success and concluded the use of PMMs could facilitate

project success. Radu and Nistor (2014) observed the application of PRINCE2 and agile methodologies were common within the information technology (IT) and construction industries. Radu and Nistor explored the methodologies that project teams in the UK and USA adopted during the project initiation process, and concluded the agile methodology, which appeared to be predominant in the IT industry, was predisposed to excess cost and financial risk.

The criteria for measuring project success are varied. Bud (2014) posited that the success of a project hinged on the ability to achieve indicator targets. Other criteria for project success are the submission, approval, and awarding of project proposals and, the amount of funds contracted and received after the project implementation or closure (Bud, 2014). Alias, Zawawi, Yusof, and Aris (2014) identified five variables for project success. These are: (a) project management action, (b) project procedures, (c) human related factors, (d) project related factors, and (e) the external environment. Allen, Alleyne, Framer, McRae, and Turner (2014) argued the project management plan (PMP) and responsibility assigned matrix (RAM) were important tools for project success in both civilian and government sectors. The PMP and RAM enable effective documentation and monitoring of the project objectives, schedule, and budget (Allen et al., 2014). In addition, the PMP facilitates communication protocols regarding management arrangements and reporting structures within the project teams (Ofori, 2013). Holistic, people-based project management approaches positively affect project performance (Obradovic, Jovanovic, Petrovic, Mihic, & Mitrovic, 2013). As such, there

is a need to engage competent project management practitioners to manage projects within the increasingly complex and dynamic environments (Voss & Kock, 2013).

Risk management is central to project performance (Bodicha, 2015; Herteliu & Despa, 2014). Employing risk management models can yield several benefits (Preda, 2013). Teller (2013) examined the relationship between project portfolio risk management and project portfolio success. Teller conducted a literature review of previous studies to investigate the influence of portfolio risk management and contingencies on project portfolio success. Teller provided a coherent and integrated framework to explain three components as relevant to portfolio risk management. The three components are: (a) organization, (b) process, and (c) risk management culture. Teller postulated the linkages of the three components to risk management quality had moderating effects on project success. Notably, successful risk management and control is dependent on the timeliness and efficiency of the mitigation strategies (Yu, Chen, Klein, & James, 2013).

Bud (2014) conducted a qualitative case study to assess the success of EU-funded projects within the Babes-Bolyai University. For the purpose of the research, Bud defined project success as the number of proposal applications submitted, approved, and contracted within the period 2007 to 2013. Bud observed 71% of applications submitted were approved and awarded. According to Bud, the reasons accounting for the *rejection* of proposals included: (a) inconsistencies with the descriptions of objectives, strategies, and indicators, (b) unsustainable project description, and (c) noncorrelation of activities

with desired results. Bud recommended further research to explore project success taking into account the funds absorption rates after project implementation.

Critical conditions that facilitate project success include: (a) scope of the project, (b) appropriate planning, (c) appropriate communication, and (d) the existence of control mechanisms (Alias et al., 2014). Mukuni and Price (2014) conducted a case study analysis and identified lessons from the implementation of donor-funded projects in Zambia. According to Mukuni and Price, the project design was critical to the success or failure of a project. Using simple project designs enables easy implementation of projects (Mukuni & Price., 2013). In addition, employing benchmarking enables the effective management of resources (Plaček, Půček, and Šimčíková, 2013). Clear job descriptions and remuneration policies for project managers could facilitate the implementation of effective strategies in the management of EU-funded projects (Plaček et al., 2013).

A focus on critical success factors is necessary to enable the achievement of project goals (Hwang & Lim, 2013). The critical success factors include: (a) achievement of project objectives, (b) client satisfaction, (c) timely project completion, and (d) conformance of project schedule and quality outcomes (Hwang & Lim, 2013). Other project performance-enhancing factors are: (a) cost and benefits analysis, (b) accountability, (c) risk management, and (d) maintenance of clear and focused scope and objectives (DeJong, Annema, & Van Wee, 2013). Mukuni and Price (2014) provided varying perspectives on the critical success factors that contributed to the success or, when absent, the failure of projects. The factors include: (a) the multiplicity of donors, (b) balance of power between donors and the host, and (c) changes in leaders. Other

critical success factors were: (a) incentives or motivational factors, (b) publicity, group dynamics, and (c) the extent to which implementers understand the project design (Mukuni & Price, 2014).

Emotional intelligence is a critical contributing factor for project success. Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's ability to recognize and actively manage emotions (Rezvani, Chang, Wiewiora, Ashkanasy, Jordan, & Zolin, 2016). Trejo (2014) identified the relationships between emotional intelligence skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management, and project management outcomes. The criterion variables for project outcomes included scope creep, in-budget project cost, and project timeliness issues. Trejo observed a positive relationship between the emotional intelligence skills and project outcomes. Similarly, Jiang (2014) suggested the application of emotional sensitivity, maturity, and competence by project management practitioners enhanced performance. According to Stevens (2013), integration of knowledge, skills, and abilities is a primary requirement for acquiring behavioral-based competencies.

Leadership performance is a crucial requirement for the effective management of projects (Liphadzi, Aigbavboa, & Thwala, 2015). Emotional, intellectual, and managerial leadership styles are essential competencies for the management of project teams (Galvin, Gibbs, Sullivan, & Williams, 2014). A project manager's ability to apply critical thinking and adapt to new situations enables exceptional project outcomes (Galvin et al., 2014). The ability to manage dynamic environments during project implementation is of primary concern to project managers (Ahmed, Azmi, & Masood, 2013).

Project managers and leaders require multidisciplinary skills and culturally sensitive approaches to lead project teams to operate in dynamic environments (Androniceanu, Ristea, & Uda, 2015). In addition, skill sets such as strategy implementation techniques, team building, and interpersonal knowledge are essential to enabling project teams to maximize performance (Schoemaker, Krupp, & Howland, 2013; Sohmen, 2013). Behavioral attributes such as interpersonal and emotional perception skills are necessary for leadership effectiveness (Bátool, 2013). Communication skills and trust attributes engender positive relationships within project teams (Vacar, 2014) and increase the value of teamwork to maximize performance (Zulch, 2014).

Toader, Brad, Adamov, Marin, and Moisa (2010) examined the factors that led to the failure of projects. Toader et al. reviewed the literature on project success and failures and identified the main variables contributing to project failures. The variables effecting project failure include the lack of internal and external communication links and the lack of an efficient project team (Toader et al., 2010). In addition, time-consuming administrative processes affect actual project implementation negatively (Keng'ara, 2014; Lucian, 2014). Plaček et al. (2013) concluded the administrative processes of investment projects occupied more time (45%) than actual project implementation (38%). The reasons accounting for the large time requirement for administrative processes include: (a) limited technical capacity of the workers in the municipalities, (b) delays in reviewing monitoring reports, and (c) delays in processing payment requests (Plaček et al., 2013). Other factors contributing to the time-consuming administrative processes

included the vague job descriptions of project managers; and more emphasis on the formal than the substantive aspects of the project (Plaček et al., 2013).

Zuofa and Ochieng (2015) concluded the main factors for project delays and project failures included: (a) improper planning, (b) poor contractor management, (c) poor technical performances, and (d) corruption. In addition, little or no executive support, inadequate supervision, and nonadherence to project schedules contribute to project failures (Hjelmbrekke, Hansen, & Lohne, 2015; Koi-Akrofi, Quarshie, & Koi-Akrofi, 2013). Allen et al.(2014) extended the conditions for project failures to include inadequate external influence, extreme scope, and inadequate budgets. Koi-Akrofi et al. (2013) recommended the adoption of effective project planning, control, and monitoring mechanisms to enhance project performance. Similarly, Hjelmbrekke et al. (2015) and Zuofa and Ochieng (2015) maintained clear strategic focus, efficient governance systems, and punitive actions against corrupt practices enhance project efficiency and effectiveness.

Ofori and Deffor (2013) observed the continuous recording of project failures in Ghana despite the increasing awareness of project management and standards. Ofori and Deffor conducted a quantitative study to investigate the level of maturity among project-oriented organizations in Ghana. Ofori and Deffor observed organizations operating in the nonprofit (NGO) category exhibited relatively higher levels of maturity than firms in the public sector. Ofori and Deffor concluded project management maturity occurred in phases; project management maturity did not occur as an event but was an ongoing



interlinked process. In addition, Ofori and Deffor posited that organizations could not claim to be mature in one area and neglect others.

Ofori and Deffor suggested, to attain the full benefits of the projects, project management practitioners and project implementation organizations in Ghana should strive to attain maturity in each of the five phases of the *project management life cycle* (PMLC). The five phases of the project management life cycle are: (a) scoping, (b) planning, (c) launching, (d) monitoring and controlling, and (f) closing (Wysocki, 2014). The *system development life cycle* (SDLC) comprises interrelated phases with predefined conditions (Valacich, George, & Hoffer, 2015) that align with the project management life cycle. Each phase of the SDLC is crucial for project implementation (Chatzimichailidou, Katsavounis, Chatzopoulos, & Lukac, 2013). The phases are: (a) definition, (b) analysis, (c) design, (d) development, (e) test, (f) implementation, and (g) termination or maintenance (Wysocki, 2014).

Besner and Hobbs (2013) conducted a quantitative study to investigate contextual variations in project practice namely the project management practices, tools, and techniques in multidimensional contexts. In addition, Besner and Hobbs assessed how the patterns of practice varied among contextual archetypes. Another objective of the study was to identify the project management practices within the contextual archetypes that were best practices. Besner and Hobbs identified five best practices on at least three out of five contexts. The best practices were: (a) initial planning, (b) databases, (c) business case definition, (d) baseline change management, and (e) team management. Besner and Hobbs also recommended the use of empirical results to inform the development or

revision of standards for project management practice. In addition, Besner and Hobbs identified a new construct - performing maturity. The performing maturity construct deals with the measurement of project success through project management maturity, organizational support for project management practice, and the availability of competent personnel.

Several of the previous authors (e.g., Allen et al, 2014; Bud, 2014; Wells, 2012) provided varying viewpoints that address the practices, tools, and techniques for attaining the full benefits of project implementation. As Ofori and Deffor (2013) and Wysocki (2014) stated, project maturity is an ongoing process involving five interlinked phases. Funds management and utilization forms an integral part of the project management process (Keng'ara, 2014). Therefore, an understanding of how the different processes and interlinkages influence funds utilization is appropriate.

### **Funds Utilization**

McCoy, Chand, and Sridhar (2009) presented a schematic description of the source, management, and spending of global health funds and emphasized the different categories of actors and interrelationships in the global health landscape. McCoy et al. concluded that the data on official development assistance for health were in fragments, complex, disorderly, and with inadequate tracking. McCoy et al. recommended holistic monitoring and tracking of the source, management, and expenditure of global health funding. McCoy et al. suggested a thorough description of the precise volume of global health to enable: (a) improved efficiency, (b) accountability, and (c) performance of the different categories of actors in the global health landscape.

Fungibility of aid is critical for decision-making on budgeting and funds utilization (McLean & Whang, 2016). Fund utilization is dependent on donor and recipient partners maintaining a good balance among fungibility, conditionality, and earmarking variables (Farag, Nandakumar, Wallack, Gaumer & Hodgkin, 2009). Fungibility occurs when the governments adjust total government and donor-financed spending to reflect national priorities (Kono & Montinola, 2015). Fungibility is welcome when governments and donors agree on budget priorities for ensuring the implementation of those priorities (Farag et al., 2009). Farag et al. observed the low-income countries recorded a proportionate *decrease* in government funding associated with an increase in donor funding. Therefore, according to Farag et al., donor aid for health care contributes to the reductions in the government health care budgets of those countries.

Van de Sijpe (2013a) conducted a quantitative study to estimate the degree of fungibility of funds earmarked for health interventions. Van de Sijpe observed limited fungibility of aid in the health sector that pertained to capacity building namely, the transfer of technical and management skills (technical cooperation). According to Van de Sijpe, technical cooperation was the main determinant of the overall degree of fungibility of earmarked health aid. In addition, Van de Sijpe observed effective donor conditionality resulted in the lack of fungibility. Van de Sijpe stated limited fungibility yielded positive consequences for human welfare as the aid in the respective sectors resulted in positive outcomes.

Dieleman, Graves, and Hanlon (2013) contested Van de Sijpe's (2013a) findings regarding the limited fungibility of aid in health sectors. Dieleman et al. applied different

models to estimate the degree of fungibility of funds earmarked for health interventions. According to Dieleman et al., health aid remains significantly fungible. However, in a rejoinder, Van de Sijpe (2013b) maintained development assistance for health was not fungible. Similarly, Altincekic and Bearce (2014) and Milner et al. (2016) argued donors' allocation of fungible aid to developing countries was minimal. Van de Sijpe (2013a) recommended conducting future research on the normative consequences of fungibility.

Large funding disbursements that are fungible and poorly tracked lead to a waste of resources, corruption, and an unrealistic, unsustainable economy (Kopinak, 2013). Corruption, mismanagement of funds, and low funds utilization in recipient countries are critical drawbacks that necessitate urgent solutions (Ejughemre, 2013b; Păutu & Dogaru, 2013). Fiscal accountability and transparency are the foundation elements for the effective management of public funds (Otieno, Rambo, & Odundo, 2014). Change management through the enforcement of existing regulations and additional controls can increase fiscal accountability and transparency (Otieno et al., 2014).

According to Tătulescu and Pătruți (2014) the factors that determine the ability of a recipient partner to utilize donor funds include: (a) the degree of bureaucracy, (b) the level of corruption, and (c) the level of depreciation in the national currency. Lucian (2014) and Păutu and Dogaru (2013) posited the factors that contributed to the low utilization rate of some EU-funded projects included: (a) bureaucratic and administrative bottlenecks, (b) inadequate technically competent personnel, and (c) a misalignment between the EU's and recipient partner's national legislations. Other factors accounting

for the low funds utilization rate are: (a) late commencement of approved projects, (b) weak procurement systems in a recipient country, and (c) inconsistencies with the timelines for implementing the projects (Keng'ara, 2014). Public institutions could improve project performance by removing bureaucratic bottlenecks, thoroughly reviewing funding policies, and improving technical competencies of project staff (Jaliu & Rădulescu, 2013; Lucian, 2014 ).

According to Keng'ara (2014), the donors' funds disbursement procedures contribute to low utilization of program funds by recipient partners. The funds disbursement methods include: (a) direct payment to a third party for eligible expenses, (b) reimbursement of eligible expenses the recipient partner incurs, and (c) cash advances to the recipient partner to finance eligible expenditures (Keng'ara, 2014). Keng'ara conducted a descriptive case study to explore the effects of donor disbursement procedures on project implementation by government agencies in Homa Bay County, Kenya. Keng'ara concluded the donors' stringent administrative processes resulted in delays in funds disbursement to the government agencies and subsequent delays in project implementation. Consequently, the government agencies failed to complete scheduled activities, resulting in low utilization of funds (Keng'ara, 2014). Keng'ara recommended the design and harmonization of funds disbursement procedures acceptable to the donor and the government agencies. In addition, Keng'ara recommended further research involving nonstate development actors to obtain and generalize findings on the effects of disbursement procedures on project implementation.

## **Transition**

Section 1 discussed the importance of aid predictability and the limited capacity of recipient partners to utilize fully donor resources. The discussion provided a background to the phenomenon and the general and specific problems that incited this study. The literature review addressed four parameters relating to the aid effectiveness structure: (a) characteristics of financial aid, (b) management practices for increasing aid effectiveness, (c) project management practices, and (d) funds utilization.

Section 2 provides insights into the research project and discusses the research methodology, data collection and analysis techniques, and the processes for assuring project reliability and validity. Section 3 comprises the presentation of findings, application and relevance of the research to business practice, implications for social change, and recommendations for action.

## Section 2: The Project

The focus of this qualitative, descriptive multiple case study was to understand the strategies and processes program and project managers use for maximizing the utilization of maternal health program funds. In conducting my research, I sought to identify facilitating factors and proactive strategies for improving the funds management capacities of recipient partners to facilitate maximal fund utilization. In this section, I discuss the purpose of this study, my role in the study, the research participants, methods, and design. This section includes discussions on (a) population and sampling, (b) ethical research, (c) data collection, organization and analysis techniques, and (d) measures for assuring my study's reliability and validity.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive multiple case study was to identify strategies and processes that recipient partners use to achieve maximal utilization (at least 97%) of maternal health program funds. The target population comprised program and project managers from seven organizations that utilized UNFPA maternal health program support funds fully in Ghana between 2011 and 2013. The identification of strategies facilitating maximal utilization of donor funds has the potential of contributing to positive social change by resolving the paradox of nonoptimal utilization of funds amidst the limited availability of resources (Tăulescu & Pătruți, 2014). Project management practitioners might learn effective funds utilization strategies to attain maternal mortality reduction program objectives in Ghana and improve the wellbeing and quality of life of the rural poor, particularly women.

### **Role of the Researcher**

According to Yin (2014), the use of multiple sources of evidence helps to assure the validity and reliability of a study. The data collection process for this qualitative multiple case study included face-to-face interviews and document reviews. Augmenting data from interviews with archival documents enables methodological triangulation (Yin, 2014). Simpson (2016) conducted in-depth interviews to explore students' experiences in single-sex and coeducational schools. According to Simpson, in-depth interviews provide an opportunity for explanations to the context of the open-ended responses to help facilitate easy interpretation of the results. I conducted semistructured, in-depth interviews in a manner that ensured the respondents responded to all questions. The holistic interpretation of data and unbiased presentation of results is critical to assure creditability in qualitative research (Mulligan, Hall, & Raphael, 2013). Therefore, as the primary data collection instrument, I collected, analyzed, interpreted the data, and explained the results of this study in an unbiased manner.

A researcher's profession, coupled with the research questions that pertain to a generalized problem, enables professional relationships with the study participants (Guercini, 2014). My 11 years of work with the development and funding agency, UNFPA, influenced my passion to understand funds utilization issues regarding recipient partners. Regular interactions with recipient partners generated interest in addressing the paradox of nonmaximal utilization of funds amidst the limited availability of resources (Tătulescu & Pătruți, 2014). In addition, the literature review provided me with useful viewpoints on funds management within the aid effectiveness structure. I adopted a



multiple case study method of inquiry to explore the organizational strategies that facilitate the maximal utilization of donor funding within scheduled project duration. This study mainly involved the program and project managers of recipient institutions with whom I regularly interacted.

Mitigating bias is critical to ensure the integrity of research (Yin, 2014). Mutual understanding and trust during relationship building with study participants enable the avoidance of biases regarding age, ethnicity, or gender (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). In addition, researchers' acceptance of their worldview and personal bias facilitate a better understanding of the participants' viewpoints (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). I allowed the participants maximum flexibility in engaging in the research in a way that reflected their viewpoints. The interview protocol focused on an overarching research question and a list of interview questions. This approach provided direction to the discussion and afforded the opportunity for the participants to explain and openly express their views.

Roulston and Shelton (2015) maintained that the review of responses by study participants aided accuracy and ensured the integrity of the data to mitigate bias. A participatory research approach through validation of the preliminary and holistic interpretation of data by respondents is essential (Ng, Siew-Hoong, & Tong-Ming, 2013). However, Zivkovick (2012) cautioned that the continuous interaction between the researchers and subjects of a study led to familiarity and a potential opportunity for manipulation and bias. I recorded the interview sessions electronically and transcribed the data from the interviews while ensuring anonymity. In addition, the opportunity for participants to validate their responses avoided manipulation. The storage of data files in

a secure encrypted structure on a computer ensures their safety and prevents manipulation (Lohle & Terrell, 2014).

The Belmont Report provides guidelines to safeguard the research participants from risk or undue physical, psychological, or social harm arising out of the research (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research [NCPHSBBR], 1979). I followed the rules of ethical research under the Belmont Report. Contacts with the study participants occurred by telephone, e-mail, or face-to-face throughout the entire process of the research. Face-to-face interviews were the primary method for collecting the data. The participants read the consent form, obtained the necessary explanations for their understanding, and endorsed the form before the interview process. The consent form comprised elements that included: (a) the purpose of the study, (b) the benefits of the study, (c) assurance of confidentiality and protection of personal information, and (d) the participant's right to withdraw. I also conducted the interviews with the participants in an honest and respectful manner to ensure no violation of their time, property, and privacy.

The application of an interview protocol (Appendix B) to all study participants safeguards uniformity and consistency in the interview process (Yin, 2014). The interview protocol provides a procedural guide to drive researchers' thinking in an unbiased manner during the interview process (Yin, 2014). For this qualitative multiple case study, an interview protocol was appropriate to elicit responses regarding the institutions' strategies and practices for achieving maximal utilization of program funds. Yin (2014) recommended the triangulation of multiple sources of evidence in case study

research. Archival documents served to augment and compare the interview responses to determine the consistency of the findings regarding program funds utilization strategies.

### **Participants**

The selection of research participants must align with the context and purpose of the study (Yin, 2014). According to Dayna (2013), the identification of a research context influences participant engagement to achieve the desired research objectives. Ofori and Deffor (2013) considered the context of project management maturity as the basis for selecting study participants. I determined the participants from the purpose, nature, and design of the study respectively.

This multiple case study involved a case from each of seven different institutions that received funding support from UNFPA between 2011 and 2013. The participant population for the study consisted of program and project managers from UNFPA recipient institutions in Ghana that achieved a minimum of 97% implementation rate between 2011 and 2013. The period 2011 to 2013 aligned appropriately with the specific business problem regarding the nonutilization of nearly a quarter of UNFPA funds earmarked for maternal health programs.

Establishing the criteria for participation in a study is crucial to ensure credibility (Robinson, 2014). Bristowe, Selman, and Murtagh (2015) recommended the selection of participants with specific characteristics that align with the phenomenon of interest. For this study, the participant selection criteria included participants who (a) were employees of institutions that receive(d) funding from UNFPA, (b) managed a UNFPA-supported project or program in those institutions, (c) had held that managerial position for at least

two years, (d) had achieved maximal utilization (at least 97%) of maternal health program funds, and (e) had recorded unqualified financial management audit findings.

The UNFPA program support to recipient institutions is through quarterly financial disbursements using financial software, ATLAS (UNFPA, 2012a). The system generates the expenditure rates of the respective disbursements to recipient institutions every quarter. Between 2011 and 2013, UNFPA provided financial support to 30 recipient institutions (UNFPA, 2013). Therefore, the expenditure rates of those 30 institutions within the period 2011 to 2013 formed a basis for the selection of the recipient institutions from which the potential study participants emerged. The achievement of a minimum of 97% expenditure rate is the required performance of the institutions that benefit from UNFPA funds (UNFPA, 2012a).

The Walden University policy indicates five to seven participants are appropriate for a case study (Walden, 2016). I adopted a minimum of 97% implementation rate as the cut-off point for identifying potential institutions, project, and program managers. I selected seven institutions that achieved the highest implementation rates among the cohort of institutions eligible for the study.

All recipient institutions had personnel who managed the implementation of the programs supported by UNFPA funds. UNFPA personnel kept the contact details of all such managers and heads of institutions to facilitate regular interaction regarding program implementation. By their roles as managers of UNFPA supported funds, I had collaborative relationships with the program and project managers from the recipient institutions as part of my schedule. I interacted mainly with the potential participants

through one or more of the following: (a) field monitoring visits, (b) annual planning, and (c) quarterly reviews.

Bernard (2013) endorsed the use of effective communication approaches to gain access to participants. Drew (2014) and Gibson, Benson, and Brand (2013) identified telephone and e-mails as suitable communication channels for engaging research participants. Upon the selection of the institutions eligible for the study, I contacted the managers of UNFPA supported funds from the respective institutions via telephone and e-mail. Prior to contacting the potential study participants, I submitted introductory letters and obtained letters of cooperation from the leadership of the selected institutions to conduct the research. The introductory letter (Appendix A) comprised elements including: (a) the purpose of the study, (b) the benefits of the study, and (c) assurance of confidentiality and protection of personal information.

The e-mail communication (Appendix D) to the potential study participants included information regarding the approval and consent of the selected institutional heads to participate in the research. In addition, the e-mail and follow-up telephone conversations included a request for their participation in face-to-face interviews. Prior to the conduct of the interviews, I shared the consent form with the interviewees and provided the necessary explanations for their understanding and potential endorsement of the form. The consent form included the goal and purpose of the research and the expected benefits of the study. The consent form also contained (a) my role in the study, (b) assurance of confidentiality and protection of personal information, and (c) the participant's right to, and process for, withdrawing from the interview process.

Building working relationships with study participants enables cooperation and eliciting relevant information (Blix & Wettergren, 2015 ). Bernard (2013) maintained that pre- and post-interview briefings with study participants were useful approaches to enhance working relationships. Similarly, Yin (2014) encouraged regular and unbiased dialogues to foster researcher-participant rapport. Regular dialogues with potential participants in an unbiased manner enhanced my existing working relationships with them and built trust. Doody and Noonan (2013) recognized the need to establish trustful relationships and relaxing environments that put participants at ease when responding to questions.

The schedule and conduct of interviews was at each participant's convenience and at locations within the workplaces where the participants felt comfortable. I obtained letters of cooperation from the leadership of the relevant institutions before interviewing the participants. The interview protocol process involved (a) formal introductions, (b) a repeating the purpose of the study, and (c) thanking participants for their willingness to be interviewees. The interview sessions relied on an open-ended approach, facilitated discussions' flexibility, and ensured the ability to redirect the discussions when appropriate to keep the interviewees focused. Participants had the freedom to decline responding to questions they were not comfortable answering.

## **Research Method and Design**

### **Research Method**

Existing literature formed the basis for selecting an appropriate research method. Using the qualitative method enables the exploration of participants' lived experiences

(Aguirre & Bolton, 2013) and provides in-depth meaning and interpretation of those participants' perspectives (Bahn & Weatherill, 2013). By contrast, the quantitative method of inquiry involves an examination of relationships or differences among variables (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). In addition, the quantitative method contains an element of testing pre-determined hypothesis through reliance on statistical analysis (Lunde, Heggen, & Strand, 2013). The reliance on statistical analysis may reduce the depth of explanation and understanding of the phenomenon (Upjohn, Attwood, Lerotholi, Pfeiffer, & Verheyen, 2013). Therefore, the quantitative method was relevant for addressing *What* questions for this descriptive study on the utilization of donor funds.

The mixed method involves an integration of qualitative and quantitative research methods in a sequential or concurrent manner (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). The mixed method may enhance the validity of research findings and therefore, could increase the capability of generalizing those findings (Gambrel & Butler, 2013). However, mixing two research methods can be complex (Harrison, 2013). A single researcher could experience difficulty in utilizing the mixed method concurrently because it is time-consuming (Caruth, 2013). Furthermore, the quantitative component is not useful for addressing research questions that relate to participants' lived experiences and perspectives (Upjohn et al., 2013).

Cronholm and Hjalmarsson (2011) posited that researchers should not mix two research designs in a single study. For this study on program funds utilization, the qualitative method should provide a holistic, broad, and deep understanding of the phenomenon (Bahn & Weatherill, 2013). As Bernard (2013) recommended, the choice of

the qualitative method aligns with the purpose, audience, and participants of this study. The use of semistructured interviews under the qualitative method of inquiry should elicit detailed responses in addressing the research question (Parker, 2014). Therefore, the qualitative method was the most appropriate for understanding the phenomenon regarding the utilization of program funds.

### **Research Design**

I employed a case study design to explore the strategies that facilitate the maximal utilization of donor funds by recipient partners. A case study presents an ability to understand the underlying mechanisms that influence a contemporary phenomenon in real-world business practice settings (Klonoski, 2013). The case study methodology enables a broad and deep understanding of real-life event environments such as managerial and organizational processes and structures (Zivkovic, 2012). The case study involves the use of multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2014). Case studies comprise two primary variations; single and multiple (Yin, 2014). The single case study design is appropriate for testing significant theories, exploring unusual or everyday occurrences, or observing conditions and processes that change over time within an organization (Turner & Danks, 2014). The multiple case study design involves exploring two or more cases and comparing the findings across those cases to understand a phenomenon (Yin, 2014). The intent of this study was to explore a funds utilization phenomenon relating to seven institutions that benefited from maternal health program funds. The multiple case study design was suitable for exploring the contextual conditions pertinent to the phenomenon regarding funds utilization by seven recipient partners.



I considered the application of four other qualitative approaches before deciding to select the case study design. The four designs were: (a) ethnography, (b) narrative, (c) grounded theory, and (d) phenomenology. Research ethnographers focus on an entire cultural group involving the behavioral characteristics of people who interact over time (Mutchler, McKay, McDavitt, & Gordon, 2013). The focus of this study was not on the observation of behavioral characteristics and people's interactions. Therefore, the ethnographic design was not appropriate to address the purpose of my study. The narrative approach focuses on biographical information, and using detailed stories or participants' life experiences (Wolgemuth, 2013). A focus on biographical information was inappropriate for a study regarding the successful strategies for improving the utilization of program funds. The grounded theory design involves developing new theories for explaining phenomena (Chamberlain-Salaun, Mills, & Usher, 2013) based on the processes or interactions with participants (Moss et al., 2014). The grounded theory approach was also not suited for a study that related to identifying and exploring organizational strategies. The phenomenological approach involves exploring the meanings of an experience of a single or several individuals to describe their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon (Achakul & Yolles, 2013; Ilkay, 2013). Elucidating meaning on individual lived experiences was not holistic or in-depth enough to gain knowledge on the phenomenon under study. In addition, using the phenomenological design does not provide the level of flexibility and diversity that using a case study offers (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014).

The purpose of this study is in alignment with the selection of the specific type of case study. Determining the unit(s) of analysis is a critical requirement of a case study design (Ponelis, 2015). The multiple units of analysis provides valuable holistic evidence for gaining insights on a phenomenon regarding one environment (Yin, 2014), and therefore, aligns with the purpose of my study.

Case studies comprise exploratory, explanatory, or descriptive modes.

Exploratory case studies employ situations that have no single, clear set of outcomes (Ponelis, 2015). Explanatory case studies explain why or how some conditions do or do not occur ( Yin, 2014). Descriptive case studies provide insights into a phenomenon in its real-life context (Hyett et al., 2014). The descriptive mode aligned with the purpose of the study, given the capability to provide insightful disclosures on the strategies that facilitate the maximal utilization of donor-supported program funds. Therefore, to understand the phenomenon of funds utilization, I employed a descriptive multiple case study design.

A redundancy of information emanating from the interviews and lack of new data that provide further insight into the study in question would indicate the likelihood of saturation (Lolhe & Terrell, 2014). According to Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, and La Rossa (2015), data saturation occurs when interview responses become repetitive and reveal no new themes, codes, or meanings. Guest, Bruce, and Johnson (2006) maintained six to 12 interviews were appropriate for achieving data saturation in qualitative case study research. For this study, the interviews involved seven participants. To ensure data

saturation, I conducted member checking and follow on interviews with the seven participants until no new themes or insights emerged.

### **Population and Sampling**

The target population for the study comprised program and project managers of the institutions that benefited from UNFPA program support funds in Ghana. To obtain reliable knowledge from the research, I focused mainly on the managers of UNFPA funds from those recipient institutions during the selection process. The eligibility criterion for participation in the research was dependent on the performance of a program or project manager's institution in the utilization of UNFPA supported funds between 2011 and 2013.

Yin (2014) proposed the purposive sampling approach was appropriate for a qualitative case study. Likewise, Ofori and Deffor (2013) and Jerbrant and Gustavsson (2013) employed purposive sampling in selecting participants for studies on organizations, systems, and project portfolios respectively. The purposeful sampling technique was suitable for selecting the participants for this study. Using a purposeful sampling approach should enable access to key participants who can share rich information on the subject of the study (Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2013). The method is essential for identifying participants who can provide targeted and focused perspectives on the research questions (Dincer & Dincer, 2013). Lee and Rhim (2014) and Ponelis (2015) noted that purposeful sampling entailed a thoughtful selection process to reach a target audience. Specifically, the homogeneous nonrandomized sampling strategy recommended by Patton (2015) applied to this study. The sampling strategy enabled in-

depth information to increase understanding of the facilitating strategies for maximal utilization of program funds.

Patton (2015) maintained the validity of a qualitative method of inquiry was dependent more on the richness of the information on the selected cases than on the sample size. Furthermore, the size of a sample depends on what and why a researcher is exploring, the availability of resources, and how the researcher would utilize the study findings (Patton, 2015). A redundancy of information is a primary criterion for determining the final sample size in a qualitative study (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). Qualitative research relies on different sample sizes, but the rationale remains consistent with eliciting profound information with each participant to the point of data saturation (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). The saturation point denotes a further collection of data provides no new themes, insights, or perspectives on the phenomenon (Bernard, 2013).

Researchers (Marshall et al., 2013; Prendergast & Maggie, 2013) maintain a sample size of 20 or less is appropriate for engaging participants in qualitative research. The focus on a small sample of participants fulfills the purpose of gathering extensive information about issues regarding the phenomenon (Ponelis, 2015). Evidence on the point of saturation is an essential factor for determining the number of participants for a study (Lolhe & Terrell, 2014). The level of homogeneity or heterogeneity of a population influences the point of saturation (Guest et al., 2006). Guest et al. concluded data saturation could occur at an early stage of data collection. According to Guest et al., interviewing a sample of six highly homogeneous participants could enable meaningful

themes and useful interpretations. Guest et al.'s conclusion aligns with the Walden University DBA policy that suggests the selection of a minimum of five to seven participants for case study research (Walden, 2016). Fusch and Ness (2015) recommended using member checking and follow-on interviews to achieve data saturation with the same participants. For this study, the interviews involved a homogeneous sample of seven participants. I assured data saturation through member checking and follow-on interviews with the defined number of seven participants until no new data emerged. In adherence to guidance by Yin (2014), evidence from document reviews provided a basis for augmenting and comparing the findings from the interview responses.

The primary criterion for participant selection included being a manager of a UNFPA - funded program or project. Notably, program and project managers from UNFPA recipient institutions in Ghana that achieved a minimum of 97% implementation rate between 2011 and 2013 were eligible for the study. Consideration of a minimum of 97% expenditure rate aligned with the prescribed acceptable performance of the institutions that benefit from UNFPA funds (UNFPA, 2012a). The expenditure rates of UNFPA recipient institutions during the period 2011 to 2013 were appropriate to inform the selection of the recipient institutions and respective program and project managers. The relevance of the period 2011-2013 aligned with the specific business problem regarding the nonutilization of a quarter of UNFPA maternal health program support funds during those years.

The cutoff point for selecting the potential institutions was a minimum expenditure rate of 97%. Financial management audits of recipient partners are essential procedures UNFPA endorses to safeguard accountability for results and the correct use of donor resources (UNFPA, 2012b). Therefore, the sample for the study comprised program and project managers from the first seven UNFPA recipient institutions that achieved the highest implementation rates and unqualified financial management audit findings.

The selection of participants with the ability to provide insights, explanations, and meanings about a phenomenon is critical to the success of a case study (Yin, 2014). According to Irvine et al. (2013), the participant selection criteria are crucial to establishing the credibility of research. Bristowe et al. (2015) recommended the selection of participants with a range of roles and experiences relevant to the overarching research question. The program and project managers were suitable for participation in this study given their leadership in implementing maternal health interventions with UNFPA resources. In adherence to guidance by Yin (2014), participants aged 18 years and above participated in the study, as under-aged children do not hold program or project management positions. All participants provided evidence of holding a program or project management position in their respective institutions for a minimum of 2 years. Race, ethnicity, religion, or physical disability did not constitute reasons for participant exclusion.

Interview settings are relevant to engender participants' rich descriptions of qualitative data (Ponelis, 2015). Peikes and Dale (2015) posited interview locations with

minor distractions minimized background noise, enabled quality recording of the interviews, and maintained participant confidentiality. Participants suggested the interview locations where they felt most comfortable; where there was privacy behind closed doors, and free of distractions. Such locations included a conference room or a closed office at the workplace. The interview times were at the participants' convenience during the official working hours of 8:00 am to 5:00 pm from Monday to Friday. According to Yun, Han, and Lee (2013), scheduling meetings at the participants' convenience facilitates a trustful, pleasant, and interactive environment for stimulating thorough responses. Interview schedules reflected times that did not interfere with participants' normal daily routines. The interview process occurred in a structured environment with reliance on an interview protocol and member checking approach.

### **Ethical Research**

Ethical considerations and parameters are essential for scholarly research involving human participants (Morton et al., 2013). I followed the ethical research requirements the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) mandates to protect the participants and adhere to human rights laws. Adherence to an institution's ethical review parameters safeguards the research participants from risk or undue physical, psychological, or social harm arising out of the research (Bhattacharya, 2014).

Data collection commenced after receiving official Walden IRB approval with the derivative approval number (04-12-17-0417041). The potential participants received an e-mail invitation (see Appendix C) to participate in the research. The invitation note comprised details regarding the purpose and benefits of the study. Participation in the

study was voluntary and without any incentives. The motivation for participation was the participants' contribution to new knowledge that would improve the utilization of donor-supported program funds by recipient institutions. The e-mail communication and informed consent form contained all such relevant information regarding the study.

Prior to any interviews, each participant signed an informed consent form. Researchers such as Bhattacharya (2014), Morton et al. (2013), and Nunan and Di Domenico, (2013) emphasized assurance of participants' confidentiality to engender trustworthiness. The consent form provided full disclosure of the research proceedings and ensured participants' confidentiality of the interview responses. The participants received a copy of the signed consent form for their record. The scheduling of meetings were at the participants' convenience. Scheduling meetings at the participants' convenience is necessary to maintain a trustful, pleasant, and interactive environment for eliciting in-depth responses (Yun et al., 2013).

Participants had the option to withdraw from the interview process without reason or refrain from answering questions that made them feel uncomfortable. In adherence to recommendations by Morton et al. (2013), participants received information that the withdrawal process required a verbal or written notification indicating they no longer wished to participate in the study. All seven participants willingly participated in the research process and answered all questions.

The informed consent form included information on the duration for storing the interview data. Researchers such as Herteliu and Mihai (2014) and Mitchell and Wellings (2013) followed ethical guidelines by storing research data in a controlled environment



for a 5-year period. In addition, Mitchell and Wellings (2013) and Lohle and Terrell (2014) maintained confidentiality by assigning file code numbers to interview respondents. For this study, the data will remain securely stored under strict controls for 5 years to provide adequate time for analysis review, and follow-up. To maintain the confidentiality of the research participants, I assigned a file code number (RPC1, RPC2 through to RPC7) to the recordings and written data about each participant. Compliance with the ethical standards of doctoral research ensured the file code numbers did not reveal participants' identities. All hard copies of information about the study will remain in a safe, private lock container in a controlled environment. In addition, all soft data including e-mail communication will remain on a computer with security precautions to protect the data and maintain confidentiality. The security precautions include: (a) antivirus software application, (b) password authentication, and (c) file encryption (Nunan & Di Domenico, 2013). At the end of the 5-year period, I will shred all hard copies of data and clear all soft data from the hard drive of the computer.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

I served as the primary data collection instrument and collected data through face-to-face semistructured interviews. Guercini, (2014) posited using face-to-face interviews enabled participants to describe and elucidate their individual experiences. Similarly, Onwuegbuzie and Byers (2014) argued interviews were the most appropriate and common methods for extracting comprehensive responses in qualitative research. Dincer and Dincer (2013) conducted semistructured interviews to identify the critical issues that influenced decision making on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Ponelis (2015)

applied interviews as the primary data collection technique to explore the contribution of business intelligence to decision making by managers of small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

I designed open-ended, nonrestrictive interview questions (Appendix E) to provide a framework for extracting fluid, in-depth, and unanticipated information about the phenomenon under study. Parker (2014) posited using open-ended questions captured accurate and in-depth responses. Using open-ended semistructured interviews enable flexibility and control in extracting, clarifying, or expanding data on the research of the business problem (Abraham, 2013). Notably, open-ended non-restrictive questions have value when participants have an opportunity to provide comprehensive descriptions of their experiences (Humphrey, 2014). The pursuit of nine discussion-type responses was to capture realities on funds utilization efforts within the aid-effectiveness structure. The first seven open-ended questions related to maternal health program funding issues that aligned with the four literature review sub-topics. Yin (2014) suggested the inclusion of general questions that add value to research data. The remaining two open-ended questions were general lines of inquiry on the business problem that could add value to the research data.

The major tasks of collecting data included submitting requests to institutional heads and the potential interviewees to participate in the study (Appendices A and D), and obtaining approval by institutional heads to involve their institutions in the study. The data collection tasks also comprised (a) signing of consent forms by interviewees, (b) scheduling times and venues for conducting interviews at the respondents' convenience,

and (c) applying the instrument (Appendix E) to obtain the relevant data. I employed flexible interview sessions to enable well-informed responses.

The use of a quality tape recorder with the interviewees' permission is necessary to provide an accurate rendition of the responses and preserve the data (Ponelis, 2015). I used member checking to assure the trustworthiness of the research data. According to Jerbrant (2013), member checking represents a means to recognize and reduce bias in qualitative research. Winter and Collins (2015) argued member checking improved the credibility and quality of data. Similarly, Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) recognized respondent validation as an appropriate method for enhancing the reliability and validity of qualitative data. As Morse and McEvoy (2014) recommended, the member checking process involved interaction with study participants to authenticate the interview responses and data interpretations. Yin (2014) suggested the use of a multitude of sources in case study research. The use of multiple sources of evidence enables the development of converging lines of inquiry to yield convincing and valid findings (Yin, 2014). For this study, to supplement the interview data, I also reviewed administrative documents such as standard operating procedures of the seven participating institutions.

### **Data Collection Technique**

The principal data collection method for this descriptive multiple case study was the semistructured face-to-face interviews. A review of administrative documents of the selected institutions corroborated and augmented the interview responses.

Methodological triangulation of the interview data and findings from the document reviews helped to establish the credibility of the study. The interviews involved a primary

list of seven participants. I conducted the interviews in accordance with the participants' most convenient schedules within the official working hours of 8:00 am to 5:00 pm; Monday to Friday. Yun et al. (2013) justified the relevance of privacy during the interview process. Similarly, Ponelis (2015) concluded the comfort and privacy of respondents were critical to generating well-informed responses. In addition, Peikes and Dale (2015) recommended interview locations with minor distractions to maintain participant confidentiality. Therefore, the interview locations for this study were at environments within the workplace where the participants felt comfortable.

Prior to the commencement of the interview process, I provided the informed consent form and the interview questions (Appendix E) to each participant for their perusal through e-mail before the interview day. The interview process began with a formal introduction and a briefing on the purpose of the study. I allowed the participants to raise any queries regarding the research proceedings and provided the necessary explanations. Upon signing the consent form, I thanked each participant for accepting to partake in the study. I reemphasized commitment to the participant's confidentiality. Each participant received a copy of the signed informed consent form for their records.

The interview process was scheduled to last about 60 minutes. However, the depth of the discussion-type responses determined the length of time for interviewing each participant. According to Onwuegbuzie and Byers (2014), using in-depth qualitative interviews enables researchers to appreciate and analyze participants' viewpoints in detail. Allowing flexibility during interviews catalyzes in-depth discussions (Abraham, 2013). Ponelis (2015) posited that enabling flexibility during the interview processes can

reveal the respondents' experiences, opinions, and attitudes regarding a business problem. I allowed flexibility and ample time to each participant to enable in-depth discussions and responses pertinent to the research question. While allowing flexibility, I ensured redirection of the discussions when necessary to keep the interviewees focused.

Face-to-face open-ended interviews enable fluid, in-depth, and unanticipated explanation and personal views of a phenomenon under study (Ponelis, 2015). However, reflexivity, bias, and inaccuracies resulting from poorly articulated questions or poor recall can threaten the reliability of the data (Simpson, 2016). Therefore, minimizing the methodological threat the conversational nature of the interview creates is crucial (Yin, 2014). Member checking was the key approach to validating the participants' responses by summarizing and comparing their responses during the interviews. Reilly (2013) recognized member checking as an important means for verifying the accuracy of qualitative interview responses. Similarly, Harvey (2015) identified member checking as appropriate quality control means in qualitative research. Jerbrant and Gustavsson (2013) employed member checking activities to validate participants' responses on project portfolio management.

I took notes during the interviews and in addition, sought the interviewees' approval to record the entire discussion content. The use of two hand-held recorders safeguarded the data against potential mishaps arising from device failure. Researchers including Bernard (2013), Houghton et al. (2013), and Ng et al. (2013) recommended participants' review of interview responses to establish the credibility of research. To establish the credibility of this study, member checking involving the interpretation of

responses with participants took place during and after the interview sessions to confirm the accuracy of intended meanings.

### **Data Organization Technique**

The organization of research data is essential to enable the best findings regarding a research problem (Korhonen, 2014). Data organization commenced after validation of the transcript files. Lolhe and Terrell (2014) recommended labeling participants' transcript files to assure clear identification of information. In addition, assigning codes to the transcript files can help protect the participants' confidentiality (Mitchell & Wellings, 2013). Camfield and Palmer-Jones (2013) argued preserving research information under strict controls was critical to prevent loss of data. I labeled the audiotapes and transcript files pertaining to each participant using alphanumeric codes (RPC1, RPC2, through RPC7) to enable clear identification of information and ensure the participants' anonymity. The interview transcripts will remain secure with regular backup on zip-drives and computer files. Regular back-up and protection of all information on the zip-drives and computer files are necessary to prevent a sudden loss of data and assure data integrity (Nunan & Di Domenico, 2013). All handwritten notes from the interviews will remain in a journal file with codes (RPC1 through RPC7) to identify the various descriptions from interview responses. Using a chronological list of the document titles and dates to determine the categories of data and file locations is expected to facilitate retrieval of information.

Using NVivo version 10.0 software aided the efficient organization of the data. The raw data for each subtopic will remain segregated in the NVivo database. I will

preserve all hard and soft copies of the data in a safe, private lock box and a security fortified computer respectively, as Herteliu and Mihai (2014) recommended. In agreement with Walden University directives, all data and information pertaining to the study will remain secure under strict controls for a 5-year period to allow adequate time for analysis and review.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in this descriptive multiple case study mainly involved data reduction approaches. Renz, Conrad, and Watts (2013) recommended the assembling, rearrangement, and categorization of data to establish useful information. Assigning and condensing codes to segregate emerging themes helps to address a research question in a logical and chronological manner (Dincer & Dincer, 2013).

Deriving a single conclusion through the convergence of data from multiple sources and types of data is more convincing and accurate than a conclusion from a sole source or type of evidence (Ngulube & Ngulube, 2015). Methodological triangulation reduces the flaws of only using individual data types and increases the credibility and understanding of a phenomenon under study (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). According to Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, and Neville (2014), methodological triangulation employs multiple types of qualitative data and not necessarily a combination of quantitative and qualitative types. Bekhet and Zauszniewski (2012) referred to the triangulation of qualitative data from multiple sources as a *within method*. For this study, the within method of triangulation involved exploring and comparing data

from two sources, namely, interview transcripts of program and project managers and administrative documents of the institutions involved in the study.

Participants' responses addressed nine open-ended interview questions (Appendix E) regarding the strategies for assuring the utilization of maternal health program funds. According to Svensson & Doumas (2013), understanding the context of a phenomenon provides a basis for determining the relevant data collection techniques and analysis in case study research. Similarly, Turner and Danks (2014) and Yin (2014) maintained the conceptual view of a phenomenon provides a valid basis for yielding analytic priorities and enables developing a quality description of data to address a research question.

The core steps of data analysis include tabulating and interpreting data (Yin, 2014). The process of segmenting data is crucial to yielding useful and logical information and identifying themes (Dincer & Dincer, 2013; Renz et al., 2013). For this study, the process of data analysis commenced with the transcription of each participant's responses onto a Microsoft Word file. The next step of data analysis was to import each validated transcript file in word format into the NVivo 10.0 database to enable the coding and meaningful description of the data. The NVivo 10.0 software provides an efficient mechanism for organizing, categorizing, coding, and analyzing the data (Zamawe, 2015). The NVivo 10.0 software enables the discovery of themes and data segmentation by subtopics and patterns (Dincer & Dincer, 2013). In addition, the software characterizes qualitative data in the form of description, figures, and tables (Bernauer, Lichtman, Jacobs, & Robinson, 2013).



Data coding using the NVivo 10.0 software involved the labeling and categorize of data concepts. I used alphanumeric codes (RPC1 through RPC7) to identify individual participants, their organizations, and to maintain confidentiality. In addition, coding of the data occurred at subtopic levels. The expected driving focus of the study was on four subtopics: donor funding mechanisms, management strategies and processes for achieving aid effectiveness, project management practices, and funds utilization. The four subtopics emerged from the review of some peer-reviewed articles, (e.g., Dalil et al., 2014; Ofori & Deffor, 2013; Păutu & Dogaru, 2013) on donor resources, management practices, and funds utilization within the aid effectiveness structure.

The first seven interview questions reflected the four different topics of the study. The first interview question applied to the donor funding mechanisms. The second and third interview questions related to management practices for aid effectiveness. The fourth interview question addressed the project management methodologies and practices. The fifth, sixth, and seventh questions addressed the funds utilization capacities. The eighth and ninth interview questions were general ones to garner well-informed responses on the business problem.

Data coding aligned with the identifiable elements that referenced the four subtopics and the category of general responses on the business problem. I used alphanumeric codes for each subtopic or category (RPC1 through RPC7) and listed the various coded data as nodes in the software. In accordance with Yin's (2014) recommendation, each subtopic required a separate focus of analysis using the pattern-matching technique. The next step of data analysis involved the discovery of emerging

themes and patterns that correlated with the subtopics as Lawrence and Tar (2013) prescribed. The redundancy or saturation points appeared from the lower levels of coding. Methodological triangulation of emerging themes from the interviews and field notes from document reviews occurred to enhance the credibility of the study findings. I identified themes to enable quality narrative and visual descriptions of the contextual conditions; in response to the research question addressing strategies and processes for achieving maximum program funds utilization.

### **Reliability and Validity**

In this section, I examined measures for assuring my study's reliability and validity to meet the quality standards of qualitative research. According to Poduthase (2015), qualitative researchers employ rigor to establish trustworthiness of the research. Yin (2014) maintained trustworthiness was relevant for judging the quality of a research design. Mulligan, Hall, and Raphael (2013) recommended demonstrating quality assurance measures in qualitative research to establish the accuracy, reliability, and validity of the data collection and analysis processes. This heading comprises discussion on the measures I employed to assure dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability of this study. In addition, I discussed measures for assuring data saturation.

#### **Reliability**

A researcher's contribution to the reliability of the methods, data, and tools for use in a case study is crucial to establishing reliable conclusions (Hess, McNab, & Basoglu, 2014). The reliability of data is essential to assure that other researchers could

replicate the research procedures applied in the case study design (Yin, 2014). In addition, the consistency of a research method can reduce doubt and improve reliability (Lokke & Dissing-Sorensen, 2014).

**Dependability.** Increasing the reliability of this qualitative study was achievable by addressing dependability. Dependability pertains to the replicability of a study and the researcher's cognizance and documentation of all changes affecting the research process (Hess et al., 2014). Yin (2014) recommended precise and comprehensive documentation of the study's procedures to allow replication of research results. An audit trail of all my involvement in the research process occurred. I also observed and documented any phenomena affecting the research process to address dependability of the study. Using a case study protocol and aligning the data collection and analysis procedures with the research problem enabled consistency and mitigated the effects of potential biases in this study. Process tracking ensured adherence to the case study protocol. Using a small, purposeful sample with characteristics that conform to the target population of successful program and project managers avoided misrepresentation of the sample to assure reliability of the study. As Ponelis (2015) noted, using a single interview question template and the proper recording and transcription of interview responses were crucial to maintaining the reliability of the study. As Yin (2014) prescribed, a database comprising electronic files and portfolio of documents will enable inspection by interested external readers and for assuring the reliability of my study.

Harvey (2015) and Marshall and Rossman (2015) recognized member checking as a valuable technique for establishing dependability of a study. I assured the reliability of

this study by verifying the accuracy of the interview responses and intended meanings through member checking. As Harvey postulated, employing member checking can reduce the likelihood of researcher misinterpretation. The member checking process included a restatement of participants' responses and conclusions during the interviews to affirm the accuracy of my understanding and interpretation of participants' responses.

### **Validity**

Increasing the trustworthiness of this study was achievable by addressing three parameters: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, and (c) confirmability. Credibility involves data authentication from the participants' perspectives (Ponelis, 2015). Transferability pertains to the extent to which the study results can apply to other widespread settings (Yin, 2014). Confirmability or objectivity refers to the degree to which other researchers can corroborate the study results (Yin, 2014). Poduthase (2015) observed that some researchers employed (a) member checking, (b) debriefing, (c) triangulation, and (d) audit trail to demonstrate the validity of qualitative descriptive studies.

**Credibility.** Qualitative researchers adopt member checking of data interpretation, participant transcript review, and triangulation methods to demonstrate the credibility of their studies (Poduthase, 2015). Authenticating data with study participants remains an important quality control technique in qualitative research (Simpson, 2016). I employed member checking during and after the interview process to assure objective interpretation of the participants' responses.

Triangulation is a recognized way to improve analysis and bolster the credibility of research findings (Carter et al., 2014). Marshall and Rossman (2015) discussed four

main types of triangulation methods applicable for qualitative research, namely: (a) data, (b) investigator, (c) theory, and (d) methodological triangulation. Data triangulation involves the use of a variety of data sources in a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). Investigator triangulation refers to the confirmation of findings across different investigators (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). Theory triangulation pertains to the use of multiple theories, frameworks, or perspectives to interpret a single data set (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). Methodological triangulation refers to the use of multiple data types to understand a phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). Yin (2014) recommended the use of multiple data types to increase the overall quality and accuracy of case study conclusions. Methodological triangulation enables validation of multiple data types and reducing deficiencies of the individual types to realize convincing study outcomes (Carter et al, 2014). Triangulation of authenticated interview transcripts and evidence from administrative documents reviews of the relevant institutions established the credibility of this study's outcomes.

**Transferability.** The transferability of research relates to the reasoning that a researcher can transfer the findings of a study to similar theoretical concepts outside the original study's location (Elo et al., 2014). Careful documentation of the methodological processes and data analysis techniques pertaining to a study can help other researchers determine the transferability of the study results (Guercini, 2014). According to Yin (2014), using a research log will maintain an audit trail of the data collection and analysis procedures. I enhanced the ability of others to determine the transferability of my study

findings by providing detailed background data collection, analysis processes, and detailed descriptions of the phenomenon and participants.

**Confirmability.** Confirmability relates to the ability of other researchers to corroborate a researcher's findings and identify the unique perspective of that researcher to the subject under study (Lofgren, 2014). Extensive documentation of bias-free research processes can increase the degree of confirmability of a study (Ponelis, 2015). According to Houghton et al. (2013), neutrality and accuracy of data are crucial criteria for establishing confirmability of a study. A detailed logical and procedural description with emphasis on an audit trail addressed confirmability of the study. In addition, as Yin (2014) postulated, my use of a research log provided a means to identify and reduce adverse occurrences and biases in the study.

### **Data Saturation**

The data saturation point denotes when no new data from the participants provide further insights for addressing the research question (Bernard, 2013). Evidence of data saturation is an essential means for determining the number of participants for a study (Lolhe & Terrell, 2014). Guest et al. (2006) argued data saturation could occur through interviews with a sample of six highly homogeneous participants. As Fusch and Ness (2015) recommended, I assured data saturation through member checking and follow-on interviews with the seven participants until no new data emerged. Evidence from document reviews corroborated and augmented the interview responses. During the data analysis, saturation emerged from using the lower levels of coding under the identifiable data elements and themes that referenced the research question that drove the study.

### **Transition and Summary**

Section 2 commenced with an introduction to the research topic with emphasis on the purpose of the study. Further discussions revolved around the role of the researcher, ethical considerations, justification of the multiple case study design and method, the population, and the criteria for sampling and selecting participants. The research instrument, data collection and analysis techniques, and reliability and validity of the methods and techniques that I adopted expanded the insight on the research methodology.

Section 3 comprises two parts. The first part includes an overview of the findings addressing the aid effectiveness structure and management practices for maximizing the utilization of donor -supported program resources. The second part of Section 3 includes summarizing and describing the themes from the study. The discussions include comparing the research findings with the literature, conceptual framework, and their applicability to business practice and implications for social change. Section 3 also contains key recommendations for actions, further studies, and my overall conclusions.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive multiple case study was to identify strategies and processes that recipient partners use to achieve maximal utilization (at least 97%) of maternal health program funds. Using purposive sampling, I addressed the research question by gathering information from semistructured interviews with seven program and project managers from seven UNFPA recipient (i.e., government and nongovernment) institutions. I used methodological triangulation of interview data with evidence from administrative documents of the seven recipient institutions to determine the consistency of this study's findings.

I sought to identify facilitating processes and proactive strategies for improving the funds management capacities of recipient partners to facilitate maximal fund utilization. Participants agreed, among other things, that institutional capacity strengthening, compliance with control mechanisms, and mitigation of funds disbursement delays at the level of donors and recipient institutions facilitated increasing utilization of program and project funds.

#### **Presentation of the Findings**

The overarching research question that guided this study was: What strategies and processes do recipient partners employ to achieve a maximal utilization (at least 97%) of maternal health program funds? Face-to-face interviews were the primary method for collecting the data. Evidence from administrative documents, such as standard operating procedures of the institutions involved in the study, provided a basis for augmenting and



comparing the findings with the interview responses. Purposive sampling ensured the sample of seven project and program managers represented participants with a range of roles and successful experiences relevant to the overarching research question. The interview participants responded to nine interview questions, giving their actual experiences on contextual conditions pertinent to the phenomenon regarding utilization of maternal health program support funds. The assumptions noted for my study included that participants demonstrated a comprehensive and objective understanding of successful project and funds management strategies. Each participant signed a consent form prior to the interview, and permitted recording of the interview responses. Data saturation was attained when no insights emerged during member checking and follow-on interviews with the study participants.

Using NVivo version 10.0 software aided the efficient organization of the data and enabled the discovery of emerging themes and patterns. Three major themes emerged from the analysis of the data: (a) clearly identifying and effectively implementing program and project budget support mechanisms, (b) robust aid effectiveness management practices, and (c) using effective project management practices. Figure 1 contains an NVivo cluster analysis of the themes emanating from the research data.

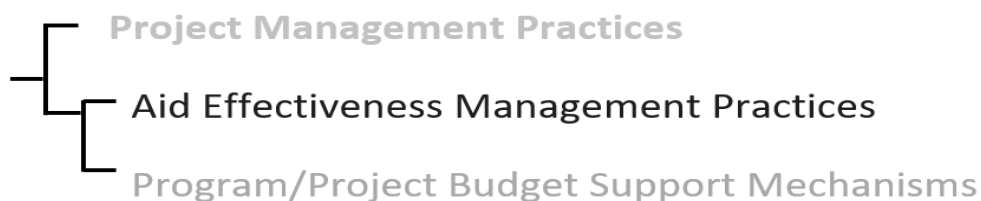


Figure 1. NVivo cluster analysis of emerging themes.

In Table 1, I present the participants' responses supporting the three themes to show the lowest and highest responses. Table 1 contains the numbers of participants' individual responses to the interview questions relating to the three themes. This table illustrates that clearly identifying and effectively implementing program and project budget support mechanisms and effectively utilizing project management practices respectively recorded the lowest and highest responses. Methodological triangulation of identified patterns of behaviour from the interview data and document review findings assisted in discovering and verifying the themes. The themes are interrelated, but each theme is distinct.

Table 1

*Participants' Responses to Themes*

Theme	RPC1	RPC2	RPC3	RPC4	RPC5	RPC6	RPC7	Total
Program/project budget support mechanisms	7	3	13	19	19	12	23	96
Aid effectiveness management principles	10	10	19	27	19	14	10	109
Project management practices	21	11	13	23	18	22	32	140

*Note.* RPC = research participant case

### **Theme 1: Clearly Identifying and Effectively Implementing Program and Project**

#### **Budget Support Mechanisms**

The ODA definition contains five elements of financial aid, namely: (a) type of aid flows, (b) source, (c) recipients, (d) development purpose, and (e) concessional character (OECD, 2014). Previous researchers (Giri et al., 2013; Langan, 2014; Molenaers, 2012; Mukuni & Price, 2014) identified different forms of development assistance or financial aid to recipient partners. This section contains discussions on the

sources, delivery channels, and modalities for disbursing maternal health program and project funds.

This theme of clearly identifying and effectively implementing program and project budget support mechanisms, emerged with 96 responses. All seven participants had successful experiences with managing maternal health program support funds from different donor sources. RPC7 affirmed Ejumhemre's (2013a) statement that donor development assistance to the health sector is of primary importance in Ghana and other sub-Saharan African countries. RPC7 stated, "basically, I can assume that most of our budget for maternal health is mainly donor funding. I haven't done any survey yet but am sure about 80% should be coming from the donor community and other foreign nations."

Grépin et al. (2014), Molenaers (2012), and Mukuni and Price (2014) identified several traditional and nontraditional bilateral and multilateral donors who provide development assistance. Participants' engagement with traditional and nontraditional donors included multilateral agencies such as World Bank and the UN System; and bilateral agencies representing the following countries; USA, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Canada, Japan, Korea, and Netherlands. RPC2 mentioned, "UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF, the World Bank... and...USAID sometimes we get some funds also from DANIDA, CIDA, now Canada... so these are the agencies that...support us with funds for specific projects, including...maternal health." RPC1 stated, "DFID is one of our major donors ...Netherlands is our longest donor, UNFPA, at least stronger partnership with them...UNICEF, we are doing a number of projects with them, they are our donors, USAID." RPC4 noted, "UNFPA, UNICEF, has been of tremendous support...both

technical and financial.” Donor sources for maternal health program support include private organizations and foundations. RPC7 revealed:

USAID is one...UNFPA is one, Government of Japan is one... DANIDA, DFID or what you call UKaid...KOIKA-Korea Association... and JICA itself has supported us...GATES has also supported us... Buffet, Willows Foundation has funded us... AU has funded us, GATES through UNFPA, Hewlett Packard Foundation and a couple of others.

The delivery channels for financing maternal health program support funds influenced participants’ definition of a donor. Bayer and Urpelainen (2013) defined a donor as a country, multilateral, or private organization providing grants, loans, or technical support to developing countries, including state and nonstate agencies. However, participants’ perceptions of donors included a broad spectrum of agencies and partners. RPC4 stated, “my simple understanding of a donor is someone who is offering something to you free. It could be financial, technical, it could be material.” Participants categorized government and nongovernment agencies that provided funding support to their institutions as donors. According to RPC3:

Ghana AIDS Commission is a state institution... they also receive the funds from other donors...but in our books we see them as a donor because the funds are transferred from Ghana AIDS Commission to us, so for us they are a donor.

RPC1 affirmed, “we have international, mostly they are international donors; we have few government donors...example Ghana Health Service.” RPC6 also expressed views regarding funding support to a government agency by a nongovernment institution:

As they can't work in Ghana without government partners...working with our institution for instance and other government partners is the right direction because they need to work with institutions that have the mandate and clear oversight of the areas that they want to work in.

The forms or types of financial aid include: (a) balance of payment support, (b) sector budget support, (c) project aid using government systems, and (d) budget support modality (Molenaers, 2012; Mukuni & Price, 2014). Participants indicated the project-based approach to development aid was more prevalent than the other forms of financial aid. The mechanisms for accessing project-based funding for maternal health interventions are varied. Figure 2 reflects participants' responses regarding their definitions and classifications of donor funding mechanisms.

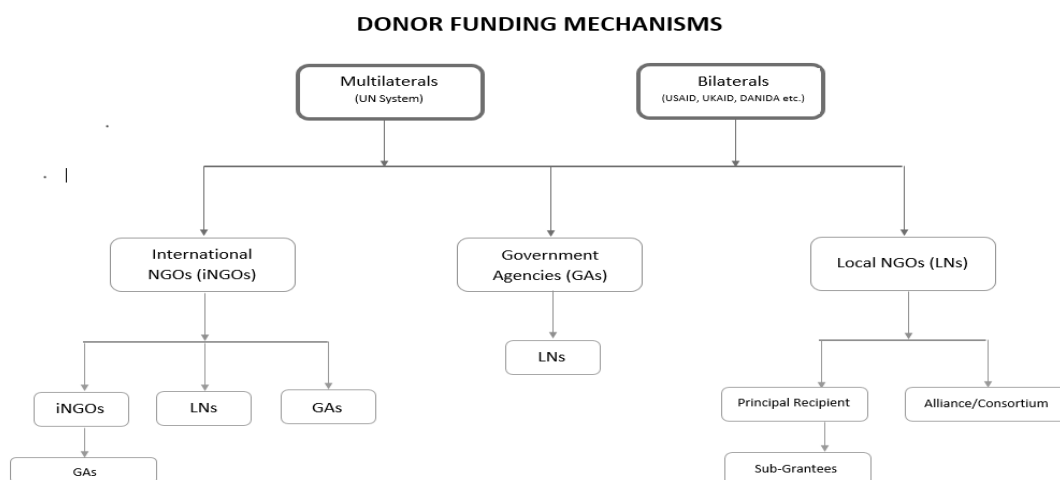


Figure 2: Donor funding mechanisms

Recipient institutions obtain donor funding through diverse approaches. These include direct funding from multilateral or bilateral agencies, and indirect funding respectively through government, international nongovernment, or local nongovernment

agencies. Some institutions obtain program support funds as subrecipients to a principal recipient, or through the establishment of consortia or alliances. RPC7 explained:

There are some funds that we get directly from the donor. There are others that come through our...our international parent body... there are others that ...come through another organization to us. They have ...they...fund us to implement and report to them and they report to the donor. Likewise too we also have funds that we receive directly from the donor and then we also work with subrecipients or what we call guarantees; there are various names for them but that is a situation where you give them money to implement on your behalf and then you account to the donor and so we have been in all of them; direct funding, as subrecipients, or as principal recipients.

RPC5 added, “we have subrecipients, so we have other organizations that we give the funding to.” RPC3 also stated:

In the area of the consortium, it is like a group of organizations that have come together so there is no ... subrecipient here. So we are seen as three or four or five or six equal organizations that have come together, with different you know, systems, with different, you know...with different strategies, and we’ve come together. So we come together as a group, then we apply jointly for the funds. But the donor wants to deal with one organization so that in terms of accounting for the resources, they are not dealing with six or three organizations at the same time. So one organization you know... acts or is appointed as the

lead organization for the consortium. So they do the communication for and on behalf of the consortium with the donor.

Contractual arrangements and modalities for funds disbursement vary from one donor to another. Keng'ara (2014) mentioned three fund disbursement methods, namely: (a) direct payment to a third party for eligible expenses, (b) reimbursement of eligible expenses the recipient partner incurs, and (c) cash advances to the recipient partner to finance eligible expenditures. Participants' responses aligned with Keng'ara's observations on the funds disbursement methods. RPC4 noted:

At one point they would want to pay for a service directly. At other points they give you disbursements on quarterly basis, and with some institutions they do that on half-yearly basis. So that's our experience with the funding mechanisms that we have. There are some that we run just one off projects for them so they release all the funds and with the exception of let's say about 10% of it; after you have reported then they give you the rest. So it varies from one donor to the other.

RPC1 also stated, "it depends on the donor but most of our donors give us money quarterly or six monthly." RPC5 shared experiences by saying, "funding was given to us every month...one-time funding...or funding on quarterly basis." RPC7 also revealed:

For as much as you agree on a certain amount of money to use within the year, the expectation is that...I don't want to use the word pre-finance, but the expectation is that you spend according to the budget. When they are ok with the receipts, returns, then they reimburse you. Some of them are on quarterly and

on semester basis. Other donors also will give you funding...for a semester but ask you to include a three month buffer.

The findings from the interviews triangulated against program and project documents of the seven respective institutions indicated quarterly cash advances was the most common disbursement method that the donors employed. The findings were also in alignment with previous researchers' (Brown and Swiss, 2013; Lawson, 2013) conclusions that some donor partners tend to have preference for aid fragmentation. As Lawson (2013) and Pallas et al. (2015) posited, the limited ability of donors to address attribution and accountability of pooled resources could lead to competition and support of stand-alone projects to increase donor visibility.

## **Theme 2: Implementing Robust Aid Effectiveness Management Practices**

The robust management of donor funds requires compliance with five underlining aid effectiveness principles for development assistance. These principles are: (a) ownership, (b) alignment, (c) harmonization, (d) managing for results, and (e) mutual accountability (Dabelstein & Patton, 2013). This emerging theme on using robust practices for assuring aid effectiveness reflects participants' positive and negative experiences regarding operationalization of the five principles in the management of maternal health program support funds. This section also contains discussions on the game theory, which supports the aid effectiveness conceptual framework for this study.

Implementing robust aid effectiveness management practices emerged with 109 total responses. Two subthemes, the principles for ownership and managing for results recorded the highest responses. The lowest number of responses emerged from the



harmonization subtheme. Table 2 contains participants' total responses specific to the five aid effectiveness subthemes. The numbers in Table 2 represent the total responses of all participants to interview questions relating to each subtheme. During the interviews, participants' responses to the harmonization subtheme were at a minimum (i.e., a total of six responses), and therefore, recorded the lowest number of responses.

Table 2

*Participants' Responses to Implementing Robust Management Practices for Aid*

*Effectiveness Subthemes*

Sub-Theme	Number of Responses
Ownership	40
Alignment	10
Harmonization	6
Managing for Results	38
Mutual Accountability	15
Total Responses	109

**Ownership.** A critical requirement of recipient partners, under the ownership principle, is to exercise effective leadership in determining country priorities (Dabelstein & Patton, 2013). Evidence-based allocation of aid and technically sound consistency with government priorities demonstrates potential for success (Dalil et al., 2014). Five participants (RPC1; RPC3; RPC4; RPC5; RPC6) representing 71% of total respondents agreed that some donors readily provided development assistance in line with the recipient partners' priorities. However, all seven participants unanimously acknowledged the tendency of some donors to influence the development priorities of recipient countries

and partners. Participants recounted experiences regarding donor interference with country and organizational strategies and plans. RPC7 noted:

What I know is that donors use some criteria based on our data; Ghana Demographic and Health Survey and other things to say that... and sometimes I don't know, they take it from other places to say that they are ready to work in these areas because of certain indicators and therefore when they bring funding it is meant for those locations. Sometimes, that is not the situation. The assumptions are wrong. But again, there is nothing much you can do about it. You have to...they are so strict on that.

RPC1 also stated:

They don't really look at the scope of what you are doing...it doesn't always work well; they don't look at what you need...you talk about it they say either you take it or leave it. There are so many NGOs competing, the moment they say either you take it or leave it, you also go in for it and do whatever they want you to do.

RPC5 added:

What I realize is that in terms of implementation, they would give you the kind of ownership you need. But in terms of priority areas...for the country itself, its better, but for NGOs, it is a bit...it's not better. They don't go to an organization and say that "what is the gap? I want to fill it." No, they tell you that "this is what I am doing, what can you do in my program?"

The findings of the analysis confirmed Sjostedt's (2013) observed tensions particularly in the area of conflicting goals between the donor and the recipient country at different levels, resulting in the nonadherence to country ownership by the donor.

Three participants representing 43% of total respondents affirmed negotiations helped to influence some donors to rescind inappropriate decisions. RPC2 explained, "sometimes we have to be firm. Yes, you are supporting us, but if we also have pressing areas...we try to put our foot down and most of the time we have been able to convince donors to go with us." RPC3, through member checking, also responded:

We had a donor that from the onset you realize that they were interested in this ... advocacy for gay and lesbian rights... and we were looking at reproductive health... in the country where we find ourselves and the kind of opposition in the country, we, we, we still needed the money, so we were looking at saying no to the money or accepting the money and doing reproductive health; because we also felt that in our reproductive health discussions we talk about sexual orientation... so there was some kind of common ground but not that we would want to openly go out there and advocate for gay and lesbian rights...we were able to convince them to get the resources but later we realized that they were trying to push us to a way that we didn't want to go and we made that clear to them.

The findings of the analysis indicated that donor partners' adherence to the ownership principle was lacking in some programs and projects, as recipient partners were unable to exercise leadership in determining priorities. The conceptual framework for this study,

the aid effectiveness framework, emphasized application of the game theory in donor-recipient relationships. Game theorists (Collier et al., 1997; McLean, 2015) proposed consensual relationships between donors and recipients to reduce donor conditionality, address diverging preferences, and secure positive outcomes from aid flows. The findings of this study revealed that donor conditionality continues to prevail within some contexts of the development landscape in Ghana. RPC4's recommendations for assuring the effective leadership role of recipient partners aligned with the game theorists' (Collier et al., 1997; McLean, 2015) propositions on consensual relationships between donors and recipients. RPC4 proposed:

In the spirit of Paris Declaration, I believe that... both donors and ... recipients should work together so that they align objectives. Objectives or goals of programs...or aid should mainly be driven by the recipients. They have a need, except they do not have the means to...address it. And so if you come to help me it should be like the bank and the...borrower situation. The one who is coming to borrow the money knows what he is going to use the money for, of course you also want assurance that your money will be returned to you...in good pace.

RPC4 further stressed:

For the donor, you have the resources and you want to use it to advance a certain cause. But the one who is on the ground knows best what the actual situation is so I think mainly the recipients should try and determine what the objectives should be, but they should do that also in consultation with...the donors. Donors should

also ensure that they fully support the objectives, also in line with the Paris Declaration, that...donor organizations ...should be willing to...move attention to the priorities that have been set by the various recipient countries, and use the local systems that have been established.

**Alignment.** The alignment principle underscores donor countries' support for recipient countries' development strategies through the use the local systems, structures, institutions, and procedures (Dabelstein & Patton, 2013). Participants shared mixed opinions on application of the alignment principle in maternal health program and project implementation. All seven participants agreed that to some extent, donors aligned their technical and financial requirements with the country's local systems, structures, institutions, and procedures. RPC2 and RPC3 expressed no reservations regarding the technical and financial requirements of their donors. RPC2 stated, "they tell you the processes involved if you are to benefit from them; and...you have to agree to it and they cannot also just do that without looking at what also pertains in your country...laws." RPC7 made the following observations on procurement:

In Ghana, the procurement process is... international. I mean there aren't too many differences in that so if you are a civil society organization that aligns your procurement processes to the national one... it's not a problem, because I don't ...I mean they are basic things... and in most cases when they come they just want to check whether you have those systems. Sometimes they look at issues related to thresholds, who should approve at what level and basically we have all those systems because its mainly linked to...and I don't know whether it's also

linked to the fact that when you register an NGO the government wants to ensure that you have those things in place.

Four participants (RPC1; RPC3; RPC4; RPC6) representing 57% of respondents lamented on some aspects of financial reporting and audit requirements of some donors, particularly in the area of procurement. RPC1 exclaimed:

The donor expects you to report with receipts, everything you do; in other developed countries, you take taxi you can get a receipt from the taxi. Here, no taxi driver will give you a receipt. Somebody cooking by the roadside will not get a receipt...I know its accountability but at times its very cumbersome.

RPC6 expressed a concern relating to external audits by donors:

The value added tax on goods and services, on specific goods and services... each country has its own specification. I was trying to explain because an external auditor was asking ...“this VAT component would not be charged to the project.” And I was telling him “no, in Ghana, it is for this institution being a government institution to work with only VAT registered organizations.” So you would see the cost plus the VAT because you’re supposed to pick that VAT invoice and that is in conformity with the procurement law. So if it’s not acceptable to add VAT then I don’t know what is going to happen because we have to work within the law.

RPC3 was of the view that the donors’ lack of confidence in the procurement processes of the country could account for observed tensions regarding financial and audit requirements. RPC3 stated, “I believe the reason is that they have challenges with our

procurement law. They feel that there are weaknesses, and all that... so sometimes they want to use their own system, they want to impose their own system on us.”

According to Dalil et al. (2014), the capacity of the recipient government to respond to the financial and audit requirements of the donor avoids disagreements on reporting procedures. Participants’ recommendations for reducing tensions on financial and audit requirements centered on balancing the donors’ requirements with Ghana’s policies and systems, while assuring the integrity of those systems. RPC6 proposed:

We should try and use in-country documentation and policies because at the end of the day, that is where the action and the activity are taking place. Because I believe those policies have international bearings on them so we should use the in-country policies on procurement, policies on doing whatever and then ensuing that it also satisfies the donor’s request or the donor’s specifications. That would create a very harmonious system.

RPC4 added, “donors should use... local systems that have been established. Of course, we can improve the integrity of those systems.”

**Harmonization.** This principle prescribes harmonized, transparent, collective, and complementary actions by donors to avoid duplication of activities (Dabelstein & Patton, 2013). This subtheme recorded the lowest number of responses, i.e., six responses. Participants’ responses centered on their perceptions of donor coordination in the delivery of maternal health programs. According to Dalil et al. (2014), collaborative decision-making between the health sector and donors facilitates a geographic approach to donor financing and the coverage of health interventions. Forty-three per cent of

participants addressed the subtheme, and expressed varied views on donor conditionality within the maternal health development landscape. RPC5's viewpoints aligned with Dalil et al.'s (2014) conclusions regarding collaborative decision-making between donors and recipient partners. RPC5 lauded efforts of government agencies to engage in collaborative decision making with donors. In addition, RPC5 was of the view that donors engaged in transparent and complementary actions to avoid duplication of activities. According to RPC5:

Government presents a work plan to the donors... donors have meetings and in these meetings they make decisions to say that "this year, this is the direction we want to go, this year that is the direction we want to go." Apart from individual donors also making decisions, there are also meetings for all the donors where they also meet and say that "if donor A is doing this then donor B should not do that", so that we are not conflicting, and then we are all not sort of repeating the same activities that are happening in country.

RPC1, however, expressed concern about donors' uncoordinated engagement with nongovernment agencies. RPC1 posited that some donors just focused on providing financial support to nongovernment agencies, without recourse to mapping the scope and interventions of actors involved with maternal health program implementation.

Participants' suggestions for strengthening donor coordination supported Cabral et al.'s advocacy for extensive engagement among donors in accordance with the objectives of the harmonization principle. RPC4 emphasized synchronizing of aid disbursement



strategies to address donor support for execution of maternal health programs and projects by government and nongovernment institutions:

There should be harmonization amongst the donor countries, so that they don't give money to organizations for the same things. They should talk to each other, know what...has worked based on their experience with organizations so that they do not leave two different sets of money which would be used on one activity.

**Managing for results.** Managing and implementing aid through adoption of results-based, performance management, and measurement techniques are critical processes for assuring development outcomes (Dabelstein & Patton, 2013). All seven participants provided coherent responses relating to technical capacity, release of donor funds, and tracking of results to address questions under this subtheme. According to Dalil et al. (2014), joint performance monitoring of health sector activities and the use of multiple data sources by donors and government partners facilitates focusing on, and tracking of, results. In addition, a balanced approach to capacity assessments and strengthening of technical competencies in recipient institutions influences the achievement of program and project outcomes (Kopinak, 2013; Zuofa & Ochieng, 2015).

Participatory approaches to institutional capacity strengthening forms a core component under the aid effectiveness principle of managing for results. Kopinak (2013) raised concerns about the donors' assessment criteria for recipient agencies, which, according to Kopinak, focused only on an investigation of the legitimate legacy of those agencies to be recipients of donor funds. Kopinak and Hechler and Tostensen (2012)

suggested the inclusion of assessment criteria that address strength, coping, resilience, challenges, and the level of risk of managing donor funds. All seven participants confirmed the conduct of capacity strengthening activities at various levels in their respective institutions. RPC4 noted, “I believe we need capacity building as a continuous strategy and we need it on all fronts. Fronts of leadership, of management, how to manage maternal health programs; learning from previous programs, the failures and successes of those programs.” However, RPC1 noted assessments to identify and address capacity gaps of recipient institutions was not a priority for some donor partners. RPC1 stated, “some of the donors don’t give you any training. They expect you to just read and follow what they want.” RPC4 added, “virtually little is given to staff of the organization, given to capacity building of the organization itself. All those organizations...donors are interested in is we have these funds, we want to support this program in community A or community B.” According to RPC1, donors that considered capacity assessment as a priority rarely employed comprehensive criteria in assessing the recipient organizations. Six participants representing 86% of respondents confirmed donors and recipient institutions cofinanced capacity strengthening activities in recipient institutions. RPC3 stated:

Capacity is an issue especially in Africa and Ghana here, and sometimes even as part of the project we identify capacity needs and funding is allocated to train...sometimes the donor has to lead the process in training the recipient organization. Sometimes we have to find our own consultants to be able to deliver.

Participants considered good remuneration and working conditions for program and project teams as primary elements for enhancing institutional technical capacity and performance. RPC7's response supported Plaček et al. (2013), who posited that clear job descriptions and remuneration policies for project managers could facilitate the implementation of effective strategies in the management of donor-funded projects.

RPC7 explained:

If you are a good employer what that means is that you have an up to date and workable human resource policy, where the needs of the... your human resource are taken care of. Good remuneration, good ...environment, adequate channels for complaints and ...for complaints...right tools to work with...support for the staff even beyond the staff to the family-spouse and children...some benefits for the future, you know, just to ensure that the staff has a clear mind to focus on what he or she is doing at a given point in time.

Four participants (RPC1; RPC3; RPC4; RPC5) emphatically stated that noncompliance of some donors with the remuneration policies of recipient nongovernment institutions contributed to the capacity gaps in those institutions. According to the participants, challenges with recruitment and maintenance of technically competent personnel compromised the performance of program and project teams, as Zuofa and Ochieng (2015) maintained. RPC3 stated:

The donors are not willing to pay for people's time on projects. There are projects that pay 100%, there are projects that don't pay at all. They actually don't want to pay anything. And the point is who should employ for them to carry out those

assignments for you? So...I would say that for NGOs some of the staff tend to be overused. There is a lot of workload on the staff. You have to, you know...a staff who is working on project A who is fully paid for by that project, but for project B because the staff, there is no money for personnel, we have to task staff who are working on project A to assist in implementing that project and that brings constraints.

RPC5 also noted:

Most of the donors expect that you should have some core funding from somewhere to be able to pay your staff, so that you use to support them. So how do you sustain people to be able to implement the activities for you? But also looking at the capacity of the people you need and the educational level, then you have to pay more for these people. So where do you find the rest of the money?

RPC1 lamented:

Donors expect you to implement projects but they don't expect you to pay staff well. If you want very good staff with capacity, it goes with resources. And most of the donors don't see why as an NGO you should pay staff benefits. They just expect you to take allowance...and if you try and even pick people who do not have capacity and you mentor them up to a certain level, they are the same people who come and employ them.

RPC4 expressed reservations about donor technical cooperation:

Sometimes donors would bring you funds and also propose to you people they think can be program managers from their own countries. We have had a similar

situation, where people come to be program managers from their own countries.

And when you look at the amount of money that you have to spend on them alone, it takes a chunk from the project itself.

RPC3 concluded, “we need to look at institutional capacity very seriously. We need to support institutions to build their capacity, most especially local NGOs. We need to invest a lot in building capacity.”

Sustainable development is dependent on a flexible, predictable, timely, and sustained release of donor funds (Kopinak, 2013). Reservations of six participants about untimely release of donor funds aligned with Kopinak’s (2013) concerns on the erratic, unpredictable, donor disbursements. RPC6 indicated, “they try as much as possible to release funds, though they sometimes delay to release funds as planned and as scheduled.” RPC4 added, “the late release of funds can stem from late approval of work plan or maybe you as the institution... not delivering your reports on time, and so it delays the subsequent processes.” Interestingly, RPC2 shared positive experiences on the timing of donor funds disbursements. RPC2 noted:

Once they agree to support our program we agree with them and we have not had any problem with delay in the release of funds; not from donors, development partners. If its Government of Ghana, yes, with the development partners we have not had such experience.

Participants’ concerns on the delays in funding releases also supported researchers’ (Dalil et al., 2014; Kopinak, 2013) conclusions that untimely, unsustainable release of donor funds could negatively affect program or project outcomes. RPC6 indicated the late

release of funds could generate inconsistencies with the activity implementation timelines and compromise the setting of activity targets. RPC5 also explained:

Some donor funding delays...when they give you the first quarter money, you get the next quarter at the end of the year; and...sometimes...during the break in funding, the challenge is that you've gotten the interest of the people you are reaching out to. They know that you are bringing this activity to them, then all of a sudden there is a break. So sometimes when you go back to the community they've lost interest...it makes it very difficult to implement activities.

RPC3 and RPC4 underscored the strong linkages between timely funds disbursement, predictability of aid flows, and the realization of program and project targets. RPC3 remarked, "they have to release the resources. Once they have signed the memorandum of understanding or a contract the resources have to be released on time."

Monitoring short, medium, and long term targets during program and project implementation is a crucial results-based management requirement (Dabelstein & Patton, 2013). All seven participants acknowledged monitoring of program and project activities by donors and recipients facilitated the effectiveness of development aid. Participants were particularly emphatic about the limited involvement of some donors in monitoring maternal health program and project activities. RPC1 revealed:

What I realize is that monitoring of those resources has not been very strong but the donors don't just give money; I know they give it to the country to work, but it is also important that they really look at the indicators and strategies and

monitor the implementation so that we can maximize impact and make sure that things are done.

RPC5 stressed:

I think that for aid to be effective there has to be very stringent monitoring systems. If the monitoring systems are weak, then it makes recipient organizations also relaxed and will not be able to implement as much as you should. It is very important that ...step by step monitoring systems are put in place...various reporting formats makes it very difficult for the recipient to say that I will not implement.

RPC3 added:

They should also monitor and evaluate the process and ensure that from time to time they visit the field to ensure we are actually delivering the project as planned. Because if you give us resources and you don't visit our side to see that we are actually doing the work, well, we may relax, and we may tell you whatever we want to tell you. So I think monitoring also helps to strengthen and to ensure...put us on our toes to ensure that we are actually delivering the results. Actually when they come, they also question us and that helps us to even correct if there are, you know... problems along the line.

The participants' responses supported researchers' (Dalil et al., 2014; Hechler & Tostensen, 2012) assertion that performance monitoring by the donor was crucial to facilitate effective tracking of results and assure the effectiveness of aid. RPC4 drew attention to revisiting the measurement of results:

We believe that also in line with the principles of ...the Paris Declaration, we should be results focused so that both donor countries and...recipients should look at what is the end result-what do we want to...we shouldn't just put activities there because those are the activities we are used to; that is how we do our thing as a donor or as a recipient. But to what end? When we give you the money what would it achieve? Measure that. The measurement part is the issue, because there are a lot of programs that are rolled out in this country. But to what end? Are we able to measure...the results of those programs?

**Mutual accountability.** Donors and recipient partners are collectively responsible for enhancing mutual accountability and transparency in the use of resources (Dabelstein & Patton, 2013). All seven participants recognized accountability of donor resources as a core requirement of recipient partners contributing to aid programs' effectiveness. According to RPC3:

The recipient is... has to be accountable, you understand, for the funds that you have received. How do you demonstrate that you are accountable? By submitting your reports on time, delivering the activities that you have planned to do and reporting same to the donor. So...and the donor also has that same, you know, is also accountable because perhaps they have also received the resources from somewhere. So we all need to discharge our responsibilities.

RPC4 added:

There should be greater accountability. We shouldn't do accountability just on the front of money but on the front of delivery. You said you were going to do A, B,



C, D. Have you done it? It's not enough to say that "oh, I have spent all the money or look I have some money left". Sometimes it is possible to achieve your results with less money. Other times, yes you may need a little more, so for me the central focus shouldn't really be about the funds but about the results that both of you committed to.

RPC7 provided an additional perspective to the recipient partners' responsibilities regarding accountability:

You pick money to do something for some people, so you are supposed to ensure that what you said you would do, you let the donor know that you have done it.

Meanwhile you are there in the community and told them that you are providing the services and you know it is not a favor, but it's their right...so again you also hold that responsibility to ensure that if you are giving this person a condom to use you have the responsibility to teach the person how to use it well and make sure that the donor knows about it. So your accountability is at both sides; being accountable to the... community, being accountable to a donor.

So you cannot be accountable to a donor and leave the community and you cannot be accountable to a community and leave the donor.

Transparency between donors and recipient partners is crucial to enable proper tracking of resources and measuring the effect of development assistance (Grépin et al., 2014). Three participants (RPC3; RPC5; RPC7) representing 43% of respondents conceded lack of trust and transparency in resource expenditure generated conflicts and tensions between donors and recipient partners. RPC3 and RPC5 posited that suspicion of

misuse of funds or fraud accounted for the disagreements between the donors and recipient partners. RPC7 provided scenarios that generated suspicion, namely: (a) under invoicing, (b) over invoicing, (c) unauthentic receipts, (d) nonadherence to standard procurement processes and internal controls, and (e) holding on to unspent funds without the donors' approval. RPC7 noted, "if there is suspicion of misuse of funds or fraud, it will affect further release of funds." Participants acknowledged the need for recipient partners to uphold financial integrity during donor resource expenditure. In addition, RPC5 underscored the responsibilities of donors and recipient partners in employing strong anticorruption processes for controlling expenditure and tracking of resources, as Hechler and Tostensen (2012) suggested.

### **Theme 3: Using Effective Project Management Practices**

Project management practices influence the utilization of funds within the project cycle (Keng'ara, 2014). Under this emerging theme on using effective project management practices, I present findings on the management structures and funds management procedures that recipient partners employed in executing maternal health programs and projects. The theme emerged with 140 total responses, with the subtheme on management structures recording the highest number of responses. Table 3 depicts participants' responses to the subthemes. The table indicates the total number of participants' responses to the interview questions relating to two subthemes namely, management structures and funds utilization control procedures.

Table 3

*Participants' Responses to Project Management Subthemes*

Project Management Practices	Number of Responses
Management Structures	75
Funds Utilization Control	
Procedures	65
Total Responses	140

**Management structures.** Projects' clear alignment with organizations' strategic focus and efficient governance systems enhance project efficiency and effectiveness (Hjelmbrekke et al., 2015; Zuofa & Ochieng, 2015). All seven participants confirmed active involvement in strategic planning processes within their respective institutions. RPC3 stated, "we have a strategic plan which defines the vision for a period, maybe 5-year and that also outlines the objectives and strategies and all that." Triangulation of interview responses with program and project documents revealed all the recipient institutions had 5-year strategic plans that guided the running of those institutions. In addition, all recipient institutions had organizational policies to facilitate prudent establishment and functioning of program and project teams that were aligned with organizations' strategic goals. RP7 noted:

We have...approved policies that help us in that process. Now, we work with human resource, so there is a human resource policy that looks at the kind of human resource you need for each level; that is one. Now, we have a financial manual, that looks at issues related to internal controls and this is standard. Then we have a finance and administrative manual, and logistics manual that looks at

procurement and all those things, it is also standard. Then we have what we call the monitoring and evaluation strategy, which is also standard. So those are...there are number of other documents-HIV policy, child protection, and reproductive rights issues. There are a number of documents but these are the key documents that are important to what we do.

Participants shared similar governance and management systems (i.e., boards and senior management teams) for providing executive support for maternal health program and project implementation. Triangulation of participants' responses with administrative documents of the seven institutions confirmed the existence of functioning boards with clear responsibilities; including approval of budget thresholds and monitoring of program and project activities.

All seven participants noted the management and coordination of maternal health programs and projects followed a decentralized approach. Similarly, communication and reporting channels followed a decentralized approach. RPC1 explained:

We have different staff ... so the structure runs from the community to the national level. And so if you look at the organogram, the field person reports to the project officer, the project officer reports to the project coordinator, the project coordinator reports to the program manager and the program manager reports to the director of programs.

Five participants (RPC1; RPC3; RPC4; RPC5; RPC7) representing 71% of total respondents emphasized the involvement of community members in the coordination and management of programs and projects. RPC1 stated:

We ensure that communities drive our implementation. And so as a result we try to establish community management committees-different level so that we maximize their active participation in whatever we do...we have the same thing at district level... and then now we have the regional, so where we have a number of projects, a five member committee and staff who are managers, who work with the staff on the field; we have project coordinators, we have field officers, we have community volunteers, so the structure runs from the community to the national level.

Review meetings constitute a core component of the management and coordination structures and processes. All seven participants indicated varied levels at which the review meetings occurred. The meetings occurred from the lowest to the highest hierarchical structures involved in program and project implementation (RPC1; RPC3; RPC4; RPC5; RPC7). Internal review meetings involving program and project teams are primary approaches for decision making on activity execution and resource expenditure. RPC3 stated, "we also use periodic review meetings, where we do a lot of review." RPC4 also mentioned, "the project management team would have a couple of meetings; it often involves people from programs, people from finance, and other key departments that we believe would be ...relevant to the program." RPC7 further explained:

All departments or units meet to discuss issues related to their work and sometimes even beyond their work...so there are instances where sometimes the programs will have their meeting and in that meeting we have all the managers...just to discuss the progress. Now beyond that if there are project

officers under that project, in the field, the whole team plus the Executive Director and the Director of Programs also meet in the form of a review meeting to look at the progress of work. Beyond that, senior management...also meet; and it's really looking at issues concerning programs, finance, human resource...so we meet and take those strategic decisions. At each level, some are just programmatic in nature, but others are programmatic and financial, procurement and human resource, you know, a number of issues depending on the level and type of people meeting.

Triangulation of participants' responses with the meeting schedules and minutes of meetings from the respective institutions indicated the meetings mainly occurred on weekly, monthly, quarterly, and half-yearly basis; depending on the level and type of people meeting.

All seven participants' views supported the findings of previous researchers (Alias et al., 2014; Koi-Akrofi et al., 2013) who posited that appropriate and effective planning was a critical condition to facilitate projects' success. The planning for program and project implementation took three main stages: (a) planning with the donor, (b) operational planning at the recipient institutions' level, and (c) planning by individual members of the program and project teams (RPC3; RPC4; RPC5; RPC7). RPC7 stated prudent annual planning with the donor required the setting of few activities and targets at the beginning and ending of the year, and more activities at the middle belt of the year, preferably the second and third quarters. The operational planning stage involved a breakdown of the annual work plans. According to RPC3:

When we have done our annual work plan, then we...we then break it down to quarterly action plans, monthly, quarterly. Then, we have the staff that are responsible, so I will say usually we use the work breakdown structure, so we have all the activities broken down into smaller pieces to action plans.

Participants were emphatic about the relevance of the operational plans and budgets in the program and project cycles. RPC4 asserted, “the operational plan will break down every single activity into everyday tasks.” RPC5 elucidated:

Usually the donor’s plan is not the “knitty gritties”. So we develop another one, that talks about- I will write letters, I will recruit...the peer educators, I will do this, that shows us in terms of the specifics that we are supposed to do. And in house, we have our reporting systems. So whether the donor is asking for a report or not, you need to write a report first on each activity and...on the month. So we have monthly reports and we have activity reports.

RPC4 added, “usually the budget you send for funding would be ... vague, it doesn’t have a clear breakdown so in our ... operational budget, we do breakdown of all the expenditures that we expect to make.” Individual members of the program and project teams derive their action plans from the operational plans. RPC7 stated, “every staff has a work plan and every staff has targets based on all these so... again beyond that, the targets are broken down to quarterly, monthly, and you yourself at your level will break it down to daily or whatever to achieve it.” Researchers (Allen et al., 2014; Ofori, 2013) recommended the application of the project management plan (PMP) and responsibility assigned matrix (RAM) to positively affect project performance. According to Allen et al.

(2014), using the PMP's and RAM's enables effective documentation and monitoring of the project objectives, schedule, and budget. Using a PMP also facilitates communication protocols regarding management arrangements and reporting structures within the project teams (Ofori, 2013). Findings of the analysis revealed the participants' operational and action planning processes concurred with the researchers' (Allen et al., 2014; Ofori, 2013) recommendations regarding application of the PMP and RAM.

The setting of timelines is a crucial component of operational plans and individual action plans. RPC4 explained the levels of timelines during the individual action planning process:

There are two levels of timelines...when we say the activity is community outreach the task is selecting a community. Then the next one is who is going to lead that task? Then...who that person is going to link with, so we have a column for partner... then the next is timeline. Then after timeline is status, so what is the status of that task? Whether it's on schedule or it's fulfilled or it's been unfulfilled. Then after status is next action. Then after next action is deadline.

RPC4 added:

So let's say activity is supposed to happen at the...end of the month. The selection of the community should have happened let's say first week, that's the first timeline. The deadline should be latest if you have not selected within that week, latest by the middle of the second week, you should have done it, so that's your deadline. So these are the two levels of timelines.



The setting of timelines is also relevant to assure the timely submission of reports from the decentralized levels to head offices of recipient institutions. All seven participants acknowledged strict adherence to timelines, monitoring, and staff performance measurement mechanisms were core values in assuring projects' success, as Koi-Akrofi et al. (2013) maintained.

Wells (2012) maintained project teams employed four project management methodologies (PMMs) namely, (a) PRINCE2, (b) in-house structured PMM, (c) gate-phased PMM, and (d) gate-phased PMM that an agile approach replaced. Triangulation of interview responses with program and project documents indicated all seven participants employed in-house structured PMMs in their respective institutions.

**Funds utilization control procedures.** The effective utilization of program and project funds requires compliance with robust control mechanisms (Alias et al., 2014). The administrative and financial manuals of all seven respective institutions stipulated the modalities for assuring the segregation of duties relating to request, utilization, and accounting of program and project funds. All seven participants confirmed the internal control procedures aligned with the communication and reporting mechanisms in their respective institutions. Program personnel initiate the request for funds in accordance with the operational and individual action plans. RPC2 stated:

The one coordinating the program would usually have to do a memo requesting for the money and indicating for which purpose the money is being requested for, with the work plan and budget attached and ... we would usually require that there is a concept note ...telling us ...when the activity is taking place, the

number of people involved, who are going to be involved in it and all the things that what you are requesting for is indicated. So its processed and not only for donor funds, even our GOG, Government of Ghana money if we are to spend that's how we do.

RPC3 explained the segregation of duties relating to project planning and monitoring funding requests and expenditures from the perspective of the decentralized level:

If it's our project officer in the Ashanti region...we are supposed to do some activity in the Ashanti region, he will raise a memo to the program manager and the program manager... and before raising the memo, you have to bring a work plan. Normally it's a monthly work plan, so in the month of March he wants to do A,B, C, D activities, then he would budget on that. Now he would raise a memo requesting for funds to do those activities.

RPC3 added:

When the memo comes, we will check to ensure that that activity for which he is requesting funds is actually in the action plan. That's the program manager will check. And then he will check that the resources that he is requesting for are actually also, has been earmarked you know... in the action plan-in the budget. Now, then the manager will authorize...will authorize...will authorize, then it goes to the Executive Director who will also check to ensure that the activity is actually within the action plan for the period and resources are also there. Then he would also approve. Then it goes to the accountant who would then write a

check for the project officer. He goes to deliver the activity and accounts for the resources that has been given to the person.

RPC7 shared internal control processes relating to funding requests for procurement activities:

If there are issues of procurement, that procurement by the line manager is referred to the general services unit and they know that we need this procurement...and even before then we need to indicate all procurement needs to the unit... the procurement unit and they should do what they call pre...they have a number of pre-selected vendors or providers...the finance and admin manual tells us that if the threshold is above 500 Ghana cedis, it has to go to the purchasing officer... and then they make recommendations, the Executive Director looks at it and approves or disapproves before the purchases are bought.

Three participants (RPC2; RPC6; RPC7) representing 43% of total respondents disclosed the presence of internal auditors added value to the control mechanisms in their respective institutions. According to the participants, the internal audit system enabled transparency of the funds disbursement and utilization processes, and mitigated errors relating to audit trails and supporting documentation. RPC6 stated:

In our case we...we...we...we have the institutional...way of ...sourcing for the funds, that's the initiator, the project head initiates that and it goes through our financial system as it is; the government financial system. It goes through the internal auditor before the voucher is even approved to be paid, so then it kind of sets the tone for accountability. It sets the tone for transparency in everything. So

at the end of the activity it comes back to the auditor to verify that the accountable funds that have been sorted out is accounted according to the planned expenditure...so basically, it's about adhering to principles, adhering to government regulations about project funding and financial management systems. RPC7 also noted, "if you spend, within 5 days you should account for the money. If you don't account for the money, it's an issue. The internal auditor will pick it up." All seven participants acknowledged prudent and accurate accounting for program and project funds was crucial to uphold financial integrity. RPC6 noted, "funds are now released as an accountable. As an accountable in the sense that it is not written off. You go, execute the activities, come back, and account for it line by line based on the expenditure code that is in place." RPC5 added:

You have to bring invoices based on how much the charges are for the various...if it's a workshop, the venue, what are, what would go into...you collect about three invoices from three different companies for each of the activities. Refreshments, you will collect the invoices. Every single thing you have to collect the invoices. Because this is evidence to prove that you didn't just get up and walk to the hotel to just...that is fraudulent. So you need to bring the invoices together and then you need to justify why you are choosing a particular invoice...to do the activity.

The requirements for planning and monitoring the procurement of goods and services also followed standard practice. RPC7 stated:

It's all in the manual, you pay by check, you get your receipts, it comes with a waybill, the stores receive it with a waybill, they issue goods received note. Its... everything is written down to the letter so you follow that. And if you look at most donor contracts, you find that those are basic things that are also there... you know, so you hardly find a situation where... and they tend to agree with what you have because it's a best practice.

The study findings revealed all seven participants valued compliance to standardized planning and internal control mechanisms in their respective institutions, as a means to facilitate positive effects of funds disbursement and utilization procedures on program and project implementation. Participants' responses supported Alias et al. (2014), who acknowledged the existence and use of standardized planning and control mechanisms was critical to enable project success.

***Threats to maximal funds utilization.*** Funds disbursement delays at the level of the donor and recipient institutions constituted major threats to maximal utilization of program and project funds. Six participants, representing 86% of total respondents corroborated Keng'ara's (2014) conclusions that the donors' stringent administrative processes resulted in (a) delays in funds disbursement to recipient partners, (b) subsequent delays in project implementation, and (c) low utilization of project funds. RPC7 explained how the donors' quarterly funds disbursement delays had affected program and project implementation:

If its January to March and it comes midway January it's ok...or even ending of January is ok. So you have two months to implement. And sometimes

because you set deadlines...it means you might think you have a full month but you actually have three weeks or in some cases two weeks. So then you see that you have only one and a half months to implement a three month project. It becomes very stressful. Meanwhile maybe a pre-activity to those intensive activities should have happened on a particular day of that month, because maybe it's in relation to a public event or national and then we don't do it. Sometimes you see a situation where a whole quarter not even a cedi would come. Then it comes even second month in the second quarter.

RPC4 added:

We have expected funds for a long time, it hasn't come, we have scheduled other project activities and now this comes so we have to compress and the...the... most murky periods would be the last quarter, where you are supposed to deliver all your activities, reports to...donors and all that.

RPC3 also lamented, "if the funds were supposed to come in the beginning of the quarter and maybe it comes at the end of the second month in the quarter we have just one month. So you may try your best but you still will not be able to spend." RPC7 agreed with RPC3's concerns and posited, "in some cases there are some activities that if you don't do it within a certain period you can no longer do it. That's why sometimes it will fall into under expenditure, under utilization or something." According to RPC3, inability to spend funds in a preceding quarter might negatively affect the quantum of funds disbursement in the ensuing quarter. RPC3 elucidated:

If they give you 100,000 for this quarter and you spend 70,000 and you have 30,000 left, if the second quarter they are supposed to give you 100,000, when you have 30,000 left they will bring you 70,000. So it means the 30,000 you didn't spend is gone, so it means that activity, you cannot do it any longer. It happened with some of the donors but for other donors they would still bring the 100,000 plus the 30,000 that you have in your account so you have 130,000.

According to Plaček et al. (2013), delays in processing payment requests negatively affect project implementation. Three participants representing 43% of total respondents reported of internal institutional delays in releasing funds for activity implementation, especially at the decentralized levels. According to RPC1, RPC6, and RPC7, internal processes for the approval of requests, generation, and signing of checks could lead to delays in releasing funds to the decentralized offices. RPC1, RPC6, and RPC7 also uttered the delay in funds releases normally stemmed from the attitudes of some program and project personnel. RPC1 stated, "the request comes and it stays with somebody more than expected." RPC7 added:

The check is ready at the accounts level and it's in a drawer; maybe two, three days and the program person doesn't know it is ready and then it's there. So the question is that how committed is the finance person to ensuring program implementation? If it's ready it's just a phone call, you call the person and say the check is ready.

RPC1, RPC6, and RPC7 maintained internal delays in releasing funds for activity implementation could breed tension between the program and finance personnel.

Delays in activity implementation also constitute threats to maximal funds utilization. All seven participants recalled delays on the part of field officers in the implementation and reporting of activities. RPC4 stated, “a lukewarm...project officer, or a task officer. You have been given a task to go and do A, B, C; and because of some excuses you have not done it.” RPC3 revealed:

Sometimes the delays come about because...either the officers in the field fail to deliver the activities on time or their reports don't come on time... sometimes, they fail in accounting on time. And when I say accounting, it's not just bringing receipts, but also a report for the previous activity that you undertook. So once there is a delay, then it triggers the delays... subsequent...you know, disbursements...so until you account for that one you will not get any resources.

RPC7 admitted some delays in activity implementation were genuine and unavoidable.

RPC3 corroborated RPC7's viewpoint and added:

We are dealing with human beings and we are dealing with you know... things that are very unpredictable. The environment is very unpredictable so sometimes we may anticipate certain challenges happening and be able to come up with ways of mitigating them. But still we may not be able to exhaust that; things that we never thought off could come up. So, for instance... sometimes you have planned to do an activity and all of a sudden it rains, it rains off... at that time that the activity is going to happen it starts raining and it is unable to... you may not be able to anticipate that it will rain at the very time.



RPC6 raised the issue of attrition of government workers, which limited the technical capacity of project teams and negatively affected activity implementation. According to RPC6, “you might have a field officer in the region or district; by the time you hear he’s been transferred or something. But he has the knowledge; he carries a lot of institutional memory.”

Activity implementation delays emanating from nuances regarding stakeholders’ and beneficiaries’ expectations of incentives and allowances were of primary concern to RPC1, RPC4, and RPC7. RPC1 exclaimed, “in Ghana now, because of the poverty level, everybody expects you to give money.” According to the participants, the inability to address those financial requirements for the stakeholders and beneficiaries delayed activity implementation on several occasions, as some key actors demonstrated noncollaborative attitudes towards community level activities. The participants’ concerns stemmed from the refusal of some donors to approve budget lines to address financial expectations of stakeholders and beneficiaries. RPC4 noted:

In the communities, they work with local partners and sometimes it’s ridiculous that there is no line in your...approved budget where you can spend on ...community folks who are helping you. But in your operational budget you need to generate something under that. And I think if such things are done it doesn’t help the local organizations to be truthful because those are things they are spending on. But they are not able to put it on, on...official documents. So I think that... donor organizations should be more realistic, they should be

more...I hope this is not harsh, humane...understand what the local realities are.

RPC4 added:

I go to communities where there are chiefs and they say you don't go to a chief 's palace empty handed, you have to give something to the chief. Meanwhile what would you write in your report? Chief gift or what? You can't write such a thing but you have to pay for it so where are we going to take those monies from?

RPC7 shared similar sentiments by stating:

There is this challenge of some donors not willing to approve certain payments at the community level; or even to the media or something. And you know that we live in a culture that there's no way you can get a media man to cover your program without parting out with something. Meanwhile, there is no way you can show that you gave a media man money. And sometimes even transportation allowance is difficult to help come and cover your work. And it's a big problem. Therefore you have to find other means of handling that.

According to the participants, the failure to address financial expectations of the stakeholders and beneficiaries negatively affected the scheduling and completion of program and project activities. The findings of the analysis aligned with Keng'ara's (2014) conclusions that the failure to complete scheduled activities resulted in reducing utilization of funds. Notably, this study's findings, while expatiating on nuances that negatively affect activity implementation and funds utilization, also draw attention to the

potential threat to upholding financial integrity by program and project teams in the delivery of maternal health interventions.

Unrealistic budgeting seemed to account for low utilization of maternal health program and project funds. RPC7, during member checking, indicated some donors determined the rates for budget lines relating to accommodation costs for residential meetings and workshops. According to RPC7, those donors obliged recipient partners to apply the same rates for accommodation for all parts of the country. Naturally, the accommodation costs in some rural and less developed districts are lower than those in the urban and capital cities. Therefore, the program and project teams completed scheduled activities, but then extra funds remained because the budgeting was not realistic.

***Critical actions to mitigate threats to maximal funds utilization.*** Innovative and tactical approaches to addressing funds disbursement and activity implementation delays are crucial to enable maximal utilization of maternal health program support funds. All seven participants recognized the relevance of employing multidisciplinary skills and attributes to mitigate threats, realize the completion of planned activities, increase funds utilization rates, and maintain donor confidence in recipient institutions. RPC3 remarked:

When donors give you funds and you don't spend, you are punished. When I say you are punished, sometimes your next disbursement is slashed down because they... they now begin to see that you don't have the capacity to deliver the activity and it has serious consequences, even for donors because they may also

you know, be punished somewhere. So we as much as possible want to avoid such scenarios.

To mitigate internal funds disbursement delays, three participants (RPC1; RPC6; RPC7) emphasized the removal of barriers to the timely approval of requests, generation, signing, and release of checks to responsible personnel for activity implementation. RPC6 was of the view that removal of administrative hitches relating to miscommunication among project team members positively influenced the timelines for processing funding requests. RPC7 expanded on RP6's argument and stated:

See somebody's work as... see your role as a major contributing factor to somebody's role and vice-versa...if something comes to your table...even if you have issues, you can minute on it and let the person have it back to respond or you can make a phone call to the person to get the clarity. But don't pile it up into one of those trays and say you will look at it later. That urgency should be there at all times.

RPC1 noted strict tracking and monitoring of the internal funds disbursement processes and stages, i.e., from approval of requests, through to the release of checks to field officers helped to reduce the delays. According to RPC1:

If the request comes and it stays with somebody more than expected we quickly notify the person. Even though at times it is difficult to know where it is, we still make sure that we get it. At times when it delays staff directly call me and draw my attention to it, you follow up...we have human challenges at different levels, but we are able to monitor periodically.

RPC7 added:

There should be effective communication and you should know that if I keep this request on my table more than 30 seconds these are the trickling effects and this is what is likely to cause the organization. If we begin to think like that we will all respond promptly. It's not like you are doing somebody a favor. You have a common goal and you have a common organization to hold high so you respond quickly to issues.

RPC7 also shared proactive arrangements in place to assure timely approvals of payment vouchers (PVs) and signing of checks. RPC7 stated:

We set some timelines among ourselves. From past experiences, there have been Executive Directors who would say that they would approve...PVs twice a week... and sign checks twice a week. There were others that Monday to Friday... approve and sign checks without any problem...so we've had various approaches. But even in scenarios where they have agreed on these two days or three days, when there are emergencies they sign them, but they just try that the bulk of it should be on the planned days. So we have set rules for ourselves.

The participants' responses revealed program and project teams employed deliberate means to mitigate funds disbursement delays. These are: (a) improving communication on administrative issues among program and project team members, (b) setting timelines for approving and processing payment requests, (c) monitoring the various stages for processing payment requests, and (d) employing flexibility in approving PVs and signing of checks during emergency situations.

According to Galvin et al. (2014), the ability to apply critical thinking and adapt to new situations enables exceptional project outcomes. All seven participants unanimously acknowledged program and project teams intensified efforts to complete scheduled activities in the event of donor funds disbursement delays. RPC7 stated:

I think basically what that results into is a lot of stress because you find yourself handling activities you should have done over let's say a 6 month period, doing it within 3 months, and it's a lot of stress. But you have to find a way of doing it so you normally would... reorganize or review our implementation plan and intensify efforts around that plan.

Simultaneous activity implementation tended to be the most common approach for completing scheduled activities under those circumstances relating to donor funds disbursement delays. RPC3 posited:

Because of the nature of our finance policies...if I have raised money and have not accounted for it, until I account for that one I cannot raise money. So... I raise money for some activities, another staff raises money for other activities... so we have more than one person raising the resources and that helps to implement speedily. Also, when delay's come, what it means is that activities that should have been done, have been cancelled and shifted upwards. So, what we do is that we sometimes have to do more than we have actually planned to do. So sometimes, in a day, we can do two or three activities in a day.

RPC3 also mentioned that under such circumstances, officers from the head office moved to their respective districts and communities to help speed up activity implementation.

According to RPC3, the officers from the head office also took advantage of their presence in the field to conduct monitoring and supervisory activities. RPC4 also noted:

Usually, we need to scale down the number of staff on an activity. So...if we were going to have let's say ... three staff attend an activity, luckily for us we are a membership based organization, so we have people from the club, not necessarily staff of the organization, so we have to drag them along and they support the staff with their activities...maybe we get two staff ...and then give an opportunity for the other staff to implement other activities.

RPC1, RPC2, RPC5, and RPC6 shared similar innovative and tactical approaches for conducting concurrent activities to facilitate timely completion of scheduled activities. RPC1 factored cultural sensitivity when employing tactical approaches to activity implementation. According to RPC1 "if they want you to come in the evening then you strategize and go there in the evening...so we work with the community time, not our time, that is one thing that we do." RPC2 remarked, "tension, political dynamics occurs but staff members are able to work to achieve timely results. We have politics but we are able to address our differences and work." It is interesting to note that two participants (RPC3; RPC5) representing 29% of total respondents revealed the board members of their respective institutions supported activity implementation under those circumstances. Participants implementing simultaneous activities were cognizant of ensuring that the speedy nature of implementation did not compromise the quality of those activities.

Participants acknowledged the completion of activities was not always feasible, notwithstanding the various approaches to intensify activity implementation. Therefore,

according to RPC3, RPC4, RPC6, and RPC7, reviewing activity targets and rescheduling other activities to the ensuing quarter was prudent. The participants emphasized communication and decision-making with the donor was crucial. RPC7 stated, “in cases where we can intensify efforts and work we just do that. If it’s that bad then we have to negotiate with the donor to reduce the targets...and you have to mention it early enough.” RPC6 was emphatic about regular communication with the donor and mentioned:

There should be discussion for instance when you can’t meet the...the timelines set on an activity. You don’t just as an institution just sit back. How would your donor know? You need to communicate, you need to give that rapport to ensure that they understand what’s happening so that they could also adjust accordingly because they also have timelines, I believe so. So that rapport has to be established and don’t wait...I don’t believe... I don’t think that... constantly touching base is wrong.

Two participants (RPC4; RPC6) expressed concerns about the negative attitudes of some donors during negotiations for reducing targets or rescheduling activities. RPC7 suggested:

There should be very good collaboration and discussions with the donor...I don’t know how we will handle the donor’s attitude, but I believe that if a donor comes in the country, the person is ready to partner you to a result and we should see that as partnership but not as...autocracy or something. I have my money so I call the stakes. No, it shouldn’t be like that.

RPC4 added:



It shouldn't be a master-servant situation. I think it should ...equal partnership and be frank with each other. Often when donors meet their recipients it's like a master-servant relationship... it should be within a friendly environment where everybody is frank with each other and are able to come up with ...the right ...propositions to improve on future programs.

RPC3 concluded with an appeal to donors:

I think that donors should be flexible in that, when there are delays and we are not able to implement activities and of course spend all the money, they should allow us to push those activities to the ensuing quarter so we can be able to deliver them...sometimes because they don't allow that and the funds you know...go back to chest, then some critical activities that are supposed to happen actually don't happen and then at the end of the day you have...you are not able to achieve all your objectives and it goes back to the issue of aid-effectiveness, then we are not effective.

With respect to the attrition of government workers, RPC6 denoted continuous capacity building of new personnel, monitoring, and supervisory visits were appropriate to enable continuity in activity implementation.

Performance monitoring mechanisms constituted a core requirement for addressing negative attitudes of program and project team members. Three participants (RPC4; RPC6; RPC7) representing 43% of respondents categorically affirmed effective supervision and performance monitoring exercises were necessary to maximize the outputs of individual program and project team members. RPC4 stated, "there are clear

cut guidelines to... what would happen to you if you fail to perform your task... so where staff are not performing... they are accordingly penalized.” RPC7 also stated:

One thing we have done is continue to sensitize people to be more responsive to issues related to that. The other thing that we did which...is working is that because of the timeline we set, the processes we set, we can easily identify who was at fault and then you can hold that person responsible... then you can try and name and shame the person...just to keep people on their toes.

Hechler and Tostensen (2012) recommended performance monitoring of civil servants through the appraisal of performance contracts. RPC6 refuted a perception that government workers who failed to perform their tasks did not face any consequences for their actions, and still had security of tenure at their workplaces. According to RPC6, internal institutional mechanisms were in place to address personnel who demonstrated apathetic attitudes towards their work schedules. RPC7 concluded on mitigating apathy and negative attitudes of program and project team members:

We should ensure that we recruit people who have passion for the job. Not money, but because they believe in a cause they are interested. That way they will have positive attitudes towards the work...but basically you have to let them appreciate the need to ensure that... and know the implications of late reporting. It can affect further release of funds, affect your integrity and you see, you say you want to be accountable so you need to ensure that these things are rightfully done.

Participants' responses on mitigating threats to maximal funds utilization corroborated researchers' (Androniceanu et al., 2015; Galvin, 2014; Vacar, 2014) recommendations on employing (a) critical thinking skills, (b) multidisciplinary skills, (c) communication and trust attributes, (d) performance measurement, and (e) culturally sensitive approaches to maximize teamwork and performance in conflicting situations.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The findings of this study are relevant for understanding the strategies that facilitate the maximal utilization of maternal health program funds in Ghana by recipient partners. According to Kopinak (2013), successful development outcomes are largely dependent on the efficiency, integrity, and effectiveness of managing and spending resources. The ability of government and nongovernment institutions to utilize fully development aid could contribute to the realization of successful development outcomes. In a resource constrained economy such as Ghana, where the country's lower middle-income status has led to a gradual loss of concessional finance and aid from donors (Resnick, 2015), maximal utilization of development aid is crucial to sustain donors' interest.

This study's results provide useful fund utilization strategies that maternal health program and project managers of government and nongovernment institutions and other aid recipients could use to further enhance benefits to their institutions. The findings outline practical project management processes and fund utilization strategies to aid efficient and effective expenditures of donor resources. Program and project teams could learn from the definitions and classifications of donors' funding mechanisms and funds

disbursement modalities, and specifying the requisite roles and responsibilities for assuring efficient aid expenditures. Recognizing that some donors employ inducement tactics to influence development priorities, the findings offer program and project team leaders proactive communication and negotiation strategies for facilitating mutual decision-making with donors for improving funds management and utilization. Findings from this study reinforce the relevance of functional management structures, adaptive organizational cultures, relationship building, teamwork, and discipline for managing and spending program and project funds by recipient institutions. The study findings, while drawing attention to the varied, unpredictable characteristics of some donors, underscore the significance of employing flexibility and initiative in program and project execution, to maintain donor confidence in recipient institutions.

The study participants presented innovative approaches for mitigating threats to maternal health program fund utilization within specific contexts which could be applicable to other government and nongovernment recipient institutions. Program and project managers who experience funds utilization challenges could view the mitigating strategies in this study as a guide for improving the expenditures of donor resources. Similarly, the leadership of state and nonstate recipient institutions could garner essential governance strategies to strengthen executive support to program and project teams.

The results of the study could also contribute to the knowledge base of development assistance in Ghana. The study findings can provide a reference point for project management practitioners to (a) learn lessons, (b) improve the funds management

capacities in their respective organizations, and (c) facilitate increasing fund utilization to sustain or increase donors' interest and mitigate development programs' funding gaps.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The study results contribute to the growing body of literature on measures for enabling tangible improvements in the wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities within developing countries. The realization of maternal health outcomes can yield economic and social gains to address poverty. According to Kirigia et al. (2014), protecting the health of mothers during reproduction guarantees their contribution to the entire process of economic and social development at the family, community, and national level.

The maternal mortality rate in Ghana is high, with a record of 319 deaths per 100,000 live births (WHO, 2015). Maternal mortality exacerbates poverty at the family level and negatively impacts the nonhealth Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at the national level (Kirigia et al., 2014). In 2010, maternal deaths in 45 African countries led to a total nonhealth GDP loss of USD 4.5 billion (Kirigia et al., 2014).

Domestic and external investment in maternal mortality-reducing interventions provides a means for gaining significant economic returns. The results of the study could contribute to improving management strategies and practices to improve the utilization of maternal health program funds. Increasing the utilization of maternal health program funds can result in the attainment of maternal mortality reduction program objectives; especially among the rural, poor, and marginalized women and girls in Ghana. Reducing

mothers' birthing mortality rates can also restore hope, healing, and dignity to women suffering from complications of childbirth.

Aid recipients such as charitable nonprofit organizations implementing development programs and projects could learn effective strategies to enhance the funds utilization capacities of their respective organizations. Improved funds utilization capacities of aid recipients can contribute to resolving the paradox of suboptimal utilization of program and project funds amidst the limited availability of resources in Ghana. Notably, aid recipients' effective utilization of program and project funds can contribute to advancing Ghana's growth and development agenda by (a) enhancing the dignity of individuals, (b) reducing poverty at the family and community levels, (c) improving the quality of life of the rural poor, and (d) benefitting Ghana's GDP.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The findings of this study on strategies and processes for improving utilization of maternal health program funds are primarily to improve the funds management capacities of program and project managers. The study results provide a plethora of project management processes and fund utilization strategies for executing development programs and projects, including maternal health interventions. The findings also reveal nuances that directly or indirectly promote or threaten effective utilization of donor-supported program funds by recipient partners. I identified a number of actionable recommendations for donors and recipient partners that might enable efficient and effective expenditure of maternal health and other development program resources.

Compliance with the aid effectiveness principles is crucial to secure positive development outcomes and assure the continuation of aid flows. Development assistance criteria should be dependent on evidence-based country needs and funding gaps. The interplay of donor and recipient partners must demonstrate a clear, realistic, and consistent leadership role of recipient partners in determining countries' priorities. Employing mutual respect and consensual approaches to decision-making is essential to address diverging preferences of donors and recipient partners and maximize payoffs for aid recipients. Government coordinating bodies particularly the Ministries of Health, Finance, Planning, and Monitoring and Evaluation must deepen donor coordination, collaboration, and reporting on development assistance to Ghana; including resource flows to nongovernment institutions. Donor and recipient partners must ensure accountability and performance measurement parameters include a business case with focus on value for money and return on investment of development aid.

Donor partners should challenge the status quo of their organizations and explore innovative, responsive, administrative approaches to assure flexible, predictable, and timely release of program and project funds. Similarly, recipient partners' timely responses and adherence to the donors' financial, technical, and audit requirements is vital to mitigate funds disbursement delays. Donors' engagement with recipient partners must include comprehensive organizational capacity assessments with enforceable criteria that address governance, technical, and financial management gaps. The leadership of recipient institutions should embrace strong adaptive corporate cultures by

fostering ongoing learning and creativity among program and project teams, minimizing bureaucracy, and considering flexibility as a core value.

Managers of development programs and projects must adopt methodologies that employ critical thinking and enable timely, responsive implementation of work plans in dynamic and conflicting situations. Program and project teams, particularly program and finance personnel, need to maintain team and relationship building to generate reciprocal reinforcement and positive synergies in activity execution and funds utilization. Realistic budgeting, regular monitoring of action plans and targets, and continuous consultations with donors are crucial to engender efficiency, accountability, and for improving program and project teams' financial performance. Institution of performance management, rewarding, and control systems in recipient institutions may increase efficiencies in the execution of development programs and projects.

The leadership of recipient institutions must consider technical competency as a principal, uncompromising criterion for establishing program and project teams. Donors must consider providing substantial support to remuneration policies for program and project teams in recipient institutions, particularly nonstate actors, to enable development, motivation, and retention of technically competent personnel. Mitigation of negative financial practices, including misappropriation of funds and fraud, requires transparent and consensual decision-making on budget lines by donors and recipient institutions. Program and project teams must uphold high standards of professional and ethical conduct to maintain financial integrity. Finally, government and nongovernment institutions should consider alternate resource mobilization mechanisms for avoiding



total dependence on donor support, and sustaining development programs' implementation in Ghana.

The results of this study could be relevant to the leadership of donor agencies and recipient institutions executing maternal health programs and projects, and other aid recipients in Ghana. Program and project managers of government and nongovernment institutions, project management practitioners, and other members of health coalitions could apply the study findings and recommendations. Findings from this study may also be valuable for government stakeholders responsible for monitoring and coordinating development assistance to Ghana.

This study's results will be available to research participants and academic communities through Proquest publishing, with abridged versions in business and health journals in Ghana and globally. I envisage dissemination of the abridged versions of the study to donor communities and recipients of donor funds in Ghana. I will also seek to present the key findings and recommendations at conferences, seminars, and workshops involving project management practitioners, health coalitions, development workers, and academia.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive multiple case study was to identify strategies and processes that recipient partners use to achieve maximal utilization of maternal health program funds. The limitations of the study that may elicit further research included time and cost constraints influencing the method, design, and scope of the study. A comparative mixed methods study, involving a larger and heterogeneous

sample of program and project managers of high and low-performing recipient institutions, could unearth further nuances that directly or indirectly promote or threaten maximal utilization of donor resources. In addition, the inclusion of a sample of portfolio managers of donor agencies may provide in-depth perspectives on maternal health program funds disbursement and expenditure in Ghana. Researchers may also explore whether recipient institutions that failed to utilize fully maternal health program funds actually needed the funds. An evaluation on the extent to which recipient institutions with low expenditure rates met the expected outcomes of a project or program, may serve as a basis for deriving conclusions on improving budgeting allocation processes.

### **Reflections**

I have a strong passion for improving the quality of life of rural, poor, and marginalized women and girls in Ghana. Throughout my experience as a development worker, I have guided program and project managers in the design and management of programs and projects that address the reproductive health needs of women and girls. My desire to improve project management skills of practitioners in government and nongovernment organizations motivated me to pursue a DBA at Walden University.

My doctoral study topic of interest has always been on improving the funds management capacities of program and project managers in recipient institutions. The initial method of inquiry was to identify the factors that hinder maximal utilization of program funds from a sample of personnel from recipient institutions with low implementation rates. The research evolved into identifying and exploring efficacious strategies and processes for improving the utilization of maternal health program funds

from a purposeful sample of personnel from recipient institutions with high implementation rates.

The doctoral study process has been challenging. However, my experiences have not diminished my passion for research. I have garnered extensive knowledge and skills in qualitative research and scholarly writing; including the rules of APA style. The literature search broadened my knowledge and viewpoints on donor resources, management practices, and funds utilization within the aid effectiveness structure. Engagements with the Walden University IRB increased my understanding of the importance of, and means for, reducing privacy and safety risks of research participants.

I had a preconceived notion that the bureaucracy and hierarchical structures in public institutions limited flexibility in program and project implementation, and created barriers to innovation and change. I was surprised to gather insightful disclosures on proactive approaches to funds management from the participants who represented government agencies. The participants from government institutions demonstrated a sense of urgency for enhancing organizational visibility and performance.

Completing this DBA program study has enhanced my knowledge on the dynamics of donor-recipient relationships within the aid effectiveness landscape. I have gained knowledge and appreciation of some tactical processes and strategies that facilitate efficient and effective management and spending of donor resources. I have also acquired additional skills that further enhance my capability to strengthen organizational and financial management capacities of development workers in Ghana.

## Conclusion

Efficiency, integrity, and effectiveness in managing and spending maternal health resources are crucial to assure the realization of successful development outcomes and predictability of aid flows. Prudent investment in maternal mortality-reducing interventions provides a means for attaining program objectives to improve the quality of life of the rural poor, and positively impact the nonhealth GDP at the national level. Therefore, recipients of maternal health program support funds require strategic and tactical management approaches to facilitate maximal resource expenditure and realize significant health, social, and economic gains.

This qualitative multiple case study provided an excellent opportunity to explore the strategies and processes accounting for recipient partners' ability to improve the utilization rates for development aid. The study findings revealed the facilitating processes and proactive strategies for improving the funds management capacities of recipient partners to increase funds utilization rates.

Efficient executive support, technical competency, prudent planning, budgeting, activity execution, and funds utilization processes constitute core techniques for managing and spending donor resources. In addition, flexible, proactive, and innovative strategies for reducing funds disbursement and activity implementation delays can mitigate threats to improving utilization of donor resources. Developing mutually beneficial relationships and decision-making processes between donors and recipient partners is critical to meet requirements of the aid effectiveness principles, and for facilitating efficiency in maternal health program implementation and resource

expenditures. Reviewing, and as necessary, tailoring, and employing this study's findings and recommendations could assist in improving the funds management and utilization capacities in recipient institutions to protect the health and dignity of rural, poor, and marginalized Ghanaian women and girls during childbirth.

## References

- Abraham, S. (2013). Will business model innovation replace strategic analysis? *Strategy & Leadership*, 41(2), 31-38. doi:10.1108/10878571311318222
- Achakul, C., & Yolles, M. (2013). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in personality: Assessing knowledge profiling and the work preference inventory in a Thai population. *Journal of Organization Transformational and Social Change*, 10, 196-217. doi:10.1179/1477963312Z.0000000005
- Acht .M, Mahmoud, T.O., & Thiele, R. (2015). Corrupt governments do not receive more state-to-state aid: Governance and the delivery of foreign aid through non-state actors. *Journal of Development Economics*, 114, 20-33.  
doi:10.1016/j.jdeveco.2014.11.005
- Adusei-Asante, K. (2013). *Towards aid effectiveness: Contested theories and concepts: A case study of Ghana's community-based rural development project* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from <http://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses/526>
- Agarwal, S., Goel, R., & Vashishtha, P. K. (2014). A literature review of agency theory. *Indian Journal of Research*, 3(5), 51-52. Retrieved from <https://www.worldwidejournals.com>
- Aguirre, R. T. P., & Bolton, K. W. (2013). Qualitative interpretive meta-synthesis in social work research: Uncharted territory. *Journal of Social Work*, 14, 279-294. doi:10.1177/1468017313476797

- Ahmed, R., Azmi, N., and Masood, M.T. (2013). The essence of project leadership is significant to project management. *Research Journal of Recent Sciences*, 2(5), 44-48. Retrieved from <http://www.isca.in>
- Alenoghena, I., Aigbiremolen, A.O., Abejegah, C., Eboreime, E. (2014). Primary health care in Nigeria: Strategies and constraints in implementation. *International Journal of Community Research*, 3(3), 74-79. Retrieved from <http://www.arpjournals.com>.
- Alias, Z., Zawawi, E.M.A., Yusof, K., & Aris, N.M. (2014). Determining critical success factors of project management practice: A conceptual framework. *Procedea-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 153, 61-69. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.10.041
- Allen, M., Alleyne, D., Farmer, C., McRae, A., & Turner, C. (2014). A framework for project success. *Journal of Information Technology and Economic Development*, 5(2), 1-17. Retrieved from <http://www.gsmi.ijgb.com>
- Altincekic, C., & Bearce, D.H. (2014). Why there should be no political foreign aid curse. *World Development*, 64(12), 18-32. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com>
- Androniceanu, A., Ristea, B., & Uda, M.M. (2015). Leadership competencies for project based school management success. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 182, 232-238. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.04.760
- Arel-Bundock, V., Atkinson, J., & Potter, R. A. (2015). The limits of foreign aid diplomacy: How bureaucratic design shapes aid distribution. *International Studies Quarterly*, 59, 544-556. doi:10.1111/isqu.12191

- Bakoup, F. (2013). *Promoting economic reforms in developing countries rethinking budgetary aid?* Tunis, Tunisia: African Development Bank.
- Bahn, S., & Weatherill, P. (2013). Qualitative social research: A risky business when it comes to collecting 'sensitive' data. *Qualitative Research, 13*, 19-35.  
doi:10.1177/1468794112439016
- Barakat, S., Rzeszut, K., & Martin, N. (2011). Multi-Donor trust funds: Impact on aid effectiveness (systematic review). *Department for International Development Systematic Reviews*, June 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.dfid.org>
- Bátool, B. F. (2013). Emotional intelligence and effective leadership. *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly, 4*(3), 85-94. Retrieved from <http://www.jbsq.org>
- Bayer, P. and Urpelainen, J. (2013). Funding global public goods: The dark side of multilateralism. *Review of Policy Research, 30*, 160-189. doi:10.1111/ropr.12013
- Bekhet, A. K., & Zauszniewski, J. A. (2012). Methodological triangulation: An approach to understanding data. *Nurse Researcher, 20*(2), 40-43.  
doi:10.7748/nr2012.11.20.2.40.c9442
- Bernard, H. R. (2013). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Ltd.
- Bernauer, J. A., Lichtman, M., Jacobs, C., & Robinson, S. (2013). Blending the old and the new: Qualitative data analysis as critical thinking and using NVivo with a generic approach. *The Qualitative Report, 18*(31), 1-10. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/>



- Besner, C., & Hobbs, B. (2013). Contextualized project management practice: A cluster analysis of practices and best practices. *Project Management Journal*, 44(1), 17-34. doi:10.1002/pmj.21291
- Bhattacharya, S. (2014). Institutional review board and international field research in conflict zones. *PS, Political Science & Politics*, 47, 840-844.  
doi:10.1017/S1049096514001140
- Bi, Z., Zhou, H-J. (2014). Optimal cooperation-trap strategies for the iterated rock-paper-scissors game. *PLoS ONE*, 9(10), 1-6. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0111278
- Blix, S., & Wettergren, A. (2015). The emotional labour of gaining and maintaining access to the field. *Qualitative Research*, 16, 688-704. Retrieved from <https://www.qrj.sagepub.com>
- Bodicha, M. M. (2015). How to measure the effect of project risk management process on the success of construction projects: A critical literature review. *The International Journal of Business & Management*, 3, 99-112. Retrieved from <https://www.theijbm.com>
- Breeveld, R., Hermans, L., & Veenstra, S. (2013). Water operator partnerships and institutional capacity development for urban water supply. *Water Policy*, 15, 165-182. doi:10.2166/wp.2013.018
- Brown, S., & Swiss, L. (2013). The hollow ring of donor commitment: Country concentration and the decoupling of aid effectiveness norms from donor practice. *Development Policy Review*, 31, 737-755. doi:10.1111/dpr.12033

- Bristowe, K., Selman, L., & Murtagh, F. (2015). Qualitative research methods in renal medicine: An introduction. *Nephrology Dialysis Transplantation: NDT Perspectives*, 30, 1424-1431. doi:10.1093/ndt/gfu410
- Bud, A. (2014). The success rate of projects funded by structural and cohesion funds within Babes-Boyalai University. *Review of Economic Studies and Research Virgil Madgearu*, 7(2), 25-40. Retrieved from <https://www.econ.ubbcluj.ro/rvm/en/>
- Cabral, L., Russo, G., & Weinstock, J. (2014). Brazil and the shifting consensus on development co-operation: Salutory diversions from the 'aid-effectiveness' trail? *Development Policy Review*, 32, 179-202. doi:10.1111/dpr.12050
- Camfield, L., & Palmer-Jones, R. (2013). Improving the quality of development research: What could archiving qualitative data for reanalysis and revisiting research sites contribute? *Progress in Development Studies*, 13, 323-338. doi:10.1177/1464993413490481
- Carter, N., Bryant-Lukosius, D., DiCenso, A., Blythe, J., & Neville, A., J. (2014). The use of triangulation in qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41, 545-547. doi:10.1188/14.ONF.545.547
- Chamberlain-Salaun, J., Mills, J., & Usher, K. (2013). Linking symbolic interactionism and grounded theory methods in a research design: From Corbin and Strauss' assumptions to action. *SAGE Open*, Jul-Sep, 1-10. doi:10.1177/215824013505757
- Chatzimichailidou, M. M., Katsavounis, S., Chatzopoulos, C., & Lukac, D. (2013). Mass customization as a project portfolio for project-oriented organizations. *Acta*

- Technica Corviniensis-Bulletin of Engineering*, 6(2), 63-70. Retrieved from <http://acta.fih.upt.ro/>
- Collier, P., Guillaumont, P., Guillaumont, S., & Gunning, J.W. (1997). Redesigning conditionality. *World Development*, 25, 1399-1407. Retrieved from <http://www.journals.elsevier.com/world-development>
- Cronholm, S & Hjalmarsson, A. (2011). Experiences from sequential use of mixed methods. *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 9(2), 87-95. Retrieved from <http://www.ejbrm.com>
- Dabelstein, N., & Patton, M. Q. (2013). The Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness: History and significance. *The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, 27(3), 19-36. Retrieved from <http://www.cjpe.journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/>.
- Dalil, S., Newbrander, W., Loevinsohn, B., Naeem, A.J., Griffen, J., Salama, P., & Momand, F. M. (2014). Aid effectiveness in rebuilding the Afghan health system: A reflection. *Global Public Health*, 9, 124-136.  
doi:10.1080/17441692.2014.918162
- Dayna, J. (2013). Toward a model of purposeful participant inclusion: Examining deselection as a participant risk. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 13, 253-264.  
doi:10.1108/QRJ-01-2013-0007
- Dietrich, S. (2013). Bypass or engage? Explaining donor delivery tactics in foreign aid allocation. *International Studies Quarterly*, 57, 698-712. doi:10.1111/isqu.12041
- Deitrich, S. (2016). Donor political economies and the pursuit of aid effectiveness. *International Organization*, 70, 65-102. doi:10.1017/S0020818315000302

- DeJong, M., Annema, J. A., & Van Wee, G. P. (2013). How to build major transport infrastructure projects within budget, in time, and with the expected output: A literature review? *Transport Reviews*, 33, 195-218, doi:10.1080/01441647.2013.778912
- Dieleman, J.L., Graves, C.M., & Hanlon, M. (2013). The fungibility of health aid: Reconsidering the reconsidered. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 49, 1755-1762. doi:10.1080/00220388.2013.844921
- Dincer, B., & Dincer, C. (2013). Corporate social responsibility decisions: A dilemma for SME executives? *Social Responsibility Journal*, 9, 177-187. doi:10.1108/SRJ-07-2011-0028
- Doloi, H. (2013). Empirical analysis of traditional contracting and relationship agreements for procuring partners in construction projects. *Journal of Management and Engineering*, 29, 224-235 doi:10.1061/(ASCE)ME.1943.5479.0000141
- Domar, E.D. (1946). Capital expansion, rate of growth, and employment. *Econometrica*, 14, 137-147. doi:10.2307/1905364
- Doody, O., & Noonan, M. (2013). Preparing and conducting interviews to collect data. *Nurse Researcher*, 20(5), 28-32. Retrieved from [www.nurseresearcher.co.uk](http://www.nurseresearcher.co.uk)
- Drew, H. (2014). Overcoming barriers: Qualitative interviews with German elites. *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 12(2), 77-86. Retrieved from <http://www.ejbrm.com>

- Ejughemre, U. (2013a). Donor support and the impacts on health system strengthening in sub-Saharan Africa: Assessing the evidence through a review of the literature. *American Journal of Public Health Research, 1*, 146-151. doi:10.12691/ajphr-1-7-1
- Ejughemre, U. (2013b). Donor support for community health financing: Options and opportunities for sub-Saharan African Communities. *American Journal of Public Health Research, 1*, 129-134. doi:10.12691/ajphr-1-6-1
- Elo, S., Kaariainen, M., Kanste, O., Polkki, T., Utriainen, K., & Kyngas, H. (2014, January-March). Qualitative content analysis: A focus on trustworthiness. *Sage Open, 4*(1), 1-10. doi:10.1177/2158244014522633
- Farag, M., Nandakumar, A. K., Wallack, S. S., Gaumer, G., & and Hodgkin, D. (2009). Does funding from donors displace government spending for health in developing countries? *Health Affairs, 28*, 1045-1055. doi:10.1377/hlthaff.28.4.1045
- Firmin, M., Bouchard, V., Flexman, J., & Anderson, D. (2014). A qualitative analysis of students' perceptions of pursuing Pharmacy as a potential vocation. *The Qualitative Report, 19*(40), 1-12. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol19/iss40/2>
- Frels, R., & Onwuegbuzie, A. (2013). Administering quantitative instruments with qualitative interviews: A mixed research approach. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 91*, 184-196. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.2013.00085.x
- Fusch, P., & Ness, L. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report, 20*, 1408-1416. Retrieved from <http://tqr.nova.edu/>

- Galárraga, O., Wirtz, V.J., Santa-Ana-Tellez, Y., & Korenromp, E.L (2013). Financing HIV programming: How much should low-and middle-income countries and their donors pay? *PloS ONE*, 8(7), 1-11. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0067565
- Galvin, T., Gibbs, M., Sullivan, J., & Williams, C. (2014). Leadership competencies of project managers: An empirical study of emotional, intellectual, and managerial dimensions. *Journal of Economic Development, Management, Information Technology, Finance, and Marketing*, 6(1), 35-60. Retrieved from <http://www.gsmi-ijgb.com>
- Ghana Statistical Service (2014). *Ghana Living Standards Survey: Poverty Profile in Ghana*. Retrieved from <http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/>
- Gibson, S., Benson, O., & Brand, S. L. (2013). Talking about suicide: Confidentiality and anonymity in qualitative research. *Nursing Ethics*, 20, 18-29. doi:10.1177/0969733012452684
- Ginsberg, A., & Sinacore, A. L. (2013). Counseling Jewish women: A phenomenological study. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 91, 131-139. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.201300081.x
- Giri, A., Khatiwada, P., Shrestha, B., & Chettri, R. K. (2013). Perceptions of government knowledge and control over contributions of aid organizations and international nongovernment organizations to health in Nepal: A qualitative study. *Globalization and Health*, 9(1), 1-15. doi:10.1186/1744-8603-9-1

- Grépin K. A., Fan, V. Y., Shen, G. C., & Chen, L. (2014). China's role as a global health donor in Africa: What can we learn from studying under reported resource flows? *Globalization and Health, 10*(84), 1-11. doi:10.1186/s12992-014-0084-6
- Guercini, S. (2014). New qualitative research methodologies in management. *Management Decision, 52*, 662-674. doi:10.1108/MD-11-2013-0592
- Guest, G., Bruce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods, 18*, 59-82. doi:10.1177/1525822X05279903
- Harrison, R. L. (2013). Using mixed methods designs in the Journal of Business Research, 1990-2010. *Journal of Business Research, 66*, 2153-2162. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2012.01.006
- Harrod, R. F. (1939). An essay in dynamic theory. *The Economic Journal, 49*(193), 14-33. Retrieved from <http://www.piketty.pse.ens.fr/files/>
- Harvey, L. (2015). Beyond member checking: A dialogic approach to the research interview. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education, 38*, 23-38. doi:10.1080/1743727X.2014.914487
- Hechler, H., & Tostensen, A. (2012) Is mutual accountability feasible? A conceptual discussion with policy implications. *U4 Issue, 11*, 1-35. CMI (Chr. Michelsen Institute). Retrieved from <http://www.cmi.no>
- Herteliu, E., & Despa, M. L. (2014). Risk management in citizen oriented innovative software development projects. *Journal of Information Systems & Operations Management, 8*, 154-171. Retrieved from <http://www.jisom.rau.ro/>

- Hess, T. J., McNab, A. L., & Basoglu, K. S. (2014). Reliability generalization of perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and behavioral intentions. *MIS Quarterly*, 38, 1-28. Retrieved from <http://www.misq.org/>
- Hjelmbrekke, H., Hansen G. K. & Lohne, J. (2015). A motherless child - Why do construction projects fail? *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 21, 72 -79. doi:10.1016/S2212-5671(15)00152-5
- Hope, K. R. (2013). Tackling the corruption epidemic in Kenya: Toward a policy of more effective control. *Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies*, 38, 287-316. Retrieved from <https://www.questia.com>
- Houghton, C., Casey, D., Shaw, D., & Murphy, K. (2013). Rigour in qualitative case study research. *Nurse Researcher*, 20(4), 12-17. Retrieved from <http://www.nurseresearcher.rcnpublishing.co.uk>
- Humphrey, C. (2014). Qualitative research - mixed emotions. *Qualitative Research in Accounting and Management*, 11, 51-70. doi:10.1108/QRAM-03-2014-0024
- Hwang, B.G & Lim, E. J. (2013) Critical success factors for key project players and objectives: Case study of Singapore. *Journal of Construction Engineering and Management*, 139, 204-215. doi:10.1061/(ASCE)CO.194-7862.0000597
- Hyett, N., Kenny, A., & Dickson-Swift, V. (2014). Methodology or method? A critical review of qualitative case study reports. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Wellbeing*, 9, 1-12. doi:10.3402/qhw.v9.23606



- Ilkay, J. (2013). Identifying motives of mothers who purchase healthy convenience snacks for their children: A phenomenological study. *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly*, 5, 237-246. Retrieved from <http://www.jbsq.org/>
- Jaliu, D., & Rădulescu, C. (2013). Six years in managing structural funds in Romania. Lessons learned. *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, 38, 79-95. Retrieved from <http://www.rtsa.ro/tras/>
- Jerbrant, A., & Gustavsson, T. K. (2013). Managing project portfolios: Balancing flexibility and structure by improvising. *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business*, 6, 152-172. doi:10.1108/17538371311291071
- Jiang, J. (2014). The study of the relationship between leadership style and project success. *American Journal of Trade and Policy*, 1(1), 51-55. Retrieved from <http://www.ajtp.us>
- Joslin, R., & Müller, R. (2015). Relationships between a project management methodology and project success in different project governance contexts. *International Journal of Project Management*, 33, 1377-1392. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com>
- Katz, I., Routh, S., Bitran, R., Hulme, A., & Avila, C. (2014). Where will the money come from? Alternative mechanisms to HIV donor funding. *BMC Public Health*, 14(956), 1-9. doi:10.1186/1471-2458-14-956
- Karini, A. (2013). Aid supported public service reform and capacity development in post-communist Albania. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 36, 469-481. doi:10.1080/01900692.2013.772634

- Keng'ara, R. (2014). Effect of funds disbursement procedures on implementation of donor projects in Homabay County, Kenya. *International Journal of Accounting and Finance*, 2(1), 9-23. doi:10.13189/ujaf.2014.020102
- Kirigia, J. M., Mwabu, G. M., Orem, J.M., & Muthuri, R. D. K. (2014). Indirect cost of maternal deaths in the WHO African Region in 2010. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, 14(299), 1-11. doi:10.1186/1471-2393-14-299.
- Klonoski, R. (2013). The case for case studies: Deriving theory from evidence. *Journal of Business Case Studies*, 9, 261-266. Retrieved from <http://www.cluteinstitute.com>
- Koi-Akrofi, G. Y., Quarshie, H. O., & Koi-Akrofi, J. (2013). Information Technology project failures in organizations in Ghana. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Computing and Information Science*, 4, 100–107. Retrieved from <http://www.cisjournal.org>
- Kono, D. Y., & Montinola, G. R. (2015). Foreign aid, time horizons, and trade policy. *Comparative Political Studies*, 48, 788-819.  
doi:10.1177/0010414014556048
- Kopinak, J. K (2013). *Humanitarian aid: Are effectiveness and sustainability impossible dreams?* Retrieved from <https://www.sites.tufts.edu/jha/archives/1935>
- Korhonen, J. J. (2014). Big data: Big deal for organization design? *Journal of Organization Design*, 3(1), 31-36. doi:10.146/jod.3.1.13261
- Langan, M. (2014). Budget support and Africa –European Union relations: Free market reform and neo-colonialism? *European Journal of International Relations*, 21, 101-121. doi:10.1177/1354066113516813

- Lawrence, J., & Tar, U. (2013). The use of grounded theory technique as a practical tool for qualitative data collection and analysis. *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 11, 29-40. Retrieved from [www.ejbrm.com](http://www.ejbrm.com)
- Lawson, M.L. (2013). *Foreign aid: International donor coordination of development assistance*. Congress Research Service. Retrieved from: <http://www.fas.org>
- Lee, E., & Rhim, H. (2014). An application of conjoint analysis to explore user perceptions on management information systems. *Management Research Review*, 37, 69-88. doi:10.1108/MRR-10-2012-0213
- Leiderer, S. (2013). Donor coordination for effective government policies? Implementation of the new aid effectiveness agenda in health and education in Zambia. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 01/2013. doi:10.2139/ssrn.2362354
- Liphadzi, M., Aigbavboa, C., & Thwala, W. (2015). Relationship between leadership styles and project success in the South Africa construction industry. *Procedia Engineering*, 123, 284-290. doi:10.1016/j.proeng.2015.10.091
- Lips-Wiersma, M., & Mills, A. J. (2013) Understanding the basic assumptions about human nature in workplace spirituality: Beyond the critical versus positive divide. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 23, 148-161. doi:10.1177/1056492613501227
- Lofgren, O. (2014). Routinising research: Academic skills in analogue and digital worlds *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 17, 73-86. doi:10.1080/13645579.2014.854022

- Lohle, M. F., & Terrell, S. R. (2014). Real projects, virtual worlds: Coworkers, their avatars, and the trust conundrum. *The Qualitative Report*, 19(8), 1-35. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/>
- Lokke, A., & Dissing-Sorensen, P. (2014). Theory testing using case studies. *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 12, 66-74. Retrieved from <http://www.ejbrm.com>
- Lucian, P. (2014). Absorption of European funds by Romania. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 16, 553-556. doi:10.1016/S2212-5671(14)00838-7
- Lunde, A., Heggen, K., & Strand, R. (2013). Knowledge and power: Exploring unproductive interplay between quantitative and qualitative researchers. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 7, 197-210. doi:10.1177/1558689812471087
- Madsen, A. K. (2013). Virtual acts of balance: Virtual technologies of knowledge management as co-produced by social intentions and technical limitations. *Electronic Journal of E-Government*, 11, 183-197. Retrieved from <http://www.ejeg.com/main.html>
- Malterud, K., Siersma, V., & Guassora, A. (2016). Sample size in qualitative interview studies: Guided by information power. *Qualitative Health Research*, 26, 1753-1760. Retrieved from <http://www.journals.sagepub.com/home/qhr>
- Marshall, B., Cardon, P., Poddar, A., & Fontenot, R. (2013). Does sample size matter in qualitative research? A review of qualitative interviews in information system research. *Journal of Computer Information Systems*, 54, 11-22. Retrieved from <http://www.iacis.org/jcis/jcis.php>

- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2015). *Designing qualitative research* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Martens, B., Mummert, U., Murrell, P., & Seabright, P. (2002). *The institutional economics of foreign aid*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- McCoy, D., Chand, S., & Sridhar, D. (2009). Global health funding: How much, where it comes from, and where it goes. *Health Policy and Planning*, 24, 401-417.  
doi:10.1093/heapol/czp026
- McLean E. V. (2015). A strategic theory of international environmental assistance. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 27, 324-347. doi:10.1177/0951629814531669
- McLean, E. V., & Whang, T. (2016). Foreign aid and government survival. *The Korean Journal of International Studies*, 14, 189-207. doi:10.14731/kjis.2016.08.14.2.189
- Milner, H.V., Nielson, D.L., & Findley, M.G. (2016). Citizen preferences and public goods: Comparing preferences for foreign aid and government programs in Uganda. *The Review of International Organizations*, 11, 219-245.  
doi:10.1007/s11558-016-9243
- Mitchell, K. R., & Wellings, K. (2013). Measuring sexual function in community surveys: Development of a conceptual framework. *Journal of Sex Research*, 50, 17-28. doi:10.1080/00224499.2011.621038
- Molenaers, N (2012). The great divide? Donor perceptions of budget support, eligibility, and policy dialogue. *Third World Quarterly*, 33, 791-806.  
doi:10.1080/01436597.2012.677311

- Morrissey, O. (2004). Conditionality and aid effectiveness re-evaluated. *The World Economy*, 27, 153-171. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9701.2004.00594.x
- Morse, A., & McEvoy, C. (2014). Qualitative research in sport management: Case study as a methodological approach. *The Qualitative Report*, 19(17), 1-13. Retrieved from <http://www.nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr>
- Morton, D. J., Proudfit, J., Calac, D., Portillo, M., Lofton-Fitzsimmons, G., Molina, T., Flores, R., Lawson-Risso, B., & Majel-McCauley, R. (2013). Creating research capacity through a tribally based institutional review board. *American Journal of Public Health*, 103, 2160-2164. Retrieved from <http://www.ajph.aphapublications.org/>
- Moss, J. M., Gibson, D. M., & Dollarhide, C. T. (2014). Professional identity development: A grounded theory of transformational tasks of counselors. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 92, 3-12. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.2014.00124.x
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Mukuni J, & Price, B. (2014). Implementation challenges of a donor funded development project: Lessons learned through a deep-end strategy while implementing a development program in Zambia. *Journal of African Studies and Development*, 6(1), 1-7. doi:10.5897/JASD2013.0262
- Mulligan, A., Hall, L., & Raphael, E. (2013). Peer review in a changing world: An international study measuring the attitudes of researchers. *Journal of the*

*American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 64, 132-161.

doi:10.1002/asi.22798

Mutchler, M. G., McKay, T., McDavitt, B., & Gordon, K. K. (2013). Using peer ethnography to address health disparities among young urban Black and Latino men who have sex with men. *American Journal of Public Health*, 103, 849-852. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2012.300988

Namazi, M. (2013). Role of the agency theory in implementing management's control.

*Journal of Accounting and Taxation*, 5(2), 38-47. doi:10.5697/JAT11.032

Ng, C. L., Siew-Hoong, A. L., & Tong-Ming L. (2013). A study on the element toward knowledge sharing among knowledge workers in a virtual CoP. *Information Management and Business Review*, 5, 553-560. Retrieved from <http://ifrnd.org/journal/index.php/imbr>

Ngulube, P., & Ngulube, B. (2015). Mixed methods research in the South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences: An investigation of trends in the literature. *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences*, 18(1), 1-13. doi:10.17159/2222-3436/2015/v18n1a1

Nunan, D., & Di Domenico, M. (2013). Market research and the ethics of the data.

*International Journal of Market Research*, 55(4), 2-13. Retrieved from

<http://www.warc.com>

Obradovic, V., Jovanovic, P., Petrovic, D., Mihic, M., & Mitrovic, Z. (2013). Project managers' emotional intelligence: A ticket to success. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 74, 274-284. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.03.034

- OECD (2014). *Development co-operation report: Mobilizing resources for sustainable development*. Paris, France: OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2009). *Managing development resources. The use of country systems in public financial management*. Paris, France: OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2005). *The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: Five principles for smart aid*. Paris, France: OECD Publishing.
- Ofori, D. F. (2013). Project management practices and critical success factors: A developing country perspective. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 8(21), 14-31. Retrieved from <http://www.theijbm.com/>
- Ofori, D., & Deffor, E. W. (2013) Assessing project management maturity in Africa: A Ghanaian perspective. *International Journal of Business Administration*, 4(6), 41-61. doi:10.5430/ijba.v4n6p41
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Byrs, V. T. (2014). An exemplar for combining the collection, analysis, and interpretation of verbal and nonverbal data in qualitative research. *International Journal of Education*, 6, 183-246. doi:10.5296/ije.v6i1.4399
- Otieno, J. O., Rambo, C. M., & Odundo, P. A. (2014). Community perspectives on accountability and transparency in the management of local authority transfer fund in Kenya. *Global Journal of Business Research*, 8, 71-85. Retrieved from <http://www.theibfr.com/ARCHIVE/GJBR>
- Pallas, S. W., Nonvignon, J., Aikins, M., & Ruger, J.P. (2015). Responses to donor proliferation in Ghana's health sector: A qualitative case study. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 93, 11-18. doi:10.2471/BLT.14.141614



- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Parker, L. (2014). Qualitative perspectives: through a methodological lens. *Qualitative Research in Accounting and Management*, 11(1), 13-28. doi:10.1108/QRAM-02-2014-0013
- Păutu, S., & Dogaru, M (2013). The main deficiencies in the implementation of sectorial operational program human resources development. *The Annals of the University of Oradea Economic Sciences*, 1, 509-515. Retrieved from <http://www.anale.steconomieuoradea.ro/en/>
- Peikes, D., & Dale, S. (2015). Solo practitioners remain important contributors to primary care. *Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine*, 28(1), 7-10. doi:10.3122/jabfm.2015.01.140316
- Plaček, M., Půček, M., & and Šimčíková, A. (2013). The utilization of benchmarking for strategic project management of municipalities in the Czech Republic. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 4(16), 18-22. Retrieved from <http://ijbssnet.com>
- Poduthase, H. (2015). Rigor in qualitative research: Promoting quality in social science research. *Research Journal of Recent Science*, 4(IVC-2015), 25-28. Retrieved from <http://www.icas.in>
- Ponelis, S. R. (2015). Using interpretive qualitative case studies for exploratory research in doctoral studies: A case of Information Systems research in small and medium

- enterprises. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 10, 535-550. Retrieved from <http://ijds.org>
- Preda, C. (2013). Implementing a risk management standard. *Journal of Defense Resources Management*, 4, 111-120. Retrieved from <http://journal.dresmara.ro/>
- Prendergast, G. P., & Maggie, C. H. W. (2013). Donors' experience of sustained charitable giving: A phenomenological study. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 30, 130-139. doi:10.1108/07363761311304942
- Radu, M., & Nistor, R. (2014). Project initiation and project management approach - An expensive connection. *Managerial Challenges of the Contemporary Society. Proceedings*, 6, 67-70. Retrieved from <https://econ.ubbcluj.ro/jmccs/>
- Renz, A., Conrad, D., & Watts, C. (2013). Stakeholder perspectives on the implementation of shared decision-making: A qualitative data analysis. *International Journal of Healthcare Management*, 6, 122-131. doi:10.1179/2047971912Y.0000000027
- Resnick, D. (2015). The political economy of Africa's emergent middle class: Retrospect and prospects. *Journal of International Development*, 27, 573-587. doi:10.1002/jid.3110
- Rezvani, A., Chang, A., Wiewiora, A., Ashkanasy, N. M., Jordan, P. J., & Zolin, R. (2016). Manager emotional intelligence and project success: The mediating role of job satisfaction and trust. *International Journal of Project Management*, 34, 1112-1122. doi:10.1016/j.ijproman.2016.05.012

- Roach, C. M. L. (2016). An application of principal-agent theory to contractual hiring arrangements within public sector organizations. *Theoretical Economics Letters*, 6(1), 28-33. doi:10.4236/tel.2016.61004.
- Robinson, O. (2014). Sampling in interview-based qualitative research: A theoretical and practical guide. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 11(1), 25-41. doi:10.1080/14780887.2013.801543
- Roulston, K., & Shelton, S. (2015). Reconceptualizing bias in teaching qualitative research methods. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 21, 332-342. doi:10.1177/1077800414563803
- Roy, K., Zvonkovic, A., Goldberg, A., Sharp, E., & La Rossa, R. (2015). Sampling richness and qualitative integrity: Challenges for research with families. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 77, 243-260. doi:10.1111/jomf.12147
- Schoemaker, P. J., Krupp, S., & Howland, S. (2013). Strategic leadership: The essential skills. *Harvard Business Review*, 91, 131-134. Retrieved from [www.harvardbusiness.org](http://www.harvardbusiness.org)
- Simpson, A., & Quigley, C. F. (2016). Member checking process with adolescent students: Not just reading a transcript. *The Qualitative Report*, 21, 376-392. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu>
- Sinden, K., MacDermid, J., Buckman, S., Davis, B., Matthews, T., & Viola, C. (2013). A qualitative study on the experiences of female firefighters. *Work*, 45, 97-105. doi:10.3233/WOR-121549

- Sohmen, V.S. (2013). Leadership and teamwork: Two sides of the same coin. *Journal of Information Technology and Economic Development*, 4(2), 1-18. Retrieved from <http://www.gsmi-ijgb.com>
- Sjostedt, M. (2013). Aid effectiveness and the Paris Declaration: A mismatch between ownership and results-based management? *Public Administration and Development*, 33, 143-155. doi:10.1002/pad.1645
- Stevens, G. W. (2013). A critical review of the science and practice of competency modeling. *Human Resource Development Review*, 12, 86-107.  
doi:10.1177/1534484312456690
- Svensson, L. & Doumas, K. (2013). Contextual and analytic: Qualities of research methods exemplified in research on teaching. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 19, 441-450.  
doi:10.1177/1077800413482097
- Tătulescu, A., & Pătruți, A. (2014). Structural funds and economic crises: Romania's absorption paradox. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 16, 64-72.  
doi:10.1016/S2212-5671(14)00775-8
- Teller, J. (2013) Portfolio risk management and its contribution to project portfolio success: An investigation of organization, process, and culture. *Project Management Journal*, 44, 36–51. doi:10.1002/pmj.21327
- Thamhain, H. (2013). Managing risks in complex projects. *Project Management Journal*, 44, 20-35. doi:10.1002/pmj.21325
- The Global Fund (2016). Grant Performance Report, Ministry of Health, Ghana.  
Retrieved from <http://www.theglobalfund.org>

- Toader, C. S., Brad, I., Adamov, T. C., Marin, D., & Moisa, S. (2010). The main causes which lead to success or failure of a project. *Scientific Papers: Animal Science & Biotechnologies / Lucrari Stiintifice: Zootehnie Si Biotehnologii*, 43, 449-453.  
Retrieved from [http:// www.spasb.ro/](http://www.spasb.ro/)
- Trejo, A. (2014). Emotional intelligence and project outcomes in technology. *International Management Review*, 10(1), 31-42. Retrieved from <http://www.scholarspress.us/journals/>
- Turner, J., & Danks, S. (2014). Case study research: A valuable learning tool for performance improvement professionals. *Performance Improvement*, 53(4), 24-31. doi:10.1002/pfi.21406
- UNDP (2015). Ghana Millennium Development Goals 2015 Report. Retrieved from <http://www.gh.undp.org>
- UNFPA (2012a). Policies and Procedures Manual for UNFPA Offices. Manual for Implementing Partners. Retrieved from <http://www.myunfpa.org>
- UNFPA (2012b). NEX Audit Guide for UNFPA Offices. Retrieved from <http://www.myunfpa.org>
- UNFPA (2013). Financial Report for Ghana. Retrieved from <http://www.finance.partneragencies.org>
- Upjohn, M. M., Attwood, G. A., Lerotholi, T., Pfeiffer, D. U., & Verheyen, K. L. P. (2013). Quantitative versus qualitative approaches: A comparison of two research methods applied to identification of two health issues for working horses in

Lesotho. *Preventive Veterinary Medicine*, 108, 313-320.

doi:10.106/j.prevetmed.2012.11.008

Vacar, A. (2013). Project management-A tool for implementing change in organizations.

*Studies in Business and Economics*, 8, 137-144. Retrieved

from <http://eccsf.ulbsibiu.ro>

Vacar, A (2014). Leadership -A necessity in projects. *Studies in Business and Economics*,

9, 128-134. Retrieved from <http://www.eccsf.ulbsibiu.ro>

Valacich, J. S., George, J. F., & Hoffer, J. A. (2015). *Essentials of systems analysis and design*. Essex, England: Pearson Education.

Van de Sijpe, N. (2013a). The fungibility of health aid reconsidered. *The Journal of*

*Development Studies*, 49, 1746-1754. doi:10.1080/00220388.2013.819424

Van de Sijpe, N. (2013b). The fungibility of health aid reconsidered: A rejoinder. *The*

*Journal of Development Studies*, 49, 1763-1764.

doi:10.1080/00220388.2013.844924

Venkatesh, V., Brown, S., & Bala, H. (2013). Bridging the qualitative-quantitative

divide: Guidelines for conducting mixed methods research in information

systems. *MIS Quarterly*, 37, 21-54. Retrieved from <http://www.misq.org/>

Voss, M., & Kock, A. (2013). Impact of relationship value on project portfolio success-

Investigating the moderating effects of portfolio characteristics and external

turbulence. *International Journal of Project Management*, 31, 847-

861. doi:10.1016/j.ijproman.2012.11.005

- Walden. (2016). Walden University doctoral study rubric and research handbook. [DBA Training document]. Unpublished instrument. Retrieved from <http://researchcenter.waldenu.edu/>
- Wamboye, E., Adekola, A., & Sergi, B. (2013). Economic growth and the role of foreign aid in selected African countries. *Development, 56*, 155-171. doi:10.1057/dev.2013.24
- Wells, H. (2012). How effective are project management methodologies? An explorative evaluation of their benefits and practice. *Project Management Journal, 43*(6), 43-58. doi:10.1002/pmj.21302
- White, H. & Morrissey, O. (1997). Conditionality when donor and recipient preferences vary. *Journal of International Development, 9*, 497-505. doi:10.1002/(SICI)1099-1328(199706)9:4<497::AID-JID459>3.0.CO;2-C
- Whiting, L. S., Kendall, S., & Wills, W. (2013). Rethinking children's public health: The development of an asset model. *Critical Public Health, 23*, 146-159. doi:10.1080/09581596.2013.777694
- Winter, S., & Collins, D. (2015). Why do we do, what we do? *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 27*(1), 35-51. doi:10.1080/10413200.2014.941511
- Wolgemuth, J. (2013). Analyzing for critical systems in narrative research. *Qualitative Research, 14*, 586-602. doi:10.1177/1468794113501685
- Wolgemuth, J., Erdil-Moody, Z., Opsal, T., Cross, J., Kaanta, T., Dickmann, E., & Colomer, S. (2015). Participants' experiences of the qualitative interview:

- Considering the importance of research paradigms. *Qualitative Research*, 15, 351-372. doi:10.1177/1468794114524222
- WHO (2015). Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2015. WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, the World Bank group and the United Nations population division maternal mortality estimation inter-agency group. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int>
- Wysocki, R. K. (2014). *Effective project management: Traditional, agile, extreme* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Indianapolis, IN: Wiley
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Yin, R. K. (2013). Validity and generalization in future case study evaluations. *Evaluation*, 19, 321-332. doi:10.1177/1356389013497081
- Yu, C-I., Chen, H-G., Klein, G., & James, J. J. (2013). Risk dynamics throughout the system development life cycle. *The Journal of Computer Information Systems*, 53(3), 28-37. Retrieved from <http://www.iacis.org>
- Yun, H., Han, D., & Lee, C. C. (2013). Understanding the use of location-based service applications: Do privacy concerns matter? *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, 14, 215-230. Retrieved from <http://www.jecr.org/sites>
- Zamawe, F. C. (2015). The implication of using NVivo software in qualitative data analysis: Evidence-based reflections. *Malawi Medical Journal*, 27(1), 13–15. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>



- Zivkovic, J. (2012). Strengths and weaknesses of business research methodologies: Two disparate case studies. *Business Studies Journal*, 4, 91-99. Retrieved from <http://www.alliedacademies.org/>
- Zulch, B. (2014). Leadership communication in project management. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 119, 172 – 181. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.03.021
- Zuofa, T., & Ochieng E. G. (2014). Project failure: The way forward and panacea for development. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 9(11), 59-71. doi:10.5539/ijbm.v9n11p59

## Appendix A: Introductory Letter

<Date>

<Address Block>

Dear Sir/Madam,

Letter of Introduction and Request for Research Assistance

I am a doctoral student at the Walden University undertaking a project to identify strategies for maximizing the utilization of program funds in Ghana. The study will involve organizations with experience in managing projects or programs. I selected your organization in view of the previous (and current) partnership with UNFPA in successfully implementing maternal health interventions.

Your organization's assistance to the conduct of this study will entail (a) providing a letter of cooperation, (b) participation of a program or project manager in a semistructured interview, and (c) providing the researcher access to relevant administrative documents. Your organization's involvement in this study could contribute to the knowledge base of development assistance in Ghana. In addition, the study findings will be a reference point for program and project management practitioners to (a) learn lessons, (b) improve the funds management capacities in their respective organizations, and (c) facilitate optimal fund utilization to sustain donor interest in reducing maternal mortality in Ghana.

I humbly request your approval and assistance in gaining access to interview the officer responsible for managing maternal health interventions. All information

emanating from the interview will be kept confidential. I thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours Sincerely,

Dorothy Esi Awotwi

## Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Interview: Identifying the strategies that facilitate the maximal utilization of maternal health program funds by recipient partners.

1. I will introduce myself to the research participant and explain the research topic, purpose, and the duration for the interview.
2. I will thank the participant for agreeing to participate in the study.
3. I will refer the participant to the communication on consent form during the initial contact e-mail and give the participant the consent form to read, seek clarification, and sign prior to the interview process. The participant will receive a copy of the signed consent form.
4. I will reemphasize commitment to the participant's confidentiality in the consent form and explain the structure of the interview.
5. I will seek the participant's permission to use an audio recorder and upon approval, note the time and location of the interview.
6. I will ask permission to start the interview process and engage the participant to respond to nine interview questions, including follow up questions for about 60 minutes.
7. At the end of the interview, I will stop the audio recording and thank the participant for participating
8. I will inform the participant of the follow up activities including member checking and follow-on interviews.

## Appendix C. Letter of Cooperation

Community Research Partner Name

Contact Information

Date

Dear Dorothy Esi Awotwi,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Strategies for Maximizing Utilization of Maternal Health Program Funds in Ghana within the organization. As part of this study, I authorize you to interact with and interview the manager of the maternal health interventions on project management strategies and use our facility for interview. The interview process is scheduled to last about 1 hour in accordance with the participants' most convenient schedules within the official working hours of 8:00 am to 5:00 pm; Monday to Friday. Interview will be audio recorded. Participants will have the opportunity to engage in follow up activities to assure objective interpretation of their responses. You will also disseminate the study findings to the participants and the organization on completion of the study. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: participation of a program or project manager in a face-to-face interview and providing you access to relevant administrative documents. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the student will not be naming our organization in the doctoral project report that is published in Proquest.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Authorization Official

Contact Information

## Appendix D: Initial Contact E-mail

Dear <participant name>.

The leadership of your organization has granted me permission to invite you to participate in my doctoral study field research. I am exploring strategies for maximizing the utilization of program funds in Ghana. Your participation in this study could contribute to the knowledge base of development assistance in Ghana. In addition, the study findings will be a reference point for program and project management practitioners to (a) learn lessons, (b) improve the funds management capacities in their respective organizations, and (c) facilitate optimal fund utilization to sustain donor interest in reducing maternal mortality in Ghana.

Attached to this e-mail is an informed consent form for your review. If you agree to participate in this study, I will follow up with you through a telephone conversation to schedule a date for the face-to face interview and clarify any concerns you may have regarding the consent form.

Thank you once again for your consideration to participate in this research.

Yours Sincerely,

Dorothy Esi Awotwi

## Appendix E. Interview Questions

1. What is your understanding of maternal health program funding mechanisms in Ghana?
2. What are the obligations of donor and recipient institutions on maternal health program funding in Ghana?
3. How has the performance of those obligations of donor and recipient institutions reflected on the actual effectiveness of aid for maternal health programs in Ghana?
4. Describe the project management methodologies and practices you employ in implementing donor-supported maternal health programs
5. How do the project management methodologies and practices reflect your strategies for maximizing fund utilization?
6. Describe the threats or challenges to utilizing donor-supported maternal health program resources
7. Describe how your project team has addressed those threats and challenges in utilizing maternal health program resources to obtain a high implementation rate.
8. Reflecting on your experiences in managing donor-supported resources, recommend if any, changes to the maternal health program fund utilization strategies that can further enhance benefits to your institution and other aid recipients.



9. Describe any other issue you would like to add in understanding the capacity issues regarding maternal health program funds utilization by recipient institutions within the aid-effectiveness structure.