

The Impact of the Anglophone Crisis on the Project Management Success of the HIV Free Project in the North West Region of Cameroon

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of the Anglophone crisis on the project management success of the HIV Free Project in the North West Region of Cameroon. The ongoing socio-political unrest has severely disrupted healthcare access and project implementation. Using a causal research design, the research involved structured questionnaires distributed to 102 project management staff from the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Board. Based on a regression analysis, the findings reveal that lockdowns and insecurity significantly hinder project success, while human displacement has an insignificant effect. The results highlight the necessity for adaptive management strategies and strong stakeholder engagement to enhance project outcomes in conflict-affected environments.

Keywords: Anglophone crisis, HIV free project, project management success

1. Introduction

Healthcare project management encompasses all initiatives aimed at enhancing the operations of healthcare organizations. As noted by Winch and Cha (2020) and Wu et al. (2021), these projects are essential for improving service delivery and patient care. In recent years, the healthcare industry has faced increasing pressure to boost efficiency and elevate the quality of patient care (Gomes & Romão, 2025; Pan & Dias, 2024). This demand has led hospitals, healthcare systems, and various stakeholders to continuously undertake projects aimed at optimising their operations (Eby, 2020).

The National AIDS Control Committee/Central Technical Group previously estimated 141 new HIV infections per day in Cameroon, translating to six newly infected individuals every hour. However, more recent data indicates a decrease in the national prevalence rate. While UNAIDS reported a prevalence rate of 5.1% in 2010, the government, through the National AIDS Control Committee (NACC), announced a prevalence rate of 2.7% in 2024 (The Guardian Post, 2024; Cameroon Intelligence Report, 2024). Other sources indicate a further decrease to 2.3% in 2024 (StopBlaBlaCam, 2024). Despite this progress, Cameroon still faces significant challenges in managing the epidemic (Djataou et al., 2025, Ge et al., 2025). To mitigate the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS, Cameroon must enhance its treatment, care, and support services while also focusing on preventing mother-to-child transmission and other new infections, particularly among high-risk populations. The WHO reported 3,220 new cases in 2024, noting that young people aged 15-24 are the most affected group

(WHO, 2024). Addressing the HIV/AIDS crisis requires a long-term commitment and collaboration among the government, civil society, and international partners to develop a sustainable national response to this health issue. This coordinated effort is crucial in improving health outcomes and reducing the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the country. In 2024, the government launched the National Pediatric HIV Surge in partnership with the CDC to scale up the identification of children and adolescents living with HIV and connect them to lifesaving treatment (CDC, 2024). A nationwide survey, CAMPHIA II, was conducted from August 2024 to February 2025 to assess the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and the impact of preventive measures. Recent data from a study conducted in two health facilities in Northern Cameroon between 2021 and 2022 revealed an increase in new HIV cases, with the HIV incidence rising from 0.27% in 2017 to 1.63% (Djataou, 2025).

Since 2007 when the HIV/AIDS project for free Antiretroviral Therapy was introduced, user fees remained a great hindrance to accessing HIV services especially to those in dire need. On April 4, 2019, the Cameroon government through the Minister of Public Health signed a Ministerial Circular declaring the elimination of User Fees for HIV related services in the country effective January 1, 2020. The abolition of fee was done in an attempt to grant all persons with HIV/AIDS free access to healthcare services. This project titled the HIV free project is under the coordination and management of the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Board (CBCCHB) in three regions; North West, South West and West regions with strategic partners such as Centre for Disease Control and prevention (CDC), Cameroon and American in Partnership to the fight HIV/AIDS (PEPFAR), and Ministry of Public Health (Chiabi et al., 2025; Roukatou & Dretti, 2022).

The effects of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon's North West and South West Regions of Cameroon in recent years are critical for project management success in these regions. Any manager in charge of a project probably wants the project to be finished successfully, irrespective of the circumstances (Shami, 2021). Project management is a guarantee for the successful realisation of a project, even in crises (Agnieszka *et al.*, 2017). Project management offers organisations the means to be efficient, effective, and competitive in a complex, and unpredictable environment.

According to Shami (2021), a successful project will often accomplish the aims or objectives that it set in the beginning. On the other hand, the effectiveness of project management is evaluated using the traditional project triangle technique, which takes into account, in particular, expenditures, amounts of time, and costs. Baccarini (1999) as cited in Shokri-Ghasabeh and Kavousi-Chabok (2021), argued that Project management success covers meeting time, cost, and quality objectives. A distinction has been made between project success and project management success by some researchers. Shokri-Ghasabeh & Kavousi-Chabok (2022) and Cooke-Davies *et al.* (2002) argued that project success is measured against the overall objectives of the project, while project management success is measured base cost, time, and quality. Collins & Baccarini (2004) also argued that there is a positive relationship between project management success and project success. Successful project management will contribute to the achievement of projects, but it will not stop a project from failing to be successful.

Since projects are temporary in nature, the success of the project should be measured in terms of completing the project within the constraints of scope, time, cost, quality, resources, and risk as approved between the project managers and senior management (PMI; 2013). According to Tsongas (2011), projects are considered strategic tools for decision making in governmental and social organisations. They are the technical expression of solutions to general interest problems and a means to change unfavourable situations into convenient aspects for the benefit of the society.

The Anglophone crisis, which started in October 2016, has been an ongoing crisis that has lasted for about 7 years now. According to the IBRD (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development; 2021), the current crisis began with peaceful protests in 2016 and quickly escalated into a full-scale armed conflict with clear secessionist and criminal elements. The roots of the conflict can be found in the country's colonial history, as Cameroon inherited two distinct traditions in the wake of independence. There were critical differences between the two systems in terms of education, provision of justice, and institutional governance arrangements. The conflict has featured repeated and deliberate attacks against symbols of the state and the boycotting of national institutions (Alphonse, 2019). The impact of the conflict has been severe in the Northwest and Southwest regions and elsewhere in Cameroon. The impacts on human lives and displacement have been the most dramatic and visible (Nginyu et al., 2023; Nginyu, 2023). The conflict has also triggered a serious internal displacement crisis.

In addition, the conflict has resulted in the significant destruction of critical assets; schools, health facilities, and productive infrastructure have been deliberately targeted and destroyed. The crisis has increased poverty levels and damaged livelihoods and human capital conditions in both affected and neighbouring regions. The crisis has registered disruption of infrastructure and the destruction of human capital through death and displacement. Mumfor (2019) affirmed that this ongoing crisis has disrupted many businesses, including the implementation of

projects and investments. The crisis, characterised by ghost towns, shutdowns, and destruction of assets, attacks, abduction of people, and displacement of people, has slowed down business activities and even led to the closure of some businesses and abandonment of some projects.

Since the HIV/AIDS project for free Antiretroviral Therapy project is being implemented in the crisis-hit NWR, the effects generated by the socio-political crisis in the English-speaking part of Cameroon are likely to adversely affect the successful implementation of the projects concerning time, cost, scope, and quality, as well as the perceived sustainability of the products of the project. This study seeks to investigate the impact of the Anglophone crisis on the project management success of the HIV Free project in the North West Region of Cameroon concerning time, cost, quality, and scope.

As violence continues to increase in Cameroon, access to health care remains seriously limited. The anglophone crisis has led to the destruction of healthcare facilities, impacting the ability of people to access health care. UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) stated in their Humanitarian Needs Overview Cameroon 2020 issued in June 2020: Attacks on medical personnel and infrastructure have become another feature of the crisis with the closure of more than 35% of all health facilities and many of the remaining not functioning at full capacity (Haddison, 2020). People living with HIV who were on Antiretroviral (ARV) drugs can no longer access drugs when they take refuge in the bush, increasing the risk of infection. People in rural or hard-to-reach areas are most affected due to limited or no access to basic medical services. From kidnapping and threats, to acts of violence in medical facilities, the space afforded to medical workers and humanitarians may be shrinking and might affect the successful implementation of the project in terms of time, quality, and budget. This has aroused attention and thus the need to assess the impact of the Anglophone Crisis on the project management success of the HIV Free project in the North West Region of Cameroon. The main objective of this study was to investigate the impact of the Anglophone Crisis on the project management success of the HIV Free project in the North West Region of Cameroon. Specifically, the study sought to: analyse the effect of lockdown on the project management success of the HIV Free project, to explore the effect of insecurity or violence on the project management success of the HIV Free project; to examine the impact of human displacement on the project management success the HIV Free project and to examine the effect of destruction of assets on the project management success of the HIV Free project.

2. Empirical Review

The Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon, which escalated in late 2016, has affected various several sectors, including public health and project management. Numerous studies highlight that conflict situations lead to disruptions in health services, where resources become scarce, and project management effectiveness is severely hampered (Abdallah, 2021). The Literature on project management in crisis contexts emphasises the importance of adaptive management practices. According to Turner and Müller (2005), successful project management relies heavily on the contextual factors that include stakeholder engagement, risk management, and communication strategies. In conflict zones, project managers must cultivate agile practices and develop strong local partnerships to navigate the challenges posed by insecurity and community discontent (Kah et al., 2022). Harake (2025) further traced the importance of effective planning, resource management, and collaboration during periods of emergencies. These core tenets become particularly critical in the North West Region, where ongoing conflict presents challenges that derail standard operational procedures.

Howsawi (2022) argued that resource scarcity significantly hinders the implementation of programs aimed at combating HIV. Secondly, according to the findings of Harake's (2025), security concerns increase the complexity with field operations in conflict zones facing risks from violence and civil unrest. Therefore, stakeholder engagement becomes increasingly difficult in such contexts. Mallak (1997) highlights the importance of maintaining clear communication and collaboration among various agents, which is undermined by fear and mistrust within the communities affected by the Anglophone Crisis, where HIV Free Project relies on local partnerships for effective outreach and engagement.

According to the findings of Harake (2025), a flexible approach to project management allows for real-time adjustments in response to the unpredictable. Howsawi (2022) emphasised the importance of conducting thorough risk assessments and scenario planning, which helps projects to anticipate challenges and streamline their response strategies. Raza and Shah (2012) highlighted that the work environment significantly affects project performance in the IT industry. Similarly, Kwasira et al. (2016) found that effective quality management is crucial for successful construction project completion in Nakuru. Ahmed (2018) emphasised the importance of the critical path method in tracking project activities to ensure they meet established constraints.

In contrasting findings, Rugenyi and Bwisa (2016) reported no significant relationship between the triple constraints (scope, schedule, and cost) and project performance from a project manager's perspective in Nairobi. Omondi (2017) also found that there is a significant relationship between scope, schedule, and cost, and the completion of NGO projects in Nakuru County. Furthermore, Agnieszka et al. (2017) explored project

management in crises. Their research highlighted the importance of professionalism among project teams and the need for proactive monitoring to detect and address crises early.

Furthermore, Mumfor (2019) investigated the socio-political crisis's effect on microfinance institutions (MFIs) in the North West Region of Cameroon, revealing that the crisis led to significant declines in financial performance due to operational disruptions and decreased customer bases. Finally, Njoroge and Yusuf (2020) assessed triple constraints in Safaricom's indoor network coverage projects and found that effective management of scope, time, and cost positively influenced project performance.

3. Methodology

This study employs a causal research design to investigate the cause-and-effect relationship of the socio-political factors in the North West Region of Cameroon and the project management success of the HIV Free project (Nginyu et al., 2023a; Nginyu & Nganchi, 2024). The HIV Free project, managed by the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Board (CBCHB) and funded by initiatives like PEPFAR and CDC, operates across seven divisions and thirty-four municipalities within the region. The study's population includes 227 project management staff members, from which a sample of 102 was selected using a purposive sampling technique. This approach was chosen to ensure that credible participants, who are familiar with project management practices under current challenging conditions.

The study employed structured questionnaires as the primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was developed based on literature totalling 37 questions. To ensure the validity of the instrument, it was evaluated for face and content validity by three experts, who provided feedback that guided revisions for clarity and relevance (Nginyu et al., 2023b; Nginyu & Racheal, 2023). Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient through a pilot test, resulting in a score above 0.7, indicating the questionnaire's reliability. Data collection involved administering 145 questionnaires, of which 102 were completed and returned, representing a 70.34% response rate. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics.

4. Presentation of Results

In this chapter, data for this study were analysed and presented based on the research questions and hypothesis that guided the study.

Table 1. Distribution characteristics of respondents according to their demographic characteristics

| Demographic profile of respondents | Frequency | Percent | |
|---|---|----------------|-------|
| Gender | Male | 55 | 53.9% |
| | Female | 47 | 46.1% |
| Age group | 20 – 30 years | 19 | 18.6% |
| | 31 – 40 years | 33 | 32.4% |
| | 41 – 50 years | 43 | 42.2% |
| | 51 and above | 7 | 6.9% |
| Educational qualification | A/L and below | 10 | 9.8% |
| | BSc | 64 | 62.7% |
| | MSc | 22 | 21.6% |
| | PhD | 6 | 5.9% |
| Duration | 0 – 1 year | 1 | 1.0% |
| | Greater than 1 year and less than 2 years | 6 | 5.9% |
| | Greater than 2 and less than 3 years | 29 | 28.4% |
| | Greater than 3 and less than 4 years | 40 | 39.2% |
| | Greater than 4 and less than 5 years | 19 | 18.6% |
| | 5 years and above | 7 | 6.9% |

Source: By author from field data (2024).

The results in Table 1 above revealed that (53.9%) of the respondents were male, while 46.1% were females. Distribution of respondents according to age revealed that (42.2%) were between 41-50years, (32.4%) were between 31-40years, (18.6%) were between 20-30 years, and (6.9%) were between 50 years and above. Going by the level of education, the results revealed that 64 (62.7%) of the total respondents were degree holders, 22(21.6%) were MSc holders, 10(9.8%) had advanced level and above, while 6(5.9%) were holders of PhD.

Table 2 below presents the descriptive statistics of the variable of interest in this study.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of Variables

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|----------------------------|-----|---------|---------|--------|----------------|
| Ghost town/lockdown | 102 | 1.83 | 5.50 | 3.1111 | .38203 |
| insecurity & violence | 102 | 2.17 | 3.83 | 3.3105 | .27254 |
| human displacement | 102 | 2.20 | 3.80 | 2.8039 | .34120 |
| Destruction of assets | 102 | 2.20 | 8.60 | 3.0373 | .94596 |
| Road blockage | 102 | 2.00 | 3.60 | 2.5863 | .23422 |
| Project management success | 102 | 1.40 | 3.60 | 2.3902 | .31764 |

Source: By author from field data (2024).

The dataset includes responses from 102 participants. The variable “Ghost town/lockdown” has a mean score of 3.11 with a standard deviation of 0.38, indicating a moderate perception of its influence. “Insecurity & violence” scored a mean of 3.31 and a standard deviation of 0.27, suggesting it is perceived as slightly more impactful compared to lockdowns. The mean for “human displacement” is lower at 2.80 with a standard deviation of 0.34, indicating a lesser perception of its impact. “Destruction of assets” has a mean of 3.04 and a higher standard deviation of 0.95, showing considerable variability in how it is viewed. The variable “Road blockage” has the lowest mean of 2.59 and a standard deviation of 0.23, suggesting it is perceived as the least impactful. Finally, the variable “Project management success” has a mean score of 2.39 with a standard deviation of 0.32, indicating that project management success is perceived to be significantly affected by the socio-political crisis.

Table 3 displays the results of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the regression model assessing the impact of various variables on project management success in the context of the socio-political crisis.

Table 3. Analysis of Variance

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|-------|
| Regression | 3.672 | 5 | .734 | 10.815 | .000b |
| Residual | 6.518 | 96 | .068 | | |
| Total | 10.190 | 101 | | | |

Source: By author from field data (2024).

The regression model shows a total sum of squares of 10.190, which is partitioned into the regression sum of squares (3.672) and the residual sum of squares (6.518). The degrees of freedom (df) for regression is 5, and for residuals, it is 96. The mean square for the regression model is 0.734. The F-statistic is 10.815, which indicates the overall significance of the model, and the significance level (Sig.) is 0.000. This p-value suggests that the regression model is statistically significant, meaning that at least one of the independent variables significantly impacts the project management success within the studied context.

Table 4 presents the regression coefficients from the analysis of the impact of various socio-political crisis factors on project management success.

Table 4. Regression coefficient

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|--------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 (Constant) | 3.979 | .512 | | 7.768 | .000 |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------|------|-------|--------|------|
| Ghosttown/lockdown | -.498 | .070 | -.599 | -7.069 | .000 |
| Insecurity /violence | -.034 | .104 | -.029 | 1.973 | .044 |
| Human displacement | -.098 | .117 | -.072 | -.836 | .405 |
| Destruction of assets | -.023 | .028 | -.070 | 2.339 | .003 |
| Road blockage | .142 | .086 | .153 | 1.646 | .103 |

Source: By author from field data (2024).

As seen on Table 4 above, it is observed that ghost town/lockdown has a negative effect on the project management success. A unit increase in the occurrences of ghost towns and lockdown will lead to a reduction in the project management success by 0.498. This test is statistically significant at a one percent level of significance. The negative effect of ghost towns and lockdowns on project management success aligns with findings of Mumfor (2019), who found that crises disrupt businesses and hinder project implementation. This correlation highlights a negative impact of lockdowns due to socio-political unrest which leads to operational inefficiencies and challenges resource mobilisation. Additionally, Turner and Müller (2005) emphasised the importance of contextual factors in successful project management. The current findings corroborate this assertion, as the crisis context significantly shapes the success of the HIV Free project by limiting operability.

Secondly, insecurity and violence is seen to have a negative effect on the project management success. A unit increase in insecurity and violence will lead to a 0.034 decrease in the project management success. The findings are in line with those of Howsawi (2022) and Kah et al. (2022), found that security concerns complicate field operations in conflict zones. Insecurity not only affects day-to-day operations but also reduces stakeholder engagement and trust within local communities, thus impairing project outreach and effectiveness.

Thirdly, human displacement has an insignificant effect on the project management success. The findings are contrary to those of Harake (2025), who emphasised the necessity for adaptive management strategies during emergencies. Howsawi (2022) argued that resource scarcity caused by displacement hinders project implementation, indicating that while displacement affects individuals' abilities to engage with projects, individual project management responses can significantly influence the broader outcome.

Fourthly, destruction of assets is observed to have a significant effect on the project management success. The findings are in line with Mumfor (2019) and Mallak (1997), who found infrastructure damage as a significant impediment to project performance.

Fifthly, looking at the effect of road blockage on the achievement of project goals, it is observed that road blockage does not have a significant effect on the project management success. The findings are contrary to Omondi (2017), who found that project completion is significantly linked to external factors like scope, schedule, and cost. This study suggests that road closures, while disruptive, do not always inhibit project success if effective adaptive measures are employed. This aligns with the findings of Rugenyi and Bwisa (2016), who found that not all constraints necessarily correlate with project performance negatively. Some projects may exhibit resilience, indicating that alternative strategies or contingency measures might buffer against the impacts of road blockages.

5. Recommendations

By implementing the following recommendations, the HIV Free project can enhance its responsiveness and effectiveness in the challenging environment created by the Anglophone Crisis in the North West Region of Cameroon.

Create teams that can operate in insecure areas to provide healthcare services during lockdowns. Equip them with portable medical supplies and communication tools like drones to conduct remote consultations and health education campaigns.

Develop clear safety protocols for field staff, including providing personal safety equipment and training for navigating conflict zones. Create emergency response plans and establish safe havens for staff during violent incidents.

Work with local governments to establish agreements for the protection of healthcare facilities. Advocate for policies that recognize healthcare structures as neutral zones during the conflict.

Identify alternate routes and partnerships with local transport providers to ensure the movement of healthcare supplies. Consider using drones or other innovative delivery methods to reach isolated communities.

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