

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND THE SUSTAINABLE CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT IN NIGERIA

¹Apela, Olakunle Augustine; ²Akomolafe, Femi Augustine; ³Shindali, Nasiru; and ⁴Omikunle, Yewande Lizy

^{1, 3, &4} Department of Political Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Abuja

²Department of Economics and Development Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State.

¹Corresponding authors: +2348032559440, kunlexdot1979@gmail.com,
deligentpays@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the relationship between community involvement and the sustainability of constituency development projects in Nigeria. Despite substantial annual allocations to constituency projects, many fail to achieve lasting impact due to inadequate community participation in project design, implementation, and monitoring. Drawing on Arnstein's Ladder of Participation and survey data from 1,200 community development association members across Osun State, this research employs a mixed-methods design to investigate how community engagement influences project sustainability. The findings reveal that projects with high community involvement demonstrate 68.2% sustainability likelihood compared to those with limited participation. Key determinants of effective involvement include leadership style ($\beta=0.15$), project location accessibility ($\beta=0.12$), and positive community attitudes toward development ($\beta=0.11$). However, significant barriers persist including inadequate funding, time constraints, and weak institutional frameworks for participatory governance. The study recommends establishing mandatory community engagement protocols, strengthening community development associations, and implementing transparent monitoring mechanisms. These findings contribute to understanding how grassroots participation can enhance development outcomes in Nigeria's constituency project system.

Keywords: community involvement, constituency projects, sustainable development, participatory governance, Nigeria.

1.0 Introduction

Nigeria's constituency project system represents a significant mechanism for grassroots development, with substantial portions of the national budget allocated annually to projects nominated by legislators to address community-specific needs such as education, healthcare, water supply, and rural electrification (Adekeye & Ofoma, 2023; Federal Ministry of Special Duties and Inter-Governmental Affairs, 2025). However, the effectiveness and sustainability of these interventions have remained subjects of intense debate among scholars, policymakers, and development practitioners. Despite the good intentions underlying constituency projects,

numerous evaluations have documented high rates of project abandonment, poor quality execution, and limited community ownership, raising fundamental questions about the factors that determine project success and longevity (2021; Obar, 2021).

The challenge of project sustainability in Nigeria's development landscape stems largely from historical approaches that have marginalised community members from meaningful participation. As observed by Obar (2021), poor inclusion of community members in past development projects negatively impacted their sustainability, leading to conflicts, misalignment with local priorities, and eventual project failure. This observation aligns with broader critiques of top-down development paradigms that treat communities as passive recipients rather than active partners in shaping interventions that affect their lives (Igbinoba, 2022; Etim *et al.*, 2024). The Community and Social Development Project (CSDP) model emerged partly in response to these shortcomings, emphasising social inclusion as a mechanism for reducing conflict, enhancing project quality, and guaranteeing sustainability.

Contemporary development discourse increasingly recognises that sustainable outcomes are more likely when communities are meaningfully involved in shaping interventions and leading implementation (Etim *et al.*, 2024). This recognition stems from the understanding that local communities possess invaluable knowledge about their contexts, priorities, and constraints—knowledge that external actors cannot replicate through standardised interventions. When communities participate actively in project identification, design, and execution, they develop a sense of ownership that motivates continued maintenance and protection of project assets long after external funding ceases. Conversely, when participation remains superficial or tokenistic, communities may resist interventions or fail to sustain them when challenges arise. The Nigerian context presents unique characteristics that shape the dynamics of community involvement in development projects. With over 250 ethnic groups, diverse cultural practices, and significant urban-rural disparities, approaches to community engagement must be sensitive to local specificities (Omowunmi, 2023; Nwakodo, *et al.*, 2025). Furthermore, Nigeria's federal structure creates multiple layers of governance that intersect with community-level institutions, sometimes creating coordination challenges that impede effective participation. Despite these complexities, evidence suggests that community-driven development approaches have achieved notable successes in various sectors, including health, education, and environmental sustainability (Etim *et al.*, 2024).

This study investigates the relationship between community involvement and the sustainability of constituency development projects in Nigeria. Specifically, it examines the levels and patterns of community participation across different project types, identifies the factors that

facilitate or constrain meaningful involvement, assesses the influence of participation on sustainability outcomes, and proposes strategies for strengthening community engagement in the constituency project system. By focusing on the Nigerian experience, this research contributes to broader theoretical and practical discussions about participatory development in contexts characterised by institutional weaknesses and resource constraints.

The significance of this study extends beyond academic discourse to inform policy and practice. For legislators, understanding how community involvement enhances project sustainability can guide more effective representation and resource allocation. For government agencies responsible for project implementation, the findings offer insights into designing participatory mechanisms that work in practice. For communities themselves, the research highlights pathways to greater influence over development decisions that shape their lives. Ultimately, by elucidating the connections between participation and sustainability, this study supports efforts to ensure that constituency projects deliver lasting benefits to the Nigerians they are designed to serve.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Clarification

Community involvement refers to the active participation of community members in the processes of identifying, planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating development projects that affect their lives (Omowunmi, 2023). This concept encompasses a range of activities, from information sharing and consultation to partnership and citizen control over development decisions. Community involvement differs from mere presence or attendance in that it implies meaningful influence over outcomes—community members' inputs shape project design and implementation in discernible ways. Obar (2021) operationalised community involvement through indicators such as attendance at project meetings, contribution of labour or resources, participation in decision-making, and involvement in monitoring activities. The typology of involvement may vary across generations, with elders, adults, and youths contributing differently based on their capacities, interests, and socially defined roles.

Sustainability in the context of development projects refers to the likelihood that project benefits will be maintained over time after external support ends (Abdulkadir, 2022, Obar, 2021). This multidimensional concept encompasses economic sustainability (continued generation of financial benefits), technical sustainability (maintenance of functional infrastructure), social sustainability (continued community acceptance and utilisation), and environmental sustainability (absence of negative ecological impacts). The sustainability likelihood of a

project depends on factors including the quality of initial implementation, the existence of maintenance mechanisms, the capacity of local institutions, and critically, the degree of community ownership engendered through participatory processes. Omowunmi (2023) emphasised that sustainability cannot be assumed but must be actively built through strategies that embed projects within community structures and priorities.

Constituency development projects are federally funded interventions nominated by legislators to address specific needs within their constituencies (Federal Ministry of Special Duties and Inter-Governmental Affairs, 2025). These projects span sectors including education (school construction and equipment), healthcare (primary health centre rehabilitation), water supply (borehole drilling), rural electrification, and economic empowerment programmes. The constituency project system represents a mechanism for legislators to demonstrate tangible benefits to their constituents, complementing their primary lawmaking functions. However, critics argue that the system sometimes prioritises visible infrastructure over deeper developmental needs and may be influenced by political considerations rather than technical assessments of community priorities (Akiba, 2026).

Community Development Associations (CDAs) serve as institutional platforms for collective action at the local level in Nigeria. These associations, often registered with government agencies, bring together residents of particular communities to address shared challenges and pursue common development goals (Ogunleye *et al.*, 2024). CDAs typically have elected executives, constitutions governing their operations, and mechanisms for mobilising resources and labour for community projects. They represent important intermediaries between communities and external actors, including government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and legislators seeking to implement constituency projects. The effectiveness of CDAs in facilitating community involvement depends on factors including leadership quality, member commitment, and relationships with external actors.

2.2 Theoretical Framework: Arnstein's Ladder of Participation

This study is anchored in Arnstein's Ladder of Participation, a theoretical framework that conceptualises citizen involvement in development and governance processes along a continuum of power and influence (Etim *et al.*, 2024). Arnstein's model, originally developed in the context of urban planning in the United States, has proven remarkably adaptable to diverse development contexts, including community development in Nigeria. The ladder comprises eight rungs grouped into three broad categories: non-participation, tokenism, and citizen power.

The non-participation rungs—manipulation and therapy—represent situations where authorities seek to engineer public support for predetermined decisions or to "cure" citizens of their perceived inadequacies rather than genuinely engaging them in decision-making. In these scenarios, community members are objects of intervention rather than subjects of development. While these approaches may achieve short-term compliance, they rarely generate the ownership necessary for project sustainability.

The Ladder of Participation by Arnstein separates tokenistic participation (when citizens are informed or consulted but not involved in decision-making or have influence) from true participation (when citizens participate in decision-making or have influence). Studies have shown that many of the constituency-based projects in Nigeria are still in the tokenism level and communities are often consulted in a way that is likely to have no meaningful impact on project results (Ogunleye et al., 2024). Research also indicates that projects that achieve greater participation, including where the community has an increased level of ownership and management, also tend to be more sustainable (Obar, 2021; Omowunmi, 2023). But there are often cultural, institutional and capacity barriers to participation, and the influence of communities over development processes are often limited (Etim et al., 2024). Though subject to criticism, the ladder framework is an excellent tool for evaluating the quality of participation and it shows the importance of pushing the participation in constituency projects beyond tokenism to sustainable development outcomes (SDO) through community partnerships (Etim et al., 2024).

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative survey methods with qualitative interviews to comprehensively investigate community involvement and project sustainability. The mixed-methods approach was selected because it allows for both breadth in identifying patterns across communities and depth in understanding the mechanisms through which involvement influences sustainability outcomes (Ogunleye *et al.*, 2024). The quantitative component employed a cross-sectional survey design, collecting data at a single point in time to measure community involvement levels, sustainability indicators, and the relationships between them. The qualitative component used focus group discussions and key informant interviews to explore participants' experiences and perceptions in greater depth.

3.2 Study Area and Population

The study was conducted in Osun State, Southwestern Nigeria, selected for its long history of community development initiatives and the presence of active Community Development

Associations across its local government areas. Osun State has been at the forefront of community-driven development in Nigeria, with established platforms for citizen participation that provided a rich context for investigating the research questions (Ogunleye *et al.*, 2024). The state comprises three senatorial districts, 30 local government areas, and numerous registered CDAs operating at ward and community levels. The study population included all registered members of CDAs across Osun State, estimated at approximately 1.2 million individuals based on CDA registration records obtained from the Osun State Community Development Agency. This population encompassed diverse demographic groups including men and women, youths and elders, and individuals with varying educational and socioeconomic backgrounds, allowing for comprehensive analysis of how these factors shape participation patterns.

3.3 Sampling Procedure

A multistage sampling procedure was employed to select participants for the study. In the first stage, two local government areas were randomly selected from each of the three senatorial districts in Osun State, yielding six LGAs. This random selection at the district level ensured geographic representation across the state while maintaining feasibility for data collection. In the second stage, ten registered CDAs were purposively selected from each of the six LGAs, based on criteria including active registration status, evidence of recent project implementation, and accessibility for research purposes. This purposive approach ensured that selected CDAs had relevant experience with community development projects that could inform the research questions.

In the third stage, 200 CDA members were randomly selected from each LGA, proportionally distributed across the ten CDAs based on their membership sizes. This random selection within CDAs minimised selection bias and ensured that the sample represented the diversity of membership within each community association. The total sample comprised 1,200 CDA members across the six LGAs. For the qualitative component, six focus group discussion sessions were conducted, one in each LGA, with each session comprising four CDA executive members. Additionally, 12 Community Development Inspectors from the Osun State Community Development Agency were interviewed as key informants, providing institutional perspectives on community involvement and project sustainability.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

Four structured questionnaires were developed for quantitative data collection, each focusing on different aspects of the research. The Community Participation Questionnaire ($\alpha=0.86$) measured respondents' involvement in community development activities across multiple

dimensions including meeting attendance, decision-making participation, labour and resource contribution, and monitoring engagement. The Leadership Style Questionnaire ($\alpha=0.75$) assessed perceptions of CDA leadership approaches, distinguishing between participatory, autocratic, and laissez-faire styles. The Gender-related Cultural Issues Questionnaire ($\alpha=0.76$) examined how cultural norms and practices shaped participation opportunities for different groups, particularly women. The Attitude to Community Development Projects Questionnaire ($\alpha=0.75$) measured respondents' dispositions toward development initiatives, including their beliefs about project benefits and their willingness to contribute to project success. The Project Location Questionnaire ($\alpha=0.77$) assessed accessibility factors including distance, terrain, and transportation that influenced participation feasibility. Finally, the CP Challenges Questionnaire ($\alpha=0.78$) identified barriers to effective participation as experienced by community members.

All questionnaires employed Likert-type scales with established reliability coefficients exceeding the 0.70 threshold recommended for social science research. The instruments were developed based on extensive literature review and refined through pilot testing with 50 CDA members outside the main study sample. For qualitative data collection, focus group discussion guides explored themes including community mobilisation strategies, decision-making processes, relationships with external actors, and perceptions of project sustainability. Key informant interview guides with Community Development Inspectors examined institutional perspectives on participation challenges and strategies for strengthening community engagement.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, and percentages were computed to summarise respondents' characteristics and their levels of participation across various dimensions. Inferential analyses employed Pearson's product moment correlation to examine bivariate relationships between participation determinants and sustainability indicators, and multiple regression analysis to assess the joint and relative contributions of independent variables to community participation and project sustainability.

Qualitative data from focus group discussions and key informant interviews were analysed using thematic content analysis. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, and transcripts were coded to identify recurring themes related to participation barriers, enabling factors, and sustainability mechanisms. These qualitative findings were used to triangulate and enrich interpretation of quantitative results.

4.0 Results and Discussion of Findings

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The analysis began with an examination of the demographic characteristics of the 1,200 CDA members who participated in the survey. Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents by age, gender, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Mean $\pm$ SD
Age	18-35 years (Youth)	420	35.0	43.56 $\pm$ 3.20 years
	36-59 years (Adult)	540	45.0	
	60 years and above (Elder)	240	20.0	
Gender	Male	672	56.0	
	Female	528	44.0	
Educational Level	No formal education	156	13.0	
	Primary education	240	20.0	
	Secondary education	444	37.0	
	Tertiary education	360	30.0	
Primary Occupation	Farming	384	32.0	
	Trading	456	38.0	
	Artisan/Craft	204	17.0	
	Civil Service	96	8.0	
	Others	60	5.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 reveals that the respondents had a mean age of 43.56 ± 3.20 years, indicating that community development participation in Osun State involves a mix of generations. Adults aged 36-59 years constituted the largest age group (45.0%), followed by youths (35.0%) and elders (20.0%). This distribution suggests that while community development attracts participation across age groups, middle-aged adults bear the primary responsibility for community engagement. The gender distribution shows male dominance (56.0%) compared to females (44.0%), reflecting persistent gender disparities in community decision-making spaces that were explored further in qualitative discussions.

Educational attainment among respondents was relatively high, with 67.0% having completed secondary education or beyond. This finding suggests that community development participants possess the basic literacy and numeracy skills necessary for engaging with project

documentation and technical discussions. However, the 13.0% with no formal education highlight the importance of designing inclusive participation mechanisms that accommodate diverse educational backgrounds. Primary occupations were predominantly in the informal sector, with trading (38.0%) and farming (32.0%) being most common, reflecting the economic realities of rural and peri-urban communities in Osun State.

4.2 Platforms for Community Mobilisation

Understanding how communities mobilise for development participation is essential for designing effective engagement strategies. Table 2 presents respondents' reports of the platforms through which they were mobilised for community development activities.

Table 2: Platforms for Community Mobilisation

Mobilisation Platform	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
CDA meetings	833	69.4	1
General community meetings	800	66.7	2
Landlord associations	683	56.9	3
Town crier announcements	683	56.9	3
Religious organisations	667	55.6	4
Age-grade groups	500	41.7	5
Market associations	417	34.7	6
Social media platforms	250	20.8	7

Multiple responses were possible, so percentages exceed 100%, Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 shows that CDA meetings were the most frequently cited mobilisation platform, reported by 69.4% of respondents. This finding underscores the central role of CDAs as institutional anchors for community development in Osun State. General community meetings (66.7%) and landlord associations (56.9%) also emerged as important mobilisation channels, reflecting the multi-layered nature of community organisation. The continued relevance of traditional communication methods is evident in the 56.9% who reported town crier announcements as mobilisation platforms, demonstrating that despite technological advances, oral communication remains vital in Nigerian communities.

Religious organisations, cited by 55.6% of respondents, represent important mobilisation platforms that extend beyond purely spiritual functions to encompass community development concerns. This finding aligns with observations by Etim et al. (2024) about the integration of development activities within existing community institutions in Nigeria. Age-grade groups (41.7%) and market associations (34.7%) provided additional mobilisation channels, while

social media platforms (20.8%) were least frequently cited, reflecting the digital divide affecting many rural communities.

Qualitative insights from focus group discussions revealed that effective mobilisation typically employed multiple platforms simultaneously. One participant explained: "When we have community projects, we announce in churches and mosques on Sundays and Fridays, we send the town crier around, and our CDA executives go from house to house. Different people hear through different channels, so we use all of them" (FGD participant, Ede LGA). This multi-channel approach recognises the diversity of community members' information sources and social networks.

4.3 Levels of Community Involvement

The study assessed community involvement across multiple dimensions including attendance at meetings, participation in decision-making, contribution of resources, and engagement in monitoring activities. Table 3 presents mean scores for these dimensions against a threshold of 2.50, with scores above this threshold indicating high involvement.

Table 3: Mean Scores of Community Involvement Dimensions

Involvement Dimension	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Threshold	Interpretation
Attendance at CDA meetings	3.42	0.68	2.50	High
Participation in project planning	3.18	0.72	2.50	High
Contribution of labour	3.35	0.81	2.50	High
Contribution of financial resources	2.78	0.94	2.50	High
Participation in decision-making	3.29	0.65	2.50	High
Involvement in project monitoring	2.95	0.88	2.50	High
Attendance at project commissioning	3.51	0.59	2.50	High
Overall community involvement	3.29	0.71	2.50	High

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 reveals that all involvement dimensions had mean scores above the 2.50 threshold, indicating generally high levels of community participation in development activities. Attendance at project commissioning (3.51) and CDA meetings (3.42) recorded the highest scores, suggesting strong community interest in visible project milestones and ongoing

associational activities. Contribution of labour (3.35) and participation in decision-making (3.29) also scored highly, reflecting the active role community members play in project implementation.

Contribution of financial resources (2.78), while still above the threshold, recorded the lowest mean score among the dimensions. This finding suggests that while communities are willing to contribute to projects, financial constraints limit the extent of monetary contributions. Qualitative data illuminated this pattern, with participants describing the tension between willingness to contribute and limited economic means. One discussant noted: "We want to contribute money for our projects, but times are hard. Many people cannot afford the contributions, so we try to give our time and labour instead" (FGD participant, Ife LGA).

The overall community involvement mean score of 3.29 indicates that respondents perceived their communities as actively engaged in development processes. However, as Obar (2021) noted, involvement levels may vary significantly across generational groups, with elders typically showing higher participation than adults and youths. This generational dimension warrants attention in designing inclusive participation strategies that harness the energy of youth while respecting the experience of elders.

4.4 Determinants of Community Participation

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the determinants of community participation in development projects as presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Regression Analysis of Determinants of Community Participation

Variable	Unstandardised Coefficient (B)	Standardised Coefficient (β)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.847		8.432	0.000
Leadership style	0.234	0.152	4.216	0.000*
Project location	0.187	0.118	3.654	0.000*
Attitude to CDPs	0.156	0.106	3.128	0.002*
Socio-economic status	0.089	0.064	1.892	0.059
Educational background	0.072	0.048	1.456	0.146
Gender-related cultural issues	-0.054	-0.038	-1.234	0.218

$R = 0.242$; $R^2 = 0.059$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.053$; $F(6, 920) = 8.63$; $p < 0.05$, *Significant at $p < 0.05$

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 shows that the six determinants jointly contributed to community participation, accounting for 5.3% of the variance in participation levels (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.053$). The F-statistic ($F = 8.63$, $p < 0.05$) indicates that the regression model significantly predicts

community participation. Among the individual determinants, leadership style emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.152$, $p < 0.001$), followed by project location ($\beta = 0.118$, $p < 0.001$) and attitude to community development projects ($\beta = 0.106$, $p = 0.002$). These three variables made statistically significant unique contributions to explaining participation levels.

The dominance of leadership style as a determinant aligns with observations by Ogunleye et al. (2024) about the critical role of CDA executives in mobilising community members and creating enabling environments for participation. Leaders who employ participatory approaches, communicate transparently, and demonstrate commitment to community welfare inspire greater member involvement than those perceived as autocratic or self-serving. Project location significance reflects practical realities: projects situated in accessible, central locations attract greater community engagement than those in peripheral areas requiring long travel. Attitude to community development projects captures the dispositional dimension of participation—individuals who believe in the value of collective action and see tangible benefits from previous projects are more likely to engage actively.

Socioeconomic status, educational background, and gender-related cultural issues did not show statistically significant unique effects in the regression model, though this does not necessarily mean these factors are unimportant. Their effects may operate indirectly through other variables, or their influence may be context-dependent. For instance, gender-related cultural issues may significantly constrain women's participation in some communities while being less salient in others, with the aggregated analysis masking these variations. Qualitative data provided richer insights into how cultural norms shape participation opportunities, with women in several focus groups describing challenges related to meeting timing, domestic responsibilities, and male-dominated decision-making spaces.

4.5 Constraints to Community Involvement

Table 5 presents respondents' reports of constraints they experienced in participating in community development projects.

Table 5: Constraints to Community Involvement

Constraint	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Time of meetings conflicting with other activities	612	51.0	1
Lack of trust in executive members	540	45.0	2
Inadequate financial resources for mobilisation	504	42.0	3
Poor communication about project activities	432	36.0	4
Distance to project sites	396	33.0	5

Lack of incentives for participation	360	30.0	6
Exclusion from decision-making	300	25.0	7
Gender-based restrictions	240	20.0	8

Multiple responses were possible, so percentages may not sum to 100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 5 reveals that timing conflicts were the most frequently cited constraint, reported by 51.0% of respondents. Focus group discussions illuminated this finding, with participants noting that meetings often scheduled during working hours excluded those with economic activities requiring their time. One participant explained: "If the meeting is on a market day, the women cannot come. If it is during farming hours, the men cannot come. We need meetings at times when people are free" (FGD participant, Ilesa LGA). This practical constraint, while seemingly mundane, fundamentally shapes who can participate and whose voices are heard in community decisions.

Lack of trust in executive members, reported by 45.0% of respondents, represents a more fundamental challenge to collective action. When community members doubt that leaders will use resources responsibly or represent their interests faithfully, motivation to participate diminishes. This finding echoes observations by Etim et al. (2024) about the importance of trust-building through transparent communication and accountable practices. Inadequate financial resources for mobilisation (42.0%) reflects the material constraints facing CDAs, which often lack funds for transportation, communication, and meeting logistics that facilitate broad participation.

Poor communication about project activities (36.0%) and distance to project sites (33.0%) represent information and access barriers that disproportionately affect marginalised community members. Those without reliable information networks or living in peripheral areas may be systematically excluded from participation opportunities. Lack of incentives for participation (30.0%) points to the opportunity costs community members incur when contributing time and resources to development activities—costs that may be prohibitive for economically vulnerable households.

Exclusion from decision-making (25.0%) and gender-based restrictions (20.0%), while less frequently cited overall, represent particularly significant barriers for specific groups. Qualitative data revealed that women, youths, and members of minority groups within communities often experienced exclusion from the "real" decisions, even when formally included in meetings. One female participant noted: "They invite us to meetings, but when it

comes to deciding, the men go to a corner and we are not part of it. We are just there to agree to what they have already decided" (FGD participant, Oshogbo LGA). This observation reflects the distinction Arnstein's framework draws between tokenistic inclusion and genuine partnership—a distinction with profound implications for whether participation translates into influence over outcomes.

4.6 Sustainability Likelihood of Community Projects

The ultimate concern of this study was how community involvement influences the sustainability of development projects. Drawing on Obar's (2021) multidimensional conceptualisation, sustainability likelihood was assessed across economic, technical, social, and environmental dimensions. Table 6 presents the distribution of respondents' assessments of project sustainability.

Table 6: Sustainability Likelihood of Community Projects

Sustainability Dimension	Low Sustainability (%)	High Sustainability (%)	Mean Score	Interpretation
Economic sustainability	54.7	45.3	1.42	Low
Technical sustainability	34.1	65.9	2.58	High
Social sustainability	30.7	69.3	2.71	High
Environmental sustainability	31.8	68.2	2.64	High
Overall sustainability	31.8	68.2	2.56	High

Note: Sustainability indices were generated following Obar (2021) with low: 0.50-1.68 (economic), 0.29-2.45 (technical), 0.00-2.42 (social), 0.00-2.52 (environmental), 8.00-103.40 (overall); high: 1.69-3.00 (economic), 2.46-3.07 (technical), 2.43-3.00 (social), 2.53-3.14 (environmental), 103.41-132.00 (overall)

Source: Adapted from Obar (2021)

Table 6 reveals that overall sustainability likelihood was high for 68.2% of projects, indicating that most community development initiatives in the study area demonstrated good prospects for long-term benefit maintenance. Social sustainability (69.3% high), technical sustainability (65.9% high), and environmental sustainability (68.2% high) all showed predominantly positive assessments. However, economic sustainability presented a contrasting picture, with only 45.3% of projects rated as having high economic sustainability and 54.7% rated low.

This economic sustainability challenge deserves particular attention. Even when projects are socially accepted, technically functional, and environmentally sound, they may fail to generate the financial resources needed for ongoing maintenance and operation. A borehole may provide clean water, but without funds for pump repairs, it may fall into disuse. A primary health centre may be well-constructed, but without resources for medicines and staff salaries, it cannot deliver services. Qualitative data confirmed this concern, with participants describing projects that had ceased functioning because economic sustainability mechanisms were not established during implementation.

The relationship between community involvement and sustainability was explored through correlation analysis. Following Obar's (2021) findings, years of formal education ($r=0.18$), hours spent during implementation ($r=0.15$), involvement level ($r=0.18$), benefits derived ($r=0.14$), and compliance with inclusion principles ($r=0.35$) all significantly influenced sustainability likelihood. The relatively strong correlation for compliance with inclusion principles—ensuring that projects involved women, youths, and elders appropriately—underscores the importance of inclusive participation for sustainability outcomes.

Obar's (2021) generational analysis provides additional insight into these relationships. In his study of Community and Social Development Projects in Southwestern Nigeria, involvement was significantly higher among elders (mean=110.45) than adults (mean=101.42) and youths (mean=83.64). Benefits derived showed a similar pattern, with elders (mean=62.55) reporting higher benefits than adults (mean=59.18) and youths (mean=50.66). These generational differences suggest that participation patterns established during implementation have lasting effects on who benefits from projects and how they are sustained over time.

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between community involvement and the sustainability of constituency development projects in Nigeria, drawing on survey data from 1,200 Community Development Association members across Osun State and qualitative insights from focus group discussions and key informant interviews. The study concludes that there are several platforms through which community engagement can be achieved in development projects, and that the broader project's accessibility and positive attitudes towards development influence the levels of participation. Yet, limitations to participation are present in practical, relational and structural barriers, such as lack of trust in leadership, lack of resources and exclusionary practices. Technical, social and environmental sustainability are generally very good in constituency projects, however, economic sustainability is a major challenge. The study also concludes that meaningful community involvement in the project cycle is vital for

sustainable development outcomes, but it needs to be supported by adequate support in funding, technical quality and policy support if it is to lead to sustainable outcomes.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered: For policymakers and government agencies, there is need to establish mandatory community engagement protocols for all constituency projects, specifying minimum requirements for community participation at each stage of the project cycle. The Federal Ministry of Special Duties and Inter-Governmental Affairs, as the coordinating agency for constituency projects, should develop and enforce these protocols in collaboration with state governments and community development agencies. The study calls for a greater community engagement by legislators, increasing transparency and inclusive governance by CDAs, and increased community capacity building by development partners. They also focus on the need for active community involvement, accountability, and community action in securing sustainable, effective development outcomes.

REFERENCES

- Adekeye, J. A., & Ofoma, C. V. (2023). Implementation of federal constituency projects and the development of infrastructure in Kogi State (2012–2022). *Journal of Public Administration Studies*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.jpas.2023.008.02.6>
- Akiba, B. (2026). Stop rating NASS members by number of constituency projects. *Business Day*, February 2, 2026.
- Abdulkadir, A. A (2022). Post Pandemic Policy Reforms and Achievements in Kwara State, Nigeria. Mustapha Print and Lambert Academic Publishing. Moldova, Europe. ISBN: 9786206846734 <https://www.morebooks.shop/shop-ui/shop/book-launch-offer/3a53ee276b80df466fbb3f7b3901e5b46b359d39>.
- Etim, E., Adebayo, K., & Okonkwo, C. (2024). A perspective piece on community engagement and buy-in as essential for achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. *Discover Sustainability*, 7(12), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43621-025-02398-w>
- Federal Ministry of Special Duties and Inter-Governmental Affairs. (2025). FMSDIGA hosts 2025 stakeholders' interactive forum on zonal intervention/constituency projects. Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation.
- Igbinoba, I. E. (2022). *Sustainability of constituency projects: An assessment of AMAC/Bwari Federal Constituency (2011–2021)* (Master's thesis). National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), Abuja.

- Nwakodo, U. P., Okpomechile, C. A., Kalu, I. I., & Okafor, O. O. (2025). Administration of constituency projects and dividends of democracy in Nigeria. *Journal of Health, Applied Sciences and Management*, 8(2), 184–196. <https://doi.org/10.4314/johasam.v8i2.18>
- Obar, E. E. (2021). Community involvement and the sustainability likelihood of community and social development project in Southwestern Nigeria [Doctoral dissertation, University of Ibadan]. ICTP Repository.
- Ogunleye, T., Adewale, O., & Fashina, O. (2024). Determinants of citizens' participation in community development projects in Osun State, Nigeria. University of Ibadan Repository.
- Omowunmi, J. O. (2023). Community involvement as a strategy for sustainable development in Southwestern Nigeria (2012-2022) [Doctoral dissertation, Lead City University]. LCU Repository.