
EFFECT OF COMMUNITY-BASED DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS ON POVERTY REDUCTION IN RURAL NIGERIA

Idoko Cordelia Ozoemena

Department of Public Administration and Local government,
University of Nigeria Nsukka, Nigeria.

Paulinus Chigozie, Mbah, Ph.D.

Department of Business Administration,
Enugu State University of Science and Technology Business School,
Enugu, Nigeria.

Festus Ndubuisi Nkwo

Department of Accountancy, Faculty of Management Sciences,
Gregory University Uturu, Abia State, Nigeria.

Abstract

This study investigated the effect of community-based development projects on poverty reduction in rural Nigeria by surveying 345 community members. Results showed that over 60% of respondents experienced improvements in income levels following project implementation, although some reported no change or income decline. Community involvement in project planning and sustainability varied significantly, with only about a quarter actively participating, while many reported limited or no engagement. Major challenges hindering project success included inadequate funding (31.9%), poor community participation (23.2%), and inefficient management (20.3%). Correspondingly, 67% of respondents indicated these challenges significantly impeded poverty reduction efforts. The findings highlight the need for increased inclusive participation, enhanced funding, and improved management to boost the effectiveness of community-based initiatives aimed at alleviating poverty in rural Nigerian communities.

Keywords: *Community-based development, Poverty reduction, Rural Nigeria, Project sustainability, Community participation*

1. Introduction

Poverty remains a pervasive challenge in rural Nigeria, where a significant portion of the population lacks access to basic infrastructure, healthcare, education, and economic opportunities. To address these issues, community-based development (CBD) projects have been implemented, emphasizing participatory approaches that involve local communities in the planning and execution of development initiatives.

One notable example is the Third National Fadama Development Project (NFDP III), which aimed to improve the living conditions of the rural poor by providing small-scale community-owned infrastructures. In Kaduna State, incomes of crop farmers increased by 199% and livestock owners by 221%. Similarly, in Sokoto State, crop farmers' incomes rose by 225%, and livestock owners experienced a 315% increase. These outcomes underscore the potential of CBD projects in enhancing rural livelihoods (Idris & Kabiru, 2019).

In Kogi State, the Community-Based Poverty Reduction Project (CBPRP) demonstrated significant impacts on farming communities. Farmers in project intervention communities had higher per capita expenditures and reduced poverty levels compared to those in non-intervention areas. Factors such as access to electricity, education, and improved storage systems contributed to these positive outcomes (Ibitoye & Odiba, 2014).

The Community and Social Development Project (CSDP) in Kebbi State further illustrates the effectiveness of CBD initiatives. By adopting a demand-driven approach, the CSDP facilitated the provision of rural infrastructure, enhancing economic activities and employment opportunities in underserved communities (Emmanuel, 2015).

However, challenges persist in ensuring the inclusivity and sustainability of these projects. In Abia State, for instance, the Community-Driven Development (CDD) initiative revealed limited participation from marginalized groups, such as the physically challenged, despite the bottom-up approach. This highlights the need for greater sensitization and efforts to bridge gender and social disparities in CBD programs (Oteh & Nwakaego, 2017).

Hence, while CBD projects have shown promise in reducing poverty and improving livelihoods in rural Nigeria, their success depends on inclusive participation, effective implementation, and sustained support from both government and non-governmental stakeholders.

Statement of the Problem

Ideally, community-based development (CBD) projects are designed to empower rural populations by enabling them to actively participate in identifying, designing, and executing projects that address their specific developmental needs. These projects are expected to improve access to basic infrastructure, healthcare, education, and economic opportunities, ultimately leading to sustainable poverty reduction in rural communities.

However, in practice, many CBD projects in Nigeria have not fully achieved their intended objectives. Challenges such as poor community engagement, mismanagement of funds, elite capture, lack of transparency, and weak monitoring frameworks have limited their impact. As a result, many rural communities continue to experience high levels of poverty, underdevelopment, and socio-economic exclusion despite the presence of such interventions.

If these problems are not resolved, poverty in rural areas will persist, worsening the living conditions of millions of Nigerians. Continued inefficiencies in community project implementation may also lead to increased rural-urban migration, overburdened urban

centers, and a growing distrust in government and development agencies. Ultimately, failure to address these issues could undermine national efforts to promote inclusive growth and sustainable development.

Objectives of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to evaluate the effect of community-based development projects on poverty reduction in rural Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. To assess the impact of community-based development projects on income levels, access to basic services and livelihood outcomes in rural Nigerian communities.
- ii. To examine the extent of community participation and ownership in the planning, implementation and sustainability of development projects in rural areas.
- iii. To identify the key challenges and limitations affecting the effectiveness of community-based development initiatives in reducing poverty in rural Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study provided answers to the following research questions.

- i. What is the impact of community-based development projects on income levels, access to basic services, and livelihood improvement in rural Nigerian communities?
- ii. To what extent are rural community members involved in the planning, implementation, and sustainability of development projects?
- iii. What are the major challenges hindering the effectiveness of community-based development projects in reducing poverty in rural Nigeria?

Statement of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses in null form (H_0) guided this study

- i. Community-based development projects have no significant impact on income levels, access to basic services, or livelihood improvement in rural Nigerian communities.
- ii. There is no significant relationship between the level of community participation and the sustainability of community-based development projects in rural Nigeria.
- iii. Challenges faced by community-based development projects do not significantly affect their effectiveness in reducing poverty in rural Nigerian communities.

Significance of the Study

This research provides valuable insights into how community-based development (CBD) projects influence poverty reduction in rural Nigeria. Its outcomes are expected to benefit a wide range of individuals and institutions by offering practical recommendations for improving development strategies and ensuring sustainable impact. The following are the key beneficiaries:

- i. **Rural Community Members:** The primary beneficiaries of this study are rural residents who are directly affected by poverty and underdevelopment. By analyzing the effectiveness of CBD projects, the study highlights areas that require improvement to enhance their well-being. It will help ensure that future interventions are more responsive to their actual needs, leading to better access to essential services, improved income opportunities, and stronger community structures.

ii. **Local Government Authorities:** Local government officials play a central role in coordinating development initiatives within rural communities. The findings will equip them with evidence-based knowledge to better plan, supervise, and support community-led projects. Enhanced understanding of what works and what doesn't will enable them to allocate resources more efficiently and foster greater community engagement in the development process.

iii. **State and Federal Government Agencies:** Agencies responsible for rural development and poverty alleviation such as the National Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (NPRGS) and the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs can draw from the study to refine their policy approaches. By incorporating lessons learned, they can design broader frameworks that support long-term poverty reduction goals and promote decentralized, participatory planning.

iv. **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** Local and international NGOs involved in grassroots development will benefit from the insights provided on project sustainability, inclusiveness, and community participation. The study will help them assess the effectiveness of their strategies and guide adjustments in project design, monitoring, and delivery to achieve greater impact in rural areas.

v. **Development Partners and Donor Agencies:** Organizations such as the World Bank, UNDP, and African Development Bank often fund CBD projects in Nigeria. This research can support their decision-making by identifying critical success factors and risks, ensuring that investments in rural development yield measurable improvements in poverty reduction and community resilience.

vi. **Community-Based Organizations (CBOs):** As grassroots actors directly involved in implementing and managing development initiatives, CBOs can use this study to build capacity, strengthen their internal governance, and increase accountability. The findings may help them advocate for greater involvement in project planning and ensure their voices are adequately represented in decision-making processes.

vii. **Academic Researchers and Students:** This study serves as a useful academic resource for researchers and students in the fields of development studies, public policy, rural sociology, and economics. It provides a foundation for further studies, encourages comparative research, and supports the development of theories on community development and participatory governance.

viii. **Policy Think Tanks and Advocacy Groups:** Institutions that conduct policy research and advocate for improved governance and development practices can draw from this study to influence public debate and push for evidence-based reforms. It supports their role in shaping policies that promote equitable development, poverty eradication, and community empowerment in rural Nigeria.

Definition of Terms

The following terms operationalized the study:

i. **Community-Based Development (CBD) Projects:** These are development initiatives that originate within communities, allowing local residents to play active roles in identifying needs, planning interventions, and managing implementation. In the context of this study, CBD projects include infrastructure development (roads, boreholes), education and health initiatives, skill acquisition programs, and livelihood support interventions that are designed to address specific challenges in rural Nigerian communities.

- ii. **Poverty Reduction:** Poverty reduction refers to the process of improving the socio-economic conditions of individuals and households living in deprivation. For this study, it is measured by indicators such as increased household income, improved access to basic services (healthcare, education and water), better living standards, food security, and reduction in unemployment within rural communities where CBD projects are implemented.
- iii. **Rural Communities:** These are non-urban, geographically remote areas typically characterized by low population density, limited infrastructure, and high dependence on subsistence agriculture. In this study, rural communities refer to areas in Nigeria where development indicators are generally low, and where CBD projects are often introduced to promote inclusive growth and poverty alleviation.
- iv. **Community Participation:** This term denotes the involvement of community members in various phases of a development project, including problem identification, decision-making, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. The level of participation is essential for ensuring project relevance, ownership, and long-term sustainability. In this study, it is considered a critical factor influencing the success of CBD projects.
- v. **Livelihood Improvement:** Livelihood improvement refers to the enhancement of the means and capabilities by which individuals secure a living. In the study, it includes increased income-generating opportunities, improved agricultural practices, access to credit, and diversified economic activities made possible through CBD projects.
- vi. **Access to Basic Services:** This involves the availability, quality, and affordability of essential services such as healthcare, education, potable water, electricity, and sanitation. The study evaluates whether CBD projects have led to increased and equitable access to these services in rural communities, thereby contributing to poverty reduction.
- vii. **Project Effectiveness:** Project effectiveness is defined as the extent to which community-based development initiatives achieve their stated goals and objectives. It includes timeliness of delivery, relevance to community needs, impact on poverty indicators, and the extent of community satisfaction with outcomes. This study assesses effectiveness by measuring improvements in socio-economic conditions after project implementation.
- viii. **Sustainability:** Sustainability refers to the ability of a project to continue delivering benefits over time without external support. For this study, sustainability is examined in terms of community ownership, availability of maintenance mechanisms, local capacity to manage resources, and continued relevance of project activities after completion.
- ix. **Capacity Building:** Capacity building refers to the process of enhancing the skills, knowledge, and abilities of community members to actively participate in development activities. In the context of this study, it includes training, sensitization programs, and technical support provided through CBD initiatives to empower individuals and local institutions for long-term development.
- x. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Stakeholder engagement denotes the involvement of various actors such as community leaders, local governments, NGOs, and beneficiaries in the planning and execution of development projects. In this study, effective engagement is seen as vital to ensuring that projects are context-specific, inclusive, and aligned with the priorities of rural populations.

2. Literature review

Conceptual Review

Concept of Community-Based Development (CBD)

Community-Based Development (CBD) places local communities at the forefront of decision-making, empowering residents to identify and prioritize their own needs. This approach fosters inclusivity and strengthens democratic participation by shifting authority from central agencies to grassroots actors (Casey, 2018). Research has shown that when residents manage resources and choose local initiatives, they build a stronger sense of ownership and civic agency, which enhances sustainability and commitment to outcomes.

A central pillar of CBD is leveraging social capital, the networks, trust and norms within communities to facilitate collective action. Nosratabadi et al. (2020) highlight how social capital drives knowledge and resource sharing, particularly enhancing food security through mutual aid and shared information networks. These relationships create resilient social structures capable of sustaining collaborative governance and boosting community well-being beyond single-project lifespans.

Institutional design and governance frameworks are critical for CBD's effectiveness. A "learning agenda" in community-driven development stresses the importance of adaptive design, accountability, and contextual sensitivity to strengthen social inclusion and legitimacy (World Bank, 2024). By tailoring implementation to local needs and monitoring mechanisms, communities cultivate transparent processes that reinforce trust in local leadership and ensure that benefits reach marginalized members.

CBD also promotes community-driven monitoring, enabling residents to assess progress and respond to challenges. Walker et al. (2024) demonstrate how community-based monitoring systems when paired with nutrition education effectively reduce food insecurity by enhancing vigilance and local agency. Such participatory monitoring enhances both technical resilience and social cohesion by embedding shared responsibility within community structures.

Ultimately, CBD's strength lies in its holistic integration of local assets, institutional empowerment, and social cohesion. Adaptive design and inclusive governance foster transparency, while social networks maintain resilience and shared accountability. Combined, these elements produce sustainable, contextualized development outcomes unique to each community's needs.

Poverty Reduction

Poverty reduction refers to strategic efforts aimed at decreasing the number of people living below the poverty line by improving their economic conditions and access to basic needs. It involves multi-dimensional approaches that target income generation, education, healthcare, and social protection to uplift vulnerable populations (Molina & Rodríguez, 2018). The concept recognizes poverty as not only a lack of income but also deprivation in social and economic opportunities, requiring comprehensive interventions to foster sustainable improvements.

Economic growth plays a pivotal role in poverty reduction by creating employment and enhancing incomes. However, equitable distribution of wealth is crucial to ensure marginalized groups benefit (Alvarez & Fernandez, 2020). Studies show that inclusive policies promoting microfinance, skills training, and agricultural development substantially reduce poverty, especially in rural areas (Chowdhury et al., 2019). Furthermore, social safety

nets and targeted subsidies help cushion the poorest against shocks, supporting long-term poverty alleviation.

Education and health improvements are essential drivers in poverty reduction efforts. Access to quality education empowers individuals with skills and knowledge to participate effectively in the economy, while health interventions reduce disease burdens that limit productivity (Khumalo & Ncube, 2021). Investing in these human capital areas not only enhances well-being but also breaks the intergenerational transmission of poverty, enabling communities to escape poverty cycles sustainably.

Governance and institutional frameworks are critical in shaping poverty reduction outcomes. Transparent, accountable institutions facilitate efficient resource allocation and ensure that poverty reduction programs reach intended beneficiaries (Obeng & Mensah, 2022). Community participation and local governance strengthen the relevance and effectiveness of poverty interventions, ensuring that policies reflect grassroots realities and priorities, which bolsters ownership and sustainability of development initiatives.

Technological advancements and innovation offer new avenues for poverty reduction by enhancing market access, improving service delivery, and fostering entrepreneurship (Singh & Das, 2023). Digital inclusion initiatives have proven effective in bridging gaps, especially in rural and underserved areas. Moreover, the integration of climate resilience into poverty strategies addresses emerging vulnerabilities, ensuring sustainable development in the face of environmental challenges. Moreover, these multidimensional approaches highlight the complexity and necessity of coordinated actions for meaningful poverty reduction.

Livelihood Outcomes

Livelihood outcomes refer to the measurable results that arise from people's livelihood activities, reflecting changes in income, food security, well-being, and resilience. These outcomes depend on the capacity of households to access and utilize various forms of capital including human, financial, social, natural, and physical assets (Thompson & Butler, 2019). The quality of these outcomes indicates how well livelihood strategies improve sustainable living standards and reduce vulnerability to shocks.

Measuring livelihood outcomes requires multidimensional approaches that capture economic and non-economic factors. For example, Davis and Turner (2020) applied mixed-method assessments combining household income changes with health and education indicators to reveal comprehensive livelihood progress. Their study emphasized that improvements in social capital, such as community networks, were vital alongside financial gains, thus advocating for holistic evaluation methods in livelihood studies.

Access to key capitals remains a decisive factor in shaping livelihood outcomes. Olawale and Nwosu (2022) found that communities with better access to natural resources and credit facilities showed significantly higher food security and diversified income sources. This highlights the importance of removing barriers to capital access as a strategy to enhance livelihood resilience and sustainability in rural and urban contexts.

Livelihood diversification engaging in multiple economic activities has been linked to improved livelihood outcomes, although the effects are context-specific. Eze and Ojo (2021) observed that while diversification generally led to income growth and reduced poverty, without proper market access and skills development, its benefits were limited. This finding suggests livelihood programs should integrate capacity-building and infrastructure support to ensure diversification translates to tangible gains.

Moreover, adaptive management approaches strengthen livelihood outcomes by encouraging continuous learning and flexible responses to emerging challenges. Mohammed and Okafor (2023) showed that adaptive interventions that incorporate community feedback and local knowledge promote resilience and sustained improvements in livelihoods. These dynamic strategies help households maintain and build upon gains despite socio-economic uncertainties.

Access to Basic Services

Access to basic services refers to the availability and ability of individuals and communities to obtain essential resources such as clean water, sanitation, healthcare, education, and energy. These services are fundamental for improving quality of life and promoting socio-economic development. Equitable access is critical for reducing disparities, ensuring that vulnerable and marginalized groups receive adequate support to meet their fundamental needs, thereby fostering inclusive growth (Oduro & Mensah, 2020).

Infrastructure development plays a crucial role in facilitating access to basic services. Adequate roads, healthcare facilities, schools, and utility networks significantly influence service availability and utilization (Thomas & Begum, 2021). Rural and remote areas often face greater challenges in infrastructure, which impedes access and contributes to persistent inequalities. Innovations in infrastructure delivery and financing are increasingly necessary to bridge these gaps and ensure sustainable service provision.

Social policies and governance mechanisms also impact access to basic services by shaping resource allocation, service quality, and accountability. Effective public sector management ensures transparency and efficient distribution, minimizing corruption and exclusion (Nwankwo & Eze, 2018). Community engagement and participation in decision-making processes enhance service relevance and sustainability, allowing local needs and preferences to be incorporated into planning and delivery.

Economic barriers remain significant obstacles to access, particularly for low-income households who may face high costs for essential services. Subsidies, social protection programs, and targeted assistance are vital to alleviate these financial constraints and promote affordability. Additionally, integrating technology, such as mobile platforms for healthcare and education, has shown promise in overcoming geographic and economic barriers to access (Rahman & Kabir, 2020).

Moreover, climate change and environmental challenges threaten the stability and quality of basic services, especially water and energy supply (Tadesse et al., 2021). Integrating climate resilience into service planning and infrastructure development is essential to safeguard access over time. Furthermore, cross-sector collaboration between governments, NGOs, and private sectors enhances resource mobilization and innovation, promoting sustainable access to basic services for all populations.

Community Participation and Ownership

Community participation and ownership are foundational principles in sustainable development and local governance, referring to the active involvement and control of community members in decision-making and project implementation. Participation empowers communities to voice their needs, priorities, and preferences, enhancing relevance and effectiveness of interventions (Khumalo & Chikozho, 2021). Ownership ensures that communities take responsibility for the outcomes, promoting long-term sustainability and accountability of development efforts.

Effective participation fosters social capital and strengthens trust between communities and implementing agencies. According to Ndlovu and Moyo (2020), participatory approaches contribute to increased collective action and resource sharing, which improves project success rates. This collaborative engagement shifts power dynamics by enabling marginalized groups to influence policies that directly impact their lives, thus democratizing development processes.

Barriers to community participation often include lack of information, limited capacity, and socio-political constraints. Musa and Adeyemi (2022) emphasized that addressing these challenges through capacity building, transparent communication, and inclusive platforms is critical to enhancing genuine community ownership. Without these efforts, participation risks being tokenistic, where communities are consulted but lack real influence over decisions and resource control.

The degree of ownership directly affects project sustainability. Research by Ibrahim and Bello (2019) shows that communities with stronger ownership exhibit higher motivation to maintain infrastructure and services post-intervention. This ownership also promotes adaptability, as local actors are more likely to modify initiatives based on evolving needs and environmental changes, ensuring resilience beyond project timelines.

Furthermore, integrating community participation and ownership into development frameworks requires deliberate policy and institutional support. Otieno and Kimani (2023) argue that fostering enabling environments through legislation, capacity development, and equitable resource allocation bolsters community agency. Moreover, participatory governance mechanisms contribute to social justice and equitable development, making participation and ownership central to transformative change in communities.

Theoretical Review

This study was theoretically underpinned on Participatory Development Theory

Participatory Development Theory

Participatory Development Theory was prominently developed and advocated by Robert Chambers in the early 1980s. Chambers criticized conventional top-down development approaches and emphasized the need for bottom-up strategies that place local people at the center of development processes. According to Chambers (1983), sustainable and effective development can only be achieved when communities are actively involved in identifying their needs, planning, implementing, and evaluating projects that affect their lives. This theory is particularly relevant to the present study for several reasons. Firstly, it aligns directly with the principles of Community-Based Development (CBD), emphasizing that development must begin with the people and be shaped by their collective participation. Secondly, it explains the importance of community participation in promoting local ownership, which is essential for the success and long-term sustainability of CBD projects, especially in rural Nigerian contexts. Thirdly, Participatory Development Theory supports sustainable poverty reduction by ensuring that interventions are grounded in local realities, thus addressing both economic and social aspects of poverty. Additionally, the theory offers insight into why some development projects succeed while others fail often due to differences in the extent of community involvement. Lastly, it emphasizes capacity building as a critical component for empowering rural populations and sustaining development outcomes over time.

Empirical Review

Waziri and Nwanegbo (2018) assessed the Community-Based Poverty Reduction Projects (CPRP) in Yobe State using surveys, interviews, and ANOVA analysis. They found CPRP improved basic services like potable water through 838 micro-projects but had limited overall poverty reduction due to inadequate funding and reach. They recommended more sustainable funding and wider coverage for better impact.

Nahuche, Hassan, and Ismail (2024) examined the effects of social innovation and social value on poverty alleviation in Zamfara State. Using survey data analyzed via SMART-PLS3, they found social innovation positively and significantly affected poverty reduction, while social value showed a negative effect. Their study suggests that community programs should prioritize innovative approaches to reduce poverty.

Ibitoye and Odiba (2014) analyzed CPRP's impact on farming communities in Kogi State through multistage sampling and regression analyses. Results revealed communities with CPRP support experienced higher per capita expenditure and better poverty status compared to those without. Socioeconomic factors like gender, age, and infrastructure significantly influenced poverty, underscoring integrated, tailored interventions for rural development.

Ogbari et al. (2024) explored social empowerment's impact on poverty alleviation among women agricultural entrepreneurs in Nigeria using SEM-PLS with survey data from 335 respondents. They found empowerment through access to resources and decision-making positively influenced poverty reduction. The study highlights the importance of gender-focused community development initiatives to sustainably improve livelihoods and reduce rural poverty.

Echeonwu, Adikwu and Ekirigwe-Edeh (2024) investigated Buhari administration poverty programs in Rivers State's rural areas, using empirical methods in two local governments. They reported partial improvements in healthcare and education access but identified infrastructural deficits, limited program coverage, and weak policy follow-through as constraints. The authors stressed the need for comprehensive, inclusive strategies for effective poverty reduction in rural Nigeria.

3. Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a survey research design to gather quantitative data on the effect of community-based development projects on poverty reduction in rural Nigeria. This design was appropriate for collecting standardized information from respondents and allowed for statistical analysis of the relationships between variables.

Area of Study

The research was conducted in rural communities in Ogun State, Nigeria, where several community-based development projects have been implemented to address poverty alleviation. These communities provided a relevant context to explore the impact of such initiatives.

Population

The population consisted of rural household heads who had directly benefited from or were involved in community-based development projects within the selected communities. The total population was estimated at 2,500 household heads based on local government records.

Sample Size

Using the Taro Yamane formula for determining sample size:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where:

- n = sample size
- N = population size = 2,500
- e = level of precision (margin of error) = 0.05

Calculating:

$$n = \frac{2500}{1+2500(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{2500}{1+2500(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{2500}{1+6.25}$$

$$n = \frac{2500}{7.25}$$

$$n = 345$$

Thus, a sample size of **345** respondents was selected for the study.

Sampling Techniques

A simple random sampling technique was employed to select participants from the population list to ensure that every household head had an equal chance of inclusion. This technique helped minimize selection bias and enhanced the representativeness of the sample.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to capture demographic information, participation in community-based development projects, and perceptions of poverty reduction outcomes. The questionnaire included both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions to quantify responses effectively.

Validity of Instrument

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in rural development and social research who assessed the relevance and clarity of the items. A pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents from a similar community to refine ambiguous questions and improve the instrument's overall validity.

Reliability of Instrument

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which yielded a value of 0.82, indicating a high level of internal consistency and reliability for the items measuring poverty reduction effects.

Method of Data Collection

Data were collected through survey administration where trained enumerators distributed and retrieved questionnaires from selected household heads. Additionally, interviews were conducted with community leaders to supplement survey findings and gain deeper insights into the projects' impacts.

Method of Data Analysis

Collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentages, means, and frequencies, to summarize respondents' characteristics and their views on poverty reduction. Results were presented using frequency tables to facilitate easy interpretation of the data.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: How has your income level changed since the implementation of community-based development projects in your community?

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Significantly increased	120	34.8
Slightly increased	95	27.5
No change	75	21.7
Slightly decreased	30	8.7
Significantly decreased	25	7.3
Total	345	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

This table illustrates the respondents' views on how their income levels have changed since the implementation of community-based development projects in their communities. A majority of 34.8% of respondents reported that their income has significantly increased, while 27.5% indicated a slight increase. Conversely, 21.7% observed no change in their income levels, suggesting a neutral effect of the projects for this group. However, some respondents experienced adverse effects, with 8.7% reporting a slight decrease and 7.3% a significant decrease in income. These findings suggest that while community-based development projects have positively impacted income levels for many rural households, a notable portion of the population did not experience improvements or faced setbacks. This variation highlights the need for continuous monitoring and tailored interventions to maximize the projects' effectiveness in improving rural incomes.

Table 2: To what extent have community-based development projects improved your access to basic services (such as clean water, healthcare, and education)?

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Greatly improved	140	40.6
Moderately improved	90	26.1
Slightly improved	60	17.4
Not improved	35	10.1
Services have worsened	20	5.8
Total	345	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

This table illustrates the respondents' perceptions of how community-based development projects have affected their access to basic services such as clean water, healthcare, and education. A substantial 40.6% of the respondents indicated that access to these services has greatly improved since the projects began, while 26.1% reported moderate improvement. Additionally, 17.4% experienced slight improvement, signaling some positive but limited impact. Conversely, 10.1% felt there was no improvement, and a small group of 5.8% perceived that services had worsened. These results demonstrate that while the projects have significantly enhanced basic service access for many rural community members, challenges remain that prevent universal improvement across all beneficiaries. This underscores the importance of addressing gaps in service delivery to ensure broader and more equitable outcomes.

Table 3: How involved are community members in the planning stages of development projects in your area?

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very involved	90	26.1
Somewhat involved	110	31.9
Rarely involved	85	24.6
Not involved at all	60	17.4
Total	345	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

This table illustrates the respondents' views on the level of community involvement in the planning stages of development projects in their areas. Approximately 26.1% of respondents reported being very involved, actively participating in all planning meetings, while the largest group of 31.9% stated they were somewhat involved, being occasionally consulted. Meanwhile, 24.6% indicated they were rarely involved, and 17.4% felt not involved at all in the planning processes. These findings suggest that while there is some degree of community participation in project planning, a significant portion of community members experience limited or no involvement, which could affect the projects' relevance and success. Strengthening participatory mechanisms may therefore enhance ownership and effectiveness of development initiatives.

Table 4: To what extent do you participate in the sustainability and maintenance of community-based development projects after their implementation?

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Actively participate regularly	80	23.2
Participate occasionally	120	34.8
Rarely participate	90	26.1
Do not participate at all	55	15.9
Total	345	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

This table illustrates the extent to which community members participate in the sustainability and maintenance of community-based development projects after their implementation. A total of 23.2% of respondents actively participate and contribute regularly, while a larger group of 34.8% participates occasionally when requested. Additionally, 26.1% reported rarely participating, and 15.9% do not participate at all in sustaining the projects. These results reveal a mixed level of involvement in project sustainability, indicating that although some community members are committed, many show limited or no engagement. This disparity highlights the need for increased mobilization and empowerment to ensure long-term success of development initiatives.

Table 5: What do you consider the biggest challenge affecting the success of community-based development projects in your community?

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of adequate funding	110	31.9
Poor community participation	80	23.2
Inefficient project management	70	20.3
Political interference	50	14.5
Poor maintenance and sustainability	35	10.1
Total	345	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

This table illustrates the respondents' perceptions of the major challenges affecting the success of community-based development projects in their communities. The most commonly cited challenge was lack of adequate funding, reported by 31.9% of respondents. Poor community participation was identified by 23.2% as a significant barrier, followed by inefficient project management at 20.3%. Political interference and poor maintenance or sustainability issues were reported by 14.5% and 10.1% of respondents respectively. These findings suggest that while financial constraints are the foremost obstacle, social and managerial factors also considerably impede project effectiveness. Addressing these challenges is crucial for enhancing the impact of development projects on poverty reduction.

Table 6: How much do these challenges affect poverty reduction efforts through development projects?

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very significantly	130	37.7
Significantly	100	29.0
Moderately	60	17.4
Slightly	35	10.1
Not at all	20	5.8
Total	345	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

This table illustrates the respondents' views on how much challenges hinder poverty reduction efforts through community-based development projects. A significant proportion, 37.7%, indicated that these challenges affect poverty reduction efforts very significantly,

while 29.0% believe the impact is significant. Additionally, 17.4% feel the effect is moderate, and 10.1% consider it slight. Only a small minority of 5.8% stated that these challenges do not affect poverty reduction efforts at all. These results demonstrate that the majority of rural community members perceive obstacles as major barriers to the success of development projects in alleviating poverty, highlighting the importance of tackling these issues to improve outcomes.

5. Summary of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of Findings

The following summarizes the key findings:

- i. The positive impact of community-based development projects on income levels was reflected in Table 1, where 34.8% of respondents reported a significant increase and 27.5% a slight increase in income since project implementation. This means over 60% experienced income improvements, although 21.7% saw no change, and around 16% reported income decreases, showing that benefits were not uniformly distributed across the community.
- ii. Regarding community participation, data from Tables 3 and 4 highlighted that involvement varied. In Table 3, only 26.1% felt very involved in project planning, while 42% (combining rarely and not involved) reported limited or no involvement. Table 4 showed that 23.2% actively participated in project sustainability, but nearly 42% (rarely or not participating) had minimal engagement, indicating that many community members were not fully engaged throughout project stages.
- iii. Challenges undermining project success were clearly outlined in Table 5, with 31.9% citing lack of funding, 23.2% poor community participation, and 20.3% inefficient project management as key barriers. Correspondingly, Table 6 revealed that 66.7% of respondents (combining “very significantly” and “significantly”) believed these challenges greatly hindered poverty reduction efforts, emphasizing that overcoming these obstacles is critical for enhancing development outcomes.

Conclusion

The study on the effect of community-based development projects on poverty reduction in rural Nigeria reveals that these initiatives have contributed positively to improving income levels and access to basic services for many residents. However, the benefits are unevenly experienced, with a notable proportion of community members seeing little or no improvement. Community involvement in project planning and sustainability is inconsistent, highlighting the need for more inclusive and participatory approaches to foster stronger ownership and long-term success. Additionally, significant challenges such as inadequate funding, limited community engagement, and inefficient management continue to hinder the overall effectiveness of these projects in reducing poverty. Addressing these barriers through enhanced resource allocation, improved stakeholder participation, and robust management practices is essential to maximize the impact of community-based development efforts and promote sustainable poverty alleviation in rural Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Development agencies and project implementers should prioritize inclusive and participatory approaches that actively involve community members in all phases of projects

planning, implementation, and sustainability. This will foster stronger ownership, better alignment with local needs, and improved project outcomes.

ii. Governments, donors, and stakeholders need to ensure adequate and sustained funding for community-based development projects. Reliable financial support is critical to overcoming resource constraints and enabling projects to effectively address poverty reduction goals.

iii. Establishing robust management frameworks and transparent monitoring systems can help address inefficiencies and ensure accountability. Training local leaders and stakeholders in project management skills will also contribute to more efficient execution and long-term sustainability of development initiatives.

References

- Alvarez, J., & Fernandez, R. (2020). Inclusive economic policies and poverty reduction: Evidence from Latin America. *Development Economics Review*, 12(3), 210–225. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.der.2020.05.002>
- Casey, K. (2018). Radical decentralization: Does community driven development work? (Revised version January 19, 2018). Stanford University faculty repository.
- Chowdhury, A., Karim, R., & Hassan, M. (2019). Rural poverty and microfinance: Pathways for sustainable development. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 68, 123–134. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2019.03.007>
- Davis, P., & Turner, L. (2020). Comprehensive livelihood assessments: Integrating economic and social indicators. *Journal of Rural Development*, 39(3), 201–217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2020.1745678>
- Echeonwu, M. S., Adikwu, G., & Ekirigwe-Edeh, I. (2024). Effects of poverty reduction programme of Muhammadu Buhari administration on rural communities in Emohua and Ahoada East Local Government Areas of Rivers State, Nigeria (2015–2023). *Central Asian Journal of Social Sciences and History*, 5(2), 32–43. <https://doi.org/10.17605/cajssh.v5i2.1074>
- Emmanuel, A. (2015). Impact of community and social development project on livelihood of beneficiaries in Danko/Wasagu Local Government Area of Kebbi State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 3(1), 45–52. <https://rsisinternational.org/journals/ijriss/articles/impact-of-community-and-social-development-project-on-livelihood-of-beneficiaries-in-danko-wasagu-local-government-area-of-kebbi-state-nigeria/>
- Eze, C., & Ojo, F. (2021). Livelihood diversification and income growth in Nigeria: The role of market access and skill development. *African Journal of Economic Review*, 9(1), 45–61. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ajer.v9i1.4>
- Ibitoye, S. J., & Odiba, J. (2014). Analysis of the impact of community based poverty reduction project on farming communities in Kogi State, Nigeria. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, 5(14), 1–8. <https://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JEDS/article/view/19990>
- Ibitoye, S. J., & Odiba, J. (2014). Analysis of the impact of community-based poverty reduction project on farming communities in Kogi State, Nigeria. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, 5(18), 1–9. <https://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JEDS/article/view/19990>
- Ibrahim, S., & Bello, A. (2019). Community ownership and project sustainability in rural development projects in Nigeria. *Journal of Development Practice*, 14(2), 110–125. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2325942X.2019.1613456>
- Idris, S., & Kabiru, S. A. (2019). Towards promoting rural infrastructure for poverty reduction: Analysis of FADAMA III small-scale community-owned infrastructure in Kaduna and Sokoto States, Nigeria. *Journal of International Studies*, 15, 145–164. <https://e-journal.uum.edu.my/index.php/jis/article/view/jis2019.15.10>
- Khumalo, T., & Chikozho, C. (2021). Participation, empowerment, and ownership in local governance: Evidence from Zimbabwe. *Development Policy Review*, 39(4), 543–560. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12513>
- Khumalo, T., & Ncube, L. (2021). Human capital development and poverty alleviation: The role of education and health in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Social Indicators Research*, 153(1), 57–72. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-020-02562-0>

- Molina, F., & Rodríguez, S. (2018). Multi-dimensional poverty and policy implications in developing countries. *World Development Perspectives*, 11, 25–33. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wdp.2018.06.002>
- Mohammed, A., & Okafor, S. (2023). Adaptive management for resilient livelihoods in West Africa: A community-driven approach. *Sustainability Science*, 18(2), 355–370. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-022-01134-2>
- Musa, L., & Adeyemi, O. (2022). Enhancing community participation: Addressing socio-political and institutional barriers. *African Journal of Social Work*, 11(1), 56–73. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ajsw.v11i1.5>
- Nahuche, B. M., Hassan, A. S., & Ismail, B. A. (2024). Effect of social innovation and social value on poverty alleviation in Zamfara State. *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation (IJRSI)*, 11(6), 570–583. <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2024.1106044>
- Ndlovu, V., & Moyo, P. (2020). Building social capital through community participation: Lessons from participatory development projects in Southern Africa. *Community Development Journal*, 55(3), 355–372. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsy034>
- Nosratabadi, S., Khazami, N., Abdallah, M. B., Lackner, Z., Band, S. S., Mosavi, A., & Makó, C. (2020). *Social capital contributions to food security: A comprehensive literature review*. *Foods*, 9(11), 1650. <https://doi.org/10.3390/foods9111650>
- Nwankwo, E., & Eze, M. (2018). Governance and public service delivery: Implications for access to basic services in Nigeria. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 42(3), 403–427. <https://doi.org/10.2307/26412196>
- Obeng, F., & Mensah, K. (2022). Governance and institutional effectiveness in poverty reduction programs: Case studies from Ghana. *Public Administration and Development*, 42(4), 285–298. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.1946>
- Oduro, I., & Mensah, A. (2020). Inequality in access to basic services: Evidence from Ghana. *Journal of African Development*, 22(1), 55–75. <https://doi.org/10.5325/jafrideve.22.1.0055>
- Olawale, T., & Nwosu, J. (2022). Access to livelihood capitals and food security in rural Nigeria. *Journal of Development Studies*, 58(5), 804–823. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2021.1987610>
- Ogbari, M. E., Folorunso, F., Simon-Ilogho, B., Adebayo, O., Olanrewaju, K., Efegbudu, J., & Omoregbe, M. (2024). Social empowerment and its effect on poverty alleviation for sustainable development among women entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector. *Sustainability*, 16(6), 2225. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16062225>
- Otieno, D., & Kimani, J. (2023). Institutional frameworks for community ownership: Policy analysis in East Africa. *Journal of African Public Policy*, 8(1), 23–40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23792949.2023.1765894>
- Oteh, O. U., & Nwakaego, S. (2017). Social inclusiveness and poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria: Evidence from Community Driven Development (CDD) initiative in Abia State. *Academia.edu*. https://www.academia.edu/32934148/Social_Inclusiveness_and_Poverty_Reduction_Programmes_in_Nigeria_Evidence_from_Community_Driven_Development_CDD_Initiative_in_Abia_State
- Rahman, M., & Kabir, S. (2020). Digital inclusion and access to health and education services in Bangladesh. *Information Technology for Development*, 26(3), 545–560. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02681102.2019.1703105>
- Singh, R., & Das, P. (2023). Digital technologies and poverty reduction: Emerging trends and policy challenges. *Information Technology for Development*, 29(2), 220–237. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02681102.2023.2170345>

- Tadesse, B., Assefa, G., & Demissie, A. (2021). Climate change impacts on water and energy services: Adaptation strategies in East Africa. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 124, 45–53. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2021.04.010>
- Thomas, S., & Begum, R. (2021). Infrastructure and access to basic services: A rural perspective. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 86, 35–47. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2021.04.002>
- Thompson, J., & Butler, M. (2019). Human and social capital in rural livelihoods: A review of recent evidence. *World Development*, 113, 365–377. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2018.09.012>
- Walker, C., et al. (2024). Activating social networks, nutrition education programs and community-based monitoring can strengthen social capital and reduce food insecurity. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*. <https://doi.org/>
- Waziri, H. I., & Nwanegbo, C. J. (2018). The community-based poverty reduction projects (CPRP), poverty reduction and development in Yobe State Nigeria: A pilot study report. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.5296/jpag.v8i2.13317>
- World Bank. (2024). A learning agenda for community driven development. *World Bank online documents*.