

Examining the Sustainability Perspectives of Beneficiaries and Benefactors in Community Based Projects in Masvingo province, Zimbabwe.

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Abstract

Informed by Marcus and Mao's (2004) Participation Theory, the Rotary International (2014) recognises that Community Based Projects (CBPs) are central to development across all levels of society; and embracing sustainable practices enables these projects to promote democratic coexistence, mitigate environmental woes, foster social equity and ensure long-term economic viability. However, in developing countries, most such projects are funded from overseas and they often face sustainability challenges such as lack of continuity when the funders pull out, which motivated this current research. The aim of the research was to examine the project sustainability perspectives in force among CBPs implemented in Masvingo Province. The research adopted a mixed methods approach called concurrent triangulation (a convergent or parallel design) for the purpose of applying both qualitative and quantitative data, allowing the views of different stakeholders to be thoroughly appreciated in the study. Quantitative data from 256 representatives of project implementing agencies was examined using descriptive statistics and factor analysis; while thematic analysis was employed in the analysis of qualitative data gleaned from 15 beneficiary representatives. Quantitative analysis yielded that many organisations were in conformity with common sustainability practices. For example, the mean statistics for all considered measures of project sustainability were all above the theoretical mean. Factor analysis too produced results where all the rankings were above half, which could suggest mere operational efficiency. However, a closer look into the qualitative findings indicated that the compliance left many sustainability gaps. Qualitative findings showed that some agencies were using a one-size-fits-all approach to project identification, formulation, assessment, and implementation thereby involving the communities only as a formality while the projects are pre-designed. The chief recommendation to drive sustainability in CBPs is for the implementing agencies to directly involve the grassroots communities for inclusivity and cost-effectiveness. Moreover, this study recommends gradually substituting local financing systems for foreign aid as well as propagating essential skills among the project end-users rather than non-locals who will soon leave the community.

Key Words: Sustainability; Community Based Projects; Sustainability Influencing Factors; Sustainability Measures

INTRODUCTION

Using Rotary International (2014)'s measures of sustainability, this research examines sustainability perspectives in community-based projects in Masvingo Province of Zimbabwe where CBPs have proven to be necessary and critical to communities as they give control of resources to communities. Across the developing world, CBPs are mostly overseas funded, and they are ideally expected to treat the poor and marginalised communities as assets and partners in the development process (Tugyetwena, 2023). When applied efficiently and effectively, this approach has a lot of benefits to beneficiary communities who become more geared to make use of their efforts, institutions and resources for their own local development sustainability as laid out in the Global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Ceptureanu, Ceptureanu, Luchian et al (2018) consider that achieving the 17 sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda requires innovative approaches that are socially inclusive and environmentally benign in implementing CBPs effectively. According to Reed, Vella, Challies et al (2017), CBPs have the potential of reducing poverty by being more inclusive, sustainable and cost-effective but most CBPs funded by overseas funders tend to be less sustainable because funding often ends when the communities have not established their own local sources of funding leading to those projects becoming white elephants which are expensive to maintain or difficult to complete. It can thus be judged that the prevailing foreign dependency by CBPs in less developed countries is a cause for concern among developmentalists and development scholars. In the current study, the researcher picked this concern and sought to reexamine sustainability perspectives surrounding CBPs in a largely rural setting in Zimbabwe.

The research site climatically falls under Natural Ecological Regions IV and V where rainfall is unreliable and most of the soils are unproductive, yet agriculture is the backbone of the economy. This situation is representative of over 60% of the country's geographical territory constituted mainly by rural communities (Chingarande, Mugano, Chagwiza and Hungwe, 2020). The provincial capital is the City of Masvingo located equidistant to all the country's major cities with an average distance of 300km from Harare, Mutare, Bulawayo, Gweru and Beitbridge. The province that hosted the study comprises 7 rural districts namely Bikita, Chiredzi, Chivi, Gutu, Masvingo, Mwenenzi

and Zaka where agencies associated to the National Association of NGOs (NANGO) are running a variety of CBPs. The projects are classified into 10 thematic sectors namely Child Protection; Land and the Environment; Economic Issues; Disability; Health and HIV; Youth Development; Arts and Culture; Human Rights; and the Humanitarian sector. NANGO Southern Region which houses Masvingo province has a membership of 60 annually subscribing organisations. Focusing on this organisation means that the findings will be somewhat generalisable nationally because the structure is replicated across the country with 4 other regions namely Eastern, Midlands, Northern and Western which operate in a similar manner under NANGO.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainability is a concept in development literature that refers to the improvement and sustainability of a healthy economic, ecological and social system for human development. It involves the efficient and equitable distribution of resources within a finite ecosystem and the interaction between the population and its environment (Ceptureanu et al., 2018a; Gohori & van der Merwe, 2022; Masud-All-Kamal and Nursey-Bray, 2021a; Nhamo & Katsamudanga, 2019). Community development is a people-centred change process that involves identifying community needs, setting priorities, establishing locally available resources, assessing external resources and experts, determining community preferences and balancing competing interests based on both local and external resources (Suriyankietkaew et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2020; de la Cruz López et al., 2021; Kashwani, 2019; Chundu et al., 2022; Nhamo & Katsamudanga, 2019). Contrary to this theoretic balance, local experiences in rural Masvingo indicate imbalances between local and external influences on projects sustainability, which was the object of the current study.

Then sustainability theory, where the abovementioned Participation Theory belongs, is a new branch of community development theory that borrows heavily from various fields of economics, science and social development engagements, such as those put forward by the World Commission on Environment Development (WCED). The theory emphasises the importance of empowering people, increasing community participation, fostering social cohesion, enhancing cultural identity, strengthening institutional development and promoting equity and fairness (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2021; Bartniczack & Raszkowski, 2019). The theory recognises

that uncertainties exist in communities and requires flexible processes to improve the lives of community people. It considers social, political, economic and cultural relationships as fundamental to community development. In community development initiatives, management requires three key competencies: contextual, behavioural and technical skills (Kashwani, 2019). According to Sarriot et al. (2022), the key indicators for community development sustainability include achieving project outcomes, maintaining project deliverables, resource mobilisation capacity and human capacity establishment, which the current study sought to decipher in the context of struggling rural communities of Masvingo, Zimbabwe.

This study made use of the Rotary International (2014) measures for ensuring sustainable best practices in community-based overseas funded projects. These measures include assessing community needs, using local materials, identifying local funding sources, providing training, education and outreach, motivating beneficiaries to take ownership as well as monitoring and evaluating progress. Their aim is to provide long-term solutions to community needs that beneficiaries can maintain after grant funding ends – a situation which has hitherto been lacking in the selected research site. The researcher was interested to learn if development agencies were consulting the local public, engaging stakeholders, making use of local resources, and advancing technological and infrastructural development as per the dictates of the Rotary Principles. Training, education and outreach should be provided to strengthen beneficiaries' ability to meet project objectives (Rotary International, 2014). This explanatory research assessed local development practices such as whether the agencies motivated beneficiaries to take ownership and prepare the community for project ownership once grant funds are spent.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed methods approach to explore CBP practices in Masvingo and understand stakeholders' perspectives on sustainability issues. For the quantitative component, a sample size of 460 participants was targeted, and it produced a return rate of 55.8%. Two hundred and fifty-six (256) participants out of the 460 successfully took the questionnaire and this is an acceptable rate according to Holtom, Baruch,

Aguinis and Ballinger (2022) who peg an excellent response rate at above 50%. At the time of conducting this study, there were 60 NANGO-registered agencies in the province, most of which had district and ward-level sub-offices. All in all, there were 460 project offices including provincial offices, district sub-offices and ward-level stations. The researcher targeted all the 460 because they constituted a manageable number for statistical purposes (Kang, 2021). Then for the qualitative component, the researcher purposively targeted 15 community representatives and administered semi-structured interviews on them. The number of interviews was informed by Campbell, Greenwood and Prior (2020) who state that population and sampling are not important in qualitative inquiry but data saturation. So, community representatives were identified for their experience in CBPs which rendered them data rich. Both the questionnaire and the interview were implemented in 5 out of 7 districts mainly due to road network inaccessibility. Data was analysed using SPSS for quantitative data and thematic content analysis for qualitative data.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Quantitative questionnaire findings

The following table is a depiction of the quantitative findings gathered from 60 participants representing benefactor organisations implementing CBPs in Masvingo Province.

Current best practices on CBPs for Sustainability	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
People organize best around problems they consider most important when implementing community projects	256	3.63	.863	-.682	.583
Local people tend to make better economic decisions and judgments in the context of their own environment and circumstances	256	3.64	.732	-.663	1.211
Voluntary provision of labour, time, money and materials to a project is a necessary condition for breaking patterns of dependency and passivity	256	3.66	.729	-.479	.438

The local control over the amount, quality and benefits of development activities helps make the process self-sustaining.	256	3.67	.659	-.515	.817
Mapping or making use of inventory of the capacities and assets in a community/organization	256	3.67	.682	-.663	1.304
Building relationships and connections between community members and between community members and agencies, to change values and attitudes	256	3.69	.623	-.839	1.422
Mobilizing community members to become self-organizing and active by sharing knowledge and resources and identifying common interests;	256	3.71	.617	-.729	1.413
Leveraging outside resources only to things that community members cannot do for themselves. Community members need to be in a position of strength in dealing with outside agencies.	256	3.69	.623	-.643	1.182
Following up of all procedures required in line with Government in terms of community developmental projects implementation	256	3.70	.679	-.464	.756
Valid N (listwise)	256				

The survey results show that the participating CBPs were implementing sustainable practices. The survey characteristics include mean, skewness, kurtosis and standard deviations. The respondents highly rated the practices of mobilising community members to become self-organising and active by sharing knowledge and resources and identifying common interests. The highest mean statistic was 3.71, suggesting a platykurtic distribution with few outliers.

The best practices for CBPs sustainability were checked for sampling adequacy using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The results showed that the sample used for the factor analysis was adequate, and all the sustainable practices were being followed in the CBPs implementation.

The Principal Component Analysis was used to extract a single factor from the nine-line items used to measure the best practices used for CBPS sustainability being used by NGOs in which are overseas funded. The total variance explained by the components on best practices being used by the NGOs is 78.00%, demonstrating that all the best practices procedures were being followed in CBDPs implementation by the NGOs.

The rotated component matrix for current best practices for CBPS sustainability indicates that all the items had factor loadings ranging from 0.808 to 0.949 and loaded successfully to the best practices variable. All factor rankings are above 0.5, implying that the best practices were being implemented in the communities. This confirms the convergent validity of the line items used to measure the best practices with none diverging from the rest of the items.

Qualitative interview findings

The following table summarises the themed-up contributions of 15 randomly selected community members representing beneficiaries of CBPs in Masvingo Province.

Question	Responses	Theme
To what extent do you find local CBPs building relationships, connections and consultations for community development sustainability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have seen them actively building relationships within this community. They play a vital role in fostering connections and promoting collaboration. A perfect example is in our income generation projects where they link us with businesses and individuals who matter, such as trainers. 	Building relationships
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CBPS are organising events, workshops and social activities for us. These help us a lot in mixing and mingling as villagers as well as encountering other people from elsewhere with different new ideas. 	Community engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They are sidestepping our traditional leaders in decision making thereby 	Community engagement

	<p>rendering the projects dubious. In the past, we would come together under a tree and discuss our concerns with our village head, but these NGOs are now like our new village heads. Often, they are contradicting our traditional systems in their topics.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They create for us opportunities to come together, exchange ideas and unite around common causes. 	Community engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These organisations often establish partnerships with other local stakeholders such as schools, government entities and donor organisations. We gain a lot of exposure due to them facilitating. 	Building relationships
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some projects are altering the social order of this community. Our overall well-being is now a dictated affair due to them. 	Community engagement
Do local CBPs ever take stock of community capacities and assets for sustainable development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all but some of them thoroughly consider the local endowments. However, some of them hardly recognise our decisional strengths or our knowledge. 	Ownership issues
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, they understand the resources we have in this community but are not able to effectively organise local hands to do work. Most of the work is done by their staff and they are the ones benefiting in the end. 	Ownership issues
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their initiatives seem to align with our immediate and medium-term needs such as drought relief and other emergency interventions. Our long-term aspirations such as better homes and better community relations do not seem to bother 	Community engagement

	<p>them as if we have no social issues to care about.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rich members of this community are harnessed in decision making processes more readily than us. We are considered as people of less capacities materially and intellectually. 	Relationship building
<p>What efforts are the local CBPs making to leverage outside resources for only those things that community members cannot do by themselves?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They often rely on foreign resources for almost all their tasks – so much that we have come to associate them with foreign donations. Sometimes they are the donors themselves. 	Ownership issues
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources like financial aid, technical expertise or equipment are often sourced as grants. I cannot remember a handful occasions where we used our own resources for community development activities except for government-initiated food-for work. 	Ownership issues
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CBPs turn to foreign resources for our benefit as we lack the financial means to tackle certain projects on our own. However, sometimes they use our plight as bait to lure grants for their own livelihood. A project as big as building a school or a medical facility requires significant funding. Obviously, we cannot fund even a quarter of the costs, hence often seek aid from foreign donors through CBP platforms. 	Ownership issues
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We also often lack the specialised skills that can only be outsourced as hired labour for our community projects, 	Building relationships

	<p>especially technological know-how in this era of high technology.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have often seen outside resources being channelled for training healthcare workers or implementing sustainable farming practices. I see nothing wrong in that because to imagine us accessing the requisite resources locally is unrealistic. CBPs necessarily utilise foreign resources as an essential means to address all our community needs, they are all beyond our capabilities. 	<p>Ownership issues</p>
<p>How do local CBPs facilitate community engagement around problems of common concern?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Though they sometimes fail, these organisations sometime bridge the gap between community members and key decision makers. Some impactful changes have been witnessed during or because of some of these interventions. 	<p>Relationship building</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of their diverse initiatives have set us on a colliding course with our leadership and our culture. I blame them for the recent chaotic changes in our laws following their rabid advocacy. Now I cannot demand bride wealth when my daughter marries due to the new marriage law which is one of several hurried changes facilitated by these organisations. 	<p>Community engagement</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their community meetings, workshops and awareness campaigns provide a platform for individuals to voice their concerns, discuss potential solutions and actively participate in collaborative efforts. 	<p>Community engagement</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They enable communities to come together, creating a sense of solidarity and empowerment. Personally, I gained problem-solving skills from some of the workshops that they organised. 	Community engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These organisations foster an environment of engagement and participation. This is especially important for us people living with disabilities to address our common problems by collective bargaining. This has made tangible differences in our personal lives and our community. 	Community engagement
<p>Are local CBPs promoting local control of development activities for self-sustenance of processes in case of end of outside support?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local control of development activities is vital for communities to sustain themselves. Organisations often tell us about this but most of our people do not seem to comprehend this. 	Ownership issues
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As residents, CBPs have given us the power to make decisions about the development of this neighbourhood. 	Community engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that our needs and priorities are met, we have often demanded genuine income generation projects that can be turned into viable businesses, but what these organisations are doing is making us participate in meaningless timewaster initiatives with which we cannot take our kids to school. Imagine a grown up like me doing a project that does not buy me a goat at the end of the year! 	Ownership issues
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We appreciate their efforts in many small projects, but we are growing weary of 	Ownership issues

	<p>those small projects which hardly lift us from poverty. Let them improve our infrastructure, preserve our local natural resources and support our traditional institutions.</p>	
<p>In what ways are local CBPs fostering community participation and equal ownership if any?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have sometimes provided opportunities for us to come together and actively engage in decision-making processes that directly impact our lives. 	Relationship building
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By organising events, workshops and public-level meetings 	Community engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have been taught by these organisations to voice our opinions and to bargain our rights as teams so as to enjoy the power of numbers. 	Relationship building
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They provide us platforms where we can share our various ideas with which we can contribute to the betterment of our community. 	Community engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I strongly doubt CBPs promote equal ownership of anything in this community. They often tell us that they do not dabble in politics and yet political issues are our greatest concerns as sources of inequality. They are just touching on nonessential aspects of our community life. 	Ownership issues
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their activities empower community members, regardless of their background or socioeconomic status, to have an equal say in shaping the direction of their own neighbourhood or town. 	Ownership issues

<p>Would you say local people are making decisions that influence community development as per local needs and demands?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I do not see much local content in the decisions made in these CBPs. Most of them are designed in offices located far away in the towns and in our absence. The moment they are communicated to us during community assemblies, it would be senseless to add our views because that will be viewed as being argumentative. 	Ownership issues
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are contributing to some extent through our community leaders. We sometimes hear they are called to workshops, but our only worry is that they go there to represent us without gathering our contributions. 	Relationship building
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, local people are participating. Many improvements can be made such as mainstreaming youth, gender and disability issues. Consultations are taking place but they are not all-encompassing yet. 	Community engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We may never agree on needs but at least we agree on the most basic things like schools, health centres and roads. 	Community engagement
<p>Have local people been providing voluntary contributions to CBPs such as labour, money and materials?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We provide voluntary contributions to those local initiatives, the little that we afford. We have a deep sense of civic responsibility and commitment towards enhancing our community wellbeing. How we contribute depends on how they organise us. 	Ownership issues
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have seen individuals willingly dedicating their time, skills and resources to support CBPs here. For example, some of us are 	Ownership issues

	<p>unpaid operates of the police and the civic protection unit.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative efforts have been going on between these agencies and community members. Villagers do not demand payment but mostly public recognition because it gives us dignity as sensible community members. As a member of the neighbourhood watch group, I conduct community patrols free of charge and with pleasure. 	Ownership issues
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a teacher I do not only teach in school but I also assist during community trainings. Sometimes I charge very little money but mostly I serve for free. 	Ownership issues
Are local CBPs following any laid down procedures for sustainable development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are instances where these organisations deviate from the laid-down procedures. 	Compliance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of them have well-structured and systematic approaches but there are some which are often at loggerheads with authorities. 	Compliance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many fail to adhere to these established procedures. Some of their operations have been suspended and others banned as a result. 	Compliance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of them are compliant but those into human rights and electoral processes often fight with government. This has hindered progress towards long-term sustainability. 	Compliance

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They understand the procedural guidelines designed to support sustainable development practices, but some wayward elements within their ranks are often seen overzealously undermining the trust placed upon them by stakeholders. 	Compliance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As champions of good governance, most of these projects are demonstrating accountability, transparency and popular decision-making processes. Those which do this have remained on track with their objectives. They are the effective ones among the so-called agents of change. The few that deviate from this route are rather undermining sustainable development within their communities. 	Community engagement

The import of the above table is that CBPs are essential for establishing ties and encouraging cooperation among members of a community. They help the villagers mingle and gather fresh ideas during social events and workshops; but they frequently avoid traditional leaders in the decision-making process, which casts doubt on their initiatives. They give locals a platform to interact and come together around shared interests. Certain CBP initiatives transform the social hierarchy by usurping the powers of local institutions. Some CBPS consider local endowments, but local people often lack the expertise to leverage these local resources. Better houses and improved community connections are long-term goals that are not given priority in CBPs projects; instead, the focus is on meeting immediate and medium-term needs. The CBPs frequently depend on outside resources, which are plainly a source of livelihood for CBP staff.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Community engagement

According to the study, some NGOs were criticised for not involving the communities they serve in decision-making processes. However, questionnaire responses indicated that these agencies were actually mobilising community members to share knowledge and resources and identify common interests. Despite this, 4 interviewees mentioned that Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) were failing to acknowledge the traditional social order in decision making. One of the 4 interviewees explained that in the past, community leaders and members would discuss issues together under a tree, whereas now NGOs are causing villagers to distrust their leaders. Another interviewee even feared that the role of the village heads was being seized by development agencies which were presenting themselves as the alternative leadership. This situation has led to a decline in traditional institutions that once facilitated collective action in rural areas, a finding which is in line with Sithole (2020) who states that local community establishments designed to smooth rural processes are diminishing thereby inhibiting a more cohesive and sustainable future. To address these challenges and promote a more cohesive and sustainable future, it is suggested that inclusive community centres be established to facilitate communication between individuals and their leaders regarding shared concerns. According to Muyambo and Shava (2021), this investment is crucial considering the diminishing role of local institutions.

Ownership issues

The study found differing opinions on equal ownership and community commitment in CBPs. Two interviewees believed these values were unattainable, while questionnaires indicated that equal ownership was already happening. Most questionnaires showed that CBPs were fostering connections and promoting positive values like shared responsibilities and project costs. However, one interviewee mentioned that socioeconomic factors like poverty and power dynamics hindered community members from making financial and other commitments in CBPs. The other one even believed that poor people were considered less capable to partake in CBPs because they had nothing to contribute. According to Polacko (2021), economic disparities, such as income inequality, hinder equal commitment. Case and Deaton

(2020) also stated that commitment to CBPs is typically limited to those with greater financial resources. Overall, the qualitative findings align with previous literature, while the questionnaire results differ.

Relationships building

The study revealed a lack of common understanding regarding relationship building among community members, organisations and government departments. According to one of the interviewees, limited resources and competing interests hinder the formation of meaningful relationships as stakeholders prioritise individual objectives over the collective good. However, quantitative questionnaires suggest that the prevailing situation is seen as normal and acceptable, with community-based partnerships facilitating sustainable relationships. Previous research has emphasised the importance of social connections and consultations in sustainable development. However, Avelino (2021) concluded that establishing and maintaining such relationships is challenging due to hidden agendas and infighting. The interview findings reinforce this previous finding while the questionnaire results provide some counter evidence, possibly indicating the limitations of close-ended questions. To achieve long-term success, it is crucial to develop inclusive platforms that foster power-balanced collaboration in community activities to gain trust and support.

Compliance

It has been found that some NGOs may not always follow prescribed procedures when carrying out their mandates in communities. While many NGOs adhere to guidelines as reflected by the questionnaire findings, 5 interviewees representing a third of all consulted beneficiaries believed that limited resources, bureaucratic inefficiencies and underhand dealings were hindering these agencies' compliance and commitment to sustainability. The World Bank (2020) has raised concerns about NGOs' adherence to established procedures for sustainability. This aligns with the findings of this study, which highlight the controversial nature of proceduralism. Other studies have also identified misallocation of resources, complex administrative processes and monitoring mechanisms as obstacles to NGOs improving their sustainability practices such as conformity to regulations (Kabonga, 2023). In light of these views, it is

recommended to implement standardised monitoring and evaluation systems that facilitate NGO compliance for sustainability.

CONCLUSION

The study found that NGOs are mobilising community members to share knowledge and identify common interests, but they are sometimes failing to acknowledge the traditional social order in decision-making. This has led to a decline in the role of traditional institutions, causing distrust among villagers. The study revealed contradictory views on equal ownership and community commitment in CBPs. A few interviewees believed these values were unattainable, while all questionnaire respondents indicated equal ownership was happening. Socioeconomic factors like poverty and inequality were among the notable hindrances limiting this commitment. Also revealed in the study was a lack of understanding of development relationships among community members, organisations and government departments, with limited resources and competing interests hindering meaningful relationships. Community-based partnerships were found to facilitate sustainable relationships, but establishing and maintaining these relationships was found challenging due to hidden agendas and power dynamics. Lastly, some agencies were found to dodge prescribed procedures, with limited resources, bureaucratic inefficiencies and the temptation of underhand dealings hindering their commitment to sustainability. Concerns were raised about the NGOs' nonadherence to sustainability procedures, and implementing standardised monitoring and evaluation systems is recommended to facilitate compliance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implementing agencies must directly involve the grassroots communities for inclusivity and cost-effectiveness.
- CBPs must gradually substitute local financing systems for foreign aid and propagate essential skills among the project end-users rather than non-locals.
- Authorities must adopt standardised monitoring and evaluation systems that ease NGO compliance for sustainability.
- Stakeholders must be seen developing inclusive platforms for power-balanced collaboration in community activities to gain mutual trust and support necessary for long-term success.

- Local area institutions must bolster communitywide linkages that promote a more cohesive and sustainable society.
- Researchers must help recognise underlying issues preventing equitable distribution of resources and opportunities.

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