

Extent of Community Participation in the Decision-Making and Planning Processes for Sustainable Development Projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone, Bauchi State

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Abstract

The study investigated extent of community participation in the decision-making and planning processes for sustainable development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial zone, Bauchi State. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design. Population for the study consisted of 1,503 members of the registered 46 Community Development Associations (CDAs) in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone. A two-stage sampling procedure was used to draw a sample size of 316 registered CDAs members. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. All the research questions were analysed using mean and standard deviation. The hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics at .05 level of significance. Findings show that overall, members of the community participated in the decision making and planning processes for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone, Bauchi State to a moderate extent. Gender had no influence on the extent members of the community participated in the decision making and planning processes for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone, Bauchi State ($p < .05$). The findings suggested that government should organize seminars and workshops for community members; these will help in influencing the attitudes and orientation of community members to participate in a community development project that has direct bearing on the community, therefore to alleviate problems the community encounters in general.

Keyword: Community Participation, Decision-Making, Planning Process, Sustainable Development

Introduction

Globally, the notion of community participation is longstanding in the development field and aims to bring marginalized voices into development processes to ensure more equitable development. World Bank (2014) viewed community participation as an important determinant in project performance and sustainability. For community participation to be effective, it must respect people's knowledge, skills and empower them to take control of their lives by focusing on training, resources, and supporting them to make their own decisions.

However, community participation is seen in two perspectives as a means or as an end. As a means, participation is a vehicle directed at achieving predetermined goals. As an end, participation is seen as a vehicle that recognizes the direct involvement of the people in shaping, deciding and taking part in the developmental process. It is 'bottom- top' oriented. Unlike the former which is 'top-bottom', participation as an end entails a process of achieving greater individual fulfillment, personal development, self-awareness and some form of immediate satisfaction (Hogan, 2016). The characteristic feature of this type of participation is that people are given the chance to 'formulate' their development, to influence or to 'have a say' in the decision-making process regarding the programme or project initiated for them. It is, therefore, the active involvement of these primary

stakeholders in the project of their own that sustainability in community development projects is achieved.

Community participation is a concept that tends to bring different stakeholders together for problem-solving and decision making. Ekong (2013) stated that community participation is a social process whereby specific groups with shared needs, often but not always living in a defined geographical area, actively pursue identification of their needs, make a decision and establish a mechanism to meet these needs. Thwala (2010) explained that for community participation to be successful, the project must include special components, such as: recruiting villagers in all phases of designing, implementing, monitoring, supervising and evaluating the project. Recruiting villagers within the context of this study entails engaging the community members' in the identification of their felt needs through several forms of interaction, approaches toward achieving these needs, and strategies to sustaining them. This recruitment is characterized by the active involvement of community members in addressing their needs.

Ordinarily, community participation is difficult to define. The social, economic, educational and other conditions of a community differ from those of other communities; as such their forms and degrees of involvement in development activities vary. It is, therefore, a continuum of involvement of people in decision-making processes, in implementing programmes, sharing in benefits of development programmes and their involvement in efforts to evaluate such programmes. Nweke (2014) asserted that, unless the community is allowed to participate in the development of interventions designed to improve their livelihood, they will continue to miss the benefits of any intervention. Okafor (2015) disclosed that when communities participate in their project, the following are usually observed: empowering community improves efficiency; local participation yields better projects, better outcomes; greater transparency and accountability enhances service delivery, and encouraging donor harmonization.

Most communities in the developing countries, including Nigeria and Bauchi State in particular are poverty stricken. Over the years, development efforts aimed at sustainable community development projects have not included community members into the processes of community participation of such projects. It is therefore, the active participation of these primary stakeholders in project of their own that sustainability in community development project is achieved.

Nigeria has witnessed the proliferation of community development programmes aimed at developing the communities. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2015) noted that in spite of the colossal amount of money that had gone into implementing community development projects and the proliferation of community development agencies one after the other, not much impact has been made. The UNICEF maintained that in spite of pious official pronouncements, and declaration of intentions as contained in the development plans, as at the end of each plan period community life remained unchanged. Each plan came with new promises and raised hopes that were never fulfilled. The UNICEF further asserted that one of the reasons why some of these community development programmes failed to achieve the desired result is the use of top-down approach to community development projects in which a group of government professionals, experts or administrators come together to deliberate on the community needs and decide on projects to be embarked upon without the consent and involvement of the community members. This was evident in many past community development programmes and it greatly reduced the participation of the community members in projects and programmes execution and also the sustainability of such projects and programmes (Uche, Okoye, & Uche, 2014). The essence of involving the people in their project is for sustainability.

Sustainability is central to all community development efforts. Without it, investment in the community development efforts may be short-lived and of no effect. Consequently, community participation is conceived as a tool capable of increasing the efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of community development projects. There are various processes used in community participation for sustainable community development. Some of these processes are the decision-making process, planning process among others. Apart from these processes, there are also challenges of community participation for sustainable community development, such as: financial constraints, poor leadership, illiteracy, socio-economic problems, corruption among others.

The decision-making process is the stage at which community members come together to participate in a systematic discussion of their felt-needs and develop plans and strategies to meet their

needs. Townsend (2013) defined decision making as the ability to choose or decide about things in a clear and definite way without much hesitation or delay, or it is the process of coming to a conclusion or determination about something. Contextually, decision making is the process through which community members participate in deciding what they want and embark on community development projects to bring about desirable or positive changes in the community. In addition to decision making, planning process promotes community participation for sustainable community development.

The planning process involves the preparation of several specific plans to be carried out in order to achieve objectives. Onah (2012) defined planning as the process of setting goals, developing strategies and outlining tasks and schedules for achieving goals. While-Singer (2011) viewed planning as “what comes before action”. Planning is done to achieve some goals; community participation in the planning process helps in sourcing information that will lead to come up with a good project plan. Contextually, planning is the process of pondering about and organizing activities required to achieve the desired goals or objectives of the community development project.

The concept of sustainable development demands to balance economic, societal and environmental consideration in the quest for development and improved quality of life. The universal, transformation and inclusive sustainable development goals (SDGs) describe major development challenges for humanity. The 17 SDGs aim to secure a sustainable, peaceful, prosperous and equitable life on earth for everyone now and in the future. The goals cover global challenges that are crucial for the survival of humanity (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2017). Sustainability is a concept that describes community socio-economic development in terms of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future to meet their needs. According to Harshardhar and Shashirekha (2014), Sustainable development is the convergence among the three trajectories of economic growth, social development, and environmental protection. Balanced development lifts people out of poverty while protecting the natural systems that support economic growth. It is all about improving lives and livelihoods while ensuring that future generations are not left without a planet on which to live, especially when gender is considered in decision making and planning in developmental projects.

It is critical to consider community participation in the gender-energy realm. For instance, while both women and men use energy sources every day at home, they do not always do so equally; women and men have different energy needs as well as dissimilar access to this energy. This disparity is compounded by the fact that most energy programmes and projects are gender-blind, meaning they fail to account for these unique gendered variations in energy use and access stemming from deeply embedded cultural (gender) norms. While energy interventions that take gender into account have the potential to be more effective, efficient and sustainable (Clancy & Stockbridge, 2018). It is clear that interventions typically consider women and men as a single, heterogeneous unit, whereby they are designated as ‘people’ or ‘community members’. The crux of effective project implementation, then, lies in the ability to bring in the points of view of all potential stakeholders rather than only a select group.

Community participation in community development projects has been identified as one of the critical factors in the sustainability of community development projects. Community participation leads to development projects that are more responsive to the needs of the poor, more responsive government and better delivery of public goods and services, better-maintained community assets, it increases the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of development projects in a community. Thus, community participation recognizes the direct involvement of beneficiaries in the planning and at the implementation stages through its processes. Some of these processes include: decision making and planning. However, most community development projects in Bauchi State do not stem from the people’s aspiration and initiation as such, lack their active participation.

Unfortunately, the absence of the people’s involvement in community development projects is manifested in frequent vandalization of the projects as well as abandonment. This has given concern to the researchers. Therefore, the problem of this study is unsustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone, and the unduly assumption here was that community participation could be employed to salvage the situation.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the extent of community participation in the decision-making and planning process for sustainable development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial zone. Specifically, the study aimed to determine the extent of community participation in

the decision-making process for sustainable community development projects; and assess the extent of community participation in the planning process for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone. However, the study sought to answer the following research questions: to what extent does community participation influence decision-making and planning processes for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone? It was hypothesized that there is no significant difference in the means of male and female community members on extent to which community participation influence decision making and planning processes for sustainable development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone, Bauchi State.

Practically, this study was of immense benefits to community members, government, policymakers, community development workers, development partners and students of higher institutions among others, and its findings would help in instilling the right attitudes and orientation of community members towards participation in community development projects. This is made possible with the findings of this study disseminated in workshops and seminars that will be organized for the purpose.

Method

The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design. According to Nworgu (2015), descriptive cross-sectional survey research design is one in which a group of items or people are studied by collecting data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group.

The study was conducted in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone of Bauchi State. The Zone is made up of seven local government areas which include: Alkaleri, Bauchi, Bogoro, Dass, Kirfi, Tafawa Balewa, and Toro. Christianity and Islam are the major religion practiced by the inhabitants with a few practicing African traditional religion. There is homogeneity in values, beliefs, norms, dialects, cultural ceremonies among others. Farming is the major occupation in Bauchi South Education Zone and its fertile soil is an advantage for agricultural products, such as: rice, maize, millet, groundnut, and guinea corn. Based on the above features, Bauchi South Senatorial zone inhabits typical farmers that have been participating in communal group farming. However, the advent of power brokers type of leadership might have thwarted the way communal farming is done. The Zone also has tourist centres which include: Yankari Game Reserve, Tafawa Balewa Monument Tomb, and Lame/Burra ECO. Reserve Tourism, Geji Rock Painting Monuments. Geographically, the Senatorial Zone is located in the Southern part of Bauchi State, and it is bounded by Ganjuwa Local Government Area and Kano State to the North, Plateau and Taraba States to the South, Gombe State to the East and Kaduna State to the West.

The population for this study consisted of 1,503 members of the registered 46 Community Development Associations (CDAs) in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone (Ministry of Rural and Community Development, 2018). The sample size for this study consisted of 316 members of CDAs in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone.

A two-stage random sampling procedure was used in this study. Stage one involved the use of simple random sampling of balloting without replacement to draw four local government areas (LGAs) out of the seven LGAs in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone. Therefore, Bauchi, Bogoro, Dass and Tafawa Balewa Local Government Areas were selected. Stage two involved the use of proportional sampling technique to draw 30% of the CDAs members in the selected four local government areas. Therefore, 102 were drawn from Bauchi, 65 from Bogoro, 64 from Dass, and 85 from Tafawa Balewa, which gave a total of 316 participants drawn for the study.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled: Community Participation for Sustainable Community Development Projects Questionnaire (CPSCDPQ). The instrument comprised of two sections 'A' and 'B'. Section A elicited demographic information of the respondents on gender. Section B consisted of 12 items that sought to determine the extent of community participation in the decision-making and planning processes for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone. The items in clusters B were assigned response options of: very high extent (VHE), a high extent (HE), a moderate extent (ME), a low extent (LE), and a very low extent (VLE). The items were weighted with assigned values as Very High Extent (5), High Extent (4), Moderate Extent (3), Low Extent (2), and Very Low Extent (1).

The face validation of the instrument was established by giving the draft copy CPSCDPQ, its specific objectives, research questions and hypotheses to four experts to make necessary inputs; of the four experts, three came from the Department of Adult Education and Extra-Mural Studies and one came from the Department of Science Education (Measurement and Evaluation Unit), all came from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. A trial test of 20 copies of the questionnaire was done on community members in Ganjuwa Local Government Area in Bauchi Central Senatorial zone. The data obtained from the trial testing were tested using Cronbach Alpha (α) reliability technique and internal consistency indices for the clusters respectively were: 0.82, 0.86, 0.81, 0.82, 0.88, 0.89 with an overall of 0.85 obtained for the entire scale. This indicated that the instrument was reliable for the study.

The researchers used the meeting days of community development associations (CDAs) to administer 316 copies of the questionnaire to the respondents with the help of four research assistants. The research assistants were briefed on the modalities in collecting quantitative data. The researchers and the research assistants supervised and assisted the respondents where necessary during the process of filling out the questionnaire. The filled-out copies of the questionnaire were collected on the spot at 100 per cent return rate and were duly filled out, thus used for analyses.

All the research questions were analyzed using means and standard deviations. This implies that the extent to which the community participates in decision making and planning projects can be very high extent, high extent, moderate extent, low extent, and very low extent. Specifically, a score/value between 0.00-0.99 was interpreted to imply that community participation as a very low extent, 1.00-1.99 was interpreted as a low extent, 2-2.99 was interpreted as moderate extent, 3.00 - 3.99 was interpreted as high extent while 4.00-4.99 was interpreted as very high extent. The hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of the Extent to which Community Participation Influence Decision-Making Process for Sustainable Community Development Projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone

SN		Male (166)		Female (150)		Overall (316)		
		<i>X</i>	SD	<i>X</i>	SD	<i>X</i>	SD	Dec.
1	Participating in needs assessment	1.77	0.42	1.75	0.43	1.76	0.43	LE
2	Participating in negotiating priorities with donor agencies/government organization	1.90	0.73	1.95	0.70	1.92	0.72	LE
3	Participating in identifying community resources and constraints	2.00	0.73	1.95	0.70	1.97	0.72	LE
4	Participating in identifying project activities	1.93	0.70	2.03	0.70	1.98	0.70	LE
5	Participate in deciding the site/location of the project	3.12	0.93	3.19	0.88	3.15	0.91	HE
	Cluster Mean	2.14	0.40	2.17	0.35	2.16	0.38	LE

Key: X= mean, SD= Standard Deviation

Table1 show that overall, the mean of 2.16 with a standard deviation of 0.38 implies that community participation in the decision-making process for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone was to a moderate extent. Based on the items, participating in: needs assessment ($x = 1.76$, $SD = 0.43$), negotiating priorities with donor agencies/government organization ($x = 1.92$, $SD = 0.72$), identifying community resources and constraints ($x = 1.97$, 0.72) and identifying project activities ($x = 1.98$, $SD = 0.70$) were to a low extent. On the other hand, result reveals that community members participate in determining the site/location of the project to a high extent ($x = 3.15$, $SD = 0.91$).

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations of the Extent to which Community Participation Influence Planning Processes for Sustainable Community Development Projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone

SN		Male (166)		Female (150)		Overall (316)		Dec.
		X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	
1	Setting projects' goals and objectives to be achieved	2.23	0.58	2.23	0.57	2.23	0.58	LE
2	Participating in sequencing project activities	2.23	0.54	2.22	0.60	2.22	0.57	LE
3	Preparing budget for the projects to be undertaken	2.12	0.42	2.13	0.42	2.12	0.42	LE
4	Assessing facilities, equipment and services for carrying out the project	2.08	0.56	2.06	0.53	2.07	0.55	LE
5	Participating in developing time-frame for activities	2.12	0.32	2.14	0.34	2.13	0.33	LE
6	Organizing fund raising committee for the projects	3.10	1.22	3.15	1.18	3.12	1.29	HE
7	Participation in assigning financial responsibilities to Groups/individuals	2.21	0.40	2.18	0.38	2.20	0.39	LE
	Cluster Mean	2.29	0.29	2.30	0.32	2.30	0.31	LE

Key: X= mean, SD= Standard deviation

Table 2 show that overall, the mean of 2.30 with a standard deviation of 0.31 implies that community participation in the planning process for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone was to a moderate extent. Based on the items, setting projects' goals and objectives to be achieved ($x = 2.23$, $SD = 0.58$), sequencing project activities ($x = 2.22$, $SD = 0.57$), preparing budget for the projects to be undertaken ($x = 2.12$, $SD = 0.42$), assessing facilities, equipment and services for carrying out the project ($x = 2.07$, $SD = 0.55$), developing time-frame for activities ($x = 2.13$, $SD = 0.33$) and assigning financial responsibilities to Groups/individuals ($x = 2.20$, $SD = 0.39$) were to a moderate extent. However, result shows that community members organize fund raising committee for the projects to a high extent ($x = 3.1$, $SD = 1.29$).

Table 3: t-test Analysis of the Significant Difference Between the Mean of Male and Female Respondents on the Extent to which Community Participation Influence Decision making Process for Sustainable Community Development Projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone

Gender	X	SD	t-value	df	p-val.
Male	2.14	0.40	-0.66	314	0.51
Female	2.17	0.35			

*Significant ($p < .05$)

Table 3 shows the t-test analysis of the significant difference between the mean of male and female respondents on the extent to which community participation influence decision making process for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone. The result shows that a t-value of -0.66 with a degree of freedom of 314 and a significant value of 0.51 were obtained. Since the significant value of 0.51 was greater than 0.05 set as level of significance for testing the hypothesis, this means that the hypothesis was not rejected and therefore was not significant. Inference drawn is that the difference in the mean of male and female respondents on the extent to which community participation influence the decision-making process for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone was not statistically significant.

Table 4: t-test Analysis of the Significant Difference between the Mean of Male and Female respondents on the Extent to which Community Participation Influence Planning Processes for Sustainable Community Development Projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone.

Gender	X	SD	t-value	Df	p-val.	Dec
Male	2.29	0.29	-0.04	314	0.96	NS
Female	2.30	0.32				

*Significant ($p < .05$)

Table 4 shows the t-test analysis of the significant difference between the mean of male and female respondents on the extent to which community participation influence planning process for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone. The result shows that a t-value of -0.04 with a degree of freedom of 314 and a significant value of 0.96 were obtained. Since the significant value of 0.96 was greater than 0.05 set as level of significance for testing the hypothesis, this means that the hypothesis was not rejected and therefore was not significant. Inference drawn is that the difference in the mean of male and female respondents on the extent to which community participation influence planning process for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone was not statistically significant.

Discussion

The findings of the study are discussed in line with the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study.

The extent to which community participation influenced decision-making processes for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone.

The findings in Table1 show that overall, members of the community participated in the decision-making process for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone was to a moderate extent. Based on the items, participating in: needs assessment, negotiating priorities with donor agencies/government organization, identifying community resources and constraints and identifying project activities were to a low extent. On the other hand, result reveals that community members participate in determining the site/location of the project to a high extent. This may be due to lack of exposure of the community members to collective decision- making during community participation. This implies that community leaders and Organizations should make efforts to engage the community members in taking decisions about affairs of the community to a high extent. On the other hand, result shows that community members participated in determining the site/location of the project to a high extent. It may be that most of the decisions are taken by community leaders and the donor agencies instead of involving the community members. Leaders should be sensitized on issues that involve the community, this will help the community to accept and engage in community participation. The overall finding of the study showed that there is lack of broad-based community participation in decision-making process for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone to a moderate extent. The finding from the test of hypothesis one showed that the difference in the mean of male and female respondents on the extent to which community participation did not influence decision making process for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone as it was not statistically significant. This implies that male and female respondents hold the same opinion on the extent to which community participation influenced decision-making process for sustainable community development projects. The result of the study is consistent with Mak, Cheung, and Hui, (2017) who carried out a study on community participation in the decision-making process for sustainable tourism development in rural areas of Hong Kong, China and found among other things that the extent to which community participation influenced decision-making is to a low extent. Mark, Cheung, and Hui also found that strategies for promoting community participation activities were not efficient and should be made better in order to reach out to various stakeholders. The overall finding of this study therefore shows that the extent to which community participation influenced decision-making process

for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone to a moderate extent.

The extent to which community participation influenced planning processes for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone.

Findings in Table 2 show that overall, members of the community participated in the planning process for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone to a moderate extent. Based on the items, setting projects' goals and objectives to be achieved, sequencing project activities, preparing budget for the projects to be undertaken, assessing facilities, equipment and services for carrying out the project, developing time-frame for activities and assigning financial responsibilities to Groups/individuals were to a moderate extent. However, result shows that community organizes fund raising committee for the projects to a high extent. This may be so because planning can be based to achieve when you engage the beneficiaries. This implies that leaders and organizations should incorporate decision of the community members to a high extent in considering decisions. However, result indicated that community organizes fund raising committee for the projects to a high extent. The finding from the test of hypothesis two showed that the difference in the means of male and female respondents on the extent to which community participation influenced planning process for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone was not statistically significant. This also implies that male and female respondents hold similar opinion on the extent to which community participation influenced planning process for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone. The finding of the study is somewhat not consistent with Njoku (2015) who carried out a study on assessment of youth organizations in the planning and implementation of community development projects in Abia State, Nigeria and found among other things that youth organizations to a great extent participate in the planning and implementation of community development projects in Abia State. However, the result agrees with Njoku (2015) who found that there is no significant difference between the means of male and female members of youth organizations on the extent youth organizations participate in the planning of community development projects in Abia State. The overall finding of the study therefore revealed that the extent to which community participation influenced planning process for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone was to a moderate extent. This could be that the community members hold different views on the planning process; therefore, consultation needs to be made in order to identify the problems. This will have impact on the planning process.

Educational Implication of the Findings of the Study

The result of the study showed that community participation in the decision-making process for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone was to a moderate extent. This implies that the decision-making process for sustainable community development projects is a sole responsibility of the government. The community members have inadequate business in the decision-making process and this may have negative influence on the community in a long run because some may not participate and may protect whatever structures that have built or set for the community.

The finding of the study showed that community participation in the planning process for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone was to a moderate extent. The implication is that since the community members are not to a high extent part of the planning process, whatever decision taken may not be in favour of the community member's interest because they are not fully engaged in the planning and decision-making processes.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this research, it was concluded that there is a lack of broad based community participation for sustainable community development projects in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone of Bauchi State as indicated in the moderate extent of the members' participation in the planning and decision making processes. This further implied that any development programmes and projects that did not involve beneficiary community members to a high extent in the processes of the programme and project would certainly continue to be unsustainable especially after the exit of donors.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made.

1. The government should organize seminars and workshops for community members; these will help in influencing the attitudes and orientation of community members to participate in community development projects that have direct bearing on the community.
2. The Local Government Area which is the closet tier of government to the community should always carry the community members along during decision making and planning processes. This will help to overcome some factors militating against active community participation for sustainable community development projects.
3. The government should organize seminars for legislative arm of government especially with respect to gender and community development projects. This will assist in making necessary review and formulation of policies that will enhance community participation in community development projects process for sustainable community development projects.

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