

**COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF GOVERNMENT
PROJECTS IN UGANDA A CASE OF NORTHERN UGANDA SOCIAL ACTION FUND
III IN SELECTED SUBCOUNTIES OF DOKOLO DISTRICT.**

OTANG ISAAC OKUMA

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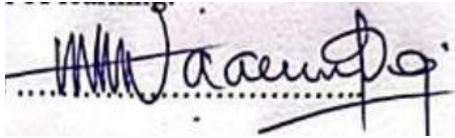
**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND
DEVELOPMENT STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
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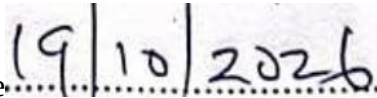
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I, **Otang Isaac Okuma**, declare that this dissertation titled; *Community participation and sustainability of government projects in Uganda a case of Northern Uganda Social Action Fund III in Dokolo District* is my own original work and has never been submitted for an award in any Institution of learning.

Signature



Date



Otang Isaac Okuma

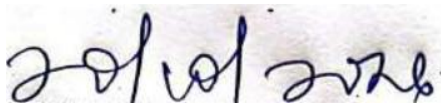
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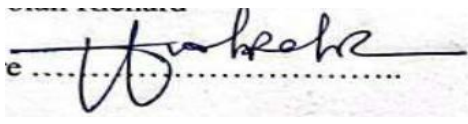
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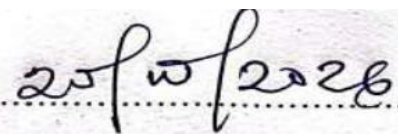
Dr. Christopher Oyat

Signature 

Date. 

Mr. Loyolah Richard

Signature 

Date 

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother Esther okuma, and my siblings for always praying for me, offering me both financial and emotional support and wishing me well in life. To my beloved wife, Ms. Reachel Auma, and to our children Estelia, Jordan, and Gabriel, for allowing me to be absent from their lives to pursue an educational career.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AFDB	African Development Bank
AGRA	Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa
EAC	East African Community
ISER	Initiative for Social and Economic Rights
ITI	Infrastructure Transparency Initiatives
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoFPED	Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development
NDPIII	Third National Development Plan
NEMA	National Environmental Management Authority
NPA	National Planning Authority
NUSAF	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund
NUYEP	Northern Uganda Youth Entrepreneurship Project
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PDM	Parish Development Model
PPP	Public-Private Partnerships
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TC	Transparency International
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programs

ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between community participation and the sustainability of government projects in Uganda a case of Northern Uganda Social Action Fund III (NUSAF III) projects in Dokolo District. It was guided by four objectives: to assess the level of community participation, to examine the extent of project sustainability, to examine the relationship between community participation and project sustainability, and to establish the influence of the government policy framework on that relationship. The study used a cross-sectional descriptive design and a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data were collected from 238 respondents using a structured questionnaire, and qualitative data from 20 key informant interviews and four focus group discussions in Batta, Adok, Kangai and Okwongodul sub-counties. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression in SPSS, and thematic analysis. Overall community participation was high, with collaboration highest and participatory decision-making lowest. Overall project sustainability was rated strongest in the social dimension and weakest in the environmental dimension. Community participation explained the variation in project sustainability, with empowerment and information sharing as the significant predictors. Adding the decentralization policy framework raised the explained variation, and the framework itself was a significant predictor of project sustainability. The study concludes that NUSAF III projects are sustained mainly where communities are empowered and well informed and where local governments provide follow-up support, while participation in decision-making remains shallow. It recommends that Dokolo District Local Government involve communities in project identification and budgeting, institutionalize information sharing and post-project monitoring, and continue capacity building for community project management committees.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0: Introduction

The sustainability of development projects has emerged as a critical goal for governments and stakeholders, emphasizing the need for long-term impacts from public initiatives that extend beyond their initial phases. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 17, highlight the importance of inclusive partnerships, while the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness promotes national and community ownership, alongside mutual accountability, to enhance sustainability. In Uganda, the Third National Development Plan (NDP III) prioritizes community participation and ownership in project implementation to ensure their sustainability. This study examines the relationship between community participation and the sustainability of projects in selected sub-counties of Dokolo District. This chapter includes the introduction, background of the study, statement of the problem, study objectives, research questions, scope of the study, significance of the study, conceptual framework, and operational definitions

1.1: Background of the Study

In its simplest form, sustainability refers to the ability to maintain activities or processes over an indefinite period, ensuring that the benefits generated today can continue to serve future generations. This concept applies across economic, social, and environmental domains, each discipline offering its own interpretation. The United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (United Nations, 1987), also known as the Brundtland Commission, defines sustainable development as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In the context of government projects, sustainability goes beyond completing physical works; it involves ensuring that these interventions remain functional, relevant, and beneficial long after the initial funding and external support have ended.

Globally, the sustainability of government projects has become a pressing concern despite increasing investments in public infrastructure, social services, and community development.

The United Nations and the World Bank emphasize that without long-term sustainability, projects risk becoming “white elephants”, visible but non-functional after completion (World Bank, 2024). Current statistics reveal worrying trends. In terms of social inclusion, only about 60% of projects worldwide achieve inclusive benefits for marginalized groups, while in financial terms nearly 35% of government-funded projects fail to generate sufficient returns to cover operational costs after completion (Avalos et al., 2023). On environmental safeguards, UNEP (2023) reports that more than 40% of major infrastructure projects globally face sustainability risks due to weak environmental safeguards. In terms of governance, Transparency International (2022) shows that corruption and poor accountability undermine project sustainability, with over 50% of developing countries ranking below average in project-related transparency. Lastly, regarding monitoring and evaluation (M&E), OECD reviews indicate that fewer than 45% of projects globally undergo rigorous post-implementation evaluations, thereby weakening institutional learning and sustainability (OECD, 2022). These trends point to the need for community participation from the inception of government projects, so that communities gain the knowledge to hold implementers accountable and take ownership of the projects. Riswan (2022) argues that when communities are actively engaged in decision-making, project design, and oversight, the likelihood of long-term sustainability significantly increases. However, Chika Igbokwe et al. (2024) and Russon (2016) caution that participation, if poorly managed, can become tokenistic and fail to address deeper governance and power imbalances.

In Africa, the sustainability of government projects remains fragile. In social terms, poverty and inequality mean that project benefits often exclude vulnerable groups; the World Bank (2024) estimates that over 30% of projects collapse within five years due to weak community ownership. Financially, high debt burdens compromise continuity: by 2023, 22 African countries were at high risk of debt distress, limiting resources for project maintenance AFDB (2025). In addition, 45% of projects lack robust environmental safeguards, leading to land degradation and water stress (UNEP, 2024). Accountability remains problematic, with over 60% of Africans perceiving government projects as corrupt (Abou-Zeid, 2023). On monitoring and evaluation, only 40% of African countries have functional national M&E systems, resulting in limited evidence-based decision-making (UN, 2021). For projects to last, communities need to work hand in hand with project implementers. Kinyata and Abiodun (2020) showed that projects with active local committees and user associations are more likely to be maintained, while those

imposed without community input often decline after donor exit due to lack of ownership and accountability.

In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), sustainability challenges are even more acute. In terms of service delivery, over 50% of rural projects fail to provide equitable services such as education, health, or clean water beyond the funding cycle (World Bank, 2022). IMF reports that more than half of SSA countries are in debt distress or at high risk, making it difficult to sustain capital-intensive projects. At the same time, large-scale projects such as dams and mining ventures often leave behind significant ecological footprints, with UNEP (2022) estimating that over 35% of SSA's infrastructure projects cause long-term environmental stress (UNEP, 2025). Accountability is also weak: procurement corruption and elite capture contribute to losses of up to 25% of project budgets (Sobrinho & Thakoor, 2019). On M&E, less than one in two projects in SSA are evaluated post-implementation, undermining learning and sustainability (World Bank, 2025).

In sub-Saharan Africa, involving the community in government projects illustrates that community participation is essential for sustainability. According to Ananga et al. (2021), in South Africa, research in Tshwane, Gauteng, demonstrates that mobilizing community strengths and assets leads to sustainable livelihoods and project outcomes. Projects that harness local knowledge and foster inclusive participation are more resilient, while those with minimal community input often face challenges in maintenance and relevance.

In East Africa, governments have expanded investment in roads, energy, water, and social programs, yet sustainability remains mixed. Community involvement is often inadequate: studies show that only 55% of East African projects meet social inclusion standards (EAC, 2020). Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda have rising debt burdens, with debt-to-GDP ratios exceeding 50%, affecting the financing of project operations (United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 2024). While Kenya leads in renewable energy (geothermal, wind), regional deforestation rates remain among the highest in Africa, undermining long-term sustainability (Hako, 2024). Accountability challenges persist, with up to 30% of project funds lost to mismanagement and procurement corruption (Transparency International, 2022). In terms of M&E, Rwanda demonstrates best practice with strong performance monitoring, but regionally, less than 50% of government projects undergo systematic evaluation (EAC, 2020).

In the study of Walukano and Wanyonyi (2024) on Sustainability of donor funded food security projects in Kenya, shows that sustainability of project depend on the community involvement and participation in the project. The community participation in planning, implementation, and monitoring significantly enhances project sustainability. When local stakeholders are involved, projects are more likely to be accepted, maintained, and adapted to emerging needs. Bakari and Mbunda (2022) in their study in Tanzania's rural water supply projects have demonstrated that participatory management, where local water user committees oversee operations and maintenance improved functionality and reduced failure rates compared to projects managed solely by government agencies. In Rwanda, the study conducted by Niyihaba & Daniel (2025) highlighted that community engagement in monitoring and evaluation is linked to the long-term success of development projects. Demonstrating high impact of community participation in project sustainability beyond its inception.

At the national level, Uganda has adopted frameworks such as Vision 2040 and the National Development Plan III, emphasizing sustainable development. Yet, sustainability gaps are evident. Many projects struggle to empower women and youth, with statistics indicating that only 48% of projects meet their gender and inclusivity targets (National Planning Authority (NPA), 2020). Uganda's public debt reached over 50% of GDP by 2023, limiting fiscal space for project maintenance (MoFPED, 2024). NEMA reports that wetland coverage dropped from 15% in 1994 to below 9% in 2022, reflecting unsustainable project activities (NEMA, 2022). Accountability also remains a challenge: Transparency International ranked Uganda 142 out of 180 countries, with corruption scandals undermining project outcomes (Transparency International, 2023). On M&E, although Uganda produces the annual Government Performance Report, the Auditor General (2022) revealed that nearly 40% of government projects lack baseline data or proper evaluations, threatening sustainability.

Amani et al. (2023) highlight that sustainability is closely tied to the degree of community involvement in planning, decision-making, and ongoing management. Projects that actively involve beneficiaries in identifying needs and solutions are more likely to endure. In Kasese District Western Uganda, the study by Esau et al. (2025) found that although community participation is a crucial factor in determining project sustainability beyond initiation, actual involvement levels are often low, which correlates with poor sustainability of water projects and their study recommends clear protocols and structures to enhance community engagement for better outcomes.

In Northern Uganda, sustainability is particularly fragile due to the region's conflict history and high poverty levels. Projects such as the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) have increased community access to services, but over 35% of completed community facilities become non-functional within five years due to low ownership (World Bank, 2021). While the Parish Development Model (PDM) targets poverty reduction, limited financial literacy and weak market access threaten sustainability, with evidence showing that more than half of micro-projects collapse once external support ends (World Bank, 2024b). Heavy reliance on natural resources has also caused severe degradation: district reports estimate that over 60% of households in Lango sub-region depend on charcoal burning, compromising ecological sustainability (Cooper, 2018). Accountability is constrained by elite capture, with communities reporting mismanagement in nearly 25% of local projects (World Bank, 2017). On M&E, local governments face capacity gaps, with less than 40% of projects in the region properly monitored, leading to weak learning and unsustained outcomes (Mbabazi & Nkwatsibwe, 2024).

A study on the Northern Uganda Youth Entrepreneurship Project (NUYEP) found a significant positive correlation between community participation in planning, implementation, and monitoring, and project sustainability, explaining 52.1% of the variation in sustainability outcomes (Tumuhairwe et al., 2024). The research on Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) indicates that community engagement and commitment are essential for the sustainability of PPP projects, with community commitment mediating the relationship between engagement and sustainability (Mwesigwa et al., 2024).

Evidence from Uganda also identifies the conditions under which participation sustains projects. Kiwanuka et al. (2015) showed that community involvement and contributions significantly enhanced the sustainability of interventions under the Northern Uganda Rural Water and Sanitation project, while Aganyira et al. (2020) found that community involvement in sustaining government projects depends on factors such as age, land ownership and access to resources. Collins (2024) adds that public involvement made environmental governance in Uganda more effective, although limited access to information still hinders meaningful engagement.

Participation alone, however, does not guarantee sustainability. Communities often lack access to information and transparent decision-making processes (Reindrawati, 2023), monitoring and evaluation are costly and demand resources that local actors rarely have (Iddi & Nuhu, 2018), and low education levels, particularly among women, limit effective participation in project

management (Lungo et al., 2017). Conversely, where communities take part in decisions and mobilise local resources, they develop the ownership needed to sustain project activities (Aumaa & Mulonzi, 2017; Hussain & Miraj, 2018; Loparimoi & Ng'eno, 2017).

In summary, although many government projects have been launched, their sustainability across social, economic and environmental dimensions remains fragile, and the evidence links this fragility to the depth of community participation. The researcher therefore contends that weak sustainability of government projects is not only a resource or policy issue but also a participation gap, which justifies a study of the relationship between community participation and the sustainability of NUSAF III projects in Dokolo District.

1.2: Problem Statement

Community participation is expected to make government projects sustainable because it builds local ownership, accountability and relevance (Agaba & Turyasingura, 2023; Rukundo, 2019). For this reason, the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund III (NUSAF III) was designed as a community-driven project in which communities would identify, implement and maintain their own subprojects, and Uganda's Third National Development Plan (NDP III) prioritizes community participation and ownership as conditions for sustaining public investments.

In practice, however, many NUSAF III investments in Dokolo District have not lasted. The NUSAF III end of project report (2022) indicates that essential NUSAF III-funded initiatives in the district collapsed within two years of implementation: community water points are no longer functional, agricultural demonstration sites have closed, some beneficiary groups have disintegrated, and some community access roads are poorly maintained or abandoned. This mirrors the wider situation in Northern Uganda, where over one-third of community facilities become non-functional within five years of completion (Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa [AGRA], 2020).

Participation in such projects is often superficial: communities are engaged mainly at the mobilization stage but excluded from decision-making, oversight and evaluation. As a result, communities neither feel responsible for the upkeep of the facilities nor are empowered to hold leaders accountable, leading to wasted public resources, stalled development and persistent poverty in a region where livelihoods depend heavily on public projects. Although participation and sustainability have been studied separately, there is limited empirical evidence on which

dimensions of participation sustain NUSAF III projects in Dokolo District, or on how the decentralization policy framework shapes this relationship. This study therefore investigated the relationship between community participation and the sustainability of NUSAF III projects in Dokolo District.

1.3: Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between community participation and the sustainability of NUSAF III projects in Dokolo District.

1.4: Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of community participation in NUSAF III projects in Dokolo district.
2. To examine the extent of sustainability of NUSAF III projects in Dokolo district.
3. To examine the relationship between community participation and the sustainability of NUSAF III projects in Dokolo district.
4. To establish the influence of the government policy framework on the relationship between community participation and the sustainability of NUSAF III projects in Dokolo district.

1.5: Research Questions

1. What is the level of community participation in NUSAF III projects in Dokolo district?
2. What is the extent of sustainability of NUSAF III projects in Dokolo district?
3. What is the relationship between community participation and the sustainability of NUSAF III projects in Dokolo district?
4. What is the influence of the government policy framework on the relationship between community participation and the sustainability of NUSAF III projects in Dokolo district?

1.6: Scope of the Study

The scope of the study covers content, geographical and time scope, as presented below.

1.6.1: Content Scope

The study focused on the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund III (NUSAF III), a five-year government project implemented by the Office of the Prime Minister with a World Bank IDA credit of US\$130 million, which became effective in March 2016. Its development objective was to provide effective income support to, and build the resilience of, poor and vulnerable households in Northern Uganda. The project had four components: Labour-Intensive Public Works and Disaster Risk Financing; Livelihood Investment Support, comprising the Improved Household Investment Support Programme and the Sustainable Livelihood Pilot; Strengthened Transparency, Accountability and Anti-Corruption; and Safety Net Mechanisms and Project Management (Office of the Prime Minister, 2017; World Bank, 2021).

Within Dokolo District, the study covered the community subprojects funded under NUSAF III, namely community water points, agricultural demonstration sites, livelihood and beneficiary group investments, and community access roads. In terms of content, the study examined community participation (the independent variable) through four dimensions: participatory decision-making, collaboration, empowerment and information sharing. It examined project sustainability (the dependent variable) through its social, economic and environmental dimensions, and the government policy framework (the moderating variable) through the effectiveness of the decentralization policy. Other determinants of sustainability, such as funding levels and technical design, were outside the scope of the study.

1.6.2: Geographical Scope

The study was conducted in Dokolo District in the Lango sub-region of Northern Uganda. The district lies approximately 60 kilometres by road southeast of Lira City and about 334 kilometres northeast of Kampala, along the Lira–Soroti highway. The study covered four sub-counties, namely Batta, Adok, Kangai and Okwongodul, which were selected because they hosted NUSAF III subprojects and had the largest numbers of project beneficiaries in the district. The district's rural, farming-based economy and its decentralized local government structures make it a suitable setting for examining how communities and local governments sustain community-driven projects.

1.6.3: Time Scope

The study covered the period from 2017 to 2021, which corresponds to the implementation of NUSAF III subprojects in Dokolo District. This period allowed the study to capture how communities participated during implementation and whether the benefits continued after the subprojects were handed over. Field data were collected after implementation had ended, which made it possible to assess post-implementation sustainability.

1.7: Significance of the Study

This study on community participation and the sustainability of government projects in Northern Uganda holds significant implications for both academic research and practical development.

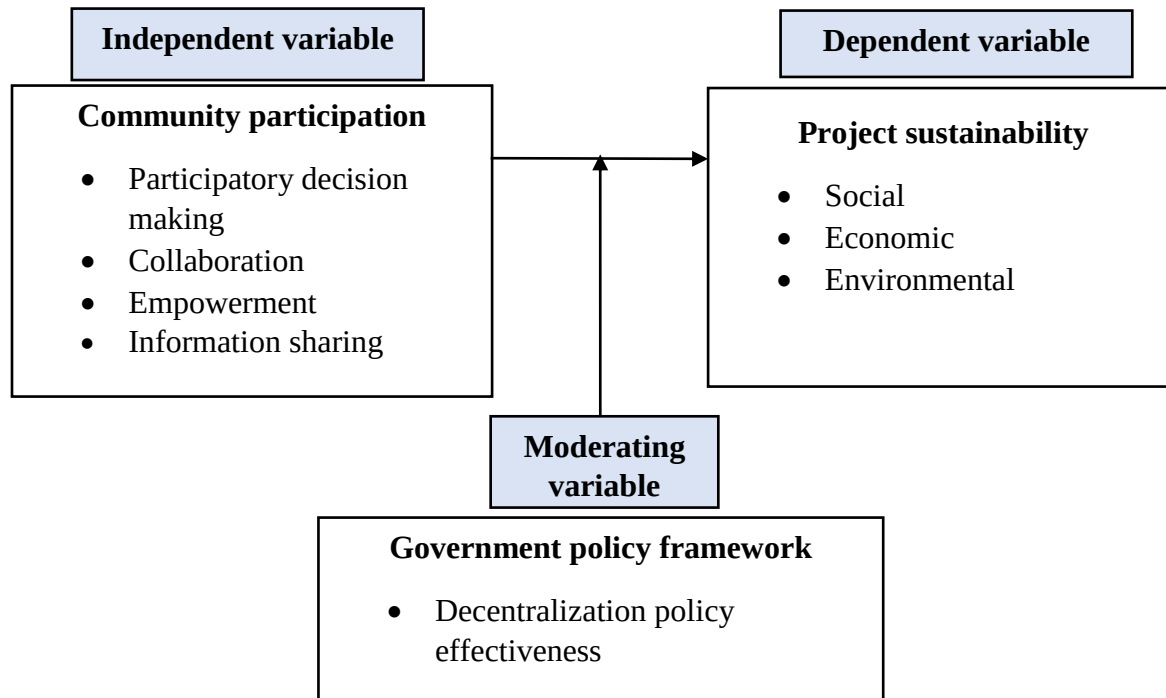
Academically, it contributes to the broader discourse on participatory development by providing empirical evidence from a specific and critical context of Northern Uganda. Understanding how community involvement impacts the sustainability of government projects helps bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical implementation. The study's insights into the factors influencing successful community engagement will enhance existing knowledge on participatory approaches and offer a valuable case study for scholars and practitioners working in similar contexts.

Practically, the findings of this study have the potential to drive improvements in the design and execution of development projects. By identifying the challenges and opportunities associated with community participation in government projects, the research will provide actionable recommendations for policymakers and development agencies. These recommendations can help refine strategies to ensure that community voices are effectively integrated into project planning and execution, thereby enhancing project sustainability and impact. Ultimately, this study aims to support more effective development practices that contribute to the long-term socio-economic improvement of communities in Northern Uganda, aligning with broader goals of poverty alleviation and sustainable development.

1.8: Conceptual Framework

To understand the relationship between community participation and project sustainability, the conceptual framework below was adopted.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework showing the relationship between community participation and sustainability of government projects



Source: Conceptual framework adopted from Mohamed (2017) and Ahmed et al. (2020), and modified by the researcher (2025)

Figure 1 show the relationships examined in this study. Community participation, the independent variable, is measured through four dimensions: participatory decision-making, collaboration, empowerment and information sharing. Project sustainability, the dependent variable, is measured through three dimensions: social sustainability (community ownership, trust, equity and cooperation), economic sustainability (continued income, enterprises and resilience to shocks) and environmental sustainability (natural resource management, conservation practices and environmental monitoring). The government policy framework, measured as decentralization policy effectiveness, is the moderating variable.

The framework links directly to the study objectives. Objective one assesses the level of each participation dimension, objective two examines the extent of each sustainability dimension, and objective three tests the effect of the participation dimensions on sustainability. Objective four

tests whether decentralization policy effectiveness, that is, the authority, financial control and monitoring responsibility held by local governments, strengthens the relationship between community participation and project sustainability. The framework assumes that participation builds the ownership and capacity communities need to sustain project benefits, and that this effect is stronger where local governments are able to support communities after handover (Ahmed et al., 2020; Mansuri & Rao, 2013).

1.9: Operational Definitions

Community participation refers to the process by which community members are actively involved in decision-making, planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating projects or policies that affect their lives. This participation can range from passive involvement to active engagement and control over development initiatives (Botes and Van Rensburg, 2000). In the context of this study, community participation refers to the active and meaningful involvement of local community members of Dokolo district in the planning, decision-making, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of NUSAF III project activities.

Project sustainability refers to the ability of a project to continue to deliver benefits to the target community for an extended period after the initial phase of the project has been completed (Aarseth et al., 2017). Sustainability is a critical goal of development projects, ensuring that the benefits of projects are not transient but continue to foster development and improve the quality of life in the community long after external funding has ceased (Carvalho & Rabechini, 2017). In this study, it refers to the ability of NUSAF III project outcomes to continue delivering intended benefits to the community over time, even after external funding and direct support have ended. It is conceptualized across three interrelated dimensions: social sustainability, which involves strengthened community cohesion, capacity, and ownership; economic sustainability, which relates to sustained income generation, livelihoods, and financial viability; and environmental sustainability, which focuses on the responsible management of natural resources and long-term ecological balance.

Sustainable development is the broader goal of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations, 1987). In this study, the Theory of Sustainable Development provides the theoretical lens, while the

variable measured and analyzed is project sustainability, that is, the continuation of NUSAF III benefits in Dokolo District.

Decentralization Policy is operationally defined as official government legal framework and practice of transferring decision-making authority, planning, implementation, and resource management responsibilities from central government institutions to local government units and community-based structures.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0: Introduction

This chapter presents a critical review of existing literature related to community participation and the sustainability of government projects. It explores theoretical foundations, and empirical studies relevant to the variables under investigation, structured based on the study objectives i.e., level of community participation in government projects, sustainability of government projects, relationship between community projects and the sustainability of government projects and effects of government policy on the relationship between community participation and the sustainability of government projects. It also identifies gaps in the literature, particularly around the contextual application of participatory approaches within Uganda's decentralized governance framework. By synthesizing these insights, the chapter builds a strong foundation for understanding the dynamics influencing the sustainability of the government project, thereby shaping the motivation and direction for the current study.

2.1: Theoretical Framework

2.1.1: Ladder of Citizen Participation Theory

The Ladder of Citizen Participation theory, developed by Sherry Arnstein in 1969, offers a powerful way to understand how citizens engage with development projects. Arnstein illustrated this engagement as an eight-step ladder, where each rung represents a different level of influence that community members can have over decisions that affect them. The lower rungs of manipulation and therapy represent situations where participation is merely symbolic. In contrast, the upper rungs of partnership, delegated power, and citizen control symbolize true community empowerment, where people play an active role in shaping the outcomes of development projects (Arnstein, 2019).

This theory assumes that real participation means giving people a voice and decision-making power, rather than simply informing or consulting them. Gaber (2020) further explains that the most meaningful form of participation happens when communities work side by side with project implementers, make key decisions, and take ownership of their development. For this to

happen, community members need the right skills and support, especially in areas where formal education and institutional structures may be limited.

Although the Ladder of Citizen Participation provides a useful lens for understanding levels of community involvement, its application in this study reveals several limitations, particularly its linear assumption that higher participation automatically leads to better outcomes and its limited attention to sustainability. In the context of NUSAF III projects in Dokolo District, participation alone does not guarantee long-term project success, especially where local capacity, resource constraints, and institutional dynamics influence implementation. The model also pays insufficient attention to the role of governance systems, such as decentralization, which significantly shape how participation is practiced and sustained. These gaps are addressed by the theory of sustainable development, which offers a more comprehensive and outcome-oriented perspective by linking participation to social, economic, and environmental sustainability. Within this study, the sustainable development perspective strengthens the analytical framework by emphasizing that meaningful community participation must be supported by strong institutions, capacity building, and policy structures to translate into enduring project benefits.

2.1.2: Theory of Sustainable Development

The Theory of Sustainable Development advanced by Enders and Remig (2015) offers a compelling framework for rethinking how long-term development goals can be realized in communities through inclusive and equitable approaches. Their theory moves beyond traditional growth models and urges a transformation toward development that balances environmental sustainability, social justice, and economic equity (Shi et al., 2019). Central to their argument is the belief that sustainability cannot be achieved without meaningful community participation and institutional reform. This theory emphasizes that development should not merely be about economic expansion, but also about empowering communities to take ownership of the processes that shape their future.

This theory has been applied in several studies related to participatory governance, community-led development (Chipango & To, 2024; Göçoğlu et al., 2025) , including project sustainability in Nigeria (Uche et al., 2023). Furthermore, Kelvin (2024) highlighted that informed frameworks for grassroots project implementation enhance long-term project sustainability.

In this study of community participation and the sustainability of NUSAF III projects in Dokolo District, the theory provides critical insight. It supports the idea that the long-term success of projects depends not only on financial input or infrastructure but on how well community members are involved in decision-making, planning, implementation, and monitoring. The theory explains why many government initiatives collapse after donor funding ends, because the people they are meant to benefit were never truly empowered to sustain them.

While the theory presents strong ethical and philosophical arguments, it does face criticism for lacking clear tools to measure sustainability practically in low-income contexts (Göçoğlu et al., 2025). However, its emphasis on equity, local empowerment, and participatory governance makes it highly relevant for understanding the challenges facing NUSAF III projects in Northern Uganda. Integrating this theory into this study helps explain the vital link between sustainable development and grassroots participation, an essential aspect of ensuring long-lasting community transformation.

2.2.0: Community participation

Community participation is widely recognized as a vital pillar in the success and long-term sustainability of development projects. Rijal (2023) emphasize that when local communities are genuinely involved in planning, implementing, and monitoring development initiatives, they are more likely to develop a sense of ownership, responsibility, and commitment to those projects. This is particularly relevant in rural and post-conflict areas like Northern Uganda, where participatory approaches are not just empowering, but also essential in ensuring that interventions address real community needs and can adapt to local contexts. Singh et al. (2017), in their study of community participation in health services development, highlight that effective community participation improves transparency, reduces the risk of elite capture, and fosters unity among community member's key ingredients for sustaining project outcomes even after external support ends. Similarly, findings from Kinyata and Abiodun (2020) show that projects that actively involve community members tend to achieve better results and remain functional longer, even with limited follow-up from implementing agencies.

2.2.1: Participatory Decision-Making

Participatory decision-making is a crucial element in the management and success of development projects, as it involves actively engaging stakeholders, particularly community members, in the decision-making processes that affect their lives Karunarathne and Shyamali (2025). This approach is grounded in the belief that including local voices leads to more effective and sustainable outcomes by ensuring that projects are tailored to the actual needs and preferences of the community (Li, 2006). In the context of government projects, participatory decision-making can significantly enhance project relevance and effectiveness by incorporating local knowledge and priorities into project design and implementation. When community members are involved in decision-making, they are more likely to take ownership of the project, contribute their resources, and work toward its success, thereby increasing the likelihood of sustainability (Sierra et al., 2018).

Recent research has demonstrated the benefits of participatory decision-making in various development contexts. For instance, studies have shown that projects with high levels of local involvement experience improved project outcomes and greater sustainability (Pretty et al., 2020). Participatory decision-making not only fosters trust and cooperation between project implementers and community members but also helps to identify and address potential issues early in the project cycle (Karunarathne & Shyamali, 2025). By actively engaging communities in the decision-making process, government projects in Northern Uganda can better align with local needs and aspirations, ultimately leading to more effective and enduring development impacts (World Bank, 2021).

Taken together, these studies agree that involving communities in decisions improves the relevance of projects, but they differ on how much real authority communities hold. Most of the evidence measures consultation, such as attending meetings, rather than influence over final choices, which Arnstein (2019) would place at the tokenistic rungs of the ladder. Recent Ugandan evidence supports this concern: Twinomujuni et al. (2023) found that nominal participation significantly reduced service delivery in selected local governments, while Tumuhairwe et al. (2024) found that participation in planning, implementation and monitoring explained 52.1% of the variation in the sustainability of a Northern Uganda youth livelihood project. The literature therefore leaves open whether decision-making that is mainly consultative is enough to sustain projects, which this study tests for NUSAF III.

2.2.2: Collaboration

Community participation and collaboration are fundamental to the success and sustainability of government projects, as they leverage local knowledge, resources, and networks to achieve project goals. Community participation involves engaging local stakeholders in various stages of project development, from planning to implementation and evaluation (Mia et al., 2022). This engagement ensures that projects are responsive to the actual needs and preferences of the community, leading to more relevant and impactful outcomes (Cleary et al., 2014). Collaboration extends beyond mere participation; it encompasses active partnerships between communities, government agencies, and other stakeholders. Effective collaboration can enhance resource sharing, build mutual trust, and foster a sense of shared ownership, which are crucial for the long-term success and sustainability of projects (Atkins et al., 2020).

Recent studies emphasize that collaborative approaches to community development can significantly improve project effectiveness and sustainability. For example, research has shown that collaborative governance, which involves multiple stakeholders working together towards common goals, can lead to more innovative solutions and increased project sustainability (Ansell & Gash, 2018). In the context of government projects in Northern Uganda, fostering strong collaboration between community members, local authorities, and project implementers is vital. Such collaboration can facilitate better project outcomes by integrating diverse perspectives, enhancing problem-solving capacities, and ensuring that projects are well-supported by all relevant parties (Eyisi et al., 2021). This collaborative approach is essential for addressing complex development challenges and achieving lasting impacts in the community (Mia et al., 2022).

A critical reading of this literature shows that collaboration is often reported as present but rarely examined for its effect once implementers leave. Studies such as Ansell and Gash (2018) and Atkins et al. (2020) describe collaboration during implementation, while recent work on public–private partnership projects in Uganda shows that community engagement sustains projects mainly through the commitment it creates (Mwesigwa et al., 2024). This suggests that collaboration may support sustainability indirectly rather than directly, a proposition the present study examines by testing collaboration alongside the other participation dimensions.

2.2.3: Empowerment

Community participation is closely linked to the concept of empowerment, which involves enabling individuals and groups to gain control over their own lives and the resources that affect them. In the context of government projects like the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund III, meaningful community participation is a key mechanism for empowerment. When communities are actively involved in decision-making processes, they acquire skills, knowledge, and confidence that enhance their ability to influence project outcomes and advocate for their needs (Luisi & Hämel, 2021). This empowerment not only strengthens local capacity but also fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the project's success, leading to more sustainable outcomes (Atisa et al., 2021).

Recent research highlights the significant impact of community participation on empowerment outcomes. For instance, studies have shown that when community members are engaged in project planning and implementation, they are more likely to experience increased self-efficacy and a greater sense of agency (Adamson, 2010). This sense of empowerment is crucial for ensuring that projects are not only effective in the short term but also sustainable in the long run (Singh et al., 2017). In Northern Uganda, enhancing community participation through government projects can thus serve as a powerful tool for local empowerment, enabling communities to better manage and sustain development initiatives while addressing their unique challenges (Belaid et al., 2021).

The empowerment literature is consistent in linking skills, confidence and access to resources to sustained project benefits, but much of it is conceptual or drawn from health and urban programmes (Adamson, 2010; Luisi & Hämel, 2021). Fewer studies measure empowerment as a separate dimension of participation in government community-driven projects, and fewer still compare its effect with that of decision-making or collaboration. This study addresses that gap by estimating the unique contribution of empowerment to the sustainability of NUSAF III projects.

2.2.4: Information Sharing

Community participation is intrinsically linked to effective information sharing, which is essential for the successful implementation and sustainability of development projects. Information sharing involves the dissemination of relevant project details, progress updates, and feedback channels between project implementers and community members. When communities are actively engaged in this exchange of information, they are better informed about the project's goals, processes, and expected outcomes, which enhances their ability to contribute effectively and make informed decisions (Hacker et al., 2012). The government projects in Northern Uganda, robust information-sharing practices can facilitate greater transparency and trust, ensuring that community members are aware of how their input is being utilized and how the project impacts their lives.

Recent studies have underscored the significance of information sharing in fostering community participation and enhancing project outcomes. Research has shown that projects with transparent communication strategies experience higher levels of community engagement and satisfaction (Slingerland et al., 2020). For example, effective information sharing can mitigate misunderstandings and conflicts, allowing for smoother project implementation and increased community support (Nelwamondo & Njenga, 2021). In Northern Uganda, where community involvement is crucial for the success of government projects, establishing clear and open channels for information exchange can significantly improve both the quality of participation and the sustainability of the projects.

There is broad agreement that transparent information flows build trust and reduce conflict (Nelwamondo & Njenga, 2021; Slingerland et al., 2020). However, the literature tends to treat information sharing as part of good project management rather than as a dimension of participation with its own effect on sustainability. Evidence from community water projects in Mbarara shows that participation across project stages significantly influences sustainability (Mpola et al., 2023), but it does not isolate the role of information. The present study therefore tests information sharing as a distinct predictor.

2.3.0: Project sustainability

This concept of sustainability encompasses various dimensions, including financial stability, institutional capacity, and social acceptance. For government projects such as NUSAF III in Northern Uganda, sustainability is crucial to ensure that the benefits of the projects endure beyond the immediate term. Achieving sustainability involves not only securing ongoing financial resources but also building local capacities and fostering community ownership and support (Uche et al., 2023). Research indicates that projects with strong community involvement and effective management practices are more likely to achieve sustainable outcomes by integrating local knowledge and addressing community needs (Morais et al., 2006; Ochunga, 2016).

Recent studies emphasize the importance of a comprehensive approach to project sustainability. For example, a study by Muniu et al. (2017) highlights that successful projects often employ strategies such as developing local partnerships, enhancing community engagement, and adapting to changing circumstances to maintain their impact (Ofuoku, 2011). Furthermore, sustainability is supported by creating mechanisms for continuous monitoring and evaluation, which help in assessing project performance and making necessary adjustments (Muniu, 2017). In the case of NUSAF III projects, focusing on these elements will be essential for ensuring that the initiatives not only achieve their goals but also provide lasting benefits to the communities in Northern Uganda.

2.3.1: Social Sustainability

Social sustainability is a critical aspect of overall project sustainability, focusing on the capacity of a project to contribute to the social well-being and cohesion of communities over time. It encompasses aspects such as social equity, community empowerment, and the enhancement of social capital. In the context of government projects in Northern Uganda, social sustainability involves ensuring that the benefits of the projects are distributed equitably among different community groups, fostering social inclusion, and strengthening local institutions and networks (Dempsey et al., 2011). By promoting social sustainability, projects can help to build resilient communities that are better equipped to manage future challenges and sustain the project's benefits in the long run.

Recent research underscores the significance of integrating social sustainability principles into development projects. For instance, a study by Agyeman et al. (2016) highlights that projects that prioritize social equity and community engagement are more likely to achieve positive and lasting impacts. This involves actively addressing issues of social disparity, ensuring that marginalized groups have a voice in decision-making processes, and creating opportunities for local leadership and participation (Kaur & Sharma, 2018). For government projects, focusing on these elements can enhance their social impact and ensure that the projects contribute to the broader goal of sustainable community development in Northern Uganda.

2.3.2: Economic Sustainability

Economic sustainability is pivotal for ensuring that development projects continue to provide benefits over the long term without requiring perpetual external funding. This concept involves the creation of financial systems and strategies that support the ongoing viability and resilience of a project. In the context of government projects in Northern Uganda, economic sustainability means implementing strategies that enable projects to generate sufficient revenue or cost savings to cover their operational costs after initial funding ends. This can include developing income-generating activities, establishing local financial management systems, and fostering economic self-reliance among community members (Zinchuk et al., 2018; Orboi, 2012). Economic sustainability is essential for ensuring that the benefits of government projects persist and that they contribute to broader economic development goals.

Recent research highlights various approaches to achieving economic sustainability in development projects. For example, a study by Elkington et al. (2019) emphasizes the importance of integrating economic considerations into project planning, such as assessing cost-benefit ratios and leveraging local resources. Additionally, sustainable financial models, such as microfinance and community-based savings schemes, have been shown to enhance project sustainability by providing ongoing funding and reducing dependency on external aid (Lynch, 2020). In Northern Uganda, adopting these economic sustainability practices can help government projects maintain their impact and contribute to the long-term economic stability of the communities they serve.

2.3.3: Environmental Sustainability

Community engagement plays a crucial role in achieving environmental sustainability in government projects by fostering a sense of ownership, enhancing resource management, and ensuring long-term project success. Engaging communities in the planning, implementation, and monitoring phases of projects not only improves their sustainability but also aligns the projects with local needs and conditions. This participatory approach is essential in various sectors, including forestry, urban regeneration, and water management, as it helps mitigate environmental degradation and promotes conservation efforts (Tumuhairwe et al., 2024).

According to Siregar (2022), community involvement in forestry projects in the Indonesian forestry sector, helps prevent forest destruction and promotes conservation by raising public awareness about the importance of sustainable resource management. On the same note, Twinamasiko and Ahimbisibwe (2013) in their study of water and sanitation projects, affirmed that forming community committees is vital in managing resources effectively, although challenges such as low education and motivation can hinder success

In the study of urban regeneration projects by Park et al. (2025), sustainable community participation fosters a sense of ownership, which is crucial for long-term project success and stakeholder engagement. Jaafar et al. (2021), community participation in biosphere reserves, such as the proposed Penang Hill Biosphere Reserve, helps mitigate threats related to climate and human changes by enhancing conservation efforts and potentially gaining recognition from international programs.

While community participation is pivotal for environmental sustainability, challenges such as ineffective cooperation strategies, unequal interest distribution, and limited community engagement can impede its success. Addressing these barriers through improved communication, education, and motivation strategies is essential for maximizing the benefits of community participation in government projects (Park et al., 2025; Twinamasiko & Ahimbisibwe, 2013).

Across the three dimensions, the literature agrees that social, economic and environmental sustainability are interdependent, yet most empirical studies measure only one of them, commonly the functionality of water points or the survival of livelihood groups (Amani et al., 2023; Esau et al., 2025; Walukano & Wanyonyi, 2024). Studies that assess all three dimensions

together for the same project are scarce in Northern Uganda. Measuring the three dimensions for NUSAF III allows this study to show where sustainability is strong and where it is weak.

2.4.0: Government Policy Framework

The government policy framework plays a pivotal role in shaping the effectiveness and sustainability of development projects by setting regulatory standards, providing funding, and creating an enabling environment for project implementation. In Uganda, policies related to community participation and project management are crucial for the success of initiatives like the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund III. This framework includes national policies on decentralization which is designed to enhance local governance, empower communities, and ensure that development efforts are aligned with national priorities (Mushemeza, 2019). Effective policies support the integration of community feedback into project planning and execution, thereby increasing the likelihood of achieving sustainable outcomes.

Recent literature highlights the importance of a coherent policy framework in ensuring the success of development projects. For example, research by Wood (2012) underscores that well-designed policies can enhance community engagement and improve project outcomes by creating clear guidelines for participation and accountability. Moreover, effective government policies can facilitate resource allocation, support capacity building, and foster partnerships between government bodies and local stakeholders (Hopkins et al., 2021). Aligning project objectives with existing government policies and frameworks can strengthen the project's impact and sustainability by ensuring that it operates within a supportive and structured environment. Decentralization is a key policy approach that aims to enhance governance, improve service delivery, and promote community engagement by distributing authority and resources from central to local governments. In Uganda, the decentralization policy is central to the implementation of projects like the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund III, as it empowers local authorities and communities to participate more actively in decision-making processes. This policy framework is designed to foster local ownership, enhance responsiveness to local needs, and improve the effectiveness of development initiatives by placing control closer to the people they impact (Green, 2018). By devolving responsibilities and resources, decentralization seeks to ensure that development projects are more attuned to local contexts and priorities, thereby increasing their sustainability and impact.

Recent research underscores the significance of decentralization in strengthening local governance and project outcomes. For instance, studies have shown that decentralization can lead to more effective community participation and greater project ownership, as local authorities are better positioned to understand and address community needs (Brisbois, 2020). Additionally, decentralization can improve transparency and accountability, as decision-making processes become more accessible to local stakeholders (Be-Ere, 2022). In the case of government projects, leveraging the decentralization policy can enhance the project's effectiveness by ensuring that it aligns with local priorities and engages communities in meaningful ways, contributing to more sustainable development outcomes.

The literature on decentralization is divided. Some studies argue that decentralization deepens participation and ownership (Brisbois, 2020; Green, 2018), while others find that weak local capacity and nominal participation can reduce service delivery under decentralized arrangements (Twinomujuni et al., 2023). This disagreement suggests that the effect of participation on sustainability may depend on how effectively decentralization works in practice, which is why this study treats decentralization policy effectiveness as a moderating variable.

2.5.0: Summary of Literature Review

The reviewed literature underscores that community participation has long been recognized as a central determinant of sustainable development projects. Scholars such as Arnstein (2019) and Rijal (2023) agree that when communities are engaged through participatory decision-making, collaboration, empowerment, and information sharing, projects are more likely to achieve long-term success. However, evidence from Uganda suggests that participation is often shallow, with communities mobilized for implementation but excluded from design, monitoring, and decision-making (Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER), 2018).

The reviewed literature reveals persistent weaknesses in government projects globally, in Africa, and in Uganda across social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Eja and Ramegowda (2020) and Chima Okereke (2017) reported that nearly a third of development projects collapse within five years, while in Uganda, according to the Infrastructure Transparency Initiatives (ITI) (2021), 40% of projects lack long-term financing and maintenance frameworks. In Northern Uganda, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) (2023) found that over one-third of facilities were non-functional shortly after completion.

The reviewed works also show a consensus that participation strengthens sustainability by fostering ownership, accountability, and capacity building (Singh et al., 2017; Pandey and Kumar, 2019). However, empirical evidence linking specific participation practices such as empowerment or information sharing to measurable sustainability outcomes remains limited, particularly in the Ugandan context. This lack of empirical testing highlights the need to examine the relationship between community participation and project sustainability.

Moderating factors such as accountability, transparency, and monitoring and evaluation are often discussed as essential governance mechanisms (Infrastructure Transparency Initiatives (ITI) (2021). Yet few studies analyze how this policy frameworks influence the strength of the participation-sustainability relationship. In Uganda, Kaddu et al. (2023) noted gaps in policy enforcement and monitoring systems, yet little is known about their impact on sustaining projects. This creates space for research that establishes the influence of government policy frameworks on participation and sustainability.

In summary, the literature agrees that participation matters for sustainability but leaves four gaps that this study addresses. First, the actual depth of participation in Ugandan government projects is unclear, since most studies measure attendance rather than influence. Second, the sustainability of completed community-driven projects is rarely assessed across social, economic and environmental dimensions at the same time. Third, few studies test which specific dimensions of participation drive sustainability. Fourth, the moderating role of the decentralization policy framework has not been tested empirically for NUSAF III projects.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0: Introduction

This section discusses the methodology that was used to conduct the study. It covers research design, approach, data collection methods, tools, procedure, validity and reliability of tools, data analysis, limitations and delimitations, and ethical considerations.

3.1: Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional descriptive research design, which is deemed appropriate for exploring the influence of community participation on the sustainability of NUSAF III projects in Dokolo District. The cross-sectional element of the design was to enable the researcher to collect data from a sample of the population at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of the existing conditions and relationships between the study variables. Sekaran (2003) notes that a cross-sectional study was effective for examining current phenomena within a specific timeframe, especially when time and resources are limited. Given that this study was being conducted within a defined research period, this design aligns well with the study's objectives.

The descriptive component of the design was to help generate detailed information on key aspects of community participation, such as participatory decision-making, collaboration, empowerment, and information sharing, and how these influence different dimensions of sustainability, namely social, economic and environmental sustainability. As Creswell (2009) emphasizes that descriptive research is ideal for capturing and interpreting the views and experiences of individuals regarding specific phenomena, making it suitable for this study's context. Thomas (2011) further supported the use of descriptive design in development research, noting its ability to reveal patterns that can guide planning and implementation.

3.2: Research Approach

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach, which combines both quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide a more holistic understanding of how community participation influences the sustainability of government projects, with specific reference to government projects in Dokolo District. A mixed-methods approach was particularly useful in development research because it allows for the convergence of numerical trends and rich contextual insights, thus improving the comprehensiveness and credibility of the findings (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2018).

The quantitative component of the study involves the collection and analysis of numerical data to determine the level of community participation and the extent of project sustainability. This was operationalized through structured questionnaires distributed to selected community members and project beneficiaries. The aim was to measure the frequency, intensity, and coverage of participatory practices and to identify statistical relationships between community engagement and sustainability indicators. Quantitative analysis was to help establish generalizable patterns and correlations that inform the overall project evaluation.

The qualitative component, on the other hand, delved into the perceptions, motivations, and experiences of stakeholders involved in government projects. It was operationalized through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with local leaders and government officials and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with project beneficiaries and the community project management committee. This approach was intended to uncover underlying contextual factors, barriers, and enablers that influence both participation and sustainability dimensions that may not be captured through quantitative metrics alone.

3.3: Study Population

The study population comprised 849 people in the four selected sub-counties, made up of six specific categories (Table 3.1): 717 NUSAF III project beneficiaries, 36 members of the community project management committees of the NUSAF III subprojects, 56 members of the sub-county technical planning committees, 20 members of the sub-county executive committees, 15 members of the district technical planning committee and five members of the district executive committee (Dokolo District Local Government, 2025).

The 56 sub-county technical planning committee members are the technical staff of the four sub-counties, an average of 14 per sub-county, including sub-county chiefs, community development officers, parish chiefs and agricultural extension staff who supervised NUSAF III subprojects. The 20 sub-county executive committee members are the elected Local Council III executives of the four sub-counties, an average of five per sub-county. The district technical planning committee comprises the Chief Administrative Officer and heads of departments, while the district executive committee comprises the elected district executive. Beneficiaries provided the quantitative data, while the leaders and committee members were key informants and focus group participants.

3.4: Sample Size Determination and Sampling Procedure

3.4.1: Sample Size Determination

The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table (Appendix V). For an accessible population of 849, the table gives a sample of 265 respondents, distributed across the categories as shown in Table 3.2. Of the 265 sampled respondents, 238 returned completed questionnaires, and 27 did not respond, giving a response rate of 89.8%.

Table 3. 1: Categories of the Study Population

S/No	Category	Accessible population	Sampling technique	Data collection method
1	District technical planning committee	15	Purposive sampling	KIIs
2	District executive committee	05	Purposive sampling	KIIs
3	Sub-county technical planning committee	56	Purposive sampling	KIIs and FDG
4	Sub-county executive committee	20	Purposive sampling	KIIs and FDG
5	Community project management committee	36	Purposive sampling	FGD
6	Project beneficiaries in the four selected sub-counties	717	Simple random sampling	Questionnaire
Total		849		

Source: Dokolo District Local Government Report (2025) and modified by researcher (2025)

3.4.2: Sampling Procedure

This study adopted a multistage sampling procedure to ensure a representative and relevant selection of respondents from the target population. In the first stage, purposive selection of four sub-counties in Dokolo District Batta, Kangai, Okwongodul, and Adok was done based on their varying levels of community participation and active involvement in the implementation of NUSAF III project. These sub-counties were identified through consultations with local government officials and government project records. According to Dokolo District Local Government reports, Batta had the highest number of project beneficiaries, followed by Adok, Kangai, and Okwongodul. Their inclusion was to allow comparison of project sustainability outcomes across different socio-economic and implementation contexts.

In the second stage, simple random sampling was used to select individual respondents (beneficiaries and community project management committee) from each of the identified sub-counties. Lists of project beneficiaries were obtained from sub-county community development offices and used as sampling frames. From each list, a proportionate number of respondents were randomly selected to ensure equal representation across the sub-counties, thus minimizing bias and enhancing the generalizability of the findings.

Additionally, purposive sampling was applied to select key informants, such as sub-county chiefs, community development officers, parish chiefs, and others. These individuals possess knowledge and experience related to community participation and project implementation, making them essential for qualitative insights.

The multistage sampling involved stratifying these populations by community roles (e.g., project beneficiaries, local leaders) and then randomly selecting participants within each stratum to ensure diverse perspectives and reliable data for the study.

Table 3. 2: Accessible Population and Sample Size per Category

S/No.	Category	Accessible population	Sample size
1	Batta	200	62
2	Adok	186	58
3	Kangai	171	54
4	Okwongodul	160	50

5	District technical planning committee,	15	04
6	District executive committee,	05	02
7	Sub-county executive committee	20	06
8	Sub-county technical planning committee	56	17
9	Community project management committee	36	12
Total		849	265

Source: Dokolo District Local Government Report (2025) and modified by researcher (2025)

3.5: Data Collection Instruments

3.5.1: Questionnaire Survey

This study used a structured questionnaire as the main survey tool. The questionnaire was administered to the 265 sampled respondents across the four selected sub-counties in Dokolo District, and 238 completed questionnaires were returned and analyzed.

To implement this, a set of both closed and open-ended questions was designed to collect detailed information on key variables such as levels of community participation (including decision-making, collaboration, and empowerment), and perceived sustainability of the projects (measured in terms of social, economic, and environmental outcomes). The structured nature of the questionnaire was to ensure that uniform data was gathered across the four sub-counties in Dokolo District, making it easier to compare responses and identify trends.

This method was preferred for several reasons. Firstly, questionnaires were an efficient method for reaching a large and geographically dispersed population, which was particularly important given the scale of the study area. Secondly, questionnaires standardized data collection, improving the reliability and comparability of results (Creswell, 2009). Thirdly, the anonymity provided by questionnaires encourages more honest and unbiased responses, especially on sensitive issues such as the effectiveness of community participation and satisfaction with government-led interventions. Overall, the questionnaire method aligns well with the study's objective to generate empirical evidence on the relationship between community participation and the sustainability of public development projects.

3.5.2: Key Informant Interviews

To complement the quantitative data, this study used Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) as a method for collecting qualitative data. This approach was particularly useful for obtaining deeper information from individuals with firsthand knowledge and experience in the implementation of the NUSAF III project in Dokolo District.

The KIIs were implemented using a semi-structured interview guide. This tool included open-ended questions designed to steer meaningful conversations while allowing respondents the flexibility to elaborate on key issues. Interviews were conducted with 20 selected informants, such as local government officials, project management committees, and community leaders. These individuals were strategically chosen due to their direct involvement in and oversight of community development activities and project sustainability efforts in the district.

This method was preferred because it allowed the researcher to capture insights that did not emerge through structured questionnaires, such as informal decision-making dynamics, local power relations, policy-practice gaps, and institutional challenges (Thomas, 2011). KIIs were also valuable for uncovering perceptions and lived experiences related to community participation and governance, which were crucial for understanding the broader social and administrative context of sustainability. In essence, Key Informant Interviews enrich the study by providing nuanced explanations and complementary perspectives that deepen the understanding of how community participation influences the long-term success of government development programs.

3.5.3: Focus Group Discussions

This study also employed Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) as a qualitative method to gather collective insights on community participation and the sustainability of government projects in Dokolo District. FGDs are particularly suited for exploring how groups of people perceive, interpret, and experience participation in government-led development initiatives.

The four FGDs were organized around pre-selected groups of participants, including Local Council leaders and the community project management committee, parish chiefs, group leaders of the NUSAF III project, and selected beneficiaries from those community groups. A discussion guide with open-ended prompts was used to steer the conversations while giving participants the

freedom to share their experiences, viewpoints, and suggestions. A total of four FGDs, one in each sub-county and each with at least five participants, were moderated in a way that encouraged interaction, storytelling, and debate among group members to draw out collective understandings and shared concerns.

This method was preferable because FGDs allow for the exploration of social dynamics, cultural norms, and community-level attitudes that influence participation and project sustainability elements that are often missed in individual interviews (Basnet, 2018). It also provided an insight into informal power relations and group influences, helping the researcher understand the deeper social factors that can either support or hinder community involvement in development programs. By listening to voices within their natural peer settings, the study gathered richer, contextually grounded data to support its findings as illustrated by the FGD photos in Appendix VI.

3.6: Data Collection Procedure

After approval of the proposal, the researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Faculty of Business and Development Studies, Gulu University, and permission from the Chief Administrative Officer of Dokolo District Local Government (Appendix VII). Entry into the four sub-counties was made through the sub-county chiefs and Local Council leaders, who helped to mobilize respondents and to locate NUSAF III beneficiary groups using the sub-county beneficiary lists.

Research assistants fluent in the local language were recruited and trained on the purpose of the study, the content of each instrument, informed consent and the recording of responses. The questionnaire was pre-tested on a small group of NUSAF III beneficiaries who were not part of the final sample, and unclear items were revised before the main data collection. Because many beneficiaries had low literacy levels, the questionnaire was administered face to face: research assistants read each item in the local language and recorded the responses. Completed questionnaires were checked for completeness at the end of each day.

Key informant interviews were conducted by the researcher at the informants' workplaces at times convenient to them, using the semi-structured interview guide. Each focus group discussion was held at a central venue in the sub-county, moderated by the researcher with a research assistant taking notes. Informed consent was obtained before every questionnaire,

interview and discussion, and interviews and discussions were audio-recorded only where participants agreed.

3.7: Data Analysis and Management

Data analysis and management for this study involved a systematic approach to handle and interpret both quantitative and qualitative data collected from the NUSAF III project in Dokolo District. Quantitative data from surveys were processed using SPSS. This includes data cleaning, coding, and performing statistical analyses to identify trends, patterns, and relationships among variables related to community participation and project sustainability. Objectives one and two were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages). Objective three was analyzed using Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression, and objective four using a hierarchical regression that compared the model without the decentralization policy framework with the model that included it. Qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed using thematic analysis, facilitated by NVivo. This involved transcribing recorded discussions, coding data into themes, and interpreting patterns to provide contextual insights. Both sets of data were integrated to offer a comprehensive understanding of how community participation influences the sustainability of the NUSAF III project. The data management process included ensuring data confidentiality, securing electronic records, and maintaining a clear audit trail for transparency and reliability.

3.7.1: Validity of the Instruments

Validity refers to the extent to which the instruments accurately measure what they are intended to measure. In this study, content validity was established by developing the questionnaire items based on the literature review and expert input from development practitioners and academic supervisors to ensure comprehensive coverage of the study variables. Construct validity was ensured by grounding the conceptual framework in recognized theoretical perspectives, particularly the Ladder of Citizen Participation theory and Sustainable Development Theory, which supports the measurement of community engagement and project sustainability. Face validity was considered by seeking feedback from local stakeholders and field practitioners to ensure the questions are relevant and understandable. Lastly, methodological triangulation through the use of both qualitative (KIIs and FGDs) and quantitative methods was applied to

confirm and validate the research findings from multiple perspectives. In general, the Content Validity Index was used to determine the validity of the questionnaire.

Content Validity Index (C.V.I) is a measure of the extent to which collected data from the use of a particular instrument is a representative of a specific domain of indicators of a certain concept (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003) where consensus judgment on each variable scoring above 7.0 was taken from the results to obtain scores by experts regarding the relevance of the questions in the instruments in connection to the study variables. This was done using the formula below:

Content Validity Index (C.V.I)

C.V.I = $\frac{\text{Total valid items declared}}{\text{Total sum of items}}$

Total sum of items

In this study, six experts reviewed the tool to ascertain its validity by pointing out how many items in the tool were corrected and how many were not. The index was calculated by dividing correct items by the total number of items in the tool, as shown in the formula above and the result presented in Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3: CVI result

S/N	Expert	Computation	CVI
1	Expert 1	49/54	0.907
2	Expert 2	50/54	0.926
3	Expert 3	51/54	0.944
4	Expert 4	46/54	0.852
5	Expert 5	53/54	0.981
6	Expert 6	48/54	0.889
Average CVI			0.917

Source: Field data 2026

3.7.2: Reliability of the Instruments

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of the research instruments in producing similar results under consistent conditions. In this study, reliability was ensured through the test-retest method, where the same questionnaire was administered to a group of selected respondents in

Dokolo District at two different points in time, and the respondents were identified and tagged with a number to ensure accuracy. The consistency of their responses was compared to assessed stability over time. Additionally, internal consistency of the instruments was examined using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the key scales of community participation and project sustainability. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher was considered acceptable. Before the main data collection, the research instruments were pre-tested (pilot study) with a small sample to identify ambiguities, improve clarity, and refine the tools for improved reliability, as shown in Table 3.4 below

Table 3.4: Cronbach's Alpha reliability result

S/N	Variables	Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha coefficient	Number of Items
1	Community Participation	Participatory decision making	0.962	5
		Collaboration	0.845	5
		Empowerment	0.865	5
		Information sharing	0.942	5
2	Sustainability of NUSAF III	Social sustainability	0.795	6
		Economic sustainability	0.796	6
		Environmental sustainability	0.835	6
3	Government policy framework	Decentralization effectiveness	0.785	7
Average Cronbach's Alpha coefficient			0.853	

Source: Field data 2026

3.7.3: Assumptions of the Study and of the Regression Analysis

The study assumed that respondents understood the questions as they were read in the local language and answered honestly, that their perceptions on the Likert scale reflected their actual experience of NUSAF III, and that the beneficiary lists obtained from the sub-counties were complete and accurate.

Before running the multiple linear regression, the data was screened for the assumptions of the model. Linearity was checked using scatterplots of each participation dimension against sustainability. Normality of the residuals was checked using a histogram and normal probability

plot of standardised residuals. Multicollinearity was checked using variance inflation factors (VIF), where values below 10 and tolerance values above 0.1 were considered acceptable; the VIF values ranged from 2 to 3.5. Independence of errors was checked using the Durbin–Watson statistic, where values between 1.5 and 2.5 were considered acceptable; the statistic was 1.8. Homoscedasticity was checked using a plot of standardized residuals against predicted values.

3.8: Measurement of Variables

In this study, the measurement of variables related to community participation and project sustainability was effectively conducted using a Likert scale, which provides a structured approach to quantify respondents' attitudes and perceptions. For community participation, a Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” was used to assess the extent to which community members feel involved in decision-making, project implementation, and monitoring. This scale enables the collection of nuanced responses about their level of engagement and influence. Similarly, for evaluating project sustainability, separate Likert scales were employed to measure social, economic and environmental sustainability. Respondents rate statements related to the project's long-term benefits, continued community support and environmental management on a scale from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” The use of Likert scales allowed quantitative analysis of subjective data, facilitating the identification of patterns and correlations between community participation and various dimensions of project sustainability. By aggregating responses, the study systematically assessed and compared the perceived effectiveness and impact of the NUSAF III project, providing valuable insights into their overall success and areas for improvement.

3.9: Limitations and Delimitations

This study faced a few unavoidable challenges that affected data collection. One major limitation was the difficulty in reaching respondents in remote parts of Dokolo District due to poor roads and long travel distances. In addition, low literacy levels among some project beneficiaries limited their ability to complete written questionnaires, so the questionnaire was administered orally in the local language. Some participants may also not have felt completely free to express honest opinions about government programmes, either out of fear of consequences or because they wanted to give the answers they thought were expected. To reduce this risk, the study

emphasized confidentiality, treated all responses respectfully, and created a comfortable environment in which participants felt safe to share their views.

Another challenge was the availability and accuracy of official project records, which were outdated or incomplete. To compensate, the study gathered data from multiple sources, including community members, local leaders, and Community facilitators, and used cross-checking techniques to verify the information. Language barriers also arose during interviews, so interpreters fluent in the local dialect assisted in facilitating discussions and ensuring participants understood the questions. Overall, while these challenges were real, the study put in place practical solutions to minimize their impact and ensure meaningful findings.

3.10: Ethical Considerations

This study strictly adhered to ethical research standards to protect the rights and well-being of participants. The researcher first obtained ethical clearance from the Faculty of Business and Development Studies and secured an introductory letter for field access and identification. Both the researcher and research assistants were trained to ensure the safety and comfort of respondents by avoiding intrusive or distressing questions and by using respectful, culturally appropriate language. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews, assuring them that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without any consequences. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research process; no names were recorded on questionnaires, interview transcripts, or focus group discussion guides. All data collected was used strictly for academic purposes, and efforts were made to store and manage this information securely to protect participant privacy.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents empirical findings on how community participation affects the sustainability of the NUSAF III project in Dokolo District. Using both quantitative and qualitative data, the results are presented according to the study objectives and key dimensions of participation. The chapter integrates statistical evidence with insights from KIIs and FGDs to provide a deeper understanding of the observed patterns.

4.1 Sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents

This section presents the background characteristics of respondents involved in the study, as highlighted in Table 4.5 below.

Table 4. 5: Sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents

Categorical variables		Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Age category	18-25	5	2.1
	26-33	28	11.8
	34-41	57	23.9
	42-49	53	22.3
	50 and above	95	39.9
Sex	Female	121	50.8
	Male	117	49.2
Education level	Non-formal	29	12.2
	Primary	168	70.6
	Secondary	38	16.0
	Tertiary	3	1.3
Occupation	Farmer	234	98.3
	Trader	4	1.7
Marital Status	Married	203	85.3
	Single	10	4.2
	Divorced	7	2.9
	Widowed	18	7.6
Duration in NUSAF III	Less than a year	21	8.8
	1 to five years	205	86.1
	Above five years	12	5.0
Household size	1-3	35	14.7
	4-8	149	62.6
	9-12	46	19.3
	13-18	7	2.9
	19 and above	1	.4
Religious affiliation	Catholic	109	45.8
	Pentecostal	52	21.8
	Islam	1	.4
	Anglican	76	31.9
Household income in UGX	Less than 100000 UGX	29	12.2
	100000 to 500000 UGX	29	12.2
	600000 to 1000000 UGX	53	22.3
	Above 1000000 UGX	127	53.4

Source: Field data, 2026

In Table 4.5, the researcher sought to know the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents and the findings indicate that older respondents dominated the study sample. Individuals aged 50 years and above constituted the largest proportion (39.9%), followed by those aged 34-41 years (23.9%) and 42-49 years (22.3%). Younger respondents aged 18-25 years accounted for only 2.1%, while those aged 26-33 years represented 11.8%. The gender distribution of respondents was nearly balanced, with females accounting for 50.8% and males 49.2%. This near parity indicates that NUSAF III projects have achieved relatively inclusive participation of both men and women.

The results in Table 4.5 also show that most respondents had attained primary education (70.6%), while 12.2% had no formal education, 16.0% had secondary education, and only 1.3% had tertiary education. The occupational profile reveals that 98.3% of respondents were farmers, while only 1.7% were traders. This underscores the agrarian nature of the study area and the dependence of households on agriculture-based livelihoods.

Furthermore, in Table 4.5, most respondents were married (85.3%), while widowed (7.6%), single (4.2%), and divorced (2.9%) respondents formed smaller proportions. Furthermore, most respondents had participated in NUSAF III for a period of one to five years (86.1%), while 8.8% had been involved for less than one year and 5.0% for more than five years and most of them are Catholics constituting the largest religious group (45.8%), followed by Anglicans (31.9%), Pentecostals (21.8%), and Muslims (0.4%).

The findings in Table 4.5 reveal that most respondents lived in households with 4-8 members (62.6%), followed by households with 9-12 members (19.3%). Smaller households with 1-3 members accounted for 14.7%, while very large households were rare. On the other hand, more than half of the respondents reported household incomes above UGX 1,000,000 (53.4%), while 22.3% earned between UGX 600,000 and UGX 1,000,000. Lower-income households, earning below UGX 500,000, constituted 24.4% of the sample.

4.2 Level of Community Participation in NUSAF III Projects

This section examines the nature and extent of community participation in the NUSAF III project across key dimensions, including decision-making, collaboration, empowerment, and information sharing.

4.2.1 Community participation in decision-making in the NUSAF III project

This part highlights the parameters used in determining the level of community participation in decision-making as indicated in Table 4.6 below.

Table 4. 6: Nature of community participation in decision-making in the NUSAF III project

F	Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	(SD+D) %	NS (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	(SA+A) %
Participatory Decision-Making	Community members are actively involved in decision-making processes for NUSAF III projects.	48(20.2)	32(13.4)	80(33.6)	6(2.5)	130(54.6)	22(9.2)	152(63.8)
	The opinions of community members are considered before making project decisions.	0(0)	31(13.0)	31(13.0)	24(10.1)	132(55.5)	51(21.4)	183(76.9)
	Community feedback is regularly sought and integrated into project planning.	1(0.4)	25(10.4)	26(10.8)	34(14.3)	141(59.2)	37(15.5)	178(74.7)
	There are regular meetings for community members to discuss and influence project activities.	1(0.4)	15(6.3)	16(6.7)	9(3.8)	144(60.5)	69(29.0)	213(89.5)
	The decision-making process for the project is transparent and inclusive.	0(0.0)	17(7.1)	17(7.1)	13(5.5)	155(65.1)	53(22.3)	208(87.4)
	Overall participatory decision making	0(0.0)	20(8.4)	20(8.4)	33(13.9)	175(73.5)	10(4.2)	185(77.7)
<i>A=Agree, D=Disagree, SA =Strongly Agree, SD=Strongly Disagree, NS=Not Sure, F= Indicators of Community Participation, %= Percentage</i>								

Source: Field data, 2026

The findings in Table 4.6 indicate generally high levels of participatory decision-making among NUSAF III beneficiaries. Overall, 77.7% (n = 185) of respondents agreed that participatory decision-making was practiced in NUSAF III projects, while 8.4% (n = 20) expressed disagreement.

In Table 4.6, a greater proportion of respondents (89.5%) agreed that regular meetings are held to enable community members to discuss and influence project activities, suggesting that formal platforms for participation are widely available. Similarly, 87.4% of respondents perceived the decision-making process as transparent and inclusive, indicating a strong perception of openness in project governance. Qualitatively, participants across FGDs reported that community members were involved in identifying and prioritizing projects mainly through village meetings, community dialogues, and consultations facilitated by local leaders and technical staff. One member of the Community Project Management Committee was quoted saying that *“Before projects were selected, the community would meet and discuss the most pressing needs. People were given a chance to speak, and their views were recorded.”*

Furthermore, the findings in Table 4.6 indicate that 76.9% of respondents reported that community opinions are considered before project decisions are made, while 74.7% indicated that community feedback is regularly sought and incorporated into project planning. Qualitatively, key informants further emphasized that regular meetings served as critical platforms for collective decision-making and accountability. Through the interview, a sub-county community development officer stated in a key informant interview that *“NUSAF III required that communities agree on priorities before proposals could be forwarded to the sub-county.”* These findings demonstrate that consultative mechanisms are embedded within the NUSAF III project framework.

However, the results in Table 4.6 also reveal some limitations in actual involvement. Only 63.8% of respondents agreed that community members are actively involved in decision-making processes, while a relatively high proportion (33.6%) disagreed. On the same vein, qualitative findings also revealed that final decision-making power was often shaped by technical, financial, and administrative considerations, which sometimes limited the influence of community voices. In the focus group discussion with the district technical team, the Assistant Chief Administrative Officer was quoted saying, *“Communities proposed many ideas, but not all could be implemented because some were not technically viable or beyond the budget.”* This suggests that although consultative structures exist, the depth of direct involvement of community members in decision-making may be uneven or limited for some groups.

4.2.2 Community collaboration with the NUSAF III project team

This section of the study presents the parameters used in determining the level of community collaboration with the project teams, as highlighted in Table 4.7 below.

Table 4. 7: Nature of community collaboration with the NUSAF III project team

F	Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	(SD+D) %	NS (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	(SA+A) %
Collaboration	Community members collaborate effectively with project implementers.	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	7(2.9)	162(68.1)	69(29.0)	231(97.1)
	There is open communication between project staff and the community.	1(0.4)	1(0.4)	2(0.8)	5(2.1)	163(68.5)	68(28.6)	231(97.1)
	Community members are encouraged to work together to achieve project goals.	1(0.4)	2(0.8)	3(1.2)	5(2.1)	155(65.1)	75(31.5)	230(96.6)
	The community is engaged in problem-solving when challenges arise in the project.	0(0.0)	4(1.7)	4(1.7)	13(5.5)	161(67.6)	60(25.2)	221(92.8)
	Regular meetings and workshops are held to foster collaboration.	1(0.4)	12(5.0)	13(5.4)	39(16.4)	145(60.9)	41(17.2)	186(78.1)
	Overall collaboration	0(0.0)	1(0.4)	1(0.4)	6(2.5)	186(78.2)	45(18.9)	231(97.1)

A=Agree, D=Disagree, SA =Strongly Agree, SD=Strongly Disagree, NS=Not Sure, F= Indicators of Community Participation, %= Percentage

Source: Field data, 2026

The findings in Table 4.7 reveal a very high level of collaboration in the implementation of NUSAF III projects. Overall, 97.1% (n = 231) of respondents agreed that collaboration exists between community members and project implementers, while only 0.4% expressed disagreement.

In Table 4.7, most of the respondents (97.1%) agreed that community members collaborate effectively with project implementers and that open communication exists between project staff and the community. Similarly, 96.6% of respondents reported that community members are encouraged to work together to achieve project goals, indicating strong collective engagement. Qualitatively, key informants described collaboration between communities, local governments, and technical staff as essential to project implementation. In an interview, the district community

development officer was quoted as emphasizing that *“Collaboration was built into the project structure. Communities worked closely with sub-county officials and sector departments, which helped to reduce conflicts and improve project outcomes.”*

Furthermore, in Table 4.7, 92.8% of respondents indicated that the community is actively involved in problem-solving when project challenges arise, suggesting that collaborative mechanisms extend beyond implementation to adaptive management. Qualitatively, most respondents reported that community members worked together with local leaders and implementing agencies during project implementation, although variations existed in the intensity and effectiveness of collaboration. In key informant interview district NUSAF III technical team, a key informant was quoted highlighting that, *“NUSAF III projects were implemented through joint efforts with the help of the community, technical officers, and local leaders, who had to work together at every stage, from planning to implementation”*.

However, comparatively lower agreement (78.1%) was reported regarding the frequency of regular meetings and workshops, as shown in Table 4.7, implying that while collaboration is generally strong, structured opportunities for joint learning and interaction may be less consistent. Qualitatively, some respondents pointed to coordination challenges. The sub-county extension worker in a focus group discussion was quoted as saying that *“Although people worked together during implementation, meetings were sometimes irregular, especially after the completion of the projects.”*

4.2.3 Community empowerment in the NUSAF III project

This part highlights the parameters used in determining the level of community empowerment in handling the NUSAF III project in Dokolo district, as indicated in Table 4.8 below.

The findings in Table 4.8 indicate a high level of empowerment among beneficiaries of NUSAF III projects. Overall, 93.3% (n = 222) of respondents agreed that NUSAF III projects empower community members, while 1.3% (n = 3) expressed disagreement.

In Table 4.8, most respondents (91.2%) feel empowered to take initiative in project activities, suggesting that NUSAF III has fostered confidence and agency among beneficiaries. Similarly, 89.9% of respondents indicated that the project provides opportunities for skills development and that access to resources facilitates effective participation. On a similar vein, qualitative findings

indicate that respondents agreed they had acquired skills, confidence, and capacity to engage in project activities. The district community development officer, in an interview, was quoted as noting that, *“Before NUSAF III, many community members depended entirely on government or NGOs, but the project helped them acquire skills to plan, implement, and sustain their own initiatives.”*

Table 4. 8: Nature of community empowerment in the NUSAF III project

F	Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	(SD+D) %	NS (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	(SA+A) %
Empowerment	NUSAF III projects provide opportunities for community members to gain skills.	1(0.4)	9(3.8)	10(4.2)	14(5.9)	185(77.7)	29(12.2)	214(89.9)
	Community members feel empowered to take initiative in project activities.	0(0.0)	3(1.3)	3(1.3)	18(7.6)			217(91.2)
	Training sessions are held to build the community’s capacity for project management.	1(0.4)	11(4.6)	12(5.0)	10(4.2)	162(68.1)	54(22.7)	216(90.8)
	The project enhances the community’s ability to sustain itself independently.	0(0.0)	4(1.7)	4(1.7)	22(9.2)	187(78.6)	25(10.5)	212(89.1)
	Easy access to resources enables effective participation in the project.	0(0.0)	1(0.4)	1(0.4)	23(9.7)	186(78.2)	28(11.8)	214(90.0)
	Overall empowerment	0(0.0)	3(1.3)	3(1.3)	13(5.5)	202(84.9)	20(8.4)	222(93.3)
A=Agree, D=Disagree, SA =Strongly Agree, SD=Strongly Disagree, NS=Not Sure, F= Indicators of Community Participation, %= Percentage								

Source: Field data, 2026

Furthermore, the findings in Table 4.8 reveal that 90.8% of respondents agreed that training sessions are conducted to strengthen community capacity for project management. On the other hand, qualitative findings indicate that Communities were trained in project management and maintenance, which improved their ability to sustain the projects. One of the Community Project Management Committee members was quoted as highlighting that, *“We were trained on record keeping, procurement, and monitoring, this made us confident to supervise projects without waiting for officials.”*

An equal proportion of the respondents (89.1%) in Table 4.8 perceived that the project enhances the community’s ability to sustain itself independently. Qualitatively, one of the project beneficiaries in the focus group discussion was quoted as saying that, *“Because the project provided tools and funds, people felt capable of contributing and not just waiting for support from outside.”* These findings suggest that NUSAF III interventions are not only focused on immediate project outputs but also on building long-term community capacity.

4.2.4 Community information sharing in the NUSAF III project

This section presents how information on the NUSAF III project was shared with community members by the project workers, as shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4. 9: Nature of community information sharing in the NUSAF III project

F	Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	(SD+D) %	NS (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	(SA+A) %
Information Sharing	Information about the NUSAF III project activities is shared openly with the community.	0(0.0)	4(1.7)	4(1.7)	8(3.4)	168(70.6)	58(24.4)	226(95.0)
	Community members are informed about project goals and expected outcomes.	0(0.0)	2(0.8)	2(0.8)	13(5.5)	191(80.3)	32(13.4)	223(93.7)
	Progress updates about the project are regularly communicated to the community.	2(0.8)	7(2.9)	9(3.7)	18(7.6)	157(66.0)	54(22.7)	211(88.7)
	Community members are given access to project reports and results.	0(0.0)	17(7.1)	17(7.1)	26(10.9)	141(59.2)	54(22.7)	195(81.9)
	Feedback from the community is welcomed and responded to by the project team.	1(0.4)	10(4.2)	11(4.6)	31(13.0)	178(74.8)	18(7.6)	196(82.4)
	Overall information sharing	0(0.0)	4(1.7)	4(1.7)	20(8.4)	181(76.1)	33(13.9)	214(90.0)
A=Agree, D=Disagree, SA =Strongly Agree, SD=Strongly Disagree, NS=Not Sure, F= Indicators of Community Participation, %= Percentage								

Source: Field data, 2026

The findings in Table 4.9 indicate a high level of information sharing between project implementers and community members under NUSAF III. Overall, 90.0% (n = 214) of respondents agreed that information is effectively shared within the project, while 1.7% (n = 4) expressed disagreement.

In Table 4.9, most respondents (95.0%) reported that information about project activities is shared openly with the community, indicating strong transparency in day-to-day project operations. Qualitative findings reveal that Project information was shared through meetings and notice boards, but not everyone could access it equally. In a key information interview, a district natural resources officer highlighted that, “*Information about NUSAF III activities was usually communicated through community barazas and local council leaders, which helped to reach many people*”.

Similarly, in Table 4.9, 93.7% of respondents indicated that they are informed about project goals and expected outcomes, suggesting that the strategic objectives of NUSAF III are well communicated. Qualitatively, most respondents highlighted that they have access to information on project budgets, timelines, and progress. A sub-county extension worker was quoted in a key informant interview saying that, *“Before implementation, we would mobilize communities and explain the project objectives, timelines, and roles, so people understood what was expected.”*

On the other hand, the findings in Table 4.9 also reveal that 88.7% of respondents agreed that progress updates are regularly communicated, demonstrating consistent information flow throughout the project lifecycle. However, agreement was lower for access to project reports (81.9%) and responsiveness to community feedback (82.4%), suggesting that although general information dissemination is strong, deeper access to formal documentation and structured feedback mechanisms may be less widespread. Qualitative findings also revealed gaps that align with the quantitative results on access to formal documentation and feedback mechanisms. Some focus group discussion participants noted that while basic information was widely shared, technical or financial details were less accessible to ordinary community members. A community project implementation committee member in a focus group discussion was quoted, highlighting that, *“We were informed about activities, but sometimes our feedback was not followed up, especially when issues required higher-level decisions.”*

4.2.5 Overall community participation in the NUSAF III Project

This section presents the overall community participation in the NUSAF III project in Dokolo district as shown in Table 4.10 below.

Table 4.10: Overall nature of community participation in the NUSAF III Project

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	(SD+D) %	NS (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	(SA+A) %
Overall participatory decision making	0(0.0)	20(8.4)	20(8.4)	33(13.9)	175(73.5)	10(4.2)	185(77.7)
Overall collaboration	0(0.0)	1(0.4)	1(0.4)	6(2.5)	186(78.2)	45(18.9)	231(97.1)
Overall empowerment	0(0.0)	3(1.3)	3(1.3)	13(5.5)	202(84.9)	20(8.4)	222(93.3)
Overall information sharing	0(0.0)	4(1.7)	4(1.7)	20(8.4)	181(76.1)	33(13.9)	214(90.0)
Overall community participation in the NUSAF III Project	0(0.0)	1(0.4)	1(0.4)	10(4.2)	199(83.6)	28(11.8)	227(95.4)

A=Agree, D=Disagree, SA =Strongly Agree, SD=Strongly Disagree, NS=Not Sure, F= Indicators of Community Participation, %= Percentage

Source: Field data, 2026

The findings in Table 4.10 indicate a high level of community participation in the NUSAF III project. Overall, 95.4% (n = 227) of respondents agreed that community participation is evident in the project, while only 0.4% (n = 1) expressed disagreement.

Among the participation dimensions, collaboration recorded the highest level of agreement (97.1%), followed by empowerment (93.3%) and information sharing (90.0%). In contrast, participatory decision-making recorded the lowest level of agreement (77.7%), although it still reflected a relatively strong level of participation.

4.3 Extent of Sustainability of NUSAF III Projects

This section presents the extent to which the NUSAF III project is perceived to be sustainable across social, economic, and environmental dimensions

4.3.1 Social sustainability of the NUSAF III project

This section of the study highlights the level of social sustainability of the NUSAF III project as determined by different parameters, as indicated in Table 4.11 below.

The findings in Table 4.11 below reveal a high level of social sustainability of the NUSAF III project. Overall, 96.2% (n = 229) of respondents agreed that the project is socially sustainable, while 0.8% (n = 2) expressed disagreement with the statement.

In Table 4.11, most respondents (91.6%) reported that community members actively maintain project outcomes, indicating a strong sense of ownership and responsibility for sustaining the project's benefits. On the same vein, the qualitative findings revealed that respondents consistently emphasized that the project strengthened social cohesion, leadership structures, and collective responsibility within communities, one respondent in a key informant interview was quoted saying, *“Because people were involved from the beginning, they feel that the projects belong to them, not the government.”*

Similarly, the results in Table 4.11 indicate that 91.2% of the respondents agreed that the project has improved local capacity to manage social initiatives, suggesting that NUSAF III has contributed to strengthening institutional and human capacities at the community level. Qualitatively, the participants feel that the project belongs to them, not the government. Another

key informant in an interview highlighted that, “*NUSAF III projects brought people together. Communities now work collectively to maintain facilities like water points and roads.*”

Table 4. 11: The extent of social sustainability of the NUSAF III project

F	Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	(SD+D) %	NS (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	(SA+A) %
Social Sustainability	The project has fostered long-term trust between the community and government	1(0.4)	4(1.7)	5(2.1)	21(8.8)	181(76.1)	31(13.0)	212(89.1)
	Community members actively maintain project outcomes.	1(0.4)	2(0.8)	3(1.2)	17(7.1)	187(78.6)	31(13.0)	218(91.6)
	The project design aligns with the community’s long-term social needs.	0(0.0)	2(0.8)	2(0.8)	22(9.2)	171(71.8)	43(18.1)	214(89.9)
	The project promotes equitable access to benefits across all social groups.	0(0.0)	12(5.0)	12(5.0)	18(7.6)	173(72.7)	35(14.7)	208(87.4)
	The project has strengthened community networks and cooperation.	1(0.4)	4(1.7)	5(2.1)	20(8.4)	186(78.2)	27(11.3)	213(89.5)
	The project has improved local capacity to manage social initiatives.	0(0.0)	4(1.7)	4(1.7)	17(7.1)	194(81.5)	23(9.7)	217(91.2)
	Overall social sustainability	0(0.0)	2(0.8)	2(0.8)	7(2.9)	213(89.5)	16(6.7)	229(96.2)
	<i>A=Agree, D=Disagree, SA =Strongly Agree, SD=Strongly Disagree, NS=Not Sure, F= Indicators of Community Participation, %= Percentage</i>							

Source: Field data, 2026

Furthermore, 89.9% of respondents perceived that the project design aligns with the community’s long-term social needs, while 89.5% indicated that the project has strengthened community networks and cooperation. Additionally, 89.1% of respondents reported that the project has fostered long-term trust between the community and government, highlighting the role of NUSAF III in improving state-community relations. Qualitatively, participants also highlighted improved trust and cooperation among community members and between communities and local authorities. In a focus group discussion, one of the project beneficiaries was quoted as saying, “*We now trust local leaders more because they involved us and explained how the project funds were used.*”

However, comparatively lower agreement (87.4%) was recorded regarding equitable access to project benefits across all social groups as shown in Table 4.11, indicating that issues of inclusivity may still require attention. The qualitative findings also reveal that participants noted that certain groups were less able to benefit from project outcomes. One of the community project implementation community members during the focus group discussion was quoted saying, *“Although many people benefited, some vulnerable groups, especially the very poor and persons with disabilities, did not fully access the project benefits.”*

4.3.2 Economic sustainability of the NUSAF III project

This part of the study highlights the level of economic sustainability of the NUSAF III project as determined by different parameters, as indicated in Table 4.12 below

In Table 4.12 below, the findings indicate a relatively high level of economic sustainability of the NUSAF III project. Overall, 91.6% (n = 218) of respondents agreed that the project is economically sustainable, while 0.8% (n = 2) expressed disagreement.

Most respondents (88.7%) in Table 4.12 below agreed that the project has stimulated the growth of durable local enterprises, while 88.2% reported that the project generates ongoing revenue streams for beneficiaries. Qualitatively, respondents consistently highlighted improvements in income generation, livelihood diversification, and local enterprise development. One of the project beneficiaries in a focus group discussion was quoted saying, *“The project strengthened local economic activities by providing start-up capital, tools, and training, which enabled beneficiaries to expand their productive capacity.”*

On the same note, the findings in Table 4.12 reveal that 86.6% of respondents indicated that household incomes have sustainably increased because of the project, suggesting that NUSAF III has contributed to improving livelihoods. Qualitative results also reveal that participants also reported that there are tangible economic benefits at the household level. A principal assistant chief administrative officer was quoted in a key informant interview saying, *“NUSAF III projects helped many households start income-generating activities such as farming groups and small businesses, which improved their economic stability.”*

Table 4. 12: The extent of economic sustainability of the NUSAF III project

F	Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	(SD+D) %	NS (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	(SA+A) %
Economic Sustainability	The project continues to support local businesses and suppliers.	1(0.4)	10(4.2)	11(4.6)	49(20.6)	157(66.0)	21(8.8)	178(74.8)
	Household incomes have sustainably increased due to the project.	2(0.8)	4(1.7)	6(2.5)	26(10.9)	178(74.8)	28(11.8)	206(86.6)
	The project utilizes cost-effective strategies that ensure long-term viability.	0(0.0)	6(2.5)	6(2.5)	35(14.7)	182(76.5)	15(6.3)	197(82.8)
	The project generates ongoing revenue streams for beneficiaries.	0(0.0)	6(2.5)	6(2.5)	22(9.2)	194(81.5)	16(6.7)	210(88.2)
	The project has spurred the growth of durable local enterprises.	0(0.0)	8(3.4)	8(3.4)	19(8.0)	183(76.9)	28(11.8)	211(88.7)
	The project has enhanced the community's resilience to economic shocks.	0(0.0)	8(3.4)	8(3.4)	41(17.2)	165(69.3)	24(10.1)	189(79.4)
	Overall economic sustainability	0(0.0)	7(2.9)	7(2.9)	13(5.5)	203(85.3)	15(6.3)	218(91.6)
	A=Agree, D=Disagree, SA =Strongly Agree, SD=Strongly Disagree, NS=Not Sure, F= Indicators of Community Participation, %= Percentage							

Source: Field data, 2026

Furthermore, Table 4.12 indicates that 82.8% of respondents perceived that the project employs cost-effective strategies that enhance long-term viability. However, comparatively lower levels of agreement were recorded regarding the project's support to local businesses and suppliers (74.8%) and the community's resilience to economic shocks (79.4%). These findings suggest that while NUSAF III has significantly improved economic outcomes, certain aspects of local economic integration and resilience remain less robust. Qualitatively, most respondents pointed out that economic benefits were uneven across sectors and groups. In a focus group discussion, one of the project beneficiaries was quoted as saying, *"Our businesses supported by the project performed well, but others struggled due to market limitations and lack of continuous support for value addition."*

4.3.3 Environmental sustainability of the NUSAF III project

This section of the study highlights the level of environmental sustainability of the NUSAF III project as determined by different parameters, as indicated in Table 4.13 below

Table 4. 13: The extent of environmental sustainability of the NUSAF III project

F	Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	(SD+D) %	NS (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	(SA+A) %
Environmental Sustainability	The project has improved sustainable management of natural resources (e.g., water, soil).	1(0.4)	16(6.7)	17(7.1)	21(8.8)	159(66.8)	41(17.2)	200(84.0)
	The project promotes practices that minimize environmental degradation.	2(0.8)	11(4.6)	13(5.4)	10(4.2)	169(71.0)	46(19.3)	215(90.3)
	Regular environmental monitoring occurs to ensure project sustainability.	5(2.1)	40(16.8)	45(18.9)	18(7.6)	146(61.3)	29(12.2)	175(73.5)
	The project provides ongoing education on environmental conservation.	1(0.4)	20(8.4)	21(8.8)	11(4.6)	162(68.1)	41(17.2)	203(85.3)
	The project has raised long-term awareness about environmental protection.	1(0.4)	14(5.9)	15(6.3)	14(5.9)	169(71.0)	40(16.8)	209(87.8)
	The project includes a clear plan for future environmental sustainability.	1(0.4)	20(8.4)	21(8.8)	8(3.4)	185(77.7)	24(10.1)	209(87.8)
	Overall environmental sustainability	1(0.4)	16(6.7)	17(7.1)	15(6.3)	173(72.7)	33(13.9)	206(86.6)
	<i>A=Agree, D=Disagree, SA =Strongly Agree, SD=Strongly Disagree, NS=Not Sure, F= Indicators of Community Participation, %= Percentage</i>							

Source: Field data, 2026

In Table 4.13 below, the findings indicate a relatively high level of environmental sustainability of the NUSAF III project. Overall, 86.6% (n = 206) of respondents agreed that the project is environmentally sustainable, while 7.1% (n = 17) expressed disagreement. Most respondents (90.3%) agreed that the project promotes practices that minimize environmental degradation, indicating strong adoption of environmentally friendly practices. Qualitatively, most respondents

consistently highlighted that the project contributed to improved environmental practices and awareness at the community level. In a key informant interview the district natural resources officer was quoted saying, *“NUSAF III encouraged communities to adopt soil and water conservation practices, which reduced environmental degradation in many areas.”*

Similarly, in Table 4.13 below, 87.8% of respondents reported that the project has raised long-term awareness about environmental protection including a clear plan for future environmental sustainability. Additionally, 85.3% of respondents agreed that the project provides ongoing education on environmental conservation, and 84.0% perceived improvements in sustainable natural resource management. Qualitatively, participants also emphasized changes in community attitudes toward environmental conservation. In a focus group discussion, one of the project beneficiaries highlighted that, *“Training sessions helped us understand how our activities affect the environment, so we try to use more sustainable practices.”*

However, comparatively lower levels of agreement were observed regarding regular environmental monitoring (73.5%). This suggests that while environmental awareness and practices are widely promoted, systematic monitoring mechanisms may be less consistently implemented. The qualitative findings also reveal that most respondents observed that monitoring activities were irregular due to limited resources and technical capacity. In a key informant interview, a sub-county extension worker confirmed this by saying, *“Follow-up on environmental issues was not always consistent because of limited funds and personnel.”*

4.3.4 Overall extent of sustainability of the NUSAF III project

This section presents the overall sustainability of the NUSAF III project in Dokolo district as shown in Table 4.14 below.

The results in Table 4.14 reveal a strong overall perception of sustainability among community members involved in the NUSAF III project. A notable 89.1% (n = 212) of respondents agreed that the project is sustainable in its overall impact, whereas only 1.3% (n = 3) disagreed. When disaggregated by sustainability dimensions, social sustainability received the highest agreement at 96.2%, reflecting strong community ownership, trust, equity, and social cohesion.

Table 4. 14: The overall extent of sustainability of the NUSAF III project

Statement	SD	D (%)	(SD+D)	NS (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	(SA+A)
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	(%)		%				%	
Overall social sustainability	0(0.0)	2(0.8)	2(0.8)	7(2.9)	213(89.5)	16(6.7)	229(96.2)	
Overall economic sustainability	0(0.0)	7(2.9)	7(2.9)	13(5.5)	203(85.3)	15(6.3)	218(91.6)	
Overall environmental sustainability	1(0.4)	16(6.7)	17(7.1)	15(6.3)	173(72.7)	33(13.9)	206(86.6)	
Overall extent of the sustainability of the NUSAF III project	0(0.0)	3(1.3)	3(1.3)	23(9.7)	199(83.6)	13(5.5)	212(89.1)	

A=Agree, D=Disagree, SA =Strongly Agree, SD=Strongly Disagree, NS=Not Sure, F= Indicators of Community Participation, %= Percentage

Source: Field data, 2026

Economic sustainability followed closely with 91.6% agreement, indicating the project's contribution to income generation, enterprise growth, and economic resilience. Similarly, environmental sustainability was affirmed by 86.6% of respondents, demonstrating positive outcomes in resource management, environmental education, and conservation practices. Qualitatively, most respondents consistently emphasized that the project produced enduring benefits that extended beyond immediate outputs to long-term community development. In a focus group discussion, a member of the community project management committee was quoted saying, *“NUSAF III did not only bring infrastructure, but also knowledge and organization, which helped the community to sustain the benefits.”*

4.4 Relationship between Community Participation and Sustainability of NUSAF III Projects.

This section examines how different dimensions of community participation contribute to the sustainability of the NUSAF III project in Dokolo district.

4.4.1 Correlation Analysis to establish the relationship between community participation and the sustainability of the NUSAF III project

This section presents the correlation analysis to examine the relationship between community participation and the sustainability of the NUSAF III project in Dokolo district, as shown in Table 4.15 below

Table 4.15: Correlation Analysis between Community Participation and Sustainability of the NUSAF III project

		Sustainability	Participatory decision-making	Collaboration	Empowerment	Information Sharing
Sustainability	r	1				
	p					
Participatory decision-making	r	0.131 [*]	1			
	p	0.043				
Collaboration	r	0.196 ^{**}	0.071	1		
	p	0.002	0.274			
Empowerment	r	0.340 ^{**}	0.161 [*]	0.291 ^{**}	1	
	p	0.000	0.013	0.000		
Information Sharing	r	0.305 ^{**}	0.237 ^{**}	0.204 ^{**}	0.344 ^{**}	1
	p	0.000	0.000	0.002	0.000	

r - Pearson correlation, *p* – significance

^{*}. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

^{**}. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field data, 2026

The correlation analysis in Table 4.15 reveals several statistically significant positive relationships between community participation dimensions and the overall sustainability of the NUSAF III project.

Specifically, empowerment showed the strongest positive correlation with sustainability ($r = .340$, $p < .01$), indicating that increased community capacity and empowerment are closely associated with enhanced project sustainability. This underscores the importance of empowering community members as a key driver for sustaining project outcomes. Qualitatively, participants consistently emphasized that empowerment played a pivotal role in sustaining project outcomes. In the focus group discussion, one of the project beneficiary group members was quoted as saying, “*Before NUSAF III, we depended on external support, but now we have skills and confidence to maintain the project activities ourselves.*”

Information sharing was also strongly correlated with sustainability ($r = .305, p < .01$), highlighting that transparent communication and access to information significantly contribute to the community's ability to maintain project benefits. In the qualitative findings, most respondents highlighted that transparency and communication foster trust and accountability, which in turn enhance project sustainability. One of the project beneficiary group leaders in a focus group discussion highlighted that *"Because we were informed about the project plans and progress, we felt involved and committed to sustaining the project."*

Collaboration exhibited a moderate but statistically significant positive correlation with sustainability ($r = .196, p < .01$), suggesting that effective cooperation between community members and project implementers supports sustainable outcomes. Most respondents in qualitative findings reveal that partnerships between community members, local leaders, and implementing agencies facilitated coordinated action and collective responsibility. In a key informant interview, one of the community leaders confirmed this by saying, *"The project succeeded because we worked together with local government and community groups; this cooperation continues even after project completion."*

Although weaker, participatory decision-making was positively correlated with sustainability ($r = .131, p < .05$), indicating that involving community members in decision processes contributes to sustainability, though to a lesser extent compared to other participation dimensions. Qualitative findings also indicate that participatory decision-making enhances legitimacy and ownership. In a focus group discussion, one of the project beneficiary group members was quoted as saying, *"We are involved in meetings, but not all decisions are made by the community; some are decided by leaders and project staff."*

4.4.2 Regression Analysis to determine the relationship between community Participation and the sustainability of the NUSAF III project

This part presents a regression analysis to determine the relationship between community participation and the sustainability of the NUSAF III Project in Dokolo district, as shown in Table 4.16 below.

Table 4. 16: Model summary and ANOVA estimate for different forms of the NUSAF III project sustainability.

Model	R	R ²	Adj R ²	SE		
Social sustainability	0.353	0.125	0.110	0.15099		
Economic sustainability	0.418	0.175	0.161	0.19862		
Environmental sustainability	0.320	0.102	0.087	0.23436		
ANOVA						
Model		Sum of squares	Df	Mean squares	F	P-value.
Social sustainability	Regression	0.756	4	0.189	8.288	0.000
	Residuals	5.312	233	0.023		
	Total	6.068	237			
Economic sustainability	Regression	1.947	4	0.487	12.336	0.000
	Residuals	9.192	233	0.039		
	Total	11.139	237			
Environmental sustainability	Regression	1.457	4	0.364	6.631	0.000
	Residuals	12.797	233	0.055		
	Total	14.254	237			

Source: Field data, 2026

The regression analysis in Table 4.16 demonstrates that community participation significantly predicts all three dimensions of sustainability of the NUSAF III project.

For social sustainability, the model yielded a multiple correlation coefficient of $R = 0.353$, with an R^2 of 0.125 and an adjusted R^2 of 0.110. This indicates that approximately 12.5% of the variation in social sustainability is explained by community participation variables. The ANOVA results show that the model is statistically significant ($F = 8.288$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that community participation has a meaningful influence on social sustainability outcomes.

Regarding economic sustainability, the model produced $R = 0.418$, with an R^2 of 0.175 and an adjusted R^2 of 0.161. This suggests that community participation explains about 17.5% of the variation in economic sustainability. The regression model is statistically significant ($F = 12.336$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that participation factors play a relatively stronger role in shaping economic sustainability compared to social and environmental dimensions.

For environmental sustainability, the model reported $R = 0.320$, with an R^2 of 0.102 and an adjusted R^2 of 0.087. This implies that community participation accounts for 10.2% of the variance in environmental sustainability. The ANOVA results confirm that the model is

statistically significant ($F = 6.631$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating that participation variables also contribute significantly, though to a lesser extent, to environmental sustainability outcomes.

4.4.3 Regression Analysis of Community Participation on Overall Sustainability of the NUSAF III project

The section presents the regression relationship between community participation and overall sustainability of the NUSAF III project, as shown in Table 4.17 below.

Table 4. 17: Model summary and ANOVA estimate for Overall Sustainability of the NUSAF III project

Model	R	R ²	Adj R ²	SE
Overall Sustainability	0.404	0.163	0.149	0.12891

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	P-value.
Overall Sustainability	Regression	0.756	4	0.189	11.368	0.000
	Residuals	3.872	233	.017		
	Total	4.628	237			

Source: Field data, 2026

The regression analysis in Table 4.17 reveals a statistically significant relationship between community participation and the overall sustainability of the NUSAF III project. The model produced a multiple correlation coefficient of $R = 0.404$, indicating a moderate positive association between community participation and project sustainability.

The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.163$) indicates that approximately 16.3% of the variation in overall sustainability is explained by community participation variables. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.149 further confirms that the model retains explanatory power after adjusting for the number of predictors included in the analysis. The relatively low standard error of the estimate ($SE = 0.12891$) suggests that the model provides a reasonably accurate prediction of overall sustainability outcomes.

The ANOVA results show that the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 11.368$, $p < 0.001$). This implies that the combined effect of participatory decision-making, collaboration, empowerment, and information sharing significantly predicts the overall sustainability of the NUSAF III project.

4.4.4 The Impact of Community Participation on the Sustainability of the NUSAF III Project

This part of chapter four presents the regression result of the relationship between community participation and different dimensions of sustainability of the NUSAF III project in Dokolo district, as shown in Table 4.18

Table 4. 18: Regression Coefficient

Community Participation	Sustainability of the NUSAF III Project							
	Social Sustainability		Economic sustainability		Environmental Sustainability		Overall Sustainability of NUSAF III Project	
	β	p-value	B	p-value	B	p-value	β	p-value
Participatory decision-making	0.041	0.247	0.168	0.000	- 0.151	0.007	0.020	0.521
Collaboration	0.023	0.757	-0.083	0.391	0.307	0.007	0.082	0.188
Empowerment	0.428	0.000	0.383	0.000	-0.62	0.514	0.190	0.000
Information sharing	0.085	0.140	0.047	0.535	0.308	0.001	0.147	0.003
Constant	1.150	0.000	0.879	0.000	1.061	0.000	1.030	0.000

Source: Field data, 2026

The regression coefficients in Table 4.18 reveal differential effects of community participation dimensions on the sustainability of the NUSAF III project.

For social sustainability, empowerment emerges as the only statistically significant predictor ($\beta = 0.428$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that increased levels of community empowerment significantly enhance social sustainability outcomes. Qualitatively, participants consistently highlighted empowerment as a foundation for social cohesion and long-term community capacity. In a focus group discussion, one of the project beneficiaries was quoted as saying, “*NUSAF III taught us skills and leadership. Because of that, we can organize ourselves and solve community problems without waiting for external support.*”

In relation to economic sustainability, participatory decision-making ($\beta = 0.168$, $p < 0.001$) and empowerment ($\beta = 0.383$, $p < 0.001$) significantly predict economic sustainability. This implies that inclusive decision-making processes and strengthened community capacity contribute substantially to sustained economic benefits, such as income generation and livelihood

improvements. Qualitatively, respondents reported that involving communities in decisions related to resource allocation and project priorities enhances the relevance and effectiveness of economic interventions. In a focus group, one of the project beneficiary group leaders was quoted saying that, *“We were involved in choosing the livelihood activities, so people are committed to making them succeed because they are our own decisions.”*

Regarding environmental sustainability, collaboration ($\beta = 0.307$, $p = 0.007$) and information sharing ($\beta = 0.308$, $p = 0.001$) have statistically significant positive effects. Qualitatively, participants noted that environmental outcomes depend largely on coordinated community efforts and continuous awareness creation. In a key informant interview, a district natural resource officer highlighted that *“Environmental activities require people to act together. When communities collaborate and receive clear information, they are more likely to adopt conservation practices”*.

Conversely, participatory decision-making demonstrates a significant negative relationship ($\beta = -0.151$, $p = 0.007$). These findings suggest that environmental sustainability is more negatively affected by decision-making structures and participatory processes, which may not always translate into positive environmental outcomes. In relation to these, qualitative findings indicate that most respondents highlighted that community preferences may sometimes prioritize short-term economic gains over environmental considerations. In a focus group discussion, one of the project beneficiaries asserted that, *“We always choose projects that help us earn money immediately, without thinking about the long-term environmental effects.”*

For overall sustainability, empowerment ($\beta = 0.190$, $p < 0.001$) and information sharing ($\beta = 0.147$, $p = 0.003$) are statistically significant predictors. Participatory decision-making and collaboration do not significantly predict overall sustainability. This indicates that empowering communities and ensuring transparent information flows are the most consistent drivers of sustainable outcomes across social, economic, and environmental dimensions.

4.5 Influence of the Government Policy Framework on the Relationship between Community Participation and Sustainability

This section explores the role of the government policy framework, particularly decentralization, in shaping the relationship between community participation and project sustainability

4.5.1 Decentralization policy framework

This part presents the different dimensions of the decentralization policy framework that play a role in shaping the relationship between community participation and the sustainability of the NUSAF III project in Dokolo district, as shown in Table 4.19 below

Table 4. 19: Decentralization policy effectiveness

F	Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	(SD+D) %	NS (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	(SA+A) %
Decentralization Policy Effectiveness	Local governments have sufficient authority to plan NUSAF III projects based on community needs.	1(0.4)	7(2.9)	8(3.3)	20(8.4)	178(74.8)	32(13.4)	210(88.2)
	Local leaders actively use their decision-making power to sustain project outcomes.	4(1.7)	7(2.9)	11(4.6)	37(15.5)	173(72.7)	17(7.1)	190(79.8)
	Project designs under decentralization better reflect long-term community priorities.	0(0.0)	4(1.7)	4(1.7)	20(8.4)	169(71.0)	45(18.9)	214(89.9)
	Decentralization has increased community ownership of NUSAF III projects.	0(0.0)	2(0.8)	2(0.8)	11(4.6)	184(77.3)	41(17.2)	225(94.5)
	Decentralized financial control improves transparency in project funding.	1(0.4)	6(2.5)	7(2.9)	12(5.0)	165(69.3)	54(22.7)	219(92.0)
	Local governments regularly monitor and report on project sustainability.	8(3.4)	46(19.3)	54(22.7)	24(10.1)	124(52.1)	36(15.1)	160(67.2)
	Overall decentralization policy framework	0(0.0)	5(2.1)	5(2.1)	13(5.5)	204(85.7)	16(6.7)	220(92.4)

A=Agree, D=Disagree, SA =Strongly Agree, SD=Strongly Disagree, NS=Not Sure, F= Indicators of Community Participation, %= Percentage

Source: Field data, 2026

The findings in Table 4.19 reveal strong community confidence in the decentralization policy framework as a foundation for the effective planning and sustainability of NUSAF III projects.

Overall, 92.4% of respondents agreed that the decentralization framework supports project implementation and sustainability, while only 2.1% disagreed.

In Table 4.19, 88.2% of respondents believe that local governments possess adequate authority to plan projects based on community needs. Furthermore, 89.9% agreed that decentralized project designs better reflect long-term community priorities, and most respondents 94.5% reported that decentralization has increased community ownership of the projects. Qualitatively, most respondents consistently emphasized that decentralization enhanced local decision-making power and improved alignment between project interventions and community priorities. One of the project beneficiary group leaders was quoted in a focus group discussion saying, *“We were consulted before the project started, and our ideas were included, which made us committed to maintaining the project.”*

Similarly, in Table 4.19, respondents expressed confidence in decentralized financial management, with 92.0% agreeing that such control improves transparency in project funding. The qualitative findings also reveal that most participants emphasized that decentralization fostered inclusiveness in project identification and implementation. In a focus group discussion, one of the project beneficiaries’ group members was quoted as saying, *“We could see how funds were used because the local government involved us in the process.”*

However, agreement was relatively lower 67.2% regarding the regularity of monitoring and reporting on project sustainability by local governments, with about a third of respondents 32.8% expressing disagreement as shown in Table 4.19. Qualitative findings also revealed persistent challenges in monitoring and reporting, which mirror the relatively lower quantitative scores in this area. In a key informant interview, one of the community project implementation committee members was quoted as saying, *“After the project was completed, follow-up by local authorities was not consistent, so some activities weakened over time.”*

4.5.2 Decentralization Policy Framework on the Relationship between Community Participation and Sustainability of the NUSAF III Project

This section measures the effect of decentralization policy frameworks on the relationship between community participation and the sustainability of the NUSAF III project in Dokolo district, as shown in Table 4.20 below

Table 4. 20: The Effects of Decentralization Policy Framework on the Relationship between Community Participation and Sustainability of the NUSAF III Project

Model	R	R ²	Adj R ²	SE	
Sustainability of the NUSAF III Project WOM	0.404	0.163	0.149	0.12891	
Sustainability of the NUSAF III Project WM	0.512	0.262	0.246	0.12131	
ANOVA					
Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	p-value
Regression	1.214	5	0.243	16.499	0.000
Residuals	3.414	232	.015		
Total	4.628	237			
WOM- Sustainability of the NUSAF III without a decentralization policy framework					
WM-Sustainability of the NUSAF III with a decentralization policy framework					

Source: Field data, 2026

The model comparison in Table 4.20 reveals a substantial increase in the explanatory power of the regression model when the decentralization policy framework is introduced.

In the model without a decentralization policy framework (WOM), the multiple correlation coefficient is $R = 0.404$, with $R^2 = 0.163$ and adjusted $R^2 = 0.149$. This indicates that community participation variables explain 16.3% of the variation in the sustainability of the NUSAF III project.

When the decentralization policy framework is incorporated (WM), the multiple correlation coefficient increases to $R = 0.512$, while R^2 rises to 0.262 and adjusted R^2 to 0.246. This means that the model explains 26.2% of the variance in project sustainability.

The inclusion of decentralization, therefore, increases the explained variance by a change in $R^2 = 0.099$ (9.9 %), representing a meaningful improvement in the predictive power of the model. Additionally, the reduction in the standard error of the estimate from 0.12891 to 0.12131 suggests improved model precision when decentralization is considered.

The ANOVA results further confirm that the model with decentralization is statistically significant ($F = 16.499$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the combined effect of community

participation and decentralization policy framework significantly predicts the sustainability of the NUSAF III project.

4.5.3 The Impact of Community Participation and Decentralization Policy Framework on Sustainability of the NUSAF III Project

This section presents the regression result of the impact of the decentralization policy framework on the relationship between community participation and sustainability of the NUSAF III project in Dokolo district, as shown in Table 4.21 below.

Table 4.21: Coefficient table with the Moderating variable

Coefficients ^a				
Model	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Constant	0.744	0.141	5.274	0.000
Participatory decision-making	-0.005	0.029	-0.185	0.853
Collaboration	0.021	0.060	0.352	0.725
Empowerment	0.352	0.725	3.818	0.000
Information sharing	0.107	0.047	2.288	0.023
Decentralization policy framework	0.285	0.051	5.580	0.000

Source: Field data, 2026

The regression results in Table 4.21 reveal that when the decentralization policy framework is included in the model, the explanatory influence of community participation dimensions on the sustainability of the NUSAF III project changes notably.

Empowerment remains a statistically significant positive predictor of sustainability ($\beta = 0.352$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that communities with higher levels of skills, confidence, and capacity are more likely to sustain project outcomes. Similarly, information sharing shows a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.107$, $p = 0.023$), suggesting that transparent communication and access to project-related information contribute meaningfully to sustainable outcomes.

The decentralization policy framework emerges as a strong and statistically significant predictor of sustainability ($\beta = 0.285$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that institutional arrangements that grant authority, resources, and accountability to local governments significantly enhance the sustainability of NUSAF III interventions. The magnitude and significance of this coefficient

highlight the critical role of governance structures in shaping long-term project outcomes. Qualitatively, participants highlighted that decentralized governance enhances sustainability by enabling local governments to plan, supervise, and support projects in line with community needs. In a focus group discussion, the district community development officer was quoted as saying, *“Even when communities are active, projects cannot last if the local government does not provide technical guidance and follow-up. Decentralization allows us to respond quickly to community issues.”*

Conversely, participatory decision-making ($\beta = -0.005$, $p = 0.853$) and collaboration ($\beta = 0.021$, $p = 0.725$) do not exhibit statistically significant effects on sustainability when decentralization is considered. This suggests that the influence of these participatory mechanisms may be mediated or overshadowed by broader institutional and governance factors embedded in the decentralization framework.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the key findings of the study in relation to the research objectives and existing theoretical and empirical literature. It critically interprets how community participation shapes the sustainability of the NUSAF III project in Dokolo District. Emphasis is placed on explaining observed relationships, drawing policy-relevant insights, and situating the results within broader debates on development and decentralization. To avoid repeating Chapter Four, the discussion refers to the key results only where needed and focuses on what they mean in relation to theory and previous studies.

5.1 Level of Community Participation in NUSAF III Projects

5.1.1 Community participation in decision-making in the NUSAF III project

The findings indicate a relatively modest level of active community involvement, which suggests that participation may often be consultative rather than transformative. In other words, while communities are engaged in discussions, they may not always exercise substantive influence over final decisions. This finding aligns with Arnstein's (1969) The classic ladder of citizen participation, which distinguishes between tokenistic participation and genuine citizen power. Similarly, Mela and Bello (2023) argues that many development projects adopt “functional participation,” in which communities are involved primarily to enhance project efficiency rather than to exercise real decision-making authority. From a sustainability perspective, limited active involvement can constrain long-term project ownership. When communities perceive themselves as implementers rather than co-designers, their commitment to sustaining project outcomes may weaken over time. Conversely, according to Yasmin et al. (2024), a deeper community participation strengthens local accountability and fosters a sense of responsibility for project continuity.

A significant number of respondents agreed that community opinions are considered before project decisions are made. This indicates that the NUSAF III project incorporates mechanisms for capturing local perspectives during planning and implementation stages. This finding

resonates with the findings on *The Impact of Participatory Planning on Sustainable Development* by Sebunya and Gichuki (2024), which emphasizes that incorporating local knowledge enhances the relevance and effectiveness of development interventions. Empirical evidence also suggests that projects reflecting community priorities are more likely to achieve sustainable outcomes because they address context-specific needs and constraints (Srinivasan, 2024). In the context of the NUSAF III project, considering community opinions likely contributed to aligning project interventions with local socio-economic realities, thereby enhancing the potential for sustained utilization and maintenance of project outputs.

The results further show that the greater proportion of respondents agreed that community feedback is regularly sought and integrated into project planning. This suggests that the NUSAF III project employs iterative participatory processes rather than one-off consultations. These kinds of feedback mechanisms are crucial for adaptive project management and sustainability. According to Ezeh et al. (2024), continuous stakeholder engagement enables projects to respond to emerging challenges and enhances legitimacy and trust among beneficiaries. Moreover, iterative participation strengthens learning and collective problem-solving, which are essential for sustaining development initiatives in dynamic community contexts. However, the fact that approximately one-quarter of respondents disagreed indicates that feedback integration may not be consistent across all project sites or social groups. This unevenness may undermine equity and inclusivity, which are key dimensions of sustainable development.

The strongest evidence of participatory structures is reflected in the finding that most of the respondents agreed that regular meetings are held to enable community members to discuss and influence project activities. This indicates that the NUSAF III project provides formal platforms for dialogue and deliberation. This finding concurred with the findings of Qi et al. (2024) who argued that regular community meetings are widely recognized as critical spaces for collective decision-making, transparency, and social learning. In the context of sustainability, such forums facilitate shared understanding of project goals, roles, and responsibilities, thereby strengthening collective ownership of project outcomes. Nevertheless, the presence of meetings alone does not guarantee meaningful participation. As Ntwana and Naidoo (2024) argue, participatory spaces can be “invited” and controlled by institutions, limiting the extent to which marginalized groups influence decisions. This observation helps explain why high levels of meetings coexist with relatively lower levels of active involvement in decision-making.

A large majority of respondents perceived the decision-making process as transparent and inclusive. Transparency is a foundational element of participatory governance and is closely linked to trust, accountability, and sustainability. According to Ezech et al. (2024), transparent decision-making enhances stakeholder confidence and encourages long-term commitment to public projects. Similarly, transparency reduces the risk of elite capture and mismanagement, which are major threats to the sustainability of community-driven projects (Thap, 2025). In the case of NUSAF III, perceived transparency likely strengthened trust between communities and implementing agencies, thereby creating a supportive environment for sustained project outcomes.

Overall, the findings suggest that participatory decision-making under the NUSAF III project is characterized by strong consultative mechanisms and relatively high levels of transparency, but with varying depth of active community influence. This pattern has important implications for project sustainability. First, the presence of consultative structures and transparency contributes positively to sustainability by fostering trust, relevance, and accountability. Second, the uneven depth of active involvement suggests that sustainability may be stronger in communities where participation is more substantive than symbolic. . As Mia et al. (2022) emphasize, the quality of participation, rather than its mere presence, determines whether community-driven projects achieve lasting impact . This study, therefore, supports the argument that participation is not merely a procedural requirement but a substantive determinant of sustainable development outcomes.

5.1.2 Community collaboration in the NUSAF III project

This study examined the role of community collaboration in shaping the sustainability of the NUSAF III project. The findings reveal exceptionally high levels of cooperation between community members and project implementers, suggesting that cooperative relationships are a defining feature of the project's implementation process. Overall, most respondents agreed that collaboration exists within the NUSAF III project, indicating that the project has successfully fostered collective engagement among stakeholders. At the core of this collaborative environment is the strong interaction between communities and project implementers. Most respondents reported that community members collaborate effectively with project staff and that open communication exists between the two groups. This finding suggests that the NUSAF III project has established functional communication channels that facilitate dialogue, mutual

understanding, and coordinated action. From a sustainability perspective, such communication is critical because it enables communities to understand project objectives, articulate their concerns, and jointly identify solutions to emerging challenges. Scholars have consistently argued that open communication and stakeholder collaboration enhance project ownership and long-term sustainability by strengthening trust and accountability (Atkins et al., 2020; Hamdan et al., 2021).

Similarly, most respondents agreed that community members are encouraged to work together to achieve project goals, highlighting the collective nature of participation under the NUSAF III project. This suggests that the project promotes not only individual involvement but also collective action, which is essential for sustaining shared infrastructure and community-based initiatives. Collective engagement reinforces social capital and strengthens networks of cooperation, which are widely recognized as key drivers of sustainable development outcomes (Prince, 2024). In this sense, the NUSAF III project appears to have contributed to building community cohesion, thereby enhancing the likelihood that project benefits will be maintained beyond the project lifecycle.

Furthermore, most respondents reported that communities are actively engaged in problem-solving when project challenges arise. This finding implies that collaboration extends beyond routine implementation activities to adaptive management and collective response to difficulties. Such problem-solving capacity is crucial for sustainability because it enables communities to respond effectively to operational, technical, or institutional challenges without relying solely on external actors. Ohmer et al. (2022), suggested that when communities move beyond passive involvement to active problem-solving, they develop stronger ownership and responsibility, which enhances the durability of development interventions.

However, the findings also reveal subtle limitations in structured collaborative processes. While collaboration is generally strong, a smaller number of respondents agreed that regular meetings and workshops are held to foster collaboration, which is comparatively lower than other indicators. This suggests that although informal collaboration and day-to-day interactions are robust, formal platforms for joint learning, reflection, and capacity building may not be consistently implemented. From a sustainability standpoint, this gap is significant because regular structured engagement is necessary to institutionalize collaboration and ensure continuity of collective action over time. Lozano et al. (2021) agreed with this current study and argued that

without sustained formal platforms, collaborative practices may weaken once external support diminishes, thereby undermining long-term sustainability.

Overall, the findings indicate that community collaboration plays a central role in sustaining the NUSAF III project. The high levels of cooperation, communication, and collective problem-solving demonstrate that collaboration has strengthened social relationships, enhanced trust between communities and implementers, and fostered shared responsibility for project outcomes. These elements are fundamental to sustainability, as projects that are jointly implemented and managed are more likely to be maintained and adapted to changing local conditions. This argument concurred with the findings of Ningsih et al. (2025), which highlighted the potential of innovative, interactive learning models to foster essential social skills required for success in a globalized environment. Nevertheless, the relatively lower emphasis on structured collaborative forums suggests that strengthening institutionalized mechanisms for collaboration could further enhance the long-term sustainability of the NUSAF III project interventions. Furthermore, the results underscore that collaboration is not merely a supportive factor but a core pillar of sustainable community-based development. By fostering strong partnerships between communities, local leaders, and implementing agencies, the NUSAF III project demonstrates how collaborative participation can translate into enduring social, economic, and institutional benefits.

5.1.3 Community Empowerment in the NUSAF III Project

This study examined the contribution of community empowerment to the sustainability of the NUSAF III project. The findings indicate that empowerment is a central feature of the project's implementation approach and a key driver of sustainable outcomes. Overall, most respondents agreed that the NUSAF III project empowers community members, suggesting that the project has significantly strengthened local capacity, confidence, and agency. A notable dimension of empowerment is skills development. Most respondents reported that NUSAF III provides opportunities for community members to acquire new skills. This finding suggests that the project goes beyond delivering physical infrastructure or services to invest in human capital development. Skills acquisition is widely recognized as a foundation for sustainability because it equips communities with the knowledge and competencies required to manage and maintain project outcomes independently (Bourn, 2018; Muraina, 2023) . In this sense, NUSAF III

appears to have contributed to building a self-reliant community capable of sustaining project benefits beyond external support.

Closely related to skills development is the community's sense of agency. A substantial proportion of respondents reported feeling empowered to take initiative in project activities. This indicates that community members do not merely participate as beneficiaries but increasingly perceive themselves as active actors in project processes. Such agency is critical for sustainability because projects are more likely to endure when communities feel responsible for their success and are willing to take initiative in addressing emerging challenges. This finding aligns with empowerment theory, which emphasizes that enhancing people's ability to influence decisions and actions affecting their lives strengthens long-term development outcomes (Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024).

Training and capacity-building activities further reinforce empowerment under NUSAF III. A great number of respondents agreed that training sessions are conducted to strengthen community capacity for project management. This suggests that the project systematically equips communities with technical and managerial skills necessary for planning, implementation, and maintenance. From a sustainability perspective, capacity building enhances institutional memory and reduces dependence on external actors, thereby increasing the likelihood that project benefits will be sustained over time (Klinsky & Sagar, 2022).

Furthermore, most of the respondents also perceived that the NUSAF III project enhances the community's ability to sustain itself independently. This finding implies that empowerment is not limited to immediate project participation but extends to broader resilience and self-sufficiency. By strengthening local institutions, leadership structures, and problem-solving capacities, the project fosters conditions under which communities can continue development initiatives even after formal project completion. Such outcomes resonate with participatory development literature, which emphasizes that sustainable projects are those that build local ownership and adaptive capacity (Geekiyanage & Fernando, 2021).

Access to resources also emerged as a critical component of empowerment. A large majority of respondents agreed that easy access to resources facilitates effective participation in the project. This suggests that empowerment under NUSAF III is supported not only by knowledge and skills but also by material and institutional resources. Access to resources enhances

communities' ability to translate participation into tangible outcomes, thereby strengthening the sustainability of project interventions. As argued by Ganesh and Chitra (2025), empowerment is multidimensional, encompassing access to resources, agency, and achievements, all of which are necessary for meaningful and sustainable participation.

However, despite the generally high levels of empowerment, a minority of respondents expressed disagreement with the overall empowerment indicator. This suggests that empowerment may not be uniformly experienced across all segments of the community. Certain groups such as women, youth, or marginalized households may face structural barriers that limit their access to training, resources, or decision-making opportunities. This uneven empowerment has important implications for sustainability, as projects are more likely to endure when empowerment is inclusive and equitable across social groups. Overall, the findings demonstrate that community empowerment plays a decisive role in sustaining the NUSAF III project. According to Arulsamy et al. (2023) enhancing skills, fostering initiative, strengthening capacity, and improving access to resources, help the project to create conditions for long-term community ownership and resilience. These results underscore that empowerment is not merely an outcome of participation but a fundamental mechanism through which community participation translates into sustainable development outcomes.

5.1.4 Community Information Sharing in the NUSAF III Project

The findings of this study also reveal that information sharing plays a crucial role in strengthening community participation and enhancing the sustainability of the NUSAF III project. Overall, a large majority of respondents agreed that information related to the project is effectively shared within the community, while only a small proportion expressed dissatisfaction. This suggests that the NUSAF III project has established relatively strong communication mechanisms, enabling community members to understand, engage with, and support project activities. First, most respondents agreed that information about the NUSAF III project activities is openly shared, indicating that transparency is a defining feature of the project's implementation process. Open dissemination of information fosters trust between project implementers and community members, which is a foundational element of sustainable development initiatives. When communities perceive project processes as transparent, they are more likely to develop a sense of ownership and commitment to sustaining project outcomes beyond external support (Hacker et al., 2012; Srinivasan, 2024) . In the context of NUSAF III,

openness in information sharing appears to have created an enabling environment in which community members feel informed and included in project processes.

Similarly, most respondents are informed about project goals and expected outcomes, demonstrating that the project has successfully communicated its strategic objectives to beneficiaries. Understanding project goals is essential for meaningful participation because it allows community members to align their expectations and actions with the intended outcomes of the project. According to Slingerland et al. (2020), access to information is a prerequisite for moving beyond helping the community to participate toward genuine involvement in decision-making. In this regard, the NUSAF III project's emphasis on communicating goals may have contributed to deeper community engagement and strengthened the prospects for long-term sustainability.

However, a relatively smaller number of respondents agreed that there are regular project progress updates, suggesting that although information is shared, the frequency and consistency of communication may vary. Regular updates are important because they enable communities to track project performance, identify emerging challenges, and adjust their participation accordingly. Scholars argue that continuous feedback loops between project implementers and communities enhance adaptive management and improve the resilience and sustainability of development interventions (Carreno, 2024; Nelwamondo and Njenga, 2021). Therefore, while the NUSAF III project demonstrates strong performance in information dissemination, strengthening mechanisms for ongoing communication could further enhance community engagement and project sustainability.

Furthermore, a moderate number of respondents agreed that community members have access to project reports and results, indicating that formal documentation may not be fully accessible to all community members. This finding highlights a potential gap between information availability and information accessibility. While project reports may exist, they may not always be presented in formats that are easily understood or accessible to local communities. Literature on participatory development emphasizes that information must be translated into locally meaningful forms to facilitate genuine participation and accountability (Lud, 2023; Onyango, 2018). In the case of NUSAF III, improving the accessibility of project documentation could empower communities with deeper knowledge and strengthen their capacity to sustain project outcomes.

The study also found that most respondents agreed that community feedback is welcomed and responded to by the project team. This finding underscores the importance of two-way communication in participatory development. Feedback mechanisms allow communities not only to receive information but also to influence project implementation. Such interactive communication enhances community ownership and accountability, which are key determinants of project sustainability (Anani-Bossman & Blankson, 2024). The relatively high level of agreement in this area suggests that NUSAF III has made efforts to institutionalize participatory feedback processes, although there remains room for improvement.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that information sharing under NUSAF III is generally strong and plays a significant role in fostering community participation. By enhancing transparency, building understanding of project goals, facilitating feedback, and promoting accountability, information sharing contributes to a sense of collective responsibility among community members. This collective responsibility is essential for sustaining project benefits after the withdrawal of external support. Consistent with the study of Kamei (2019) on Participatory Communication for Development, which highlighted that effective information sharing is not merely a communication strategy but a structural mechanism through which communities become active agents in sustaining development interventions. Nevertheless, the observed gaps in access to formal reports and regular progress updates suggest that sustainability could be further strengthened by institutionalizing more inclusive and continuous information-sharing practices. Enhancing the clarity, frequency, and accessibility of project information would likely deepen community engagement and reinforce the long-term sustainability of the NUSAF III project.

5.2 Extent of Sustainability of NUSAF III Projects

5.2.1 Social sustainability of the NUSAF III project

The findings on social sustainability also demonstrate a notably high level of sustainability associated with the NUSAF III project, as evidenced by the overwhelming agreement among respondents across multiple indicators. A substantial number of participants acknowledged that the project has successfully fostered long-term trust between the community and government actors. This trust is fundamental to sustaining development initiatives, reinforcing the argument by Singapur (2022) who suggested that social capital and trust between stakeholders are pivotal

for the durability of collective action projects. The high level of trust reflects the effectiveness of participatory processes embedded within the NUSAF III project, which according to Almasi and Mohammadi (2023), this would likely contribute to strengthening community-government relations and enhancing legitimacy. Furthermore, a larger proportion of respondents reported active maintenance of project outcomes by community members. This active stewardship highlights the intrinsic link between community participation and sustained benefits, consistent with studies emphasizing that local ownership is critical for long-term sustainability (Hobson et al., 2018). The ability and willingness of communities to sustain outcomes reflect both their sense of responsibility and the project's success in cultivating empowerment and agency.

The alignment of project design with the community's long-term social needs, agreed upon by most of the respondents, indicates that the NUSAF III project planning processes incorporated locally relevant social priorities, supporting the literature that participatory planning enhances contextual fit and social acceptability of interventions (Sebunya & Gichuki, 2024). This is vital for social sustainability as it ensures the project remains relevant and beneficial beyond the initial implementation phase. Furthermore, equitable access to project benefits was recognized by most of the respondents, signifying efforts to address social inclusion. However, there is a relatively lower percentage compared to other indicators signals ongoing challenges in ensuring all social groups benefit equally. Scholars such as Denney et al. (2018) caution that participation processes may unintentionally marginalize vulnerable groups if power asymmetries are not actively addressed, emphasizing the need for continuous vigilance in promoting equity.

On the same note, most respondents affirmed that community networks and cooperation have been strengthened, reflecting enhanced social cohesion, which is widely recognized as a critical enabler of community resilience and collective action (Nanditha & Sathyamurthi, 2022). The project's role in fostering these networks underscores the social infrastructure required to sustain benefits and respond adaptively to emerging challenges.

Finally, the findings show that a greater proportion of respondents perceived improvements in local capacity to manage social initiatives, which underscores the importance of capacity building as a foundational element of social sustainability (Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024). By equipping communities with the skills and knowledge to govern their social initiatives, NUSAF III has contributed to institutionalizing mechanisms for self-reliance and sustained development.

Jointly, these observations affirm that social sustainability within the NUSAF III project is strongly interwoven with active community participation, trust-building, equitable access, and capacity enhancement. Such findings resonate with broader development theories that conceptualize sustainability as multidimensional and deeply embedded in social processes and relationships (Žak, 2021).

5.2.2 Economic Sustainability of the NUSAF III Project

The findings also reveal a robust perception of economic sustainability within the NUSAF III project among community respondents. Many participants agreed that the project continues to support local businesses and suppliers, underscoring the project's role in fostering local economic linkages. This reflects the principle that sustainable development is deeply rooted in strengthening local economies and supply chains, which in turn catalyse multiplier effects within communities (Ruggerio, 2021). However, a notable number of respondents disagreed, suggesting that there remain gaps in fully integrating local enterprises into the project's economic framework, highlighting an area for policy improvement. Furthermore, a considerable number of respondents reported a sustainable increase in household income attributed to the project, indicating tangible improvements in their livelihoods. This aligns with the findings of Kinyata and Abiodun (2020), who emphasize that community-driven development projects succeed when they directly enhance income-generating opportunities and improve economic well-being. This increase in household income not only elevates immediate living standards but also contributes to long-term resilience and poverty alleviation (Kahara et al., 2023).

Most respondents agreed that the NUSAF III project employs cost-effective strategies conducive to long-term viability. Efficient resource utilization and cost-effectiveness are essential to project sustainability, ensuring that limited financial and material resources yield maximal impact (Ahsun & Elly, 2024). Such strategic economic management reflects prudent project design that supports durability beyond the initial funding cycles. On the same vein, a vast number of participants agreed that the project generates ongoing revenue streams for beneficiaries, highlighting the importance of sustained financial inflows as a foundation for economic sustainability. This aligns with Makomborero et al. (2023) who asserted that sustainable projects must transition communities from dependency on external aid to generating self-reliant income sources. More importantly, most respondents agreed that the project spurred the growth of durable local enterprises, indicating a strengthening of the entrepreneurial ecosystem within the

project area. This is consistent with the literature that links community participation and empowerment to enhanced enterprise development and local economic dynamism (Kamruzzaman & White, 2018).

Lastly, most respondents agreed that the project has contributed to enhancing community resilience to economic shocks. Economic resilience is the ability to absorb and recover from shocks, and is a critical dimension of sustainability (Eichengreen et al., 2024). Although the economic sustainability proportion is high, it registers lower agreement compared to others, suggesting vulnerabilities remain, potentially due to external macroeconomic factors or insufficient risk mitigation strategies within the project design. These findings resonate with broader theoretical frameworks emphasizing that economic sustainability is a complex, multidimensional process requiring inclusive participation and adaptive capacity (Chaturvedi et al., 2024). Overall, a sizeable number of respondents agreed that economic sustainability exists. The findings suggest that while the NUSAF III project has contributed to economic empowerment and viability, continuous efforts are required to deepen integration with local economies. This will bolster resilience mechanisms and ensure equitable access to economic benefits..

5.2.3 Environmental Sustainability of the NUSAF III Project

The findings highlight a positive perception of environmental sustainability within the NUSAF III project, with a notable number of respondents affirming that the project contributes meaningfully to sustainable environmental outcomes. Notably, most respondents agreed that the project has enhanced sustainable management of natural resources such as water and soil. This reflects the critical role that community-based projects can play in natural resource stewardship, reinforcing the principle that environmental sustainability is foundational for long-term rural development (Sele & Mukundi, 2024). Most respondents agreed that the project has promoted practices that minimize environmental degradation. This suggests that the NUSAF III project interventions successfully encourage environmentally conscious behaviours within the community, which is essential for safeguarding ecosystem services and maintaining productivity (Oe & Yamaoka, 2022). Such findings echo the growing recognition in the literature that effective environmental management requires integrating local knowledge with project activities to achieve sustainability (Kehinde, 2025).

Despite these positive perceptions, a smaller number of respondents agreed that regular environmental monitoring is conducted to ensure project sustainability, indicating a relative weakness in systematic oversight mechanisms. This gap suggests a need for strengthening institutional arrangements for ongoing environmental assessment and adaptive management to address emerging challenges promptly (Edema et al., 2020). Continuous monitoring is vital to prevent degradation that might undermine both environmental and project longevity.

The project also appears to have made significant strides in environmental education, with most respondents acknowledging ongoing conservation education efforts, and a moderate number of respondents agreeing that the project has raised long-term environmental awareness. These results underscore the importance of knowledge dissemination as a catalyst for behavioural change and community engagement in sustainability efforts, consistent with findings by Rubial and Arana (2025) that education enhances environmental stewardship.

Most respondents agreed that the project has a clear plan for future environmental sustainability, signalling forward-looking project design attentive to intergenerational equity. This planning aligns with the conceptual frameworks of sustainable development that emphasize the necessity of balancing present needs with those of future generations (Kehinde, 2025). Collectively, these findings suggest that the environmental sustainability of the NUSAF III project is underpinned by community participation in resource management, education, and planning. However, to ensure lasting impact, enhancing systematic monitoring and accountability mechanisms remains imperative. Such efforts would not only safeguard environmental gains but also reinforce the integrated nature of sustainability, linking social, economic, and ecological dimensions (Edema et al., 2020).

5.3 Relationship between Community Participation and Sustainability of NUSAF III Projects

The correlation analysis conducted to explore the relationship between various dimensions of community participation and the sustainability of the NUSAF III project reveals significant positive associations, underscoring the critical role of participatory processes in sustaining development outcomes. Notably, empowerment exhibited the strongest positive correlation with overall project sustainability, highlighting that enhancing community members' skills, confidence, and agency is fundamental to ensuring the long-term viability of project benefits.

This finding aligns with empirical evidence emphasizing empowerment as a cornerstone for sustainable development, where empowered communities are better equipped to manage resources and adapt to challenges (Ganesh and Chitra, 2025).

On the other hand, information sharing also demonstrated a robust positive correlation with sustainability, illustrating the importance of transparent communication and access to information in fostering community trust and enabling informed participation. This supports prior research that identifies open information flows as vital for accountability and collective action in community-driven projects (Nava et al., 2024).

On the same vein, collaboration showed a moderate yet statistically significant positive correlation with sustainability, indicating that cooperative engagement between community members and project implementers enhances project continuity through shared ownership and problem-solving capacities. This finding echoes theoretical perspectives that frame collaboration as a social capital resource that strengthens institutional resilience and community cohesion (Aldrich et al., 2014).

Furthermore, while participatory decision-making had the weakest yet significant positive correlation with sustainability, it nonetheless points to the value of involving community members in governance processes, but to a lesser degree compared to other participation dimensions. This suggests that although decision-making inclusion is important, it may need to be complemented by other forms of engagement, such as empowerment and information sharing, to effectively promote sustainable outcomes (Ezeh et al., 2024).

5.4 Influence of the Government Policy Framework on the Relationship between Community Participation and Sustainability

5.4.1 Decentralization policy framework

The regression analysis investigating the effects of the decentralization policy framework on the relationship between community participation and the sustainability of NUSAF III projects reveals nuanced insights into the mechanisms underpinning project longevity. Notably, empowerment emerges as the most influential community participation dimension positively predicting sustainability, underscoring the critical role of enhancing local capacities, skills, and agency in sustaining project outcomes over time. This finding aligns with the findings of

Kamruzzaman and White (2018), who highlighted that empowerment is a catalyst for community ownership and resilience.

On the same note, information sharing also demonstrates a statistically significant positive effect on sustainability, highlighting transparency and the free flow of project-related information as vital for fostering trust, informed decision-making, and collective accountability within communities. This corroborates arguments in participatory governance literature that effective communication channels are essential for embedding sustainable development practices (Nava et al., 2024).

The decentralization policy framework itself exerts a strong and statistically significant positive influence on NUSAF III project sustainability, affirming that devolved governance structures characterized by local autonomy, resource control, and accountable leadership are foundational for embedding participatory processes within institutional contexts. This supports the decentralization theory that posits enhanced local governance capacities as instrumental in ensuring development interventions are responsive, adaptive, and sustainable (Adnan & Hanafiah, 2025).

Conversely, participatory decision-making and collaboration did not exhibit significant effects on sustainability when the decentralization framework was accounted for consistent with critiques in participatory development that emphasize the need to move beyond tokenistic involvement (Ezeh et al., 2024). This suggests that while these elements are important for engagement, their direct influence on sustainability may be overshadowed by the broader governance environment. It may also reflect contextual limitations in the depth or quality of participation and collaboration in decision-making processes,.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the findings, the conclusions and the recommendations of the study, organized according to the four objectives.

6.1 Summary of the study findings

On the first objective, community participation in NUSAF III projects was high, with 95.4% of respondents agreeing that it was evident. Collaboration (97.1%), empowerment (93.3%) and information sharing (90.0%) were rated highest, while participatory decision-making was lowest (77.7%), and only 63.8% agreed that community members were actively involved in decisions.

On the second objective, 89.1% of respondents rated the NUSAF III projects as sustainable. Social sustainability was highest (96.2%), followed by economic (91.6%) and environmental sustainability (86.6%). The weakest indicators were regular environmental monitoring (73.5%), support to local businesses and suppliers (74.8%) and resilience to economic shocks (79.4%).

On the third objective, all four participation dimensions were positively and significantly correlated with sustainability, with empowerment strongest ($r = 0.340$) and participatory decision-making weakest ($r = 0.131$). Together, the dimensions explained 16.3% of the variation in overall sustainability, and only empowerment ($\beta = 0.190$) and information sharing ($\beta = 0.147$) were significant predictors.

On the fourth objective, adding the decentralization policy framework raised the explained variation in sustainability from 16.3% to 26.2%. Decentralization ($\beta = 0.285$), empowerment ($\beta = 0.352$) and information sharing ($\beta = 0.107$) were significant, while decision-making and collaboration were not. Only 67.2% of respondents agreed that local governments regularly monitor and report on project sustainability.

6.2 Conclusions

Community participation in NUSAF III projects in Dokolo District is high but shallow. Communities were strongly involved in implementation, but their influence over what was selected and funded was limited, so participation sits closer to consultation than to the partnership and delegated power that Arnstein's ladder associates with ownership.

NUSAF III projects are largely sustained in social terms, through community ownership, trust and cooperation, but their economic and environmental benefits are less secure because market linkages, resilience to shocks and environmental follow-up are weak.

Not all forms of participation sustain projects equally. Building community skills and keeping communities informed are what sustain NUSAF III projects, whereas attending meetings and working alongside implementers do not, on their own, keep benefits going after handover.

The decentralization policy framework strengthens the link between participation and sustainability. Communities sustain projects better where local governments hold the authority, resources and responsibility to support them after handover, which means that sustainability depends on both community agency and local government follow-up.

6.3 Recommendations

Dokolo District Local Government should require that community members select, prioritize and approve subprojects and their budgets in parish meetings before proposals are forwarded to the sub-county under the Parish Development Model and any future NUSAF-type programmes. Signed minutes of these meetings should be a condition for approving funding.

Sub-county local government in Dokolo district should ensure that every completed subproject has a public notice board showing its budget, expenditure, responsible committee, and contact persons; that community meetings to report on completed subprojects continue after handover, and that a feedback register is kept at the sub-county with a written response to each issue raised.

The District Production and Commercial Office should link NUSAF III livelihood groups to markets, value addition and savings groups to improve resilience to shocks, while the District Natural Resources Office and sub-county extension staff should include completed NUSAF III

subprojects in their routine environmental monitoring plans and train community project management committees to carry out simple environmental checks.

The Office of the Prime Minister should provide adequate resources for project monitoring and evaluation for future government projects.

6.4 Areas for further study

1. A Longitudinal Study on Community Participation and the Long-Term Sustainability of Government Projects in Northern Uganda
2. Assessing the Effectiveness of Objective Sustainability Indicators in Evaluating Government Development Projects in Uganda
3. The Influence of Political Leadership, Institutional Governance, and Cultural Practices on the Sustainability of Government Projects in Post-Conflict Communities of Northern Uganda

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of the study: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF GOVERNMENT PROJECTS IN UGANDA: A CASE OF NORTHERN UGANDA SOCIAL ACTION FUND III PROJECTS IN DOKOLO DISTRICT

Invigilator(s): Otang Isaac Okuma

Institution(s): Gulu University

Introduction

I am Otang Isaac Okuma from the Faculty of Business and Development Studies, Gulu University. I am conducting a study on Community Participation and Sustainability of Government Projects in Uganda: A case of Northern Uganda Social Action Fund III Projects in Dokolo district. You have been selected as a study participant. We kindly request that you respond to our questions. For your assurance, this information shall not be shared with any organization or institution but shall only be used for this study.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to assess the Community Participation and Sustainability of Government Projects in Uganda. The findings will help improve the design, implementation, and support mechanisms for government project sustainability in Uganda.

Procedures

Your participation in this study will involve answering the questions while filling in the questionnaires as requested.

Participate in a focus group discussion and key informant interview (optional), where your views and experiences regarding NUSAF III will be explored in more detail.

The questionnaire will take approximately 30–45 minutes to complete. Focus group discussions will last about 60–90 minutes.

Who will participate in the Study?

You are eligible to participate if you are:

Beneficiary of the NUSAF III Project

A local leader, caregiver, or official involved in the implementation of the NUSAF III program

Risks/Discomforts

There are no major risks involved in participating in this study. However, you may feel uncomfortable answering some personal or sensitive questions. You are free to skip any questions you are not comfortable with or stop participating at any time without any consequences.

Benefits

Your participation will contribute to a better understanding of how Community Participation and Sustainability of Government Projects in Uganda. Although there may be no direct benefit to you, your input may help improve future interventions for Communities in Uganda.

Confidentiality

All information collected in this study will be treated with strict confidentiality. Your name or identity will not be used in any reports, publications, or presentations resulting from this study. Data will be stored securely and used solely for research purposes.

Alternatives

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect any services or support you currently receive or may receive in the future.

Costs

There are no costs to you for participating in this study. However, reasonable refreshments and transport reimbursement (where applicable) may be provided during focus group discussions.

Inquiries

If you have any questions related to the study or your rights as a research participant, you can contact the principal investigator, Otang Isaac Okuma, on telephone 0776011969 or via email at isaacokuma@gmail.com

Statement of Voluntaries

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to decline or withdraw at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits. By signing below, you confirm that you have read (or been read) the information above and freely agree to participate.

Name Sign/Thumb print of the participant.....date.....

Name Sign/Thumb print of the witness.....
...date.....

Name Sign/Thumb print of the interviewer..... date....

APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HOUSEHOLD PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

Dear respondent,

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to decline or withdraw at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits. By signing below, you confirm that you have freely agreed to participate. This questionnaire aims to gather information on community participation and the sustainability of NUSAF3 projects in Dokolo District. Your responses are valuable for understanding the effectiveness and inclusivity of community engagement in these projects. The information provided will be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes.

Name Sign/Thumb print of the participant.....date.....

Thank you for consenting to participate in this survey.

Section A: Demographic Information

No.	Question	Response Options
1	Sex	☐ Male ☐ Female
2	Age	☐ 18-25 ☐ 26-33, ☐ 34-41, ☐ 42-49, ☐ 50 and above
3	Education level (years)	☐ Primary, ☐ Secondary, ☐ Tertiary
4	Occupation	☐ Farmer ☐ Trader ☐ Civil servant ☐ unemployed
5	Years spent in NUSAF III	
6	Household size (number of people)	☐ 1-3, ☐ 4-8, ☐ 9-12, ☐ 13-18, ☐ 19 and above
7	Household income in Uganda Shillings	
8	Religious Affiliation	☐ Catholic, ☐ Pentecostal, ☐ Islam
9	Marital Status	☐ Married, ☐ Single, ☐ Divorced

Section B: Community Participation in NUSAF3 Projects in Dokolo District

Each statement is designed to gather information on respondents' perceptions on community participation sustainability of NUSAF III project activities in the Dokolo district. Respondents are asked to indicate their agreement on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). This structure allows for a comprehensive assessment of community engagement and participation in the projects.

Community Participation in NUSAF3 Projects in Dokolo District					
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Indicators	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Participatory Decision-Making					
1. Community members are actively involved in decision-making processes for NUSAF3 projects.					
2. The opinions of community members are considered before making project decisions.					
3. Community feedback is regularly sought and integrated into project planning.					
4. There are regular meetings for community members to discuss and influence project activities.					
5. The decision-making process for the project is transparent and inclusive.					
Collaboration					
1. Community members collaborate effectively with project implementers.					
2. There is open communication between project staff and the community.					
3. Community members are encouraged to work together to achieve project goals.					
4. The community is engaged in problem-solving when challenges arise in the project.					
5. Regular meetings and workshops are held to foster collaboration.					
Empowerment					
1. NUSAF3 projects provide opportunities for community members to gain skills.					
2. Community members feel empowered to take initiative in project activities.					
3. Training sessions are held to build the community's capacity for project management.					
4. The project enhances the community's ability to sustain itself independently.					
5. Easy access to resources that enable effectively participate in the project.					
Information Sharing					
1. Information about NUSAF3 project activities is shared openly with the community.					
2. Community members are informed about project goals and expected outcomes.					
3. Progress updates about the project are regularly communicated to the community.					

4. Community members are given access to project reports and results.					
5. Feedback from the community is welcomed and responded to by the project team.					

Section B: The level of NUSAF3 Project Sustainability

Extent of NUSAF3 Project Sustainability					
Indicators	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Social Sustainability					
The project has fostered long-term trust between the community and government					
Community members actively maintain project outcomes.					
The project design aligns with the community's long-term social needs.					
The project promotes equitable access to benefits across all social groups.					
The project has strengthened community networks and cooperation.					
The project has improved local capacity to manage social initiatives.					
Economic Sustainability					
The project continues to support local businesses and suppliers.					
Household incomes have sustainably increased due to the project.					
The project utilizes cost-effective strategies that ensure long-term viability.					
The project generates ongoing revenue streams for beneficiaries.					
The project has spurred the growth of durable local enterprises.					
The project has enhanced the community's resilience to economic shocks.					
Environmental Sustainability					
The project has improved sustainable management of natural resources (e.g., water, soil).					
The project promotes practices that minimize environmental degradation.					
Regular environmental monitoring occurs to ensure project sustainability.					
The project provides ongoing education on environmental conservation.					
The project has raised long-term awareness about environmental protection.					
The project includes a clear plan for future environmental sustainability.					

Section B: Government Policy Framework.

Policy Indicators	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Decentralization Policy Effectiveness					
Local governments have sufficient authority to plan NUSAF3 projects based on community needs.					
Decentralization has improved efficient allocation of resources for project maintenance.					
Local leaders actively use their decision-making power to sustain project outcomes.					
Project designs under decentralization better reflect long-term community priorities.					
Decentralized management reduces delays in project implementation.					
Local governments are held accountable for NUSAF3 project results.					
Decentralization has increased community ownership of NUSAF3 projects.					
Locally managed projects show higher functionality rates after 3+ years.					
Decentralized financial control improves transparency in project funding.					
Local governments regularly monitor and report on project sustainability.					
Decentralization has reduced elite capture of project resources.					
Project maintenance budgets are consistently allocated at the local level.					

.....The end.....

APPENDIX III: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW (KII)

Dear respondent,

Thank you for participating in this survey. This interview aims to gather information on community participation and sustainability of NUSAF3 projects in selected sub counties in Dokolo District. Your responses are valuable for understanding the effectiveness and inclusivity of community Participation in these projects. The information provided will be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes.

Section A: Demographic Information

No.	Question	Response Options
1	Sex	☐ Male ☐ Female
2	Age	☐ 20-30, ☐ 31-40, ☐ 41-50, ☐ 51 and above
3	Education level (years)	☐ Primary, ☐ Secondary, ☐ Tertiary
4	Occupation	☐ Farmer ☐ Trader ☐ Civil servant ☐ unemployed
5	Years spent in NUSAF III	
6	Household size (number of people)	☐ 1-3, ☐ 4-8, ☐ 9-12, ☐ 13-18, ☐ 19 and above
7	Household income in Uganda Shillings	
8	Religious Affiliation	☐ Catholic, ☐ Pentecostal, ☐ Islam
9	Marital Status	☐ Married, ☐ Single, ☐ Divorced

Could you please provide the brief history of NUSAF III project, including key milestones such as inception and significant development?

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SECTION B: PROJECT DESIGN AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Could you explain how the community members were involved in the planning and design phase of NUSAF III projects?

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In your own opinion were the local leaders and opinion leaders consulted during project identification and prioritization?

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In your view, how well were the community's needs reflected in the projects that were implemented?
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.....
What challenges, if any, did you observe in mobilizing community participation during the project cycle?
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SECTION C: IMPLEMENTATION AND PARTICIPATION

How did community members participate in the implementation of NUSAF III projects (e.g., labor, supervision, resource provision)?
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.....
In your view, were there training or sensitization activities to prepare the community for their roles?
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.....

How was transparency and accountability ensured during project implementation?
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Were any groups (e.g., women, youth, and persons with disabilities) particularly active or left out in the participation process?
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.....

SECTION D: SUSTAINABILITY OF NUSAF III PROJECTS

Are the NUSAF III projects in this district still functioning as intended (e.g., water points, roads, community groups)?
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What factors have supported or hindered the continued use or maintenance of these projects?

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In your opinion, what role has community participation played in sustaining these projects over time?

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.....
What measures, if any, were put in place to ensure ownership and long-term management of these projects?

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SECTION E: GOVERNMENT POLICY FRAMEWORK

How effective have government decentralization policy been in supporting community-led sustainability?

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.....
What challenges have existed in maintaining the benefits of NUSAF III projects after their formal completion under decentralization policy arrangement?

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.....
What improvements would you recommend to make future government projects more sustainable under decentralization policy arrangement?

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.....
.....

The end

APPENDIX IV: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD)

Dear respondent,

Thank you for participating in this survey. This interview aims to gather information on community participation and the sustainability of NUSAF3 projects in selected sub-counties in Dokolo District. Your responses are valuable for understanding the effectiveness and inclusivity of community Participation in these projects. The information provided will be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes.

SECTION A: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN PROJECTS

(Independent Variable: Decision-making, Collaboration, Empowerment, Information Sharing)

1) Participatory Decision-Making

How were community members involved in identifying and selecting projects under NUSAF III?

Were your opinions, priorities, and local needs considered during the planning and design stages? Please explain.

Who usually made the final decisions about which projects to implement, and how were those decisions communicated to the community?

2) Collaboration and Partnership

What forms of collaboration existed between community members, leaders, and implementing agencies during project implementation?

Were there partnerships with local groups (e.g., CBOs, women's groups, youth associations)? How effective were they?

What challenges, if any, limited collaboration or joint action among different stakeholders?

3) Empowerment and Capacity Building

Were community members given any training or resources to help them manage or maintain the projects?

Do you feel more capable of managing community initiatives now than before the NUSAF III projects? Why or why not?

How has community leadership or confidence changed as a result of participating in these projects?

4) Information Sharing and Transparency

How was project information (e.g., budgets, timelines, progress) shared with community members?

Did you feel well-informed about project goals, activities, and outcomes?

What barriers, if any, prevented the free flow of information between the project implementers and the community?

SECTION B: PROJECT IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

(Dependent Variable: Economic, Social, and Environmental Sustainability)

1) Economic Sustainability

What economic changes have you observed since the implementation of NUSAF III projects (e.g., income, employment, productivity)?

Have these projects continued to generate economic benefits for the community after completion?

What measures, if any, were taken to ensure financial sustainability or continued funding?

2) Social Sustainability

How have the projects affected relationships, trust, and cooperation within the community?

Are community members still actively involved in maintaining or using project outcomes?

What motivates or discourages people from taking responsibility for project upkeep?

3) Environmental Sustainability

Were environmental concerns (such as soil, water, and tree cover) considered during project planning and implementation?

Have the projects helped to protect or harm the local environment in any way?

What is being done to ensure that project benefits do not lead to environmental degradation?

SECTION C: POLICY FRAMEWORKS, DECENTRALIZATION POLICY EFFECTIVENESS

(Moderating Variables: Decentralization policy effectiveness)

How are community members involved in tracking how project funds and resources are used?

Are there accountability mechanisms (e.g., reports, meetings, audits) that ensure transparency?

What challenges do you face in holding leaders or implementing agencies accountable?

How does the community participate in monitoring and evaluating project progress?

Are there follow-up visits or assessments after project completion to ensure continued functionality?

In your opinion, how could monitoring and evaluation be improved to make projects more sustainable?

The end

APPENDIX V: KREJCIE AND MORGAN TABLE

Table 1: Krejcie and Morgan Table

<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380
190	127	950	274	50000	381
200	132	1000	278	75000	382
210	136	1100	285	100000	384

Note.—*N* is population size. *S* is sample size.

Source: Krejcie & Morgan, 1970

APPENDIX VII: INTRODUCTORY LETTERS

GULU
P.O. Box 166
Gulu, Uganda



UNIVERSITY
Tel: 0471-42923
Fax: 256-471-42094

OFFICE OF THE DEAN FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Date: 14th October 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: OTANG ISAAC OKUMA

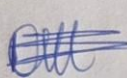
REG: NO: 23/U/0492/MDS/PS

The above-named person is a final year student pursuing Master of Development Studies (MDS) Degree of Gulu University.

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree, he is carrying out research on the topic: **Community Participation and Sustainability of Government Project in Uganda; A Case Study of Northern Uganda Social Action Fund III Project in Dokolo District.**

Due consideration accorded to him shall be highly appreciated.

Yours Faithfully,

 14/10/2025



Dr. Olanya David Ross (Ph.D.)
Vice Chairperson Higher Degrees' and Committee
Faculty of Business and Development Studies
Tel: 0773-170-448
E-Mail: d.olanya@gu.ac.ug

Telephone: 0772362037

Chief Administrative Office
CAO General Line/Fax

Website: www.dokolo.go.ug
E-mail: dokolodistrictlg@gmail.com



DOKOLO DISTRICT LOCAL GOVERNMENT
Office of Chief Administrative Officer

P.O Box 540, DOKOLO
UGANDA

Date 3rd .November .2025

The Senior Assistant Chief Administrative Officer

- Batta sub-county
- Okwongodul sub-county
- Adok sub-county
- Kangai sub-county

RE: OTANG ISAAC OKUMA

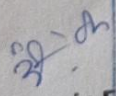
The above named person is a final year student of Gulu University perusing master of development studies.

In abide fulfill partial requirements for the award of the above degree, the student is conducting a research work titled ; Community participation and sustainability of government projects in Uganda a case of the northern Uganda social action fund III in Dokolo district.

The study will be conducted in the four sub-counties of Batta. Okwongdul , Adok and kangai sub-counties where the researcher and team will be interacting with sampled beneficiaries of NUSAF III, Community project management committee, members of sub county technical planning committee, sub county executive committee members and at the district level selected members of district technical planning committee and district executive committee will also be interviewed.

Please accord him all the necessary assistance he may require from you during this exercise.

Yours


Orit Dennis Engweddu
For Chief Administrative Officer
Dokolo District Local Government



