



## BENEFITS OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT ON RURAL DWELLERS IN RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS OF OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

The study examined the benefits of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) on rural dwellers in rural community development projects of Oyo State, Nigeria. Two hundred and fifty (250) rural dwellers were chosen using a multistage sampling technique. Statistical analysis was performed using Chi-square, and Pearson and Product Moment Correlation. According to the awareness on EIA by rural dwellers, 95.3% of respondents in the study region highly aware and blamed their government for being ignorant regarding EIA's issues. The survey found that corruption ( $mean = 4.37$ ) was the major problem facing the usage of EIA in rural community development projects. Thus, 39.3% of respondents confirmed that EIA had substantive benefits for optimal project sitting and design. The chi-square test at  $p < 0.05$  revealed that sex, religion, marital status, educational attainment, and occupation of the rural dwellers were significant with benefits of EIA on them. However, the correlation results revealed that monthly income ( $r = 0.039$ ,  $p = 0.007$ ) of the rural dwellers was significant with benefits of EIA on them in terms of rural community development projects. The findings of this research suggest that after applying the concept, rural inhabitants who used EIA were better able to make environmentally responsible decisions and plan programmes for rural community development projects.

**Keywords:** Benefits, Challenges, Community, Development and Environment

### INTRODUCTION

The term *rural development* refers to initiatives aimed at improving rural residents' awareness and living conditions (Hackbarth and Vries, 2021). It encompasses progress in governance, land ownership, technology, labor force, infrastructure, access to services, and social power structures (Ravetz *et al.*, 2013; Deichmann *et al.*, 2016). Broadly, rural development seeks to enhance quality of life and economic security in sparsely populated areas (Micheal *et al.*, 2016). Yet, many rural residents do not benefit from projects because they are excluded from planning and implementation. Hence, community participation is critical to successful rural development. Infrastructure such as motorable roads, schools, markets, electricity, and water supply forms its foundation, but effectiveness depends on active local involvement (Sunday and Oluoha, 2020).

Over the past four decades, interest in environmental issues, sustainability, and environmentally conscious development has grown significantly (Roth, 2014). National and international laws, such as those of the European Commission, now regulate how development interacts with the environment. However, environmental resources remain under pressure, partly due to construction projects (Gifford and Nilsson, 2014). Since resources are both renewable and non-renewable, sustainable use requires Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) before and after projects (Alozie and Nikolaos, 2018).



EIA, first introduced in the U.S. through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1970, evaluates proposed actions for their potential environmental effects before commitments are made (Morgan, 2012; George *et al.*, 2020). Its mission is to assess biological, chemical, physical, social, cultural, and economic impacts of projects, thereby guiding sound decision-making and planning (Arts *et al.*, 2012; Loomis and Dziedzic, 2018; Iyer, 2018). Although EIA structures differ by country, core steps such as scoping, impact evaluation, mitigation, reporting, and follow-up are common (Fonseca *et al.*, 2017; Hasan *et al.*, 2018). Public participation is central to the process, influencing scoping, analysis, mitigation, and review, while also empowering marginalized groups (Glucker *et al.*, 2013; Brett *et al.*, 2014; Yao *et al.*, 2020; Johnson, 2020).

Nevertheless, EIA frameworks vary significantly between developed and developing countries. In industrialized nations, EIA emerged largely from public demand for environmental protection, whereas in developing nations, its growth has often been reactive to disasters (Bond *et al.*, 2014; Brett *et al.*, 2014; Khosravi *et al.*, 2019). In Nigeria, EIA has contributed to more sustainable construction practices. However, many project proponents often view it as costly and time-consuming, choosing lobbying over compliance and neglecting to incorporate mitigation strategies during design (Kalu and Ogbonna, 2021). This weakens the process, as regulatory agencies frequently lack capacity for adequate monitoring and enforcement. Proponents also resist exploring alternatives due to the perceived expense of redesign, even though EIA could yield more efficient solutions (Kalu and Ogbonna, 2021).

Rural communities are particularly disadvantaged, as their concerns are often overlooked in EIA implementation. Projects in these areas rarely reflect local realities, leaving residents without meaningful benefits. Consequently, there is a need to examine how EIA can contribute more directly to rural development by ensuring community needs are integrated into project planning and execution.

This study therefore investigates the benefits of EIA in rural community development projects in Oyo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- i. describe the socio-economic characteristics of rural dwellers in the study area;
- ii. identify respondents' awareness of EIA-related issues carried out in the study area;
- iii. ascertain the problems affecting the use of EIA in rural community development; and
- iv. determine the benefits of EIA in rural development within the study area.

### The research's hypothesis

The null form of the investigation's hypothesis was employed;

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between socio economic characteristics and benefits of EIA on rural dwellers in rural community development project in the study area.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Description of the study area

Between February 2022 and January 2023, the research project was carried out in the Nigerian state of Oyo in the southwest. Oyo State is among the 36 states that make up the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Oyo State is headquartered in Ibadan. There are 27,249 square kilometers of land there (Adegoke and Jegede, 2016; Ilesanmi *et al.*, 2017)

In order to regulate and monitor environmental issues and waste management standards that apply to any project, the federal government of Nigeria and several Nigerian states have established various agencies and organizations, of which Oyo State's Environmental Impact



Assessment (EIA) is under the framework of Oyo State Environmental Protection Commission and Oyo State Ministry of Environment and Water Resources, Ibadan. The Oyo State Ministry of Environment is in charge of evaluating Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) and Environment Audit Reports (EAR), controlling water pollution and hygiene, treating waste water, developing policies regarding environmental services, conducting field lab and geo-surveys with other stakeholders, supervising and managing projects supported by donor agencies, and managing flood, erosion, and coastal management (Gbadegesin *et al.*, 2007; Shittu, 2016). This will make the study area's use of EIA relevant in order to prevent or minimize adverse environmental effects.

### **Sampling techniques and sample size**

The population of this study comprises of rural dwellers in Oyo-State. There is no definite sample frame in the state. In this regard, multistage sampling technique was used to select the respondents for the study. This was done in steps: Firstly, Egbeda and Akinyele Local Government Areas were purposively selected out of the 33 local government areas that constitute Oyo State, because the selected LGAs have the comprehensive lists of Community Development Associations (CDAs) as well as benefitted from many rural community developments and predominantly in environmental activities engagements. Secondly, five (5) communities were simple randomly selected from each local government area, making a total of ten (10) communities. Lastly, twenty-five (25) rural dwellers were simple randomly selected in each community to make total of two hundred and fifty (250) respondents that were used for this study.

### **Data Collection technique and instrument for data collection**

Data were collected using questionnaire from the respondents (rural dwellers), in order to gather the relevant and important information. Focus group discussions were also used to verify the accuracy of the data, particularly that pertaining to qualitative data from rural dwellers.

### **Data analysis**

The socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents and other variables were summarized in this study using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentages, and mean), and the stated hypothesis was tested using inferential statistical methods like Chi square, and Pearson correlation, and product moment correlation.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents**

The average age of respondents, as shown in Table 1, was  $34.18 \pm 11.96$  years. The age distribution indicates that most respondents (32.6%) fell within 30–39 years. This suggests that the majority were in their prime productive ages, aligning with the findings of Alawode and Jinaid (2014) and Asa and Obinaju (2014), who noted that individuals within this age range are more likely to be economically active. Since Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) requires interactive and participatory engagement, the predominance of respondents in their active years is significant.

Sex distribution revealed that 67.3% were male and 32.7% female, indicating that men are more involved in EIA-related issues in the study area. Regarding religion, 55.3% were Muslims and 44.7% Christians. This highlights the potential role of spiritual leaders in mobilizing their followers toward EIA participation. Marital status data showed that 63.3% were married, while 30.7% were single. According to Smith and Sizer (2016), marriage and family serve as indicators and pathways to community development. The predominance of married respondents suggests a



level of responsibility and commitment to community projects that enhance environmental sustainability.

Educational attainment revealed that 78.0% had tertiary education, while 18.0% completed secondary education. This indicates that most respondents were literate and knowledgeable—an important factor for EIA implementation, as education fosters awareness, value transformation, and sustainable practices (Joyce and MacFarlane, 2001).

Household size averaged  $7 \pm 3.30$  persons, with 41.4% of households having between 6–10 members. This relatively large household size may influence collective decision-making and participation in EIA initiatives.

The mean monthly income was ₦78,866.67  $\pm$  ₦42,107.83, with most respondents (44.0%) earning between ₦50,001 and ₦100,000. This shows that many earned above Nigeria's minimum wage of ₦33,000, suggesting financial capability to contribute counterpart funds in EIA-related projects involving grants. Occupationally, respondents were fairly diverse: 22.7% were civil servants, 22.7% self-employed/independent workers, 17.3% farmers, and 13.3% traders, among others. This occupational spread indicates a mix of formal and informal sector participation, which may influence how different groups engage with environmental development programs.

**Table 1: Socio economic characteristics of the respondents (n=250)**

| Socio-economic characteristics | Frequency | Percentage (%) | Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) | SD         |
|--------------------------------|-----------|----------------|--------------------|------------|
| <b>Age(years)</b>              |           |                |                    |            |
| 30-39                          | 82        | 32.6           | 34.18              | 11.955     |
| <b>Sex</b>                     |           |                |                    |            |
| Male                           | 168       | 67.3           |                    |            |
| Female                         | 82        | 32.7           |                    |            |
| <b>Religion</b>                |           |                |                    |            |
| Christianity                   | 112       | 44.7           |                    |            |
| Islam                          | 138       | 55.3           |                    |            |
| <b>Marital status</b>          |           |                |                    |            |
| Married                        | 158       | 63.3           |                    |            |
| <b>Education level</b>         |           |                |                    |            |
| Tertiary education             | 195       | 78.0           |                    |            |
| <b>Household size</b>          |           |                |                    |            |
| 6-10                           | 104       | 41.4           | 7                  | 3.297      |
| <b>Monthly income(₦)</b>       |           |                |                    |            |
| 50,001-100,000                 | 110       | 44.0           | 78,866.67          | 42,107.830 |
| <b>Occupation</b>              |           |                |                    |            |
| Independent                    | 57        | 22.7           |                    |            |
| Civil service                  | 57        | 22.7           |                    |            |
| Others                         | 7         | 2.7            |                    |            |

Note: SD is standard deviation. 1US\$ (DOLLAR) = 780 NIGERIAN ₦ (NAIRA). Source: Field survey, 2023

### **Awareness on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) by Rural Dwellers**

Table 2 highlights the respondents' level of awareness on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Findings revealed that 95.3% of respondents blamed government for inadequate enforcement of EIA in rural projects, a concern echoed in Focus Group Discussions that pointed to poor implementation of policies. Similarly, 94.7% held the mass media responsible for not providing adequate information. A majority (94.0%) believed that EIA should be a primary concern in rural development, while 89.3% emphasized its importance for enhancing participation in community projects.

Encouragingly, 86.0% of respondents had heard about EIA, mainly through radio (58.7%), television (56.0%), and schools (52.0%), though fewer cited textbooks (38.7%), print media (38.0%), and billboards (30.7%). Most respondents (76.7%) recognized the positive effects of EIA, 65.3% were aware of its possible uses, and 73.3% acknowledged its environmental impact. However, only 42.0% identified potential negative implications, showing limited understanding of EIA's broader scope.

Blame for poor awareness was also assigned to stakeholders (76.0%), extension agents (40.7%), and rural dwellers themselves (31.3%), reflecting dependence on external actors for information. Overall, the findings underscore high interest but limited depth of awareness, suggesting the need for stronger sensitization and policy enforcement to strengthen rural participation in EIA.

**Table 2: Respondents' levels of awareness on EIA (n=250)**

| Awareness Statements   | Frequency** | Percentage (%) |
|--|-------------|----------------|
| Have you heard of EIA  | 215         | 86.0           |
| If yes through which channel:                                      |             |                |
| School   | 130         | 52.0           |
| Textbook   | 97          | 38.7           |
| Radio  | 147         | 58.7           |
| Television   | 140         | 56.0           |
| Print media  | 95          | 38.0           |
| Billboard  | 77          | 30.7           |
| Do you aware that an EIA may have positive effects on a project    | 192         | 76.7           |
| Do you aware that an EIA may have negative effects on a project    | 105         | 42.0           |
| Do you aware of possible utilization or use of EIA                 | 163         | 65.3           |
| Do you aware that EIA has an effect on the environment             | 183         | 73.3           |
| Have you been consulted/involved in community-oriented assessments | 147         | 58.7           |
| Do you think Knowledge of EIA is important                         | 223         | 89.3           |
| Do you think EIA should be of primary concern in rural development | 235         | 94.0           |
| Government is to blame for EIA issues                              | 238         | 95.3           |
| Rural dwellers are blamed for the EIA issues                       | 78          | 31.3           |
| Blaming of mass media on EIA issues                                | 237         | 94.7           |
| Blaming of stakeholders on EIA issues                              | 190         | 76.0           |
| Blaming of extension agents on EIA issues                          | 102         | 40.7           |

\* = Multiple responses. Source: Field survey (2023)

### Problems facing the use of EIA in rural community development projects

The findings in Table 3 illustrated the challenges faced by rural residents when using EIA for rural community development. According to the survey, corruption was the main issue the respondents encountered ( $mean=4.37$ ), as confirmed during FGD that; *"this is primarily due to abuse of public power for private gains, slashing of funds which should be used for sustainable projects"*. This is in line with (Williams and Dupuy, 2017; Muslihudin *et al.*, 2018) that EIA is influenced by corrupt practices, including bribery, collusion, and conflicts of interests. Also, neglecting of rural people in participatory approach ( $mean=4.15$ ) and decision making ( $mean=4.05$ ) respectively were also the problems faced by rural dwellers in rural community development projects, with these results, it could be accrued to implies that rural dwellers were not fully allowed to participate in rural community development projects as well as not involved in crucial decision-making processes in the study area. This signifies top-down approaches were been using concerning rural community development projects that would not influence rural dwellers to have interest in utilizing EIA in the study. Furthermore, the result also reveals that



boundary conflicts ( $mean=2.89$ ) was the least problem faced by the rural dwellers in using EIA in the study area.

**Table 3: Problem facing the use of EIA in rural community development (n=250)**

| Problems   | No Problem<br>F (%) | Mild problem<br>F (%) | Moderate problem<br>F (%) | Severe problem<br>F (%) | Very Severe problem<br>F (%) | Mean<br>( $\bar{x}$ ) | S.D   | Rank             |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|-------|------------------|
| Corruption   | 2(0.7)              | 5(2.0)                | 22(8.7)                   | 92(36.7)                | 129(52.0)                    | 4.37                  | 0.782 | 1 <sup>st</sup>  |
| Rural dwellers are ignored in participative approaches | 4(2.7)              | 9(6.0)                | 16(10.7)                  | 53(35.3)                | 68(45.3)                     | 4.15                  | 1.013 | 2 <sup>nd</sup>  |
| ignoring rural residents when making decisions         | 5(2.0)              | 12(4.7)               | 42(16.7)                  | 98(39.3)                | 93(37.3)                     | 4.05                  | 0.954 | 3 <sup>rd</sup>  |
| Lack of awareness                                      | 5(2.0)              | 8(3.3)                | 35(14.0)                  | 125(50.0)               | 77(30.7)                     | 4.04                  | 0.874 | 4 <sup>th</sup>  |
| Lack of transparency and credibility                   | 3(1.3)              | 21(0.7)               | 57(22.7)                  | 140(56.0)               | 48(19.3)                     | 3.91                  | 0.750 | 5 <sup>th</sup>  |
| Inadequate volume of analyses performed                | 8(3.3)              | 8(3.3)                | 42(16.7)                  | 153(61.3)               | 38(15.3)                     | 3.82                  | 0.852 | 6 <sup>th</sup>  |
| Lack of meaningful sanctions                           | 3(1.3)              | 10(4.0)               | 58(23.3)                  | 137(54.7)               | 42(16.7)                     | 3.81                  | 0.806 | 7 <sup>th</sup>  |
| Inadequate attention given to indirect impacts         | 3 (1.3)             | 10(4.0)               | 87(34.7)                  | 103(41.3)               | 47(18.7)                     | 3.72                  | 0.860 | 8 <sup>th</sup>  |
| Exclusion clause in EIA acts misuse                    | 5 (2.0)             | 28(11.3)              | 73(29.3)                  | 107(42.7)               | 37(14.7)                     | 3.57                  | 0.944 | 9 <sup>th</sup>  |
| Socio-economic status                                  | 55(22.0)            | 25(10.0)              | 68(27.3)                  | 57(22.7)                | 45(18.0)                     | 3.05                  | 1.392 | 10 <sup>th</sup> |
| Boundary conflicts                                     | 53 (21.3)           | 19(12.7)              | 32(30.0)                  | 68(27.3)                | 22(8.7)                      | 2.89                  | 1.265 | 11 <sup>th</sup> |

F = Frequency, % = Percentage. **Source:** Field Survey (2023).

### Benefits of using environmental impact assessment (EIA)

The results in Table 4 revealed that majority (39.3%) of rural dwellers with mean value of 3.83 attested to EIA of having effective benefits on them in terms of proper projects sitting /design environmentally sensitive decisions. This implies that rural dwellers would maximize efficiency and minimize errors at the foundation or basics of a designed project due to knowledge and awareness they have gained through EIA. Also, 34.7% with mean value of 3.77 agreed to receive effective benefits of EIA on more environmentally sensitive decisions, with these benefits, rural dwellers would be sensitive to rural community development projects that could result to global warming and climate change, oil spillage, air pollution, soil pollution, water pollution, gully erosion and so on. However, about 41.0% with mean value of 3.75 asserted that they received effective benefits of EIA that dealt with reduction of environmental damages. Thus, 37.3% with mean value of 3.73 claimed they have received moderate benefits of EIA in the area of increasing accountability and transparency during project development process. This is in line with Cilliers *et al.* (2020) that EIA ensure transparency in decision making and provide an opportunity for voices to be heard. Inversely, those areas that EIA generated low benefits to the respondents were contributing towards achieving sustainability ( $mean = 3.60$ ), more informed decision makings ( $mean = 3.51$ ) and generated feedbacks to all stakeholders ( $mean = 3.46$ ). From the overall discussion, it was discovered that the highest benefit of EIA to the respondents is proper project sitting / design while the least benefit is to generate feedbacks to all stakeholders.



**Table 4: Benefits of using EIA (n=250)**

| Benefits   | NB<br>F (%) | LB<br>F (%) | MB<br>F (%) | EB<br>F (%) | VHB<br>F (%) | Mean<br>( $\bar{x}$ ) | S.D   | Rank            |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------|-----------------|
| Proper project sitting /designs  | 3(1.3)      | 20(8.0)     | 60(24.0)    | 98(39.3)    | 68(27.3)     | 3.83                  | 0.965 | 1 <sup>st</sup> |
| More environmental sensitive decisions   | 5(2.0)      | 13(5.3)     | 80(32.0)    | 87(34.7)    | 65(26.0)     | 3.77                  | 0.963 | 2 <sup>nd</sup> |
| Reduced environmental damages  | 5(2.0)      | 25(10.0)    | 57(22.7)    | 103(41.3)   | 60(24.0)     | 3.75                  | 0.996 | 3 <sup>rd</sup> |
| Increased transparency and accountability throughout the project development process | 2(0.7)      | 15(6.0)     | 93(37.3)    | 80(32.0)    | 60(24.0)     | 3.73                  | 0.919 | 4 <sup>th</sup> |
| Development that is sound and sustainable  | 8(3.3)      | 18(7.3)     | 75(30.0)    | 83(33.3)    | 65(26.0)     | 3.71                  | 1.038 | 5 <sup>th</sup> |
| Assisting in the attainment of sustainability  | 5(2.0)      | 17(6.7)     | 87(34.7)    | 107(42.7)   | 35(14.0)     | 3.60                  | 0.882 | 6 <sup>th</sup> |
| Decision-making that is more informed  | 10(4.0)     | 15(6.0)     | 113(44.7)   | 63(25.3)    | 50(20.0)     | 3.51                  | 1.008 | 7 <sup>th</sup> |
| Created feedback for all stakeholders  | 12(4.7)     | 23(9.3)     | 90(36.0)    | 88(35.3)    | 55(14.7)     | 3.46                  | 1.008 | 8 <sup>th</sup> |

Note: NB = No benefits, LB = Less benefits, MB = Moderate benefits, EB = Effective benefits and VHB = Very high benefits. F = Frequency, % = Percentage. Source: Field survey (2023).

### Chi-square test between socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and benefits of EIA on rural dwellers in rural community development projects

The chi-square test results in Table 5 showed the association between the respondents' socioeconomic characteristics and benefits of EIA on them in rural community development projects. The result shows that sex ( $\chi^2= 43.305$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), religion ( $\chi^2= 45.005$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), marital status ( $\chi^2=158.055$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ), educational level ( $\chi^2= 182.373$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) and occupation ( $\chi^2= 43.305$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) of the respondents were significantly related to the benefits of EIA on them in rural community development projects, with the level of significant relationship of the selected socioeconomic characteristics had with the EIA' benefits, signifies that either male or female, every recognized religious member, irrespective of marital status, level of education as well as occupation of the respondents would benefit from the established EIA' activities.

**Table 5: Chi-square test between socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and benefits of EIA on rural dwellers in rural community development projects**

| Socio-economic characteristics and benefits of EIA | $\chi^2$ | Df | P-value | Decision |
|--|----------|----|---------|----------|
| Sex  | 43.305   | 4  | 0.013   | S        |
| Religion   | 45.005   | 4  | 0.008   | S        |
| Marital status                                     | 158.055  | 16 | 0.000   | S        |
| Educational level                                  | 182.373  | 12 | 0.000   | S        |
| Occupation   | 241.651  | 20 | 0.000   | S        |

Where  $\chi^2$ = Chi-square value, Df = Degree of Freedom, P-value = Significant at 0.05. NS= not significant, S= significant. Source: Computation Analysis (2023).

### Correlation between socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and benefits of EIA on rural dwellers in rural community development projects

Pearson and Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was also used in Table 6 to access the relationship between the selected socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and benefits of EIA on them in rural community development projects. The result shows that age ( $r = - 0.018$ ,  $p = 0.830$ ), education ( $r = - 0.002$ ,  $p = 0.979$ ) and household ( $r = 0.022$ ,  $p = 0.791$ ) of the rural dwellers had no significant relationship on benefits of EIA on them in rural community development projects. Alternatively, the result revealed that monthly income ( $r = 0.039$ ,  $p = 0.007$ ) of the rural dwellers was significant with benefits of EIA on them in rural community development projects. This implies that rural dwellers' monthly income had a significant role to play in partnership with rural community development projects where counterpart payments as well as use of EIA are needed.



**Table 6: PPMC test between socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and benefits of EIA on rural dwellers in rural community development projects**

| Benefits of EIA and socio-economic characteristic | r-value | p-value | Decision |
|---|---------|---------|----------|
| Age   | -0.018  | 0.830   | NS       |
| Education   | -0.002  | 0.979   | NS       |
| Household   | 0.022   | 0.791   | NS       |
| Monthly income                                    | 0.039** | 0.007   | S        |

Where r = correlation coefficient, Significant at 0.05. NS= not significant, S= significant. Source: Computation Analysis (2023).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In consideration of the findings, the study came to the conclusion that men tend to be community members who are in their middle years and who participate more in community development initiatives. This indicates that men were more actively involved in the research area's environmental impact assessment issues. The majority of rural residents were made aware and blamed the government for not knowing about EIA in regards to improper maintenance and implementation of laws and regulations by the government in enforcing EIA to be carried out to every specific rural community development project. However, corruptions related to the misuse of public resources for personal benefit and the reduction of funding for sustainable initiatives were mostly identified as the key issue faced by rural residents when employing EIA on rural community development projects. The key advantages that the rural residents in the study area derived from using environmental impact assessment (EIA) were proper project designs, more environmental sensitive decisions, reduction in environmental damages like global warming and climate change, oil spillage, air pollution, soil pollution, water pollution, gully erosion, and so forth.

The study recommended that, in order to achieve balance and speed development in any project in the study area, women should participate in community development projects at a higher rate than men do. It also advised that EIA be legitimated by developing formal guidelines for public participation and the establishment of an independent body to conduct public hearings. Finally, it highlighted some of the least discussed benefits are needed to be re-launched to the rural dwellers, hence motivate them for efficient and effective usage of environmental impact assessment in the study area.

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## Conflict of interest

There are no conflicts of interest indicated by the authors.

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