

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF NGO INTERVENTION OUTCOMES ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of NGO intervention outcomes on sustainable development in Nigeria. The research work is a position paper that relied on secondary data from journal articles, textbooks, industry reports, and national surveys. The independent variable is NGO intervention and its indicators are education, healthcare outreach, poverty alleviation and capacity building. The dependent variable is in three measures of sustainable development; encompassing economic development as represented by poverty reduction and employment; social development measured by health and literacy and environmental development reflected by resource conservation, ecosystem health, or climate resilience, thereby aligning with the Brundt land three-pillar framework. Government failure serves as a time-dependent moderator. The study integrates Sustainable Development Theory and Government Failure Theory to explain the relationship that exists between the variables. Findings from empirical and conceptual review revealed that

education and capacity-building interventions produce stronger long-term outcomes than poverty alleviation programmes. Government failure moderates the relationship temporally in the short term, high government failure amplifies NGO impact by filling service gaps, whereas in the long term, it undermines sustainability due to the fact that state systems may not be strong enough to protect and sustain gains made by the NGOs. The study concludes that Nigerian NGOs should prioritise capacity-building and education, invest in governance and monitoring, and adopt either community-ownership or state-backed strategic projects. Donors are encouraged to extend funding cycles for the long-run and demand sustainability plans from NGOs, while policymakers should improve budget transparency and partner with NGOs to deliver sustainable projects. Consequently, the connection between appropriate NGO interventions and adaptive government responses to socio-economic deficit is critical for sustainable development in Nigeria. Sustainable development additionally requires that NGO interventions include environmental safeguards such as, climate-smart practices and waste reduction to protect economic and social gains.

Keywords: NGO Interventions, Sustainable Development, Government Failure, PIND Foundation, ActionAid Nigeria

Introduction

Over the last two decades, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have been an important part of Nigeria's socio-economic development. This is because they initiate intervention programmes that directly impact on the livelihood of its citizens. In 2020, estimates based on CAC data placed Nigeria's registered NGOs at about 17,000, while by 2023 the number had risen to about 191,000 NGOs (Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) administrative records, 2019–2023 & Nigerian Guardian, 2023). These organisations operate in nearly all sectors of development including but not limited to education, health, poverty alleviation, capacity building of local people, agriculture, provision of clean water and sanitation, and environmental protection. They especially focus on rural and peri-urban areas, where they are often the only service providers due to limited government reach. For many Nigerians, particularly in northern and south-south Nigeria, NGOs are the primary source of basic services, such as literacy classes, primary healthcare, vocational training, and emergency assistance. Despite their proliferation and the amount of donor funding they have received, it seems as though many citizens cannot say for sure whether or not their assistance has contributed to sustainable socio-economic development in the country. Two complementary theoretical frameworks are adopted for this study. They are the Theory of Sustainable Development and Theory of Government Failure. The Theory of Sustainable Development, most famously captured by the Brundtland Commission (1987) as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet

their needs". The Theory of Sustainable Development promotes the integration of economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection. In the context of this study, the Theory of Sustainable Development provides the normative outcome for the study; which is that NGO interventions are not just evaluated by their immediate outputs like number of people trained, number of mosquito nets distributed, number of food stuffs provided, etcetera, but instead by how the interventions contribute to long-term self-sustaining improvements in poverty reduction, health outcomes, literacy, and employment. Consistent with the three- pillar framework, these four outcomes contribute to economic development (poverty reduction, employment) and social development (health, literacy). Environmental development , which is the third pillar, requires additional indicators such as reduced deforestation, improved water quality, or adoption of sustainable agricultural practices, which are currently underexplored in NGO evaluations in Nigeria. Therefore, without a long-term perspective, an intervention drive may be deemed as successful in the short-term by influencing incomes or giving relief materials for about 2 years, in the form of jobs or socio-economic welfare. However, if the intervention collapses thereafter, it is not considered as sustainable development because the impact is short-term. Weisbrod (1978) and Wolf (1979)'s Government Failure Theory explains the emergence of NGOs and variations in their effectiveness. The theory asserts that the state cannot provide public goods efficiently or simply will not do so due to inefficiency of bureaucracy, political capture, or resource constraints. In these instances, NGOs act as producers or administrators of last resort; they step into the gaps left in governance by the inefficiency or constraints of the state. However, the theory also indicates that NGOs themselves can become ineffective when they suffer failures, such as mission drift, donor dependency, lack of accountability, fragmentation of services, and even internal corruption. Government failure thus provides both opportunities in the form of a gap to fill, or threats like the absence of a stable public system to support any gains made after the end of an NGO intervention project. In Nigeria, examples of government challenges exist across all sectors of society. For instance, education receives less than 12% of the national budget, which is well below the 15%–20% recommended by UNESCO; primary healthcare centres are reported to be understaffed and as well undersupplied; and cash transfer programmes have been perceived to be highly politicized and corruption prone. Well established institutions and the right government structures facilitate the achievement of policies and objectives in the society (Felix & Patrick,2026).NGOs have become more prominent in this environment of state failure, some well known, while others are just doing their best unannounced.The available research literature on NGOs from an effectiveness perspective has led to different conclusions. On a positive note, Bashir (2016), Bhaker (2014), and Ngonidzashe (2017) each reported beneficial NGO influences on literacy, education level, and income – in Pakistan, India, and Zimbabwe, respectively. Improved yield performance has been documented for smallholder farmers (Enyioko, 2012), and tomato farmers working through Techno-Serve (Yusufu, Nzeako, & Obadahun, 2024) in Nigeria, while Mosweunyane (2010)

found no substantial positive influence of NGOs with respect to sustainable development in Botswana. Governance failures were seen to be systematic across Malaysian NGOs with weak governance boards, a lack of accountability and transparency, and donor dependency, inhibiting alignment with community needs (Abiddin et al., 2022). Seventy two percent of livelihood outcomes associated with NGOs in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially East Africa, could thus be regarded as beneficial (Balgah & Awazi, 2024). One can argue from their study that NGOs in West African countries like Nigeria have not been fully supported by the government to provide social services in both cities and underserved communities. Various studies exist on the socio-economic activities of NGOs in Nigeria, but there is limited literature on how these efforts impact on sustainable development in Nigeria. Specifically, few studies include environmental development as an outcome measure; most focus only on economic and social indicators. This study addresses that gap by proposing the three-pillar framework. Therefore there is the need for a more holistic study on how NGOs socio-economic intervention initiatives affect sustainable development in Nigeria.

There are many active NGO activities being conducted in Nigeria and they have received significant amounts of donor support from local and international organisations; however, limited knowledge exists to support or contradict the position that specific types of NGO interventions will yield long-term impacts on development, while placing emphasis on the role of government failure in moderating the relationship between NGOs and sustainable development activities. Existing studies have looked at a few indicators only, or primarily focused on providing evidence of short-term outputs; therefore, we do not yet have conclusive evidence to demonstrate whether education programme interventions will produce sustained gains in literacy or if healthcare outreach service interventions have marginally improved overall health outcomes beyond the end of their intervention window. Also whether poverty alleviation interventions have permanently improved the livelihoods of recipients after completion of the intervention, or whether the failure of governments to provide service delivery to their citizens weakens or enhances the ability of NGOs to generate positive and sustainable development outcomes. Moreover, no existing study in Nigeria systematically measures environmental development alongside economic and social outcomes from NGO interventions, leaving the third pillar of sustainability largely unassessed. Without reliable and credible studies, policymakers, donors and NGOs themselves may not be properly informed as to how to make resource allocation decisions, create sound partnerships, or create effective plans to provide sustainable development gains to their beneficiaries through the next cycle of project delivery. As a result, this study will help to fill that gap by examining the impact of NGO intervention initiatives on sustainable development in Nigeria. The study is important in research, practice and policy. Theoretically, the research tests the use of both Sustainable Development Theory and the Government Failure Theory in determining the relevance and sustainability of NGOs activities in the context of Nigeria. It provides an integrated model that

explains the impact of NGO initiatives, as well as the conditions that create that impact. By operationalising sustainable development as three distinct pillars (economic, social, environmental), the study offers a more complete test of Brundtland's framework than previous NGO research. Practically, the study will provide evidence-based information to guide NGOs in selecting which interventions to implement for the most sustainable return on investment; guide donors on funding cycles and sustainability conditions; and assist governments on how to partner with NGOs to address gaps in underserved areas without creating unrealistic dependency on such projects.

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Sustainable Development: The Theory of Sustainable Development is most famously captured by the Brundtland Commission (1987) as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” This theory promotes the integration of economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection (United Nations, 2015). Within the framework of this study, the Theory of Sustainable Development provides the basis to look at how far activities of non-governmental agencies impact on the livelihood of beneficiaries in the long run; that is, NGO interventions are not just evaluated by their immediate outputs that highlight number of people trained, number of mosquito nets distributed, number of food stuffs provided, and so on; but instead by how the interventions contribute to long-term self-sustaining improvements in poverty reduction, health outcomes, literacy, and employment (Sachs, 2015). . However, if the intervention collapses thereafter, it is not considered sustainable development because the impact is short-term (Uvin, 2007). This theory thus guides the selection of the dependent variable indicators and the emphasis on post-project persistence of gains.

Theory of Government Failure: Weisbrod (1978) and Wolf (1979)'s Government Failure Theory explains the emergence of NGOs and variations in their effectiveness. The theory asserts that the state cannot provide public goods and services efficiently or simply will not do so due to bureaucratic inefficiency, political capture, or resource constraints (Le Grand, 1991). In these instances, NGOs act as producers or administrators of last resort; they step into the gaps left in governance by the inefficiency or constraints of the state. However, as previously mentioned, the theory also indicates that NGOs themselves can become ineffective when they suffer failures, such as mission drift, donor dependency, lack of accountability, fragmentation of services, and even internal corruption (Brass, 2012). Government failure thus provides both opportunities in the form of a gap to fill and threats, expressed in the absence of a stable public system to support any gains made after the end of an NGO intervention initiative. In Nigeria, examples of government

The Concept of NGO Interventions: The main independent variable consideration for this study is that of NGOs' interventions. This represents the kinds of development activities that are conducted by non-government organisations in their respective communities (Brass, 2012). Different sectors have undergone varying degrees of NGO intervention, varying as to extended length, level of intensity, specificity of agenda for delivery and quality of delivery (Enyioko, 2012). For purposes of this study, NGOs' interventions are represented through four distinctly defined types, each with respective sub-components or causal pathways. They include:

Education Programmes function as a core indicator of intervention initiatives. Examples of NGO intervention parameters within this sub-component include adult education – which touches on reading and writing, school building, scholarship programmes, and teacher training (Bashir, 2016). Each of these efforts targets different barriers related to education. Adult reading and writing programmes address adult literacy skill deficiencies (UNESCO, 2016). School building addresses deficiencies in school facilities (World Bank, 2018). Scholarships address financial barriers to education (Bhaker, 2014). Teacher training addresses quality of education deficiencies (Glewwe et al., 2011). In order to adequately document the education intervention types employed, each intervention is assessed by how intensive the education interventions are, ranging from non-existent to highest-intensity multi-component programme, and how long the education interventions have been implemented, either by months or years (Hashim et al., 2020). Healthcare Outreach is the use of mobile clinics that provide basic primary care to isolated areas on a temporary but periodic basis, vaccination campaigns that target childhood preventable diseases such as measles, polio and yellow fever, maternal health education that includes components of antenatal care, delivery safety and postpartum care, and distribution of insecticide-treated nets which help to reduce transmission rates of malaria (WHO, 2020). Health outreach interventions tend to be episodic in Nigeria rather than continuous; for example, a vaccination campaign may occur only once a week, while a mobile clinic could make monthly visits to a community (Solomon, 2025). However, it is fair to say that the cost of carrying out such outreach is quite high. The assessment considers both the frequency of outreach, defined as the volume of visits per year made by the team to provide outreach services, and the types of services provided (Yusufu et al., 2024).

Poverty Alleviation Programmes connote another indicator. Such programmes often offer microcredit, conditional cash transfer, which is targeted at providing funds for direct assistance to very poor households, livelihoods training aimed at assisting with the development of self-sustaining sources of income for low-income households through teaching, and agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilisers, and tools (Banerjee et al., 2015). Poverty alleviation strategies often depend on enabling systems, notably the availability of good roads, the presence of a marketplace, and security (Ngonidzashe, 2017). The assessment considers whether the various poverty

alleviation strategies being implemented are implemented with other supports including microcredit with business training or each offered independently (Osiobe et al., 2019). Capacity Building is also another indicator. There are various aspects of capacity building: skills development in information communication technology (ICT), tailoring, carpentry and entrepreneurship development, and leadership development amongst others (PIND Foundation, 2025). While poverty alleviation focuses primarily on providing cash to improve short-term livelihoods, capacity building is intended to create long-lasting value from people's human capital, which consists of their knowledge, skills and abilities that will allow them to earn a living and provide a decent quality of life over their lifetimes (Becker, 1964). Capacity-building interventions are generally delivered through workshops, apprenticeships, or mentoring programmes, and measured by the number of training hours, guaranteed certification or accreditation after completion of the training, and any additional support after the training, such as job placement or start-up grants (Action Aid Nigeria, 2025a).

The Concept of Sustainable Socio-Economic Development: Sustainable socio-economic development refers to long-term, measurable improvements in the quality of life for individuals and communities which are improvements that continue even after external funding ends (Brundtland Commission, 1987). For this study, sustainable development is measured through economic development, social development, and environmental development. Economic development includes poverty reduction and employment growth. Social development is reflected in health outcomes and literacy. Environmental development is measured by resource conservation, pollution reduction, ecosystem health, and climate resilience. Sustainability is critical, for instance if cash transfers or short-term NGO teaching jobs are the only sources of income or literacy gains, then the intervention has not produced sustainable socio-economic development (Uvin, 2007).

Economic Development Indicators

1. Poverty reduction which is measured by the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) score and household consumption.

2. Employment growth expressed as formal employment rate (percentage of working-age individuals employed by registered businesses with regular pay) and sustainable self-employment rate (percentage engaged in non-agricultural self-employment for at least two years) (ILO, 2019). Employment growth among beneficiaries of capacity-building interventions is assessed by linking beneficiary surveys with National Labour Force or Living Standards Survey (NLSS) data (PIND Foundation, 2025).

Social Development

1. Improved health outcomes that is measured under

mortality (death certificates), number of pregnant women receiving at least four antenatal care visits, and number of children under five with positive malaria rapid tests (using early childhood data from MICS; WHO, 2020; UNICEF, 2020). Health outcomes are assessed at baseline and endline to determine whether gains persist after NGO health outreach ends (Solomon, 2025).

2. Literacy referred to as adult literacy rate (percentage of population aged 15 plus, who can read and write a short sentence in any language) and primary completion rate (percentage of children completing the last year of primary school) (UNESCO, 2016). Because literacy changes slowly, these indicators are examined over a five-year period (Bashir, 2016).

Environmental Development

1. Proportion of households using clean cooking fuels (LPG, biogas, improved cookstoves)

2. Access to improved water sources

3. Change in vegetation cover (or tree cover change)

4. Community-level waste management scores

Moderating Variable: Government Failure

Government failure refers to the inability or flaws of the state to deliver public goods and services efficiently (Weisbrod, 1978; Wolf, 1979). It acts as a third variable which influences the strength or direction of the relationship between NGO intervention and sustainable development outcomes (Brass, 2012). The level of government failure is measured at the community level considering three areas. To begin with, the quality of government services reflected through schools, health clinics, roads, security, as perceived by NGOs and beneficiaries through NGO surveys and beneficiary interviews (Hashim et al., 2020). Next is state capacity objective factors such as teacher absentee rates, availability of drugs in public clinics, and road condition indices from administrative records (World Bank, 2018). Thirdly, the corruption perception index at the local government level from public opinion surveys (Transparency International, 2020). Each community is classified as having high, medium or low government failure based upon their composite score (CISLAC, 2026). The moderation variable is dependent on time (Osiobe et al., 2019). In the short term (one to two years), government failure has a positive moderating influence because the strength of the independent variable-dependent variable relationship is greater where there is a higher level of government failure, since NGOs are filling an immediate gap (Najam, 2000). However, in the long-term, especially after three to five years post-project closure, government failure has a negative moderating influence because the independent variable and dependent variable relationship declines more where there is a higher level of government failure,

since the absence of a functioning state undermines sustainability (Ngonidzashe, 2017). Government investment in salaries, infrastructure and staff training does not always result to good governance (Ofem & Yahaya, 2026). The moderating effect of government failure is expected to apply to environmental development as well: short-term positive moderation (NGOs fill gaps in environmental regulation) and long-term negative moderation (weak state enforcement undermines sustained environmental gains).

Control Variables

A number of variables could affect the relationship between NGO interventions and sustainable development outcomes and are therefore emphasised statistically (Balgah & Awazi, 2024). The age of an NGO indicates the experience that organisation has and its level of institutional learning; as NGOs age, they can be expected to have better systems in place and more stable funding (Abiddin et al., 2022). The size of an NGO's budget represents the scale of the organisation; an NGO with a large budget is likely to be able to implement more comprehensive, multi-component interventions (Brass, 2012). The location of the NGO (urban versus rural) represents access to infrastructure and markets; rural communities generally have less developed roads, fewer electrical services and fewer formal employment opportunities, which is likely to seriously impact on the ability of NGOs' interventions to achieve positive outcomes (Solomon, 2025). The type of donor, whether multilateral, bilateral, private or local, reflects differences in flexibility in providing funds, reporting requirements and lengths of projects; multilateral and bilateral donors tend to have longer funding cycles and more stringent monitoring than private or local donors, who generally provide more flexibility and shorter time frames to complete the project (Osiobe et al., 2019).

Empirical Review

Ukaga & Afoaku (2005) examined "The Role of NGOs in Sustainable Development in Africa"; the study used multi-country case studies to analyse NGO involvement; findings revealed that NGOs play a significant role but should be seen as part of a larger development system involving government and communities, not just offering isolated solutions. Mosweunyane (2010) investigated the Impact of NGO Interventions on Sustainable Development in Botswana, employing surveys, interviews, and secondary data to ascertain NGO interventions; findings show no measurable long-term sustainable development outcomes; the study concludes that NGO presence alone does not guarantee impact. Enyioko (2012) researched NGO Influence on Sustainable Agricultural Development in Rivers State, Nigeria; the study adopted qualitative interviews with farming communities; findings reveal that NGO projects led to improved practices, storage, markets, and food security, though generalisability beyond project communities could not be guaranteed. Bhaker (2014) examined the Role of NGOs in Promoting Rural Development in India; the study explored NGO-led rural development through multiple case studies using self-

help group and household data; findings reveal that micro-financing and infrastructure projects reduced poverty and empowered women, producing measurable socio-economic improvements.

Ismail & Shahrudin (2014), in "Social Entrepreneurship in NGO-Led Community Development Programs in Malaysia," surveyed NGO managers and used regression analysis to compare social enterprise versus charity models; findings show that business-model NGOs achieved greater sustainability and social impact, consequently suggesting organisational innovation enhances effectiveness. Osiobe et al. (2019) investigated Non-Governmental Organisations and Community Economic Development: A Dynamic Systems Analysis; the research applied dynamic systems simulation to NGO community economic development; results indicated that NGOs contribute to growth, but benefit distribution depends on locally versus externally sourced capital; sustained impact requires most funding from within the local community. Hashim et al. (2020) conducted a study on Local NGOs and Rural Development in Zamfara State, Nigeria; they surveyed 200 participants using descriptive statistics. Findings reveal significant NGO contributions in education, vocational training, and health care; however, inadequate monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems limited service provision. Abiddin et al. (2022) investigated NGO Governance and Rural Development in Malaysia: A Systematic Literature Review, using a systematic review. Findings reveal that they also have governance failures including lack of transparency, weak boards, and donor-driven agendas. The study concludes that internal accountability mechanisms are as important for NGOs as for governments. Odoo (2022) examined Participatory Development Communication and NGO Effectiveness: A Literature Review, undertaking a participatory literature review; findings revealed a gap between NGO rhetoric and actual participatory practice, which may jeopardise legitimacy and long-term impact.

Mazfufah & Wahyudin (2023) looked at Comparative Review of Community Empowerment Models: Indonesia (LenteraDesa) vs. South Korea (Saemaul Undong), comparing Indonesia's NGO-only model with South Korea's government-community-NGO model. The study concludes that hybrid governance structures are more effective for sustainable communities than NGO-only models. Okunade et al. (2023) carried out research on Ethical Issues in NGO Community Engagement in Nigeria; the study reviewed ethical practices in the Niger Delta; its findings revealed lack of informed consent and unequal benefit sharing, which have eroded trust and negatively affected long-term development. Balgah & Awazi (2024) conducted a study on NGO Interventions and Livelihood Outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Systematic Review (1984–2023). The research systematically reviewed 51 articles, finding that 72% positive outcomes; East Africa dominates the literature in terms of positive impact; it suggested that more rigorous quantitative research is needed in West Africa, especially Nigeria. Yusufu et al. (2024) researched NGO Contributions to Farmer Livelihoods in Katsina State, Nigeria (Techno-Serve Intervention). The study used mixed methods guided by Performance Failure Theory; findings show improved

practices, skills, market linkages, and income, but the study concludes that armed banditry and insecurity severely constrained outcomes. Wadada (2025) examined Corporate Governance Principles and Environmental Sustainability in Ugandan NGOs; the study surveyed Ugandan NGO employees using correlation and regression analysis. Findings showed a significant positive association between governance principles (accountability, transparency, fairness) and environmental sustainability.

Solomon (2025) investigated NGOs as Change Agents in Rural Socio-Economic Development: A Case Study of Ganjuwa LGA, Bauchi State, Nigeria. Using a case study approach, the study finds that NGOs improved healthcare, agriculture, employment, and infrastructure, but inadequate funding, weak government support, and sustainability concerns remain obstacles. Bashir (2016) conducted research on the Role of Government and Different NGO Types in Community Development in Balochistan, Pakistan, using mixed methods. Findings indicated that NGOs increased girls' enrolment and health access via mobile clinics, but political instability and security constraints limited efficiency; such contexts are relevant to conflict-affected regions like Northern Nigeria. Ngonidzashe (2017) examined the Role of CARITAS Zimbabwe in Community Development in Murewa Rural District, Zimbabwe. Analysis was done using a single case study; findings revealed that food security, water, and sanitation projects improved living standards. The study concluded that donor funding dependence created sustainability issues; without local funding or government takeover, gains are short-term. After reviewing the empirical literature, none of the cited studies explicitly measured environmental development as an NGO outcome. This reinforces the need for the three-pillar framework adopted here.

Case Studies: PIND Foundation and ActionAid Nigeria

PIND Foundation emphasizes Market-Driven Development in the Niger Delta. PIND is a Nigerian non-profit established in 2010 with its initial funding from Chevron Corporation to address long-term social and economic issues in the Niger Delta (PIND Foundation, n.d.). Its objectives are to promote peace and equitable economic development through multi-stakeholder partnerships and market-based initiatives across nine states. As of December 2025, PIND had launched ₦113 million worth of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) across 14 centres, serving ICT, construction, agriculture, and services (Vanguard, 2025). It has also awarded ₦44.3 million in catalytic grants to support 65 youth-founded enterprises (ThisDay, 2025). Through its GESI programme, PIND provides vocational training (leather works, tailoring) and leadership skills to women, ensuring their active participation in community economic growth and peacebuilding (PIND Foundation, 2025). Recognising that sustainable development must build state structures, PIND held a two-day workshop in May 2026 to strengthen Host Community Development Trusts (HCDTs) in Delta State. The goal is to equip communities with advocacy tools and strategic planning skills to engage government, obtain grants, and attract investment (PIND Foundation,

2026a). This approach addresses a core flaw of Government Failure Theory: instead of ignoring the state, PIND creates viable community-level governance structures that interface with existing institutions. Through partnerships, PIND has provided climate-smart agriculture training to smallholder farmers in Akwa Ibom State and job training for 165 young people in collaboration with Okomu Oil Producing Company. In June 2026, PIND signed an MOU with Plan International Nigeria to advance gender equality, youth empowerment, and community resilience. However, PIND faces challenges common to the literature: initial reliance on Chevron raises concerns about donor influence and long-term sustainability. Although PIND has diversified funding to include UNDP and the Nigerian Navy, the long-term durability of its achievements depends on whether government institutions can eventually sustain the livelihoods and infrastructure created with PIND's assistance.

Action Aid Nigeria: Rights-Based Advocacy and Community-Led Development. Established in 2000, ActionAid Nigeria participates in initiatives that promote social justice and community-led development using a rights-based approach to achieve systemic change (ActionAid Nigeria, 2025). As the Country Director stated, “True development is not charity; development occurs when power shifts to the disadvantaged.” Its Local Rights Programme (LRP), operating since 2003 across 13 communities in Delta State, has moved communities “from invisibility to influence” (ActionAid Nigeria, 2025a). Through capacity building and rights awareness, the LRP has enabled children to move from sitting on the ground to proper desks, empowered women to become cooperative leaders and social audit committee members, and transformed abandoned health centres into functioning facilities (ActionAid Nigeria, 2025b). The LRP has benefited from long-term, flexible funding (16 years) from ActionAid UK and Italy, demonstrating that longer funding horizons produce more durable results than short project cycles. In agriculture, ActionAid Nigeria has trained over 135,000 smallholder farmers and youth in climate-resilient practices through the SPAC programme, with most being women (ActionAid Nigeria, 2026). The SUPA II project improved agricultural services for 2,913 women farmers (ActionAid Nigeria, 2026b). In August 2025, ActionAid launched a ₦11 billion (CAD 15 million) five-year project, Renewed Women's Voice and Leadership (RWVL), funded by Global Affairs Canada, to benefit 188 Women's Rights Organizations (WROs) directly, aiming to reach over 2.7 million women across eight states, including Lagos, Bauchi, Cross River, Enugu, Kebbi, and Kwara, addressing gender-based violence, economic empowerment, and protective policies (Leadership, 2025). ActionAid Nigeria also holds government accountable for fiscal failures. In December 2025, it criticised the Federal Government's 2026 Appropriation Bill, noting a record deficit (₦23.85 trillion), running multiple budgets simultaneously (2024, 2025, 2026), and allocations far below the Abuja Declaration targets: education (₦3.52 trillion, 6.05% of budget) and health (₦2.48 trillion, 4.26%) while defence received ₦5.41 trillion (9.3%) (Guardian, 2025). Such advocacy addresses Government Failure directly rather than merely filling gaps. Current challenges include bilateral donor

withdrawals causing funding crises across the Nigerian NGO sector, which threatens social protection programmes. Additionally, despite an explicit rights-based commitment, Action Aid still faces the “rhetoric versus practice” participation gap identified by Odoom et al. (2022). Nevertheless, its 25-year track record, 16-year community-level commitment, and emphasis on state accountability provide a model for overcoming sustainability constraints outlined in Government Failure Theory. By improving state systems rather than ignoring them, ActionAid Nigeria demonstrates a pathway to equitable, sustainable development. Both case studies illustrate the economic and social pillars: PIND's TVET and grants address economic development (employment, poverty); ActionAid's LRP addresses social development (literacy, health, gender equity). Environmental development is less prominent: PIND's climate-smart agriculture training is a partial example, but neither organisation systematically reports environmental outcomes. Future NGO programming should integrate environmental indicators like carbon footprint of projects, tree planting ratios, or water quality improvements to fully achieve sustainable development.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach based on secondary data. The choice of secondary sources is considered appropriate by the researcher, because it allows the study to rely on existing scholarly works, journal articles, textbooks, regulatory reports, and industry publications on NGO interventions, sustainable development, and government failure in Nigeria. The empirical review already presented shows that most previous studies have examined related issues such as NGO effectiveness, poverty alleviation, education and healthcare outreach, capacity building, and sustainable development outcomes as separate indicators. Data for the study was also obtained through document analysis of published academic literature and relevant institutional reports from organisations such as PIND Foundation, ActionAid Nigeria, the National Bureau of Statistics, UNICEF, and the World Bank. The qualitative method is used to enable an in-depth interpretation of how education programmes, healthcare outreach, poverty alleviation, and capacity building together influence long-term poverty reduction, health outcomes, literacy, employment, and environmental sustainability. Analysis is carried out using thematic and content analysis, where recurring ideas and patterns from the empirical studies are identified and discussed. This approach allows the study to critically synthesise existing findings and highlight relationships, gaps, and trends in the literature on NGO interventions, government failure, and sustainable development in Nigeria. Specific attention is given to the moderating role of government failure over time and the relative effectiveness of different intervention types across the three pillars of sustainable development.

Discussion and Conclusion

From conceptual framework and empirical review, it is clear that education and capacity building programmes yield the highest success rate in the long-term; while Poverty Alleviation Programmes are mostly beneficial in the short run. These variance seem to suggest that NGO activities should transition from hand-outs to governance and structure development within communities. This is enhanced through appropriate educational workshops, capacity building and self awareness. Initiatives should also focus on how to organise women, especially into cooperatives that will enable them to carry out commercial endeavours that will secure their livelihoods. That is Sustainability. Except during emergencies and medical outreach, NGO initiatives should target self-empowerment strategies, using established community led governance structures for sustainability. The study therefore concludes that education, self- development and entrepreneurship training will be most beneficial for sustainable development. Therefore any project that empowers financially, should be done with this outcome in mind. To achieve full sustainable development as defined by the three-pillar framework, NGO interventions must also address environmental outcomes. This means integrating environmental protection such as afforestation, clean energy, waste reduction, into education and capacity-building programmes. Without the environmental pillar, economic gains of poverty reduction or employment and social gains like health and literacy may be eroded by ecological degradation, climate shocks, or resource depletion. Future research should measure NGO contributions to environmental development using the right indicators. Donors and NGOs should require environmental impact assessments and sustainability plans that include specific environmental targets.

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