

## **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: THEORIES, STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES IN JIGAWA STATE, NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*Sustainable community development is an evolving field worldwide due to the various global challenges such as climate change, resource depletions, social inequality, population explosion, deforestation, political instability, humanitarian crises and the lack of effective sustainability of community development processes put in place to address the challenges. This paper examines the three theoretical foundations of sustainable community development and some strategies that can foster sustainability drawing from the grass root through the building of the local economic development initiatives. It also outlines some workable modalities that communities and all other stakeholders can employ to attain some holistic and sustainable solutions to the lingering social, economic, political, and environmental concerns.*

**Keywords:** Community; Development; Sustainability; Engagement; Social; Economic; Political; Equity; and Environmental Protection.

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### **Introduction**

Historically, marginalized communities, particularly those with low incomes or from racial minorities have faces, disproportionate environmental hazards and had limited access to resources equitable access to the benefit of sustainable requires policies that prioritize environmental justice and inclusively, to and benefit from sustainable practices. Sustainable development as defined by the United Nation's Commission on Environment and Development (1987); as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs as well.

Sustainable community development is embedded in poverty eradication, social justice and equality, checking population explosion, curbing local and global tension, and controlling or managing rift and violent conflicts. In the words of Erle (2007), we live in a world with unprecedented economic growth but also in a world where more than 1.1 billion human beings live on less than a dollar per day and are exposed to extreme poverty, making them very vulnerable, thereby forcing them to use all the available resources within their reach. Therefore, such vulnerable population cannot be expected to be sensitive of any violence to

the environment or even plan for the conservation of resources for future development. As a rider, he maintains that, the field of sustainable development can be conceptually be broken down into three constituents' parts; environmental sustainability, economic sustainability and social sustainability. The global concern and outcry on sustainable development arises from the urgent needs to address issues like resources depletion, climate change, economic and political instability, social inequality, hunger and other humanitarian crises occasioned by local, regional and global wars and conflicts.

Sustainable community development is increasingly becoming a panacea as societies worldwide seek to address sustainably and the global challenges affecting both developed and developing nations. As urbanization increases and environmental pressure mounts, sustainable community development has emerged as a central tenet of planning and the provision of policy frameworks worldwide United Nations, (2002). Sustainable community development therefore, is multi-dimensional and dynamic by its continuously evolving to accommodates and proper long-term solutions to global crises ranging from social, economic, developmental and political instability in order to ensure economic sustainably, social sustainability and environmental sustainability in whatever dimension that entails lending support to maintain all positive moves and to conserve, preserve, practice, promote social justice, human right and community well-being as well as ensuring long lasting economic viability which in turn, will reduce poverty and also enhanced the sources and access to national resources. These outcomes will surely save the entire ecosystem from eminent collapse.

### **Theoretical Foundations of Sustainable Community Development**

For communities to be able to meet the present needs and without threatening or compromising the future needs as conceptualized by sustainable community development, there is the need for a theoretical framework that would guide their courses of actions and basis for analyzing community felts needs and peculiarities in terms of who needs what, where, and to how to balance the various equation or requirement for sustainable community development. There According to the United Nations, the three foundational dimensions that must be balanced for sustainable development are economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection. These interconnected pillars ensure that societies can meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. But, theoretical foundations of sustainable community development include the three pillars of sustainability (economic, social, and environmental), socio-ecological systems theory focusing on interconnectedness and community capital (natural, social, economic, etc.), and theories from general sociology like structural functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. These frameworks provide different lenses through which to understand the complex dynamics of communities and the actions needed to balance development with long-term well-being for current and future generations. These theoretical foundations are:

the three pillars of sustainability;

Environmental sustainability.  
Economic sustainability.  
Social sustainability.

The Circular Economy model and;

The Reliance theory.

Environmental sustainability: this requires the harmonization of the ecosystem, bio-diversity and harnessing of natural resources to support life and ensure well-being.

Social Sustainability: the emphasis is on equity, inclusively increased access to essential services such as healthcare, housing, education; by ensuring that all community members benefit from sustainable practices (Dempsey et al (2011)).

Circular Economy Model: this model is a departure from the old model as it seeks to minimize waste and maximize resource use through recycling, re-use and the development of long lasting products (Geissdoerfer et al. 2017).

Resilient Theory: this theory provides insight on how communities cope with environmental and social disruptions, absorbing shocks and re-organized while undergoing change, as well as preserving their essential function (Folk et al 2021). From the foregoing, it can be deduced that, the first three pillars of sustainability reveal the dimensional nature of sustainability and by extension the sustainable community development, pointing at the imperativeness of a holistic approach and the ability of the development professional to harmonized biotic and abiotic components of communities as a pre-requisite for attaining sustainable community development because neglecting one aspect and upholding the other, poses a challenges to the actualization of sustainable community development process and goals and consequently, the achievement overall global sustainable development goals.

The circular economy model on the other hand, advocates cycling and recycling of waste to create wealth through the use and re-use strategy and also promoting the local economy through building, serving and developing the economic base of communities, promoting renewable energy initiatives and diversifying means of economic engagements of communities.

Resilience Theory: the resilience theory provides an insight into the abilities of communities to remain firm, strong and adaptive to environmental, to thrive by adapting to the recurring changes and at the same time reorganizing themselves to sustained their ideals. Resilience is a driving force that armed a community against apathy and restore hope and the desire to forge a head against all odds. These three theoretical foundations highlighted the indicators of sustainability as follows;

Renewable energy utilization.

Waste management and recycling.

Economic stability, social equity, education and awareness.

Bio-diversity conservation.

Environmental protection.

Cultural sustainable.

### **Key Strategies in Sustainable Community Development**

Strategies are the long-term plans put in place to achieve a specific goal or set of goals. For a community development process, programme or project to be sustained, there must be ownership and accountability and these can only be achieved by employing these key strategies.

### **Community participation and stakeholder's engagements**

Green infrastructure and nature-based solutions.

Social equity and environmental justice.

Community participation and stakeholders' engagement from planning to execution of community development projects and decision-making process as active not passive members breeds sense of belonging, feeling of ownership and promotes accountability on the part of the community. Engaging the community and ensuring community participation is not only relevant but necessary because the communities know their needs and aspirations better than anyone. Hence, their engagement would not only foster ownership but also ensure relevance of all projects, process and programmes executed in the local communities which can guarantee its acceptance by all, and by avoiding resistance and abounding of projects after completion as collaborated (Reed et al., 2009). Effective sustainable development requires the active participation of local communities in planning and decision-making process. This approach ensures that sustainability initiatives are relevant and responsive to the uniqueness and values of the community.

*Green infrastructure and nature-based solutions:* simply refers to eco-friendly initiatives that can cut carbon emissions, improved air contents, reduce the effect of climate change such as heat waves, flood, famine etc. and also encourage tree planting, creation of deforestation in both rural and urban centers for healthy living and well-being of communities globally. This is in line with the submission of (Hansen et al, 2015) thus; Green infrastructure, which includes features such as parts, green roofs wetland, and urban forest, is a critical components of sustainable community development. These systems provide multiple bent fits including improved air and water quality, climate regulation and enhanced biodiversity.

*Social equity and environmental justice:* social equality and environment justice rights of the communities that should not only be respected but provided equally among members. Equal distribution of resources and environmental protection ensuring equitable distribution of community resources and making it accessible fasters sustainability and it reduces the chances of depletion of resources through over-use and min-management. The concentration of social communities in the urban centers leaving the rural areas in hazardous situations othering lack of on portable drinking water, healthcare services green spaces, energy, equality education and other forms of in quality tends serious danger to sustainable community development as Anyemsan (2005), admits that, 'indent sustainable development must address the inherent social inequalities that exist in many communities.

### **Challenge of Sustainable Community Development**

Financial constraints.

Political and institutional constraints.

Social resistance.

Apathy.

*Financial constraints:* In most developing countries or the growing economies, ensuring sustainability of community development activities is inefficient and ineffective due to its capital-intensive nature couple with low level governments' budgets, lack of effective corporate social responsibility on the part of corporate bodies operating in the communities and heightened by lack of interest from communities. According to Smith & Jones (2019), one of the most significant barriers to sustainable community development is the financial cost associated with implanting green infrastructure, measures. Many communities, particularly in developing countries, lack the necessary upfront investments.

*Political and Institutional Barrier:* Sustainable community development is a continuous process that requires high level of commitment and consistency. However, lack of synergy among the tiers of government and other governmental agencies is major challenges in ensuring sustainability. Agyeman (2005) states that: Achieving sustainability requires strong political will and coordinated institutional support. However, inconsistent policies, lack of political commitment and fragmentation across government level can impede sustainable development efforts. Strengthening institutional frameworks fostering cross-sector collaboration and ensuring consistency in sustainability policies are critical to overcoming these challenges.

*Social Resistance:* has over the years proven to be a challenge to sustainable development activities. Most African societies have long standing customs and traditions that they don't want to let go hence resisting any new idea or paradigm shift and this attitude poses serious challenges to sustainable development Jones, (2018), submits that: 'Sustainable development initiatives after face resistance from communities unwitting to change established habits or skeptical of the benefits of sustainability.

## Conclusion

Consequently, going with what we have discussed on the sustainable community development: theories, strategies and challenges in Jigawa state, Nigeria, in this study, it is boldly examined the three theoretical foundations of sustainable community development and some strategies that can foster sustainability drawing from the grass root through the building of the local economic development initiatives. It also outlines some workable modalities that communities and all other stakeholders can employ to attain some holistic and sustainable solutions to the lingering social, economic, political, and environmental concerns.

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