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Assessing the Influence of Community-Driven Development Projects in Enhancing Household Livelihoods: A Case Study of Kulundana Ward, Choma District

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Abstract

This study assessed the influence of Community-Driven Development projects in enhancing livelihoods in Kulundana Ward, Choma District. The study was guided by three objectives: to analyse the types of Community-Driven Development projects implemented in Kulundana Ward, examine their effectiveness in poverty reduction, and establish challenges affecting their implementation and effectiveness. The study was anchored on the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework and adopted a mixed-methods research design. Data were collected from 50 respondents comprising household beneficiaries, committee members, community development stakeholders, and local authority officials. Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies and percentages, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The findings showed that agricultural support was the most commonly implemented Community-Driven Development intervention, reported by 88% of respondents, followed by savings and Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) projects. Livestock support was perceived as the most beneficial intervention, followed by agricultural support, reflecting the importance of productive assets and income generation. Regarding effectiveness, 54% of respondents rated Community-Driven Development projects as effective or very effective. Furthermore, 68% indicated that Community-Driven Development projects contributed to household livelihoods to a great or very great extent, while 54% reported that their current livelihood situation was better or much better than before the projects. Benefits included improved food security, income diversification, savings and credit, community services, and greater capacity to cope with economic difficulties. However, the findings also revealed implementation constraints. Inadequate funding was the most frequently reported challenge at 74%, followed by poor monitoring and supervision and limited technical support. Poor market access and drought or climate-related challenges also affected effectiveness. The study concludes that Community-Driven Development projects have a positive but constrained influence on household livelihoods in Kulundana Ward. The study recommends timely funding, stronger monitoring, continuous technical support, climate-resilient agriculture, improved market linkages, strengthened livestock and savings initiatives, and greater community participation to promote sustainable livelihood outcomes.

Keywords: Community-Driven Development, Household Livelihoods, Poverty Reduction, Sustainable Livelihoods, and Rural Development

1. Introduction

Community-Driven Development (CDD) has become one of the most widely adopted participatory approaches to rural development and poverty reduction. Globally, the approach empowers local communities to identify development priorities, participate in decision-making, manage resources, and oversee project implementation to improve their socio-economic well-being (Beath *et al*., 2018) [3]. Recent studies by King & Samii, (2019) indicate that community-driven projects significantly improve household income, support social capital, increase access to productive assets, and enhance resilience against economic and climate-related shocks, particularly in rural communities. Furthermore, Mansuri & Rao, (2021) states that CDD has become an important strategy for achieving sustainable rural development by improving livelihoods through locally driven solutions that respond to community needs.

In the Sub-Saharan Africa, Community-Driven Development has also gained increasing attention. Governments and

development partners are seeking sustainable solutions to persistent rural poverty, food insecurity, unemployment, and vulnerability to climate change. Community-managed interventions in agriculture, rural infrastructure, water supply, and livelihood diversification have contributed to improved agricultural productivity, increased household incomes, strengthened local governance, and enhanced community resilience (Manda & Alobo, 2021). However, recent empirical studies also show that the effectiveness of these projects depends on the extent of community participation, institutional capacity, transparency, and long-term sustainability. Chasukwa *et al*., (2022) reports that weak governance structures, inadequate financial resources, and limited technical support continue to constrain the effectiveness of many community development initiatives across the region.

While in Zambia, rural livelihoods continue to depend largely on small-scale agriculture, livestock production, and informal economic activities. This makes many households vulnerable to poverty, climate variability, and limited market opportunities. In response, the Government of Zambia and its development partners such as NGOs have implemented several Community-Driven Development programmes aimed at strengthening household livelihoods through agricultural support, rural infrastructure, and women's empowerment. Other means include; youth entrepreneurship, community savings groups, and natural resource management. According to Lewis & Wilkie, (2020), these interventions have improved household food security, income diversification, agricultural productivity, and resilience among beneficiary communities. Regardless of this, outcomes vary across localities depending on institutional support and levels of community participation (Ngoma *et al*., 2024).

Specifically in Kulundana Ward of Choma District, most households rely on farming and livestock production for their livelihoods. Despite the implementation of various community-driven development interventions by government agencies and cooperating partners, many households continue to experience low incomes, food insecurity, inadequate access to productive resources, and vulnerability to climatic shocks (Makondo & Thomas, 2024). While Community-Driven Development projects are expected to enhance household livelihoods through increased community participation and local ownership of development initiatives, limited empirical evidence exists on their actual influence at the ward level.

Previous studies by the World Bank, (2023) [13] have focused on broader rural development programmes or national-level interventions, leaving a knowledge gap regarding the effectiveness of Community-Driven Development projects in improving household livelihoods within Kulundana Ward. It is against this gap that this study seeks to assess the influence of Community-Driven Development projects in enhancing household livelihoods in Kulundana Ward, Choma District. The main aim is to generate evidence that can inform policy and improve the implementation of community-based development programmes in Zambia.

1.1 General Objective

To assess the influence of Community-Driven Development projects in enhancing household livelihoods in Kulundana Ward, Choma District.

1.1.1 Specific Objectives

1. To analyse the types of Community-Driven Development projects implemented in Kulundana Ward.
2. To examine the effectiveness of Community-Driven Development projects on poverty reduction.
3. To establish challenges affecting the implementation and effectiveness of Community-Driven Development projects.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF). This is a widely applied analytical framework used to examine how households construct, sustain, and diversify their livelihoods under conditions of vulnerability and structural constraints. This theory conceptualizes livelihoods as a combination of assets such as human, social, natural, physical, and financial capital. These assets are shaped by a vulnerability context. They are mediated through transforming structures and processes such as institutions, policies, and governance systems, ultimately producing livelihood strategies and outcomes (Natarajan *et al*., 2022).

The framework begins by emphasizing the vulnerability context. In the context of this study they include shocks, trends, and seasonal variations that affect household livelihoods. In rural African settings like Kulundana ward, these includes climate variability, rising input costs, market instability, and land degradation, all of which directly influence household welfare. Studies in Zambia by Chisengele & Nyanga, (2026) and similar contexts show that rural households remain highly exposed to climate-induced shocks such as droughts and erratic rainfall. These significantly reduce agricultural productivity and income stability (Makondo & Thomas, 2024). In Kulundana ward, such vulnerabilities shape the extent to which Community-Driven Development (CDD) projects can improve livelihoods, making the vulnerability context a critical lens for this study.

In this study, a central component of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework is focused on livelihood assets. These determine the capacity of households to pursue sustainable livelihood strategies. Contemporary studies by Banda & Mwange, (2025) emphasize that strengthening multiple forms of capital particularly human and financial capital enhances household resilience and poverty reduction outcomes. In the context of Community-Driven Development, interventions such as agricultural input support, savings groups, skills training, and rural infrastructure development are designed to strengthen these asset bases. In addition, Zulu & Mukuka, (2026) further suggests that when households gain improved access to productive assets, they are more likely to achieve income stability, food security, and livelihood diversification.

The framework also highlights the importance of transforming structures and processes, which include institutions, policies, and governance systems that shape access to resources and determine how development interventions are implemented. Haider & Cleaver, (2023) emphasize that the effectiveness of rural development programmes is highly dependent on institutional coordination, decentralization structures, and community participation mechanisms. In Zambia, Ward Development Committees, local authorities, and implementing partners

play a critical role in determining how Community-Driven Development projects are delivered and how benefits are distributed. Despite that weak institutional capacity or limited coordination significantly reduces the impact of CDD interventions on household livelihoods (Manda & Alobo, 2021).

In due course, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework focuses on livelihood outcomes. These include increased income, improved food security, reduced vulnerability, and enhanced well-being. According to Bwalya *et al*., (2024) development interventions that strengthen household assets and reduce vulnerability tend to improve multidimensional welfare outcomes. Even though that is the case, impacts vary depending on context and implementation quality. Hence in relation to this study, these outcomes provide a direct basis for assessing whether Community-Driven Development projects in Kulundana Ward are effectively improving household livelihoods.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework is therefore highly suitable for this study because it provides a comprehensive and up-to-date analytical lens for examining how Community-Driven Development projects influence household livelihoods. It does so by, first enabling the identification of different types of CDD interventions and how they contribute to livelihood assets. Second, it provides a structured way of assessing their influence on poverty reduction and livelihood improvement through changes in household capital and strategies. Third, it incorporates the role of institutional and structural constraints. These aspects allows the study to analyze challenges affecting project effectiveness (Natarajan *et al*., 2022). Even recent literature by Haider & Cleaver, (2023) supports this framework as a dynamic and adaptable means for understanding rural livelihoods in the context of climate change, governance reforms, and development interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Types of Community-Driven Development projects are implemented in Kulundana Ward

Community-Driven Development (CDD) projects are implemented across several sectors to address poverty, improve rural livelihoods and promote human development. Globally, the major categories include agricultural development, water supply and sanitation, education, healthcare, rural infrastructure, livelihood enhancement and environmental conservation. These projects are based on participatory planning, where communities identify their priority needs and participate in project implementation and management (World Bank, 2022) [12]. Agriculture remains a major focus because millions of rural households depend on it for food, income and employment. Consequently, CDD agricultural interventions include irrigation schemes, improved seed distribution, livestock support, farmer organisations and climate-smart agriculture. Evidence from Indonesia and India demonstrates that community participation in agricultural programmes strengthens productivity, household income and local ownership (FAO, 2023) [5].

Water supply and sanitation constitute another important category of CDD projects, particularly in rural communities experiencing inadequate access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities. These interventions include borehole construction, rehabilitation of water points, protected wells and community-managed sanitation facilities. Research indicates that community participation in the management and maintenance of water systems improves their functionality and sustainability (WHO & UNICEF, 2023) [15]. Education and healthcare projects are equally important because they improve access to essential social services through the construction of schools, classrooms, health facilities and maternity shelters, as well as community health outreach programmes. Evidence from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Ethiopia demonstrates that community involvement in education and healthcare initiatives strengthens service delivery, school attendance and access to primary healthcare (WHO, 2023) [14].

In Zambia, particularly in rural communities such as Kulundana Ward in Choma District, CDD projects are implemented in agriculture, water and sanitation, education, healthcare, infrastructure development, livelihood enhancement, environmental conservation and social protection. Agricultural interventions include conservation farming, livestock vaccination, irrigation gardening and farmer training, while water projects involve borehole construction and rehabilitation managed through Community Water Management Committees (Ministry of Agriculture, 2022; UNICEF Zambia, 2022) [8, 11]. Other interventions include school infrastructure development, rural health outreach, feeder road rehabilitation, village savings and loan associations, agroforestry and social cash transfers. These projects contribute to improved access to essential services, household income generation and environmental sustainability. The literature therefore demonstrates that CDD projects in Kulundana Ward address interconnected community needs through locally identified and managed development interventions (World Vision Zambia, 2022; Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, 2024) [16, 9].

2.2 How Community-Driven Development projects influence poverty

Community-Driven Development projects influence poverty reduction by transferring decision-making responsibilities and development resources closer to local communities. This approach enables beneficiaries to identify their most pressing needs and participate in allocating resources towards interventions that improve their living conditions. International evidence indicates that community participation improves project relevance, accountability and sustainability, thereby strengthening poverty reduction outcomes (Mansuri & Rao, 2018) [7]. In countries such as Indonesia and Bangladesh, community-based development initiatives have improved rural infrastructure, household consumption, agricultural production and access to financial services. Similarly, evidence from Bolivia indicates that decentralised investment decisions contribute to more equitable distribution of public resources, particularly in rural municipalities (Asian Development Bank, 2022).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, CDD projects contribute to poverty reduction through agricultural productivity improvement, infrastructure development, financial inclusion and access to essential social services. In Ethiopia, community-based public works under the Productive Safety Net Programme have improved food security while creating productive community assets (African Development Bank, 2023) [1]. In Kenya, improved access to community-managed water systems has reduced the time spent collecting water,

allowing women to participate in income-generating activities, while savings groups have strengthened household financial inclusion (Hope & Rouse, 2021). In a similar way, community-managed irrigation projects in Malawi, have improved agricultural productivity and reduced seasonal hunger (Chinsinga, 2018). These experiences demonstrate that CDD interventions address both the immediate and underlying causes of rural poverty by improving household productive capacity, access to services and economic opportunities.

In Kulundana Ward, Choma District, CDD projects influence poverty through agricultural productivity improvement, livelihood diversification, infrastructure development and increased access to social services. Agricultural interventions such as conservation farming, irrigation gardening, livestock rearing and improved seed distribution enhance food availability and household income (Ministry of Agriculture, 2023; Manda *et al*., 2021). Community-managed boreholes, sanitation facilities and health outreach programmes improve household welfare by reducing water-related illnesses, healthcare costs and time spent accessing essential services (UNICEF Zambia, 2022; WHO, 2023) [11, 14]. Furthermore, village savings and loan associations, poultry farming and small-scale trading provide alternative income sources, while feeder roads improve access to markets and reduce transportation constraints (World Vision Zambia, 2022; Chikulo, 2019) [16, 4]. Education, agroforestry and social protection interventions further strengthen human capital, environmental sustainability and household resilience (UNESCO, 2024, Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, 2024) [10, 9]. Collectively, these interventions demonstrate how CDD projects contribute to poverty reduction by improving livelihoods, increasing income opportunities and strengthening the capacity of rural households to withstand economic and environmental shocks.

2.3 Challenges affecting the implementation of Community-Driven Development projects

The implementation of Community-Driven Development projects is affected by several governance, institutional and financial challenges that can undermine their effectiveness and sustainability. Globally, weak institutional coordination and bureaucratic procedures often result in delayed project implementation, duplication of activities and inefficient resource utilisation (World Bank, 2023; Beath *et al*., 2018) [13, 3]. Another significant challenge is elite capture, whereby influential individuals dominate community decision-making processes and disproportionately benefit from project resources. This limits the participation of women, poorer households and other vulnerable groups, thereby undermining equitable resource distribution (Mansuri & Rao, 2021). Financial sustainability is also a major concern because many community projects depend on external funding and lack adequate maintenance resources after completion. Evidence from Nepal and Bangladesh demonstrates that insufficient financial contributions and limited technical support can result in the deterioration of community-managed infrastructure (White, 2022).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, CDD implementation faces additional challenges associated with weak local institutional capacity, inadequate technical expertise, poor coordination and climate variability. Many local development committees lack the necessary planning, financial management and monitoring skills to implement projects effectively. Evidence from Malawi indicates that institutional capacity limitations affect project planning, monitoring and sustainability, while poor coordination between local authorities and community structures undermines implementation (Chasukwa *et al*., 2022). Climate-related shocks, including droughts, floods and irregular rainfall patterns, further affect agricultural and infrastructure projects by disrupting production activities and reducing expected benefits (Manda & Alobo, 2021). These challenges are compounded by inadequate financial resources and limited administrative support, which can result in delayed implementation, poor-quality infrastructure and reduced long-term development outcomes (African Development Bank, 2024) [2].

In Zambia, particularly in rural communities such as Kulundana Ward, CDD projects experience challenges relating to inadequate and inconsistent funding, limited institutional capacity, low community participation and poor project maintenance. Delayed financial allocations often result in incomplete projects and interruptions in service delivery, while limited technical and monitoring skills among Ward Development Committees and local authorities undermine effective implementation (Makondo & Thomas, 2024). Furthermore, poverty and inadequate awareness limit the ability of vulnerable households to participate meaningfully in development activities. Other challenges include climate variability, inadequate market access, weak value chains and unequal distribution of project benefits. These factors reduce the economic returns and sustainability of community interventions (Chisengele & Nyanga, 2026; Haider & Cleaver, 2023). Therefore, the literature establishes that the effectiveness of CDD projects in Kulundana Ward depends not only on the availability of development resources but also on effective governance, inclusive participation, institutional capacity, sustainable financing and appropriate responses to environmental and socioeconomic challenges.

Note: I have maintained the three original headings and retained the citations used in your literature review. The summaries follow the global, regional and Zambian contexts, with particular emphasis on Kulundana Ward. I have not introduced additional references.

2.4 Literature gap

The literature review identified following gaps. Existing literature provides broad information on the categories of Community-Driven Development (CDD) projects, particularly agriculture, infrastructure and financial inclusion. However, limited empirical evidence documents the exact types, distribution and composition of these projects at ward level in rural Zambia. Furthermore, there is insufficient understanding of how local socio-economic conditions and community priorities influence project selection and implementation (World Bank, 2023) [13]. This study therefore addresses the gap by examining the specific types of CDD projects implemented in Kulundana Ward.

Secondly, although previous studies acknowledge the contribution of CDD projects to poverty reduction through improved income, food security and access to social services, limited empirical evidence establishes the actual magnitude of their influence at ward level. Existing studies also inadequately examine differences in livelihood benefits

across household categories, gender and income levels, as well as the combined effects of multiple CDD interventions on household livelihoods (Haider & Cleaver, 2023). This study seeks to address these gaps by examining how CDD projects influence poverty and household livelihoods in Kulundana Ward.

Third, previous studies identify challenges such as inadequate funding, weak institutional capacity and elite capture in the implementation of CDD projects. However, limited research provides an in-depth, context-specific analysis of how these challenges manifest and interact at ward level, particularly in rural Zambia. Furthermore, community-level constraints, including low participation, geographical barriers and local governance dynamics, remain inadequately explored (AfDB, 2024) [2]. This study therefore addresses the gap by investigating the challenges affecting the implementation of CDD projects in Kulundana Ward.

3. Research Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection, analysed separately, and then merged during interpretation to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The use of this design is appropriate because the study seeks to examine both measurable livelihood outcomes and contextual experiences of Community-Driven Development (CDD) projects in Kulundana Ward. This allowed the researcher to integrate statistical evidence on household livelihood changes with in-depth qualitative insights on implementation processes, participation, and challenges affecting CDD effectiveness (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

3.2 Target population

It included all stakeholders involved in or benefiting from Community-Driven Development projects in Kulundana Ward, Choma District. These are local authority officials, ward development committee members, community development officers, and implementing partners responsible for CDD programmes. In addition, the population involved households and community members who are direct beneficiaries of CDD projects. For example, agricultural support programmes, savings groups, infrastructure development initiatives, and social empowerment projects. These respondents are important because they will provide first-hand information on how CDD interventions influence income levels, food security, employment opportunities, and general household welfare (Chambers, 2019).

3.3 Sampling design

The study used purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling will be used to select key informants such as ward development committee members, local authority officials, and CDD implementing officers. These participants will be selected because they possess specialized knowledge regarding planning, coordination, and implementation of Community-Driven Development projects (Etikan *et al*., 2016). While simple random sampling will be used to select household respondents from Kulundana Ward. This will ensure that each beneficiary household has an equal chance of being selected (Bryman, 2016).

3.4 Sample Size determination

The study targeted a total sample of 50 respondents**.** This will be distributed as follows, The sample includes 10 local authority and CDD implementing officials who provide insights into planning and coordination of projects. It also consists of 5 ward development committee members who represent grassroots governance and community participation. In addition, 10 community development stakeholders are included to capture perspectives on implementation, support, and sustainability. While another 25 household beneficiaries are selected as the main source of data on lived experiences and livelihood outcomes resulting from CDD projects.

3.5 Data Presentation

Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires which will be administered to household beneficiaries to collect quantitative data on income changes, livelihood outcomes, and access to Community-Driven Development (CDD) services. Secondary data was obtained from various reports including that of government development, NGO project documents, ward and district development plans, records from the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and among others. Heeks, (2019) argues that the use of multiple data sources enhances triangulation and improves the credibility and depth of the findings.

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Qualitative Data

Qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis**.** Using this method, responses were coded, and grouped into themes. Later, these were interpreted according to the study objectives. This made possible following Braun and Clarks Six-Step Model (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

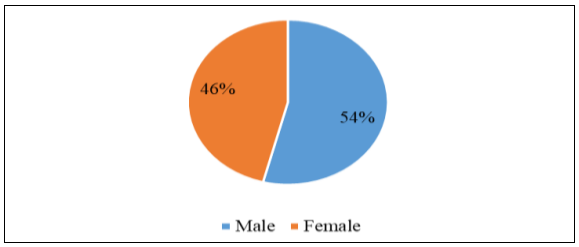
3.6.2 Quantitative analysis

Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS where descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means were generated to assess income levels and livelihood outcomes.

4. Findings and Results

4.1 Background characteristics of respondents

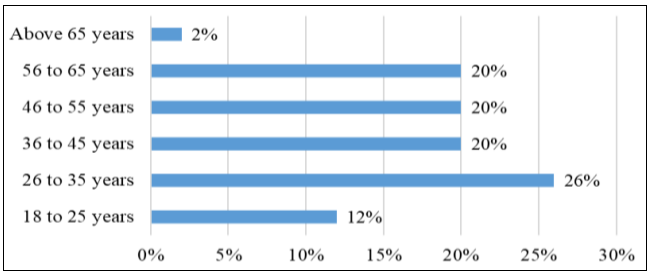
Fig 4.1.1 presents information on gender distribution of respondents. Findings show that 54% of the respondents were male, while 46% were female. The results indicate that both males and females were adequately represented in the study. Although males constituted a slightly larger proportion, the difference was relatively small, suggesting that the findings incorporate perspectives from both genders.



Source: Researcher's field data, 2026

Fig 4.1.1: Gender of respondents

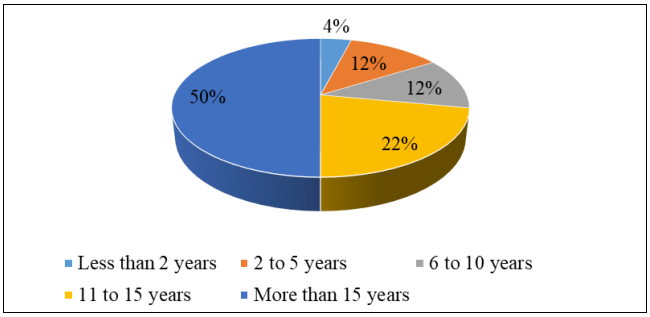
Fig 4.1.2 presents findings on respondents age range. Those aged 26 to 35 years constituted the largest group at 26%, followed by those aged 36 to 45 years at 20%. Respondents aged 18 to 25 years accounted for 12%, while those above 45 years represented 20%. Additionally those aged between 56 to 65 years were 20%, while those above 65 years were 2%. This indicates that the study captured views from respondents across different age categories, with relatively greater representation from adults aged 26 to 45 years.



Source: Researcher's field data, 2026

Fig 4.1.2: Age group of respondents

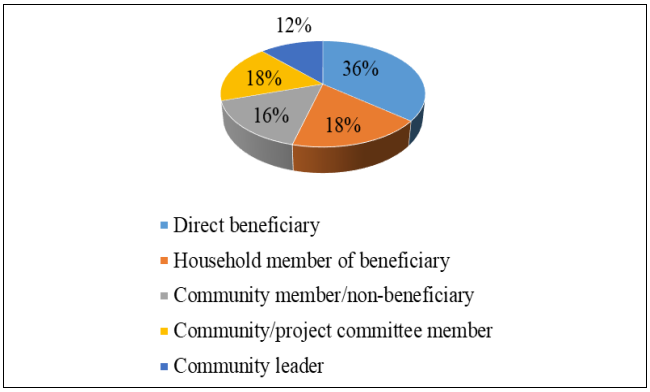
Fig 4.1.3 indicates the length of residence in Kulundana Ward. 50% of the respondents had lived in Kulundana Ward for more than 15 years. A further 22% respondent had lived there for 11 to 15 years, while those who had lived there between 6 to 10 years accounted for 12%.



Source: Researcher's field data, 2026

Fig 4.1.3: Length of residence in Kulundana Ward

Fig 4.1.4 presents information on level of involvement with Community-Driven Developmental projects. Direct beneficiaries formed the largest group, with 36% respondents. Community and project committee members and household members of beneficiaries each accounted for 18% respondents.



Source: Researcher's field data, 2026

Fig 4.1.4: Level of involvement with Community-Driven Developmental projects

4.2 Types of Community-Driven Development Projects Implemented in Kulundana Ward

Table 4.2.1 presents data on types of Community-Driven Developmental projects implemented. Findings show that agricultural support was the most commonly identified intervention, mentioned by 88% respondents. Savings and VSLA projects followed at 58%, while water and sanitation projects were mentioned by 44%. Other types of Community-Driven projects where, Livestock support, 26%, Women's empowerment, 30%, Education, at 26%, Small business/ and livelihood support, 12%, and among others. These are well summarized in the table below.

Table 4.2.1: Types of CDD projects implemented

S. No	CDD project	Frequency	Percentages
1	Agricultural support	44	88%
2	Savings and VSLA	29	58%
3	Water and sanitation	22	44%
4	Women's empowerment	15	30%
5	Livestock support	13	26%
6	Education	13	26%
7	Environmental conservation	9	18%
8	Small business and livelihood support	6	12%
9	Youth entrepreneurship	2	4%

Source: Researcher's field data, 2026

Table 4.2.2 presents data on the most beneficial Community-Driven Developmental projects. The findings indicate that Livestock support was identified as the most beneficial project by 24% respondents, followed by agricultural support which accounted for 20% respondents. Women's empowerment and rural infrastructure each accounted for 10%. While education was the least lagging behind at 2%.

Table 4.2.2: Most beneficial Community-Driven Developmental projects

S. No	Project	Frequency	Percentage
1	Livestock support	12	24%
2	Agricultural support	10	20%
3	Women's empowerment	5	10%
4	Rural infrastructure	5	10%
5	Small business and livelihood support	4	8%
6	Savings and VSLA	4	8%
7	Water and sanitation	3	6%
8	Youth entrepreneurship	3	6%
9	Environmental conservation	2	4%
10	Health	1	2%
11	Education	1	2%
	Total	50	100%

Source: Researcher's field data, 2026

When the researcher asked respondents on why respondents considered the project most beneficial, the responses indicate that respondents considered Community-Driven Developmental projects beneficial mainly because they generated tangible improvements in household livelihoods. A major response was the ability of projects to increase household income and food security. Respondents who identified agricultural support explained that improved farming practices and access to inputs enabled them to increase production and have more food available for their households. One respondent explained that the project was beneficial because, *"It improved crop production, food*

availability and household income through better farming practices and inputs." This suggests that agricultural interventions were valued not only for increasing production but also for their contribution to household welfare.

Additionally, livestock support was also viewed as particularly beneficial because livestock could provide several forms of household benefit simultaneously. Respondents associated livestock with food, income and agricultural production. One respondent stated that, "*Livestock provides food, manure and a source of income when animals or animal products are sold*." This response demonstrates that livestock was perceived as a productive household asset rather than simply a form of assistance. Livestock could be sold when cash was needed, while manure could be used to improve agricultural production.

Furthermore, savings and Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) projects were similarly viewed as important because they improved access to financial resources. Respondents explained that participation in savings groups allowed households to save regularly and obtain small loans for immediate or productive needs. One respondent stated that the project *"helped members save regularly, access small loans and meet urgent household expenses without relying heavily on outside borrowing."* This indicates that financial inclusion was an important component of livelihood improvement.

Apart from that, small business and livelihood support was also appreciated because it enabled households to diversify their income sources. One respondent noted that the intervention *"provided start-up support and helped households diversify income beyond farming."* This is particularly important in a rural setting where households may depend heavily on agriculture and therefore remain vulnerable to poor harvests and other economic shocks. In addition, women's empowerment interventions were perceived as beneficial because they increased women's participation in household economic activities. The responses suggest that such interventions helped women participate more actively in income generation and household decision-making.

When asked about the other types of Community-Driven Developmental projects that should be implemented in Kulundana Ward the responses show a strong preference for projects that address the economic and environmental challenges experienced by households in Kulundana Ward. Irrigation and drought-resilient agricultural projects were frequently recommended. Respondents felt that dependence on rainfall exposed farming households to production difficulties during periods of inadequate rainfall. One respondent specifically recommended *"Irrigation and drought-resilient farming projects, especially small community gardens."*

The recommendation for irrigation was closely connected to concerns about climate variability and food security. Respondents indicated that irrigation could enable households to continue producing crops even when rainfall is inadequate. Community gardens were also seen as an opportunity for households to produce vegetables and generate additional income. Livestock-related interventions were another important recommendation. Respondents proposed livestock restocking, poultry projects and veterinary services. One respondent recommended *"More livestock restocking, poultry projects and veterinary support."* This suggests that respondents wanted Community-Driven Developmental projects to build household productive assets that could provide continuing income rather than short-term benefits.

Respondents also called for more skills training, business support and market-linkage programmes. One response recommended *"Skills training, small business grants and stronger market-linkage programmes."* This indicates that respondents recognised that providing productive assets alone may not be sufficient if households lack the knowledge, capital and markets required to convert those assets into sustainable income. In relation to the above point, water-related projects were also suggested, particularly boreholes, water harvesting and community irrigation facilities. One respondent proposed *"Water harvesting, boreholes and community irrigation facilities."* These recommendations demonstrate that water was viewed not only as a household need but also as an important resource for agricultural and livelihood activities.

Lastly but not the least, youth entrepreneurship and skills development were also identified as areas requiring additional attention. Respondents suggested that young people should be provided with skills and opportunities to establish income-generating activities. Food processing and value addition were similarly recommended so that households could earn more from agricultural products instead of selling them in their raw form.

The researcher also asked respondents to describe their involvement or experience with Community-Driven Developmental projects in Kulundana Ward. The responses demonstrate that respondents experienced Community-Driven Developmental projects in different ways. Some were direct beneficiaries who received agricultural inputs and training. One respondent explained, *"I received agricultural inputs and training and have applied improved farming practices on my household plot."* This suggests that Community-Driven Developmental projects interventions were not limited to the distribution of inputs but also involved capacity building intended to improve how households used the resources provided.

Other respondents participated in savings groups. One respondent stated, *"I participate in a village savings group supported through the community project and have accessed a small loan."* This demonstrates that some respondents benefited through financial services provided at community level. Access to small loans was particularly important because it enabled households to meet immediate needs or invest in livelihood activities. Some respondents had more direct roles in project management and community mobilisation. A respondent who served on a project committee explained, "*I served on a community project committee and helped mobilise households and monitor project activities."* Such responses demonstrate that Community-Driven Developmental projects involved community members not only as beneficiaries but also as participants in implementation and monitoring.

Livestock beneficiaries also reported direct benefits from Community-Driven Developmental projects interventions. One respondent stated that their household *"benefited from livestock support and we have used the animals as a source of income and manure."* This illustrates how project benefits could continue beyond the initial intervention because livestock remained a productive household asset. Other respondents participated mainly through community meetings and indirectly benefited from improved services

and livelihood opportunities. This demonstrates that the influence of Community-Driven Developmental projects extended beyond direct beneficiaries to the wider community.

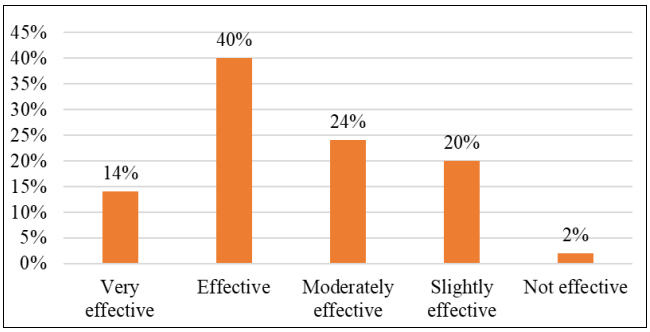
When the researcher asked respondents to describe the Community-Driven Developmental project that has had the greatest impact on their household or community the responses indicate that agricultural and livestock-related interventions were commonly associated with substantial household and community impact. Agricultural projects were considered important because they directly affected food production and household income. Respondents linked agricultural support to improved farming practices, increased production and greater availability of food.

Livestock interventions were also described as having a lasting effect because livestock could continue generating benefits after the project intervention. Respondents highlighted livestock as a source of income, food and manure. The ability to sell animals when household financial needs arose made livestock particularly important as a form of household economic security.

Savings and VSLA interventions were identified as important because they enabled households to accumulate savings and access credit. Respondents described these groups as useful when households needed money for school expenses, food, small businesses and other household requirements. In relation to savings and VSLA intervention, small business and livelihood projects were also considered important because they reduced dependence on a single source of income. Respondents explained that such interventions helped households establish alternative income-generating activities.

4.3 Effectiveness of Community-Driven Development Projects on Poverty Reduction

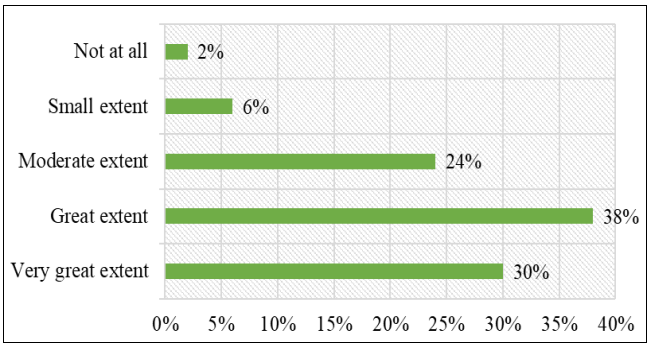
Fig 4.3.1 presents data on overall effectiveness of Community-Driven Development Projects on Poverty Reduction. 40% respondents rated CDD projects as effective, while 14% considered them very effective. Thus, 54% respondents gave a positive effectiveness rating. A further 24% of respondents rated them moderately effective.



Source: Primary data, 2026.

Fig 4.3.1: Overall effectiveness of Community-Driven Development Projects on Poverty Reduction

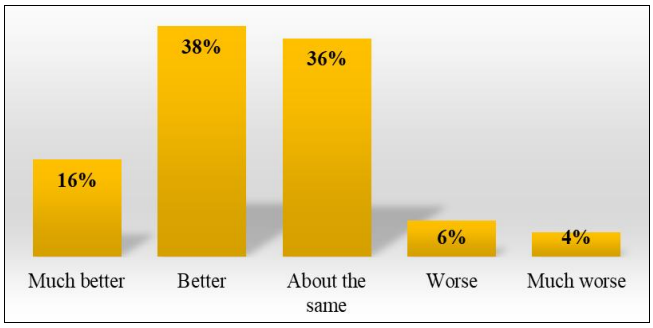
Fig 4.3.2 represents the extent to which Community-Driven Developmental projects contributed to livelihoods. The findings shows that 38% respondents indicated that CDD projects contributed to household livelihoods to a great extent, while 30% indicated a very great extent. Combined, 68% respondents reported substantial contribution.



Source: Primary data, 2026

Fig 4.3.2: Extent to which Community-Driven Developmental projects contributed to livelihoods

Fig 4.3.3 presents data on current livelihood situation compared with before Community-Driven Developmental projects. The findings show that 38% respondents stated that their current livelihood situation was better than before Community-Driven Developmental projects, while 16% reported that it was much better. Thus, 54% respondents perceived an improvement. However, 36% respondents considered their situation about the same.



Source: Primary data, 2026

Fig 4.3.3: Current livelihood situation compared with before CDD projects

When asked about the main changes experienced in the implementation of Community-Driven Community projects, the responses indicate that CDD projects contributed to several changes in household livelihoods. One of the most important changes was improved food production. Respondents reported that improved farming practices and access to agricultural support helped increase crop production and household food availability. One respondent stated, *"Crop yields and food availability have improved, and the household has more opportunities to earn income."* Another major change was diversification of household income. Respondents explained that they were increasingly able to combine farming with savings, small trading and other livelihood activities. One respondent stated that *"Income has become more diversified through savings, small trading and farming activities."* This indicates that CDD projects helped some households reduce dependence on a single livelihood activity. Improved access to community services was another change reported by respondents. Some respondents indicated that improved services reduced household expenses and created more time for productive activities. One respondent explained, *"Access to services has improved and some household expenses have become easier to manage."*

The responses also show that Community-Driven Developmental projects improved households' ability to cope with economic and agricultural difficulties. Savings, livestock and alternative income activities provided households with additional options during difficult periods. One respondent explained that the household was *"better able to cope during poor harvests because of savings and alternative income sources."* In addition, respondents reported greater participation of women and other household members in income-generating activities. This suggests that Community-Driven Developmental projects had social as well as economic effects.

When asked about the most significant improvement brought about by Community-Driven Developmental projects, responses reveal that food security and household income were among the most significant improvements. Respondents associated improved agricultural production with greater availability of food and increased opportunities to sell surplus produce. One respondent explained that the most important improvement was *"Improved household food security and increased income from farming."* Access to savings and credit was another important improvement. Respondents indicated that savings groups enabled households to accumulate funds and access loans when necessary. This helped households address school expenses, food requirements and small business needs.

Furthermore, improved water access was also identified as an important community-level improvement. Respondents indicated that better access to water reduced the amount of time households spent collecting water and allowed more time for productive activities. Apart from that, respondents also highlighted increased livelihood opportunities for women and young people. These opportunities enabled household members who might previously have had limited access to income-generating activities to become economically active. Last but not the least, improved farming skills and the ability to cope with drought were regarded as important achievements. The responses indicate that respondents valued knowledge and skills because they could continue to use them even after the Community-Driven Developmental project had ended.

The researcher further asked respondents on ways Community-Driven Developmental projects helped their household improve income, access to basic needs and cope with economic difficulties, the responses show that Community-Driven Developmental projects contributed to household income mainly through increased agricultural and livestock production. Respondents explained that improved production allowed them to sell surplus crops or livestock and use the income to meet household needs. One respondent stated, *"Income increased through improved production and sale of farm or livestock products, while savings helped meet basic needs."*

Savings and small loans were another important mechanism. Respondents indicated that VSLA participation helped households obtain funds for school expenses, food and small businesses. For example, one respondent explained, *"The project provided savings or small loans that helped with school costs, food and small business activities."*

Other areas included, improved agricultural production also helped reduce food shortages. Respondents indicated that producing more food reduced the need to purchase food and, where there was surplus, allowed households to sell part of their production. While alternative income-generating activities were also important in helping households cope with periods when agricultural income was low. One respondent stated that *"Alternative income activities helped the household manage periods of low agricultural income."* Lastly but not the least, improved water and community services were also reported to reduce some household costs and free time for productive activities.

4.4 Challenges Affecting the Implementation and Effectiveness of Community-Driven Development Projects

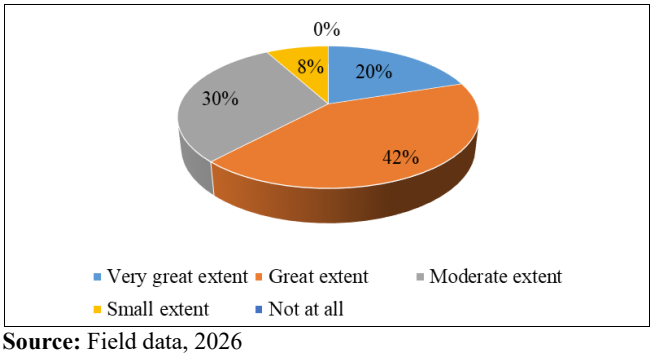
On challenges affecting the implementation and effectiveness of Community-Driven Development projects, the most frequently identified challenge, reported by 74% respondents Poor monitoring and supervision followed at 44%, while limited technical support was identified by 42%. Poor market access and drought were each reported by 30% and among others as shown in a table below.

Table 4.4.1: Challenges affecting the implementation and effectiveness of Community-Driven Development projects

Challenge	Responses	Percentage
Inadequate funding	37	74%
Poor monitoring and supervision	22	44%
Limited technical support	21	42%
Poor access to markets	15	30%
Drought/climate-related challenges	15	30%
Lack of information	13	26%
Weak institutional support	9	18%
Low community participation	8	16%
Poor leadership	8	16%
Lack of transparency/accountability	8	16%
Poor maintenance	5	10%
Geographical/accessibility challenges	5	10%

Source: Primary Data, 2026.

Fig 4.4.1 presents data on the extent to which challenges affect implementation of Community-Driven Developmental projects. The findings indicate that 42% respondents indicated that the challenges affected implementation to a great extent, while 20% indicated a very great extent. Therefore, 62% respondents considered the effect of challenges substantial.



Source: Field data, 2026

Fig 4.4.1: Extent to which challenges affect implementation of Community-Driven Developmental projects

On how challenges affected implementation and effectiveness of the Community-Driven Developmental, the responses indicate that inadequate funding is one of the major factors limiting the effectiveness of Community-Driven Developmental projects. Respondents explained that insufficient resources can delay activities, reduce the scale

of interventions and limit the number of households benefiting from projects. One respondent stated, *"Insufficient funding delays activities, reduces the scale of support and limits the number of households reached."* Moreover, limited technical support was also identified as a problem. Respondents indicated that without continued technical assistance, beneficiaries may struggle to maintain project activities or apply the knowledge gained during implementation. One respondent explained, *"Limited technical support affects the quality and sustainability of activities after initial project support ends."*

Another challenge, poor market access was another important challenge. Respondents explained that even where households increased agricultural production, limited access to markets made it difficult to convert surplus production into reliable income. One respondent stated, *"Poor market access makes it difficult for households to sell surplus produce and turn project benefits into reliable income."* Drought and other climate-related challenges were also seen as undermining agricultural projects. One respondent explained, *"Drought reduces agricultural output and can weaken the benefits gained from farming-related projects."* This demonstrates that the sustainability of agricultural interventions depends partly on households' ability to withstand climate-related shocks.

Weak monitoring and community participation were also viewed as barriers. Respondents explained that inadequate monitoring could contribute to poor maintenance and delayed implementation, while limited participation could weaken community ownership. One respondent stated, *"Weak monitoring and participation can lead to poor maintenance, delayed activities and limited community ownership."*

The researcher asked respondents on what measures should be taken to improve implementation and effectiveness. With that, the responses strongly emphasised the need for increased funding and stronger monitoring. Respondents argued that adequate financial resources would allow projects to reach more households and ensure that activities are implemented as planned. One respondent recommended, *"Increase funding, strengthen monitoring, provide technical support and involve communities in planning and implementation."* In addition, respondents also recommended timely provision of inputs, training and market linkages. This suggests that project implementation should not end with the distribution of resources. Beneficiaries should continue receiving the knowledge and support required to use project resources effectively.

Furthermore, transparency and accountability were also identified as important. Respondents recommended greater transparency in project selection and the use of project resources. One respondent proposed, *"Improve transparency in project selection and resource use, strengthen committees and provide regular technical supervision."* In connection with this, Continuous training was also recommended, particularly in financial literacy, business management and livelihood skills. Respondents believed that continued support would help households sustain project benefits after implementation. One respondent recommended, *"Provide continuous training, financial literacy, business skills and follow-up support after projects are completed."*

Lastly but not the least, climate-resilient interventions were another important recommendation. Respondents suggested irrigation, climate-resilient farming activities and improved access roads. One respondent stated, "Support irrigation and climate-resilient activities, improve access roads and connect producers to reliable markets."

Because of this, respondents suggested what changes or improvements that should put in place to ensure that Community-Driven Developmental projects to produce lasting benefits. The responses demonstrate a strong concern with the sustainability of Community-Driven Developmental projects. Respondents recommended longer-term follow-up instead of ending support immediately after the completion of project activities.

Moreover, climate resilience was also repeatedly emphasised. Respondents recommended expanding climate-smart agriculture, irrigation and livestock activities so that household livelihoods would be less vulnerable to drought. One respondent explained, *"Expand climate-smart agriculture, irrigation and livestock activities so benefits are less vulnerable to drought."* Furthermore, transparency and accountability were also considered important for sustainability. Respondents recommended transparent beneficiary selection, timely funding and regular monitoring of completed projects.

Respondents also recommended refresher training and continued technical support. This was considered particularly important for farmers, savings groups and small businesses because beneficiaries may require additional knowledge as their activities develop. One respondent recommended, *"Provide refresher training and technical support, especially for savings groups, small businesses and farmers."* Finally, respondents recommended greater participation of women and young people and increased value addition. They believed that processing agricultural products before sale could enable households to obtain greater economic value from local resources.

4.5 Discussion of Results

The findings of the study on the influence of Community-Driven Development (CDD) projects on household livelihoods in Kulundana Ward, Choma District, were organised according to the three research objectives. The first objective established that agricultural support was the most commonly implemented intervention, reported by 88% of respondents, followed by savings and Village Savings and Loan Association projects (58%), water and sanitation (44%), women's empowerment (30%), livestock support and education (26% each), environmental conservation (18%), small business support (12%) and youth entrepreneurship (4%). These findings demonstrate that CDD projects mainly address agricultural, financial and basic service needs within the community. This agrees with the African Development Bank (2023) [1], which identifies agriculture as a major component of rural development.

Regarding the second objective, the findings established that CDD projects generally contribute positively to poverty reduction and household livelihoods. Approximately 54% of respondents considered the projects effective or very effective, while 68% indicated that the projects improved household livelihoods to a great or very great extent. The reported benefits included increased agricultural production, improved food security, income diversification, access to savings and credit, and improved access to community services.

Furthermore, 54% reported that their livelihood situation

had improved compared to the period before project implementation. These findings support the arguments of Ksoll *et al*. (2016) [6], Mphuka *et al*. (2020) and World Vision Zambia (2022) [16] that community-based interventions strengthen household income, savings and economic resilience.

The third objective established that inadequate funding was the major challenge affecting CDD project implementation, reported by 74% of respondents. Other significant challenges included poor monitoring and supervision (44%), limited technical support (42%), poor market access (30%) and drought or climate-related challenges (30%). Additionally, 62% of respondents indicated that these challenges affected project implementation to a great or very great extent. These findings are consistent with Makondo and Thomas (2024), Manda and Alobo (2021) and Chisengele and Nyanga (2026), who identify financial, institutional, technical, environmental and market-related constraints as barriers to sustainable rural development.

In summary, the study established that CDD projects have a generally positive influence on household livelihoods in Kulundana Ward, particularly through agricultural production, livestock support, savings and income diversification. However, their effectiveness is constrained by inadequate funding, weak monitoring, limited technical assistance, poor market access and climate vulnerability.

The findings demonstrate that sustainable poverty reduction requires not only implementing community development projects but also strengthening their financing, management, monitoring and long-term sustainability. These conclusions are consistent with the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, which emphasises the importance of livelihood assets, institutional structures and vulnerability contexts in determining household livelihood outcomes.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that Community-Driven Development (CDD) projects in Kulundana Ward cover various areas, including agriculture, livestock support, savings and VSLAs, water and sanitation, women's empowerment, education, environmental conservation, and youth entrepreneurship. Agricultural support was the most widely implemented intervention, while livestock and agricultural support were perceived as the most beneficial because they contribute to food availability, household income and livelihood security. Savings and VSLA projects also promote financial inclusion by enabling households to save and access small loans.

The study further concludes that CDD projects have made a generally positive contribution to poverty reduction and household livelihood improvement. More than half of the respondents considered the projects effective or very effective, while 68% indicated that they contributed to household livelihoods to a great or very great extent. Furthermore, 54% reported an improvement in their livelihood situation following project implementation. These benefits included improved agricultural production, food security, household income, income diversification and access to savings and credit. However, the benefits were not uniform, as some households reported no significant improvement.

Finally, study concludes that the implementation and sustainability of CDD projects are constrained by inadequate funding, poor monitoring and supervision, limited technical support, poor market access and drought-related challenges. These constraints weaken project implementation, accountability and the ability of households to translate increased production into sustainable income. Therefore, improving the effectiveness of CDD projects requires adequate financing, continuous technical support, effective monitoring, better market access, climate-resilient interventions and meaningful community participation.

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