

# Stakeholder Participation Patterns Across Construction Project Stages in the Niger Delta: Archival Evidence from Public Sector Projects in Nigeria

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## Abstract

Construction project underperformance in Nigeria's Niger Delta region are long-standing challenges in governance and delivery concern but the significance of stakeholder participation throughout the entire project lifecycle has received little empirical attention, especially in riverine public sector contexts. This study rooted in Freeman's Stakeholder Theory, aims to document and analyse active stakeholder participation patterns across the different stages in lifecycle of completed public sector construction projects in Ondo State, Niger Delta, Nigeria. It also to assess the implications of identified participation deficits for project performance. The study used an archival document analysis of records from 48 projects performed by OPADEC and UBEB between 2016 and 2024 to apply a systematic 18 roles of participation assessment framework across four life cycle stages. The findings show that involvement rates remained below 60% throughout the conception, design and planning and construction phases with 100% participation only noted at the commissioning stage. This pattern is interpreted as evidence of performative rather than substantive engagement in which public participation is concentrated at project completion events while the most crucial decision-making phases to project quality and community alignment receive little stakeholder input. The report advocates mandatory participatory governance protocols from project conception to commissioning, institutional accountability reforms for OPADEC and UBEB and the implementation of participatory monitoring frameworks that empower host communities throughout the project's lifespan.

**Keywords:** Archival document report, Construction project performance, Niger Delta, Project governance, Stakeholder participation.

## 1. Introduction

The Niger Delta region is Nigeria's primary center for oil extraction and serves as a source of national wealth, however it endures ongoing underdevelopment despite its economic significance. The scarcity of resources has been recognized as a primary catalyst for the violent conflicts that have disrupted the region, undermining Nigeria's national unity. This has also heightened demands for resource control and terrorist activities (Odusanya, *et al.*, 2025). In this fragile socio-political climate, the provision of infrastructure encounters considerable obstacles. Studies conducted by Amadi and Higham (2018) and Amadi (2023) indicate persistent delays and the cessation of construction and highway projects across the Niger Delta. These problems are associated with the region's intricate riverine wetland topography, geotechnical difficulties, and deficiencies in governance and procurement frameworks. The technical difficulties of constructing on unstable, saturated soil are exacerbated by systemic problems in project governance, procurement deficiencies, and inadequate risk management, resulting in much poorer cost and time efficiency for riverine projects relative to those in upland regions. Subsequent analyses, encompassing

regression and cognitive mapping, substantiate that non-compliance with best geotechnical practices and inadequate procurement processes are substantial determinants of suboptimal cost performance (Amadi and Higham, 2018; Amadi, 2023). Research underscores the prospective benefits of enhanced cost management, strategic planning, and superior technical oversight; however, persistent governance and procurement challenges inherent in the region's riverine project delivery system impede significant advancement (Okereke, *et al.*, 2022; Iroha, *et al.*, 2024). Ejiba, *et al.* (2016) analyse the Niger Delta, revealing that riverine populations have traditionally relied on fishing and agriculture, but oil and gas production continues to be a primary economic activity. Despite ample resources, many communities continue to face poverty, environmental degradation, and the disintegration of traditional livelihoods, consequently undermining local economies (Ejiba, *et al.*, 2016). Elisha (2023) study on the environmental and socioeconomic impacts in Niger Delta riverine communities indicates that significant infrastructure deficiencies, such as deteriorated transport networks, water system pollution, and inadequate access to essential services, considerably undermine community resilience. These factors lead to project delays,

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increased implementation costs, and sluggish public sector/community growth (Elisha, 2023). Abosede (2010) determined that numerous governmental intervention agencies, including NDDC, OPADEC, MDGs, ETF, and UBEB, had initiated hundreds of infrastructure projects throughout the years, encompassing schools, healthcare centers, administrative buildings, roads, bridges, and jetties. Project abandonment and delays adversely affect project value, stakeholder confidence, community stability, and prospects for sustainable growth. This study, grounded in stakeholder theory, reveals that inadequate involvement of essential actors—such as government agencies, contractors, consultants, community leaders, and regulatory bodies—typically results in conflict, scope modifications, negotiation delays, and community disturbances, thereby adversely impacting cost and time performance (Tor, *et al.*, 2025; Maurer, *et al.*, 2022). However, current existing Nigerian construction studies have predominantly relied on surveys and perception-based evidence. Consequently, limited empirical evidence documents actual stakeholder participation across the lifecycle of completed public-sector projects in riverine settings. Moreover, previous research has rarely quantified stage-specific participation or examined the governance implications of concentrating engagement at project completion rather than during conception, planning, and construction. This evidence gap constrains the development of context-responsive stakeholder governance mechanisms for Niger Delta infrastructure delivery.

Accordingly, this study pursues three objectives: (1) to identify and categories the principal stakeholder groups involved in public sector riverine construction projects implemented by OPADEC and UBEB in Ondo State between 2016 and 2024; (2) to document and measure active stakeholder participation across conception, design and planning, construction and commissioning using archival records; and (3) to analyze the implications of the observed participation patterns for construction project performance and formulate governance recommendations for public sector agencies operating in Niger Delta riverine communities.

## 2. Literature review

Subsequent Nigerian administrations have established various development intervention agencies to tackle the persistent underdevelopment of the Niger Delta. Obiam, *et al.*, (2022) contended that these initiatives have persistently failed, leading to profound frustration among local populations whose expectations have been continually elevated and subsequently dashed. Notwithstanding decades of government initiatives, the region persists in facing widespread poverty, environmental degradation and insufficient infrastructure which researchers characterise as

structural violence inflicted through systematic neglect, particularly in this riverine area of the Niger Delta. Deprivation has consistently fuelled youth radicalism and intensified grievances against both state and federal authorities, as well as multinational oil firms (Onoyemeakpo, 2023; Ebeku, 2020). The origins of the Niger Delta's developmental crisis may be traced back to the pro-independence era. Abayomi, *et al.* (2021) assert that the Henry Willink Commission of 1958 identified the region as neglected, topographically difficult and characterized by major developmental disparities. Subsequent institutions, including the Niger Delta Development Board, Niger Delta Basin and Rural Development Authority, Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission, and Niger Delta Development Commission, encountered limited institutional capacity, governance failures, corruption, and inadequate community engagement. Despite substantial project portfolios, many interventions have been abandoned, poorly implemented or misaligned with community priorities (Abosede, 2010; Ebeku, 2020; Owisi and Ikenga, 2025). Political interference, weak accountability and marginalization of local stakeholders during planning and execution have reduced institutional effectiveness and public trust (Isidiho and Sabran, 2015; Owisi and Ikenga, 2025). Furthermore, interventions frequently overlook the region's riverine geography and communities lived experiences, producing projects that appear visible but are insufficiently transformative (Onoyemeakpo, 2023; Ebeku, 2020). The Universal Basic Education framework seeks to promote equitable and compulsory basic education through UBEC and State Universal Basic Education Boards. However, infrastructural deterioration, underfunding and regional inequality constrain educational access in oil-producing riverine areas (Joy, 2025; Monday and University, 2024). Although large investments have supported classroom construction, rehabilitation, e-learning centers, sanitation facilities, workshops, libraries, clinics, playgrounds and boreholes (Idoko, 2024), evidence indicates that some intervention projects remain inadequately aligned with community needs (Onoyemeakpo, 2023; Owisi and Ikenga, 2025).

### 2.1 Stakeholder Participation in Construction Projects

In construction management, stakeholders are individuals or groups that can affect or are affected by the achievement of project objectives (Preble, 2005; Kivits and Sawang, 2021). Lin, *et al.*, (2019); Tor, *et al.*, (2025) highlighted the internal stakeholders include clients, contractors, designers and suppliers, whereas external stakeholders include host communities, regulators, non-governmental organizations and the media. Primary stakeholders are directly involved in project execution while secondary stakeholders may lack contractual roles but can materially influence or be affected by project outcomes (Maddaloni and Davis, 2017). Stakeholder salience is shaped by power,

legitimacy and urgency. Accordingly, stakeholder identification, mapping, communication and impact assessment should be embedded in project planning. Excluding relevant stakeholders, particularly host communities has been associated with conflict, delay, cost inefficiency and project abandonment (Maddaloni and Davis, 2017; Tor, *et al.*, 2025; Adepoju and Obademi, 2023). The stakeholder environment in Nigeria's riverine regions includes clients, contractors, consultants, community groups, youth organizations, traditional leaders, regulators, financial institutions, and environmental organizations (Ali, 2025; Maliki and Ogedengbe, 2025; Ogunsanya, *et al.*, 2019). Community actors can exercise substantial influence through their control of waterways, access routes and local security. Consequently, project success depends not only on technical competence but also on the management of stakeholder expectations, competing claims, communication and negotiation (Agbi, *et al.*, 2023; Tor, *et al.*, 2025). Poor communication and weak collaboration remain important contributors to construction underperformance in Nigeria (Unegbu, *et al.*, 2024; Igbokwe, *et al.*, 2025).

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework of the Stakeholder Theory

This study is anchored in Freeman's Stakeholder Theory which maintains that organizations and projects should account for the interests of parties who can affect or are affected by their objectives (Preble, 2005; Kivits and Sawang, 2021). Applied to construction, the theory suggests that systematic identification, meaningful engagement and balanced management of stakeholder interests enhance legitimacy, information quality, accountability and the likelihood of achieving project objectives. The framework is particularly relevant to riverine public sector construction where host communities, traditional institutions, regulators and intervention agencies possess different forms of power, legitimacy and urgency. It therefore provides the analytical lens for interpreting whether participation is substantive across the project lifecycle or merely visible at ceremonial completion.

## 3. Research Methodology

This study adopts an archival document analysis technique using a mixed methods design where qualitative archival records are the main data source and quantitative participation frequency counts are obtained through systematic coding of those records. This design was chosen because the research objectives require access to historical project records that capture actual stakeholder behaviour over the entire project lifecycles rather than retrospective opinions or intentions which would be captured through surveys or interviews. The two source organisations (OPADEC and UBEB) were purposefully chosen because they represent the primary government intervention agencies responsible for most of the public sector

construction in Ondo State's oil-producing communities providing a representative cross section of Niger Delta public sector construction governance. OPADEC concentrates on infrastructure in oil-producing regions, whereas UBEB focuses on educational facility construction to ensuring that the sample includes both social infrastructure and community development projects. A total number of 48 completed projects undertaken from 2016 to 2024 were examined; all projects for which complete archival documents were available were included, resulting in a census of the accessible project population rather than a deliberate subset. Documents analyzed comprised project inception reports, stakeholder meeting minutes, site supervision records, progress reports, and project completion and commissioning certificates. Active participation was described as documented evidence of a stakeholder group's involvement in a designated project role at a specified lifecycle stage as recorded in official project documentation. Participation rates were computed as the proportion of the 57 total stakeholders (Divided into four categories: NGOs/activists, community members, government and pressure groups) that were actively involved in each function. A structured participation assessment framework was used based on construction project management literature with 18 discrete stakeholder roles distributed across four project stages: conception (4 roles), design and planning (5 roles), construction (8 roles) and commissioning (1 role). To ensure the validity of the participation rate figures was checked across various document types for each project that were accessible. The identified stakeholder population comprised of 57 actors classified as non-governmental organizations/activists, community members, government representatives, and pressure groups. For each role, the participation frequency was the number of stakeholders for whom documentary evidence of active involvement was identified. The participation rate was calculated as the frequency divided by the total stakeholder population ( $n=57$ ), multiplied by 100. Evidence was cross-checked across available document types within each project to improve consistency. Descriptive frequencies and percentages established the participation pattern while qualitative thematic interpretation examined its governance and performance implications. The records did not contain uniform cost and schedule outcome measures for every project; the study interprets performance implications through documented participation patterns and relevant literature rather than claiming direct causal effects.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

Table 1 presents the distribution of the 57 stakeholders identified in the archival records. Community members constituted the largest category (63.2%), followed by government representatives (17.6%), pressure groups (12.2%) and non-governmental organizations/activists (7.0%).

**Table 1:** Nature of the Stakeholders

| Stakeholders                             | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Non-governmental organization/ Activists | 4         | 7.0        |
| Communities' members                     | 36        | 63.2       |
| Government                               | 10        | 17.6       |
| Pressure Group                           | 7         | 12.2       |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>57</b> | <b>100</b> |

Source: Authors (2026)

The 48 projects comprised 3 commercial projects, 36 educational projects, 8 hospitals and 1 skills-acquisition center. Table 2 reports stakeholder participation across the 18 assessed roles and four lifecycle stages.

Table 2 (Appendix 1) presented the active stakeholder participation across project lifecycle stages which revealed the participation of stakeholders did not exceed 60% in any conception, design and planning, or construction role. The highest rates were recorded for needs analysis, identification of roles and responsibilities, and corrective action (58.8% each). Stakeholder analysis reached 56.9%, while identification of activities required to complete deliverables reached 54.9%. The lowest rate was recorded for influence over factors that could circumvent integrated change control (19.6%), followed by design and redesign of drawings (23.5%) and resource estimation (29.4%). The pattern indicates limited stakeholder involvement in activities that shape scope, design suitability, resource allocation, risk control and performance monitoring. Such deficits can weaken information sharing, project legitimacy, community ownership and the early identification of delivery risks. By contrast, participation reached 100% at commissioning, when all four stakeholder categories were represented.

#### 4.1 Discussion of findings

The findings indicate that the stage specific pattern demonstrates that stakeholder involvement was uneven and generally low during the phases in which project objectives, design choices, resource requirements, risk responses and corrective actions were determined. Although this study does not establish a direct causal relationship between participation rates and measured cost or schedule outcomes, the observed deficits are consistent with literature linking inadequate engagement to misalignment, conflict, delay, cost inefficiency and weak service delivery (Ebekozi, *et al.*, 2024; Nguyen and Mohamed, 2021; Figueiredo-Filho, *et al.*, 2021; Gupta, *et al.*, 2019). Stakeholder Theory gives these findings analytical significance. Projects that systematically identify and engage legitimate, powerful and urgent stakeholders are more likely to align decisions with user needs and manage risk effectively (Preble, 2005; Kivits and Sawang, 2021). In the present study, host communities formed the largest stakeholder category, yet participation

remained restricted during the stages where their knowledge could most directly shape project relevance, design quality, constructability, access arrangements and implementation acceptance. This supports Maddaloni and Davis's (2017) argument that marginalizing local communities can increase conflict, delay and cost exposure.

The Niger Delta context intensifies this risk because community stakeholders can influence access routes, waterways, local security, and the social license to operate (Agbi, *et al.*, 2023; Tor, *et al.*, 2025). Their limited participation during project development is therefore not merely a procedural weakness but a governance and delivery risk. The most striking result is the contrast between sub 60% participation in all earlier roles and universal participation at commissioning. This pattern indicates performative participation: engagement becomes most visible at project completion, while the substantive decisions affecting project relevance, quality and sustainability occur with limited stakeholder input. The finding echoes evidence that formal participation mechanisms in Niger Delta interventions may function as instruments of legitimacy rather than genuine stakeholder empowerment (Isidiho and Sabran, 2015). Addressing this structural deficit requires participatory project inception, documented community representation on project oversight committees, stage-gate consultation requirements, accessible grievance and feedback mechanisms, and participatory monitoring throughout implementation. These requirements should be incorporated into the contracting, reporting, and accountability systems of OPADEC, UBEB and comparable public sector agencies. A stakeholder register, regularly updated throughout the lifecycle, would also support systematic identification and engagement of affected actors (PMI, 2017).

#### 5. Conclusion and further research

This study examined documented stakeholder participation across 48 completed OPADEC and UBEB projects in Ondo State's Niger Delta riverine context. Participation remained below 60% across all assessed roles during conception, design and planning and construction but reached 100% at commissioning. The evidence therefore reveals a lifecycle imbalance in which stakeholder visibility at project completion is not

matched by meaningful involvement in earlier decision making and delivery activities. The findings indicate that effective riverine construction delivery depends not only on technical and environmental competence but also on inclusive governance across the project lifecycle. OPADEC, UBEB and comparable agencies should institutionalize mandatory stakeholder engagement plans, stakeholder registers, community representation on oversight committees, participatory monitoring, stage specific consultation records and independent feedback mechanisms. These measures would improve transparency, project legitimacy, risk identification and alignment with community priorities.

The study contributes methodologically by demonstrating the value of archival document analysis for examining recorded participation behaviour, thereby complementing the survey and interview approaches that dominate Nigerian construction management research. Empirically, it provides stage level participation data across 18 roles and four

lifecycle stages for 48 completed public sector projects. Practically, it identifies the project stages and functions in which participation deficits are most pronounced, enabling agencies to target governance reform at conception, design, planning, risk management, monitoring, and change control activities. The study is limited to completed projects for which accessible archival records were available from two agencies in Ondo State. Documentary absence may not always indicate the complete absence of informal participation and consistent project level cost and schedule performance data were unavailable for causal testing. Further research should combine archival evidence with interviews, community-based inquiry and standardized cost, time, quality, utilization and maintenance indicators. Comparative studies across Niger Delta states and intervention agencies would also test the transferability of the participation pattern identified in the study area.

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## Appendix 1

**Table 2:** Active Stakeholder Participation Across Project Lifecycle Stages.

|                                                                                                                  | Frequency of stakeholders                |                             |            |                | Percentage of members participation |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                  | Non-governmental Organization/ Activists | Communities/ General Public | Government | Pressure group |                                     |
| Roles of the Stakeholders in Projects Conception Stage                                                           |                                          |                             |            |                |                                     |
| Analyzing the needs in measurable goals                                                                          | 2                                        | 13                          | 10         | 5              | 58.8                                |
| Review of the current operations                                                                                 | 3                                        | 2                           | 10         | 5              | 39.2                                |
| Financial analysis of the costs and time benefits including budgets.                                             | 0                                        | 10                          | 10         | 2              | 43.1                                |
| Stakeholder analysis, including users and support personnel                                                      | 4                                        | 10                          | 10         | 5              | 56.9                                |
| Role of the Stakeholders in Projects Design and planning stage                                                   |                                          |                             |            |                |                                     |
| Design and re-design of the drawing in accordance                                                                | 0                                        | 2                           | 10         | 0              | 23.5                                |
| Identifying the activities needed to complete the deliverables                                                   | 1                                        | 15                          | 10         | 2              | 54.9                                |
| Estimating the resource requirements for the activities                                                          | 0                                        | 10                          | 5          | 0              | 29.4                                |
| Risk planning                                                                                                    | 2                                        | 8                           | 10         | 0              | 39.2                                |
| Identifying roles and responsibilities of others                                                                 | 2                                        | 15                          | 10         | 3              | 58.8                                |
| Roles of the stakeholders in projects Construction Stage                                                         |                                          |                             |            |                |                                     |
| Procurement of materials and equipment                                                                           | 0                                        | 16                          | 0          | 3              | 37.3                                |
| Coordinating people and resource                                                                                 | 0                                        | 17                          | 0          | 0              | 33.3                                |
| Performing activities of project in accordance with project management plan                                      | 0                                        | 20                          | 0          | 2              | 45.1                                |
| Update of risk analysis                                                                                          | 0                                        | 15                          | 5          | 0              | 39.2                                |
| Measuring the ongoing activities                                                                                 | 0                                        | 11                          | 5          | 0              | 31.4                                |
| Monitoring project variable (cost, time and others) against the project management plan and performance baseline | 0                                        | 12                          | 10         | 0              | 43.1                                |

|                                                                         | Frequency of stakeholders                |                             |            |                | Percentage of members participation |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
|                                                                         | Non-governmental Organization/ Activists | Communities/ General Public | Government | Pressure group |                                     |
| Identify corrective actions to address issues and risks properly        | 4                                        | 11                          | 10         | 5              | 58.8                                |
| Influencing the factors that could circumvent integrated change control | 2                                        | 3                           | 2          | 3              | 19.6                                |
| <b>Commissioning of the projects</b>                                    | 4                                        | 36                          | 10         | 7              | 100.0                               |

Source: Author (2026)