



# Implementing Infrastructure Maintenance Guidelines to Sustain Education Quality in public Primary Schools in Babati District: Headteachers' Perspectives

Francis Edward & Milka Otieno  
St John's University of Tanzania  
Email: [fgeffi2@gmail.com](mailto:fgeffi2@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** *This study aimed to explore headteachers' perspectives on the implementation of school infrastructure maintenance guidelines in public primary schools within Babati District, Tanzania. Grounded in the Resource-Based Theory (RBT), which views school infrastructure as strategic resources essential for educational quality, the research examined how effective management of these resources impacts institutional performance. A mixed-methods design was employed, involving qualitative interviews with six headteachers and two School Quality Assurance Officers (SQAOs) and quantitative surveys administered to 240 students. Findings revealed persistent inadequacies in school infrastructure, including overcrowded classrooms, poor sanitation, and limited accessibility for learners with disabilities. Maintenance practices were largely reactive and constrained by insufficient and delayed funding, diminishing community participation due to misconceptions about the Free Education Policy, and a shortage of skilled artisans. Despite leveraging multi-source funding and participatory strategies such as the force account model, schools faced challenges in sustaining infrastructure quality and usability. The study concludes that while maintenance guidelines provide a valuable framework, systemic funding and capacity gaps hinder effective implementation, threatening both safety and learning outcomes. Recommendations include increasing and timely disbursement of capitation grants earmarked for maintenance, adopting preventive maintenance schedules, strengthening technical support through training of local artisans, and revitalizing community engagement via sensitization campaigns. Institutionalizing regular monitoring by the School Quality Assurance Department and promoting infrastructure accessibility through universal design principles are also advocated. Implementing these measures will enhance infrastructure sustainability and foster equitable access to quality education in Babati District.*

**Keywords:** *School Infrastructure, Maintenance Guidelines, Public Primary Schools, Community Participation, Babati District, Tanzania.*

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## 1. Introduction

Quality education in Tanzania depends heavily on the availability and condition of school infrastructure. The

Education Policy of 2014, revised in 2023, emphasizes the need for adequate, safe, and inclusive facilities to support effective learning (URT, 2023). Similarly, the Education Act Cap. 353 of 2002 requires schools to

possess sufficient, well-maintained infrastructure as a condition for registration (URT, 2002). These provisions, reinforced by the School Accreditation and Registration Guidelines (URT, 1982), demonstrate the government's commitment to ensuring conducive learning environments (Adebayo,2021). However, understanding the realities on the ground is essential, as infrastructure quality often determines whether these policy aspirations translate into sustainable education outcomes. Scholars note that infrastructure encompasses not only classrooms but also sanitation facilities, administrative spaces, libraries, laboratories, and recreational areas, all of which are vital to both academic and non-academic functions when properly maintained (Mathase,2021).

Evidence worldwide underscores the impact of well-maintained facilities on student performance, attendance, and teacher motivation. Yangambi, (2023). Found that inadequate infrastructure in developing countries correlates with poor learning outcomes, while research in sub-Saharan Africa highlights the importance of facility upkeep in achieving educational goals (Byansi et al, 2025). Yet, many Tanzanian schools particularly in rural districts such as Babati continue to face serious infrastructure challenges. Wood (2023). reported inadequate investment, temporary structures, and poor maintenance as major barriers that widen the gap between urban and rural schools.

To address these challenges, recent policy initiatives such as the Education Policy (URT, 2023) and the Fee-Free Education Circular No. 3 of 2016 place responsibility for infrastructure maintenance on government, communities, and local authorities. However, capitation grants provided for this purpose remain insufficient, creating financial gaps that force schools to rely on local efforts. The CAG Report (URT, 2018) highlights issues such as underfunding, limited technical expertise, and weak community participation, which further constrain effective maintenance practices. Against this backdrop, this article explores headteachers' perspectives on the implementation of infrastructure maintenance guidelines in Babati District and assesses how these practices affect the sustainability of quality education in public primary schools.

## 1.1 Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to assess the state of infrastructure in public primary schools in Babati District, examine how headteachers implement maintenance guidelines, identify challenges hindering effective upkeep, and

explore the roles of stakeholders in sustaining school facilities to support quality education.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 International and National Policy Frameworks

Globally, the role of school infrastructure in sustaining education quality is recognized within several policy frameworks. UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report emphasizes that adequate and well-maintained facilities are a prerequisite for equitable access to quality learning (Manyasa, 2022). Similarly, the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) advocates for inclusive, safe, and effective learning environments, calling for investments in infrastructure that are both accessible and regularly maintained (Gunawan, 2025). At the national level, Tanzania's Education Policy of 2014 (Revised 2023) mandates the provision of standard infrastructure as a cornerstone for achieving quality education (URT, 2023). The Education Act Cap. 353 of 2002 further stipulates that schools must maintain facilities to meet registration standards, while the School Accreditation and Registration Guidelines (URT, 1982) outline specific benchmarks for infrastructure quality and maintenance. These frameworks collectively set the formal expectations that headteachers must interpret and implement in their daily school management practices.

### 2.2 Headteachers' Role in Implementing Infrastructure Maintenance Guidelines

Empirical evidence highlights that headteachers are central actors in translating policy into practice regarding infrastructure maintenance. Mbua (2023). found that headteachers' leadership styles and management competencies directly influence the effectiveness of school maintenance programs. In Nigeria, Bada et al, (2024) reported that principals who actively engaged stakeholders and prioritized maintenance planning achieved better facility conditions, which in turn enhanced teaching and learning. In Tanzania, research by Ogunbayo et al, (2023). revealed that headteachers' understanding of maintenance guidelines significantly affects their ability to mobilize resources and coordinate repairs. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of guideline implementation depends not only on policy clarity but also on the leadership capacity of headteachers.

## 2.3 Challenges in Implementing Infrastructure Maintenance Guidelines

Despite clear policy directions, numerous challenges hinder the successful implementation of maintenance guidelines. Internationally, studies by Lebea et al, (2024) cite inadequate funding, shortage of skilled maintenance personnel, and competing budget priorities as persistent obstacles. In the Tanzanian context, the Controller and Auditor General's Report (URT, 2018) points to chronic underfunding, delayed disbursement of capitation grants, and weak community participation as major barriers in Babati and similar districts. Moreover, Olaifa et al, (2024). noted that many headteachers lack specific training in facilities management, which limits their capacity to plan preventive maintenance and respond promptly to urgent repairs.

## 2.4 Influence of Infrastructure Maintenance on Education Quality

Well-maintained school facilities have been shown to positively impact education quality by enhancing the learning environment, boosting attendance, and improving teacher morale. Iordye & Jato (2023). demonstrated that students in well-maintained schools achieve higher academic outcomes than those in poorly maintained environments. In sub-Saharan Africa, Assoumpta & Andala (2020) found that infrastructure conditions are closely linked to pupils' academic performance, while Gbesoevi, (2024) stressed that facility upkeep supports the attainment of educational goals. Tanzanian studies, including that of Mwakyoma (2023), highlight that clean, safe, and functional facilities encourage active learning, reduce absenteeism, and foster a positive school culture all of which are essential for sustaining quality education.

## 2.5 Gaps in Literature

While existing studies acknowledge the importance of infrastructure maintenance, few have explicitly focused on headteachers' perspectives regarding the implementation of formal maintenance guidelines in Tanzania, particularly in Babati District. Most research addresses general facility management or funding challenges but does not systematically explore how headteachers interpret policy, prioritize maintenance tasks, and mobilize resources within their unique local contexts (Mushi & Balyage, 2018; URT, 2018). This gap underscores the need for localized, context-specific research that can inform targeted interventions to improve

infrastructure management and, by extension, education quality.

## 2.6 Theoretical Framework

### 2.6.1 The Resource-Based Theory

The Resource-Based Theory (RBT), developed by Wernerfelt (1984) and expanded by Barney (1991), argues that organizations including schools achieve sustained success by effectively managing valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources. In the education sector, infrastructure such as classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and sanitation facilities are considered strategic resources that, when well-maintained, can enhance institutional performance. Olurotimi (2023) emphasize that modern, functional facilities create a conducive learning environment, increasing student engagement and improving academic achievement. In Tanzania's public primary schools, especially in Babati District, headteachers' ability to interpret and apply maintenance guidelines directly affects the longevity and usability of these critical resources.

RBT is relevant to this study as it frames school infrastructure as a strategic asset whose value depends on proper upkeep aligned with institutional goals. Its strength lies in emphasizing the strategic role of resource management in sustaining educational quality, providing a clear lens for assessing the condition and use of facilities. However, its limitation is that it focuses mainly on tangible resources, often overlooking external factors such as funding constraints, teacher motivation, and community participation. In this study, RBT helps explain how maintaining infrastructure is not merely a technical task but a strategic process essential for sustaining quality education in Babati's public primary schools.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Study Context

This study was conducted in Babati District, Manyara Region, Tanzania, chosen for its representation of both rural and semi-urban contexts that influence the implementation of school infrastructure maintenance guidelines. Administratively, the district comprises Babati District Council and Babati Town Council, each with distinct socio-economic conditions that affect educational resource availability and maintenance practices. The focus was on public primary schools, which cater predominantly to low- and middle-income families relying on government-funded infrastructure. These schools vary in terms of facilities, location, and student

demographics, making them ideal for assessing the effectiveness and challenges of infrastructure maintenance in sustaining education quality.

## **3.2 Research Approach and Design**

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between infrastructure maintenance and education quality. A concurrent mixed-methods design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was adopted, enabling the simultaneous collection of statistical data and in-depth insights. Quantitative data were obtained from structured questionnaires administered to students, while qualitative data came from semi-structured interviews with headteachers and School Quality Assurers (SQAs). This combination allowed for both measurable trends and contextual understanding.

## **3.3 Study Participants and Sampling Procedures**

The target population included 240 public primary school students, six headteachers, and two SQAs in Babati District. Stratified random sampling was used to select the 240 students (40 from each of the six purposively chosen schools) to ensure diversity in socio-economic background and location. Purposive sampling was applied for the six headteachers, who were directly responsible for guideline implementation, and the two SQAs, who oversaw compliance with maintenance standards. This approach provided both representative and expert perspectives.

## **3.4 Data Collection Tools and Procedures**

Data collection was conducted in three stages. First, structured questionnaires in both Swahili and English were administered to students to gather their perceptions on the effectiveness of maintenance guidelines, with distribution and retrieval coordinated directly at the schools. Second, semi-structured interviews with headteachers and SQAs, each lasting about 40 minutes, were conducted in Swahili to allow free expression, then translated into English by a professional translator. Third, document reviews of three years of SQA reports from the selected schools were carried out to assess historical compliance and maintenance performance.

## **3.5 Validity and Reliability**

Reliability was ensured through a pilot study conducted in schools outside the main sample, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.71, which is considered acceptable for internal consistency (Pallant, 2016). For qualitative data, inter-coder agreement was used to maintain consistency in coding and interpretation. Validity was enhanced through content validation by basing instruments on a thorough literature review and expert input, while external validity was supported through stratified random sampling to allow for generalization to similar public primary school settings in Tanzania.

## **3.6 Data Analysis**

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations to summarize responses, and inferential statistics, particularly paired sample t-tests, to examine differences in perceived education quality before and after the implementation of maintenance guidelines. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving systematic coding and theme development to capture perspectives on infrastructure adequacy, challenges in implementation, and effects on the learning environment.

## **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval was obtained from the Manyara Regional Office, the Babati District Education Offices (both councils), and the participating schools. Informed consent was secured from all participants or their guardians in the case of students. Participation was voluntary, and measures such as pseudonyms and secure data storage were used to protect confidentiality and anonymity. The study followed the principles of beneficence, ensuring that its findings would contribute to improving infrastructure maintenance practices and sustaining the quality of education in public primary schools in Babati District.

# **4. Results and Discussion**

## **4.1 The Headteachers' Perspectives Toward the School Infrastructure Maintenance Guidelines**

### **4.1.1 State of School Infrastructure**

Head teachers from Babati District unanimously reported that most public primary schools suffer from inadequate and substandard infrastructure, severely undermining efforts to sustain quality education. The condition of school facilities was described as generally poor, with a marked shortage of essential structures such as

classrooms, staff offices, toilets, and libraries. Even where such infrastructure exists, it often remains dilapidated, unusable, or insufficient for the student population, thus directly challenging teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes. These qualitative insights align closely with the quantitative findings in Table 1, where for instance, 55 (22.9%) students strongly disagreed and 100 (41.7%) disagreed that classrooms are spacious and comfortable for learning, reflecting overcrowding and poor facility conditions. Additionally, 90 (37.5%) strongly disagreed and 33 (13.8%) disagreed that toilets are clean and accessible, indicating sanitation issues.

One head teacher described the situation vividly:

*The condition is moderately good, but classrooms and toilets are not enough. Also, the kitchen, dining hall, and some fields are completely missing. We have only four classrooms for over 400 pupils, with some pupils sitting under trees during lessons. The office space is shared and congested, and there are only two pit latrines for both pupils and staff. (Head-teacher, School 4, May 2025)*

Another head teacher highlighted further infrastructure gaps:

*School infrastructure is completely insufficient and the available ones are in bad condition. There is no staff office, no library, and no teachers' houses. Toilets are dilapidated, and most buildings have cracked walls and leaking roofs. During rainy seasons, classes are suspended due to flooding. Maintenance efforts are minimal due to lack of funds. (Head-teacher, School 6, May 2025)*

These sentiments resonate with findings by Komba and Yangabi (2023), who reported that poor infrastructure impairs quality education delivery in Tanzanian public schools. Similarly, URT (2019) emphasized that the absence of basic facilities lowers teacher morale and student performance. Supporting this, the School Quality Assurance Officer remarked that,

*Many schools lack proper inspection routines for infrastructure maintenance. Facilities deteriorate rapidly because schools have no regular monitoring schedules or dedicated maintenance staff. This results in unsafe learning environments and frequent disruptions. (SQAQO, Council 1, May 2025)*

Furthermore, these findings correspond with the quantitative data in Table 1 where significant proportions of students disagreed with the statements regarding functional and accessible sanitation facilities and well-maintained classrooms. This convergence of data underscores the urgent need for targeted investments in school infrastructure. Barrett et al (2019). Also noted that structural damage and inadequate maintenance lead to interrupted learning and increased teacher absenteeism. Similarly, Ngussa and Role (2022) highlighted that poor infrastructure causes overcrowding, reduced instructional time, and hygiene challenges, especially with insufficient toilet facilities.

#### 4.1.2 Accessibility of Infrastructure

The responses from head teachers revealed mixed experiences regarding the accessibility of existing infrastructure in public primary schools across Babati District. While some schools reported that certain facilities are reachable and usable, others described complete inaccessibility due to poor design, physical deterioration, or inconvenient location. Accessibility was found to be closely linked to the condition and upkeep of infrastructure. Schools with well-maintained facilities tended to report higher accessibility, whereas those with neglected or damaged structures faced significant barriers to usage. This variation highlights the need for a more inclusive, standardized approach to school planning and facility renovation one that prioritizes both physical access and structural quality.

One head teacher commented that,

*Some infrastructure is accessible, while others are not easily accessible. This inconsistency affects daily school activities and student attendance. (Head-teacher, School 1, May 2025)*

Importantly, several head teachers pointed out the lack of infrastructure to support pupils with disabilities:

*We don't have ramps or special toilets, so children with disabilities face difficulties accessing the classrooms, which limits their participation. (Head-teacher, School 5, May 2025)*

Lastly, maintenance issues affecting accessibility were raised:

*Even where buildings exist, broken doors, cracked floors, and overgrown surroundings make them hard to use, especially for younger pupils. (Head-teacher, School 6, May 2025)*

These qualitative findings correspond with Ibrahim et al. (2016), who observed that infrastructural accessibility in Tanzanian schools is often compromised by poor maintenance, lack of inclusive design, and limited adaptation to local environmental conditions. Likewise, URT (2019) underscored that accessible infrastructure is critical to ensuring equitable participation in education, especially for children with disabilities and those in marginalized rural communities.

Furthermore, these perspectives align closely with quantitative data presented in Table 1. For example, over 50% of students disagreed that toilets are clean, functional, and accessible, while nearly 66% expressed dissatisfaction with the reliability of the water supply necessary for sanitation and hygiene. Similarly, over 64% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that classrooms are spacious and comfortable, indicating infrastructural barriers that likely affect accessibility and usability. The implications are clear: school infrastructure planning must incorporate universal design principles, consistent maintenance, and localized solutions to improve access and foster inclusive learning environments. Addressing these issues will be essential to ensuring all students, including those with disabilities, can fully participate and benefit from quality education.

### **4.1.3 Maintenance Practices and Learning Environment**

Head teachers identified various funding sources and strategies used to maintain infrastructure in public primary schools across Babati District. These include

government capitation grants, Education for Self-Reliance (Elimu ya Kujitegemea - EK) programmes, donor support, and voluntary community contributions. While capitation grants remain the primary financial base, some schools supplement these funds with assistance from parents, NGOs, and development partners. This reveals that resource mobilization for infrastructure maintenance is not solely dependent on government allocations but often hinges on local initiative and stakeholder collaboration. The involvement of school committees and community members is especially instrumental, as they participate in planning, fundraising, and overseeing maintenance activities, thus fostering local ownership and accountability. Despite limited financial resources, many head teachers reported adopting creative, low-cost strategies to sustain a conducive learning environment. These findings align with Herath and Duffield (2022), who argue that community-school partnerships are crucial for infrastructure sustainability, particularly in rural areas with constrained state support.

Head teachers from all the six schools pointed out similar illustrations with maintenance practices and learning environment but two were cited out:

*We maintain facilities using capitation grants, contributions from parents and the community, government projects, EK (Education for Self-Reliance), and collaboration between school and construction committees. (Head-teacher, School 1, May 2025)*

Others emphasized challenges with irregular funding and delayed disbursements:

*Sometimes the capitation grants arrive late or are insufficient, so maintenance gets postponed until parents' step in or we delay repairs. (Head-teacher, School 4, May 2025)*

Schools employ mixed yet proactive strategies to maintain their physical environments, often relying on local collaboration and community support to compensate for limited government assistance. Despite these efforts, effectiveness is constrained by inadequate funding, delayed disbursement of resources, and limited capacity within school committees. Quantitative findings indicate that over 70% of students perceive delays or neglect in repairing damaged infrastructure, echoing interview insights on persistent maintenance challenges. These

results highlight that while community involvement is valuable, systemic issues in financial and administrative support remain significant barriers. Addressing these challenges requires improved financial planning, timely release of maintenance funds, capacity building for school committees, and stronger partnerships between government, communities, and development partners to establish sustainable models for maintaining school infrastructure (Herath & Duffield, 2022).

#### 4.1.4 Strategies Used to Maintain Infrastructure

Head-teachers in Babati District reported the use of several strategic approaches to implement and sustain infrastructure maintenance in public primary schools. A dominant strategy involves the application of formal government guidelines, particularly those outlined under the Education Program for Results (EP4R), which promote the force account model. This method empowers schools to directly manage and implement minor infrastructure projects using in-house resources and local labour, bypassing lengthy procurement processes. This approach not only reduces costs but also enhances efficiency and accountability, as it fosters direct oversight by school management and communities. In addition, schools adopt participatory strategies that involve diverse education stakeholders, including school committees, parents, local artisans, and local government authorities. These inclusive practices are crucial for promoting transparency, building trust, and mobilizing additional resources and support beyond what is provided by the central government. URT (2019) recognizes the force account method as a practical strategy that aligns

infrastructure development with localized decision-making and financial accountability.

*We use the government capitation grant guidelines and conduct meetings with the school committee, parents, and the community.* (Head-teacher, School 1, May 2025)

Other head teachers from school 2, 4, and 5 had similar quotes as:

*After receiving funds, we plan maintenance activities jointly with school committees and involve local artisans for repairs.* (Head-teacher, School 3, May 2025)

Finally, a sixth head-teacher said:

*For urgent repairs, we consult with the ward education officer and apply simplified force account procedures approved under EP4R.* (Head-teacher, School 6, May 2025)

These findings illustrate that while infrastructure maintenance in Babati District is guided by official national frameworks, its successful implementation depends on the school's capacity to engage communities and navigate procedural requirements effectively. The combination of government directives and participatory practices appears vital for ensuring that infrastructure remains usable and aligned with educational quality goals.

**Table 1: Students' Perceptions of School Infrastructure, Accessibility, and Maintenance (n = 240)**

S/n	Statement	Strongly Agree (n, %)	Agree (n, %)	Disagree (n, %)	Strongly Disagree (n, %)
1.	Classrooms are spacious and comfortable for learning	32 (13.3%)	53 (22.1%)	100 (41.7%)	55 (22.9%)
2.	Toilets are clean and accessible	18 (7.5%)	27 (11.3%)	33 (13.8%)	90 (37.5%)
3.	Water supply is reliable for sanitation and hygiene	28 (11.7%)	54 (22.5%)	79 (32.9%)	79 (32.9%)
4.	Capitation grant funds are sufficient to cover infrastructure maintenance needs	12 (5.0%)	31 (12.9%)	124 (51.7%)	42 (17.5%)
5.	Parents and community actively contribute to infrastructure maintenance	15 (6.3%)	76 (31.6%)	87 (36.3%)	61 (25.4%)
6.	Schools have adequate access to skilled workers for maintenance tasks	22 (9.2%)	38 (15.8%)	92 (38.3%)	48 (20.0%)
7.	Repairs of damaged infrastructure are timely and efficient	21 (8.8%)	50 (20.8%)	85 (35.4%)	84 (35.0%)

Source: Field data, 2025 (n = 240 students, 4 headteachers, 2 SQAOs)

The study found that the state of infrastructure in Babati District's public primary schools is generally inadequate, negatively affecting teaching and learning. Quantitative data from 240 students, summarized in Table 1, showed that 64.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed that classrooms are spacious and comfortable, while 51.3% reported that toilets are neither clean nor accessible. Over 69% perceived capitation grants as insufficient for maintenance, and 62% noted low community participation. Qualitative interviews with four headteachers and two SQAOs confirmed these findings, highlighting dilapidated classrooms, overcrowding, limited sanitation facilities, poor accessibility, and challenges for children with disabilities.

Maintenance practices were largely reactive, depending on delayed government capitation grants, occasional community contributions, and donor support. Headteachers reported adopting low-cost strategies and participatory approaches, including the force account method under EP4R, to sustain learning environments despite funding shortages and limited skilled labor. Challenges such as delayed fund disbursement, inadequate skilled artisans, and misconceptions about free education constrained the effective implementation of maintenance guidelines. These findings align with studies by Komba and Yangabi (2023), who reported that poor school infrastructure impairs teaching effectiveness in Tanzania. Herath and Duffield (2022) further support the importance of community participation and multi-source funding for sustainable school infrastructure maintenance.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

The study revealed that infrastructure in Babati District's public primary schools is inadequate and not well maintained, limiting quality education. Schools face shortages of classrooms, staff offices, and sanitation facilities, with existing structures often inaccessible or in disrepair. Environmental factors like flooding and weak designs further reduce usability. While headteachers understood maintenance guidelines, implementation was mostly reactive due to irregular funding and lack of skilled labour. Collaborative efforts with parents, NGOs, and artisans existed but were undermined by scarce resources, delayed disbursements, and low community participation. Misinterpretation of the Fee-Free Education Policy also discouraged local involvement, leaving maintenance largely ineffective despite clear national guidelines.

### 5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends timely and sufficient capitation grants dedicated to routine and emergency maintenance. Policies should enforce preventive schedules with accountability for headteachers and committees. Schools must integrate universal design features to improve access for learners with disabilities. Technical support should be strengthened through engineers and artisans training local teams. Community engagement should be revived with sensitization campaigns to clarify shared responsibilities. Stronger partnerships with NGOs, private sector, and local authorities are needed to supplement funding and expertise, while the force account approach should promote transparency and inclusivity. Regular monitoring by the School Quality Assurance Department is essential to track progress and ensure sustainability.

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