

Investigating the Economic Sustainability of Social Welfare Non-Governmental Organizations: A Multiple Case Study Approach

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Abstract

This study investigates the economic sustainability of social welfare NGOs in Lusaka, Zambia, addressing a critical gap in understanding the challenges these organizations face. Despite their pivotal role in supporting vulnerable populations, many social welfare NGOs struggle with financial viability, leading to operational inefficiencies and closures. While existing literature identifies financial sustainability as a major hurdle, it lacks a comprehensive analysis of the specific economic challenges confronting these organizations. Through thematic analysis, the study explores organizational structure, financial management, human resources, program delivery, partnerships, and external factors affecting sustainability. Key findings highlight that NGOs face limited funding sources, rising operational costs, competition for resources, regulatory barriers, and external pressures such as economic instability and political unrest. In response, NGOs adopt diverse strategies, including diversifying funding through grants and partnerships, enhancing financial management, advocating for supportive government policies, and fostering collaborations with stakeholders. The study concludes that achieving economic sustainability requires a multifaceted approach tailored to the unique needs of each NGO and the socio-economic context. Recommendations include capacity-building programs for NGO staff to improve financial literacy and management skills, creating an enabling policy environment, and encouraging donors to adopt flexible funding models. This research provides valuable insights for policymakers, donors, and NGOs, enabling them to address structural barriers, align funding strategies, and refine operational practices to enhance their impact on vulnerable populations.

Keywords: Economic Sustainability, Social Welfare NGOs, Financial Resilience

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1. Introduction

Following Zambia's independence in 1964, the government collaborated with NGOs to address poverty, education, and healthcare, particularly in rural areas. In the 1990s, economic reforms led to a surge in NGOs filling gaps in social services and advocating for human rights and social justice (Shepherd et al., 2021). Despite their significant contributions, social welfare NGOs in Zambia face donor dependency, limited resources, and competition for funding. Reliance on external funding leads to financial instability, constrained program focus, and challenges in attracting skilled personnel (Curado et al., 2021; Sustainability, 2022).

This study aims to address the knowledge gap in the economic sustainability of social welfare NGOs by identifying challenges and exploring strategies for financial resilience. The findings will provide insights to enhance financial management practices and inform effective funding mechanisms tailored to the needs of NGOs, ultimately improving their impact on vulnerable populations.

1.2. Problem Statement

Despite their critical role in society, social welfare NGOs in Zambia face significant challenges, particularly in achieving economic sustainability. A report by the (Council of NGOs in Zambia, 2023), indicates that 36 social welfare NGOs have closed in the past decade, out of a total of 328. This report highlights the closures but does not focus into the economic difficulties faced by the remaining registered yet inactive NGOs.

Existing research, including studies by (Katongo, 2023; Nunkwe, et al., 2022), have identified financial sustainability as a key challenge for NGOs in Zambia. Kasongo focused on the factors influencing financial sustainability of Local Health NGOs (LHNGOs) in developing countries, specifically Zambia. Nunkwe et al. investigated the risk factors affecting financial sustainability in NGOs based in Lusaka. While these studies provide valuable insights, they do not comprehensively address the economic sustainability challenges faced by social welfare NGOs in Zambia.

In addition, (Mikeladze, 2021), notes that NGOs work on communities, suffer from a lack of staff, and this role is assigned to an employee who does not have a financial education and puts the successful operation of the organization at high risk. This study aims to fill this research gap by focusing specifically on the economic sustainability of social welfare NGOs in Zambia. The lack of detailed understanding of the economic constraints and opportunities within this sector hinders the development of effective strategies to ensure their longevity and effectiveness. The economic instability of social welfare NGOs can lead to inactive NGOs operations, increased closures, reduced service delivery, and decreased staff morale, ultimately impacting the well-being of vulnerable populations who rely on these services (Mikeladze, 2021). This study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of economic issues faced by social welfare NGOs in Zambia, thereby contributing to the development of practical strategies to enhance their economic sustainability and ensure continued support for those in need.

1.3. Research Objectives

1. To establish the economic challenges that social welfare NGOs are facing in Zambia
2. To establish the strategies that can be applied to achieve economic sustainability in the social welfare NGOs in Zambia
3. To assess the extent to which the established strategies in (ii) can affect economic sustainability in the social welfare NGOs in Zambia.

2. Literature Review

This section focuses on the empirical research relevant to addressing the research objectives.

2.1. Social Welfare NGOs

Social welfare NGOs are entities working toward the socio-economic development, welfare, and empowerment of communities, often referred to as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs). In this context, their focus spans issues like education, healthcare, women's rights, and poverty alleviation. The terminology used to describe these organizations can vary depending on the geographical location. In the UK, for example, these organizations are commonly termed charities or voluntary organizations. Regulated by the Charity Commission, they operate for public benefit, addressing a spectrum of social concerns, including poverty, education, health and environmental sustainability (National Council for Voluntary Organizations, 2019). In the USA, social welfare NGOs are recognized as non-profit organizations or 501(c)(3) organizations under the Internal Revenue Code. Functioning for charitable, educational, religious, scientific or literary purposes that benefit the community, they enjoy tax-exempt status and rely on donations, grants, and fundraising (Fdez, 2023; NGO INDIA, 2022; Charity Commission, 2011).

Social welfare NGOs are independent and non-profit entities dedicated to addressing the needs of marginalized groups. Operating outside government frameworks, they are characterized by a commitment to social development, human rights and community well-being. In Zambia, these NGOs play a pivotal role in child welfare, supporting the elderly and vulnerable, aiding persons with disabilities and engaging in charitable activities, as highlighted by (Council of NGOs in Zambia, 2023). Social welfare NGOs are those that primarily rely on volunteer labor to accomplish their objectives and rely on grants, contributions and government money to support them. They are usually founded solely for the purpose of promoting the general welfare in a society.

2.2. Economic Sustainability

The concept of economic sustainability takes on a specific meaning for social welfare NGOs. While broader definitions may emphasize resource conservation or economic growth, for social welfare NGOs, economic sustainability translates to the ability to secure and manage financial resources effectively to continuously deliver their vital social services without harming the planet and people. This ensures long-term viability and allows the organization to fulfill its mission of supporting vulnerable populations. Unlike profit-driven businesses, social welfare NGOs may not primarily focus on maximizing financial returns. However, achieving a level of economic stability is crucial for their continued operation, as explained below;

Economic sustainability allows social welfare NGOs to focus on their core mission of addressing social needs and improving the lives of disadvantaged populations (INDEED, 2022). Without economic stability, they may be forced to scale back services or even shut down entirely. Financial security enables social welfare NGOs to invest in resources, programs, and staff training, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness and impact of their interventions. This creates a virtuous cycle where positive social outcomes can attract additional resources, further strengthening economic sustainability (UMW Sustainability, 2023; Electric, 2022; Simon, 2023). Demonstrating sound financial management practices builds trust and confidence with donors, which is essential for securing continued funding and attracting new supporters. The definitions provided by Nunkwe et al. (2022) and others focus on broader economic sustainability principles.

2.3. Factors Affecting Economic Sustainability of Social Welfare

Innovation and Collaboration

Innovation and collaboration among social welfare NGOs are essential for advancing economic sustainability and social impact. These organizations engage in various types of innovations such as technological, economic, and business to address societal needs and enhance human well-being (Moeenian et al., 2022). Collaborative innovations can simultaneously fulfill multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and strengthen the roles of NGOs in promoting sustainable economies and environmental conservation (NGO Council, 2022). Through embracing innovative approaches, such as integrating skilled volunteers and utilizing online platforms for fundraising, NGOs can overcome challenges related to limited personnel and funding, thereby enhancing their long-term sustainability. The strategic adoption of innovation and collaboration enables NGOs to navigate changing landscapes effectively. Organizations that innovate in fundraising, program delivery, and partnerships are better positioned to create societal value while addressing core issues relevant to their missions. Both non-profits and corporations increasingly recognize the importance of collaborations that contribute to economic sustainability. This alignment fosters a shared commitment to addressing fundamental societal challenges through innovative solutions.

Operational resilience

Operational resilience for social welfare NGOs may refer to the ability for the NGOs to endure and adjust to different disruption and challenges without compromising the core business. Resilience is defined as the ability to withstand or absorb shocks and stresses, as well as the ability to adapt to dynamic conditions and put in place mechanisms that enable longer-term, systemic responses to the underlying causes of vulnerability. These challenges could include natural disasters, economic downturns, or political instability (Frankenberge, et al., 2020). For social NGOs, operational resilience is crucial for sustaining their economic activities and fulfilling their social missions. Operational resilience is pivotal for social welfare NGOs as it encompasses their ability to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from disruptions. Operational resilience's role in economic sustainability is crucial, minimizing disruptions and preserving resources essential for program sustainability (Sisaye, 2021; Frankenberge, et al., 2020).

Financial performance

Financial performance is a critical factor in contributing to the economic sustainability of social welfare NGOs. Ensuring resource availability, positive financial performance is imperative for social welfare NGOs, granting them the essential means to efficiently execute their programs. Sufficient funding enables the coverage of operational expenses, investment in staff and infrastructure, and the seamless delivery of services to beneficiaries (Ionescu, 2020). This financial stability acts as a catalyst for program expansion, empowering NGOs to broaden their reach and tackle a wider spectrum of social issues. For NGOs, the key importance of financial planning and management is determined by the achievement of organizational goals. The financial condition of any type of organization determines its future and long-term stability (Mikeladze, 2021). Financially sound NGOs also demonstrate heightened adaptability and innovation, possessing the flexibility to respond to evolving circumstances and emerging challenges. Their ability to allocate resources for research, development, and the implementation of new strategies ensures that their programs remain dynamic, relevant, and effective (Ilyas, et al., 2020).

Social and environmental factors

Social and environmental factors are integral contributors to the economic sustainability of social welfare NGOs,

influencing various facets of their operations, funding sources, and long-term viability. One key aspect is the active engagement of these organizations with stakeholders, including local communities, beneficiaries, and partner organizations. This engagement establishes strong relationships, fostering trust and garnering community support (Shakesprere, et al., 2021; UNDP, 2022).

Furthermore, the relevance and impact of social welfare NGOs are accentuated when they address urgent social and environmental issues, aligning their programs with the critical needs of society. (Sisaye, 2021), highlights that the effectiveness of NGOs is accentuated when they address urgent social and environmental issues, aligning their programs with the critical needs of society. Donors, including governments, foundations, and corporate entities, prioritize initiatives with positive social and environmental outcomes, making NGOs with such aligned projects more likely to secure funding from multiple sources. This diversified funding approach reduces dependency on a single stream, contributing significantly to the economic sustainability of the organization.

Legal and regulatory compliance

Adhering to legal and regulatory requirements emerges as a pivotal factor in bolstering the economic sustainability of social welfare NGOs. Governments around the world have implemented various laws and regulations to ensure that social welfare programs are sustainable and effective. For instance, the European Union (EU) has some of the world's most advanced environmental, social, and governance (ESG) regulations of any economic region. Under the banner of a 'European Green New Deal', Europe is implementing a sweeping set of measures designed to fight climate change, support sustainable innovation, and make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 (Brightest, 2023). Legal and regulatory compliance serves as a bedrock for ESG, with NGOs showcasing robust governance practices, ethical standards, and adherence to laws and regulations. This commitment builds trust among donors, beneficiaries, and the public, creating a foundation that is indispensable for attracting funding and support. The establishment of trust plays a pivotal role in sustaining financial backing and cultivating positive relationships with stakeholders, thus fortifying the economic sustainability of the NGO. These standards are designed to ensure that NGOs operate in a sustainable and responsible manner.

2.4. Strategies for achieving Economic Sustainability in Social Welfare NGOs

Diversification of Funding Sources:

Social welfare NGOs should proactively diversify their funding sources to mitigate financial risks and enhance sustainability. This involves cultivating relationships with various stakeholders, including individual donors, corporate partners, government agencies, fundraising and philanthropic foundations. By creating a diverse funding portfolio, NGOs can better withstand fluctuations in any particular funding stream and ensure a more stable and resilient financial foundation (EdelGive, 2018; Toker, 2019).

Capacity Building and Operational Efficiency:

Investing in the capacity building of the organization is crucial for economic sustainability. This strategy encompasses developing the skills and capabilities of staff, adopting efficient technologies, and streamlining operational processes. A well-equipped and skilled workforce, along with optimized operations, not only enhances program effectiveness but also contributes to cost savings. Improved efficiency allows social welfare NGOs to maximize the impact of their resources, making them more sustainable in the long run (Gul & Morande, 2023).

Capacity Building and Operational Efficiency:

Establishing strategic partnerships and collaborations is another key strategy for economic sustainability. Social welfare NGOs can leverage synergies by working with other organizations, businesses, government entities, and community groups. Collaborative initiatives enable resource-sharing, enhance program effectiveness, and open up new funding opportunities. By joining forces with like-minded partners, social welfare NGOs can expand their reach, address complex challenges, and diversify their impact, contributing to long-term sustainability (Miriti & Morris, 2020).

2.5. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study integrates Resource Dependency Theory, Institutional Theory, and Stakeholder Theory to analyze the factors affecting these organizations. Resource Dependency Theory emphasizes that NGOs' competitive advantage stems from their unique resources, such as skilled personnel, community ties, and diverse funding sources, which help them navigate external challenges (Barney, 1991). Institutional Theory highlights how social welfare NGOs respond to external pressures and societal expectations, influencing their strategies for economic sustainability (Scott, 1995). Meanwhile, Stakeholder Theory underscores the importance of managing relationships with various stakeholders such as donors, beneficiaries, and communities thus to balance social missions with economic viability (Freeman, 2010). Together, these theories provide a comprehensive lens for understanding how social welfare NGOs in Zambia can leverage their internal strengths and adapt to external pressures to enhance their economic sustainability and fulfill their social objectives.

2.6. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the research is illustrated in Figure 1.

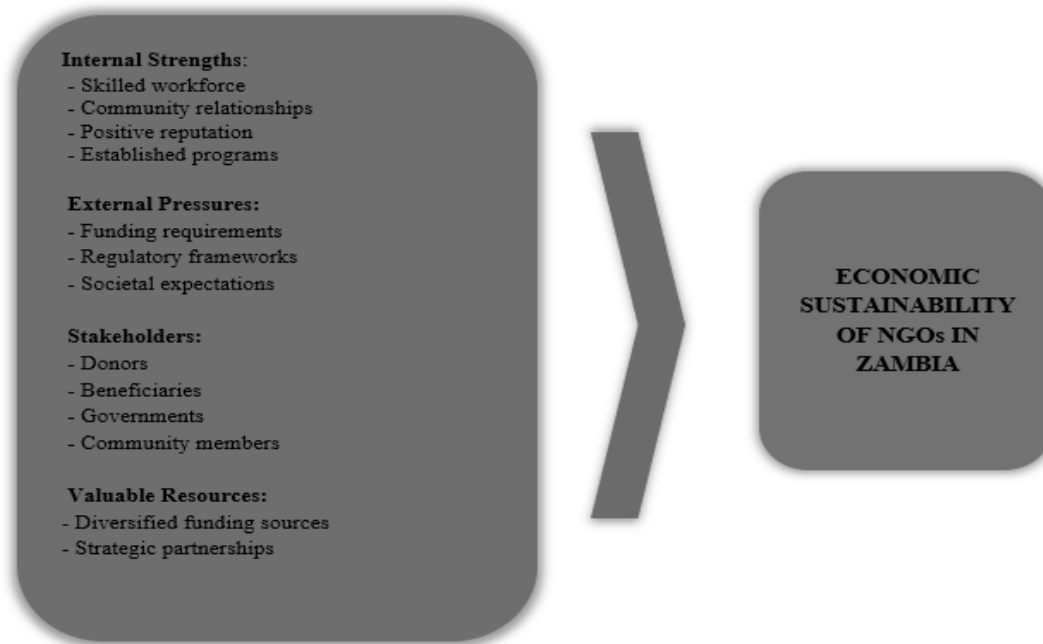


Figure 1: Conceptual framework (Source: Author's constructions)

3. Methodology

The philosophical approach guiding this research is interpretivism which fitly aligns with a qualitative research methodology. Interpretivism asserts that interpretivist involves researchers to interpret elements of the study and, interpretivism integrates human interest into a study. The decision to employ a qualitative research approach for the exploration of economic sustainability within social welfare NGOs is rooted in the recognition of the multifaceted and nuanced nature of the subject matter. The research methodology for this study employs an exploratory multiple case study design. In this study, each Social NGO selected for investigation becomes the primary unit of analysis. Effective data collection in this study involves using in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary analysis to gather comprehensive insights from stakeholders in social welfare NGOs. The study targets social welfare NGOs in Zambia, focusing on those registered and operational across various sectors such as healthcare, education, and environmental conservation to capture diverse challenges and strategies related to economic sustainability. Inclusion criteria emphasize the relevance of organizations to the research objectives, their operational status, geographical location in Lusaka, service diversity, size, and community impact, while excluding non-registered or inactive NGOs to ensure the legitimacy and applicability of findings. For this study, data collection was conducted with 20 participants as a unit sample from different 20 NGOs, including NGO owners and deputy directors, and the study further employed purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key personnel within the selected NGOs, including executive directors, finance managers, and program coordinators.

Validity and Reliability Test

In qualitative research, concepts such as normality, reliability, and validity are assessed through strategies that ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of findings. Normality is evaluated by thematic consistency, member checking, peer debriefing, richness, saturation, and triangulation, ensuring coherence and depth in the data. Reliability in this study is enhanced through consistency across coders, audit trails, prolonged engagement, member checking, and triangulation, which ensure dependable and transparent findings. Validity on the other hand, is bolstered by credibility, triangulation, member checking, and expert reviews, which ensure the accuracy and depth of interpretations, while also aligning findings with participants' perspectives and theoretical frameworks.

4. Results and Discussion

The provided table offers a demographic snapshot of the respondents. A majority of respondents (35%) were between the ages of 46 and 55, indicating a significant presence of experienced individuals in the NGO sector. In terms of education,

a substantial portion (30%) held a Master's degree, suggesting a high level of academic qualification. Regarding the duration of operation, 45% of the NGOs had been active for over five years, demonstrating a degree of institutionalization. However, a significant portion (30%) were relatively new, highlighting the dynamic nature of the sector. The data on sources of income for NGO members revealed a diverse mix of funding streams. Notably, 45% of respondents reported relying on business activities for income, indicating a growing trend of NGOs engaging in entrepreneurial ventures. Government support and formal employment were also significant sources of income for 5% and 20% of respondents, respectively. Religious support played a role for 30% of respondents, suggesting a strong connection between faith-based organizations and social welfare activities.

Demographic	Attribute	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 25 years	2	10%
	25 to 35	2	10%
	36 to 46	3	15%
	46 to 55	6	30%
	56 to 65	7	35%
Educational Level	GCE	2	10%
	Certificate	3	15%
	Diploma	4	20%
	Bachelors	4	20%
	Master's	4	20%
	PhD	3	15%
Number of Years in Operation	1	0	0%
	2	1	5%
	3	4	20%
	4	6	30%
	5+	9	45%
Sources of Income for NGO members	Government Support	1	5%
	Formal Employment	4	20%
	Religious Support	6	30%
	Business Activities	9	45%

4.1. Themes and their Descriptions

The themes for this study were developed through a comprehensive analysis of responses gathered from various stakeholders involved with social welfare NGOs in Zambia. During the interviews, respondents shared their experiences and insights regarding the operational landscape of these organizations, highlighting the multifaceted challenges and opportunities they encounter. From these analyses, key patterns emerged that reflected the critical areas influencing NGO effectiveness, including financial management, partnerships and collaboration, operational challenges, sustainability, equality and equity, contextual factors, and external influences.

Organizational Structure and Governance

The organizational structure and governance of social welfare NGOs in Zambia often feature a fluid approach that encourages quick decision-making and staff input, as highlighted by a respondent who noted, "Our organization operates on a flat structure, which allows for quick decision-making and encourages input from all staff members," although this flexibility can sometimes lead to confusion about responsibilities during crises. Another respondent expressed concern that the overly democratic decision-making process can delay urgent actions, stating, "I sometimes feel that the decision-making process can be too democratic, which delays action on urgent issues," indicating a need for a balance between flexibility and clear authority to enhance governance effectiveness.

Financial Management

The theme of financial management in Zambian social welfare NGOs highlights the significant challenges these organizations face due to their heavy reliance on donor funding, as noted by a respondent who stated, "We rely heavily on donor funding, but the competition for these funds has become fierce," emphasizing the restrictive nature of many funding sources that do not align with community needs. Additionally, respondents shared insights into their struggles with sustainable income generation, with one director explaining their tight budget reliant on member contributions and plans for income-generating activities like farming, while another lamented the closure of operations due to dwindling

donations, stating, "We had to close our operations because the donations dried up," which underscores the critical need for robust financial management practices and diverse funding strategies to ensure long-term viability and effective service delivery.

Collaboration with Stakeholders

The theme of partnerships and collaboration with stakeholders in Zambian NGOs emphasizes the importance of building relationships with government agencies, other NGOs, private sector organizations, and community groups, though these collaborations often face significant challenges. As one managing director noted, "Building partnerships is essential for our success, but it's not without its challenges," pointing to bureaucratic red tape that can delay initiatives, such as securing necessary approvals for projects aimed at improving health services in rural areas. Effective collaboration requires clear communication and mutual understanding among stakeholders, which can be difficult in a fragmented operational environment, highlighting the need for streamlined processes to enhance cooperative efforts.

Political Influence on the Operations of NGOs

The political climate in Zambia significantly impacts NGO operations, particularly through the lens of democratic backsliding and state-civil society relations. Between 2011 and 2021, Zambia experienced a decline in democratic governance, characterized by the stifling of opposition and civil society, which weakened NGOs' political influence due to reduced funding and political space. The relationship between the state and civil society has been fraught, with the government viewing NGOs as adversaries, while NGOs criticize state abuses of power, hindering collaborative efforts for national development. Furthermore, the intimidation and censorship faced by NGOs, as highlighted in the case of the Young African Leaders Initiative, illustrate the challenges to civic engagement and political participation. Although the election of Hakainde Hichilema in 2021 raised hopes for improved conditions, the potential for further backsliding remains, leaving NGOs in a precarious position. For instance, personnel at Next Avenues for Retirees in Zambia, lost government support after the change of government. If an individual or institution is branded as opposition, securing collaboration or funding from stakeholders is mostly next to impossible. Thus, the political environment directly shapes the operational landscape for NGOs in Zambia.

Operational Challenges

The theme of operational challenges faced by Zambian NGOs encompasses various obstacles, including financial constraints, regulatory hurdles, inadequate infrastructure, and community resistance, which significantly hinder their ability to deliver services effectively. As one director noted, "We encounter significant operational difficulties due to inadequate infrastructure," highlighting how poor road conditions and limited resources impede access to remote communities and diminish trust among those served. Additionally, political fears and misconceptions can lead to community resistance against certain programs, emphasizing the necessity for NGOs to build trust and demonstrate their commitment to local development in order to overcome these barriers.

4.2. Challenges do NGOs face when working with Zambian communities

Respondents further provided specific examples where cultural norms hindered participation in programs, indicating a gap in the literature regarding how deeply ingrained societal beliefs can obstruct NGO efforts. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) face several challenges when working with Zambian communities, particularly in the realms of community engagement, informed consent, and addressing social norms. A significant barrier is the inadequate use of recognized communication channels, which leads to misunderstandings and mistrust regarding interventions, as seen in a study on adolescent health where guardians often refused consent due to fears about losing control over their daughters and suspicions about the motives behind financial support for girls.

For instance, some communities perceive elderly with contempt, thinking they are witches and wizards, and so when an organization that specialized in rendering help to the elderly comes on board, they may receive no support from the other members of the communities, including their families, unfortunately. Additionally, harmful gender norms and the "taboo gap" surrounding discussions of sexual health create barriers to effective communication and service uptake, particularly for adolescents at risk of HIV. Furthermore, logistical issues such as limited infrastructure, lack of trained personnel, and inadequate resources hinder access to health services. These challenges underscore the need for NGOs to adopt culturally sensitive approaches and enhance community participation to foster trust and improve health outcomes.

4.3. Program Delivery and Impact on Community

Program delivery and its impact on the community focuses on how Zambian social welfare NGOs design, implement, monitor, and evaluate their initiatives to effectively meet the needs of their beneficiaries. As one director noted, "Our NGO has launched several sports teams as a way to engage with the community, especially the youth," illustrating the structured approach these organizations take to foster community engagement and promote values like teamwork and discipline. Effective program design is essential for addressing specific community needs, and many NGOs report positive outcomes from their initiatives; however, continuous monitoring and adaptation are necessary to ensure that programs remain relevant and impactful in a changing environment.

5. Conclusion and Implications

This article has identified several critical economic challenges faced by social welfare NGOs in Zambia. Primarily, these organizations grapple with a heavy reliance on external funding sources, which exposes them to fluctuations in donor priorities and economic conditions. Respondents highlighted issues such as competition for limited resources, bureaucratic hurdles, and regulatory constraints that complicate compliance and operational efficiency. In addressing the second objective, this dissertation outlined various strategies that social welfare NGOs can employ to achieve economic sustainability. Key strategies identified include diversifying funding sources to reduce dependency on single donors, implementing income-generating initiatives through social enterprises, and fostering strategic partnerships with other organizations and private sector entities. The assessment of the established strategies revealed a significant potential for enhancing economic sustainability among social welfare NGOs in Zambia. Respondents indicated that diversifying funding sources not only mitigates financial risks but also fosters a more stable revenue base, allowing NGOs to plan long-term initiatives effectively. The implementation of social enterprises was shown to create additional income streams while empowering communities through job creation and skills development.

Recommendations

This study recommends several strategies to enhance the economic sustainability of social welfare NGOs in Lusaka. First, diversifying funding sources through social enterprises, membership fees, and fundraising events can reduce dependence on donor funding. Second, strengthening financial management practices, including budgeting, expenditure control, and reporting, can improve resource allocation and accountability. Third, forming partnerships with government agencies, other NGOs, and the private sector can provide access to additional resources and support. Fourth, advocating for favorable policies can create a more enabling environment for NGOs. Fifth, improving operational efficiency through streamlining processes and utilizing technology can reduce costs and enhance productivity. Finally, focusing on impact measurement, community engagement, and innovation can strengthen the long-term sustainability of these organizations. By implementing these recommendations, social welfare NGOs in Lusaka can improve their financial resilience, expand their impact, and continue to serve vulnerable populations effectively.

Limitations

The study, while comprehensive, has certain limitations. The primary limitation is that the generalizability of the findings to the entire population of social welfare NGOs in Zambia may not be applicable. Additionally, the study focused on a specific period, and changes in the economic and political environment may impact the sustainability of NGOs over time. Furthermore, the self-reported nature of data from interviews and surveys may introduce potential biases. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the economic sustainability challenges and opportunities faced by social welfare NGOs in Lusaka, and it serves as a foundation for further research in this area. Future research could explore the long-term impact of the strategies implemented by NGOs, investigate the role of technology in enhancing sustainability, and examine the effectiveness of different governance models in promoting financial stability.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicting interests.

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Data availability statement

The data used to support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

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