



Research Article

An Assessment of The Factors Affecting the Sustainability of Community-Based Organizations (CBO) Managed Community Development Programs: A Case Study of T/A Machinjiri (Blantyre Rural)

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Abstract

This study investigates the determinants influencing the sustainability of CBO-run community development projects in T/A Machinjiri, Blantyre Rural, Malawi. Using the mixed-method approach, the study contrasts CBO participation trends, stakeholders' participation trends, and internal organizational dynamics. Studies evidence that though CBOs take the focal point in grass-root development, sustainability is hampered by limited finances, intermittent training, ineffective coordination of stakeholders, and minimal awareness among the public. Strategic capacity building, multi-dimensional resource mobilization, and adaptive governance are suggested by the study to produce maximum long-term impact.

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KEYWORDS: Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), Sustainability, Participatory Development, Malawi, Grassroots Governance, Stakeholder Engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) are today commonly referred to as the leading proponents of human-centered development in Malawi. CBOs, when integrated with mainstream leadership paradigms, bring cheap local resources, empower individuals, and introduce health care, education, agriculture, and youth empowerment programs. Their sustainability remains precarious due to systemic and organizational constraints (Mzembe et al., 2015; Lud, 2023).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Participatory Development Theory suggests participatory decision-making and local control over development projects (Lud, 2023). Empowerment Theory and Social Capital Theory expand on these by emphasizing the use of networks of trust and community initiative for sustained maintenance of development projects. Donor dependency, governance loopholes, and monopolistic behavior are noted in Malawian CBOs (Mzembe et al., 2015; McCauley et al., 2022). These are further compounded by entry into resource barriers and weak institutional support.

3. METHODOLOGY

There was combined methods design with use of structured questionnaires (n=60), key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. CBO members, traditional leaders, NGO representatives, and government officials were sampled. Quantitative data were analysed by descriptive statistics, and thematic coding for qualitative data.

4. RESULTS

a. Partition Participation Trends:

38% of the respondents were active CBO members, and most were involved in health and education programs.

b. Awareness & Impact:

87% of them had low awareness about the role of CBO; 49% perceived little or no impact.

c. Support Structures:

75% were supported externally, by NGOs in most cases; there was no visible government support.

d. Challenges:

Shortage of funds (87%), low community participation (87%), and technical capacity deficits (38%) came forward as the challenges.

e. Leadership & Collaboration: All traditional leaders who took part (87%), despite stakeholders' recommendations on collaboration being poor to medium rated.

5. DISCUSSION

The study reveals a gap between CBO potential and working conditions. Robust intrinsic motivation by members is cut short by structural barriers that stifle program duration. Government

patronage and poor stakeholder integration erode long-term effects. Empowerment and participatory governance are far from being optimally leveraged (Lud, 2023; McCauley et al., 2022).

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Formalize mentorship and capacity building.
- Enhance funds diversification through local fund-raising and revenue-generating projects.
- Legislate or regulate traditional leaders' involvement in government.
- Enhance multi-stakeholder platforms of cooperation.
- Enhance community consciousness through outreach and narration.

7. CONCLUSION

T/A Machinjiri CBOs form an integral component of the development model of Malawi, but their viability is hinged on strategic transformation. Through closure of gaps in intra-capacity and realization of inclusive partnerships, the CBOs can be effective, people-owned institutions that can lead transformational change.

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