



Organisational factors influencing sustainability of local non-governmental organisations

Lessons from a Ghanaian context

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Abstract

Purpose – Despite the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as actors in development, the issue of local NGOs' sustainability remains a major concern in many developing countries such as Ghana. This study seeks to determine key factors that can influence local NGOs based on a Ghanaian case study.

Design/methodology/approach – The research used a combination of quantitative and qualitative research approaches.

Findings – The study identifies that the availability of funds, quality material resources, supportive leadership, development of needs-based and demand-driven programmes, and effective management can have a significant influence on the sustainability of local NGOs. Significantly, leadership emerged as the most important factor to organisational sustainability of local NGOs. Equally, the availability and quality of material resources for work were least critical to local NGO sustainability, although they were all very important.

Practical implications – The case study suggests that local NGOs can adopt several measures to ensure their sustainability. These include the writing of good needs-based and demand-driven project proposals, ensuring transparency and accountability, leadership training and lobbying for resources including funds, especially, from local sources.

Originality/value – Although the findings are based on Ghanaian local NGO sustainability scenario, the lessons can be useful to NGOs within similar contexts.

Keywords Sustainability, Non-governmental organizations, Management, Leadership, Ghana

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Increasingly, it is being accepted in many developing countries that the state can no longer be the sole provider of goods and services for eradicating poverty and ensuring sustainable development among its people. Accordingly, with the increasing demands on governments in many developing countries to meet the needs of their citizenry, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are taking active and complementary roles in harnessing the potentials of the people for national development (Lekorwe and Mpabanga, 2007). Consequently, in the last decade the support to, and interest in NGOs has grown in many developing countries. The persuasion was that NGOs were more flexible, adaptive and quick to respond to peoples' needs than governments (Lekorwe and Mpabanga, 2007). Further, they could deliver higher quality social



services and programmes to the very poorest sectors of the society in a cost-effective and efficient way for sustainable development (Clark, 1991; Fowler, 1988). Not surprisingly, by 2004, Ghana had already registered 3,000 NGOs to operate in different parts of the country (Adam, 2004).

Interestingly, the expanded role of the NGO sector had been accompanied by heightened expectations of accountability and requirement for demonstrable evidence that they can significantly contribute to national development as earlier thought. In most developing countries such as Ghana, NGOs have been associated with several weaknesses including lack of experienced manpower, limited financial assistance, having short range objectives, yielding to political influences and corruption (Schiampo-Campo and Sundaram, 2001; Shastri, 2008). Schiampo-Campo and Sundaram (2001), for instance, argued that not all NGOs have the time and expertise to efficiently manage all their programmes, or even to ensure full involvement of communities. These perceived weaknesses, perceptibly, present a major threat to organisational sustainability of many local NGOs in developing countries. That is, the ability or capacity of the NGOs to endure – internal and external factors that affect their operations and survival (Broekhuis and Vos, 2003; Geelsa, 2010). Anecdotal evidence shows that many NGOs in Ghana fold up within the first two years of their registration for reasons not clearly understood. For those that survive, only a few remain active and functional, and the worse affected are local NGOs.

Research objectives

Given the background, the objective of the study was to provide an understanding of the key factors that can influence the sustainability of local NGOs based on a Ghanaian context. The intent is to provide suggestions for improving the sustainability of local NGOs.

Research methodology

The research adopted a case study approach to allow for an in-depth understanding of a complex organisational phenomenon such as sustainability, which according to Kane (1999) involves an enormous variety of activities, often without clarity and distinctiveness in an organisation. The Western Region of Ghana was selected for the study because it is one of the worst affected regions in the country in terms of local NGO sustainability, and the terrain was well-known and accessible to the researchers. Anecdotal evidence suggests that although several NGOs have registered to operate in the region, only few of them have survived and are functional. The assumption is that those that have survived have been influenced by certain factors worth understanding. As such, the choice of the study area was influenced by Marshall and Rossman's (1999) view that an ideal case should be accessible, offer the researcher the opportunity to encounter many of the processes, people, programmes, interactions and/or structures that are relevant to the research question or objective, and provide credible data for the analysis of the phenomenon.

To select key informants, a combination of simple random sampling and purposive sampling procedures were used. Two districts, namely, Mpohor Wassa East and Wassa West were selected from the 17 districts in the Western region, because they were the most accessible. To select an NGO for the study, the determining criteria were that it was seen as having being in operation for five or more years, and having the majority of the staff – particularly senior staff – who had worked for the organisation from

its inception, and are in position and willing to share their experiences, and having good archival records. Based on the above criteria, a total of 28 key informants from 20 NGOs were selected from the two districts for the study. Beside those from the NGOs, a total of 32 beneficiary informants, at least two from each selected NGOs participated in the study. The latter provided supplementary information for clarification and validation regarding the activities of the NGOs where necessary.

The data were collected mainly through interviews and documents. A structured interview schedule was used to generate quantitative data that summarize the characteristics of the participants and the NGOs with respect to sustainability. This quantitative data were analysed with descriptive statistics including frequencies, means and percentages. The use of statistics here were primarily to show the differences in views of the key informants in relation to key sustainability factors, and not for the purpose of generalizing the findings to all local NGOs in Ghana. The qualitative data generated from the interviews and documents were analysed by summarizing, coding and establishing relationships among the factors influencing the survival of the participating NGOs. To ensure a high quality case study, several strategies including data triangulation, establishment of chain of evidence and explanation-building analytic strategy were adopted to improve the credibility of the findings.

Results and discussion

The context of the case

As at January 2008, the Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment through the Department of Social Welfare had registered 15 local NGOs in the Mpohor Wassa East and Wassa West Districts of the Western region. Besides this, 15 unregistered local NGOs were identified to be operating in the two districts. The majority (75 per cent) of those selected to participate in the study have worked in the study area from five to 16 years, and as such, were in a position to talk about what had contributed to their sustainability for the period they had being in the area. The results showed that there were more young males involved in the administration of NGO activities in the study area. Out of the 28 respondents who participated in the study, 82 per cent were males with most (71.4 per cent) of them below the age of 40 years. In addition, a majority (80 per cent) of them had worked with the NGOs for three to four years, and a substantial proportion (77.8 per cent) were in middle-level management positions.

Scope of organisational sustainability by local NGOs

To understand the factors that can influence the sustainability of small local NGOs, the study asked the key informants to indicate the extent to which their NGOs consider the following organisational factors: leadership, funding, programme development, programmes management and quality of material resources in their sustainability plans. The organisational factors are those factors which are internal to the NGO, and over which the organisation has a degree of control as opposed to external factors (e.g. government policy) which are outside the control of the NGO but which can affect its operation. These organisational factors have been discussed widely in the organisational sustainability literature (Atiti, 2006; Malunga and Banda, 2004; Moore, 2005; Thomas and Thomas, 2000; VanSant, 2003).

The results showed that organisational sustainability is perceived by local NGOs from several aspects of organisation's activities. The scope includes the availability

of funds, availability and quality of material resources, supportive leadership, development of needs-based and demand-driven programme and effective management. The study showed that all these factors affect the effectiveness and survival of the local NGOs more than moderately (means are > 3 ; Table I). Leadership came out as the most important (mean = 3.86) perceived factor critical to local NGOs organisational sustainability in the study area. This is followed by funding which has always been perceived as a limiting factor especially, in developing countries such as Ghana (Ditshwanelo, 2004; Lekorwe and Mpabanga, 2007; VanSant, 2003). Understandably, leadership is critical for marshalling the needed funds especially for non-profit organisations which according to the literature (Malunga and Banda, 2004) have their sustainability dependent on their ability to mobilize money to implement their activities. Comparatively, the availability and quality of material resources for NGOs' operation (means = 3.2, 3.37, respectively) were found not as critical to NGO sustainability in the study area, although all were rated moderately high in the planning for sustainable operation by the case organisations.

Factors influencing organisational sustainability

For an in-depth understanding of the key factors that can affect organisational sustainability of local NGOs in the study area, the study further interrogated the key informants on how their human resource, funding, programme development, general management and material resource situations had contributed to their operation and survival. The results are presented under the following sections.

Human resource capacity. The results showed that the local NGOs partially agreed that the number and competence of their human resource are satisfactory (mean^b: 3.46, 3.50, Table II). Interestingly, the key human resource factors that were found to be critical to the survival of the NGOs were leadership issues. These include managers instilling a spirit of team work and cooperation among the staff, and leading by example (means: > 4). This latter finding confirms the earlier findings in Table I, and the view of Kusi-Appiah (2006) and VanSant (2003) that managerial leadership holds the key to the success and survival of NGOs of today. Thomas and Thomas (2000) also stated that the "personality" of the leader, transparency in communication, high motivation and supervisory ability could be used as strategies to improve sustainability.

Other key human resource capacity factors that emerged from the study were that the NGOs had adequate staff with managerial and technical skills and good in-services training plan for staff development (mean = 3.60). As the usual practice,

| Factor | <i>n</i> | Mean ^a | SD |
|-----------------------------------|----------|-------------------|------|
| Leadership | 28 | 3.86 | 0.59 |
| Funding | 28 | 3.71 | 0.88 |
| Programme development | 28 | 3.50 | 0.88 |
| Programmes management | 28 | 3.50 | 0.88 |
| Quality of material resources | 27 | 3.40 | 0.84 |
| Availability of material resource | 28 | 3.21 | 0.83 |
| Overall mean | | 3.50 | 0.83 |

Notes: ^aScale: 1 – very low, 2 – low, 3 – moderately high, 4 – high, 5 – very high; *n* – number of key informants from the NGOs

Table I.
Perceived scope
of organisation
sustainability
of local NGOs

Table II.
Human resource factors
influencing NGO
sustainability

| <i>Factors</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>Mean^a</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|--|----------|-------------------------|-----------|
| Our managers install a spirit of team work and cooperation | 28 | 4.10 | 0.54 |
| The managers in our organisation lead by example | 27 | 4.04 | 0.51 |
| We get staff with adequate managerial skills for our work | 28 | 3.64 | 0.68 |
| Our management has good in-service training plan for the staff | 28 | 3.60 | 0.57 |
| We get staff with adequate technical skills to do our work as we wish | 28 | 3.60 | 0.74 |
| Our organisation has structures that determine the roles and responsibilities of the individual and department | 26 | 3.54 | 0.79 |
| We get staff with adequate secretarial skills for our work | 28 | 3.54 | 0.69 |
| Management brings in trainers to introduce business skills to us | 28 | 3.50 | 0.64 |
| Our employees are always prepare to work with our NGO | 28 | 3.50 | 0.79 |
| Our organisation is organized as to personal and work routine | 28 | 3.50 | 0.88 |
| Our management has study leave plan for staff development | 28 | 3.43 | 0.74 |
| Our organisation takes time to properly train all employees | 28 | 3.30 | 0.59 |
| Our organisation has a recruitment policy | 27 | 3.24 | 0.83 |
| Our organisation is able to attract very competent staff | 28 | 3.20 | 0.98 |
| Our organisation keeps on maintain key employees | 28 | 3.10 | 0.98 |
| Overall mean | | 3.47 | 0.47 |
| <i>Human resource situation</i> | | <i>Mean^b</i> | |
| Number of human resource status | 28 | 3.46 | 0.88 |
| Competence of human resources | 28 | 3.50 | 0.84 |

Notes: ^aScale: 1 – very much disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – somewhat, 4 – agree, 5 – very much agree; ^bscale: 6 – excellent, 5 – very good, 4 – good, 3 – satisfactory, 2 – poor, 1 – very poor; *n* – number of key informants from the NGOs

NGOs in Africa, generally, depend on voluntary staff to run their activities and programmes, and therefore, do not have control over the quality of the staff they recruit (Lekorwe and Mpabanga, 2007). Lekorwe and Mpabanga argued that lack of well trained and experienced staff limit the extent to which NGOs can manage their daily affairs and their capacity to effectively plan, appraise, implement and monitor their activities. Atiti (2006) identifies qualified and motivated staff as one of the pillars for a sustainable organisation. Not surprisingly, Thomas and Thomas (2000) have argued the need for career planning and training for NGOs personnel as essential for improving NGO sustainability. In that regard, respondents agreed that their management invite external trainers into their in-service training programmes to train them in business skills as part of their staff development process.

The key informants agreed (mean = 3.54; Table II) that their NGOs had structures that determine the roles and responsibilities of the individuals and departments. Molomo and Somolekae (1999) have argued that a key weakness of NGOs in Africa is their inappropriate organisational structures which impact on the manner they carry out their core business. Thomas and Thomas (2000) have also stated that describing roles and responsibilities and instituting appraisals are important strategies for improving NGO sustainability.

Respondents partially agreed that their NGOs always had the right (qualified) human resources for work. But, they agreed that those they had are committed to work, and for that matter, the NGOs had taken time to properly train them. Though the results showed that the NGOs partially agreed that their human resource situation is satisfactory, they were uncertain on their recruitment policy with respect to attracting and retaining

competent staff. As such, they indicated that they needed various refresher training programmes to improve their skills and competence, especially in information and communication technology. According to UNDP (2000), such refresher training programmes are crucial to staff performance, and of course, organisational sustainability.

Funding. The results as shown in Table III indicate a partial agreement from informants that the NGOs' financial management for mobilisation and use of funds is doing well (mean = 3.22). The NGOs also have organisational structures that ensure quarterly reviews of their financial statements; responsible use of resource to meet their missions; keeping of accounting records; and the organisations make effort to obtain resource from local sources. This finding is expected because with good leadership as the study tends to suggest, these financial management issues can easily be managed.

The results also showed that major sources of financial support for the NGOs in the study is from internal (within Ghana) as against external funding which is becoming very unyielding. This is well argued in the literature (Ditshwanelo, 2004; Lekorwe and Mpabanga, 2007; VanSant, 2003) that a major factor impacting the effective management and sustainability of NGOs is their dependability on donor funding especially from external sources – once the donors pull their financial support, the NGOs collapse. Interestingly, the key informants somewhat agree that their NGOs are able to raise the funds they need from local sources to keep them going. They, however, disagreed that local source of funding can yield enough to enable them adequately undertake all their projects, and indicated that their performance is limited because internal support is barely

| Factors | <i>n</i> | Mean | SD |
|---|----------|------|------|
| Our board of director ensures that our resources are used responsibly to meet our mission | 28 | 3.61 | 0.63 |
| The board reviews the financial statement on quarterly basis | 28 | 3.64 | 0.62 |
| The accounting policies and recording procedures are clearly documented in a written policies | 28 | 3.60 | 0.63 |
| The executive director and the programme managers review the monthly financial statement | 28 | 3.60 | 0.74 |
| All contributions are recorded in the accounting records book | 28 | 3.60 | 0.69 |
| Our NGO makes great effort to obtain resources from local source | 28 | 3.53 | 0.75 |
| Our survival depends on how much money we raise next year | 28 | 3.50 | 0.69 |
| Our NGO has a comprehensive annual budget which include sources and use of funds | 28 | 3.50 | 0.51 |
| There are proper and timely financial reports | 28 | 3.50 | 0.58 |
| Our NGO has a fundraising board | 28 | 3.43 | 0.57 |
| Our NGO has financial sustainability plan | 28 | 3.21 | 0.57 |
| We can survive with financial support from internal source | 27 | 3.21 | 1.07 |
| Our major source of finance is from internal support | 28 | 3.21 | 1.07 |
| We are able to raise the funds we need from within Ghana | 28 | 3.14 | 0.65 |
| We will have to charge fees for our services to survive | 28 | 2.64 | 0.68 |
| Our organisation can still do well with internal support | 28 | 2.54 | 0.69 |
| Our organisation has enough financial support | 28 | 2.40 | 0.83 |
| We have adequate resources to undertake all our projects | 28 | 2.32 | 0.48 |
| Overall mean | | 3.22 | 0.25 |

Notes: ^aScale: 1 – very much disagree; 2 – disagree; 3 – somewhat; 4 – agree and 5 – very much agree; *n* – number of key informants from the NGOs

Table III.
Funding factors
influencing NGO
sustainability

adequate to meet all their operational costs. However, they were affirmative that beneficiary communities should not be charged fees for the services they receive from NGOs.

Respondents in the study suggested that their board of directors should device and use various methods of fundraising in a bid to improve the financial sustainability of NGOs. The methods should include training individuals on proposal writing, expanding the scope of donors and identifying more local sources of funding. Furthermore, they suggested that management should ensure more transparency and accountability in their financial matters through proper documentation, application of accounting policies and recording procedure to avoid ambiguities and suspicion. They also indicated that executive directors and programme managers of their NGOs should carry out monthly financial reviews to ensure judicious use of funds and to monitor and evaluate programmes and performances of their NGOs.

Programme development. Although the study showed that programme development is one of the key factors that could affect the sustainability of NGOs in the study area, a detailed analysis of the programme development factors showed that the major problems that may affect the sustainability of NGOs in the study area has little to do with programme development. The results as presented in Table IV showed that programmes developed by the NGOs were generally needs-based and demand-driven (mean^a = 4.00). That is, programmes are developed collaboratively to meet the felt and expressed needs of their target communities. The study showed that the development of needs-based and demand-driven programme is realistic only when community participation is encouraged and programmes are seen as useful and having positive

| <i>Factors</i> | n | Mean ^a | SD |
|--|----|-------------------|------|
| Programmes are needs-based (based on needs identified in the community) | 28 | 4.00 | 0.33 |
| Programmes are demand-driven (requested by the people) | 28 | 4.00 | 0.38 |
| Staff bring up innovative ideas to improve programmes | 28 | 3.80 | 0.50 |
| Target clients shows much interest in our programmes | 28 | 4.08 | 0.55 |
| The communities participate in our programmes as we wished | 28 | 3.50 | 0.64 |
| Our organisation always get the right programmes to meet the needs of our target communities | 28 | 3.50 | 0.79 |
| We get users of services or programmes to become beneficiary owners and managers to ensure suitability | 28 | 3.50 | 0.64 |
| We easily develop rapport with the community and the client | 28 | 3.43 | 0.63 |
| We are able to get attitudinal change in our areas of operation | 28 | 3.41 | 0.50 |
| We are able to develop good programmes to meet the needs of our communities as we wish | 28 | 3.40 | 0.92 |
| Our organisation uses technologies suitable to local culture | 28 | 3.40 | 0.88 |
| We have the capacity to review and update interventions | 28 | 3.30 | 0.86 |
| Overall mean | | 3.41 | 0.55 |
| <i>Programme development status</i> | | Mean ^b | |
| Community participation | 28 | 3.46 | 0.75 |
| Usefulness of the programme to the people | 28 | 3.64 | 0.68 |
| Impact (effect) of the programme on the people | 28 | 3.64 | 0.62 |

Table IV.

Programme development factors influencing NGO sustainability

Notes: ^aScale: 1 – very much disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – somewhat, 4 – agree, 5 – very much agree; ^bscale: 6 – excellent, 5 – very good, 4 – good, 3 – satisfactory, 2 – poor, 1 – very poor; *n* – number of key informants from the NGOs

impact on the targeted people. According to the beneficiary key informants, the NGOs work together with them to develop relevant programmes to meet their needs – a process which is well supported in the literature (Atiti, 2006; Ditshwanelo, 2004; Lekorwe and Mpabanga, 2007).

For quite a number of the critical questions raised about programmes development – building rapport with client, attitudinal change, meeting the people's needs adequately, use of appropriate technology, and the capacity to review and update their interventions, the answers were not definite – the key informants only partially agreed (Table IV). But all these factors are critical to organisational sustainability as had been argued by some authors (Atiti, 2006; Moore, 2005). Atiti (2006) made the point that dynamic and responsive community programmes are pillars to a sustainable organisation. Regarding the status of their programmes in terms of community participation, usefulness and impact, they were found to be satisfactory (mean^b 3.46-3.64; Table IV). However, the key informants indicated the need for their NGOs to further:

- improve community participation in their programmes;
- ensure the usefulness of the programmes to the communities; and
- strive to achieve the desired impact on their clients.

Management. The results showed a positive contribution of good management to local NGOs' sustainability (mean = 4.00, Table V). The informants generally agreed that they have management capacity to oversee the implementation of their development programmes. They agreed that their executive directors and staff provide good up-to-date financial and strategic plans to their board. This is significant as it brings to the fore, a good partnership among the management, the staff and the board. Although funding

| Factors | <i>n</i> | Mean | SD |
|---|----------|------|------|
| We have management capacity to oversee implementation | 28 | 4.09 | 0.42 |
| Our executive director and staff provide good up-to-date information and strategic planning to our board | 28 | 4.03 | 0.47 |
| Our NGO has the enabling environment which enables staff with innovative ideas to express them and try them | 28 | 4.01 | 0.40 |
| Our organisation has good accountability | 28 | 4.01 | 0.46 |
| Our organisation is good at organizing programmes | 28 | 4.01 | 0.54 |
| We do feasibility study before initiating our projects | 28 | 4.01 | 0.57 |
| We have improved transparency through communication | 28 | 4.01 | 0.63 |
| Our director and board set policies for shaping our NGOs | 28 | 4.00 | 0.43 |
| We have management capacity to oversee fundraising | 28 | 4.00 | 0.52 |
| The staffs are educated about our finances, product and service in relation to others | 28 | 4.00 | 0.44 |
| We have prescribed roles and responsibilities and instituted appraisals in our organisation | 28 | 4.00 | 0.48 |
| We are able to enhance motivation of personnel | 28 | 4.00 | 0.75 |
| We have organisational culture that blends commercial values with philanthropic principle | 28 | 4.00 | 0.69 |
| We enhance the interest of all our stakeholders | 28 | 3.40 | 0.74 |
| Overall mean | | 4.00 | 0.37 |

Notes: Scale: 1 – very much disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – somewhat, 4 – agree, 5 – very much agree; *n* – number of key informants from the NGOs

Table V.
Management factors
influencing NGO
sustainability

was seen as a critical factor, it was also observed that selfless leadership was critical. Because management was perceived to have adequate managerial skill, encourage teamwork, and lead by example, it was able to get the necessary support for ensuring organisational sustainability – something already emphasised in the literature (Atiti, 2006).

The results also showed that the NGOs had an enabling environment where staff can innovate and experiment with new ideas. This supports Adamsa and Frost's (2008) view of management as the provision of environment and resources to support organisational improvement. The study showed that the local NGOs have good accountability policies and are good at organizing programmes (mean = 4.0; Table V). The informants agreed that their organisations carry out feasibility studies before initiating projects, and have internal communication systems for improving transparency. With this, energies are productively channelled for the execution of programmes. Furthermore, their executive directors and boards set policies for shaping their NGOs' financial accountability. Atiti (2006) acknowledged the important role of committed and competitive board of directors in ensuring sustainable organisations.

The key informant agreed that their NGOs have management capacity to oversee fundraising. They agreed that staff of their NGOs are educated about the situation of their NGO's finances, cost and competitiveness of their products and services to beneficiaries. Respondents also agreed that their organisations have prescribed roles, responsibilities and appraisals and these have gone a long way to enhance staff motivation. They also agreed that their organisations have the organisational culture that blends commercial values with philanthropic principles. However, they partially agreed (mean = 3.40) that their organisations are able to enhance the interest of all their stakeholders, that is, those groups or individuals who can affect or are affected by the achievement of the organisation objectives (Freeman, 1984). The critical role of management in ensuring full stakeholder (including beneficiaries) participation in NGOs' operations for sustainable development has been alluded to by Adamsa and Frost (2008).

Material resources. Material resources capture what the NGO has to work with at a given point in time beside financial and human resources. The study revealed that the availability and quality of material resource can affect the sustainability of local NGOs. The key informants, generally and partially agreed (mean = 3.20) that it affects the effectiveness and survival of NGOs in the study area. Comparing it to the other factors already discussed (mean = 3.22-4.00), the material resource is the least critical to NGO sustainability. However, the key informants partially agreed (mean = 3.36) that availability and quality of their material resources for operations was satisfactory.

The respondents partially agreed (mean = 3.40) that building local NGOs' ability to turn their resources into wealth is the bedrock for organisational effectiveness and sustainability. Also, they partially agreed that their NGOs easily get the right material resources for work (mean = 3.30), and specifically, to undertake their programmes and projects (mean = 3.21). Furthermore, they partially agreed that their NGOs have strategic plans to monitor how well their resources are used (mean = 3.11), and inform staff on how to attract the needed resources for their programmes (mean = 3.04). The difficulties associated with getting needed and requisite material resources naturally calls for prudent use of such resources, and making their mobilisation a shared responsibility of all members of the organisation (Table VI).

| <i>Factor</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>Mean^a</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|---|----------|-------------------------|-----------|
| Building the organisation's ability to turn its resource into wealth is the bedrock for organisational sustainability | 28 | 3.40 | 0.57 |
| Our organisation easily get the right materials to work | 28 | 3.30 | 0.75 |
| We get right materials to undertake our project | 28 | 3.21 | 0.83 |
| Our organisation has a strategic plan to monitor how well our resources are being used | 28 | 3.11 | 0.69 |
| Our organisation has an effective strategic plan that informs staff how to attract needed resources | 28 | 3.04 | 0.64 |
| Overall mean | | 3.20 | 0.56 |
| <i>Resource situation</i> | | <i>Mean^b</i> | |
| Availability of resources | 28 | 3.36 | 0.78 |
| Quality of resources | 28 | 3.50 | 0.69 |

Notes: ^aScale: 1 – very much disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – somewhat, 4 – agree, 5 – very much agree; ^bscale: 6 – excellent, 5 – very good, 4 – good, 3 – satisfactory, 2 – poor, 1 – very poor; *n* – number of key informants from the NGOs

Table VI.
Material resources
factors influencing
NGO sustainability

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this case study, several conclusions can be drawn. The employees of local NGOs in the study area were dominated by youthful males below the age of 40 years with moderate level of working experience ranging from three to four years. They were mostly middle-level management personnel.

The findings suggest that to improve organisational sustainability, local NGOs can broaden their scope of sustainability factors to include human resource management especially leadership, funding, programme development, general management and material resources. The above factors, although not mutually exclusive, were perceived to affect local NGOs' sustainability in the study area. But more importantly, it can be concluded that supportive leadership and adequate funding were the two most essential ingredients and determinants of local NGOs' sustainability in the study area.

On human resource capacity, it can be concluded that managerial leadership, technical competence and staff motivation are three most critical factors that can influence the survival of local NGOs. The study suggests that local NGOs can achieve this through advertisement, peer recruitment and regular on-the-job training especially in leadership, project and prudent financial management and lobbying. Particular to funding, the study reveals that it is becoming increasingly difficult for local NGOs to attract funding, especially, from foreign sources to support their programmes. Accordingly, the study suggests that local NGOs in similar context to those studied can improve their funding situation by spreading their network to include domestic (local) sources. Vigorous lobbying from board of directors, management, friends, churches and philanthropists, with good project proposals, and the provision of for-fee consultancy services represent some of the measures which local NGO can adopt to improve their ability to raise local funds.

Based on the findings, it can also be concluded that the survival of local NGOs in similar context as those studied can be improved if they are able to develop and implement need-based and demand-driven programmes, supported by good leadership, transparency, accountability, and commitment to meet felt and expressed needs

of beneficiaries. Further, the study highlighted the need for management capacity that promotes learning organisation principles (e.g. shared vision, teamwork), and the provision of quality material resources for organisational efficiency and effectiveness.

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