

**FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF SOCIAL SERVICE NGOs IN
BELIZE**

By

Kendra Tonelle Griffith

A THESIS

Submitted to
KDI School of Public Policy and Management
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF DEVELOPMENT POLICY

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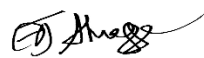
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Committee in charge:

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ABSTRACT

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Belizean social service NGOs are a critical segment of society filling gaps in services to the most vulnerable and needy populations. In the current decade there has been a noticeable decline in the formation of new NGOs and in the closure of some service providers as funding agencies shift priorities and withdraw from the country. Research using primary and secondary sources, survey, and case studies show that the main commonality between all the social service agencies—both defunct and operational—is their struggle for financing, with a particular emphasis on funding core costs. The findings also reveal that larger NGOs, which charge for services, are better able to withstand funding shocks by making organizational changes. However, improved management of resources, strategic and financial planning, along with diversifying income can help to alleviate the sustainability problems faced by all sizes of social service NGOs.

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I dedicate this thesis to my team of supporters consisting of my family and friends. Thanks to them, I truly believe that I can do anything I set my mind to. Special thanks to my fellow KDI School alumni, Tomaz Araujo, for regularly encouraging me to complete my thesis and believing in me when I felt discouraged. Thanks as well to my best friend Arlette Abraham Thompson for her unwavering support through this and life's other challenges. To my daughter, Zaira, thanks for breathing new life into me and being my perpetual source of motivation and inspiration.

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INTRODUCTION

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness defines Civil Society Organizations (CSO) as “all non-market and non-state organisations outside of the family in which people organise themselves to pursue shared interests in the public domain. They cover a wide range of organisations that include membership-based CSOs, cause-based CSOs and service-oriented CSOs.”¹ These unions, associations, charities, agencies and cooperatives play an important role in society. They fill gaps in government services; they advocate and agitate for change at the micro, mezzo and macro level; they are grassroots, working in communities; they are trusted because of their lack of political affiliation; they provide a voice for citizens who do not feel brave enough to speak up for themselves; and they educate and empower citizens by giving them information. Belize's Non-Governmental Organizations Act (2000) states that to operate in the country an NGO should be independent of Government control in its operations and management; its aims, objects and purposes shall be to achieve sustainable human development on a voluntary, non-profit basis . . . and its activities in and within Belize shall be consistent with the principles and provisions of the Belize Constitution.²

There is no shortage of civil society/non-governmental organizations³ in Belize which fit the above definitions. Information from Belize's Ministry of Human Development and internet research reveal that at the end of 2014, there are approximately 135 registered and unregistered NGOs, groups, and associations operating in a wide range of sectors within the country including sexual and reproductive health, environmental, social services, education, disaster preparedness, youth, elderly, music and culture. These organizations are critical to Belize's development as although it is designated as “upper-middle income” by the World Bank with a

¹ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "How DAC Members Work with Civil Society Organisations: An Overview," (2011): 11, <http://www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/48843465.pdf>.

² Government of Belize, Non-Governmental Organizations Act of 2000, Chapter 315 of the Laws of Belize, 7.

³ Throughout this document, the terms NGOs and CSOs will be used interchangeably.

GDP of USD 1.763 Billion⁴ and a GNI per capita of US \$4,420⁵, the country nonetheless has a high 41% poverty rate.⁶

Belize is a small underpopulated country located in Central America with an estimated total population of 368,310 spread across 8,867 rural and urban square miles. It is also a young country in more ways than one; having gained its independence from the British in 1981 and having fifty-six percent of its population (205,552) under twenty-five years old.⁷ The spread of the population presents a challenge for the provision of services to rural areas—where more than half its residents abide—and it is not uncommon for citizens to travel many miles (sometimes to other villages) to access basic services such as schools and medical facilities. Often, it is NGOs which help to fill those governmental gaps by going into communities and bringing services to needy populations.

It is generally accepted that civil society organizations contribute to good governance, transparency, accountability, and policy development through advocacy and lobbying governmental institutions on behalf of the disadvantaged and disenfranchised. To fulfil that great mandate, these organizations need to be strong, which includes being financially sustainable, properly staffed, institutionally capable, and strategic in their goals. The Nature Conservancy defines financial sustainability as an organization's "capacity to obtain revenues in response to a demand, in order to sustain productive processes at a steady or growing rate to produce results and to obtain a surplus."⁸ This however is not the case for many NGOs in Belize, as while some organizations appear to be flourishing, there are many others that are struggling. The last five years in particular has seen the closure of several high-profile social service organizations in Belize. Some have experienced very public financial troubles and had to downsize services, while others struggle to find the resources to become and/or stay relevant.

⁴ The World Bank, Belize Data, <http://data.worldbank.org/country/belize>, (accessed July 28, 2016).

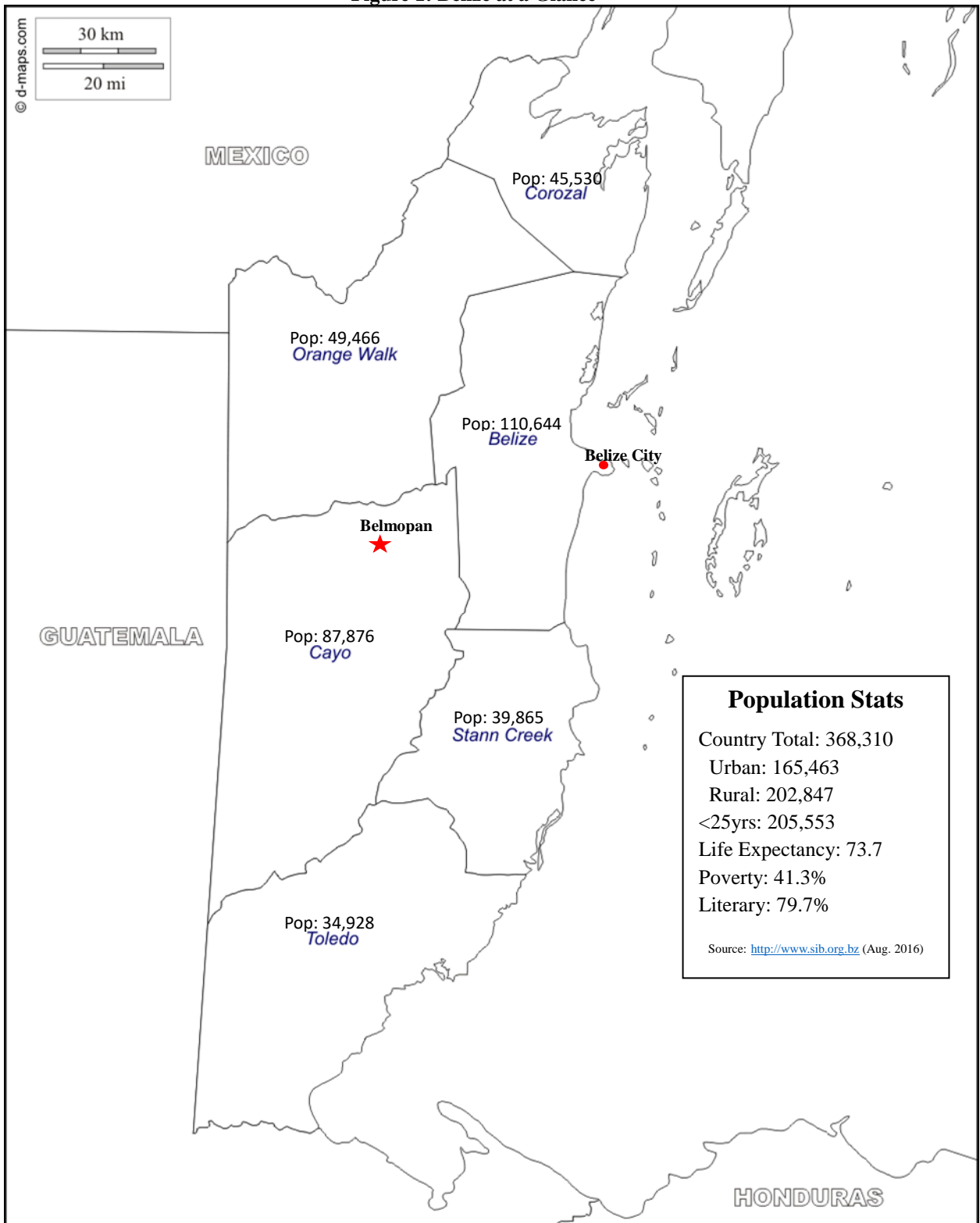
⁵ Atlas method, current US\$.

⁶ Halcrow Group Ltd., "Belize Country Poverty Assessment", Final Report, Vol. 1, Main Report, August 2010, 55, <http://www.sib.org.bz/Portals/0/docs/publications/other%20statistical%20reports/Belize%20Country%20Poverty%20Assessment%20Report.pdf>, (accessed July 30, 2016).

⁷ Statistical Institute of Belize, Postcensal Population Estimates 2008-2015, <http://www.sib.org.bz/statistics/population>, (accessed July 25, 2016).

⁸ The Nature Conservancy, "Resources for Success, Vol 2: Four Pillars of Financial Sustainability", 2001, 14, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnadf342.pdf, (accessed July 15, 2016).

Figure 1: Belize at a Glance



Thesis Statement

Belizean social service NGOs face many resources constraints, in particular among them is financial sustainability. Aid volatility, especially due to the global financial crisis, has only served to heighten this problem.

Sub claim 1: Medium to long term financing is one of the primary challenges for the sustainability of Belize's social service NGOs.

The last decade has seen the closure and/or public financial struggle of several once-prominent NGOs. Alliance Against AIDS, Belize Organization for Women and Development (BOWAND), Parent of Children and Special Needs (PACSN), and CARE-Belize have all become defunct. Some NGOs have had to downsize and/or are in a constant struggle to stay alive; while others are finding it difficult to access the resources needed to become and stay relevant (e.g. Belize Association of Persons with Diverse Abilities). Funding is at the heart of the struggles faced by all these organizations.

Sub claim 2: NGOs need to become more strategic and collaborative to increase their sustainability and efficiency.

Belize's social service NGOs need to take stock of the current environment within which they are operating and make medium and long term strategic plans to ensure their sustainability. This includes collaborating to prevent overlap in the provision of services (inefficiency), seeking out new avenues of possible funding, and undertaking financial planning. Basically, they have to start operating with a more business-like approach to their administrative operations.

Sub claim 3: Belize's NGOs need to improve their institutional capacity to compete at the regional and global level to attract funding.

Belizean NGOs are not only competing with each other for access to grant funding, they are competing with thousands of other civil society organizations around the world vying for donor attention. As donor countries and agencies become increasingly concerned about the effective

and efficient use of aid, Belizean NGOs need to improve their transparency and accountability for the proper administration of aid as well as improve their capacity to effectively manage aid funding.

Research Questions

In light of the claim and sub-claims, the author will seek to answer the following questions:

1. What is the number, scope and focus of social service NGOs in Belize?
2. Where do these NGOs obtain their funding?
3. What kind of funding do NGOs typically receive and how is it used?
4. How volatile is funding in Belizean social service NGOs?
5. How do NGOs cope with reductions in funding?
6. What factors contributed to the failures of those NGOs which closed or are experiencing challenges?
7. What lessons can be learned from those failures?
8. What changes can NGOs adopt to ensure their sustainability?
9. What are donors looking for in NGOs?

Statement of Significance

Even before Belize gained its independence in 1981, CSOs have been providing services where government has been unable or unwilling. To carry out their activities, these organizations rely on international donor countries and agencies. At the end of 2011, when Dutch funder HIVOS pulled out of Belize, it resulted in a financial crisis for many local NGOs,⁹ at least three of which had problems finding other means of funding and closed its doors. What will happen to those populations being served should we continue to see a decline in NGO services? With its own financial constraints, the Government of Belize would surely be unable to fill that dearth. It is no wonder that when it appeared the Belize Family Life Association would need to close its doors¹⁰ due to financial problems, the news sent shock waves throughout the social sector, general public and even government. As the largest organization in the sexual and reproductive health arena, a closure would have left hundreds of residents without access to low-cost health-care services. The case of BFLA underscores the importance of NGOs to Belize's continued development. Their existence eases the burden on government to provide public goods, while assisting the population at large. As such, their health and sustainability should be a concern for all stakeholders.

⁹ Jim McFadzean, "NGOs Collapse as Dutch Funding Agency Pulls Out," 7News Belize, December 14, 2011, <http://www.7newsbelize.com/sstory.php?nid=21270>.

¹⁰ Isani Cayetano, "Belize Family Life Association in Financial Difficulty," News 5, October 18, 2011, <http://edition.channel5belize.com/archives/62129>.

Literature Review

Across the globe, non-governmental agencies have earned the respect of citizens, governments, and international organizations who have all come to rely on the services they provide. But while their work is praised and their activities appreciated, there are many factors which affect the sustainability of these entities and as such their ability to provide services. These include: financing (including donor demands), staffing capacity, and leadership. Lack of or inconsistent funding is a direct threat to an NGO's sustainability and to the effectiveness with which they can fulfil their organizational mandate. Both NGOs and donors have come to realize that addressing this problem requires changes in the administration of aid and changes within the NGOs, but knowing is only half the battle. This literature review looks at how some scholars believe that the aim of sustainability can be achieved.

Sustainability is a universal plight faced by NGOs whether they are located in Belize, India, South America or the Pacific Islands, and as such has been the subject of research by academics the world over. In their article "NGO Capacity Building and Sustainability in the Pacific,"¹¹ Low and Davenport (2002) conducted interviews with 80 civil society stakeholders from the Pacific Islands of Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea. The authors note that while there is consensus on the need for capacity building in NGOs, there are differing viewpoints as to what exactly capacity building entails. Depending on the stakeholder, capacity building is either about improvements in financing, operational capacity, or the management of the organization itself.¹² These varying definitions invariably create problems in assessing institutional capacity if donors and agencies are not well coordinated. Low and Davenport (2002) believe that "[p]art of the answer may lie in the notion of self-reflection: the ability of an organisation to honestly look in upon itself, and to appraise and to learn." They go on to assert that "capacity building is not separate from development" and cite South African NGO founder,

¹¹ Will Low and Eileen Davenport, 2002, "NGO capacity building and sustainability in the Pacific," *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 43, no. 3: 367-379.

¹² *Ibid.*, 3.

Allan Kaplan, who makes the very important point, “that development is not about transfer of resources, but about facilitating “resourcefulness.”¹³ And indeed, resourcefulness is needed to creatively utilize limited funds, as well as for finding new sources of aid, both of which are vital for NGO survival.

This article, in highlighting the priorities for capacity building, brought up many of the suggestions listed in the sub-claims of this thesis and which are applicable to Belizean NGOs. Those priorities are leadership, training in organisational development, improved networking between stakeholders, a greater financial base, better relationships with government, and better relations between NGOs within the region.¹⁴ Low and Davenport (2002) also touched upon a key aspect of sustainability within the donor arena: funding for “core costs,” such administrative expenses as rent, transportation and salaries. This is a sticking point for donors and NGOs as many donors either do not fund core costs or put a ceiling on the level of funding they provide for such expenses. Making matters worse is that these core costs can be particularly high when working with certain populations, such as those in rural areas. Attempting to achieve sustainability by charging for services in those instances is usually out of the question as the client-base would not be able to afford it (Low and Davenport 2002). The researchers, however, note that donors still expect organizations to find a way to financially sustain projects once funding is discontinued and conclude that “donors must accept that the long term processes of development and the roles played by NGOs/CBOs require a rethinking of the standard funding cycle and the focus on ‘exit strategies’”¹⁵ They suggest that a possible solution is for NGOs to look for alternative means of funding, such as building relationships with corporate donors.

One means through which NGOs can build relationships and capacity is through collaboration. For their article “Resources, Knowledge and Influence: The Organizational Effects of Interorganizational Collaboration” in the *Journal of Management Studies*, Hardy, Phillips

¹³ Ibid., 3.

¹⁴ Ibid., 3, 4.

¹⁵ Ibid., 12.

and Lawrence (2003) conducted a qualitative comparative study of the effects of interorganizational collaboration between one NGO and eight partners over a span of four years.¹⁶ The featured NGO, Mère et Enfant is headquartered in Europe, but is located in many countries including Palestine—which is the branch that was the focus of the study. Mère et Enfant provides medical and nutritional services to children as well as information and education to parents. It also trains healthcare professionals and conducts research on topics of nutrition and food security. According to the authors, the organization made it a point to collaborate with other organizations in an effort to increase their ability to raise funds and deliver services.¹⁷ For the purpose of the research, C. Hardy et al (2003) define collaboration as “a cooperative, interorganizational relationship that is negotiated in an ongoing communicative process, and which relies on neither market nor hierarchical mechanisms of control.”¹⁸ In their review of existing literature, the authors note that there are various reasons why organizations collaborate: strategic, “to build organizational capacities through the transfer or pooling of resources”; knowledge creation, transfer of existing knowledge and/or the creation of new knowledge; and political, “to increase their centrality [interconnectedness to other organizations] and the degree of their influence over other organizations.”¹⁹

For the data analysis, the researchers gathered information via archival data and interviews with key personnel involved in the collaborations. They then investigated the characteristics of the collaborations; first was the scope (narrow to broad) and depth (shallow to deep). Second, they looked at the “structure” of the collaboration to determine whether they were transactions (pooling or transfer of resources), partnerships (carrying out activities together), or representation (representing each other’s interests to third parties). Third, investigated at the flow of information to determine if it was unidirectional, bi-directional or

¹⁶ Hardy, Cynthia, Nelson Phillips, and Thomas B. Lawrence, 2003, "Resources, Knowledge and Influence: The Organizational Effects of Interorganizational Collaboration," *Journal of Management Studies* 40, no. 2: 321-347. E-Journals, EBSCOhost (accessed September 6, 2016).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 329

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 323

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 324-328

multi-directional (embedded).²⁰ They then cross-analysed those factors within the three reason/effects of the collaboration.

To determine the effects of strategic collaboration, C. Hardy et al. (2003) looked at “the degree to which distinctive resources were acquired, improving the ability of collaborating partners to carry out their 'core' business.” They determined that “collaborations that have high levels of involvement will be positively associated with the acquisition of distinctive resources.”²¹ This was the case for six of the collaborations for Mère et Enfant, which benefitted from training for its staff. In terms of knowledge creation, the authors prefaced that “knowledge creation occurs in the context of a community: it is not located so much inside organizations but rather between them.” They proposed that, “collaborations that have high levels of involvement and high levels of embeddedness will be positively associated with the creation of knowledge.”²² While only one of the organization’s collaborations scored high on that knowledge scale, five were medium and mostly involved implementing new practices. Finally for political effects, the authors looked at “the way in which the collaboration increased the influence that partners had on the broader interorganizational relations of which they were a part.” They determined that “collaborations that are highly embedded will be positively associated with increases in influence.”²³ Three of Mère et Enfant’s collaborations were designated as having a high political effect, which came from gaining access to governmental and diplomatic organizations for future collaborations.

The authors conclude that organizations therefore have to make “trade-offs” in certain collaborations depending on what effect they are trying to trigger within the partnership. While Mère et Enfant’s collaborations showed mixed results in the three effects, they were nonetheless beneficial as they served the greater aim of improved delivery of services to the target populations. Probably one of the greatest benefits it gained, however, was in capacity building

²⁰ Ibid., 337

²¹ Ibid., 339

²² Ibid., 340

²³ Ibid., 341

for its staff, which various research shows is a factor in NGO sustainability. It can also be argued that by collaborating with varied entities, the organization increased its dossier which can be used in the future to gain access to funding. As such, the lesson that can be derived from this research for the Belizean context is that collaboration is multi-faceted and therefore can benefit organizations in many ways depending on their needs.

Limitations to this study pertain to the fact that some data is based on the memory of personnel and that because a small NGO in one region of the world was used, some may argue it is not possible to generalize the results.

Returning to the broader issue of sustainability, research scholar R. Rajarajeswari, in her "Study on Sustainability of Non-Governmental Organizations in Tamilnadu,"²⁴ (2013) asserts that not only is sustainability a continuous struggle, but it is at the heart of "every major decision" made by NGOs. She defines sustainability as "an NGO's ability to identify a pertinent task, pursue sound management practices and to build up diversified sources of income that assure permanence of excellence [in] actions and services. . . ."²⁵ That definition disaggregates sustainability into three types: financial, functional (quality service), and formational (administration of resources and achievement of organizational goals), which is actually very similar to the capacity-building areas listed by Low and Davenport (2002). The author also agrees with Kotler and Andreasen (2003), saying that "sustainability requires a shift both in [the] way NGOs view their relationship with their donors and beneficiaries and in the way it operates." And while there are numerous factors that affect and support sustainability, Rajarajeswari (2013) insists that it is imperative that NGOs "enhance [their] strengths" and "improve [their] weaknesses" so as to attract donations.²⁶

For Jeffrey Unerman and Brendan O'Dwyer (2010), financial consistency is achieved through accountability. In their Public Management Review article, "NGO Accountability and

²⁴ R. Rajarajeswari, 2013, "A Study on Sustainability of Non-governmental Organizations in Tamilnadu", *Golden Research Thoughts* 2, no 11: ISSN:-2231-5063.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

Sustainability Issues in the Changing Global Environment,²⁷ the researchers note that the global economic crisis affects not only the level of funding from donor countries, but also the amount of funding coming from individuals, as a reduction in disposable incomes means “less spare money to give to poverty alleviation and other charitable causes.” As such, “it is important not only to increase the quantum of ODA, but also to improve the effectiveness with which such aid funding is spent.”²⁸

The article discusses the various types of accountability which are utilized by NGOs. In identity accountability, the authors note that because managers passionately believe in the ‘correctness’ of their organization's mission, “They do not therefore see a need to consult on these issues, as they ‘know’ they are doing the right thing, nor do they recognize the accountability rights of other stakeholders, including those providing funds.” This attitude, however, is not widespread and exists mostly in large and prominent agencies. More common is upward accountability which “recognizes that the NGO is accountable to those who provide funds, and that those providing funds want an account of what the money has been spent upon.” Upward accountability is typically quantitative and varies by donor. It becomes problematic when NGOs collaborate with several donors, each of whom has its own time-consuming and detailed reporting mechanism. Next, there is downward accountability which “recognizes that NGOs can and should be accountable not just to those who fund them, but also to their beneficiaries.” This entails dialogue with beneficiaries and being able to adapt services to their needs. Finally, there is holistic accountability, “a combination of upward and downward accountability, which encompasses all possible stakeholders affected by the activities of the NGO” Unerman and O’Dwyer (2010) stress that whatever the accountability measure used by the donor, it should be flexible and appropriate for the organization as inappropriate or too detailed reporting

²⁷ Jeffrey Unerman and Brendan O’Dwyer, 2010, “NGO Accountability and Sustainability Issues in the Changing Global Environment,” *Public Management Review* 12, no. 4: 475–486.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

mechanisms are counterproductive to the aim of aid effectiveness.²⁹

While the above-mentioned authors focussed on accountability, collaboration, and capacity building, for Okorley and Nkrumah (2012), leadership is the most important factor for NGO sustainability.³⁰ For their journal article, “Organizational Factors Influencing Sustainability of Local Non-Governmental Organizations: Lessons from the Ghanaian Context,” the authors conducted a qualitative and quantitative research via interviews with twenty-eight key informants and thirty-two beneficiary informants. In analysing the data from the twenty NGOs in the western region of Ghana, it was leadership, followed by funding, which was perceived by the respondents as the most important factor. Leadership, they maintain “is critical for marshalling the needed funds” upon which NGOs rely and for overseeing the implementing of projects. Additionally, Okorley and Nkrumah (2012) note that managers are key to “instilling a spirit of team work and cooperation among the staff, and leading by example.”³¹

Although these articles focus on different means by which to achieve sustainability, they are unified in the belief that NGOs are important and that sustainability—while challenging—is necessary for organizational effectiveness. Furthermore, there is agreement that sustainability requires a change in the manner with which both the organizations and donors operate. As such, the onus is not only on the NGOs but also the donors who benefit from the work of these organization through positive publicity. So while NGOs need to improve their capacity, leadership, and broaden their base of funding, donors need to be more understanding and flexible, particularly as it relates to funding of core costs. These lessons are applicable to embattled Belizean organizations, which receive a majority of their funding from international agencies and donor governments.

It must be noted that a noticeable limitation of the articles is that they give very little

²⁹ Ibid., 7-8.

³⁰ Edmund E. Nkrumah and Ernest L. Okorley, 2012, “Organisational Factors Influencing Sustainability of Local Non-Governmental Organisation: Lessons from the Ghanaian Context,” *International Journal of Social Economics* 39, No. 5: 330-341.

³¹ Ibid., 10.

practical advice on how to implement the suggested changes to achieve said sustainability and accountability. Additionally, much of the focus was on what NGOs can or should do with very little emphasis on the changes needed in donor agencies and governments.

METHODOLOGY

This thesis analyses Belize's social service NGOs by categorizing their services, location and populations served to determine the scope of activity within the country. Qualitative and quantitative data on funding, spending and sustainability is gathered from an anonymous electronic survey sent to thirty social service NGOs across the country. The author also investigates the sustainability challenges faced by organizations by conducting a case study of the 2011 financial crisis of the Belize Family Life Association to determine to what extent are the issues faced by that organization indicative of problems in the wider civil society arena. Additional primary data is obtained qualitatively through correspondence interviews with managers. This research is also supplemented with information from news articles in the media, as well as reports from local and international organizations or researchers. Where necessary, databases from organizations such as the OECD and World Bank adds to quantify and support claims. Using the information gathered, as well as researched best-practices, recommendations are made for the sustainability of current and future non-governmental organizations in Belize.

RESULTS

Scope of NGOs in Belize

For the purpose of this research, social service organizations are defined as any non-profit entity which provides services to vulnerable populations for free or lower than market costs. According to the *American Journal of Managed Care*,

Vulnerable populations include the economically disadvantaged, racial and ethnic minorities, the uninsured, low-income children, the elderly, the homeless, those with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and those with other chronic health conditions, including severe mental illness. It may also include rural residents, who often encounter barriers to accessing healthcare services. The vulnerability of these individuals is enhanced by race, ethnicity, age, sex, and factors such as income, insurance coverage (or lack thereof), and absence of a usual source of care. Their health and healthcare problems intersect with social factors, including housing, poverty, and inadequate education.³²

Research has found 143 registered and unregistered NGOs, community groups, and associations operating or having once operated in Belize. Figure 2, shows that at the end of 2014, eight or approximately 6% of these NGOs were non-functioning; forty-seven or 33% have an environmental focus; forty-two or 29% have a scope of work within the social arena; while the remaining 32% work in various arenas including the arts, sports, education, religious, and professional associations.

³² American Journal of Managed Care, "Vulnerable Populations: Who Are They?," November 01, 2006 <http://www.ajmc.com/journals/supplement/2006/2006-11-vol12-n13suppl/nov06-2390ps348-s352#sthash.i0N4GbPO.dpuf>, (accessed August 11, 2016).

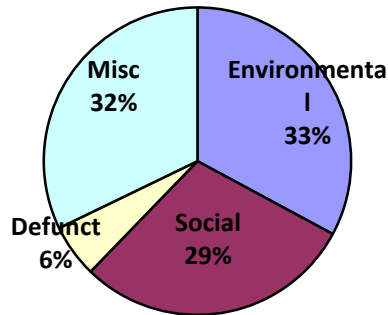


Figure 2: NGOs by Scope of Works

The oldest NGO is the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), which began operations in Belize in 1956. This organization now runs a school for young women, providing them with basic education as well as skills training in sewing, cooking, and cosmetology. The YWCA also provides life skills and counselling, operates a daycare center and is actively involved in sexual and reproductive health education for youths.

We can see from Figure 3 that Belize’s social service sector increased at an exponential rate since independence as within that decade, seven NGOs were launched. Fourteen more organizations were registered in the 1990s, while the 2000s saw the greatest increase with eighteen new agencies. In the 2010s, however, there was a noticeable decline as just three new organizations formed.

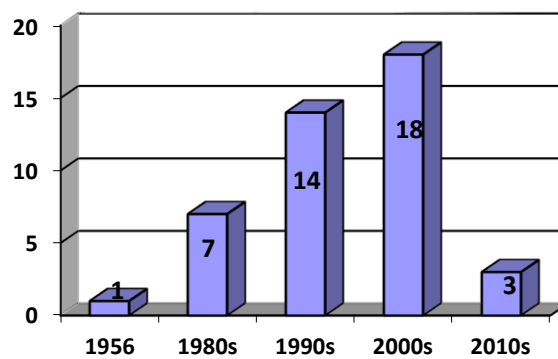


Figure 3: NGOs Formation by Decade

As it pertains to location, Belize’s social service NGOs are heavily centered in the most populous district of Belize, with twenty-nine or 69%. The largest district, Cayo, is the base for six organizations; four are situated in Toledo; two in Stann Creek; and one in Orange Walk. It

should be noted that at least six organizations (BFLA, YWCA, The Inspiration Center, Belize Enterprise for Sustainable Technology, Belize Council for the Visually Impaired, HelpAge, and Tikkun Olam) have branches and/or offer services in multiple districts. It is also possible that some districts which appear underserved have informal/unregistered local organizations that are not well known outside of their region and of which the author is not aware.

These social organizations cover a broad scope of issues; however, advocacy and education of both their target populations and the general public occupies a large part of their mission. Advocacy issues ranged from sexual and reproductive health to domestic violence and children's rights, which are the focus for approximately fifteen organizations. Next are skills training and persons with disabilities which are topics of interest for eight and five organizations respectively. Other focus areas include community development, healthcare, micro-finance, housing, children's residential facilities, and domestic violence shelters.

Belize has a fairly young population and as a result, children, teens and youths are the main target population for some eighteen organizations. Twenty-three of the NGOs also focus on the general population as a result of their education/advocacy efforts. This was followed by women (6) and persons with disabilities (5). Persons living with HIV/AIDS and LGBTQ populations were the target of three organizations; while the poor and Mayans are disadvantaged populations which are the focus of four and three entities respectively.

With limited information on many of these organizations, it has been difficult to determine their size, except for the larger more well-known agencies. Among the largest are the Belize Family Life Association, Belize Council for the Visually Impaired, YWCA, and The Inspiration Center, which all have in excess of twenty employees and a presence in multiple districts.

Survey Methodology

The author chose survey as a research method as it is an efficient means to gather data from a wide subset of organizations spread across the country. Additionally, the hope was that the relative anonymity of an electronic survey would entice agencies to respond to the rather sensitive topic of their organization's funding and operations.

The broad purpose of the survey is to add to the research and create a profile of the social agencies operating in Belize as well as to answer several of the research questions, namely:

Where do NGOs obtain their funding?

What kind of funding do NGOs typically receive and how is it used?

How volatile is funding in Belizean social service NGOs?

How do NGOs cope with reductions in funding?

What changes can NGOs adopt to ensure their sustainability?

The survey questions are also geared at determining the validity of sub-claims one and two; that medium to long-term financing is a primary challenge for NGO sustainability and that NGOs need to become more strategic and collaborative to increase sustainability and efficiency. Some of the questions therefore pertain to the organizations' concerns and whether they utilize methods such as strategic plans. The answers overall are analysed to determine sub-claim 3: Belize's NGOs need to improve their institutional capacity to compete at the regional and global level to attract funding.

The survey was created and distributed via Qualtrics. Before circulation, it was tested on four persons and revisions made before distribution. The survey was initially sent on April 8th, 2016, to thirty out of thirty-six NGOs for which the author could find contact information. One email bounced and as such was not delivered. Five organizations responded to that initial distribution. The author made a second attempt in June to increase the number of respondents and scheduled via Qualtrics a reminder to unfinished respondents; it was later discovered that message failed and was never delivered. In July, the author chose to utilize a personal plea to

organizations and emailed fifteen respondents asking them to once again complete the survey. Response improved and eight additional agencies submitted responses for a total of thirteen respondents. This represents a 45% response rate, although it should be noted that three respondents did not answer all the questions in the survey.

Profile of the Respondents

Ten of the thirteen respondents (77%), are based in the Belize District, two in the Cayo District, and one in the Stann Creek District. While some organizations report working in multiple districts, Belize and the Cayo District are nonetheless most frequently cited as service locations. This is also the trend for the larger subset of the social NGOs in the country.

In terms of longevity, all the social agencies which participated in the survey have been in existence for over a decade with one founded in the 50s, four established in the 80s, five in the 90s, and three in the 2000s. The size of the respondents also vary, with the largest having sixty-one employees (31 fulltime; 30 part-time) and the second largest with forty-two (34 fulltime; 8 part-time). However, the majority are fairly small organizations with 62% (8) having less than five full-time employees. Volunteers are therefore cited as important to the majority of respondents with 92% reporting using volunteers and of that percentage, 50% doing so on a daily basis.

Services provided by these agencies varies widely and includes residential and day-care operations for children and the elderly, alternative education, sexual and reproductive health education, feeding and literacy programs, and an emergency shelter. Advocacy is also cited as a service by three organizations. As pertains the populations receiving said services, the word cloud³³ in Figure 4 shows that women and children are most the commonly used target population descriptors. In Belize, women and children are regularly cited as vulnerable populations since they are often the target of sex crimes and domestic violence.

³³ Created July 24th, 2016 at <http://worditout.com/word-cloud/1764394>

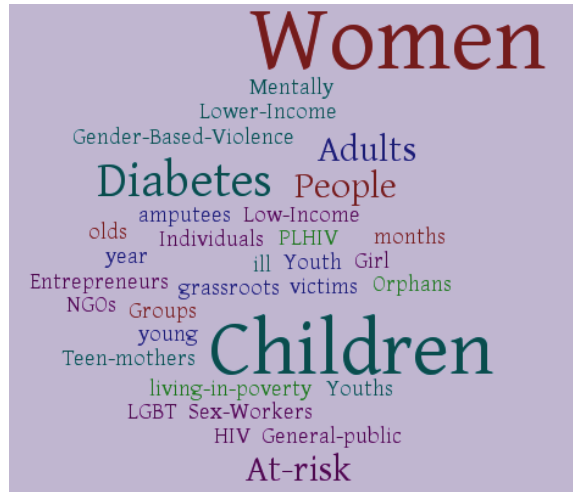


Figure 4: Respondents' Target Population Descriptors

Findings: NGO Funding

To provide services, NGOs need funds. On the question of “what size budget does the organization typically require to carry out its annual mission/services (include overhead costs)”, only ten of the thirteen respondents answered and as can be seen from Figure 5, 50% of that number report a budget of less than BZ³⁴ \$100,000. Thirty percent have a budget between \$100,000 to 250,000, while the remaining 20% list a budget of more than \$400,000. Analysis of the organizations with the biggest budgets reveals that they did not necessarily have the largest number of employees. Of those with the largest budgets, one has no full-time employees and only three part-time workers, while the other has twelve employees (11 fulltime, 1 part-time).

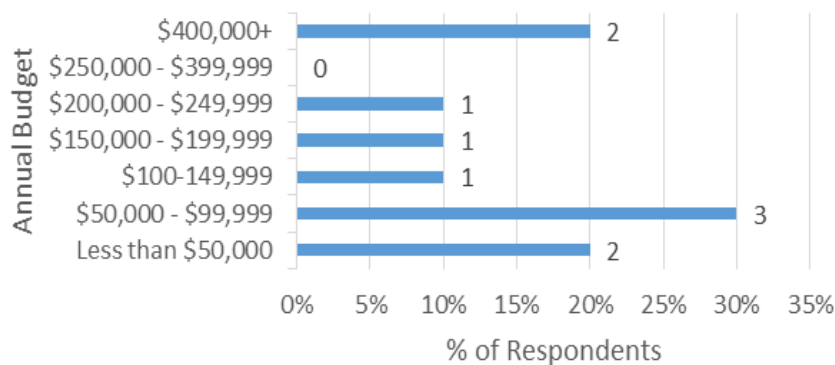


Figure 5: Respondents' Annual Budget

³⁴ The Belize dollar is pegged to the US dollar at a rate of 2:1.

Since usage of funds has sustainability implications, the respondents were also asked to breakdown their annual budget into specific categories. “Using the current or most recent annual budget, estimate what percentage is used for the purposes listed below:

- Salaries
- Rent and Utilities
- Transport
- Office/Cleaning Supplies
- PR/Advocacy/Outreach
- Projects/Programs Activities
- Miscellaneous”

Overhead/core costs comes out on top as the primary expenses for the majority of the organizations. Figure 6, displays the average percentage breakdown by category, showing that salaries alone account for an average of 37.7% of the respondents’ budget, while program and project activities account for 26.8%. When overhead costs are averaged as a bloc comprising salaries, rent and utilities, transport, and supplies, the percentage average swells to 63% of the budget.

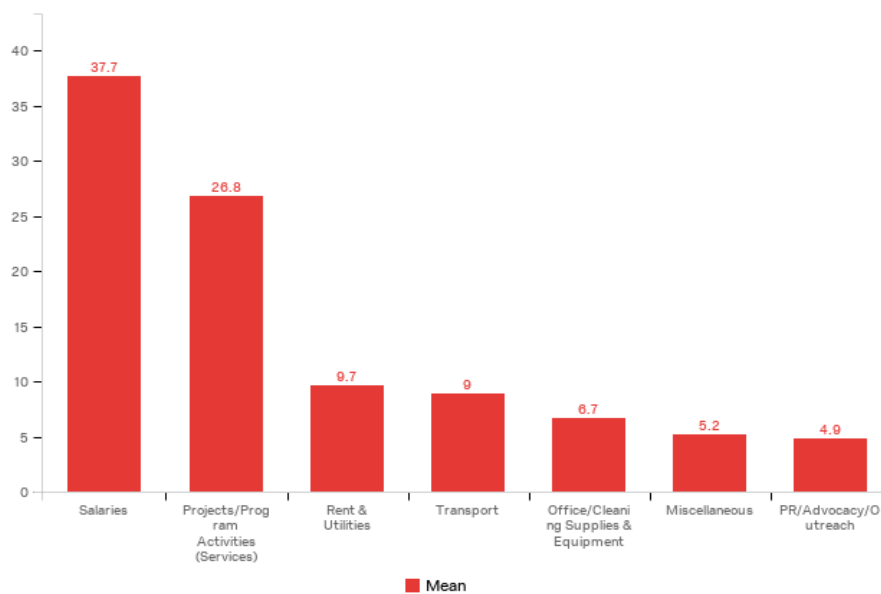


Figure 6: Respondents’ Spending by Categories (Percentage)

Taking a more in depth look at the individual organizations, in Table 1 below, we see two agencies report that salaries accounted for 70% or more of their budget. At the other end of the spectrum, one organization lists no funds for salary since they don’t formally have employees. We can also see that the NGOs with the smallest budgets for salaries most naturally

spent the highest percentage on programs and projects (60% and 70%).

Table 1: Respondents Budget by Category

Rent & Utilities %	Salaries %	Office/Cleaning Supplies %	Transport %	PR/Advocacy/Outreach %	Projects/Program Activities %	Misc. %
10	0	5	5	5	70	5
10	10	5	5	0	60	10
20	20	10	10	10	20	10
5	25	10	30	10	15	5
7	40	5	10	12	25	1
15	40	5	10	5	20	5
0	45	6	10	0	35	4
10	52	14	8	2	13	1
5	70	5	2	5	10	3
15	75	2	0	0	0	8
9.7%	37.7%	6.7%	9%	4.9%	26.8%	5.2%

Findings: Type and Source of Funds

Knowing how much funds the organization needs and how they use it, the remaining questions in this section covers where they source these funds. In its 2013-2014 budget, the Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation reports that it distributed 1.7 million Belize dollars in grants. Nine or 69% of the survey respondents mention benefitting from that government subvention. Of those that benefit, the subvention covers up to 25% of the budget for six organizations, while three report that the subvention comprise 50-100% of their annual budget. In a cross-tabulation using these two parameters, three of the respondents who answered the subvention questions did not list their budget. Of those that did answer both questions, we see can see from Table 2, that the organization with the highest reliance on a subvention (76-100%) falls in the \$50-99,999 budget range. Additionally, we can also see that the organizations with the largest budgets do not receive a government subvention. In terms of the type of social services government funds, Table 3 reveals a trend towards organizations with emphases on education/training and childcare.

Table 2: Budget & Subvention Cross-tabulation								
		What size budget does the organization typically require to carry out its activities?						
What percentage of the annual budget does the government subvention cover?	%	Less than \$50,000	\$50,000-\$99,999	\$100,00-149,999	\$150,000 - \$199,999	\$200,000-\$249,999	Unknown Budget	Total
	1-25	2	1	0	1	0	2	6
	26-50	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	51-75	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	76-100	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Totals	2	2	0	1	1	3	9	

Table 3: Services by Subvention Recipients			
Subvention	Service1	Service2	Service3
Yes	Day-care	Preschool	Residential care
Yes	Childcare	Preschool	Skills training
Yes	Conferences	Banquet	Speech competition
Yes	Alternative Education	Parenting Class	SRH Education
Yes	Residential Care	Home Care	Day-care
Yes	Facilitate prosthetic clinics	Conduct Outreach Programs	Supply access equipment
Yes	Proposal writing	Networking	Gender training
Yes	Feeding Program	Literacy Program	HIV/AIDS Education
Yes	Emergency Shelter		

Another important aspect within NGO funding is the category of funds the organizations access. Asked to select ‘what type of funding does the organization typically receives’, the majority of the agencies report that they collect a mix of two or more types of funding. Figure 7 shows that 77% select that they receive grants, 62% project funds, 54% individual donations, and 38% receive program funds.

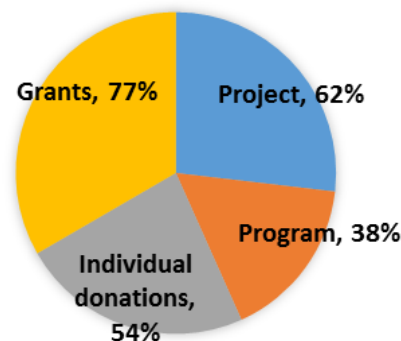


Figure 7: Respondents' Funding by Category

As to whether those funds are one-time or recurring, fifty-four percent of the respondents

reported receiving recurrent funds.

Donors sometimes place restrictions on their funds dictating how and on which activities/projects/populations those funds should be used. Restrictions are often also placed on use of funds for core costs. When asked to state what percentage of their funds are restricted, three respondents list that 94-100% of their funding is restricted. Three others report a 70-90% restriction, while the remaining four lists restrictions ranging from 1-50%. Three respondents did not answer.

One means by which some NGOs supplement donor funds to pay for activities and core costs is to charge a fee for services. Fifty-four percent (7) of the organizations report they charge fees; 46% (3) did not. Of the agencies that do charge, Table 4: Fees and Services Cross-Tabulation shows that many of them are involved in education and/or the childcare sector.

Table 4: Fees and Services Cross-Tabulation			
Fees	Service1	Service2	Service3
Yes	Day-care	Preschool	Residential care
Yes	Childcare	Preschool	Skills training
Yes	Conferences	Banquet	Speech competition
Yes	Alternative Education	Parenting Class	SRH Education
Yes	Credit Delivery Services	Grant Project Implementation	Consultancy
Yes	Residential Care	Home Care	Day-care
Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown

Another means of income-generation is fundraising. Eighty-five percent of the agencies report raising funds locally. Forty-six percent hold annual fundraisers, 23% each report holding bi-annual or quarterly fundraisers, while 8% report weekly efforts. The success of those fundraising efforts is almost evenly split as per Figure 8. When asked, “when fund-raising, how often do you meet or exceed fund-raising goals”, 50% percent report meeting their goals all or most of the time, while 8% report never meeting goals.

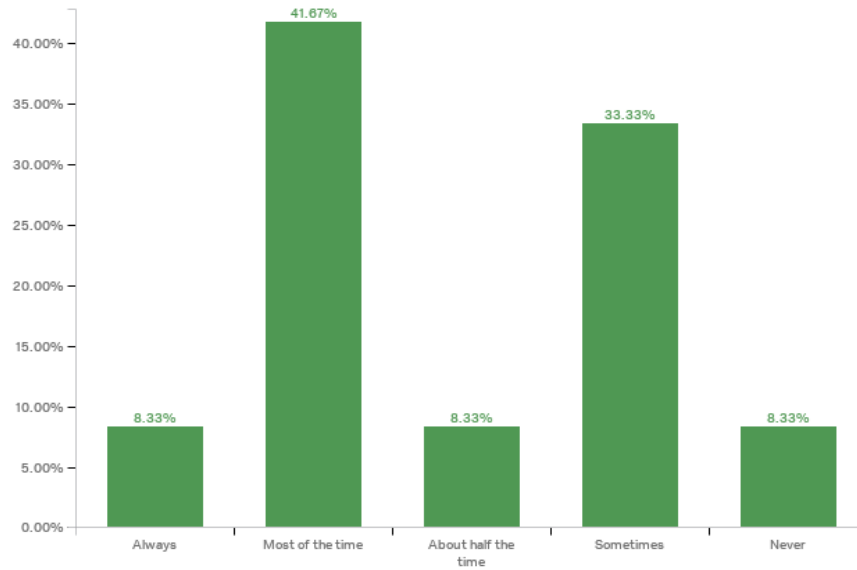


Figure 8: Respondents' Fundraising Success

When questioned on, “what percentage of your funding comes from local, regional and international sources?” Figure 9, details that local sources account for 54% of the funding for the agencies, regional sources account for 15%, and international 30%.

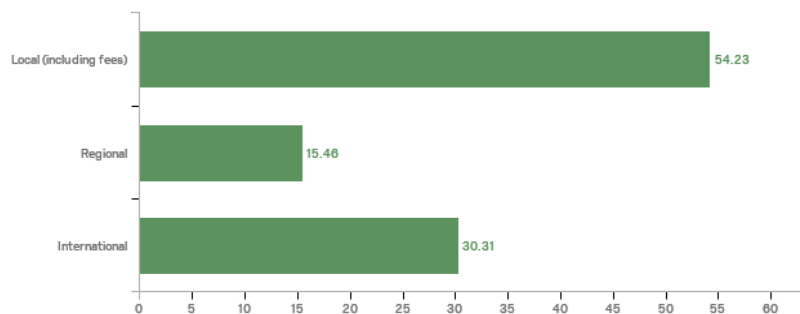


Figure 9: Funding Sources by Location (Percentage)

As for which agencies in these different regions are providing funds, it can be seen from Table 5, that the United States is the most often cited donor country via various programs, followed by multi-lateral organizations such as the UN agencies.

Multilateral	Bilateral	International NGO	Local
World Bank	USAID	Tides Foundation	Belize Social Security Board
UNICEF	US Embassy	Open Society Foundation	Government of Belize
UNDP	US Central American Regional Security Initiative	PSI/Caribbean	Lifeline Foundation
IDB	US State Department		
UN	Canada Fund		

Findings: NGO Sustainability

Finance plays a significant role in sustainability, but it is not the only factor determining the longevity of an NGO. This section continues to probe into financial sustainability, but also ventures into strategic planning and collaboration amongst agencies. The respondents were asked to, “list the organization’s top 3 financial/fund raising concerns.” From Table 6, we can see two categories are particularly concerning to NGOs: the lack of donors/need to attract more donors and the current lack of monies for core costs. Expanding on the issue of core costs, the organizations were asked to state the frequency with which they had problems funding their administrative costs. Of the ten respondents in Figure 10, three (30%) state it is a constant concern; 60% said it is a problem occasionally, while for one it is never an issue.

Concern 1	Concern 2	Concern 3
Lack of International Funding	Need for Proposal Writing Training	Slow response for Proposals
Depressed local economy	No fund for recurrent expenditures	No funds for salaries
Membership fees	Tuition	Accessing grants
Poor Banquet ticket sales	Poor conference attendance	
Low participation	Not making a profit	Low pool of grant donors
Long Term Core Finances	Injections of new Credit resources	Expansion of office infrastructure
Limited number of generous donors	Over-dependency of the limited donors	Need to network to attract major donors
No money for programs	Government only funder at time	No money to pay staff
Human Rights violations	Discrimination	Redress mechanism

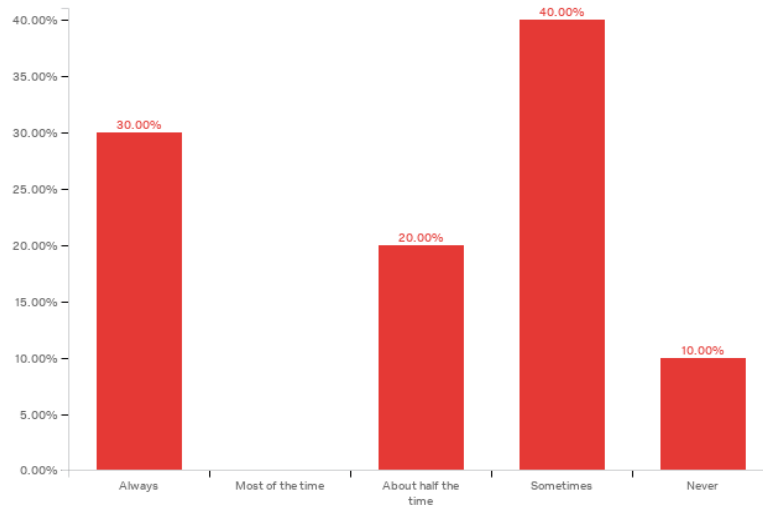


Figure 10: Respondents' Ability to Fund Core Costs

To explore the topic of aid volatility, participants were asked, “over the last 5 years has there been any changes in funding to the organization?” Figure 11, shows 63% of respondents reporting an increase or no change in funding, with 36% noting a decrease.

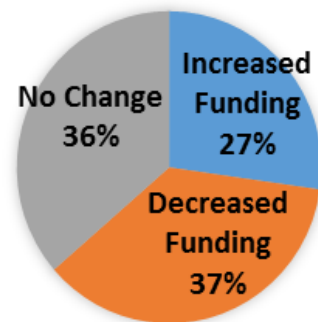


Figure 11: Changes in Funding in Last 5 Yrs.

Another question asked, “Within the last 5 years, has the organization had to change how it operates in order to access donor funding?” Twenty-seven percent (3) said “yes”, listing that they’ve had to:

- Develop a strategic plan
- Plan strategic large fundraisers with partners
- Lobby the government ministries & other entities
- Increase public awareness initiatives & build alliances
- Enact monitoring and evaluation

- Extend services

Interestingly, two of the three organizations which implemented changes report no change in the funding access, while one cited a decrease in funding. It thus appears that either the effected changes are not yet reaping benefits or that changes were made to maintain current funding.

Outside of finance, another predominant concern for the organizations is human resources. The NGOs report being concerned with retaining, attracting, or training staff. Also cited were organizational issues such as the need for a strategic plan, updating their constitution, and putting in place systems and structure. As to whether they had a strategic plan, ten respondents answered with 80% reporting, yes.

The final segment of the survey dealt with the topic of collaboration between agencies. Respondents were asked to report on, “How often does your NGO liaise/partner with other organizations in the same sector?” and, “How would you describe the level of collaboration/communication between NGOs in the sector?” The responses are mostly positive with 40% reporting that they collaborate monthly and 30% quarterly; 30% say they join forces on approximately a yearly basis. Positive responses were also reported for the level of communication and collaboration with 60% reporting that they have good relationships with other agencies. Thirty percent believe the level of collaboration to be average, while 20% report poor inter-agency collaboration. The effects and benefits of these interorganizational collaboration are unknown as they were not investigated. However, the fact that is occurring with some level of frequency lends itself to the assumption that some benefits are being derived from the collaborations.

Case Study: BFLA

Five years ago, the Belize Family Life Association experience a financial crisis which threatened its survival. The purpose of this case study is to explore what caused the financial crisis, how the organization coped, and what lessons can be learned from its experience.

The Belize Family Life Association originated thirty-one years ago in 1985 in Southern Belize. According to its website, the impetus for its formation by the five women founders was concern about the rate of teen pregnancy and the lack of spacing between births.³⁵ It didn't take the organization very long to gain credibility and become affiliated with international and regional agencies namely the Caribbean Family Planning Affiliation and International Planned Parenthood Federation (Western Hemisphere).

With its mission to be “the country’s leading non-profit provider of comprehensive and high quality sexual and reproductive health services,”³⁶ BFLA expanded quickly despite the fact that sexual education was—and continues to be—a controversial topic in Belize.³⁷ Within a decade, the organization went from a single center in Dangriga Town to having multiple sites in the country and its headquarters to Belize City. Today BFLA operates six stationary clinics in four districts, along with three mobile clinics using a staff of approximately fifty employees.

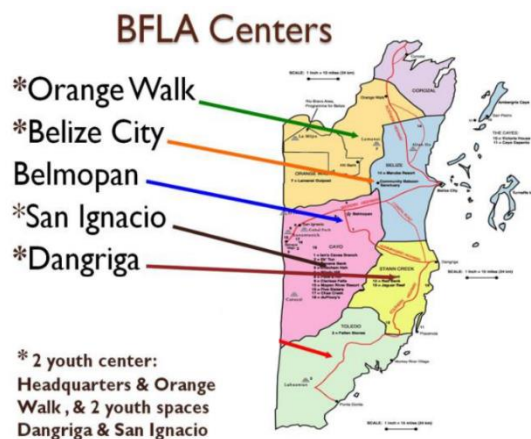


Figure 12: BFLA Centers by Location³⁸

BFLA offers a variety of clinical services including: gynecological tests, abortions, pre-natal and post-natal care, HIV/STI counselling and testing, EKGs, urinalysis, and family planning and contraceptives. Its non-clinical services are mainly geared at young people with a

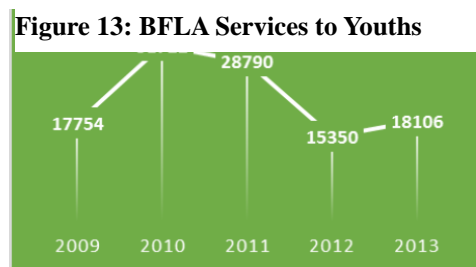
³⁵ Belize Family Life Association, “About Us”, <http://www.bflabelize.org/about-us-2/history>, (accessed March, 20, 2015).

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Adele Ramos, “Education Pulls Controversial Peace Corps Sex Manual from Primary Schools,” The Amandala Newspaper, 14 September 2012. <http://amandala.com.bz/news/education-pulls-controversial-peace-corps-sex-manual-primary-schools/>, (accessed July 30, 2016).

³⁸ Belize Family Life Association, “Annual Performance Report 2012-2013,” <http://www.bflabelize.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Annual-Report-2012-2013-final-draft1.pdf>, (accessed January 20, 2016).

goal “to create spaces and opportunities for all youth to enjoy meaningful sexual and reproductive lives free of exploitation, coercion, stigmatization and discrimination, and where their rights are respected.” Via its Youth Advocate Movement (YAM), Peer Educators, and Behaviour Change Communication programs in and out of schools, BFLA educates, trains, and provides “youth friendly spaces” where young people can surf the internet, hang out, and have access to SRH information and counsellors.³⁹ In its 2012-2013 Annual Report, BFLA notes that it had provided 66,859 sexual and reproductive health services to the Belizean public, of which young people (under 25) account for just over 18,000 or approximately 38%⁴⁰ of its clients (Figure 13).



Service provision to youths is one of the main reasons why BFLA is an important organization in Belize. According to the 2010 “*National Gender Policy: Situation Analysis of Gender Issues in Belize*”, not only does the country have a high rate of teenage pregnancy and HIV prevalence, there is also a glaring lack of healthcare services both in the number of health centers and in the ratio of medical personnel to population size. The document notes that, “the BFLA continues to provide the most comprehensive SRH services in Belize, albeit on a small scale. ... [and] while the Ministry of Health scales up its SRH services for adolescents, BFLA continues to target adolescent men and women in the provision of overall sexual and reproductive health services.”⁴¹ Furthermore, while Belize does have a Health and Family Life

³⁹ Belize Family Life Association, “Non-Clinical Services: BFLA’s Youth Programme,” <http://www.bflabelize.org/services/non-clinical>, (accessed March, 20, 2015).

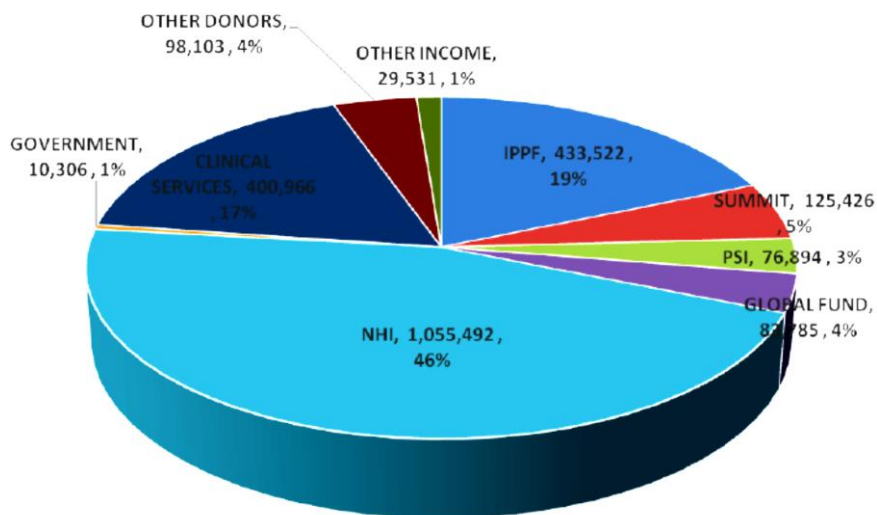
⁴⁰ BFLA, 13.

⁴¹ National Women’s Commission, *National Gender Policy: Situation Analysis of Gender Issues in Belize*, by Adele Catzim-Sanchez, (2010), 13-16, http://www.dbzchild.org/uploads/docs/national_gender_policy_situation_analysis_of_gender_issues_in_belize_2010.pdf.

Education (HFLE) curriculum within schools to provide children and youths with age appropriate sexual and reproductive health education, the program is met with resistance, especially from the Catholic institutions which manage approximately 20% of the schools in the country. The situational analysis notes that there is also “reluctance” on that part of teachers who report being uncomfortable discussing such topics with students and “prefer to engage other agencies who they feel are better equipped to deliver this information.”⁴² BFLA is one of the key agencies conducting SRH education within the schools.

BFLA is unique among social organizations in the clinical services it provides. In 2001, it was contracted to deliver primary care via the government’s National Health Insurance (NHI) scheme—which has become a major source of income for the organization. By 2013, NHI accounted for over a million dollars or forty-six percent of BFLA’s income. Figure 14, also shows other major sources of funding includes clinical fees outside of NHI (17%) and donations from IPPF (19%).⁴³

Figure 14: BFLA Income by Category 2013⁴⁴



Despite fees and recurrent financial support from international donors, BFLA is not

(accessed September 5, 2016).

⁴² Ibid., 45.

⁴³ BFLA, 17.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 17.

immune to financial troubles. In 2011, the organization faced its biggest crisis since inception: a \$142,027 deficit which nearly resulted in the closure of its offices. In an October 2011, interview with the media, Executive Director Joan Burke explained that the organization was unable to pay its staff due to a reduction in persons accessing its paid services.

When we look at the expenses of the association we have two levels. We have of course the operational cost which includes that of personnel and our rental for the facilities that we have to rent, as well as the programmatic part which includes the different activities and projects that we implement.... However, for the most part projects do not pay salaries and the income for personnel basically we generate those incomes from the persons walking into the clinics and accessing the services which unfortunately over time we're having less and less persons coming in and accessing the paid services of the organization. So as we stand yes whilst we have projects and funds for projects we don't have monies for personnel and so that is the current situation where we have no more monies to meet the operational cost.⁴⁵

This struggle to pay core/administrative expenses, is widely cited as a problem by NGOs across the world and at the time of the crisis, restricted funds accounted for 29% of BFLA's income as can be seen in Figure 15.⁴⁶

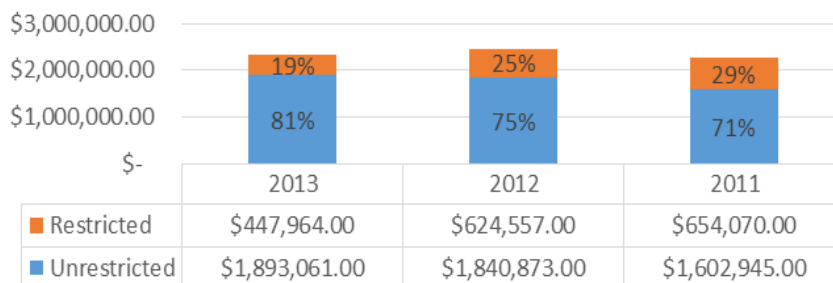


Figure 15: BFLA Restricted/Unrestricted Funds 2011-2013

However, its biggest problem in 2011 wasn't solely restrictive funds, which as can be

⁴⁵ Cayetano, News 5.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 16.

seen from the chart above has decline by 10% over three years. BFLA’s greatest expense was and continues to be in administering its NHI and clinical services. Figure 16, reveals that combined those services accounted for sixty percent of the NGO’s expenses in 2011. Clinic and medical services did not bring in sufficient cash to cover the expenses of running those programs, which in 2011 accounted for approximately 55% of income, but utilized 61% of its expenses. As such, the services were not generating enough income to assist with paying for core expenses outside those programs and for which the organization does not charge fees. During that same time period, BFLA reports that it also experienced resignations, staff protests, and the dissolution of its board of directors.

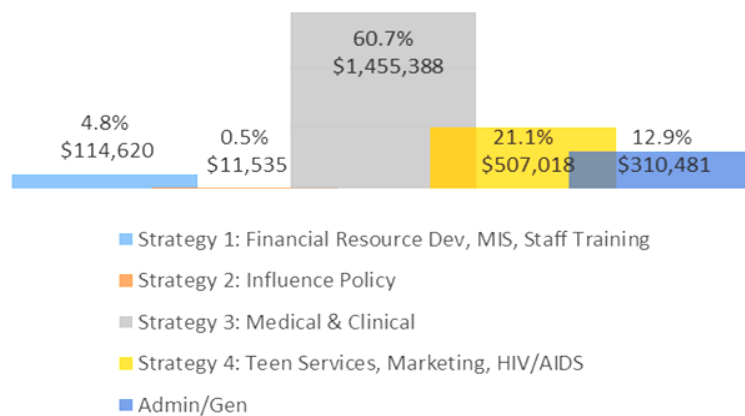


Figure 16: BFLA Expenses by Category 2011

But while the situation appeared grave, the NGO was able to weather the crisis by implementing a variety of measures which resulted in a \$485,678 surplus in the year following the crisis and a \$356,581 surplus in 2013.⁴⁷ The director reports that the organization undertook various cost cutting measures including reducing services at select centers, revising job descriptions and reducing staff. It also started out-sourcing some services, such as data management, and improved the management of office supplies and vehicles.

Along with a new board of directors, BFLA also implemented other medium to long term measures to improve its sustainability, including adopting a monthly income monitoring

⁴⁷ Ibid., 16.

system, implementing a fundraising subcommittee within its board of directors, establishing an independent group of “Friends of BFLA” to assist with fundraising, and holding an annual fundraising event in the form of a music concert. The organization also expanded its base of customers by becoming a provider of preventative healthcare services to Sagacor Insurance policy holders. Additionally, in the two years after the crisis, BFLA kept its expenditures stable at \$1.9 Mil compared to \$2.3 Mil in 2011.

BFLA also increase its income by \$200,000+ in 2012. And although 2013 saw a \$151,405 decrease, Table 7⁴⁸ nonetheless shows a surplus which was gained by controlling costs.

Table 7: BFLA Income 2011-2013

Income	2013	2012	2011
Unrestricted	\$ 1,893,061.00	\$ 1,840,873.00	\$ 1,602,945.00
IPPF	\$396,766.00	\$379,849.00	\$340,431.00
Government	\$10,306.00	\$21,754.00	\$12,229.00
NHI	\$ 1,055,492.00	\$994,104.00	\$802,729.00
Other Donors		\$40,143.00	\$19,543.00
Other Income	\$430,497.00	\$405,023.00	\$428,013.00
Restricted	\$447,964.00	\$624,557.00	\$654,070.00
IPPF	\$63,756.00	\$186,311.00	\$278,821.00
Summit	\$125,426.00	\$124,813.00	\$148,614.00
PSI	\$76,894.00	\$260,107.00	\$195,967.00
Global Fund	\$83,785.00	\$19,494.00	
Other Donors	\$98,103.00	\$33,832.00	\$30,668.00
Total	\$ 2,341,025.00	\$ 2,465,430.00	\$ 2,257,015.00

It should also be noted that NHI, which accounts for the bulk of the organization’s income, increase by \$252,763 from 2011-2013, and at the same time the program’s expenses fell by \$291,970. From the medical and clinical income and expenses below in Figure 17, we see that the program began sustaining itself in the year following the crisis.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 16.

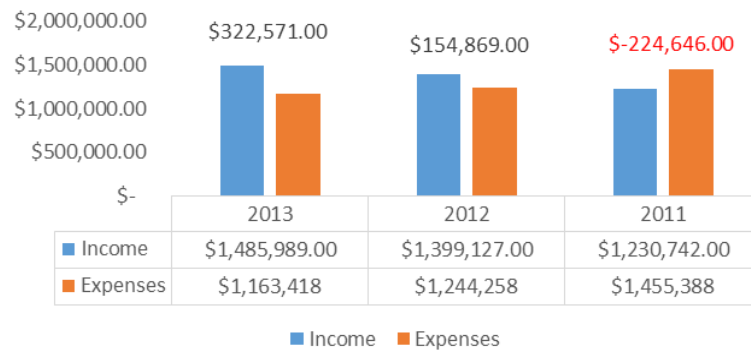


Figure 17: BFLA Medical/Clinical Income and Expenses 2011-2013

BFLA also worked on its capacity building. Five members of its board of directors completed an online training in advocacy and governance, while staff were trained to utilize a new accounting and clinic data management system.

This rebound does not mean that BFLA is now without challenges. Keeping and attracting new clients will continue to be an issue as organizations in the same SRH field and some government services offer for free some of the same services BFLA sells (e.g. pap smears and condoms). Additionally, although BFLA's fees are significantly lower than those of private institutions, some clients are nonetheless unable to pay.

DISCUSSION

BFLA's actions during its financial crisis contained many elements of the research findings cited by Rajarajeswari (2013) and Low and Davenport (2002). The NGO focused on cutting costs, increasing and diversifying income, strengthening capacity and management via trainings and established new systems. BFLA also continues to utilize a strategic plan as well as annual reports and audits. But while in some instances the close-call that BFLA faced is similar to that of other NGOs in that it experienced problems paying for core costs, its situation is nonetheless unique. BFLA has consistent and recurrent funding from its international affiliates, charges fees for its services which helps to bolster funds, is a very large organization when compared to the average NGO in Belize, and therefore has resources and recourses at its disposal that other smaller organizations may not.

The author finds that a much more typical financial crisis is that a major funder exits the country and sends an NGO into a financial downward spiral from which it may never recover. That was the situation for several organizations including Alliance Against AIDS (AAA) and CARE-Belize.

Alliance Against AIDS was formed in 1998 to provide education and support to persons at-risk of HIV/AIDS and to those already infected. The organization managed a helpline where it provided information, education, support and referrals, as well as advocated for the rights of all persons living with HIV and their immediate families. AAA was one of six NGOs affected by the 2011 withdrawal of Dutch funding agency, HIVOS, from Belize. According to AAA's Executive Director, Rodel Beltran-Perera, HIVOS was an important donor because it funded core costs.

...the uniqueness of HIVOS was administrative funding, and we are going to lose that. So, there is now a risk for the Alliance Against AIDS of having to pull back, or even contemplate closing our doors. And so, we want to look at other areas, and to ask people

if they do, for us to continue our work, to give us a helping hand somehow.⁴⁹

For its part, HIVOS, blames the exit on shrinking funds and therefore shifting priorities.

Susana Rochna, Program Officer for HIVOS explained to 7News:

Unfortunately, we're under in this scenario of reduction in the corporation funds. We haven't been able to escape from that. The Dutch, as well as other European countries, is revising its budget creation and its policies toward international corporations. And although we are not a Governmental institution, we HIVOS, receive most of our funds from the Governmental budget.⁵⁰

Alliance Against AIDS never did recover from the loss of HIVOS' support. Beltran further explained that “financing has dwindled for HIV globally” as a result of “global reduction in new HIV infections as well as deaths due to... access to ARVs throughout the world.”⁵¹ By 2013, AAA had closed its offices and all but ceased services. At least two other organizations also collapsed after the HIVOS departure: BOWAND and SPEAR. Another NGO, WIN-Belize, has been taken under the wing of BFLA. The fate of the other two organizations affected by the withdrawal is unknown.

For disability NGO, CARE-Belize, donor reductions began in 2007, just five years after it was registered. The NGO was one of the only organizations providing community-based rehabilitation (CBR) services to persons with physical disabilities in Belize and at its peak had rehabilitation field officers in all six districts, working mostly in rural areas. CARE's main donors were CBM International and the Government of Belize. According to Executive Director, Evan Cowo, “funding cuts began in 2007 because of a shift in CBM policies to cut support for middle income countries all over the world.”⁵² CBM completely withdrew from Belize in 2009, leaving

⁴⁹ McFadzean, 7News, December 14.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Rodel Beltran Perera, email correspondence to author, May 21, 2013.

⁵² Evan Cowo, email correspondence to author, July 25, 2016.

CARE with a \$95,000 gap in its budget. The organization survived in the ensuing years through the government subvention which covered approximately 35% of its budget, by fundraising, and through project funding. It was not enough, however, to sustain the organization and it gradually decreased operations by not filling posts when staff resigned. CARE-Belize ceased operations in 2013 when its remaining six staff and CBR services were absorbed by a newly formed NGO, The Inspiration Center—which was also established to provide services to children with disabilities.

However, not all NGOs collapse with the exit of a funder. In 2014, the Belize Council for the Visually Impaired (BCVI) lost the support of funder, Sightsavers International, which had been contributing to the organization for thirty-four years. Shifting donor priorities is also the reason in this case as the funder decided to gradually withdraw support from the Caribbean. There are many similarities between BCVI and BFLA, including that BCVI was formed in the 80s, charges fees for services (eye care and glasses), is an NHI provider, and has five locations across the country. It also has a large staff (32) and receives a subvention from the government. As such, BCVI has means at its disposal to cope with the \$100,000 loss in funding, without its operations being severely affected. In fact, in the final year of Sightsavers International funding (2014), BCVI reported a \$66,000 surplus.⁵³ That surplus expanded to \$210,226 according to its 2015 annual report, which also shows that BCVI has managed to reduce its operating expenses by \$40,000.⁵⁴

The lessons learned from these cases are that while it is important for organizations to have consistent and unrestricted funding to support core costs; it is just as important that they have a diversified income whereby the organization does not rely on any single source for the majority of its funding. In its Four Pillars of Financial Sustainability, The Nature Conservancy recommends that “at least 60% of the organization’s overall budget must come from five different sources.”⁵⁵ Also noteworthy is that of the organizations mentioned in this research

⁵³ Belize Council for the Visually Impaired, “Annual Report 2014,” 23, <http://www.bcvi.org/annual-report-2014>, (accessed January 15, 2016).

⁵⁴ Belize Council for the Visually Impaired, “Annual Report 2015,” 30-31, <http://www.bcvi.org/annual-report-2015>, (accessed August 2, 2016).

⁵⁵ The Nature Conservancy, 16.

which have closed, none charged for services. As such, own-income generation also supports sustainability. Size also appears to be a factor affecting sustainability as bigger (and older) organizations have been able to cope with funding crises better than their smaller counterparts.

NGOs cope with funding reductions by either reducing services and/or staff and by management of organizational resources. Sometimes, this temporary reduction assists them to regain their financial foothold, but if that donor is not replaced or if other sources of income are not found, closure appears to be an eventuality.

These findings support the main claim that financial sustainability is one of the foremost resource constraints for social service NGOs in Belize; a problem is heightened by aid volatility. However, there is insufficient evidence to link the cause of that aid volatility to the global financial crisis. HIVOS did report a reduction in funding, however, it appears that the main cause for the aid volatility is shifting priorities by donors.

Sub-claim 1: medium to long-term financing is one of the primary challenges for the sustainability of Belize's social sector, has also been proven accurate, as the organizations report via survey that they are mainly concerned with the lack of/attracting donors and with funding core costs.

For sub-claim 2: NGOs need to become more strategic and collaborative to increase their sustainability and efficiency, 80% of the survey respondents did report utilizing strategic planning, however, the extent to which those plans are utilized is undetermined. Additionally, there is insufficient evidence to support that there is an overlap in services within this social sector. It is more likely that some parts of the country, such as the south, is underserved. However, there is support for the collaboration portion of the claim as respondents report regular and positive interactions with other NGOs.

Sub-claim 3: Belize's NGOs need to improve their institutional capacity to compete at the regional and global level to attract funding, was not fully proven. While Belize has seen the withdrawal of at least three funding agencies, there is not enough evidence to support that

improper administration or inefficient use of aid by the NGOs was a factor in the loss of those donors. Nonetheless, research outside of Belize has determined that institutional capacity is an important factor in the sustainability of organizations⁵⁶ and additionally, the survey respondents report organizational capacity in the area of staffing as a primary concern.

⁵⁶ Supported by Low and Davenport (2002), Rajarajeswari (2013), and Unerman and O'Dwyer (2010)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To summarize, the author has determined that social service organizations comprise almost a third of Belize's NGOs, but there has been a decline due to the reducing number of new registrants and with the closure of some organizations. With 36% percent of survey respondents reporting a decrease in funding, it is possible that there may be more closures in the coming years unless action is taken and new sources of funding found.

These CSOs show variety in size and budget, however, core costs comprise the majority of their budgets and most report having problems supporting these costs. To cope with those costs and associated projects and activities, they utilize government subvention (69%), charge fees and fundraise. Surprisingly, respondents report that an average of 54% of their funding comes from local sources. Aside from subventions, the country does have small to medium sized donors which donate as a form of corporate social responsibility. These include the Social Security Board, banks and credit unions, utility companies and some large businesses. There are a few charity organizations, such as the Lifeline Foundation, which fundraises to support causes and there are government-based agencies such as the Social Investment Fund which supports community development activities. Companies which act as donors, however, do so solely as a means of social responsibility and for positive publicity as there are no tax incentive regulations in Belize to reward or encourage such donations. Aside from local sources, bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors are the other main sources of funding for organizations.

In conclusion, the author has confirmed that while some organizations are flourishing even in the face of donor withdrawals and funding reductions, others cannot withstand the loss and collapse. Investments must therefore be made in strategic and financial planning for all NGOs, regardless of size with plans for worse-case scenarios in the event of donor exits or shifting priorities. The author also agrees with the other researchers in that NGOs need to diversify their income and not rely on a limited number of donors or wait until they lose a donor

to look for another. Even if an NGO cannot charge fees—which many cannot—it can fundraise or create campaigns to generate income. The government can also play a role in supporting the fundraising efforts of NGOs by enacting donor tax incentive regulations which can encourage businesses and individuals to increase or begin to donate. Additionally, organizations can immediately start to implement better management of current resources and cut unnecessary or inflated costs rather than wait for a crisis to implement cost control measures.

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations were encountered while undertaking this research. Firstly, the availability of information on many of the NGOs (in particular the smaller organizations) was severely limiting. The author had to rely on her own knowledge and experiences in the arena along with tips from other knowledgeable individuals on where to find information. There was also no local baseline data from which the author could draw as no other research of this kind was found on the status of NGOs in the social arena or in general in Belize.

With regards to the survey, while the rate of response is relatively high, item non-response was an issue as some respondents did not answer several critical questions. This posed problems when attempting cross-tabulation analysis and/or detecting trends. Another drawback to an electronic survey was the inability to probe further for explanation to open-ended questions. Additionally, the majority of respondents came from the urban area of the Belize and Cayo Districts. Their experiences may be different from those organizations that are based in rural areas.

For the case study, limitations were encountered in that the majority of the information came from a narrow number of sources. Lacking a broader range of historical information on these organizations affected the author's ability to conduct a more in depth analysis.

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APPENDIX A: LIST OF SOCIAL SERVICE NGOS IN BELIZE

No.	Organization	Year Est.	Location	Status
1.	Belize Family Life Association	1985	Belize City (HQ)	Active
2.	Belize Association for Persons with Diverse Abilities	2009	Belize City	Active
3.	Belize Cancer Society	1996	Belize City	Active
4.	Belize Diabetes Association	1991	Belize City	Active
5.	Belize Emergency Response Team	1996	Belize City	Active
6.	Belize Council for the Visually Impaired	1981	Belize City	Active
7.	Belize Enterprise for Sustainable Technology	1985	Belmopan/Belize City	Active
8.	Centre for Community Resource Development (CCRD)	2010	Belize City	Active
9.	Child Development Foundation	2008	Belmopan	Active
10.	Collaborative Network for Persons living with HIV (C-Net +)	2011	Belize City	Active
11.	Cornerstone Foundation	1999	San Ignacio	Active
12.	Friends of Pediatrics	1998	Belize City	Active
13.	Hand in Hand Ministries	2002	Belize City	Active
14.	Hand Wash Hand		Belize City	Active
15.	Help for Progress	1981	Belmopan	Active
16.	Here's Hope Ministries/Hosanna House		Cayo District	Active
17.	Haven House	1993	Belize City	Active
18.	HelpAge Belize	1984	Belize City	Active
19.	Liberty Foundation	2005	Belize District	Active
20.	Lifeline Foundation	2004	Belize City	Active
21.	Mental Health Association	2000	Belize City	Active
22.	Maya Youth Coalition	2006	Toledo District	Unknown
23.	Mary Open Doors	2008	Cayo District	Active
24.	Plenty Belize Limited	1997	Toledo District	Active
25.	Pickstock Development Association	2008	Belize City	Active
26.	POWA	2003	Stann Creek	Active
27.	Special Olympics Belize	2006	Belize City	Active
28.	The Inspiration Center	2014	Belize City	Active
29.	TIKKUN OLAM Belize	2006	Orange Walk/Belize	Active
30.	Toledo Maya Women's Council	1997	Toledo District	Active
31.	Tumul K'in Center of Learning	1997	Toledo District	Active
32.	United Belize Advocacy Movement (UNIBAM)	2006	Belize City	Active
33.	Voice (Belize)	2007	Belmopan, Cayo	Active
34.	Women Issues Network of Belize	1993	Belize City	Unknown
35.	Youth Enhancement Services	1989	Belize District	Active
36.	Young Women's Christian Association	1956	Belize/Belmopan	Active
37.	Young Men's Christian Association	197	Belize City	Active

38.	CARE Belize	2002	Belize City	Inactive
39.	Belize Organization for Women and Development (BOWAND)		Belize City	Inactive
40.	Alliance Against AIDS	1998	Belize City	Inactive
41.	H.A.N.D.S. Belize Foundation	2004	Stann Creek	Unknown
42.	Parent Association of Children with Special Needs		Belize City	Inactive
43.	National Organization for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect	1992	Belize City	Inactive

APPENDIX B: NGO SUSTAINABILITY SURVEY

Q5 Thank you for participating in this survey on NGO Financial Sustainability in Belize's Social Sector. This survey will ask questions pertaining to the operation of your organization, with special emphasis on funding and sustainability. The exercise is purely academic as a means to fulfill the thesis requirement for a Master's Degree in Development Policy from the KDI School of Public Policy and Management. This is not a test; there are no right or wrong answers. Please answer honestly and candidly. Also note that you cannot go back and change your answers so be sure of your response before proceeding to the next page. All answers will be kept anonymous and strictly confidential. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at kendra.griffith@gmail.com or 626-3219. Thanks for your participation!

Q41 Organizational Questions

Q6 Please state your position in the organization:

Q7 What year was the organization established?

Q44 Where is the organization's headquarters located?

- Corozal (1)
- Orange Walk (2)
- Belize (3)
- Cayo (4)
- Stann Creek (5)
- Toledo (6)

Q8 Briefly list the services the organization provides.

- Service 1 (1)
- Service 2 (2)
- Service 3 (3)
- Service 4 (4)
- Service 5 (5)

Q9 Please list the organization's top 3 target populations (leave blank if less than 3).

Population 1 (1) Population 2 (2) Population 3 (3)

Q11 How many employees does the organization have?

_____ Full-time Employees (1) _____ Part-time Employees (2)

Q15 Does the organization use volunteers?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To In which area of Belize does your org...

Q15 How often do you use volunteers?

- Daily (1)
- Weekly (2)
- Monthly (3)
- Quarterly (4)
- Special Events (5)

Q16 How important are volunteers to the organization?

- Extremely important (1)
- Very important (2)
- Moderately important (3)
- Slightly important (4)
- Not at all important (5)

Q17 In which area of Belize does the organization typically conduct its work?

	Urban (1)	Rural (2)
Corozal (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Orange Walk (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Belize (3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cayo (4)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stann Creek (5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toledo (6)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All Districts (7)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q18 List any international organizations or agencies with which the organization is affiliated.

- Organization 1 (1)
- Organization 2 (2)
- Organization 3 (3)

Q42 Funding Questions

Q14 What type of funding does the organization typically receive. (Choose all that apply)

- Program (1)
- Project (2)
- Grants (3)
- Individual Donations (including businesses) (4)

Q15 What percentage of the funds received from donors are restricted funds for specific projects and activities?

_____ Restrictive Funding (1)

Q16 How often does the organization apply for funding or fund raise?

- Weekly (1)
- Monthly (2)
- Quarterly (3)
- Biannually (4)
- Yearly (5)

Q17 Does the organization receive any recurrent donor funding?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q18 Does the organization receive a subvention from the government?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To List the top three countries from whi...

Q19 What percentage of the annual budget does the government subvention cover?

- 1-25% (1)
- 26-50% (2)
- 51-75% (5)
- 76-100% (6)

Q20 List the top three countries from which the organization would typically access funding.

- Country 1 (1)
- Country 2 (2)
- Country 3 (3)

Q21 List the top three organizations from which you would typically access funding.

- Organization 1 (1)
- Organization 2 (2)
- Organization 3 (3)

Q22 Does the organization fund raise locally?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q23 When fund-raising, how often do you meet or exceed fund-raising goals?

- Always (1)
- Most of the time (2)
- About half the time (3)
- Sometimes (4)
- Never (5)

Q25 Does the organization charge fees for any of the services it provides?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q24 What percentage of your funding comes from local, regional and international sources?

- _____ Local (including fees) (1)
- _____ Regional (2)
- _____ International (3)

Q43 Sustainability Questions

Q27 List the organization's top 3 financial/fund raising concerns.

- Concern 1 (1)
- Concern 2 (2)
- Concern 3 (3)

Q28 List up to 3 other concerns you may have about the organization's sustainability, aside from funding.

- Concern 1 (1)
- Concern 2 (2)
- Concern 3 (3)

Q29 What size budget does the organization typically require to carry out its annual mission/services (includes overhead cost)?

- Less than \$50,000 (1)
- \$50,000 - \$99,999 (2)
- \$100,000 - \$149,999 (3)
- \$150,000 - \$199,999 (4)
- \$200,000 - \$249,999 (5)
- \$250,000 - \$399,999 (6)
- \$400,000+ (7)

Q30 Using the current or most recent annual budget, estimate what percentage is used for the purposes listed below:

- _____ Rent & Utilities (1)
- _____ Salaries (2)
- _____ Office/Cleaning Supplies & Equipment (3)
- _____ Transport (5)
- _____ PR/Advocacy/Outreach (4)
- _____ Projects/Program Activities (Services) (6)
- _____ Miscellaneous (7)

Q31 Does the organization have any problems funding administrative costs?

- Always (1)
- Most of the time (2)
- About half the time (3)
- Sometimes (4)
- Never (5)

Q32 Over the last 5 years has there been any changes in funding to the organization?

- Increased Funding (1)
- Decreased Funding (2)
- No Change (3)

Q33 Within the last 5 years, has the organization had to change how it operates in order to access donor funding?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Does management have any plans/measur...

Q34 Briefly list some changes the organization has had to make to access funding.

- Change 1 (1)
- Change 2 (2)
- Change 3 (3)
- Change 4 (4)

Q35 Does management have any plans/measures in place to ensure the sustainability of the organization?

- Yes (1)
- Maybe (2)
- No (3)

Q36 Does the organization have a strategic plan?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q38 How often does your NGO liaise/partner with other organizations in the same sector?

- Weekly (1)
- Monthly (2)
- Quarterly (3)
- Yearly (4)
- Never (5)

Q37 How would you describe the level of collaboration/communication between NGOs in the sector?

- Excellent (1)
- Good (2)
- Average (3)
- Poor (4)
- Terrible (5)

Q40 Thank you for your response... your feedback is greatly appreciated!