

Organizational Capacity Building of Civil Society Organizations (CSO's): A Case of Nandi South District, Kenya

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Abstract

Currently donors are moving away from funding physical projects to funding intangible projects like capacity building, which are of great importance to the attainment of Sustainable development. The attainment of these goals is dependent on the organizational capacities of Civil Society Organizations (CSO's) which in turn affect their performance. This study examines the various forms of organizational capacities of CSO's in Nandi South District, Kenya with a view of explaining how capacity building influences their performance. The study was guided by systems theory which stipulates that organizations should be treated as open systems which are continually dependent upon and influenced by the environments in which they operate. The findings of the study established that there are two forms of organisational capacity building; resource and management. The study also established that most CSO's are dependent on donor funding and that is why they have a weak financial base and are not self sustaining. The study recommends that CSO's should diversify on their sources of funds to enable them be self sustaining.

Key words: *Capacity building, Civil Society Organizations, Sustainable Development*

Introduction

An organization's capacity is its potential to perform, its ability to successfully apply skills and resources. It is also the potential for engaging resources and skills in optimum combination in order to perform relevant activities and tasks in line with the organization's strategy. Organizational capacity explains how two organisations may perform very differently, even if they possess almost identical resources and skills. Organizational performance is influenced not only by how it employs its capacities which includes resources and management, but also by

forces in its external environment. These comprise forces of administrative and legal systems that govern an organisation as well as its political, social cultural context (Horton 2001).

The internal environment relates to the organisation culture, rewards, incentives and management style. All these factors influence organizational performance which in turn affects community development. Capacities also exist among individuals and groups and within the organisation as a whole. Individuals possess knowledge, skills and attitudes that reflect their experience and training. When individuals share their knowledge, skills and attitudes with colleagues, these become embedded in group norms and processes. It can be said that they become part of the group's capacity. And when individuals and group capacities become widely shared among the organization's members and incorporated into management systems and culture, they become organizational capacities (Horton 2001).

Civil society capacity is crucial if they are to deliver on their mandate. Moreover the ultimate goal of capacity building programmes is to support the development of better skilled and knowledgeable individuals, more responsible and effective institutions and a better policy environment for pursuing development objectives. The key message is the importance of going beyond mere skills transfer towards supporting country leadership and strategic decision making, accounting systems and culture of learning and innovation. Local civil society organizations are endowed with resources which include human, financial and even infrastructural. The productivity of these resources depends not only on organizational capacity building but more so on how they are utilized. In order to achieve superior performance, these organisations must learn to do more than merely identifying its needs and acquiring the missing resources. They must learn how to nurture, integrate and deploy their resources to create the capabilities needed to accomplish strategic goals and achieve community development. As such, when the local organization capacities are developed they will be independent and will achieve sustainable community development in the long run since the communities will be involved directly in setting and fulfilling their own development goals (Morgan 1997).

Statement of the Problem

Resources have always been viewed as an important aspect of organisational capacity building because there lie the sources of organization capacities (Morgan 1997). However, it is not its acquisition per se that drive organization performance especially when they are not fully utilized. Organisational capacity may include acquisition of resources but must include learning how to deploy and integrate these resources to accomplish complex task of development.

Research questions

The following questions guided the research:

- i. What sources of funding are available for CSO's in Nandi South District and what is their level of resource utilization?
- ii. How competent are the facilitators offering training to CSO's in Nandi South District?
- iii. Apart from collaboration and networking, what are other capacity building needs of CSO's in Nandi South District?

Theoretical Framework

An organization is a system which is open and prone to interference because both internal and external environment will have to be provided for an organization to perform. Miller and Rice (1967) argue that organizations should be treated as open systems which are continually dependant and upon and influenced by their environment.

The greatest challenge encountered by organizations is that performance is influenced not only by how it employs its capacities which include resources and management, but also forces in its external environment which comprises forces of administration and legal systems that govern an organization as well as its political and social cultural content.

Methodology

The study employed ex post facto research design approach. The study population was CSO's in Nandi South District which included 20 Non-government organizations, 6 faith based organization and 1010 community based organizations. Of these, 38 % were randomly selected as units of study.

Stratified sampling was chosen to select respondents the approach ensured that the desired representation from various Sub groups was achieved. Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire and an interview schedule. Secondary data was obtained mainly from the review of literature and was important in augmenting the findings of the study.

Literature Review

The Basics of Organizational Capacity Building

The terms “capacity” and “capacity building” are used in many different settings. An organization’s capacity is its potential to perform, its ability to successfully apply its skills and resources towards the accomplishment of its goals and the satisfaction of its stakeholder’s expectations. The aim of organizational capacity building is to improve the organisation performance by increasing its resources and management. The forms of capacity building are broadly classified into:

- i. Resources
- ii. Management

Resources include those things traditionally thought of as “hard capacities” such as infrastructure, technology, finance and human resource. Management is concerned with creating the conditions under which appropriate objectives are set and achieved. Three types of management are important:

- i. Strategic leadership
- ii. Programme and process management
- iii. Networking and linkages with groups.

An organisational overall capacity depends upon its resource (human, physical, financial and technological) and its linkages. Although individuals knowledge, skills and attitude development are important, they are not sufficient for developing organizational knowledge and change, capacity development efforts must also include team building and the development of organisational knowledge system that channel human abilities and resource to achieve organizations goal (Horton 2001).

Investments in hard capacities alone i.e. in facilities and resource, will not lead to lasting improvement in performance. Organisations must be able to acquire and effectively use

resources. Hence, managerial capacities, which allow an organisation to effectively acquire and use resources, are crucial for enhancing and sustaining organisation performance.

Management practices are particularly important, in safeguarding the relevance of the organizations through efficiency and effectiveness. There is need to go beyond managing organisations as isolated entities to managing complex programmes, partnership, alliance and networks.

Organisations also need to be flexible and creative in order to adapt to continuously changing conditions. Those that don't learn from experience and change in ways which enhance their performance risk rapid obsolescence (Capacity Org/5, 2003).

Monitoring and evaluation can improve an organization's capacity development efforts because capacity building involves considerable experimentation and learning by doing periodic reflection and analysis. This can help an organisation to keep its capacity development efforts on track and to learn from success and failure. Monitoring and evaluation can be used to compare progress with goals and expectations and to test the assumptions underlying a capacity development effort. They can also provide useful information that managers and programme operators can use to improve their ongoing work and their future planning. (Capacity Org / 5, 2003)

Resources

The resources of society consist not only of free gift of nature such as land, forest and minerals, but also human capacity both mental and physical (Ndegwa, 1996). Resources refer to "hard capacities" such as human resources, financial, technology and infrastructure. Resources are an important aspect of organizational capacity building because they are the sources of organization capacities. Morgan, (1997) further argued that as much as resources are a source of capacities it is not only its acquisition per se that drives an organization's performance especially when they are not fully utilized. Horton (2001) realized that organizational capacity may include acquisition of resources but must include learning how to deploy and integrate these resources to accomplish complex task of development. In the activities of local organizations, concern exists regarding

their system and structures some having remained rigid like the structure and system of government. This is likely to impact on community development because the available limited resources will not be successfully exploited for the benefits of rural people.

Management

According to Kaplan (1999) management is concerned with creating conditions under which appropriate objectives are set and achieved and consists of three categories namely, strategic leadership, programmes and process management and networking and linkages with groups. Management is an important aspect of organizational capacity building because many management practices are particularly important in safeguarding the *relevance* of an organization through *efficiency* and *effectiveness*. Horton (2001) argues that the above three terms are key indicators of organizational performance. Performance ensures accomplishment of strategic goals and satisfaction of the stakeholder's expectations which in turn contributes to development.

Local civil society organizations in Nandi south district are endowed with resources which include human, financial and even infrastructural. The productivity of these resources largely depends not only on organizational capacity building but more so on how they are utilized. In order to achieve superior performance, these organisations must learn to do more than merely identifying its needs and acquiring the missing resources. They must learn how to nurture, integrate and deploy their resources to create the capabilities needed to accomplish strategic goals and achieve community development. As such, when the local organisation capacities are build they will be independent and will achieve sustainable community development in the long run since the communities will be involved directly in setting and fulfilling their own development.

Discussion of the Findings

Resources: Source of funds

The study found out that 37.5% NGO's/FBO's facilitators said they acquired their funds from their contribution, 59.3% from external donors, 9.47% from government and 18.8% others (well wishers, friends and grants). It further established that, 90% of CBO's acquired their funds from

their contribution, 11% from donors and government and other 7% (loans from microfinance institutions).

This showed that most of NGO's obtain their funds from external donors and most CBO's from their contribution. This further indicates that most CSO's are not self sustaining and are more dependent on donors. This explains why most CSO's undertake certain projects /programs and incase donors pull out it becomes their end.

Resource Availability and Utilization

The study found out that the resources available in Nandi South District which can be utilized by CSO's included natural resources, financial resources, human resources, technology and infrastructure and capital (machinery). It was further established that they had not fully utilized these resources. It was evident that CSO's in Nandi South District are endowed with resources but the challenge is on how the resources can be fully utilized.

This shows that many CSO's in Nandi South District lack organizational capacity, which is the potential for engaging resources and skills in optimum combination in order to perform relevant activities and task in line with the organization strategy.

Competence of CSO's Facilitators

The CBO's members affirmed that the NGO's /FBO's facilitators were competent to facilitate the community activities. They rated NGO's training offered to them as 33% very good, 58 % good and 9% poor. The 9% were among those who had developed negative attitude toward training and also they had not attended any training organized by NGOs/ FBOs.

Although male facilitators were many, female facilitators were also represented. 70% were male and 30% were female. This concurred with what Akelo (1999) said, "Despite a noticeable improvement in gender awareness worldwide, data on women's work and economic contribution have remained far from comprehensive".

The study established the following; On the level of education 12% had attained secondary certificate 50% had attained diploma certificates from tertiary colleges and 38% had attained university degree. In addition 53% had worked for a period of between one and two years, 22% a period between three and four years, 16% period between five and nine years and 9% period over ten years. 56% worked elsewhere before joining their current organization and 44% had not. All 100% had attended seminars .The study therefore, found out that CSO's facilitators had skills and experience required to engage in community mobilization so as to involve community in the process of defining and transforming their social problems.

From the responses on interview conducted on NGOs / FBOs personnel the study found that, recruitment of facilitators was done on an open system whereby the vacancies were advertised through media and churches, then qualifying candidates short listed and invited for an interview. It also revealed that the assessment of their work was done through monitoring and evaluation of their activities and they submit monthly reports and the program managers visit them at the field.

Collaboration and Networking

On collaboration and reasons of networking, the study found out that CSO's collaborate and network with other development actors. It further revealed that what had enabled them to work together was interdependency, common community needs and differentiation.

In addition it revealed that, collaboration had affected their development work .This shows that CSO's have discovered that networking was crucial in that, it helps to overcome problems through information exchange and sharing experiences outside their domain, while dealing with common community needs.

The study also found out that the capacity building needs of the CSO's in Nandi South included, Training needs 66% ,organization development 28% ,skills and development 40% and awareness creation 69%. With awareness creation ranked the highest, it was evident that many CSO's entry strategy to the community was still a challenge, many begin their activities without first identifying themselves with the communities.

Conclusion

The study concluded that CSO's two main forms of organizational capacity are resources and management. Resource includes hard capacities such as financial resource, human, natural, infrastructure and technology. Management is concerned with creating the conditions under which appropriate objectives are set and achieved like networking with other organizations. Financial resources are of great importance to CSO's in Nandi South District. Most NGO's/ FBO's main source of finance is external donors while most CBO's generate most of their incomes from members' contribution. This explains why many CSO's projects / programs are not sustainable especially when the donors pull out. This is also the main reason why most CSO's are only active when are undertaking a funded activity then becomes dormant immediately thereafter. The study also found out that most CSO's in Nandi South District have the following resources available at their disposal: natural, technology, infrastructure and capital but they have not fully utilized these resources. They however, network and collaborate with other development actors because they deal with the common community needs.

Recommendations

- a) In order to be effective fully and achieve community development CSO's need to diversify on their sources of funds. Instead of wholly depending on external donors they can also sources funds from government and can engage in other income generating activities to be able to sustain their operations.
- b) CSO's need to develop and identify the best entry strategy to the community like identifying with the existing CBO's and government bodies already on the ground.

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