

Contributions and Challenges of Non-Government Organizations (NGO's) On Social Economic Wellbeing of Communities. A Case Study of HEPs in Ibanda Municipality

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Abstract: The study aimed at assessing the contributions and challenges of Non-Governmental Organizations towards the socio-economic wellbeing of communities basing on HEPS in Ibanda Municipality as a case study. Its objectives were to assess the state of HEPS operations towards the social economic wellbeing of communities in Ibanda town council, to assess the factors that have enabled or hindered the operations of HEPS in Ibanda Municipality and to propose practical strategies that can improve HEPS operations in Ibanda Municipality and elsewhere in the world. The study used an exploratory design where both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were used. A sample size of 420 responses was used in this study including 368 community people in Ibanda Municipality and 52 staff of HEP, simple random sampling was used during the selection of community residents while snow ball sampling techniques was used during selection of HEPS staff questionnaires and interview guides were the main instruments of data collection. Descriptive techniques were used in data analysis.

It was found out that HEPS is involved in a lot of operations towards the socio-economic wellbeing of communities in Ibanda Municipality. Its activities are aimed at solving specific problems as well as improving the health status and coping ability of residents by increasing income among other things. HEPS is involved in strengthening local leadership, mobilizing local development communities and capacity building of people hence leading to improve socio-economic wellbeing of communities. It was found that factors that have hindered the operations of HEPS in Ibanda Municipality include: financial constraints, inadequate human capacity, and lack of community participation or involvement in the activities of HEPS, poor infrastructure, lack of partnership between HEPS and other NGOs that lead to duplication of services.

Key Words: Challenges of NGO's, Social Economic Wellbeing, HEPS

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Study Background

World over, Non-governmental organizations are critical actors in the advancement of universal values around human rights, the environment, labour standards and anti-corruption. Due to the advancement of the global market, their contribution has

gained particular importance in aligning socio-economic activities like maternal health, providing food for refugees and examples of these civil organizations include community organizations, catholic relief, and human rights watch (UNICEF, 2010).

The origin of NGOs can be traced in the mid-19th century when some 30,000 homeless or neglected lived in the New York City streets and slums. The NGOs started because of the man named Charles Loring Brace who took these children off the streets. Brace believed the children would do best with a Christian farm family. He did this to save them from "a lifetime of suffering". He sent these children to families by train, which gave the name, "The Orphan Train Movement". This lasted from 1851 to the early 1990's and transported more than 120,000 children to new lives (Michael, 2008). When Brace died in 1890, his sons took over his work of the Children's Aid Society until they retired.

The Children's Aid Society created a NGO approach that became the basis for the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 called Concurrent Planning. This greatly impacted the Foster home system. Children's Aid works with the biological and foster parents to achieve permanency. From the mid-1800's to the eve of the Great Depression, orphan train children were placed with families who pre-selected them with an order form, specifying age, gender, and eye color. In other cases, trainloads of children were assembled on stages, train platforms or town halls and examined by prospective parents, conjuring the image of picking the best apple from the bin. Sometimes a child would be separated from his or her brothers and sisters, or would end up in a family only wanting them to work. Most of the time the children were chosen by a loving or childless family (Michael, 2008).

In Australia, NGOs were known as boarding-out. NGOs had their early states South Australia in 1866 and switched to the second half of the 19th century. It is said that the system was mostly run by women until the early 20th century. Then the control was centered in many state children departments. "Although boarding-out was also implemented by non-

governmental child rescue organizations, many large institutions remained. These institutions assumed increasing importance from the late 1920's when the system went into decline." The system was re-energized in the postwar era, and in the 1970's. The system is still the main structure for "out-of-home care" The system took care of both local and foreign children. "The first adoption legislation was passed in Western Australia in 1896, but the remaining states did not act until the 1920's, introducing the beginnings of the closed adoption that reached its peak in the period 1940- 1975. New baby adoption dropped dramatically from the mid-1970's, with the greater tolerance of and support for single mothers (Pears & Fisher, 2005).

In Nigeria, NGOs have always been an option, in the sense of taking abandoned children looking, after them on a permanent or temporary basis Although, nothing about it had a legal foundation, until the 20th century. At the end of the 19th century foster homes started calling it boarding-out. They started placing the children in orphanages and workhouses as well. The First World War saw an increase in organized adoption through adopted on societies and child rescue organizations, and pressure grew for adoption to be given legal status The main reasons for children being adopted in Nigeria had been unmarried mothers giving up their children for adoption and stepparents adopting the new partner's children (UNDP, 2012).

In Tanzania, NGOs started around 1958 with a legal basis. Following the NGO system came to the endorsement of the Child Welfare Law. The people in Tanzania thought the children would do better on farms rather than living in the "dusty city." The families would often send their children to a farm family outside the village and only keep their oldest son. The farm families served as the NGO parents and they were financially rewarded for taking in the younger siblings. It was considered an honor to be chosen as foster parents, and selection greatly depended on the family's reputation and status within the village.

Non-governmental organizations have been an integral part of global impact evolution and impact of and education to the global compact. Non-governmental organizations in Ghana, Zimbabwe and Kenya now provide 40% of all health care and education to the refugees in order to improve the standards of living of the people. Non-governmental organization is comprised of the totality of voluntary social relationships, civic, social organizations and institutions that form a basis of a functioning society. NGOs are populated by organizations like registered charities, NGOs and community groups (Homer-Dixon, 1991).

Since 1986, there has been a rapid proliferation in Uganda of both indigenous and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The Ministry of Internal Affairs had registered more than 1,200 NGOs registered by 1995. Both local and external NGOs have played an essential role in social and economic development, including efforts against poverty in Uganda. The contribution of the NGOs to national

development is sufficiently important to justify measures aimed at reinforcing and promoting the NGO sector, but there are limitations.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study was to assess the contributions and challenges of Non-Government Organisations towards the socio-economic wellbeing of communities basing on HEPS in Ibanda Municipal Council as a case study.

1.3 Study Design

The study used an exploratory design where both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were used. An exploratory design is a kind of research design that is conducted about a research problem when there are few or no earlier studies to refer to or rely upon to predict an outcome (Amin, 2005). Exploratory design was preferred because it enabled the researcher to study in depth contribution of Non-Government Organizations towards the social economic wellbeing of communities in Ibanda Municipality.

1.4 Sample Selection Techniques

The researcher used simple random sampling during the process of selecting study respondents. Simple random sampling was used during the selection of community residents benefiting from NGOs in Ibanda Municipality since the method helped to give all the people an equal chance of being selected. In addition, the researcher used snow ball sampling technique during the selection of NGOs staff members in the study area. Snow ball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances. For the case of this study, the researcher identified 2 HEPS staff who were assumed to have information related to contributions of HEPS towards the socio-economic wellbeing of communities in Ibanda Municipality and the 2 respondents who were identified took him to another respondent until a total number of 52 respondents was reached. Snow ball sampling was preferred in this study because researcher did not know the field locations of HEPS staff and thus the identification of 2 staff HEPS staff members helped the researcher to locate others. **3.5**

II. DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND TOOLS

2.1 Interviews

Interviews were used to collect data from staff of HEPS basing on an interview guide. The researcher adopted this method because it enabled him to come across new ideas. This interview method was appropriate as it brought the interviewer and the interviewee close to each other hence the establishment of rapport which allowed easy collection of data. Interviewing also enabled probing and cleared ambiguities, generated firsthand information, enabled a high response rate and acquisition of data there and then. An interview guide was drafted with a set of questions that the researcher used to ask respondents during the interviews and this were none structured (open ended) in nature. The researcher personally recorded the

provided responses as per the study respondents during the process of carrying out an interview. This tool was used to collect information from respondents that were selected from staff at HEPS.

2.2 Self-Administered Questionnaires

For community people, a self-administered questionnaire with closed ended items was used to collect data. Questionnaires were used because they helped to save time than interviewing each respondent which would have taken a lot of time. The researcher used structured questionnaires formulated and directed to the sample subjects. They were answered by the respondents and then collected later by the researcher. This type of research instrument was used to collect data from community people in Ibanda town council. Questionnaire were considered appropriate since they were administered to a large population of the respondents and were given ample time to think and express themselves and quite a lot of information was collected in a relatively short period of time.

Analysis and interpretation of the study findings on the contributions of HEPS as an Non-Government Organization towards the socio-economic wellbeing of communities in Ibanda Municipality.

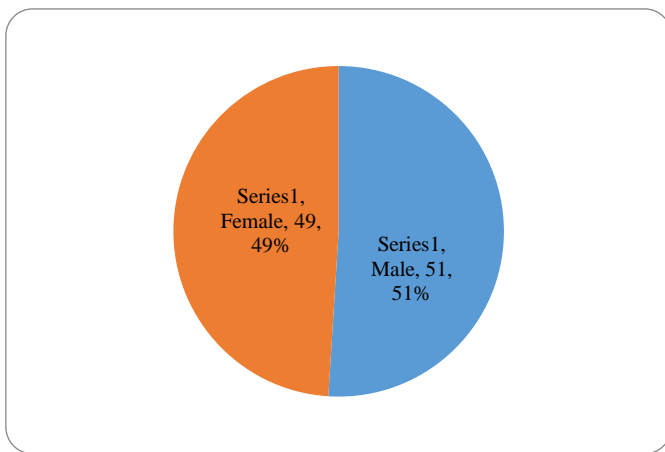
2.3 Social demographic characteristics of the respondents

This section entails gender of respondents, age of respondents, marital status, level of education, occupation of the respondents and duration of stay in the areas of residence.

2.4 Gender of respondents

This sub-section presents the gender of the respondents as shown in the figure below:

Figure 1: Gender of respondents



Source: Field Data, 2015

Male

According to results in figure 1, majority 214 (51%) of respondents were female. This shows that more women were willing to give information than men.

Female

From the results 206(49%) of the respondents were male. Though more data in this study was collected from males than females, both males and females were well represented.

2.5 Age of respondents

Table 2: Showing the breakdown of respondents by age

Age bracket(Year)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 25 years	97	23
25-36	118	28
36-44	104	25
45 years and above	101	24
Total	420	100

Source: Field Data, 2015

From the results 118(28%) of the respondents were in the age bracket (25-36), followed by age bracket (36-44) with (25%), followed by the age bracket (45 years and above) with (24%) and the minority (23%) of the respondents were below 23.

Below 25 years

From the results the minority 97(23%) of the respondents were in the age group of below 25 years. These were mainly youth in the community who were getting help from NGOs and thus were in position to give their views on benefits they were getting from HEPS as an NGO towards their socio-economic wellbeing.

25-36 years

In this study 118(28%) of the respondents were in age bracket of 25-36 years. These were mainly staff of HEPS and few young parents as were well aware of the HEPS operations in Ibanda Town and thus were in position to give their views on NGOs' operations towards the socio-economic wellbeing of communities in Ibanda town council.

45 Years and above

According to the results, 101(24%) of the respondents were in the age bracket of 45 years and above. These were mainly married couples and a few staff of HEPS. These were mature enough and had knowledge on factors that hinder or favour the operations of HEPS in Ibanda town council. Therefore, they were in position to give their views on the contributions of HEPS towards the socio-economic wellbeing of communities in Ibanda Town Council.

III. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The discussion of the findings is based on the following sub themes in relation to the study objectives as below:

3.1 The operations of HEPS towards the socio-economic wellbeing of communities in Ibanda town council

3.1.1 Community mobilization and sensitization

The study revealed that HEPS helps in mobilization of resources towards improved social economic development of communities in Ibanda Town council. For instance, it was revealed that HEPS is involved in community mobilization and sensitization about the welfare of orphans in Ibanda town council. It was reported that few caretakers and the community at large really understand the suffering and plight of OVCs. It was therefore revealed HEPS that is involved on sensitizing and mobilizing communities and caretakers of orphans to play a leading role and contribute generously to improve the wellbeing of the orphans. This activity is participatory by HEPS, partners, caregivers/guardians and beneficiaries. It was mentioned that HEPS uses IEC strategy especially mass media (radio programs on radios such as Endigyito, Radio Efumbe and radio west) to reach out to so many people so that they can understand and appreciate their contribution towards the well being of orphaned Vulnerable Children (OVCs).

It was also found out that HEPS helps in mobilizing the community people to participate in community socio-economic development activities such as constructing of schools and mobilizing community people to give land for feeder road construction. The community in Ibanda Municipality are sensitized and mobilized to directly get involved in the construction of schools and health centres. Communities contribute by providing land and building materials such as sand, stones and bricks while HEPS as an NGO provides cement, corrugated iron sheets and transport for these materials. The community members contribute to development through monthly subscriptions, which are determined by the community and are affordable to the majority. HEPS provides the extra funds required in completing a project.

A staff of HEPS commented,

“HEPS helps identify problems in communities and then consult the community for discussions. HEPS then mobilizes the community people and convenes community meetings to consider the priorities of the area towards solving community problems. We thus have a close linkage with the community people in undertaking activities such as the construction of water sources and schools”, (Interview, June, 2015).

The findings concur with Serwadda (2009) who found out that HEPS in Uganda are involved in Community Mobilization and sensitization towards improving the socio-economic wellbeing of people in communities. HEPS uses the existing local leadership systems that helps to strengthen them. It also improves the confidence of the community in their local leadership through sensitization. HEPS mobilizes committees that are used for other activities in their communities.

3.1.2 Socio-economic support to orphans

From the results it was mentioned by community people that HEPS offers Orphan Support Activities to improve the social economic wellbeing of orphans in Ibanda town council. It was revealed that HEPS helps in providing educational materials,

paying school fees and food to the OVCs and their households. It was found out that the HEPS is involved in giving scholarastic materials such as exercise books, textbooks and paying schools to orphans in schools such as Ibanda Integrated primary and Ibanda Preparatory primary. It was also mentioned that HEPS initiates activities that are aimed at improving on the socio-economic security of orphans. For example it was involved in providing seed money in form of beehives, piglets, passions fruit seedlings, goats and other plant seeds to care takers of orphans. This was aimed at ensuring that caretakers of orphans have food security in their homesteads.

A staff of HEPS in Bufunda ward in Ibanda Municipality commented,

“Orphan support, especially to AIDS orphans, is provided by HEPs through orphanages or support to foster parents in the form of school fees and scholastic materials. Older orphans are sometimes supported in vocational training schools through provision of fees and supply of equipment, and are assisted in acquiring jobs after completion of courses”, (Interview, June, 2015).

In a related study McCauley and Salter, (2005) noted that in Uganda HEPS as an NGOs provides OVC and OVC households with care and support, socio-economic security, food and nutritional assistance. Under HEPS, out-of-school youth are attached to apprenticeship training centres for motor vehicle and motor cycle mechanics, hair dressing, silk weaving and tailoring.

3.1.3 Economic Activities

It was also revealed that though HEPs was involved in various activities to assist communities with improving their socio-economic wellbeing of people in Ibanda Town Council. For instance community members revealed that some youth who had been redundant before the establishment of the NGO in the town council but are now earning a living by transporting people to and from the different office locations and field out-reaches working under HEPS (*boda boda cyclists*).

In Bufunda cell, adult literacy classes provided for the community by HEPs have enabled better savings by members when they receive loans. Also, community members, especially women, in Ibanda Municipality believe that HEPS -related efforts toward economic improvement have raised the standard of living for their respective families. They can now afford to send their children to school and provide them with nutritious meals. Staff of HEPs cited improved education infrastructure both in number and quality (from none at all or mud and wattle to brick/ iron sheets structures) as one staff member observes thus:

“Many community people are contented with the education facilities that have been provided with the help of HEPS as an NGO. In fact, when a child goes to school, he is likely to come back with fairly clean clothes since he now has somewhere to sit.” (Interview, June, 2015).

The findings concur with Holloway (2009) who noted that in Uganda HEPS provides economic activities that help to improve on the socio-economic wellbeing of communities. Programs of HEPS focus on improving physical well-being, providing access to services, protecting vulnerable groups, providing education (and/or literacy), employment and income generating activities.

3.1.4 Sensitization and capacity building

The study findings revealed that sensitization and capacity building of local communities about role of NGOs were other practical strategies that can improve operations of HEPs and other NGOS towards improving the social economic wellbeing of communities in Ibanda Town Council. Respondents also suggested that there was need for capacity building for programme delivery in respect to human resource training and equipment and infrastructure development. There was need to revitalize community based economic initiatives to respond to the large number of people in need in communities is also necessary. They also suggested that HEPS as an NGO should work with organizations like schools, hospitals and other institutions to sensitize the general community about activities such as improved agricultural production such as commercializing of Agricultural which can be a source income generating.

The above findings concur with Dicklitch (2012) noted that indigenous NGOs must also focus more on capacity building. The survival of these groups greatly relies on dependable donors. Therefore, NGOs must strive to adopt practices to better account for the money they receive and to plan for the future in order to promote sustainability. These are basic standards that any organization must embrace in order to thrive. NGOs should be introspective to understand their potential weaknesses and constantly attempt to become stronger, more active entities.

3.1.5 Improve on Human Resource Capacities

From the results the need to improve on human resource a capacity was mentioned another practical strategy that can improve operations of HEPs and other NGOS towards improving the social economic wellbeing of communities in Ibanda Town Council. It was found out that most staff working under HEPS are volunteers who lack adequate skills to implement the activities of the NGO. For example, respondents thus suggested that there was need to train counselors and Community Workers (CWs) in skills that will help them to take care of the increasing number of the orphans. It was also suggested that the NGO needs to employ more staff to match with the ever increasing demands of the community who are in need. There should special refresher courses to equip staff with skills to take care of various needs of people in communities. This implies that with the acquisition of such skills, the caretakers and staff will perform a number of tasks; counseling, home care and sensitization.

3.1.6 Resource Mobilization and infrastructure development

From the results the need for resource mobilization and infrastructure development were revealed as other practical strategies that can improve operations of HEPs and other NGOS towards improving the social economic wellbeing of communities in Ibanda Town Council. It was found out that NGOs in Ibanda Municipality are faced with a lot financial constraints to implement some activities and therefore there was a need for mobilization activities such as fundraising raise funds. It was also suggested that noted that there was need to directly fight poverty by helping communities to “shock absorb orphans”. This can be done through the purchase of goats and cows, or bee keeping and small-scale farming with disease-resistant seeds. Respondents further indicated that there is need for NGOs to work with the government to emphasize on income generating activities in homesteads to earn income and thus stopping being vulnerable to poverty.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Basing on the study findings, the following conclusions were reached:

In this study it can be concluded that HEPs as an NGO is involved in a lot of operations towards the socio-economic wellbeing of communities in Ibanda town council. Its activities are aimed to solving specific problems as well as improving the health status and coping ability for example by increasing income. It is also involved in strengthening local leadership, mobilising local development committees, and capacity building that have the potential to spread and in the long-term be cultivated within the community towards improved socio-economic wellbeing of communities. Also by targeting marginalized groups, especially women and orphans, the NGO gives them a greater opportunity and role to participate in development activities. This also increases opportunities for capacity building and skills development. The indicators of the activities of HEPS as an NGO can be linked to improved health and wellbeing, access to health care, affordability of services and infrastructure in Ibanda Town Council.

It can also be concluded that factors that have hindered the operations of HEPs in Ibanda Municipality include: financial constraints, inadequate human capacity, lack of community participation or involvement in the activities of NGOs, poor infrastructure, lack of partnership between HEPS and other NGOs that lead to duplication of services, small administrative staffs that is not properly designed for large-scale budgeting or technical reporting and lack of adequate planning.

In conclusion the practical strategies that can improve operations of HEPs towards improving the social economic wellbeing of communities in Ibanda Municipality include; improving of human resource capacities of staff of NGOs, capacity building of local communities, strengthening partnership between stakeholders and resource mobilization and infrastructure development.

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