



Empowering Communities: The Role of Non –Governmental Organisations in promoting Community Development through Non-Formal Education

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the role of Non-governmental Organisations in promoting community development through non formal education. The objectives of the study were to find out the types of non-formal education activities implemented by Non-Governmental Organisations and to find out the challenges encountered in the implementation of non-formal education activities in community settings. This study adopted a mixed methods research design and the study found that the types of non-formal education that NGOs were offering included civic education, health literacy, youth empowerment, and training of occupational skills. One of the recommendations was that NGOs should actively seek to diversify funding by exploring sustainable models such as income-generating projects linked to vocational training (e.g., selling products made by trainees), micro-grants, and partnerships with local businesses.

Keywords: Non –Governmental Organisations, Community Development, Non-Formal Education

INTRODUCTION

While governments remain important development actors, non-governmental organisations have increasingly assumed active roles in community development processes worldwide, employing diverse strategies to address local needs. Osiobe, Osiobe and Olushola (2019) State that the required community development burden has become enormous, and efforts made by local organizations and the government to cater to all the ramifications of individual and societal needs are not sufficient. Hence, the need for NGO interventions in addressing these gaps.

Non-governmental organisations have emerged as crucial players in promoting grassroots change because their strength lies in their flexibility, adaptability and deep connection at community level. They are able to mobilise local resources and address specific community needs. According to Pannipitiya (2018) NGOs have efficient administrative structure and specialized skills and strategies to closely work with the community. Because of NGOs strategies on stimulating potential powers, skills, talents and capacities and specialized techniques, they have become more crucial factor in the community development process.

In Zambia most non-governmental organisations run community-based programmes which are a form of non-formal education. These community-based programmes include women empowerment programmes, vocational training, civic education, health education, environmental education and other awareness campaign programmes. These activities aim to enhance community member's capacities to improve their lives and enhance development in the communities.

Statement of the Problem.

Non -governmental organizations play an important role in promoting community development through various interventions including non-formal education initiatives aimed at empowering individuals and communities. Despite these educational activities having the potential to address socio economic challenges, there is limited



empirical evidence of these educational initiatives being implemented and the extent to which these initiatives contribute to community development outcomes. This knowledge gap undermines informed decision making and the effective use of non-formal education as a development tool.

Objectives

1. To find out the types of non-formal education activities implemented by Non-Governmental Organisations in Lusaka.
2. To find out the challenges encountered in the implementation of non-formal education activities in community settings in Lusaka.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical and Conceptual Evolution of NFE

The historical involvement of NGOs in community education is rooted in responses to colonial legacies and modern neoliberal reforms. In many parts of the Global South, colonial educational policies were restrictive and exclusionary, prioritising elite urban males and neglecting the majority (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974). In Zambia specifically, colonial policies under British rule followed this trend, with the 1930s and 1940s seeing only limited mission-based education for Africans (Serpell, 1993). Following independence in 1964, the Zambian government under Kenneth Kaunda adopted the philosophy of 'Education for Development,' expanding formal schooling, yet significant gaps remained in adult education and rural access (Kelly, 1999).

By the 1970s, it became clear globally that formal systems alone could not address the urgent learning needs of out-of-school youth and rural communities, giving rise to non-formal education (NFE) as a flexible alternative (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974; Rogers, 2005). This shift was accelerated in the 1980s and 1990s by structural adjustment programs (SAPs) promoted by the World Bank and IMF. These programs weakened the state's role in service provision, fundamentally altering the Zambian economic landscape and forcing governments to withdraw from various sectors (Korten, 1990; Banks et al., 2015).

As a result, NGOs stepped in to fill the vacuum, particularly in health and education, adopting community-based, participatory approaches tailored to local contexts (Mayo, 1999). During this transition, NGOs began to challenge top-down education by embracing alternative philosophies, particularly those inspired by Paulo Freire. The Freirean model, with its emphasis on dialogue and consciousness-raising, offered a framework for delivering education as a tool of liberation (Freire, 1970; Kane, 2001). Consequently, the NGO sector in Zambia and beyond moved from mere service delivery toward empowerment, positioning education as a central element in the broader community development agenda.

Types of Non-Formal Education Programs Implemented by NGOs

NGOs implement a wide array of non-formal education programs tailored to the needs of specific communities. These programs typically fall into the following categories:

Adult Literacy and Numeracy Programs

Adult literacy remains a cornerstone of many NGO interventions, especially in rural or post-conflict areas where formal schooling has been disrupted or denied. These programs aim not only to teach reading and writing but also to empower adults to participate more fully in family, economic, and civic life. For example, programs run by ActionAid and World Education use literacy classes as entry points for discussing health, gender rights, and community organisation (Archer & Cottingham, 1996; World Education, 2012).

Vocational and Life Skills Training

NGOs frequently offer vocational training that includes agriculture, carpentry, tailoring, and small business management. These programs are particularly targeted at unemployed youth and women, with the goal of



enhancing income generation and economic independence. In Zambia, for example, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has implemented vocational training and livelihood programs linked to microfinance for households affected by HIV/AIDS (CRS, 2023). This aligns with global evidence that combining microfinance with health education produces more sustainable outcomes for vulnerable populations (Kennedy et al., 2014)."

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS Education

Health education, particularly in relation to reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention, forms another major stream of NFE offered by NGOs. These programs often involve peer educators and are delivered in youth clubs, women's groups, or community centers. Studies have shown that such programs contribute to increased condom use, delayed sexual debut, and reduction in stigma toward people living with HIV (UNAIDS, 2012; Pathfinder International, 2014).

Civic and Human Rights Education

NFE is also a platform for civic education, especially in contexts of fragile democracy or post-conflict reconstruction. NGOs use workshops and theatre-based approaches to teach communities about legal rights, gender equality, electoral processes, and anti-corruption. The Centre for Governance and Human Rights in Kenya, for instance, conducts mobile civic education sessions in slums and rural villages, often using participatory video and radio as tools for community engagement (Tett, 2010; FAWE, 2013).

Environmental and Agricultural Education

Given the importance of environmental sustainability, many NGOs implement community-based training on conservation agriculture, climate change adaptation, and water sanitation. Organizations like Caritas and Heifer International use field demonstrations, farmer field schools, and model gardens to promote sustainable livelihoods (Caritas Zambia, 2015; Pretty, 1995).

These programs are usually designed with community input and integrated with broader development initiatives, making them holistic and sustainable. Importantly, their non-formal nature allows for cultural relevance, flexible timing, and community-based learning spaces factors critical for participation among vulnerable populations (Rogers, 2005; UNESCO, 2015).

Strategies Used in Delivering Non-Formal Education

The implementation of non-formal education (NFE) by NGOs is distinctively shaped by participatory, inclusive, and community-responsive strategies that are often absent in rigid, institutionalised formal education systems. These strategies are grounded in critical pedagogy, empowerment theory, and adult learning principles, which advocate for learning that is situated in learners' lived experiences and social realities (Freire, 1970; Mezirow, 1997). Rather than merely transmitting information, NGO-led NFE approaches prioritise dialogical engagement, experiential learning, and transformation through collective action (Kane, 2001).

One of the most foundational strategies employed by NGOs is Participatory Learning and Action (PLA). This approach goes beyond traditional teaching to treat learners as co-creators of knowledge. PLA employs tools such as community mapping, seasonal calendars, and problem ranking to facilitate critical analysis of socio-economic conditions by the learners themselves (Chambers, 1997). What distinguishes PLA from conventional learning is its embeddedness in the realities of the learners; it does not bring in abstract or standardised curricula but draws upon indigenous knowledge and local priorities (Blackburn & Holland, 1998). ActionAid's REFLECT methodology institutionalises PLA by combining literacy education with community mobilisation, effectively using learning spaces to address local issues such as sanitation, land rights, and gender inequality (Archer & Cottingham, 1996). This strategy is deeply rooted in Freirean theory which promotes critical consciousness and views education as a tool for social change (Freire, 1970).



Another widely adopted strategy is peer education and mentorship, particularly prevalent in reproductive health, youth empowerment, and HIV/AIDS awareness initiatives. Unlike top-down instructional models, peer education capitalises on the shared lived experiences and cultural affinity between facilitators and learners (UNAIDS, 2012; Pathfinder International, 2014). Peer educators are trained community members, often youth themselves, who facilitate informal sessions, workshops, or discussions among their peers. This model enhances credibility, relatability, and trust, thereby increasing participation and retention in educational programs (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002). The mentorship aspect further ensures continuity of learning and leadership development within the community, aligning well with empowerment theory's emphasis on leadership emergence and capacity building at multiple levels (Zimmerman, 2000; Christens, 2012).

Workshops and interactive seminars are also key components of NGO NFE strategies. These are typically used for short-term, intensive training on specific subjects such as vocational skills, civic rights, or small business management. Their interactive nature, featuring group discussions, simulations, role plays, and case studies, enhances not just cognitive learning but also social cohesion and mutual support (Rogers, 2004). The experiential learning models embedded in these workshops derive from constructivist theories of learning, where knowledge is constructed through doing, reflection, and interpersonal interaction (Kolb, 1984; Brookfield, 1986). Moreover, NGOs often use these platforms to introduce advocacy and leadership components, thereby extending the learning outcomes beyond skills acquisition to include civic engagement and social action (Mayo, 1999).

A particularly innovative strategy employed by many NGOs is community theatre and storytelling, especially in societies with strong oral traditions. These methods are culturally resonant and capable of addressing sensitive topics such as domestic violence, HIV stigma, or gender-based discrimination in emotionally compelling and non-threatening ways (Mlama, 1991; Tett, 2010). Community theatre serves as both an educational tool and a catalyst for public discourse, allowing learners and audiences to reflect critically on social realities and generate contextually appropriate solutions. By involving community members as actors, writers, or facilitators, theatre for development also fosters agency, creativity, and ownership of learning outcomes (Boal, 1979). This aligns with Freire's vision of education as praxis, a cycle of reflection and action that leads to transformation (Freire, 1970).

In the contemporary era, mobile education units and information and communication technologies (ICTs) have increasingly been used by NGOs to extend the reach and accessibility of NFE. Mobile classrooms, libraries, and ICT-based platforms are particularly valuable in rural, nomadic, or post-conflict areas where access to formal education infrastructure is limited (Worldreader, 2019; UNESCO, 2016). Digital literacy programs delivered through tablets and smartphones have proven effective in improving basic reading and numeracy skills, especially among children in informal settlements or refugee camps (UNHCR, 2015). The deployment of technology in NFE not only enhances educational access but also introduces digital skills that are essential for participation in the modern economy. However, scholars caution that unless paired with participatory pedagogies and contextual relevance, digital solutions risk reproducing the same exclusionary dynamics as formal systems (Selwyn, 2011).

Taken together, these strategies reflect a deliberate effort by NGOs to redefine education as a participatory, inclusive, and transformative process. Rather than being passive recipients of information, learners in NGO-led NFE programs are encouraged to become active agents in their own development, consistent with the underlying values of both critical pedagogy and empowerment theory (Freire, 1970; Zimmerman, 2000).

Challenges Faced by NGOs in Implementing Non-Formal Education Activities

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play a vital role in expanding access to Non-formal education (NFE), especially in marginalized and underserved communities. However, the delivery of NFE is often hampered by a range of interrelated challenges that reflect structural, financial, institutional, and socio-cultural limitations. These challenges, if not adequately addressed, can compromise the sustainability, scalability, and impact of NGO-led education initiatives. This section explores these challenges in-depth, with reference to relevant scholarly literature and case-based empirical studies.



Financial Constraints and Sustainability

One of the most persistent and structural barriers facing NGOs in the implementation of NFE programs is the instability and inadequacy of funding. Most NGOs operate within a financial ecosystem that is highly dependent on external donor support, which tends to be short-term, project-based, and often restricted to specific thematic or geographical areas (Banks, Hulme, & Edwards, 2015). This funding model introduces significant uncertainty and limits the capacity of NGOs to engage in long-term strategic planning or invest in institutional strengthening.

Empirical studies highlight how donor-driven financing can distort local priorities and reduce community ownership. For example, Fowler (2000) observes that dependency on donor aid often leads NGOs to design programs that align with donor expectations rather than local needs, thereby undermining the authenticity of participatory development. In the case of NFE, this can result in programs that are more concerned with meeting output indicators (e.g., number of workshops held) than with achieving meaningful educational outcomes.

The issue of sustainability is also a core concern. Research by Kumi (2017) in Ghana found that several community-based education programs collapsed following the withdrawal of donor funds, raising questions about the long-term viability of externally funded NFE models. Similarly, Smillie (2001) argues that the lack of investment in local revenue-generating mechanisms has left many NGOs vulnerable to funding shocks and unable to sustain their educational initiatives beyond project cycles.

Recognition and Accreditation Issues

Another significant challenge is the lack of formal recognition and accreditation of NFE programs. In many countries, non-formal education is considered inferior to formal education and is often excluded from national education policy frameworks (UNESCO, 2015). This lack of recognition means that skills and competencies acquired through NFE programs do not translate into certified qualifications, thereby limiting their utility in the labour market or for further education.

According to Singh (2015), the lack of national-level mechanisms for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or Recognition, Validation, and Accreditation (RVA) has contributed to the marginalisation of NFE learners. Without standardised certification systems, learners are often unable to transition into formal education systems or secure formal employment, even when they have demonstrable competencies. This disconnect undermines the legitimacy and perceived value of NFE in the eyes of both learners and employers (UIL, 2012).

Moreover, the absence of coordination between formal and non-formal sectors often results in fragmentation and duplication of services. Cross-sectoral studies by Colley, Hodkinson, and Malcolm (2003) show that learners experience difficulty navigating parallel education systems that lack articulation, thereby reducing the overall effectiveness and equity of lifelong learning approaches.

Human Resource Challenges

The successful delivery of NFE is heavily dependent on the availability and quality of facilitators. However, some NGOs often struggle to recruit and retain well-trained educators due to financial constraints, remote work conditions, and lack of professional development opportunities. In rural or conflict-affected areas, these problems are further exacerbated by insecurity, low remuneration, and limited access to teaching materials. Moreover, many NFE educators lack formal teacher training, which can result in inconsistent pedagogical approaches and reduced learning outcomes (Rogers, 2004). The capacity gap in educational delivery is a persistent issue that NGOs must address through sustained investment in facilitator training, mentoring, and support systems. Critically, the professional status of NFE educators is also often lower than that of their counterparts in the formal system, leading to stigma and reduced motivation. Research by UNESCO (2016) suggests that institutionalising training and accreditation systems for NFE facilitators can improve program quality and bolster legitimacy in the education sector.



Infrastructure and Technological Barriers

Infrastructure deficits pose a major constraint to the effective implementation of NFE programs, particularly in rural and underserved regions. Many communities lack the basic facilities such as safe learning spaces, electricity, clean water, and sanitation that are essential for effective education (World Bank, 2018). These deficits not only hinder attendance but also compromise the health and safety of learners and facilitators. In recent years, the integration of technology into education has been widely promoted as a means of enhancing access and quality. However, the digital divide remains a stark reality in many areas where NGOs operate. According to the International Telecommunication Union (2021), more than 2.9 billion people globally remain offline, the majority of whom reside in low-income, rural settings. Without electricity or internet access, ICT-based NFE initiatives cannot reach their full potential.

Even when basic infrastructure is in place, technological illiteracy among both learners and educators can prevent effective utilisation of educational tools. Selwyn (2011) notes that digital learning solutions must be accompanied by intensive training and support, lest they exacerbate existing inequalities. NGOs that seek to incorporate technology into NFE must therefore invest not only in devices and connectivity but also in capacity-building for digital literacy and content development.

Cultural and Social Barriers

Socio-cultural norms significantly influence participation in NFE programs. In many conservative communities, education particularly for women and girls is undervalued or actively resisted due to prevailing gender norms, religious beliefs, or patriarchal structures (Stromquist, 2006). This resistance often manifests in the form of early marriage, domestic workload, or mobility restrictions, which prevent female learners from attending NFE sessions. Cultural resistance can also be tied to the perception that non-formal education is inferior to formal schooling, thereby diminishing its appeal among learners and parents. As noted by Leach (2003), the social status associated with formal education remains a powerful determinant of educational aspirations, leading some families to view NFE as a "second-best" or remedial option.

Additionally, in communities with a strong tradition of oral knowledge transmission, standardized or externally-developed curricula may be seen as irrelevant or even intrusive. NGOs must therefore engage in culturally sensitive curriculum development and community mobilisation to build trust and foster acceptance of NFE (Chambers, 1997).

Coordination and Integration with Government Policies

A lack of coordination between NGOs and government bodies presents another barrier to effective NFE implementation. While NGOs are often agile and responsive, their programs may be poorly integrated into national education strategies, resulting in fragmentation, duplication of effort, and inefficiencies (Edwards & Hulme, 1996). In many contexts, there is a lack of clear policy frameworks to guide NGO-government collaboration in education. This results in confusion regarding roles, responsibilities, and standards. Research in Malawi by Chinsinga (2008) shows that NGO-run Village Based Schools failed to scale or sustain their impact largely due to weak alignment with government priorities and institutional frameworks.

Furthermore, frequent turnover in government leadership and the politicisation of development partnerships can undermine long-term planning and accountability. According to Kumi, Arhin, and Yeboah (2013), NGOs often find themselves negotiating with shifting bureaucratic actors, which disrupts program implementation and monitoring. Improved coordination mechanisms, such as joint planning committees and information-sharing platforms, are essential to harmonise NFE efforts and ensure alignment with national development goals (UNESCO, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design to comprehensively investigate the role of NGOs in

Lusaka's community development. The target population comprised development workers from local non-governmental organisations, with thirty-three participants selected through purposive sampling. This technique was used to focus on information-rich cases capable of providing in-depth insights into the mechanisms of non-formal education, enabling deeper qualitative explanation rather than broad generalization (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015).

While this purposive approach was justified for capturing expert perspectives, the sample size of thirty-three limits the broad statistical generalizability of the findings. Consequently, these results provide a robust understanding of the Lusaka NGO sector specifically, though they may not represent the entire Zambian national context.

Data collection involved questionnaires to ensure standardization, while the inclusion of open-ended questions allowed respondents to express their perspectives freely for richer insights (Patton, 2015). Finally, the data was analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and descriptive statistics to summarize demographic participation.

FINDINGS

Thematic Analysis

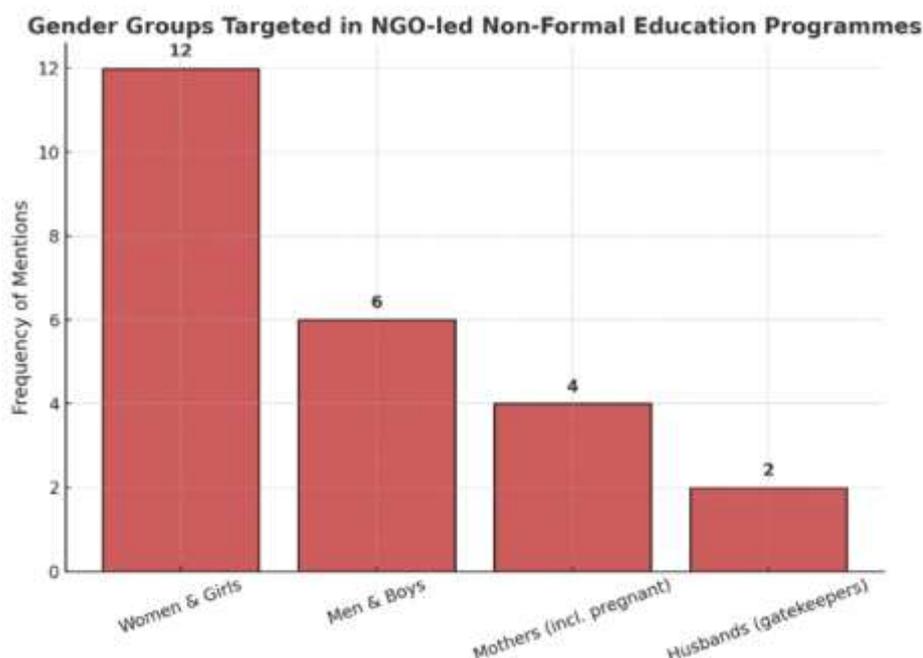
Table 1: Thematic Framework

Major Theme (Research Objective)	Sub-Themes	Codes / Keywords	Quoted Responses from Participants	Notes
1. Types of Non-Formal Education Activities Implemented by NGOs	Vocational & Skills Training	Tailoring, carpentry, brick-making, mechanics, cookery, catering, ICT, farming, electrical	<p><i>“Tailoring, Youth Entrepreneurship, The S-cape”</i> (Bwafwano)</p> <p><i>“Electrical, automotive mechanics, design, catering and tailoring, food production and cookery”</i> (Makeni Women’s Skills Centre)</p> <p><i>“Carpentry, Brick Making, Farming”</i> (PRISCCA)</p>	Skills-based, livelihood-focused NFE
	Civic, Human Rights & Governance Education	Civic education, human rights education, advocacy, sensitisation, accountability	<p><i>“Awareness Raising and Sensitization... Civic Education, Health Education, Human Rights Education”</i> (CSPR)</p> <p><i>“Youths are trained on human rights based approach where they capacitate communities to find solutions”</i> (globe Platform Zambia)</p>	Strengthening civic voice and rights awareness
	Health & Nutrition Education	HIV/AIDS awareness, reproductive health, maternal health, safe parenting,	<p><i>“HIV/AIDS awareness, Human rights training, Gender analysis”</i> (Women for Change)</p> <p><i>“Good health is poverty reduction... 1000 days from conception up to two years”</i></p>	Health and well-being education

		nutrition, sanitation	(Civil Society Scaling Up Nutrition) <i>"Nutrition education... early marriages reduced, STDs minimized"</i> (CSO-SUN Alliance)	
	Inclusive & Special Education	Sign language, adult literacy, disability-inclusive ICT training	<i>"Adult Education (English, Science, Literacy), Sign language, Computer lessons, Life skills"</i> (Fly Deaf Inclusive Education) <i>"Disabled people now are appreciated in terms of education"</i> (Fly Deaf Inclusive Education)	Promoting inclusivity and accessibility
	Youth Empowerment & Leadership	Peer learning, safe parenting, participatory pedagogy, leadership training	<i>"We give trainings to youth in a participatory pedagogy, where youths learn from each other and doing"</i> (Global Platform Zambia) <i>"Youth training... to be safe parents"</i> (Global Platform Zambia) <i>"Capacity building, trainings, career guidance, vocational skills, literacy and reproductive health"</i> (Restless Development)	Empowering youth leadership and agency
2. Challenges Encountered in Implementation of NFE	Financial Constraints	Lack of funding, limited donor support, lack of start-up capital	<i>"The major challenge is with the youths who preferred to go and look for casual work at the expense of completing the entrepreneurship course. Lack of start-up capital to give participants after training"</i> (Bwafwano) <i>"There has been inadequate funding in most activities"</i> (CSPR)	Resource dependency
	Infrastructure & Resources	Lack of training equipment, limited space, poor buildings, lack of materials	<i>"Lack of resources needed in getting the skills such as sewing machines, materials... the building is not big enough"</i> (Musole Mwananjovu Centre) <i>"Limited space"</i> (Global Platform Zambia)	Facilities and materials gaps
	Human Resource Limitations	Lack of qualified teachers, lack of professional	<i>"Lack of qualified teachers, who can work in most communities"</i> (Child Fund Zambia)	Trainer shortages

		trainers, skill mismatch		
	Sociocultural Barriers	Gender norms, illiteracy, cultural resistance, patriarchal restrictions	<p>“Some husbands... not understanding whenever women attend workshops” (Civil Society Scaling Up Nutrition)</p> <p>“Different women and girls have got different educational background and it is a challenge to educate some people” (Women for Change)</p>	Gender/cultural resistance
	Political & Policy Barriers	Lack of clear policy frameworks, politicisation, lack of recognition	<p>“Most of our non-formal education activities lack recognition in comparison with formal education” (CSPR)</p> <p>“Politicisation of development concepts and activities” (Global Platform Zambia)</p>	Institutional and political hindrances
	Technological Barriers	Lack of ICT resources, adapting to changing technologies	<p>“Technological change (where things are changing)” (Makeni Women’s Skills Centre)</p> <p>“Access to skills technologically... lack of computers” (Makeni Kanyama Centre)</p>	Technology divide

Demographic data of the people who participate in NGO led Non-Formal Education Programmes.





NGO-led non-formal education prioritises gender empowerment, rights knowledge, and vocational training, targeting women and girls most often. Though less common, men and boys participate in mixed-gender youth leadership or vocational programs. Mothers, including pregnant women, form a separate subgroup in health and nutrition programs, whereas spouses appear to be gatekeepers who support or oppose women's participation. The distribution in the figure below shows that empowerment projects were led by women but contextualised by men.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Types of Non-Formal Education Programs Implemented by NGOs

The first objective sought to identify the types of NFE activities being implemented. The data clearly shows that Vocational and Skills-Based Training is the primary tool used to improve local livelihoods. From tailoring and carpentry to automotive mechanics and ICT, NGOs prioritize practical, hands-on trades because they allow participants to "start earning immediately" (Participant 19). This emphasis on immediate income generation confirms the argument by Coombs and Ahmed (1974), who stated that NFE has the greatest impact when it addresses the dual challenges of poverty and unemployment. By aligning these courses with the local labour market, NGOs are successfully promoting self-reliance rather than a culture of charity.

Furthermore, Civic and Human Rights Education proved to be an integral component of NGO programming. Participants noted that these trainings help communities "demand accountability from leaders" (Participant 12) and empower those who feel ignored by the government to "speak up" (Participant 20).

The inclusion of Health, Nutrition, and Inclusive Education such as sign language for the deaf and HIV/AIDS awareness further highlights the holistic nature of NGO interventions. By teaching skills like sign language, NGOs are not just spreading information but are actively raising the self-esteem and dignity of vulnerable groups.

Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of NFE

The second objective aimed to find out the challenges encountered in these community settings. The data shows that while the intent is strong, Financial and Resource Constraints significantly limit the reach of these programmes. The "inconsistent funding" (Participant 8) and "lack of start-up capital" (Participant 5) create a situation where students learn the theory of entrepreneurship but lack the means to start a business. This aligns with the findings of Banks et al. (2015) and Smillie (2001) regarding the instability of donor-dependent development models.

A major institutional barrier identified is the Lack of Accreditation and Recognition. As Participant 16 observed, "non-formal education activities lack proper recognition in comparison with formal education." This creates a "skill-certification" gap that prevents learners from transitioning into the formal labor market or further education, a problem highlighted by UNESCO (2015) and Singh (2015). Without national frameworks for the recognition of prior learning, NFE remains marginalized.

Lastly, Sociocultural and Political Barriers present persistent hurdles. Patriarchal norms continue to restrict women's participation, especially when "husbands do not understand whenever women attend workshops" (Participant 7). This resistance, coupled with the "politicisation of development concepts" (Participant 14), confirms that NFE implementation is a complex process influenced by local power dynamics and gender norms. These findings mirror Stromquist's (2006) and Mayo's (1999) assertions that educational interventions must be culturally sensitive and politically aware to be truly transformative.

CONCLUSION

Non formal education is highly advantageous to socio-economically disadvantaged individuals in Lusaka, but its efficiency is hampered by resource dependency, infrastructure gaps, and deep-seated sociocultural barriers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Diversify Funding:** NGOs should explore sustainable models, such as income-generating projects (e.g., selling products made by trainees) and partnerships with local businesses in Lusaka.
2. **National Frameworks:** Advocate for inclusive national policies to reduce institutional barriers and depoliticize development efforts.
3. **Knowledge Documentation:** Methodically document and share successful models that effectively navigate resource and socio-political constraints in the Lusaka context.

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