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**Community Led Development:
An Analysis of Zambian Development NGOs'
Participatory Practices**

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Abstract

The Republic of Zambia, a landlocked country in Southern Africa, has been home to a growing number of NGOs seeking to combat poverty and advance social good in recent years. Historically, however, the communities most impacted by problems have been given little input in the development-related processes and decisions that impact their lives. In our paper, we utilize a literature review and interviews with Zambian NGOs and community leaders to analyze the community feedback mechanisms that Zambian NGOs currently have in place. We then make recommendations about policies and practices that can potentially enable Zambian NGOs to better employ communities' perspectives in their development work.

Acronyms

CLD - Community Led Development
MCLD - Movement For CLD
NGO- Non-governmental organization
INGO - International non-governmental organization
LNGO - Local non-governmental organization
PRA - Participatory Rural Appraisal
PLA - Participatory Learning & Action
RRA - Rapid Rural Appraisal
PPA - Pre-Project Analysis
M&E - Monitoring & Evaluation
PM&E - Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation
CM&E - Conventional Monitoring & Evaluation
RM&E - Results-based Monitoring & Evaluation
BFM - Beneficiary Feedback Mechanism
ICT - Information Communication Technology
SMS - Short Message Service
LFA - Logical Framework Analysis
MSC - Most Significant Change
OH - Outcome Harvesting
OM - Outcome Mapping
HRM - Human Resource Management
PB - Participatory Budgeting
VMC - Village Management Committee
VO - Village Organization
CB - Community Advisory Boards
LFSP - Livingston Food Security Project
ZRDA - Zambian Road Development Agency
WHO - World Health Organization
JICA - Japan International Cooperation Agency
UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1. Introduction

Community Led Development (CLD) is a term used to typify a process where community members have control over the decisions, resources, and processes involved in the development projects that operate within their communities. The Movement for Community Led Development (MCLD) defines CLD as the “process of working together to create and achieve locally owned visions and goals,” (MCLD), although the term has been defined in countless different ways. CLD exists as an ultimate goal on the continuum of participatory development, which broadly refers to development processes that seek to engage and empower the local population (Aziz, 2008). The rising popularity of CLD has led community leaders to reevaluate the merits of a bottom-up development approach.

Many Zambian citizens and organizations have become more vocal advocates for CLD, a likely byproduct of the country’s rapidly growing development sector, which receives nearly a hundred millions dollars in foreign aid each year (Global Economy, 2019). In particular, Zambian non- governmental organizations (NGOs), which are primarily responsible for implementing development projects within Zambian communities, are increasingly eager to give Zambian community members power in decision making. In this paper, we seek to understand important components of a CLD approach and assess Zambian NGOs’ existing CLD practices, with a particular emphasis on assessing their community feedback mechanisms, to analyze how they can bridge gaps in their development processes and more effectively facilitate a community-led approach.

2. Background

This section provides a brief overview of the Zambian aid sector and describes and discusses the relevance of a participatory development approach, in addition to delineating a framework that can be used to measure the scope of an organization's participatory practices. It also details six components of a participatory development approach that we have identified as critical for analyzing Zambian organizations' CLD practices.

2.1. The Zambian Aid Sector

The Republic of Zambia has a population of about 18 million people, with close to 60% of its population living below the poverty line ([World Bank, 2020](#)). Despite its recent classification as a lower-middle income country ([UNDP, 2017](#)), Zambia's Gini index, 57.1, is the third highest globally and reflects its growing income inequality in both rural and urban areas over the past three decades ([Equity Watch](#)). An unemployment rate of 15%, low access to sanitation, and high mortality rates from chronic disease and HIV/AIDS ([Sopitshi & Niekerk, 2015](#)) have continued to pose obstacles to Zambia's further growth and development.

NGOs have been important actors in combating many of these problems. The proliferation of NGOs within Zambia was, in large part, a phenomenon of its period of economic and political liberalization after 1991, when NGOs expanded their work across most sectors of the economy in response to a decline in the state's provision of public services ([ZCSD, 2010](#)). NGOs are important in contemporary Zambia, where they promote "civic education, advocacy, human rights, social welfare, development" and other activities and programs for the public's benefit ([SDG Philanthropy, 2017](#)).

A range of International NGOs (INGOs) and Local NGOs (LNGOs) occupy a number of important roles within Zambian civil society. The movement for a decentralized, community-driven Zambian aid sector has been advanced by the government recently. Additionally, some international NGOs within Zambia have helped pave the way in implementing participatory approaches that involve community members' feedback and strengthen communities' capacities. Certain local NGOs have also been promoting greater participation among community members impacted by development projects.

Generally, however, there are challenges that seem to impede a larger number of NGOs from employing participatory development approaches. The Zambian World Wide Fund noted that it is key for Zambian NGOs to establish relationships with local traditional and political leaders, something that is especially challenging because Zambia has 73 tribes that each have their own dialect (Lupele, 2003). In many impoverished communities, low literacy levels, a lack of capacity to engage in project policy planning, implementation, and evaluation, and gender inequalities prevent the full participation of community members (Mpolomoka et. al, 2018).

2.2. Participatory Development

In this section, we will describe feedback mechanisms, which provide the basis for quality participatory development techniques, outline the framework we will later use to evaluate Zambian NGOs' practices, and describe the limitations of a typical CLD assessment tool in gauging the extent to which organizations employ participatory practices.

2.2.1. Feedback Mechanisms

Feedback mechanisms are "the systems and processes that give the recipients of aid the opportunity to comment, make suggestions, express gratitude or criticise the products,

services or targeting of an aid project of which they may be recipients' ([Jump, 2013](#)). Effective feedback mechanisms support the collection, acknowledgement, analysis, and response to received feedback ([Bonino et. al, 2014](#)) and can be integrated into NGOs' project cycles or maintained as separate tools. As such, NGOs' feedback mechanisms encompass processes including methods for assessment, program design, monitoring and evaluation, accountability mechanisms, and typical complaint and response mechanisms ([CDA, 2011](#)). Ideally, feedback mechanisms will form a closed feedback "loop", where a two-way flow of information is established between NGOs and community members, in which the information and responses NGOs gather from community members are relayed back to communities (Bonino et. al, 2014). Feedback mechanisms will constitute a central component of our paper, as they undergird all of the components we have identified as necessary for a participatory development approach.

2.2.2. Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation

Citizen engagement is not binary but, rather, can be conceptualized as a continuum where various possible levels of engagement exist. In 1969, Sherry Arnstein ranked variations of citizen engagement from low to high through a ladder-like typology called "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," (Arnstein, 1969).

The ladder has 8 rungs that represent increasing levels of participation. It moves from nonparticipation, where citizens have no power, to degrees of tokenism, where citizens are granted counterfeited power for appeasement, to degrees of citizen participation, where citizens have usable power. Within the nonparticipation rungs, manipulation involves influencing the public and gaining its support through propaganda. Similarly in the therapy stage, those in power impose paternalistic practices onto citizens

without their input to 'cure' them. In the next rung, institutions inform citizens of their rights and options but often emphasize one-way feedback flows that do not allow citizens to provide their input. Consultation involves institutions asking for citizen opinions, while placation involves picking certain citizens and allowing them to advise or plan, but maintaining the authority of power holders to judge citizens' input. Partnership, delegated power, and citizen control are respectively when communities share equal power, gain majority power, and ultimately have total power to plan and manage programs.

Arnstein admits the ladder's separation into eight distinct rungs is somewhat arbitrary and not mutually exclusive. The typology also "does not include an analysis of the most significant roadblocks to achieving genuine levels of participation," (Arnstein, 1969). Using Arnstein's ladder as a grading scale can provide some insight into how power holders broadly include community members, but a rubric that is more specific to the nonprofit sector is necessary to more comprehensively grade organizations.

2.2.3. The CLD Assessment tool

In 2019, The Movement for CLD (MCLD), a consortium of over 70 INGOs and hundreds of LNGOs, developed a list of 11 distinguishing CLD characteristics that became the basis for a rubric called the CLD Assessment Tool (Veda, 2020). The 11 characteristics are: participation and inclusion, voice, community assets, capacity development, sustainability, transformative capacity, collective planning and action, accountability, community leadership, adaptability, and collaboration. These 11 characteristics are drawn upon to create different dimensions that organizations rank themselves in.

The tool "functions as a generative, learning focused tool that organizations can use to assess where their internal practices are when set against their overall goals and

compared to the collective experience of other community-led practitioners,” (Veda, 2020). This gives the tool limited utility. First, in a survey of both local NGOs and INGOs, ZGF finds organizations overestimate the degree to which they facilitate CLD, possibly due to overconfidence or social desirability bias ([ZGF, 2020](#)). Secondly, the tool does not help third-party, external evaluators assess how community-led organizations are. Third, the tool provides areas that an organization can improve in, but it does not give any indication of how the organization should improve. Our framework identifies important elements that facilitate citizen feedback and promote collective action by identifying a list of six factors.

2.3. Components of a Participatory Development Project Approach

The six factors are crucial factors in determining the efficacy of an organization’s CLD approach and form the basis for our analysis of Zambian NGOs. We define and describe each factor, make a distinction between typically ‘conventional’ and ‘participatory’ approaches to the factor, and provide examples of projects that employ participatory approaches.

2.3.1. Pre-Project

Pre-project analysis entails the analysis of “project stakeholders and their influence and relevance to the project as well as [the] needs and problems” ([The CBM](#)). In this portion of the project, NGOs typically conduct a situational analysis, which allows NGO field staff to not only identify key stakeholders involved in and affected by the project. They also usually conduct needs assessments to understand problems and priorities of beneficiaries ([World Bank, 1996](#)).

NGOs that take conventional, structured approaches to the pre-project analysis stage often employ time-constrained, top-down approaches, such as Rapid Rural Appraisal

(RRA) to collect, analyze, and evaluate information on local knowledge and conditions quickly through semi-structured activities, typically in one to three days ([Cavestro, 2003](#)). Although RRA techniques enable evaluators to learn about communities by obtaining information from locals, it has been described as an extractive methodology ([Chambers, 1996](#)) because it rapidly acquires and uses information according to external evaluators' needs and concentrates it at higher levels, impeding communities from building their capacities to comprehend, circulate, and act upon new knowledge alongside field staff or other evaluators (Cavestro,2003).

Recent critiques of RRA as an insufficient mechanism for elevating community members' voices have led to the rising popularity of lengthier, bottom-up information gathering and application techniques such as Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) ([Desa et. al, 2012](#)), which take place over the period of several months to years ([Shah et. al, 1999](#)). Owing to the frequent usage of PLA as an umbrella phrase that encompasses PRA in relevant literature, the term "PLA" can be assumed in this paper to include PRA practices but to refer to their usage in a more comprehensive manner and a longer time frame. PLA techniques aim to bring outsiders in only as facilitators to promote collective action among community members and can be grouped together in numerous ways to capture spatial data, temporal data, discrete data, and social relationships that constitute the basis for community members' feedback and highlight important relationships that affect feedback flows within a given community (["Enhancing Ownership and Sustainability, Altarelli et. al](#)). The set of tools and approaches that constitute PRA can be used in M&E.

In the conventional development project lifecycle, PPA is followed by the project design phase. In this phase, external agencies such as donors often identify concrete project objectives and indicators, commonly through tools such as Logical Framework Analysis (LFA). LFA has outside evaluators develop project indicators and objectives that they typically fit into a logical framework, a visual approach to project design ([Bakewell&Garbut, 2005](#)). Rigid project design approaches such as LFA can fail to commensurate the varying goals and purposes of communities by imposing a single focal problem onto projects and limiting opportunities for community feedback to advance the iterative process of project design ([Des Gasper](#)). Of course, the efficacy of LFA and similar project techniques cannot be generalized. However, updating log frames tends to be cumbersome, so participatory LFAs are generally considered unfeasible.

Meanwhile, project design approaches such as Outcome Mapping (OM) provide alternatives for incorporating community members' feedback. OM builds capacity in communities of boundary partners, who are groups that interact directly with a project.

2.3.2 Ownership of Funds

The scope and success of development projects is determined by the funding programs receive. Citizens may control planning, but without determining where funds are allocated, their level of participation is consultory.

Operational NGOs struggle to involve community members in funding practices because they often obtain funds through donations or grants from governments, foundations, companies, and individuals that limit their autonomy (Mostashari, 2005). As donors increasingly impose their own strategies onto grant requirements, NGOs sometimes act as contractors charged with implementing investor-driven plans (Gibson,

2017). Consequently, barriers to participatory grantmaking include, “power imbalances, institutional priorities, legal regulations, and potential conflicts of interest,” (Gibson, 2017). However, there are a number of funding structures that organizations can take advantage of.

For example, flexible funding, which gives organizations discretion on its use, can “enable needs-based programming and direction of resources based on a holistic assessment of needs, vulnerabilities, and risks,” (UNHCR, 2020). UNHCR classifies types of flexible funding as: multi-year funding, softly earmarked, or unearmarked.

Multi-year contributions are funds for 24 months or more that keep community members engaged by expanding the possibility of their feedback to drive change. Softly earmarked funds allow UNHCR to use resources for a specified strategic objective across a range of locations and activities in accordance with identified priorities. Un-earmarked funding has no restrictions on its use and can allow NGOs to create projects based on community-identified needs, without influence or manipulation from outside funding agencies’ requirements. (UNHCR, 2020).

If flexible funding cannot be obtained, a democratic medium exists. In Kabwe, for example, the Kabwe Municipal Council set up a system to involve communities in the budgeting process to increase residents’ involvement in decision making. The council set up residents’ development committees, composed of community members in given localities (Shah, 2007). The committees work with government department representatives to set and prioritize local goals. Representatives convert agreed upon goals into annual work plans, which are consolidated into annual departmental budgets (Shah, 2007).

This example is a form of participatory budgeting (PB), a “decision-making process through which citizens deliberate and negotiate over the distribution of public resources,” (Wampler, 2000). In this process, NGOs initially define target communities and encourage community members to participate in the process (Wampler, 2000). After a project team works with community members to transform project ideas into feasible budget proposals, the community votes on the project that they feel most serves their need, and this project is implemented by the NGO.

2.3.3. Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)

Monitoring is a continuous process of assessment in a project or program during its agreed implementation schedule that involves collecting and analyzing information ([Cassley & Kumar, 1987](#)). Meanwhile, evaluation can be defined as a process which “determines systematically and as objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact of activities in light of project performance”.

Largely because of the fluidity of these two processes within a development project, monitoring and evaluation are often jointly referred to as M&E. “Conventional” M&E (CM&E) approaches typically employ top-down, output-centric processes while participatory approaches employ bottom-up, process-oriented techniques that focus on incorporating community feedback and building community capacity. (Otieno, 2019). Conventional M&E (CM&E) methods, like their pre-project method counterparts, typically involve outsider experts collecting types of quantitative data. Their focus on producing information that is ‘objective’ and ‘quantifiable’ can create distance between community members and evaluators ([PRIA, 2014](#)).

CM&E aligns with a broader category of M&E approaches, results-based monitoring and evaluation (RM&E), which uses techniques including but not limited to quantitative surveys, externally-conducted biophysical measurements, and standardized interviews and focus groups to extract information from communities (PRIA, 2014). RM&E systems can be categorized as 'consultative' under Arnstein's ladder because, while they seek community members' opinions on projects, they extract information without establishing two-way communication between communities and NGOs can channel that information back to communities.

Conversely, PM&E tools and techniques are part of a process where local community members are active participants, rather than sources of information, in the development process([Dillon](#)). PM&E draws on many of the PRA/PLA tools that were described previously in the pre-project section, among others.

2.3.4. Human Resource Management

Human resource management (HRM) constitutes the policies, practices, and systems that influence employees' behavior, attitudes, and performances (Noe et al. 2017). Development NGOs' ability to employ participatory approaches is dependent on organizations creating a team that is committed and trained to implement community-led mechanisms within their organization, and then use HRM strategy and tactics to further mobilize the community to engage in collective action.

An HRM strategy that is aligned with the organizational strategy underlies core HRM activities. For example, the AMO model defines an employee's performance as a function of their ability, motivation, and opportunity (Appelbaum et al. 2000). Employing this model can help create a work culture that promotes CLD.

Efficiency and rationalization, and increasing cost-cutting regulations from donors, can constrain NGOs from investing in HRM. Many NGOs also have project-oriented HRM strategies. If organizations are too focused on specific projects that end, the long term goals and purpose of the organization are unclear, making the creation of long term HRM policies useless.

Thus, many local NGOs suffer because of their inadequate core HRM policies, leading to unmotivated employees that are unable to work (Batti, 2013 & Baluch, 2021).

A sustainable two-way communication channel needs long-term and talented employees who are committed to the NGO for several years. CLD requires employees who are motivated and compelled to go above and beyond project requirements to truly be a conduit of local needs. Thus, redesigning HRM as a tool to enable, motivate, and empower both community members and staff to engage in community development is essential.

2.3.5. Information Sharing

Information sharing is a critical process that must be incorporated into all project elements described thus far for NGOs to promote collective action within communities, but it can also be promoted outside of the traditional project cycle.

Formalized beneficiary feedback mechanisms (BFMs) allow “recipients of aid the opportunity to comment, make suggestions, express gratitude or criticise the products, services or targeting of an aid project of which they may be recipients” ([JUMP, 2013](#)). They may or may not be integrated into regular M&E, pre-project, and implementation processes. Many BFMs, such as hotlines, are part of a broader set of Information Communication Technology (ICTs) enabled feedback mechanisms that can strengthen NGOs’ community-development efforts. ICT are “ any products that will store, retrieve,

manipulate, transmit or receive information” (Ruppert et. al, 2016), and they can not only efficiently deliver information from NGOs to targeted beneficiaries but also reinforce communication between NGOs and beneficiaries. (SDC, 2007).

2.3.6. Accountability

Accountability mechanisms and processes are embedded within mechanisms already described, such as M&E, but it is also crucial to develop them for the organization as a whole.

NGOs must pledge to take ownership for their actions. They must then maintain responsibility by ensuring there is high transparency within the organization.

Transparency initiatives include disclosure statements and reports, in which organizations provide information on finances, organizational structure, and programs, (Ebrahim, 2003).

For transparency mechanisms to be impactful in shifting power to communities, “citizens must be able to process, analyse or use the newly available information,” (Gaventa & McGee, 2013). Organizations can increase communities’ capabilities to process this information through “active media; prior social-mobilisation experience, coalitions, and intermediaries who can ‘translate’ and communicate information,” (Ibid).

NGOs must establish consequences for inaction and misconduct. HR mechanisms can help remedy non-compliance among organizational members. However, if an entire organization is not adhering to accountability mechanisms, it may be helpful to grant a third party authority, so they can audit the organization and mobilize consequences.

Ultimately, external and internal accountability mechanisms are important for NGOs to install in order to follow through on their commitments to implementing CLD.

3. Methodology

Our research process was two-fold: we conducted a literature review and interviews with stakeholders, including 6 organizations and 5 community leaders.

3.1. Literature Review

In our literature review, we primarily searched for information about the 7 components and processes that we identified as impacting NGOs' potential for participatory development processes. We also sought out literature specific to the Zambian aid sector.

3.2. Stakeholder Interviews

From our literature review, we created a framework to help us rank Zambian NGOs on Arnstein's ladder. Additionally, we assessed the gaps that exist between organizations' current participatory ranking and the ideal, citizen-controlled ranking. After assessing these gaps, we interviewed local community leaders to understand their perceptions about the strengths and weaknesses of NGOs' policies, practices, and tools utilized in development projects. The five communities interviewed include: the Namanongo community, the Mboshya community, the George community, the Mandevu community, and the Kashimpa community. The Namanongo community is a rural community in the Rufunsa district. The Kashimpa community is another rural community in the Rufunsa district. The Mboshya community is a rural community in the Chibombo district. The George community is a peri-urban community in Lusaka and is part of the Matero constituency. The Mandevu is a peri-urban community in Lusaka.

Results and Discussion

Asking organizations about mechanisms they use in each stage of the project gave us insight into how participatory each organization is and what the gaps in their current practices are. Each of the six organizations that we interviewed agreed that a development project must involve community members at all stages and include practices from each critical component of our framework to facilitate a sustainable, CLD approach. In this section, we will outline the results from our interviews with both organizations and community leaders and analyze important implications, as well as distinct patterns that emerged, from our findings.

4.1. Organization Case Studies, Analysis, and Evaluation

We have presented results from our interviews with organizations in a case study format, where we have described each organization (A-F) based on the processes and tools it employs in each of the seven elements from our framework. For each organization, we have also analyzed the implications of its practices on its overall ability to foster a CLD approach and described where we believe the organization falls on Arnstein's ladder.

4.1.1. Organization A

Organization A is a coalition of various organizations that works on projects in various parts of Zambia. They claim only around 25% of its work involves citizen engagement.

The organization seeks to help local voices “inform advocacy interventions at local, district, provincial, and national levels.” At a local level, it focuses on building local communities’ capacities to use social accountability tools by training local community members to use its social accountability tools. However, the organization did not disclose

what its social accountability tools are. Citizens' needs are then collected by a local monitoring committee through snapshot surveys and baseline surveys. The entire process of building monitoring capacity, training community members, and identifying community needs takes two days. To ensure equal participation of all beneficiaries, the organization separates beneficiaries of the sector into five groups, including one for traditionally marginalized groups, and puts together teams to collect data on each group. The monitoring committees report to district representatives, who then report to parties at higher levels of the organization where project decisions are made.

Once local needs are identified and problems are researched, the member organizations come to an agreement on their priorities within a given thematic area. Differences between community identified needs and what international donors provide funding for are common.

Once a project idea is approved, community members are not included in the design process, and once the project design is finalized, community members' perceptions and attitudes towards the project are not always assessed. While the organization has not yet installed any mechanisms that shift financing power to communities, it has publicized budgets that local communities help manage. However, it is unclear how local community members help manage this budget. Although community members may not have the ability to manage funds, they do have control over other project resources, such as bicycles used for monitoring.

Since the organization is more research-oriented, community members are not involved in its primary development and research work in any capacity. However, when the organization collects monitoring information from communities, they incentivize

citizen participation by subsidizing community members' lunch and transportation when funds are available.

The organization primarily uses a participatory outcome harvesting methodology and community meetings as methods for M&E. Community members are invited to provide feedback in both the monitoring and evaluation processes, although both are carried out by a central office within the organization. While the organization has an established role for an M&E leader, there have been recruitment issues in the past, requiring another central office member to step in. The organization's social accountability work embraces a continuous process of generating feedback with communities even after projects end and staff are not present. However, the organization's M&E processes, including gathering feedback, end for the research, advocacy, and capacity strands of its work once projects conclude. Similarly, the organization only shares information related to its social accountability strand of work. The organization also did not clarify what accountability mechanisms they had in place.

The organization ranked its participatory practices at 25% compared to other NGOs and perceived the main barriers to full citizen control of its projects as inadequate capacity and trouble in capacity building. However, the organization does believe that full citizen control of projects is possible, and it is striving to adopt more participatory approaches.

Analysis of Organization A's Practices

Organization A's PPA approach limits its ability to fully obtain and understand community feedback because its stakeholder and needs assessments primarily capture quantitative information from community members. The short, two-day timeframe of training community members and conducting PPA work hinders the equitable

involvement of all community members in need of identification. Its PPA processes may also decrease community members' motivation if they perceive PPA work as being conducted to appease donors rather than facilitate authentic participation. This problem is compounded by the organization's failure to assess community members' attitudes towards projects, a critical step in discerning their receptiveness to specific feedback channels.

The main problems in the organization's CLD approach stem from limited HRM. Its project-driven approach, which divides operations into projects, separates community members from the authorities who make final project decisions. The organization's inability to retain its M&E leader is also related to poor HRM practices. As such, the organization's largest self-identified gap, a lack of capacity to implement CLD approaches, likely stems from its inability to find skilled staff who can properly carry these approaches out. This carries over to its poor capacity-building practices within communities, limiting the opportunity for communities to sustain their own development. However, the organization does utilize external incentives to motivate community members to participate in monitoring, which can be beneficial.

However, these incentives may dissuade community members from taking on more responsibilities and feeling a greater sense of ownership over their work by providing them with benefits that they have no reasons to forego. This may maintain community members' roles as implementers with predefined responsibilities who must answer to project staff or external consultants tasked with supervisory roles.

The organization's use of outcome harvesting (OH) is ideal. However, staffing constraints likely prevent this technique from being utilized with many community

members. Also, a majority of the organization's M&E efforts conclude with the formal culmination of the project, which does not allow for a continuous flow of feedback between community members and project staff or build communities' capacities to continue assessing progress in the long-term.

The organization's information sharing mechanisms are limited by their inconsistencies across the organization. While the organization did not state how it ensures each member organization equally participates and follows a common set of principles, its project orientation coupled with the unique interests of each of its member organizations can lead to gaps in responsibilities for each of the membering partners responsible for implementation.

Organization A falls into the "consultation" category of Arnstein's ladder. The organization self-describes community members' involvement in development projects as for prescriptive purposes. While citizens are involved in its social accountability work, this is only a quarter of what it does, and citizens are not involved in any capacity in the rest of its work

4.1.2. Organization B

Organization B is a large international, religious NGO that works at the grassroots level across the globe to promote human rights, development, and poverty reduction. Within Zambia it operates in rural and urban areas.

To capture feedback from community members, it uses a policy of 'community capacity building' that allows community members to participate in each step of the development process. It uses dioceses, which operate within communities, to feed staff members with information about community needs and conduct needs assessments with

community members. It also uses forms to report the participation of those with disabilities and women to ensure that they are being represented in PPA analyses. New projects begin every few years according to community needs and wants, as identified by needs analyses. A disconnect between what communities identify as needs and what donors provide funding on sometimes prevents communities from starting certain projects, though. However, once a project has been planned, local directors of the organization inform the organization's Zambian national office about their desired budget and control and document their spending and use of other resources.

Community members partake in community-based M&E processes quarterly where they assess project successes and failures. More regularly, a Quality Assurance program within the organization plans and conducts monitoring and evaluation activities. In the past, it has used WhatsApp and online forms for project-specific M&E activities to capture real-time details about community member participation, including gender and disability breakdowns, but it is currently still searching for a permanent technology for its M&E practices.

The organization also shares information about projects and programs through quarterly bulletins and reading materials that are distributed locally within communities. The Quality Assurance Team collects community feedback outside of the project cycle in two ways: it distributes forms to community members, and it conducts a national meeting where local planning directors share reports from their interactions with communities. It is accountable to beneficiaries, donors, and the government.

The organization believed that a primary barrier to full citizen control of its projects was the limiting influence of poverty within communities, which can redirect young

peoples' attention towards volatile activities and derail their civic participation. The government's support systems for some communities the organization works with has also hindered some community members from wanting to be self-sufficient and contributing their feedback to projects.

Analysis of Organization B's Practices

The localized model that this organization utilizes for PPA assessments ensures that all community members' needs and wants are considered in needs and stakeholder assessments. Communities and local evaluators tasked with PPA seem to take a joint approach to data collection and analysis that aligns with a PLA methodology. Even so, a lack of direct communication between project staff and community members before a project may prevent alignment on salient issues.

Further, organization B only consults community members for funding-related matters. Traditional funders sometimes disagree with local community ideas for projects, indicating that not all of organization B's funding is flexible. However, organization B can access flexible funds raised by its religious congregations, which allow the organization to fund community projects not approved by traditional funders and cover administrative costs, including training employees and conducting in-depth PPA.

The organization is one of the only ones interviewed that provides a monthly stipend to community members who are hired for non-technical activities. However, it has no incentives for the rest of the community, which is likely why community members perceive higher personal utility from other activities that provide pay. The organization can also do more to motivate, enable, and provide opportunities to community members to maximize their participation.

Organization B makes use of M&E techniques that are fairly participatory in nature, although it can capture significantly more feedback from communities. The organization promotes collective action among community members by facilitating, but not leading, opportunities for them to engage in M&E processes. The low frequency of the organization's formal M&E practices, however, may derail the establishment of information flows between staff and communities. The organization also does not provide opportunities for community members to identify or modify any predetermined indicators that are meant to reflect a project's progress.

The organization keeps community members well-informed by distributing quarterly bulletins and reading materials, which allows it to reach community members that might not have access to technology. Its accountability practices are also constrained in a similar manner to organization A, as consequences for breaches of its promises to stakeholders are unclear.

Organization B falls under the "placation" category of Arnstein's ladder. Although communities have opportunities to discuss information and transfer it to local leaders, this information is channeled to higher organizational levels, where non-community members make project-related decisions and give resources to local directors, instead of citizens, to implement. So while community members have some outlets for decision making power at lower levels, decision making power is not evenly split between the community and the organization.

4.1.3. Organization C

Organization C believes that engaging community members and capturing their feedback in all stages of development projects is crucial.

Before beginning a large project in a community, the organization spent 6 months performing PPA groundwork. It mainly employed focus group discussions, questionnaires, and other meetings to perform stakeholder and needs analyses because of a lack of capacity. Later, it utilized an external consultant. A representative from the organization identified a frequent disconnect between identified needs and funding. As a result, there are many projects that communities have wanted that have been unable to be implemented. There are also no mechanisms currently in place to shift financing power to community members or foster their longer-term active participation and resource control. After a project has been identified, community members' attitudes towards the project are usually not assessed because of the organization's self-identified resource restrictions. In an effort to build capacity and reduce their resource restrictions, the organization hired its employees from the community and hired professional trainers to train community members on project processes.

A project manager from the organization carries out most of the M&E activities. While project staff have changed the course of projects due to community feedback, evaluation for its projects is typically restricted. It utilizes Facebook pages to monitor project success for many of its projects and to continue to communicate with community members after a project is over. It also maintains a local presence within the community its project was located.

To capture feedback from community members, the organization uses questionnaires and consultative meetings, and it is accountable to funders and community members.

The organization said that it has not seen other organizations that involve communities as much as it does, but it identified access to funding as the main barrier to improved community ownership of projects.

Analysis of Organization C's Practice

Organization C's PPA, characterized by low engagement with community members, is largely a result of its lack of resources. Staff used a small set of quantitative, extractive techniques to solicit community members' feedback without gauging their attitudes beforehand. Such extractive techniques can fail to build capacity and collect comprehensive feedback from community members.

The organization also struggles to secure funding for itself, likely because of the high administrative costs that it must pay consulting firms and other operational partners.. Like other organizations, organization C likely cannot convince donors to fund some of the projects desired by communities because it does not have adequate external engagement strategies or an organizational mission and strategies that are tailored to empower CLD. Moreover, the organization does not have the capacity to train community members or fortify local community groups to manage their own funds.

The organization's size also contributes to its HRM deficiencies, although its own internal HRM practices have effectively mitigated some of its weaknesses. Although obtaining consultants can prevent a CLD approach, consultancy help likely allows this organization to channel more community feedback than would be possible with in-house help or assistance from poorly trained community members. Most impressively, the organization mitigated the recruitment and retention challenges associated with small NGOs - such as their low salaries, name recognition, and capacity by hiring directly from

the community and providing community members with the professional training necessary to carry out relevant development work. As such, the organization is able to cultivate workers who are highly dedicated to both their home communities and the organization, which provides them with opportunities to expand their skills through training, and have the social capital and intrinsic motivation to facilitate CLD. They also have workers who are highly dedicated to the organization and provide them with invaluable training, so they can develop long lasting connections with donors and partners and pass their acquired knowledge to other community members.

While the organization's M&E processes are fairly limited in the long-term, it does have a number of mechanisms set up to involve communities. The organization's lack of regular interaction with community members, and, thus, its likely inability to establish trust with them, may contribute to its difficulty in reaching out to community members to set up meetings. However, it attempts to continue circulating community feedback by maintaining a presence within communities and communicating with them via technology after a project is completed. The existence of several channels to capture feedback coupled with a lack of community involvement suggests that the organization may either be lacking enough staff to maintain its channels or is not able to encourage community members to be sufficiently engaged.

While it aims to share information and collect feedback from community meetings, the organization did not enumerate any processes that ensure it receives feedback from marginalized groups. It does not create closed feedback loops because it does not emphasize the reciprocal flow of information to communities.

Organization C falls under the “consultation” category of Arnstein’s ladder. While organization C attempts to base its decisions on community input, as a small organization, it has yet to find a way to involve citizens in decision-making processes. The organization’s staff includes community members, but funders still make most decisions about development projects.

4.1.4. Organization D

Organization D is part of a Zambian grassroots federation and combats homelessness by increasing grassroots initiatives’ capacities in urban and peri-urban communities.

The organization trains community members in profiling, enumeration, and mapping processes by helping them develop, understand, and administer questionnaires as well as map out actions and progress. However, community members self-organize and regularly meet to discuss and prioritize their own needs and, then, collectively gather, analyze, and use data. The organization’s staff supplements these processes with the use of logframes, but they play a minimal role so that there is a continued emphasis on community members’ findings. The organization also facilitates community forums where community members, religious groups, other NGOs, ward development committees, health committees, government authorities, companies, and others are invited to further discuss the communities’ identified priorities.

These priorities are then jointly turned into actionable plans through consensus among community members and the organization, after which the organization assesses community members’ attitudes before the project begins. The organization allows communities to manage funds by not only allocating funds towards certain community-

determined initiatives but also setting up a revolving fund within each community that gives community members the responsibility to implement projects from funds seeded by partners.

After implementing projects, the programmes department helps community members with M&E activities by providing logistical support that allows communities to build records and institutional memories about projects and can be learned from to make improvements even after the project's final deadline. It has been using virtual meetings to share experiences.

Reporting back to communities and receiving their feedback about a project's perceived strengths and weaknesses is an essential part of the organization's work. This feedback is collected and shared through meetings and exchange visits with communities that emphasize learning, sharing, and both individual and group reflection. The organization stressed its efforts to incorporate marginalized voices, citing how majority of its members are women and emphasizing its push for participation by youth groups in development projects.

Even though the organization prides itself on being community-led, it believes that common stereotypes and prejudices that community members are not educated enough to lead their own development are still commonly held by some donors and organizations. It also believes that discrepancies between donors' wants and local needs impede its ability to support local needs and receive more lucrative funding opportunities.

The organization identified fatigue among community members, who are often exhausted from participating in a multitude of different organizations' data collections and

demotivated by a lack of results, as a barrier to CLD since it can induce negative attitudes about NGOs' development work.

Analysis of Organization D's Community Practices

Organization D has comprehensive PPA methods that enable it to put responsibilities for not only collecting but also comprehending, analyzing, and extrapolating data into community members' hands. The organization strikes an ideal balance between providing community members with resources, including training, minimal guidance, and information from conventional planning techniques like logframe, and encouraging community members to collectively conduct as much of a project's PPA as possible. However, the organization can still encourage equitable participation among all groups of community members by specifically tracking the participation of women, youth, and the disabled in its PPA methods.

Organization D effectively adapts both the flexible and inflexible funding it receives, to advance development projects that are defined as important by communities. Unlike other organizations, it is able to do this because it has good external engagement systems to receive flexible funding from multiple sources, and its organizational purpose centers around building up community capacity. Further, the organization maintains partnerships that provide seed funds to community revolving funds. Communities are left to manage all project funds and their revolving funds. Revolving funds also remain available to finance the community's continuing operations without fiscal year limitations, which is effective because the organization only refills the fund once the community has ensured they are able to replenish money used from the account by generating returns from their projects. Organization D further validates these financial strategies by training community members

how to properly manage these funds. Even so, a potential gap in this approach is that only a few community members are likely in charge of managing the revolving fund, leaving out the broader communities' interests.

The organization's broad HRM strategy facilitates its community-led mechanisms. Because the organization is so focused on creating stronger communities, they do not think of their work as being broken into projects. It attracts workers who are, likewise, dedicated to seeing the growth that comes with community development. This strong person-organization fit leads to strong retention in which staff stay for years and help in several project cycles. Furthermore, the organization makes an effort to hire community members as both interns and support staff to give community members broad representation within the staff team. However, there are still gaps that exist in the HRM practices that the organization uses to facilitate participation and performance amongst community members involved in project implementation. Notably, the organization trains community members to learn new methods of PPA, but does not help evolve the roles of community members who want to take on greater levels of responsibility. Furthermore, the organization did not elucidate how community members are motivated past the project being completed. As volunteers, community members do not get paid, and it does not appear as if there are any group rewards to the community for good performance.

The organization's overall goal to build communities' own records about practices is indicative of its adoption of PLA techniques. However, the organization's M&E practices need to adopt more methods of communication between project staff and community members, both so that project staff can provide community members with updated

information and community members can share any concerns or comments about the project and receive timely responses.

The organization seems to adequately centralize and collect the feedback it receives from community meetings, although it did not specify any technology or methodology used to track and store it. This may prevent community feedback and reflection from being stored in non-anecdotal formats, making it difficult for decision makers and the broader community to know if others share similar complaints.

It also claims that its participatory nature keeps it accountable to communities. While high citizen engagement is a form of accountability, a gap could exist if community members do not have the power or the courage to hold the organization they may rely on accountable. The organization did not mention being audited by outside parties or community members, nor did it indicate if it had predetermined consequences if it failed to be accountable to its stakeholders. Lastly, organization D realized that community members may get fatigued from all the extraction and engagement required from different organizations. While this suggests community members are not sufficiently rewarded or compensated for their participation, it also reveals that organizations might not be coordinating with each other to make sure community members are not overworked by projects.

Organization D falls under the “delegated power” category of Arnstein’s ladder. In each stage of a development project, community members either have a full or majority control of processes and resources. The organization's practices do not enable full citizen control because there is more room for community members to engage in HRM-related practices and own the funding process or manage their own partnerships.

4.1.5. Organization E

Organization E works within all areas of Zambia to both advise enterprises and perform development work to combat youth unemployment and enhance agricultural output in rural areas. Our interview with Organization E centered around its active role in community development projects within Zambia.

This organization believes that involving community members in every stage of the project is essential to ensure that communities have truly benefited from a project. It mainly uses physical events, such as community events and meetings, to capture community members' feedback about projects before they begin, and has targets that mandate that women, the disabled, and youth groups should each constitute 5% of the population heard from in needs assessments. Although it uses Logframe in PPA analyses, the organization also uses outcome mapping and human-centered design techniques. Organization E identified a large mismatch between funding requirements, which deemphasize sustainability, and community needs, which require attention even after the end of a project. Although there are mechanisms in place for community members to decide where money is channeled, funders still have the penultimate say. After projects are chosen, community members' attitudes towards the organization's projects are not formally assessed, but they can be negative because of their perceptions that the organization is corrupt or misuses funds. For example, in the past, farmers that the organization has given resources to, with the expectation that they would sell back their harvested crops to the organization, have sold their crops to other higher bidders.

The organization frequently hires paid interns, as well as volunteers from communities. It also hires interpreters to overcome language barriers between community members and staff.

The organization's staff typically provides community members with smart phones and laptops to collect data from them in the form of questionnaires on simple platforms, such as google forms. M&E processes can go on for 6 months after a project's final deadline and report.

Community members can also provide feedback to the organization through face-to-face interviews and receive information about projects through road shows, print magazines, and brochures. The organization is accountable to both community members and donors.

Because it is growing, the organization does not yet think it has optimal community engagement practices. It does believe that full citizen control of projects is possible, but maintains that barriers, including community members' poor attitudes and lack of sincere engagement, and no structured financial management or training, are currently preventing this from happening.

Analysis of Organization E's Practices

Organization E largely utilizes participatory PPA techniques that capture feedback from community members, although it can work to build capacity more in this stage. The organization does use Logframe, but its simultaneous use of outcome mapping and human centered techniques suggest that it only uses it as an initial organizational tool to organize project objectives and potential indicators and is receptive to modifying these elements. It also has specific mandates to ensure feedback of marginalized groups is incorporated into

PPA. However, the organization does not attempt to bolster community members' knowledge to perform their own analyses and, despite facing negative attitudes from community members, does not have any mechanisms in place to remedy these attitudes.

Organization E's poor external engagement strategies make it difficult to receive flexible funds, and it struggles to receive funding for community-defined projects because its mission and strategy do not closely align with CLD goals. The organization does a good job of providing community members with resources and funds, although this shrinks the organization's funds. It could benefit from a revolving fund, like the one organization D has.

Although we do not have much information about this organization's HR practices, the organization likely struggles from capacity-related HR issues similar to those identified in other small organizations thus far.

While it did not provide concrete details on community members' roles in implementation, the organization involves community members in several different capacities, though it is limited by its lack of resources.

The organization's M&E processes, though extending past its projects' final deadlines, also do not facilitate the community's long-term involvement in monitoring project progress and evaluating the overall success of a project, since project staff only extract data from community members without strengthening their ability to continue collecting and interpreting it without external help. Its use of smartphones and laptops also likely leaves out the feedback of community members who are illiterate or prefer not to use technology - as such, there is much more the organization can do in its M&E practices to ensure participation by community members of all ages, genders, and abilities.

The organization uses both technology and traditional methods to distribute information to community members. However, considering some community members see the organization as untrustworthy, they may be unwilling to provide open and honest feedback even if asked for it. The organization also did not list any specific mechanisms used to ensure accountability, and they did not provide any consequences they faced for faltering on their responsibilities.

This organization falls under the “consultation” rung of Arnstein’s ladder. Although it attempts to capture community feedback through both processes embedded in its project cycle and additional communication channels, it does not give community members the opportunity to take control of the processes within any project stage, be represented at higher levels of the organization, or decide how funds and other resources will be allocated.

4.1.6. Organization F

Organization F is a faith-affiliated international development organization that is based abroad and works in Zambia to eradicate poverty and promote economic development by strengthening local NGOs’ capacities and acting as an intermediary between multilateral and bilateral funders who distribute funds to local partners.

The organization encourages the NGOs that it works with to move towards a context-based approach, where the NGOs’ projects are based on yearly situational analyses within communities. It gives partners a month and a half to conduct PPA assessments and create a project plan. Many of its partners use external consultants to perform baselining and create reports, although the organization encourages its NGO partners to set up project teams that involve community members from the project’s beginning.

Currently, the organization receives basket funding from a European embassy and multilateral sources to help fund local organizations' development projects, although Zambia's classification as a lower middle income country has shrunk the organization's pool of flexible funding. Its donor funding is also earmarked based on foreign entities' own development goals and strategies. Organization F also stated that when donors design their funding strategies, the decisions are political. As a result, organization F is only able to support its partners with earmarked project funding that matches the result frameworks of the donors and only fund certain components- mainly implementation- of their partners' projects. To mitigate this difficulty, the organization encourages PPA processes to be conducted before funding.

Organization F is attempting to adapt co-funding techniques to increase projects' sustainability and local ownership by transitioning several partner organizations' funding from project funding to co-funding. Co-funding involves assessing its partners' identified needs in accordance with its strategy. The organization does not yet know if co-funding is sustainable and will be renewed by its current donors.

Mainstreaming participation to specifically encourage the involvement of women, youth, and those with disabilities is an important priority for the NGOs that it works with, yet organization F finds it and its partners typically fall short on this goal. Young people, despite comprising close to 70% of Africa's population, are also not included in project interventions, particularly in post-project M&E activities, and only 15% of funding goes to the youth.

Further, the organization believes that the NGOs it works with currently are not focusing on building capacity in their M&E activities, and many do not engage with

community members at all when they visit communities to conduct monitoring activities. This was identified as a likely result of NGO employees' fears that community members might assert dominance in running the project and relegate their own work. Partners can also be fearful of the organizational budget cuts that would be probable if NGO staff reduced the amount of independent work they conducted within communities, or of the potential financial costs associated with empowering community members to make claims and demands, including for allowances.

The organization stated that at 'less participatory' NGOs, staff often want to maintain relevance by preventing community members from taking control of development projects. Less participatory organizations also often frequently staff people who do not understand how the project lifecycle works. This is common at smaller local NGOs, which may have less experience, no oversight by a board, rely on one grant or partner, or inadequate staffing or capacity. Many local organizations also do not have formalized systems, and international organizations often use their HRM policies in only an ad hoc manner.

Organization F believes a strong correlation exists between how well their partners share information and how often their partners are in touch with rights-holders. Communicative organizations that share their plans more frequently across communities typically spend more time integrating into communities and building their capacity. However, organization F recognizes a general gap in transparency because many organizations make documents that can be shared with communities classified.

Analysis of Organization F's Practices

This organization understands the limitations that external, evaluator-facilitated PPA techniques have in capturing communities' needs, and how these techniques can hinder community participation by allowing staff with short-term interests to set project guidelines and goals. It further realizes the disconnects that arise between project staff and community members when these assessments are not undertaken locally or integrated within communities. These disconnects may range from not sharing reports and budgets with community members to help them make informed decisions about project designs to failing to incorporate communities' political and social dynamics into needs assessments, which can demotivate community members, who may feel like they cannot make an impact on the project, from sharing feedback.

Organization F also recognizes the pressure that basket funding imposes on its partners to implement projects that fit donors' wants rather than communities' needs. The organization often acts as a liaison between small local organizations, such as organization C, and funders, so it must deal with many of the small organizations' burdens. While the organization attempts to match partners' funds with different donors' requirements, it can improve its external engagement with funders, as it is likely that it has currently not built up enough rapport with funders, does not have enough trained external management staff, or does not do a good job of convincing funders that its partners' projects are both sustainable and meet the donors' criteria. The organization also may not provide donors with a clear picture of their partners' mission. The organizations' issues in securing flexible funding for their partners extends to its own practices, since it is unsure if its co-funding strategy will get reapproved by funders.

The organization also understands how only outwardly engaging with communities, without truly focusing on the extent to which community members are participating in M&E activities, can deter greater community involvement in, and ownership of, development projects. Especially in M&E activities, expanding the role of community members so that they are able to make more meaningful contributions to data collection and analysis processes, and eventually to take control of these processes, is critical for an effective community-led approach. It is difficult to empower community members without engaging with them regularly, as the organization notes, which is why NGOs that infrequently conduct visits with community members will likely be unable to build the communities' capacities to conduct their own M&E activities.

Organization F found that staffing is a critical component to facilitating CLD and stated that if its partners had staff who were not motivated by community involvement, prioritized their own interests above communities' interests in projects, or were not fully trained in understanding the project cycle, they were less likely to be participatory. Some of these problems stem from weaknesses in the partners' hiring strategies and overall organizational strategy, which may prompt organizations to not fully empower communities because of the interests of their own employees. The organization also mentioned that some of its partners do not have HRM policies or take their policies seriously.

Despite encouraging its partners to make information public, organization F revealed that many partners still opt to keep much of their information private, which prevents the formation of a two-way feedback loop, since communities that are highly engaged in or own the development process should be given all appropriate information.

The organization strives to meet international standards, but community members do not audit results and there are no consequences for failing to meet the standards.

Our conversation with organization F encompassed discussion about both its own participatory approaches and its partners', so we did not have enough information about organization F to determine how participatory its practices are on Arnstein's ladder.

4.2. Comparisons of Findings

Organization F highlights how the poor HR practices of its partner organizations hinders their CLD. Encouraging leadership in development projects requires highly motivated individuals who are willing to give up power and be patient throughout an extended process that may take years to come to fruition. As the organization acknowledges, these qualities cannot be written into job requirements, easily assessed, or forced onto staff. Even though CLD mechanisms may be displayed on organizations' websites and included in their procedural handbooks and project designs, they still may not be properly utilized by those carrying out a majority of the fieldwork. Even NGOs that have HRM policies often do not consistently apply them. Because HRM policies and practices exist not only as a recognition of employees' importance to the organization but also as platforms for workers, an NGO's avoidance of HRM techniques suggests that it does not recognize workers' values. Executing HRM practices in an ad hoc manner has two major implications: first, the organization is not responsible for promises it makes because it does not follow guidelines that it sets out, and power and decision making is concentrated at the top of the organization, which is uncondusive to facilitating CLD.

Relatedly, no organizations used HRM components to facilitate broader community members' participation and performance during projects and most were, instead, content

with community members' participation in project stages, such as implementation and PPA, as volunteers. Even so, no organizations could specify the number of community member volunteers, enumerate how frequently they volunteered, or detail their work roles. This indicates that NGOs often do not collect comprehensive data about these individuals. All interviewed organizations speculated as to why community members might not want to participate in project activities, theorizing that it might be due to community members' engagement in more lucrative activities, burnout, or a lack of training or trust in the organization. However, NGOs might be able to receive clearer answers to these questions by asking community volunteers about why they volunteered, if they plan to do it again and want more responsibilities and what their ideal volunteer roles look like to receive clarification about community members' motivations for participating. HRM strategies that track volunteers and focus on ways their motivation, ability, and opportunity can be improved can likely increase broader community involvement.

Although small organizations with low funding and funding flexibility, such as organizations C and E, tended to have difficulties in implementing structured, comprehensive, and participatory PPA or M&E techniques within their development projects, some of the larger organizations interviewed had similar problems. Small organizations' insufficient feedback practices were primarily constrained by their lack of funds, which limited their ability to hire enough staff, invest in ICTs or other costly forms of monitoring and information sharing, and equip community members with the skills necessary for them to independently collect and evaluate information. However, even larger organizations that had more funding, such as organization A, had limited participatory practices for including community feedback in their project cycles because

their broad organizational strategies, or HRM strategies, were un conducive to a community- led approach. This indicates that these organizations' HRM approaches likely became systemic to their culture and promoted the hiring or retention of individuals who were incompatible with a participatory approach, and thus, were not trained in employing, or did not want to learn how to facilitate, participatory mechanisms.

Organizations recognized the importance of collecting different types of information from community members at all stages of development, including data for PPA, feedback for M&E, and complaints for accountability. While all organizations recognized that collecting information during PPA requires consolidating information to assess which community needs are the most pressing, most did not consolidate information they received from communities after the PPA stage. While some of the participatory M&E techniques that organizations reported using, such as outcome mapping and harvesting, did rely upon consolidating community members' experiences, they did not appear to be supplemented by additional avenues for organizing community members' feedback during the M&E stage of the project. Also, although organizations frequently reported utilizing face to face interviews, community meetings, reflection sessions, exchange sessions, and questionnaires to share information with community members, no organizations went into detail on how collected feedback could be collated and analyzed on a mass scale. Most of these techniques allow feedback to be heard on an anecdotal level, which individual community members may appreciate, but they are not ideal for analyzing common trends amongst community members to draw adaptable information from. Ideal information sharing mechanisms within NGOs would include a reward for sharing information, a

recognition and response to community members' message, and channels through which information can be mass produced and easily analyzed.

Furthermore, organizations had a variety of people and processes to hold them accountable to beneficiaries but no delineated consequences if they did not meet their responsibilities. Ideally, consequences should lie in the hands of community members. This is because funders tend not to be concerned about organizations' inclusion of participatory mechanisms unless citizen control is explicitly their mission, so they should not be solely tasked with imposing consequences onto organizations.

Lastly, a common theme that emerged during our interviews was the importance of partnerships in facilitating CLD. Partnerships can broadly be defined here as organizations' coordination or work with other organizations, companies, governments, schools, and people as it relates to development work. NGOs do not only interface with community members and donors when conducting development work but, rather, have a web of partners that they rely on to implement joint efforts. For example, organization D expressed that many organizations extract data and require community participation from the same communities at the same time, which is not a concern if organizations coordinate their PPA efforts. Similarly, organization C chose to outsource its PPA to consultants, and the type of consultants has implications for the extent to which communities can own development projects. Organization F's successful partnerships with smaller organizations provide another example of how strong networks and partnerships can positively impact funding and capacity building processes. Lastly, organization D shows how providing community members with the opportunity to utilize the deep social capital embedded in organizational partnerships can provide NGOs with a "competitive advantage". Considering

how NGOs leverage a variety of partnerships, given their unique characteristics and circumstances, to facilitate CLD is important.

4.3. Results From Community Leader Interviews

We interviewed a community leader from each community about their community members' experiences with NGOs in their area, how NGOs operate, and what factors they believed inhibited NGOs from effectively serving their communities. We have organized community leaders' responses into the following categories: community members' willingness to participate, information sharing, ownership of funds, accountability, PPA, M&E, staffing, technology, equal access to participation, and general feedback.

4.3.1. Community Members' Willingness to Participate

Leaders in four communities shared that their community members prefer some NGOs' projects over those of others, favoring projects that they feel are genuine and have the potential to make a wide, deep, and permanent impact within the community. For example, one community's leader identified an organization that helped the community obtain water and is now helping them improve schools as particularly impactful. The leaders also found projects to be more genuine if they were proposed to the community members before they were started and were implemented by organizations who taught the community to develop on its own.

All leaders shared that community members want to participate in development projects; however, one peri-urban leader stipulated that they are sometimes afraid to participate because of political mobs that impact their freedom of attendance. Community members also do not get to participate as much as they would like. Three of the five community leaders stated that members interact with NGOs through meetings, with one

specifying that interactions between communities and organizations take place through a teaching relationship, and another saying that community members can choose who leads these meetings. Within one leader's community, only leaders were invited to meetings. When asked about what their communities participate in the most as a group, responses varied across communities, but some leaders identified meetings as having the most participation while others identified saving groups, village banking, or community projects as bringing the most people together. Overall, community members from all locations appreciate opportunities to participate in a wide range of development projects, and their involvement can be boosted.

4.3.2. Information Sharing

All community leaders affirmed that community members are aware of the aid projects operating within their communities, but two explicitly mentioned community leadership and events, including workshops, seminars, and information from leaders, as the primary source of community members' knowledge about them. Similarly, while all community leaders mentioned having opportunities to give feedback on projects, two community leaders described the process of feedback between communities and NGOs as one where they invited NGO staff to meetings to initiate this process. One peri-urban community leader found two or three NGOs did similar projects in his community without consulting community members. Three community leaders reported receiving information about project progress through meetings, while two leaders, from a rural and peri-urban area respectively, reported having variable or nonexistent mechanisms to obtain information from NGOs.

4.3.3. Ownership of funds

When asked whether community members have the power to determine where money from NGOs gets spent, the communities who said they have the discretion to impact spending did

not clarify how determinations were made. The other communities, who did not have any ability to allocate funds, identified several limitations - one community leader said NGOs “pretend they don’t have money, use you, and you don’t get anything. They don’t even tell us where the money for the projects comes from.” Another community leader stated that community members do not even ask where money can get spent because they do not think they will have the opportunity to control it. However, all community leaders agreed that if community members could determine where development funds are spent in the community, they would be even more interested in participating in development projects.

4.3.4. Accountability

Two community leaders maintained that NGOs acknowledge their communities’ feedback, while the others reported mixed results. Leaders identified transparent NGOs as more likely to acknowledge criticism and NGOs with poor leadership as unresponsive to criticism, and one leader claimed that his community members feel used when organizations do not acknowledge their criticisms. Similarly, we found varied results when community leaders were asked about their perceptions of NGOs as loyal to the promises they make. All reported that community members trust NGOs who follow through on their promises, are transparent, and demonstrate commitment to the community more, although leaders did not identify what happens to NGOs who do not follow through on their promises.

4.3.5. PPA

All of the community leaders’ communities came together through meetings to discuss their community needs for a project and said that NGOs working within their communities tried to get to know community members in some way, commonly through questionnaires or meetings. However, two leaders believed the needs of their communities were misrepresented during PPA, with one

stating that some NGOs impose projects onto communities according to what they think the communities need, although many of these projects end up failing. Another characterized his personal experience with some NGOs as marked by these NGOs coming to communities with pre-prepared projects and not consulting community members about the project design.

4.3.6. M&E

Three community leaders had experiences with multiple failed projects within their communities, with two of these leaders stating the failure was due to NGOs' inability to train community members how to run projects independently after NGOs leave, and the other citing community members' lack of involvement and shunning of meetings as contributing factors. No leader reported that community members help decide when a project ends, and the majority of leaders reported wanting improved project exit strategies, with one saying that community members need to have increased interactions with NGOs before they leave and the other saying that NGOs do not always deliver on their promises before leaving. All leaders connected the success of a project to its adherence to what community members wanted, and one said a successful project should involve training community members how to independently run it.

4.3.7. Staffing

Two community leaders stated that community members were either hired or formally volunteered to work on development projects, and further stated that their community members saw their work on development projects as meaningful. One local leader specified that some NGOs assess the community members' skills to employ them in appropriate roles. Others said they did not know if community members were employed or that they were not employed -these leaders could not assess whether community members

found their work on development projects to be meaningful. Interestingly, when community leaders were asked if NGOs train members to carry out parts of the project, the two leaders who said that community members were employed to work on projects stated their community members were not trained to carry out parts of the project, while community members, from other communities, that were not employed received training. Only one leader identified how community members were trained, specifying training occurred through NGO-led workshops and seminars.

4.3.8. Use of Technology

Two leaders stated that NGOs used technology in their development projects to involve community members- one said that NGOs use computers, and the other said they use GPS, phones, and computers. The other leaders did not know of any technology being used by NGOs during development projects.

4.3.9. Equal Access to Participation

All but one community leader, who said their community needs to do more to include the disabled, claimed that every group in their community has an equal ability to participate in development projects. Several leaders explained how they, and their communities, has been advocating for broad social inclusion during projects.

4.3.10. General

Only one community leader said that their community has felt disrespected or harmed by NGOs and cited organizations' lack of involvement of community members, who want to feel like a part of the project, as a primary cause. Lastly, when asked what NGOs care most about them, and why, community leaders picked NGOs that implemented impactful projects which had high citizen engagement. For example, one community leader

picked an NGO that contributes to generational health and education while another picked an athletic association as most impactful.

4.4. Analysis

Generally, negative perceptions about NGOs' inclusion of community members in each of the above categories were concentrated among the same two community leaders. Because we were only able to interview one community leader from each community, it may be that some community leaders have a more negative perception of NGOs than others. Alternatively, organizations concentrated higher on Arnstein's ladder may concentrate their projects within certain communities that are easier to empower to see tangible outputs faster.

The apparent lack of correlation between hiring and training of community members, coupled with the positive relationship between hiring and community members' perceptions about the meaningfulness of their work on development projects, suggests that NGOs may not employ comprehensive training methods or train community members in a way that aligns with their preferences. Perhaps workshops and seminars that NGOs are leading are rigidly structured, and do not give community members the flexibility to learn about techniques and skills that they are interested in acquiring. NGOs that attempt to train community members may also not be spending enough time iteratively working through training material with community members to actualize improvements in their skills. Conversely, community members that are hired by organizations for their existing skills might have more favorable perceptions about their work in projects since they were given the opportunity and flexibility to apply a talent they had already learned to various project elements.

Additionally, some community leaders' negative perceptions about NGOs' lack of involvement of community members in PPA and M&E processes combined with their seeming lack of knowledge about NGOs' funding practices implies that there is a knowledge gap between NGO staff and community members regarding viable funding methods. Leaders that expressed unhappiness with NGOs' information sharing mechanisms generally spoke about their dissatisfaction with NGO-imposed projects, low frequency of engagement with community members, and poor exit or feedback strategies throughout the project cycle. While there is much that NGOs can do to remedy their poor practices in these domains, factors such as funding constraints and donors' control over development projects cannot be easily remedied in the short-term. Considering that no interviewed community leaders had control over funding or knew about NGOs' funding practices, NGOs should be transparent about the limitations they are facing with communities early on to resolve this knowledge gap, and community members' accompanying discontent about practices that NGOs do not have control over.

Community leaders found that high impact and high community engagement are typically synonymous, indicating that projects that engaged the community were more likely to be sustainable, and therefore have greater impact and success rates. As such, funders and NGOs should be less concerned about superimposing certain sectoral areas onto development projects. Progress should, therefore, be made through whichever channel the community desires, such as athletic associations, and communities are capable of recognizing their own needs and how to progress their own development.

Moreover, community leaders' descriptions of their own efforts to increase representation of all community members in development projects suggests that they,

rather than NGOs, take responsibility for advancing equitable opportunities for project participation. This speaks to the oftentimes tenuous balance between providing communities with help and enabling them to help themselves- although NGOs that have a dearth of measures to increase diversity of community member participation may be viewed as unresponsive to community members' needs, their lack of action may actually empower community leaders to increase their own efforts to diversify participation within communities. Hence, to determine communities' specific needs, NGOs should gauge how community members would decide when a project should be over.

The community leaders, while representing very different communities, reported NGOs' use of simple and similar mechanisms and processes. However, the NGOs that we interviewed described their use of multi-step processes and tools for various stages of development. Therefore, the tools they described were likely either not appreciated by community members or ineffective in achieving CLD objectives. If their tools are not appreciated by communities, NGOs should spend more time explaining processes to make them more knowable to community members. If the tools are ineffective, then NGOs need to refocus their efforts on streamlining their use of tools and mechanisms that exist to benefit community members. The timetable, identified by a community leader as an accountability measure, is an example of a tool that is widely visible and accessible to the whole community. Although it can be beneficial for organizations to train specific community members to take on full time jobs that help M&E processes, it can be a poor strategy to rely on processes and tools that require seminars or training for providing feedback and ensuring accountability because it is unrealistic for all community members to attend these trainings or seminars. The broader community's interests and desires can

also get lost to organizations who focus on ensuring the participation of only a subset of community members.

Community leaders' responses affirm that some of the largest barriers to CLD are systemic, cultural issues within NGOs. For example, when NGOs disrupt the work of other NGOs, it is disrespectful to the community and incompatible with facilitating CLD. Even if a small minority of organizations exacerbate these problems, they can provoke large effects because they can prompt negative perceptions of NGOs to percolate within communities and make it harder for other organizations to form trusting relationships with community members.

4. Recommendations

Given our above analysis of the current practices followed by Zambian NGOs and communities as they pertain to community development projects, gaps preventing both parties from jointly implementing approaches that enhance the efficacy of the 7 factors we identified as critical to a quality CLD approach, and our preliminary discussion of solutions, we have developed a list of recommendations to promote CLD. These recommendations are by no means prescriptive and are only meant to provide insight into potential processes and actions that these parties may be able to take to mitigate some of the notable challenges they face. Importantly, while they may be generalizable across other NGOs or communities in different nations, they are derived from Zambia-specific research.

5.1. Implementing Structured HR Practices

The broad HRM strategy of NGOs should reflect their overall strategic goals to empower communities over time. Organizations who affirm citizen engagement as synonymous with their organization's mission can recruit and retain workers who share

similar values and are intrinsically motivated by community empowerment ([Kristof, 1999](#)). Getting like-minded individuals who share community empowerment as a value also contributes to social capital, which develops trust-based networks that can be used to acquire further resources and engage in collaborative strategies ([Baluch, 2021](#)).

Next, organizations with local partnerships can recruit committed individuals. For recruiting full time staff and community members, partnerships can help the community own part of the project's HR process while aiding in recruiting talented and intrinsically motivated individuals with existing community ties. Community focused organizations also benefit from offering full-time employees longer contracts, which contributes to opportunity ([Baluch, 2021](#)).

Successful community-led organizations should have mechanisms for training and developing workers that lead to high retention. First, organizations should attempt to receive administrative funds to implement good training and development initiatives. When applying for funding, organizations should ask grantmakers about funding for overhead costs. If funding cannot be received, organizations can attempt to rely on reciprocity.

In designing work for full-time employees and volunteering community members, organizations should note the job characteristics model. According to Fried, "the Job Characteristics Model argues that five core job characteristics influence three critical psychological states which, in turn, lead to various positive psychological and behavioral outcomes at work," ([Fried & Ferris, 1987](#)). The five job characteristics include; skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. Skill variety is the degree to which a job involves a variety of different activities. Task identity is the degree to which a job

creates a product from start to finish. Task significance is the degree to which the job has an impact on others. Autonomy is the degree to which the job provides both freedom and discretion. Lastly, feedback is the degree to which a job provides the worker with clear information about the effectiveness of his or her work ([Hackman](#) & Oldham, 1976).

Organizations can also give power to workers and volunteers by promoting job crafting. Job crafting is an effort by employees to “redesign their own jobs in ways that can foster job satisfaction, as well as engagement, resilience, and thriving at work,” ([Berg](#) et al. 2008). Job crafting is found to have a positive relationship with both engagement and work meaning, ([Letona-Ibañez](#) et al. 2021).

Once management has conducted job analysis, staff can conduct behavior-based appraisal, which asks if employees exhibit behaviors that enable the company to achieve its goals, supports community-led frameworks because full-time staff can be assessed on the inclusivity they display in their roles ([Noe](#) et al. 2017). A behavior based approach is a good alternative when outputs are unmeasurable, performance constraints are relatively easy to account for, it guides employee behavior, and it is helpful for developing employee’s growth. However, it is usually costly to implement, and the chosen behaviors for monitoring can be subjective, ([Noe](#) et al. 2017). Behavior-based appraisal can be combined with objective measurable feedback, based on outputs, to create a balanced approach.

Lastly, organizations should apply compensation management strategies to the volunteers that work on implementing projects. They may consider team-based rewards, in which a portion of an individual’s compensation depends on the performance of the group, ([De Matteo](#) et al, 1998). For example, organization D can add more money to communities’ revolving funds if a certain number of community members participate and reach certain

group goals in development. Then, these added funds can be distributed to members of the implementing team.

5.2. Empowering Communities to Take Greater Ownership of Funds

Organizations can shift the power to manage funds to community members by tailoring their organization's objectives and strategies to explicitly center on empowering communities to lead their own development. For both organizations who are in direct contact with donors and those who receive funding from other organizations, management should work on creating better external engagement systems and strategies to find a greater quantity and quality of donors and partners who can provide flexible funding. McKinsey suggests that good external engagement models are supported by a fact-based history supported by organizational purpose, expressive tools that show engagement, and an agile engagement function (Geddes et al. 2020) A fact-based history involves tailoring organization objectives as above. Organizations can create better expressive tools by creating a presentable database of community member feedback of their current needs and reactions to past projects. Lastly, an agile engagement function requires organizations to be adept at leveraging connections and partnerships to expand their network. These strategies can be used to get more flexible funding.

Once funding has been secured, NGOs can implement PB, capping community members on budget limits based on what flexible funding they have available. If NGOs do not have flexible funding available, they can use their historic numbers to estimate funding, and they then ask community members to come up with projects as part of a pre-project analysis. Then, organizations can apply for grants with the community proposals. Pairing

PB with the revolving fund, as described by organization D, would allow a variety of citizens to own funding.

5.3. Strengthening Communication Channels

As explained, one of the primary purposes of collecting community feedback is for NGOs to learn about community members' needs. However, many organizations, after PPA, collect feedback about projects in an anecdotal manner where feedback gets dispersed across many meetings, heard by few staff members, and is then forgotten about. Organizations need a way to reward feedback, respond to it, collate it, and analyze it. Loop.io is a Technology non-profit that "provides a safe, free, and independent channel for people to share their views and engage with others," ([loop](#)) and is "available in multiple languages and through SMS, Interactive Voice technology, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, USSD, or via website from any device." This service allows feedback to be anonymous, so some of the pressures that community leaders referred to earlier can be mitigated. Loop has been working on becoming more usable in remote areas without internet access, but in the meantime, organization staff can write down feedback from community members, and upload it to Loop once they are in a location with better connectivity. Loop should not be the sole way NGOs collect feedback from community members, but it can be a powerful supplemental tool to see feedback from community members all in one place, while increasing transparency into the organization. As a bonus, Loop can also serve as an interactable, expressible tool that shows engagement as a part of organizations' external engagement strategies to increase flexible funding.

5.4. Concretizing Stronger Accountability Measures

While organizations recognize the different stakeholders that they are accountable to, there are three major accountability gaps that are often left unaddressed: ownership, transparency, and having consequences. Taking responsibility is mainly an issue within organizations that are a part of coalitions, such as organization A. Such organizations should mandate that their member organizations use identical accountability mechanisms, and they should be clear in outlining each member organization's responsibilities in development projects. Furthermore, a code of conduct should be drafted and agreed upon by both member organizations and community members. The benefit of coalitions, such as A's, and funding partnerships, such as organization F's relationship with its partners, are that these organizations can exact consequences. Organization A's national director can terminate relationships with irresponsible staff or member organizations for irresponsible actions, and organization F can cut funding ties with organizations who exploit communities. However, there should also be light consequences, which become increasingly severe for repeated violations, if a partner organization does not share the results of a community survey with the relevant community.

Issues of transparency seem to stem from the top down in many organizations. As organization F and several community leaders shared, some organizations may have a cultural unwillingness to share information with community members or protect classified documents. Thus, communities, staff, and funders need to put pressure on organizations to share documents as soon as they are created or received. If organizations are willing to be transparent, they should agree to follow the IATI and other international standards, and if donors require some documents to be classified, organizations should ask why. If NGOs are

to become community-led, they should be thought of as public organizations that are owned by the people.

The largest issue remains giving power to community members to use consequences when organizations do not live up to promises they give to the community. Organizations can use CABS as described in the background, but they can give them more decision making power.

For broader consequences CAB members in development NGOs should have a diverse group of members, but members should be "upstream" enough to be able to influence the broader community. The CAB can then use its liaison function to mobilize strategies such as encouraging litigation, government interventions, or protests as consequences to egregious violations of agreed-upon conduct, (Gaventa & McGee, 2013). Any of these mobilization strategies materializing would reflect very poorly on the organization, also disenchanting donors.

5.6. Facilitating Community Participation Before, During, and After a Project

Some of community members' central concerns about their participation in development projects involved their lack of interaction with NGOs before a development project, NGOs' inability to maintain open and consistent communication throughout the project, and NGOs' unresponsiveness to community needs when exiting communities. Considering that most community members utilize meetings as their main avenues of discussion with not only organizations but also each other, community members should be involved in physical processes during all project stages that enable them to give real-time

feedback to organizations and have greater control over the course of a development project.

Before the project begins, community members should engage in simple methods of communication with NGO staff members, such as transect walks, which can allow each party to get a better sense about the other's values, goals, and overall attitude about the project. The transect walk should specifically allow less-represented members of the community, such as the disabled and youth, to interact with project staff and informally communicate their perceptions about existing structures and deficiencies within the community. Ideally, this pre-engagement process should take no less than a week. Afterwards, NGOs should utilize simple tools, which can be used by community members who are illiterate, to train members in processes of data collection, analysis, and application and ensure that community members are well-versed enough in these techniques to train fellow community members. Although they should provide technical and logistical support as needed and can use tools such as LogFrame for their own organizational purposes, NGOs should encourage and help facilitate community members perform their own participatory needs assessments, stakeholder analyses, and project design through processes such as Outcome Mapping and Outcome Harvesting. They should stay in communities, or periodically check in, for multiple weeks during this time.

After the project has been implemented, project staff should continue communicating with community members through M&E processes and, ideally, provide community members with further training on how to monitor and evaluate data. For example, rather than just implementing the MSC technique, staff should train community members to independently conduct it without the presence of staff. Other PLA techniques,

especially visual and interactive techniques such as pile sorting, can be integrated into M&E activities to allow community members to continue updating their preferences for indicators and self-evaluating the success of certain project activities in meeting objectives. If NGOs are operating in urban or peri-urban areas where community members have access to phones, they can utilize tools such as Facebook and WhatsApp to create interactive groups where community members can update project staff with project successes and challenges and indicate to staff when they need to facilitate new M&E processes or provide more training or resources to community members.

Lastly, a project's final completion should be jointly determined by project staff and community members to prevent community members from being dissatisfied with the conclusion of a project that they deem unfinished. Thorough M&E practices should diminish the chance of disconnects between NGOs and community members on this matter, but project staff should also continue engaging in physical meetings and discussions regularly to ensure that they understand community members' preferences about ending a project.

5. Conclusion

Through a literature review and interviews with Zambian NGOs and community leaders, this study illustrated that the challenges of Zambian NGOs in facilitating an effective CLD approach, which captures comprehensive feedback from community members, spans multiple phases and processes of their development project cycles.

Our findings reveal that discrepancies in Zambian NGOs' participatory practices seem to have very real implications for community members and their ability to make an impact on development projects. Ultimately, our evaluation of Zambian NGOs' mechanisms

within the six components we identified as critical for CLD, combined with our analysis of local communities' perceptions of these mechanisms, allowed us to gain insight into how some critical disconnects between communities and Zambian NGOs can be bridged.

There are nearly endless extensions to and applications of the work we have done. Future researchers could find it deeply valuable to focus on a more specific development field or stage or to compare and contrast the participatory techniques that NGOs within a certain community employ. For example, future researchers may be able to map out the participatory landscape of development NGOs implementing projects related to education in the Namonongo community, which was identified as a valuable need. From our small sample of six NGOs and five community leaders, the Zambian aid sector has much room to grow, but has already implemented some promising mechanisms and processes to capture feedback from communities. Our findings reveal that, despite recognizing the ways in which they can become more participatory, many Zambian NGOs attempt to consult communities on projects in some capacity.

With the imminent growth of Zambia's community-led movement, we hope that this research will not only serve as evidence to inform Zambian NGOs' policy and facilitate their continued expansion, but also serve as a reminder of the great promise that Zambian NGOs and communities have to be leaders at the forefront of this movement and process.

Limitations

Conducting research virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic was challenging. An eight week timeframe, combined with an increase in COVID cases led to a smaller sample of organizations than initially anticipated. We were also unable to ask follow up questions about some answers provided by two organizations because their interviews were done through a questionnaire since unexpected COVID circumstances undermined our interview plans. Thus, while our recommendations are based on factors that we identified as crucial to facilitating CLD, they are not exhaustive or specific.

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