

Non-governmental Organizations and the Implementation of Good Governance Principles

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KEYWORDS NGO. Implementation. Good Governance. Ethics

ABSTRACT This paper sought to assess whether Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) indulging in poverty alleviation in Mwenezi District of Zimbabwe are implementing principles of good governance such as strategic planning, advocacy, legitimacy, transparency, accountability, monitoring and evaluation in their work. The study adopted a qualitative approach in which semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten NGO program managers who were chosen purposively. The main reason was that the researcher sought to obtain in-depth information on the way NGOs implement principles of good governance in Zimbabwe. Secondary analysis was also used to establish the existence of literature on the implementation of good governance principles in Zimbabwe. The study established that whilst some NGOs observe principles of good governance such as transparency, and information dissemination, some are not, which often led to conflicts between NGOs and the government over accountability issues. The study recommended that NGOs need to revamp their governance structures such as boards of trustees and foster close cooperation with international institutions such as World Bank, International Monetary Fund and Commonwealth to enjoy good financial relations towards funding development projects.

INTRODUCTION

Good governance is a buzzword in this era and has swept public attention for the last decade. The concept is fast becoming a significant pillar in the consideration of a state's ability to conform to universally acceptable democratic standards (Uddin 2008: 3). The Centre for African Family Studies (2001) pointed out that governance has become an issue of worldwide importance. The efficiency and accountability of organizations is a matter of public and private interest. Critical scholarship argues that the significant increase in the number of NGOs, funding and other collaborators have identified governance as a key issue in organizational effectiveness and efficiency. Camay and Gordon as cited by Hendrickse (2008) realized that NGOs should take responsibility for effective, accountable and democratic internal governance, which will enhance its credibility, legitimacy and impact its constituents. The authors explained further that governing bodies in the form of a board of directors play a crucial role in organizational governance as evidenced by a number of authors.

Uddin (2008) acknowledges that good governance is a necessity or precondition to development. Many countries globally seem to be in a race to utilize their available resources to provide development to their citizens, which is a positive stride towards good governance. The

implementation of the principles of good governance in NGOs has been hotly debated on the international forum and in developmental circles. There has not been a universal definition or a single author who has actually explained satisfactorily what "good governance" means in NGOs or how they should practice it in the process of delivering aid to vulnerable communities. In most scenarios, good governance has been closely linked to public affairs and how public utilities or resources should be properly managed. The International Journal of Governmental Financial Management (2014: 43) explains that governance can be best described as a decision-making process and how they should be implemented. It is necessary to highlight that "good governance" does not only concern making the right decisions but also involves the process of making those decisions. In Zimbabwe, and the rest of the world, "good governance" has been fundamental in explaining the actions or activities of various groups of people within societies.

Wyatt (2011) advanced the definition of good governance in NGOs when he refers to the decentralization and delegation of decision-making authority so that power is not centralized on an individual or a group of people. He ascertains that NGOs in Zimbabwe have been exercising good governance through the systems of checks and balances that decentralize author-

ity between management and the governing body to facilitate public service delivery (Ngwenya 2013; Wyatt 2011: 6). It is imperative to note that for NGOs to practice good governance there should be a Board of Directors, which is a governing body that observes the overall implementation of the principles of good governance. The main function of the board is to identify and safeguard the organization's mission, values, vision and goals. It is against this background that this paper seeks to establish if NGOs operating in Mwenezi District of Zimbabwe exercise principles of good governance in executing their mandate of alleviating poverty in rural areas or not. There has been widespread concern among different groups of people as to why should NGOs practice good governance. Do they really care about good governance or not? All these questions will be addressed in the literature review section.

Saunders (2011) asserted that Zimbabwe experienced tumultuous and unprecedented economic, social and political developments in the past decade. These developments maneuvered their way into the enactment of new policies and amendment of existing legislation, which was meant to militarize and politicize public institutions and deprive the non-state actors of their right to liberty (Mapuva 2010). The constitutional development in Zimbabwe came as a nightmare to civil society's democracy, as more and more incriminating or repressive legislation was passed out in the form of the NGO Bill in 2004, which in fact was meant to control all operations of NGOs in the country. This however does not stop the emergence of pro-democracies to arrest the rapidly diminishing democracy (Sachikonye 1995). The World Bank (2004) observes that following changes in the rule of law, citizen participation became guided by partisan pieces of legislation that act like a steering wheel to direct and control behaviors and in reality operations of NGOs in the country. Other laws passed such POSA and AIPAA were meant to control the activities of the citizens not to mention that they accrued more harm than good, and the king makers regret to this day to ever formulating such policies. In the light of this background NGOs and other civil society organizations rejuvenated to play an advocacy role, keeping the government in check, offering aid to vulnerable communities.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to assess whether NGOs in Mwenezi District implement principles of good governance in their operations. The study also seeks to establish the challenges facing NGOs in exercising good governance principles. The study concludes by recommending the NGOs to foster close ties with the government and other international monetary institutions such as (IMF) International Monetary Fund and World Bank on issues of common interest.

Problem Statement

Most NGO studies in Zimbabwe seem to claim that good governance of NGOs means being accountable to the government and not necessarily to the public or stakeholders. In his study on the good governance of NGOs in Zimbabwe, Dhafana (2013) was quick to challenge the executive or boardroom form of governance as old fashioned and not in touch with the current realities in the dynamic NGO movement. Jordan (2005) of the Ford Foundation argues that NGOs often fail to address questions of accountability as such organizational reliability and legitimacy questions. Cavill and Sohail (2007) observed that donor agencies, stakeholders, funders and academics always exert pressure on NGOs to exercise downward, horizontal and vertical accountability. Most NGOs in Zimbabwe are failing to adhere to the mentioned three types of accountability, which are key principles in enhancing good governance, which has also led to the unnecessary duplication or the failure to forge the appropriate synergies and wastage of resources (Kumi 2004). The government of Zimbabwe has been on record pleading with NGOs to prove their enactment of the principles of good governance such as strategic planning, legitimacy, monitoring and evaluation, advocating for the people, sources of funding and proper management of their institutions which only a few succeeded. Chakawarika (2011) however, relegated the above verdicts when he argues in his study that the political harsh climate in Zimbabwe is not conducive for NGO growth and exercise of principles of good governance. He challenges the current governmental policies as restrictive and yet unsuitable for the advancement of NGO movement. Despite

the abundance of literature on the governance of NGOs in Zimbabwe, more issues still need to be addressed to realize the sustainability of NGOs.

The present study interrogated the presence of the principles of good governance in NGOs such as strategic management, monitoring and evaluation, ethical conduct among others in NGOs operating in Mwenezi District.

Based on the above information, the research problem identified for this paper questions the following:

- Are NGOs accountable on moral grounds to their stakeholders? Do they maintain the values, principles, mission and goals of their organization?
- Are NGOs exercising the right to legitimacy in their operations? How accountable are they to the government or the people?
- Are NGOs advocating for human rights and in what way is this crucial towards enhancing good governance?
- Are NGOs implementing monitoring and evaluation in their development work? How efficient is their system of improving good governance?

Literature Review

Why Should NGOs Care About Good Governance?

The NGO Handbook (2011: 1) claims that in any business, investors or donors seek to protect their investments as a way of generating high returns. So doing they need to exercise principles of good governance since these contribute to the organizational three Es' of equity, efficiency and effectiveness, and they are essential for organizational growth. In many countries NGOs have been used as vehicles for driving good governance especially in countries where democracy is very limited. Kofie Annan the former UN Secretary General in his speech in 2002 observed that NGOs have been used to serve what he termed the "*conscience of humanity*". Critics however, question the meaning of good governance in the face of observing humanity. Annan (2002) asserts further that some people regard NGOs as lobby groups or pressure groups although they may be classified as lobby groups. In some instances, NGOs are seen to have accumulated more legitimacy than

ruling governments due to their relentless efforts to prove their accountability mechanisms in their operations. This is probably why Economists coined NGOs, the non-profit sector of the economy popularly known as the "third sector", which is a true diversion from private enterprises or public entities. One author observed that the irrefutable value of NGOs is that they supply public goods demanded by citizens hence they are effective vehicles for delivering public services (Paul 2014).

Principles of Good Governance in NGOs

According to the World Bank (2000), NGOs in the world, of which Zimbabwe is no exception, have been hit by a deadly virus, which manifests itself in bad governance structures in the NGO sector, which has seen many countries and communities suffering despite the abundance of different types of NGOs. This has caused many governments in the developing world to criticize NGOs as unaccountable institutions that exist to drive their own agendas. In its report the World Bank stipulated clearly that NGOs should practice principles of good governance in their operations such as advocacy, public participation, rule of law, transparency, accountability, equity and inclusiveness, consensus oriented responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency (World Bank 2000).

The NGOs and Observance of Human Rights

NGOs are playing a critical role in good governance through the promotion of equality and human rights, education and training, legal services, employment generation schemes and social economic and political empowerment. In most developing world countries such as Zimbabwe, Zambia and Mozambique, the civil society continue to shine in these developing societies since they assist citizens to participate in local affairs as well as influencing public policies and proper management and governance mechanisms of various governments. Chakawarika (2011:5) admits that non-governmental organizations have been playing a critical role in pushing for protection of human rights at the international level. Their existence is proving to be a necessity than a luxury in societies throughout the modern world. Gaist (2009 in Chakawarika 2011) discovered that in Zimbabwe and other third world

countries NGOs emerged to fill market gaps left by the government. The inefficiencies of the state led to the rise in NGOs around the world in an effort to redress market inadequacies, and social and economic shortages in the process of implementing the principles of good governance).

The Capacity Development of NGOs and Good Governance

The empowering of local people through capacity development is one of the important aims of NGOs in exercising good governance. Ulleberg (2010: 20) observes that the majority of NGOs view themselves as catalysts for change and as actors affected by external changes such as the capacity development turn in the development discourse. In addition, capacity development reorients NGO action in terms of types of activities as well as concerning the recipients of NGO efforts. She argued further that traditionally the recipients of capacity development efforts have been on NGOs, which is the civil society itself through a focus on community empowerment. However, it seems the state has been the focus of capacity development by most relevant actors in development circles. To enhance sustainable development change, action and intervention need to be transformed, Gordijin (2006) endorses that capacity development implies radical changes in NGO approach, for instance, "leading to a significantly diminished role in problem identification, design and implementation of interventions and greater emphasis on facilitation, strategic inputs and supporting processes aimed at strengthening developing country capacity". Gordijin (2006: 14) maintains that it functionally means a move away from NGO projects to investments in developing country programs and less reliance on expatriate technical, which is a positive step in achieving good governance.

Uvin et al. (2000: 1414-1417) pointed out that NGOs can reorient and expand their actions by implementing their skills and knowledge in activities ranging from training, information sharing, consultancy as well as advice as a way of promoting change in other institutions whose duties are to provide support services to government. By promoting skills and development initiatives NGOs are seen as implementing principles of good governance in communities they

are operating in. IFUW (2007: 6) claims that apart from the changing role of NGOs in capacity development, the tools for capacity development are rapidly changing from "hard" to "soft" from a focus on technical cooperation, equipment provision and constructing facilities such as schools, to increasingly turning towards less tangible but perhaps more significant tools. A study conducted by UNESCO as IFUW (2007: 6) describes such tools as important in improving knowledge management and skills capacity, social capital, communication and good governance. Moreover, Horton et al. (2003: 41) state that NGOs perceive capacity building as the process through which a society or (organization) changes its rules, institutions and standard of behavior, increases its level of social capital, which enhances its ability to respond, adapt and exert discipline on itself. The authors reflect on the idea that as part of enhancing good governance, NGOs and donor agencies share the soft tolls of capacity development thereby reflecting a growing awareness, which facilitates resources and inputs alone, which usually do not last in improving organizational performances. It is the crucial capacities, which reside in governance and management practices and systems that allow the organization to acquire resources and use them effectively (Horton et al. 2003).

The NGOs, Human Resource Policies, Work Procedures and Good Governance

The implementation of human resource policies and work procedures are crucial to NGOs in practicing good governance. Scharthmann (2010) argues that in any organization the effective implementation of quality of control largely depends on the quality of human resource staff operating the system. NGOs in the developing world have an obligation to exercise good human resource initiatives through adopting various personnel policies ranging from recruitment, inducting, training and promotions, monitoring and evaluation, hiring, compensation and taking remedial action. The Green Paper Audit (2010) explains that in hiring labor for instance, NGOs need to search for standards whereby they hire qualified personnel with extensive working experience and knowledge and should show ethical standards for a particular job. This is significant in ensuring good governance in an organization since most NGOs in Zimbabwe have been

on record for hiring unqualified staff, which contributes to the fall of development projects and mismanagement of NGO institutions (Ngwenya 2013). In that capacity, NGOs are required to run background checks on previous employee positions before hiring since organizations differ in principle and in operation. The White Paper on Internal Control in Chinese Listed Companies (2010) asserts that NGOs need to exercise post-employment controls, which involve internal and external auditing. Control in the words of The Institute of Internal Auditors as cited in White Paper on Internal Control in Chinese Listed Companies (2010) is “any action taken by management board and other parties to enhance risk management and increase the chances of achieving the established objectives”. It is noteworthy that control is one of the key tools in enhancing good governance among NGOs in poverty alleviation.

Guoping and Dengmei (2011) admitted further that it is the duty of designated authorities in NGOs to safeguard the assets of the organization. Messier et al. (2008) endorsed that authorities need to ensure that approval of transactions is conducted by responsible officials within regulatory limits that are all financial construct should require the authorization or approval of an appropriate responsible person to avoid wasteful expenditure at the expense of the organization. Sun et al. (2009: 229) realized that NGO managers need to play an oversight role by employing supervisors who are fundamental in implementing effective control systems for effective governance. This requires routine check-up compliance in accordance with relevant work procedures. These procedures entail what, how, why and where and when any set of actions is going to be undertaken (Yuan Min 2008). Monitoring controls or procedures have also been essential elements in implementing good governance in NGOs. This includes the analysis of errors and taking remedial action, conducting surprise counts of assets and comparing with the corresponding records. As the NGO sector has expanded in terms of funding and functions, there has been a growing concern with the issues of professionalization (organizational development and capacity building) and accountability (financial probity and transparency) (Yuan Min 2008; Zhu 2009).

A Board of Trustees as a Watchdog in Good Governance

Questions are often raised as to who is supposed to drive change and implement the principles of good governance in any organization a governing body, the Chief Executive Officer or a Board of Trustees (Jacobs 2012). In NGOs in Zimbabwe, the body of trustees is a statutory board established legally to implement principles of good governance. Section 21 of the (PVO) Private Voluntary Act (2007) speaks to the functions of the body. The Act clearly stipulates that, an NGO’s Constitution should have a clause on how a new member is to be elected onto the Board either due to an old member’s incapacitation, death, resignation, disqualification or maladministration. The body serves as an administrative structure that oversees if the organization is properly run and also ensures that funds are used for the intended purposes. Also, the body exists as a control and check mechanism to ensure if NGO managers in their operations see if they conform to the principles of running a non-profit institution. Section 1.3 of NANGO (2006) explains the principles of good governance to be observed by management. There may be others such as not to prejudice or compromise the interests of society of which the NGOs are meant to benefit. Management, which reports to the Board, should adhere to these key principles of good corporate governance, which include fairness, accountability, transparency, discipline, independence and social responsibility. Lewis (2012: 6) contends the same sentiments when he affirms that the way that an NGO is structured and registered will therefore have an impact on its legal status, accountability and transparency.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted on 10 NGOs operating in Mwenezi District Municipality in Zimbabwe. These were purposively chosen due to their role in rural poverty alleviation in the district. The study implemented a qualitative research design whereby semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 NGO field officers, program managers of NGOs to establish the availability and implementation of good governance principles in their operations. This technique was suitable because the researchers seek

to acquire detailed information from key informants who are program managers on how NGOs in the district exercise principles of good governance such as accountability, transparency, and monitoring and evaluation. Secondary analysis of published electronic journal papers together with other relevant information formulated the discussions and findings of this study on the current state of good governance in NGOs in Zimbabwe. It is imperative to highlight that secondary analysis was conducted to provide an overview of the current state of corporate governance in Zimbabwe. Data obtained from secondary sources was analyzed in a qualitative manner using thematic content analysis whereby the data from semi-structured interviews was transcribed verbatim and read several times and themes arranged in accordance with how the data was collected to identify any differences or contradictions. Reliability was exercised using papers, which were peer reviewed and those papers form the basis of this paper.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Are NGOs Exercising Accountability, Transparency, and Openness in Their Governance Structures?

Participants from all the NGOs under study were asked on whether they observe the principles of good governance such as transparency, accountability and openness in the operations. The majority of participants claim they have the mandate to practice good governance in their execution of development work. They argue that good governance established at the outset encourages organizational stability and balanced decision-making. In that same vein, Walt (2004) established that good governance involves many characteristics such as participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus-orientated, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, and accountability. Van der Walt (2004) contends with the above view, when he affirms that participation in the context of an NGO can be direct where staff provides feedback on the formulation and implementation of organizational policies. In that regard, good governance requires fair organizational policy frameworks that are enforced impartially. Also, transparency and openness in turn imply that decisions are taken and

their enforcement is done in a manner that follows rules and regulations.

The Need for Information Dissemination in Good Governance

As part of enhancing good governance practices, information pertaining to the organizations was made available and directly accessible by stakeholders. The NGOs exercised quick response to all challenges raised by the beneficiaries and relevant stakeholders especially all parties (internal and external to the organization) were served fairly and within an appropriate time-frame. The researchers discovered that NGOs under study prioritized community needs, which were customer oriented decision-making. To enhance sustainable human resource development, NGOs exercised equity when obtaining resources externally. It should not be forgotten that these NGOs take it to account to the public and their respective stakeholders. However, few NGOs still lag behind in as far as accountability is concerned. It appears that these NGOs impose their own agendas, becoming self-interested actors at the expense of the people they seem to support on paper. This is further cemented by the study of Kaldor in Lewis and Kanji (2009: 34) when they suggest that some NGOs seem to have become the end-points of domesticated social movements that are being used as political pawns in developing countries. In Zimbabwe, the government through the media often labels NGOs as agents of Western imperialists seeking regime change. Following the results from a study by Hendrickse (2009) it has been realized that good governance is the key to ensuring effective adjustments to changing circumstances within civil society organizations (CSOs) and the environments in which they operate.

The Need to Enhance Strategic Planning and Work Procedures in NGOs

There was a negative response on the availability of strategic plans in the study as the researchers were surprised to discover that apart from enhancing other good principles of good governance such as legitimacy and information dissemination, some NGOs in the study area failed to produce any documentary and oral evidence of strategic management in their organizations. They plan their programs the old way in

bureaucratic nature wherein the head manger is the one who delegates the program of the day to junior officers, which some field officers complained that it derailed progress especially in delivery supplementary feeding to vulnerable communities. The study established that authority to take action often comes from the head office, which compromised service delivery in the district living the residents at the verge of starvation. One programs manager in response to the question posed by the researchers, why does your organization does operate without a documented strategic plan, states, *“We have raised that issue in most board meetings that we should have a well written strategic plan which informs our plan action throughout the year, measured against our available budget. However, little was done to address this challenge, which sometimes contributes to poor implementation of development projects as a result of poor governance and underfunding”*. It can be realized from the above sentiments that lack of strategic planning in some NGOs hampered the effective implementation of their values, mission and objectives in communities they operate.

The Need to Protect Abuse of Human Rights and Good Governance

In sub-Saharan Africa, the abuse of human rights has been of world concern, and hence NGOs and other civil society organizations exist to defend such atrocities. The study established that in Zimbabwe, NGOs have been playing an advocacy role for a long time as a way of representing the public. However, NGOs have been under fire to clearly express on which behalf or which groups of people they claim to present. The government of Zimbabwe has been on record so many times accusing NGOs of driving their own agendas since they seems to be no reality as to whom they represent. The majority of NGOs under study argue that in delivering services to poor communities they are representing the marginalized people who are not able to complain to their government on the need to improve service delivery. In fact NGOs were found to emphasize more on their relationships between them and the communities they serve. The reason is simply because they are trying to win the hearts of the people in the country to government point of view. Evidence from the

study reveals that NGOs that focus on advocacy strive in their capacity to interpret to the people their rights, disseminating brochures concerning the Constitution of the country, which the government is failing to do. To that end, NGOs regard this as the most efficient and effective way of accountability to the general public in that attempt exercising good governance.

Are NGOs Implementing Capacity Building Programs in Good Governance?

The researchers found out that NGOs in the case study implemented various capacity building programs ranging from training and development of the local people in technical fields. The respondents explains that the beneficiaries were taught to be self-reliant through empowering them with skills such as building, carpentry, and new farming techniques since Mwenezi District is a dry region. Evidence from the Field Work (2015) suggests that in an attempt to exercise good governance, NGOs under study empower local communities through skill development initiatives such as bee keeping training programs, farming and carpentry skills, building and technical graphics courses, which equipped the local people with skills to self-sustain them in the district where economic opportunities are very limited. These initiatives from some NGOs were widely embraced by the local people though other NGOs failed to fund training and development programs due to lack of funding.

The Need for Policymaking, Citizen Participation and Good Governance

The study established that NGOs in the study area engage the public in policymaking processes from agenda setting to policy implementation. The main reason was that all the policies formulated by these NGOs in poverty alleviation affected the beneficiaries who are the people. The majority of NGOs embark on various activities such as agenda setting, negotiating outcomes, promoting legitimacy and providing alternative solutions. The responses were in conjunction with the study by Townsend et al. (2002) who ascertain that NGOs support civil societies through social capital provision, promotion of advocacy, empowerment and informing policy on good governance. It is crucial to highlight that NGOs increasingly influence pol-

icymaking process in national governments, multilateral institutions and corporations thereby conferring legitimacy and enhancing good governance. This is corroborated by the findings from a study conducted by Vassilev (2001), which reveals that in the policymaking process legitimacy remains an important aspect for NGOs to be acceptable in communities they operate. The study established that there are two types of legitimacy conferral that NGOs used in the study area. First is conferring legitimacy to actors in general, such as building confidence in, and support of, the United Nations or its subordinate bodies such as checking public and political support for certain policies and actions taken by UN Development Program. Secondly, conferring legitimacy to particular policies such as poverty eradication policies and to policymaking processes such as the consultation procedures at the World Bank. In the study, enhancing legitimacy was significant for NGOs indulging in poverty alleviation since the public should accept and understand the nature of development rendered to them as beneficiaries.

Evidence from the study seems to agree with relevant literature when it suggests that NGOs in some countries are involved in the development of environmental policies, as a way of obtaining information and conflict resolution. For instance, under the social development process in South Africa, NGOs participate in policymaking to suit the needs of the public and winning public support (Department of Social Development 2002). Similarly, in Zimbabwe the National Association of Non-governmental Organizations (2006) reasons that NGOs such as Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) and Christian Care embark on environmental awareness campaigns to conserve the environment degradation. The policies of these NGO are centered on the preservation of the beauty of surroundings, and hence they are often classified as developmental NGOs.

The study further established that citizen participation in policymaking was so overwhelming. This is strengthened by a research done by Galubovic (2010: 2), which echoes the same sentiments when it asserts that citizen participation in NGO activities is important in shaping and implementing public policies, which is a critical ingredient of participatory democracy. The author was quick to pin point that participa-

tory democracy is not meant to replace representative democracy, instead it seeks to supplement it and make it a better function. To that end, the respondents argue that public participation serves various significant functions in policymaking and promotion of good governance and these are inter alia providing an opportunity and creates conditions necessary for citizens to engage in political life regularly and not only during elections, creating a framework for citizens to advocate for their legitimate interests and thus contributes to the development of a vibrant democratic society. Public participation in the study makes the work of public authorities more transparent and closer to their constituencies. It also contributes to the quality of adopted public policy and its smooth implementation. If all stakeholders participate in the process, their legitimate interests will presumably be protected and the costs of implementation of such a policy will be reduced, as they will be less inclined to resort to judiciary and other remedies to protect their interests. Evidence from this study agrees with the results from a study referenced in the Public Hearings Manual, published by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as cited in (Gabulovic 2010), which revealed that those citizens are ready to embrace public policy when they are given an equal opportunity to participate in the formulation process in the process inserting their input facilitating NGO watchdog role in the implementation of adopted policies.

The Need for Monitoring and Evaluation

The study established that NGOs in Mwenzi District exercised monitoring and evaluation strategies as part of effective governance in poverty alleviation. The strategies involve Global Impact Monitoring (GIM) quarterly and annual reporting to the board or funders of development projects, disclosure statements, strategic evaluations, and performance assessments. All these strategies were essential in holding the NGOs accountable to donor agencies. The NGOs also conduct internal and external auditing annually to see if they were making progress or not as well as to identify gaps in their departments such as accounts and finance departments. This was important since the majority of these NGOs enjoy good relationships with the

funders, and hence this helped them a lot in delivering services to vulnerable communities.

How Ethical are NGOs in Exercising Good Governance

The participants from the study agree that they conform to ethical standards as stipulated in the code of conduct of for National Association for Non-governmental Organizations (NANGO). The study establishes that NGO staff enjoys mutual relations and the researcher recognized shared commitments and values, which resembles their accountability structures. Despite high observance of ethical conduct faith based organizations reflect that they adhere to Christian ethics, which reflect their code of conduct, which was a "faith based" in the accountability arena. The participants also show that their exercise of good governance in delivering services to the vulnerable communities relies more on their faith that human beings should be helped. Overall the NGOs under study responded positively to observing good ethics, which is a true reflection of good governance.

Importantly, the major findings of the study have shown that the majority of NGOs strive to enhance principles of good governance in their operations though at times political interference from the government act against their vision and mission to alleviate poverty in rural communities in Zimbabwe. It should be noted that from the study NGOs attempt in their capacity to account to the public concerning their actions through mass meetings, public participation in policymaking. To the funders and donor agencies the NGOs account through internal and external auditing, quarterly and annual statements. Achieving legitimacy is one of the most critical steps in the work of NGOs in Mwenezi, and hence they conform to government regulations thereby entering into a Memorandum of Association (MoU) with the government, which is a general agreement to map the development path forward. Few NGOs were found acting as voices for the voiceless (advocacy) in Zimbabwe due to the hostility of the political environment. Other NGOs of course campaigned for women rights especially the protection of girl child and abuse of press freedom such as abduction and arrest of journalists and human rights activists.

CONCLUSION

The present study was geared towards exploring whether NGOs program managers in Mwenezi District employ principles of good governance in their development work in the district or not. The principles of good governance such as accountability, consensus oriented, strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, transparency, openness, and ethical conduct were assessed to see if they are any gaps in the NGO sector when they deliver services to rural communities under study. The study depicted that despite the implementation of principles of good governance in the majority of NGOs, some still lag behind in as far as strategic management and monitoring and evaluation. Whereas some NGOs have a strategic plan in place, some did not, which is a tremendous blow to enhancing good governance in development work. However, the government could not delay to suspend operating licenses of such NGOs, and hence advocacy still needs to be achieved in the country. The restrictive political or regulatory environment coupled with repressive legislation in form of Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) was a hindrance to effective planning, funding access, governance and transparency of NGOs in their operations, and hence failure to win trust of donor agencies and funders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above conclusions, the study therefore rendered the following recommendations to NGOs so that they improve on their obligation to achieve good governance in their development work in Zimbabwe. NGOs should employ capable people with proper qualifications to formulate and implement strategic plans in their operations since this is the gateway to achieving sounder governance. NGOs need to improve on their leadership style thereby investing in succession planning, document and dissemination of good practices and develop mentoring programs. NGO managers should be in apposition to implement effective monitoring and evaluation techniques such as immediate or monthly, mid-term, assessment of policies to see if they are bringing any impact in their daily business. In development work, NGO should deploy

well-capacitated field officers to conduct close monitoring in the distribution of food parcels and other forms of development aid. Despite the harsh political environment in the study area, NGOs need to stand for the people be their mouthpieces advocating for the observance of human rights. There is a need to conduct further training on advocacy at local up to national level in the process sharing experiences for future improvement of administrative structures focusing on advocacy.

To improve on their accountability, NGOs should establish and register procedures, capital, asset and/or membership requirements, tax treatment and benefits, disclose and public reporting requirements. In an attempt to improve on the general management of NGOs there is need for NGO staff to undergo a paradigm shift from bureaucracy to democracy since this will minimize delays in decision-making, and thereby improving service delivery. To improve on financial stability, NGOs should foster relationships with international bodies such as International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and the United Nations (UN). These bodies usually have projects for poverty alleviation, observance of human rights and proper management of institutions both public and private. So NGOs can find a common path to development through associations, and hence their sustainability and improvement in the implementation of principles of good governance. NGOs should forge better working relationships with the government in form of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), whereby NGOs are hired to deliver public goods and services. This is essential in enhancing legitimacy and avoids political isolation from the government. Such a relationship goes a long way in complementing each other in service delivery to vulnerable or poor communities.

LIMITATIONS

The study focused on assessing the availability of principles of good governance in NGOs operating in poverty alleviation in Mwenezi District of Zimbabwe. The study relied mainly on semi-structured interviews and secondary data, which make the results from the study not uniform with other NGOs indulging in poverty alleviation in other parts of Zimbabwe, and hence the results cannot be generalized. The highly politicized environment of the study area inhib-

its the researchers from reaching all the intended respondents for fear of persecution or releasing sensitive information regarding their organizations or against the government.

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Paper received for publication on July 2015
Paper accepted for publication on May 2016