

**SEEKING SUSTAINABILITY AND LEGITIMACY: AN EVALUATION  
OF LITERATURE AND APPLICATION TO THE AFRICAN  
EDUCATION PROGRAM AND AMOS YOUTH CENTRE**



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December 10, 2008  
Honors Capstone  
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University Honors in SIS  
Fall 2008

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# **1. INTRODUCTION ACROSS THE BOARD**

## **1a. Growing Role of NGOs and GROs**

In January 1999, Secretary General Kofi Annan stated, “The United Nations once dealt only with Governments. By now we know that peace and prosperity cannot be achieved without partnerships involving Governments, international organizations, the business community and civil society. In today’s world, we depend on each other.”

Non-government organizations (NGOs) have become an integral sector at each level of these interwoven, crucial relationships; they supplement government development initiatives, emerge as international organizations, help involve the business community, and represent civil society. In fact, governments and the UN have become increasingly reliant on NGOs to deliver services for humanitarian relief and long-term development initiatives. In 1970, NGOs provided only .2% of official development assistance compared to 10% by 1995.<sup>1</sup>

From academics to those working in the field, from heads of UN initiatives to small rural cooperatives of women, all agree that NGOs and subsequently grassroots organizations (GROs) now play a crucial role in the developing world.<sup>2</sup> GROs on a more micro-level, offer to the world’s poor the opportunity of development, self-help, and representation.<sup>3</sup> In turn, NGOs can help GROs by providing support, knowledge, and resources to eventually create not just local change, but regional and national

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<sup>1</sup> Atack, 856-857.

<sup>2</sup> Esman & Uphoff, 1984; Leonard & Marshall, 1982; Nelson, 1979 in Silberberg, 432. Fernando and Heston, 9. Fouilhoux, 46.

Hamad and Swarts, xi.

<sup>3</sup> Esman & Uphoff, 1984; Leonard & Marshall, 1982; Nelson, 1979 in Silberberg, 432.

transformations.<sup>4</sup> Uphoff asserts that, “GROs and NGOs are increasingly seen as channels for promoting economic and social development, also contributing to democratization of the economy, society and polity.”<sup>5</sup> From micro to macro projects, from village chieftaincy to national government, from the United Nations to civil society, all of these groups, ideally, can work together to attain the vision of creating more positive environments for the world’s poor and underprivileged.

### **1.b The African Education Program (AEP)**

“Both GROs and NGOs bring different advantages to our quest for poverty alleviation and multifaceted development. GROs offer closeness to the people, knowledge of local conditions, responsiveness to local needs. NGOs represent different principles of motivation – both for creating goods and services and for receiving them – from those that animate state or market institutions.”<sup>6</sup>

Uphoff’s words appropriately typify the grassroots non-governmental organization, The African Education Program, and its sister organizations (offspring) The Amos Youth Centre and affiliated GRO the Women on the Move, which will be focused upon in this paper.

When sophomores in high school, two friends and I founded AEP, which is now a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization. At the beginning, our only goal was to help African students while “recycling” what our schools and community throw away too easily. We decided that our initial mission would be to send used educational materials to students and schools in an African community. We then faced the task of deciding where to establish our efforts, knowing that local community support would be needed. We were able to connect with community leaders in an impoverished and HIV/AIDS plagued community in the Zambian town of Kafue situated 40 kilometers South of the capital,

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<sup>4</sup> Esman & Uphoff, 1984; Leonard & Marshall, 1982; Nelson, 1979; Ralston, Anderson, & Colson, 1983 in Silberberg, 432.

<sup>5</sup> Uphoff, 618.

<sup>6</sup> Uphoff, 619.

Lusaka. We found out that all the schools in the community lacked basic equipment and were in dire need of books and computers. During our senior year of high school we achieved our original goal as we raised enough money to send a twenty-foot container full of books, school materials, computers and clothing to the community of Kafue. Our contacts in the town would distribute the material to a few schools in the area. The summer before the three founders set off for college, AEP received a grant to fund a trip to Zambia to witness the arrival of our first container and meet with the community and, in particular, the students who would be benefiting from our efforts. This first trip enabled us to better evaluate the educational system and the students' situation and needs.

Our time spent with Kafue's youth inspired us not only to continue our work<sup>7</sup>, but also to revise the organization's projected path, planning to broaden our programs by taking a holistic approach to education based upon the evaluation of the educational and community structures in which the students find themselves. Our efforts would eventually be geared towards supplementing the education being received by Kafue's youth in public schools.

AEP is a very young organization, managed by people without much experience in managing an NGO, like myself. None have ever formally worked for a structured non-profit organization before. So as a "rule of thumb", when AEP identifies a problem relative to the Zambian education system and linked to poverty, it immediately discusses the issue and solutions with the local Kafue community before trying to mitigate the issue.

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<sup>7</sup> From 2005 to 2008, AEP has sent over 20,000 books, 60 computers and a few tons of clothing and bedding to the community of Kafue. Collecting donated goods and sending them remains an ongoing program for AEP.

Early on, AEP identified the need to take a holistic approach to education. For example, children cannot learn efficiently when hungry. In addition, children will not go to school if it is not economically beneficial for the family- unless the income generated or responsibilities taken by the child are replaced, the family will have to keep the child out of school to subsist. AEP has, step by step, begun to address these issues entwined in education attainment.

### **1.c The Amos Youth Centre (AYC)**

2006 witnessed a landmark event as AEP raised enough funds to open a youth community center, the Amos Youth Centre located in Kafue. The center was created in the “spirit” of responding to the community’s assessment of a need. The youth whom we met, explained that they only attend school half of the day and did not have books to study from, because of school saturation. Therefore, a place to supplement their education would be very useful. So the center provides an educational, creative, and safe environment for Kafue’s vulnerable children. The AYC center offers a library, computer lab (with books and equipments from the container that AEP sent), HIV/AIDS awareness programs, various academic support programs and a feeding program.

The center is supervised and run by two local women who were unemployed before. Mrs. Chama and Mrs. Banda are two impressive women (both living with ten to twelve dependants in their individual homes at a time without a steady income) who have invested themselves to be full time supervisors at the center. Upon their recommendation, AEP started the Scholarship Program because of the number of AIDS orphans living in Kafue who cannot afford their tuition fees (about \$150 a year which is a large amount of money in a country where about 70% still live with less than \$1 per day). AEP saw the

opportunity to directly link donors in the United States to the Kafue youth. Individual Americans sponsor Zambian students and AEP facilitates communication between them (email, letters, etc). One of the major accomplishments of the two directors at the center is their role as counselors, guiding the students in their studies, helping them find a seat in school, and also giving psychological support to all the HIV/AIDS orphans.

### **1.d Women on the Move (WOM)**

Neither directly partnered, nor financially dependent upon AEP, a vital facet of AYC is a group called Women on the Move<sup>8</sup> who meet bi-weekly at the center because of the safe and comfortable environment the center provides, as well as the resources and commodities (i.e. electricity and running water) that are accessible. With a core of about 20-30 women, most of them are mothers of children who use the center's resources and benefit from AYC scholarship. WOM focuses on helping their families and community overcome the face of poverty and HIV/AIDS. Under the supervision of Mrs. Banda and Mrs. Chama, WOM members help manage and organize programs at AYC, and serve as surrogate mothers for some of the orphans. WOM's involvement in AYC will come up periodically throughout this evaluation, however the purpose of this paper is to focus on AEP and AYC since WOM is a peripheral organization to AEP and AYC- making its own decisions and managing its own budget..

### **1.e The Relationship Between AEP and AYC**

AYC is now an official GRO registered with the Zambian Government.<sup>9</sup>

Although AEP raised the original funds to open AYC, AEP never desired to control

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<sup>8</sup> Most of these women are widows, who lost their husbands to HIV/AIDS.

<sup>9</sup> WOM remains a separate entity whose funding is completely separate from AEP. AYC and AEP opened its door to WOM because of the impact the group has on the community and the inherent common cause all three groups are fighting for.



AYC. AEP chose to develop a mutual partnership in terms of decision-making, despite the fact that all funds come from AEP.<sup>10</sup> AYC provides local resources and participation, with consequent expertise and knowledge of the environment, but AEP provides the financial support for AYC's projects.

Currently AYC relies one hundred percent on AEP for funding and support. Applying Korten's model, AYC, as a part of AEP, is a program which finds itself in the second generation of development strategy as it focuses on "local self-reliance...in long-term development work or capacity building, 'with the intent that benefits would be sustained beyond the period of NGO assistance... [by] developing the capacities of the people to better meet their own needs through self-reliant local action.'"<sup>11</sup> In other words, AEP wishes to always remain linked with AYC through the scholarship program and by sending volunteers to work with Kafue's youth. AEP's vision, however, is to have the Amos Youth Centre become gradually less dependent and eventually self-sufficient so that funds can be redirected towards opening other centers and various other projects in order to replicate the AYC model. AEP believes that self-sufficiency represents full empowerment of the community members, as they take on the responsibility of their futures completely into their own hands and facilitate their own change.

### **1.f Overview of the Paper**

"All NGOs want to make the best possible use of their limited resources to achieve the greatest impact on poverty and powerlessness in a cost-effective manner. But

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<sup>10</sup> For the context of this paper, a partnership is defined as, "cooperative actions characterized by...two non-profit organizations... [in] a venture in which each of the stakeholders contributes resources of one kind or another – expertise, funding, community trust [and] an endeavor in which all parties involved partake in the design and implementation of the joint venture..." (Vargas, 1541.)

<sup>11</sup> Korten in Atack, 856.

how is this goal to be achieved?”<sup>12</sup> AEP and AYC are no exception. Up until this point, AEP and AYC based their initiatives solely on the good willed intentions of its members, both in the United States and Zambia. Through inspiration to help underprivileged students on AEP’s part, and AYC’s knowledge of Kafue’s need, these organizations have subsisted thus far. No member has been professionally trained in the development field nor have any academic reviews of similar initiatives been done.

These two organizations have reached a point where an evaluation is required to insure that AYC remains efficient in helping the targeted community and to ensure an eventually attainment of sustainability. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to serve as a reflection piece for AEP and AYC collectively. First of all, a Literature Review on NGO sustainability, self-sufficiency, legitimacy, learning organizations, and capacity building in a development environment will be carried out. This Review will also include a commentary on participation, empowerment, and the role of women in development.<sup>13</sup>

Instead of a formal Literature Review which only presents the academic text, each section of gathered information will then be applied to the AEP and AYC context. Where AEP and AYC stand in regards of the reviewed concept or tool of advice will be presented. The realities of the organizations, both AEP and AYC, will be critically looked at in order to make these suggestions practical, realistic, and most importantly beneficial and effective for the children of Kafue.

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<sup>12</sup> Edwards, 361.

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that although the existing work referenced in the Literature Review may need to be improved or modified, the purpose of this paper will not be to explore these flaws. Rather, the Review will concentrate on practical information and ideas that can be applied in a beneficial way to the case of AEP and AYC.

The final section of the paper, as a tool of summary, will describe plans for the future of AEP and AYC in a prioritized list from projects for the very near future to aspirations of prospective and potential objectives to come.

## **2. TOOLS FOR SUSTAINABILITY**

### **2.a Definition of Sustainability**

Sustainability is comprised of a variety components and factors such as the environment, human rights, and economics. Depending on the context at hand, equally varying definitions exist for the subject. For the purpose of this paper, sustainability will be defined as the perpetuation of “valued benefit flows or outcomes” whether the initial program/organization still exists or not. It is important to note that sustainability does not mean the continuation of a set activity, project or organization, but rather prolongation of the benefits that were once provided by the original initiatives.<sup>14</sup>

This definition is all encompassing since it can be applied to all the contexts connected to sustainability. In addition, it focuses on the outcome of the targeted group, not the projects or initiatives which commence the process of sustainability.

Unfortunately, all too frequently, benefits from development projects falter or cease completely when the initial funding fades out.<sup>15</sup> Sustainability or lack thereof, is too often simply linked with money. Projects or initiatives that do not begin generating an income on their own will not subsist when the preliminary donors withdraw.<sup>16</sup> Although

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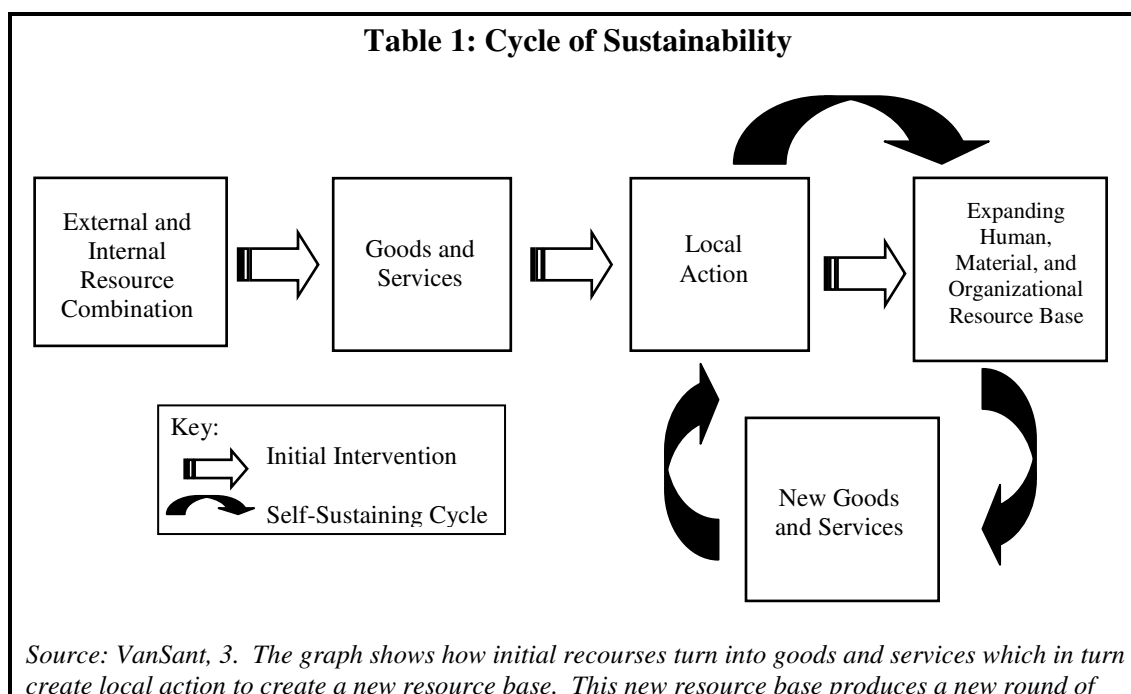
<sup>14</sup> VanSant, 2.

<sup>15</sup> VanSant, 1.

<sup>16</sup> Bebbington, 1716.

this paper will focus on sustained benefit flows, it is essential to realize that sustainability depends on funding and income generation.

For the context of this paper, the process of obtaining sustainability begins with an external NGO coming into a community and providing certain services and resources. The community itself is considered the internal resource. Local participation is an influential and, in fact, vital determinant factor for sustainability. Local action dramatically increases the chance of sustainability (*to be further discussed in the Participation section*).<sup>17</sup> Sustainability will only be reached when benefit flows continue despite the withdrawing of funds from the external NGO. Therefore, a transition needs to occur where the initial resource provision from the NGO can be utilized to create a new resource foundation by the internal resource, the people themselves. This new foundation will perpetuate benefit flows because it will now only be produced by the local people and local resources. (See Table 1).



<sup>17</sup> VanSant, 2.

*goods and services to be used locally. Local action and participation are key to initiating the cycle, but once started, the local group profits from sustained benefit initiated by the original resource base.*

As a final note on sustainability, Uphoff et al. explain the overall meaning goal of sustainability, and impact that sustainability can have on people in the following statement. “Success is not to be measured just by how well certain material or social needs are met. Rather, the aim is to create local capabilities for mobilizing and managing resources so that needs can be met on a sustainable and expanding basis.”<sup>18</sup>

## **2.b Key Issues and Factors in Planning Sustainability**

### ***1. Establish Background Information of Target Community***

Many components and/or questions must be addressed when an organization or program plans to create a project that will produce sustained benefits. First of all, the incoming organization needs to assess the community where projects are to be implemented. Demographics, economics, and employment are vital factors to sustainability and must be understood ahead of time. Using this information, the organization and community can realize the benefits that can be delivered and can then determine which are desired to remain sustainable. The organization needs to distinguish the benefits and projects as temporary or long-term. Without establishing the desired long-term benefits, it will be impossible to create an enduring plan.

### ***2. Establishing Necessary Foundation Resources***

The organization and community must establish the necessary resources required to fund long-term benefit flows. An important question to add is: Can the benefits be sustained through a self-supporting project or will a certain extent of permanent outside

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<sup>18</sup> Uphoff et al. 28.

funding or subsidy be required? A major part of this step includes the determination and categorization of capital costs and consistent recurrent costs.

At this point, a “Reality Check” is conducted. Local attitudes about the goals, as well as realistic environmental constraints, need to be assessed. It must be determined whether the projected profits justify the original investment.<sup>19</sup> One of the most important questions to ask, from the beginning is: “Does the administrative capacity exist (or is it being developed) to maintain essential systems for benefit continuation?”<sup>20</sup> Obviously, if the management resources do not exist, benefits cannot be sustained. From the beginning, resources may be wasted if this component of planning is not accurately assessed.

Another component of planning concerns service delivery. When the original funding ceases, will the supply of services be institutionalized in the local or national government structures or in private sector delivery systems? In other words, will there be need for other administrative resources or will the program itself be able to independently sustain delivery of the services and benefits? The final part of planning for sustainability questions what percentage of the program funding and administration can be found locally for the benefits to continue. Can all of the necessary resources be found locally, or will there always be a need to outside funding and support?<sup>21</sup>

### ***3. Program and Management Organization***

Branching out from administration and management, the next part of planning involves personnel organization. Leadership remains vital in the success of a project or program, and then the eventual sustained benefits. The project must found either a broad

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<sup>19</sup> Sandler, 217.

VanSant, 7.

<sup>20</sup> VanSant, 7.

<sup>21</sup> VanSant, 8.

administration which will organize and deliver the project services; or it has to establish a single key leader or small group of leaders. Otherwise, responsibility for different parts of the project will not be taken and services will not be effective or efficient.<sup>22</sup>

“Program managers are responsible for mobilizing, allocating, and utilizing available resources in ways that achieve the objectives of the organization most reliably, quickly, and efficiently.”<sup>23</sup> An organization’s manager or managers play vital roles in direct daily practices, supervising quotidian tasks, and administering long term objectives. These integral people also need to be able to train and motivate other staff members.<sup>24</sup>

Program managers for development NGOs require unique leadership qualities which go beyond basic decision making and representational roles for their group affiliates. They must be able to bring out the assets of each member of the group and incorporate those strengths into organization growth. It is imperative to note that success does not depend on program leaders and managers solely, but on the “quality, creativity, and commitment of the personnel who staff an organization from bottom to top”.<sup>25</sup> Good leadership will be able to facilitate all the strengths of the organization.

At the same time, the leader must be able to increasing the level of leadership which the group itself emits throughout the greater community.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, those who maintain leadership roles need to be able to connect, not only with those involved in the organization, but with the local people of their larger community. On the whole, these

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<sup>22</sup> VanSant, 7.

Sadler, 218.

<sup>23</sup> Uphoff et al., 88.

<sup>24</sup> Uphoff et al., 89.

<sup>25</sup> Uphoff et al, 45.

<sup>26</sup> Uphoff et al., 46.

leaders must be also to rally, inspire, and direct all those who are integrated in the organization and the community members not directly involved, but who can benefit from the organization.<sup>27</sup>

USAID emphasizes that an organization trying to reach a sustainable status must have members who are committed and feel strongly about the viability of the initiative.<sup>28</sup>

An initiative that is well funded, and has a guaranteed long-term income, will not be sustainable without the motivation, dedication, and determination of not only those in charge of the project, but those benefiting from it as well. Money does not act as the sole determining factor of sustainability; it remains a means to the end. Rather, the people surrounding the development project are the catalyst for change. Status, reputation, and charisma of leaders and staff are all relevant to legitimacy (for other components of Legitimacy see section 3b).<sup>29</sup>

When working in developing countries, where employment and money are not readily available, it is important to note that appropriate incentives for staff members can readily increase attaining sustainability. Incentives (and the possibility for increased recompense) will motivate leaders and staff to produce quality results for short-term goals, as well as maintain potential for the long-term vision of the initiative.<sup>30</sup>

#### ***4. Learning Organizations***

“Now, the better developed NGOs and NGO staff question themselves about what they do and do not do, what they should and should not do, and how to do what they

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<sup>27</sup> Uphoff et al., 50.

<sup>28</sup> USAID Executive Summary.

<sup>29</sup> Brinkerhoff, 3.

<sup>30</sup> Morss and Gow, 235.



should do.”<sup>31</sup> Organizations face constantly evolving environments in terms of society, resources, and people. Therefore, an organization must be innovative and their programs must develop accordingly. Uphoff asserts that, for sustainable development, NGOs must incorporate “learning” as a main objective for both short and long term initiatives.<sup>32</sup> Organizations which take these measures and insure innovation, good practice, reflection, and evaluation are referred to as Learning Organizations.

Learning Organizations have many components:

### *1. Reflective Practices*

Learning Organizations take to heart “Reflective Practices” which integrate prior experience, local knowledge, and theory to guide and inform the organization’s methods and procedures.<sup>33</sup> These organizations also embrace errors and turn them into constructive criticism for future improvement.<sup>34</sup>

### *2. Dynamic Systems Thinking*

“Dynamic Systems Thinking” is another component of Learning Organizations. Patel explains that an organization should be able to link the micro-local occurrences taking place in its community to macro-global trends.<sup>35</sup> For instance, HIV/AIDS is an issue that plagues local communities. A local NGO concerned with HIV/AIDS awareness and control needs to understand the unique dynamics of the area that it is doing work in with regards to infection rates, high-risk behaviors, and stigma. However, an understanding of the local context alone will not lead the path to curbing infection rates and consequential implications. The NGO must also be aware of the global HIV/AIDS

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<sup>31</sup> Chambers, 89-90.

<sup>32</sup> Uphoff et al., 19.

<sup>33</sup> Patel, 235.

<sup>34</sup> Korten in Uphoff et al., 20.

<sup>35</sup> Patel, 236.

patterns, such as high-risk behaviors or vulnerable groups to help target at risk candidates, as well as current innovations and advances in combating the virus.

### *3. Shared Vision*

Patel also stresses that a Learning Organization will build a “Shared Vision” within the organization. All parties involved in the organization should be a part of establishing the goals and principles of the initiative to create a sense of ownership and commitment by all.<sup>36</sup>

### *4. Learning Process*

According to Uphoff et al. *learning process* (LP) is an integral practice of these advanced organizations. LP requires continual planning for contingencies. It assumes that uncertain events and changes will occur and that the organization will have to adapt with consistent revision of practice. LP emphasizes the process, rather than the apparent product.<sup>37</sup>

Local participation is also a crucial component of LP. Uphoff et al. explain:

Learning process must be ongoing, and it should be carried forward not just by program planners and implementers but even more so by rural people themselves. They need to see themselves as capable of and responsible for continual innovation, as must the government or NGO personnel working with them.

LP runs parallel to sustainability since local participation not only emerges at initial stages of development, but also ends with full responsibility of the local people.

### *5. Evaluations*

One key tool in determining a Learning Organizations status is the use of evaluations regularly. By assessing progress on a regular basis, NGO performance becomes more thorough.

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<sup>36</sup> Patel, 238.

<sup>37</sup> Uphoff et al., 20-21.

In addition, cost-benefit ratios can be established for insight on future projects.<sup>38</sup> Evaluations remain a crucial part of standardization because they create core procedures and routines which occur habitually. This not only produces efficiency, but it also produces predictability which can aid in decision making in adjusting procedures for increased efficiency.<sup>39</sup>

Evaluation of the entire process of planning for sustainability must be implemented. At first, the organization needs to assess what resources will still be required when outside funding stops? What will be the sources for these necessary resources? How can these sources be secured? The local environment, including traditions and practices must be into consideration. Local involvement brings an expertise that no foreigner could possess concerning the community's needs and the surrounding environment. In addition, local resources and management inputs reduces a program's dependency on the funding organization.

The assessment of cost obligations (especially those that are recurrent) must also occur.<sup>40</sup> However, this evaluation cannot be development without organizational and administrative foundations which often need to be established through training and capacity building (to be discussed later).<sup>41</sup>

Note: Evaluations are not exclusively end of project assessments, but rather be required periodically throughout the project as a continuing source of information. Project and program conditions can constantly change over the planned program period (i.e. six months, five years) because of the evolving environment of the communities,

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<sup>38</sup> Tembo, 33.

<sup>39</sup> Uphoff et al., 106.

<sup>40</sup> Morss and Gow, 240.

<sup>41</sup> Nandago, 29. *Nandago argues that, "training and facilitation are the key enablers of the spread and success of participatory methodologies."*

resources, and staff. Evaluations therefore remain a major component of project redesign and adjustments to guarantee effectiveness in benefit delivery over time. In addition, periodic evaluation and assessment of the local staff and stakeholders will illustrate efficiency or lack thereof. Self-assessment can help determine the strengths and weaknesses of the program, thereby fully integrating strengths (project leaders, staff members, certain project components) and also focusing on improving the weaknesses.<sup>42</sup>

### **2.b.2 Application to AEP-AYC: Planning for Sustainability**

When speaking with the youths who utilize the resources at AYC, I often ask why education matters so much to them. And each has responded with a variation of the same answer- Education represents hope for a brighter future, void of poverty and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. They believe that with each grade level they pass, they are one step closer to a better life. This hope, this dream held so closely to each student's heart represents the inherent need for sustainability of AYC. The positive effects on the youth of Kafue have proven to be substantial and grow year after year as AEP and AYC continue to fulfill catering to a holistic approach to education. These students deserve to have these benefits continue to be sustained, even with eventual financial withdrawal by AEP. The impact on their lives and aspirations remains too great to let it all subside.

On a more formal note, as alluded in the introduction, sustainability remains the key to growth for both AEP and AYC. Without efforts for sustainability, at the current rate, AEP will have to continue spoon feeding AYC, unable to distribute funds elsewhere; meanwhile AYC will not reach levels of community integration necessary for complete efficiency. With sustainability, AYC can become more economically independent through empowerment of the members and the community at large.

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<sup>42</sup> Morss and Gow, 237-240.

### **2.b.3: AEP – AYC Evaluation**

Taking into consideration the definition of sustainability, AEP and AYC understand the necessity of creating an environment where the benefits of the youth center will continue to be provided when AEP starts to withdraw financial support. AEP wants to avoid the trend of past development efforts that fall apart once initial funding discontinues.

AEP and AYC have, so far, followed the steps, as previously established, toward reaching sustainability (although not necessarily intentionally or consciously at first). AEP, from the start, understood the necessity of creating a relationship with locals when shipping the first container of good. After the decision to continue AEP and carry on working in Kafue, the members, accidentally and purposefully began collecting information from the community on its perceived needs and understood that support of the community and the involvement of its leader remain imperative.

AEP and AYC are successfully combining initial external and internal resources, and providing goods and services as depicted in Table 1. The organizations now find themselves in the process of accomplishing the self-sustaining cycle (*see section 2b4: Need for Improvement*).

Concerning the Issues and Factors in planning sustainability:

1. Establish Background: AEP gathered initial economic and demographic information during its first trip. With the input from local students, AEP established that opening a youth center would be the next major project. Based on the information collected, AEP, along with Kafue community leaders, would have to decide in which part of Kafue the youth center would be opened. The poorest neighborhood, called Shikoswe, was picked

because this is the area where students struggle the most to stay in school. This choice helps the most in need, but also creates the risk of not achieving sustainability because of the lack of resources (see section 2b4: *Need for improvement*).

As AEP volunteers continue to travel to Zambia and work with the students at AYC, the members are becoming more comfortable in sharing information about their family lives. For instance, the interviews of applicants for sponsorship for the 2009 scholastic year provided the first opportunity when students felt truly comfortable disclosing personal information. Through the interviews of fifty female and sixty male students (age twelve to twenty-two), AEP discovered community trends. For example, of those interviewed, sixteen are vulnerable youth with both parents still living and thirty-six are double orphans. The remaining are single orphans- fifty-one have their mother still, leaving only seven single orphans with the father being alive. Few of the students have their parent or guardian with formal employment. Only half of the applicants live in homes with electrical service (and often they do not have electricity because they cannot pay the bill). As for their HIV/AIDS status, only one third of them had been previously tested, mostly older members of the center who have been counseled by trained AEP volunteers. This new information demonstrates a need for more intense HIV/AIDS awareness programs and stigma breaking.

With more information in hand, AYC can start catering even more toward the needs of the students. For instance, last year the feeding program was established after AEP and AYC realized that most of the students were often going to school without a meal.

2. Foundation Resources: AEP has already made assessments of AYC's capital and reoccurring costs. At this point, most costs are reoccurring: AEP rents the establishment used by AYC, electricity, water, and salaries are paid on a monthly basis, and technology upkeep is ongoing. Eventually, AEP and AYC envision building a center which would be a considerable capital cost, but would cut down in the long run on the reoccurring cost of rent.

A "Reality Check" has also begun (mainly through the process of this paper). The local community, community members, and especially the youth see the goals of AEP and AYC not only as important, but life altering. So a critical assessment of the realities of keeping these projects alive and the benefits flowing must be made in order to avoid letting down this deserving community.

Based upon the literature and the constraints of the surrounding environment, it seems that outside financial support for AYC will probably always be necessary as local resources are deficient for now (see section 2.c.2 for further explanation).

3. Programs and Organization Management: The organizations have accomplished establishing a board of directors (for both AEP and AYC respectively) and also delegated leadership roles for AYC. AEP's board consists of four members as prescribed in the organization's bylaws. None of the original founders still involved in the organization, sit on the board because at the time of commencement, they were not legal adults. The board members share various backgrounds (a computer engineer, a teacher, a heart surgeon, and a businessman). All are passionate about the organization yet the members understand the necessity to expand the Board and recruit other interested individuals whose assets will

help build the organizations, especially in terms of networking, fundraising, and overall public awareness of the organization.

From a legal standpoint, the Board collectively makes financial decisions and creates budgets while a group of volunteers take on the day-to-day workload of the organization.

AYC's board consists of ten members as required by Zambian Law. Two members are American AEP volunteers (including myself and one other) who consistently travel to Zambia on work trips, and the eight others are Zambian. All members remain involved at the center at different levels. The two directors, Mrs. Banda and Mrs. Chama serve as Treasurer and Vice- Treasurer. The Secretary and Vice-Secretary are local religious community leaders from the Catholic Church in Kafue who were our first contacts in Kafue.<sup>43</sup> The one, as a former teacher, is extremely involved in the current selecting of tutors/teachers to be hired at the center. The other is a professional HIV/AIDS counselor and aids in the HIV/AIDS awareness programs at the center. Two other members are businessmen from Lusaka who volunteered to help with the administration of the center. The final two board members are young, educated but otherwise unemployed men, who assist in all technical aspects of the center. As a multifunctional board, the members not only represent major stakeholders in the community, but also assist in many of the quotidian needs of running the center.

AEP has also taken the steps of providing appropriate incentives for AYC staff members. The two directors of the youth center receive a monthly salary, almost similar to one of a Zambian schoolteacher, which is open to renegotiation every year after

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<sup>43</sup> Religion is an extremely important facet of daily life in this society, and although AEP and AYC are nondenominational NGOs, the input of the religious community remains vital because of its strong presence in society.



review. AEP envisions having the directors receive a higher salary once budget allows such, and assuming that the directors continue on their current paths of capacity building and leadership, as well as training as HIV/AIDS counselors. In addition, since both directors have AIDS orphans living as dependents in their households, AEP sponsors some of the directors' children to go to school. This motivates the directors to continue working hard, as the center remains a focal point for their children's future and therefore, their own.

Only three others are on salary through AEP: the two night guards who are older AYC members (orphans and without proper housing). Through AYC and AEP discussion, it was decided to give two students this job as it gives them a small income, empowerment, and a sense of responsibility for their center. The third person is a young female, also a member who is cooking lunch for the students.

The spirit and commitment to a cause by the community, as deemed essential by the literature for success, already exists in Shikoswe. AEP and AYC remain fortunate to have the luxury of working in a community that feels very strongly about the initiative and have committed, especially on the part of the youth, to build the center for the betterment of the community.

4. Learning Organizations: AEP is striving toward becoming a true Learning organization. It has already adopted a theory of approaching education holistically and is gradually building this methodology.

The literature on Dynamic Systems of Thinking applies directly toward AEP and AYC's goal of elevating levels of HIV/AIDS awareness and stigma breaking. We are slowly learning the dynamics of this area through community assessment. Kafue finds

itself situated along the major Zambian highway which connects South Africa, Zimbabwe through Livingstone to Lusaka and Zambia's northern African neighbors. Often a site for truck stops, Kafue has become a place for prostitution of young girls who have dropped out of school to support their families. In addition, many of Shikoswe's families have lost the father. These households used to live in Lusaka, or in the wealthier Copper Belt region. But when the father dies, the family moves to Shikoswe where living is cheaper. Lack of formal employment opportunity too often forces the younger girls in families to become prostitutes and the cycle continues. AEP is using this knowledge and applying to the great AIDS context of stigma and lack of prevention methods. Kafue fits the great Africa patterns, with females being most at risk, stigma perpetuating, lack of prevention, testing, and medication (despite the vast quantities of free anti-retro viral drugs available in Zambia and even in clinics in Kafue). These micro and macro trends are aiding AEP and AYC to cater HIV/AIDS programs for its youth. Through stigma breaking programs and activities, provision of condoms at the center, and counseling, the organizations are using Dynamic System Thinking and beginning to see changes in attitude toward the virus on the part of the students.

5. Evaluations: This assessment is AEP and AYC's first evaluation on progress through academic literature and it is proving to be very beneficial as shown by the application the organizations and consequent review on necessary improvements.

AEP will face its first formal external evaluation in January 2009. A group of students taking a Social Entrepreneurship and Community Leadership Course at Penn State University will be evaluating AEP and creating a strategic plan of proposals and recommendations for organizational improvement.

#### **2.b.4 Need for improvement**

Based upon the Cycle of Sustainability in Table 1, AEP and AYC need to improve upon expanding a human, material, and organizational resource base which will create new goods and services, thus perpetuating benefit flows. This remains difficult because of the lack of local resources. Therefore ingenuity and creativity are needed to find ulterior resources.

AEP and AYC need to become increasingly proactive, instead of reactive, in information gathering and needs assessment. By continuing to establish needs and programs or projects which can facilitate change, AYC may become a catalyst for community building. This unfortunately ties into current constraints in funding- without money, even if needs are assessed and solutions are determined, without financial backup, nothing can be achieved.

Through proactive needs assessment, AEP and AYC can begin flushing out all facets of education and begin implementing projects and programs. The organizations need to improve upon addressing all aspects of education to truly fulfill the methodology of approaching education holistically.

AEP and AYC need to intensify their HIV/AIDS programs. The urgency of the pandemic is too great to become complacent. Awareness programs which occur monthly should be occurring bi-monthly and eventually weekly. AYC's drama club which occasionally performs HIV related skits throughout the community needs to increase numbers of performance and also being targeting schools and community gatherings. AYC also needs to build a better relationship with the VTC (voluntary testing and counseling) centers in the area so that the youth can feel comfortable going to be tested.

Although AEP and AYC are doing a decent job of targeting the HIV/AIDS pandemic, they need to continue using Dynamic Systems Thinking and accomplish more.

Although AEP is facing its first formal external evaluation, it needs to improve upon more frequent internal evaluations and monitor progress in addition to self-evaluations of board members and community leaders.

## **2.c Extending Resource Options to Increase Sustainability**

This section will not only explore the resource options which can increase sustainability levels, but also the shortcomings of these resources if they are not readily available. As discussed earlier, in order to reach sustainability, external aid which originally funded the project needs to be substituted. However, if these substitutions are not comprehensive, sustainability will falter.

### ***1. Local Participation***

The local people remain one of the most important resources for sustainable benefit flows. Nandago notes, “It has increasingly become important that the institutional leaders, or community leaders in the case of grassroots work... are brought on board if we are to see a sustained change in people’s lives through the use of participatory approaches.”<sup>44</sup> Their knowledge and insight on their own community is unique and irreplaceable, and consequently vital to sustainability.<sup>45</sup> This knowledge also applies to the Evaluation Stages, previously mentioned. Gopalan insists better feedback occurs when local participation is an integrated feature of needs assessment, program implementation, and evaluation.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Nandago, 34.

<sup>45</sup> VanSant, 13.

<sup>46</sup> Gopalan, 179.  
Sandler, 217.

Local participation also reduces costs since fewer outsiders need to be hired.<sup>47</sup> Since the local people are those benefiting from the services provided, their participation will result in the prevention of wasted materials and resources because these local people would be the ones suffering the costs of wasted supplies.

In addition, when the external funding and resources cease to be provided, local actors have no choice but to take responsibility<sup>48</sup>, otherwise the benefits will not be sustained. By integrating local persons in the primary stages of the project, a transition from outside “ownership” to local undertaking occurs more fluidly.

Although involving the local people who are benefiting from the project in the original design and implementation can be extremely cost effective, often time, the local community does not possess the necessary capacity to supply the program with adequate resources or administrative/staff personnel.<sup>49</sup> Local management skills and leadership continue to be one of the scarcest of resources in the developing areas where these initiatives are taking place.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, if a project, from the beginning, relies on local people and resources, the services may fall short because of the potential inherent shortage.

## **2. Role of Women**

The 1990s UN Summit documents repeatedly stress that sustainable development cannot occur without women’s participation.<sup>51</sup> Gender equality opens the doors to both economic growth and poverty reduction. For instance, households which invest in the education of the women members are more likely to have a higher income. With

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<sup>47</sup> Morss and Gow, 230.

<sup>48</sup> *It is at this stage that most projects tend to fail. It is vital that this transition of “ownership” be done fluidly, over time, and with the necessary funding and resource development.*

<sup>49</sup> VanSant, 4.

<sup>50</sup> Morss and Gow, 230.

<sup>51</sup> Vargas, 1539.

increased levels of education, women tend to have more opportunity for employment. In addition, increased education positively affects a woman's health.<sup>52</sup>

In addition, educated women tend to emphasize the importance of education on their children, thus improving the potential for the next generation. Unfortunately, according to the World Bank report *Gender Equality and the Millennium Goals*, "In no region of the developing world are women equal to men in legal, social, and economic rights,"<sup>53</sup> despite the fact that their involvement in all sector increases sustainable development.

USAIDS report, *Catalyzing Equitable Development*, calls for "Gender Mainstreaming" as a mean to overcoming gender equality and promoting sustainable development. "Gender mainstreaming" necessitates the respecting both men's and women's full participation in an organization's operations. "This full and systematic incorporation of a gender perspective within an organization is called 'gender integration.' Thus, gender mainstreaming is the means to attain gender integration, which leads to gender equality and enhanced development effectiveness."<sup>54</sup> NGOs have begun incorporating "Gender Mainstreaming" as a means to sustainability and development.

### ***3. Participation and Empowerment***

Former World Bank president James D. Wolfensohn said, "empowering stakeholders-particularly the poor-beyond information sharing and consultation to decision making gives the project ownership. And this sense of ownership is vital to the

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<sup>52</sup> Catalyzing Equitable Development, 5 and World Bank, 6.

<sup>53</sup> World Bank, 4.

<sup>54</sup> Catalyzing Equitable Development, 6.

goal of sustainable development."<sup>55</sup> Sustainability cannot be attained without the integration and expertise of the local people who benefit from the organization's services.

Gueye's definition of participation will be used for the purpose of this paper. He defines participation as a:

Greater involvement of local people in defining local problems, identifying solutions and implementing them, [which] ensures that the resulting programs are more effective and sustainable... [Also] A process whereby local people are given the capacity and power to make their own analysis, direct the process, grow in confidence and take their own decisions.<sup>56</sup>

Participation involves people in determining issues and making decisions that influence their own lives.<sup>57</sup> Local participation should not only occur at the implementation stages of a project, but rather at all stages including decision-making and evaluation.<sup>58</sup>

Rowlands' definition of empowerment will be used: empowerment is a process which involves people or groups that are powerless. They eventually become conscious of the dynamics of power in their societies and thus can acquire skills which give them the ability to take control of their lives. Rowlands notes that the empowerment of one group or individual should not infringe upon the rights of anyone else in the community. Additionally, once one individual or group is empowered they should work towards empowering others in the community to continue the development process.<sup>59</sup>

Thomas adds that, "Empowerment is a desired process by which individuals, typically including the 'poorest of the poor,' are to take direct control over their lives."<sup>60</sup>

Another indication of empowerment is when communities can accomplish their own

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<sup>55</sup> World Bank, 1996.

<sup>56</sup> Gueye in Tembo, 24.

<sup>57</sup> Eade in Tembo, 24.

<sup>58</sup> Cohen and Uphoff 1980 in Uphoff et al., 76.

<sup>59</sup> Rowlands in Tembo, 25.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas in Attack, 861.

development objectives and do not have to wait for external factors such as funding or project initiation.<sup>61</sup>

Brohman views empowerment through three distinct levels. Firstly, on an individual basis, where a person becomes empowered enough that they can depend on self-help and self-reliance to subsist. Secondly, empowerment allows local groups to make collective decisions and take collective actions concerning development initiatives in their community. Thirdly, empowerment provides a channel for local participation in organizations involved in their communities.<sup>62</sup>

#### ***4. Capacity Building***

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s definition will be used to define Capacity Building: "the creation of an enabling environment with appropriate policy and legal frameworks; institutional development, including community participation (of women in particular); [and] human resources development and strengthening of managerial systems."<sup>63</sup> Capacity Building does not occur overnight, but rather persists over an extended period of time as a continual process of growth. All stakeholders must participate (ministries, local authorities, non-governmental organizations and water user groups, professional associations, academics and others) for capacity building to truly occur. Through Capacity Building, human resources are developed. In terms of organizations, capacity building shapes management structures, methods, and inter-organization relationships.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Attack , 861.

<sup>62</sup> Brohman, 265.

<sup>63</sup> UNDP, 1991 in "Defining Capacity Building."

<sup>64</sup> "Defining Capacity Building."



USAID stresses two major points with regards to the capacity building of an NGO in a developing environment. It states, “The process of pursuing development objectives and dealing with attendant real world problems is the single most important method of developing NGO capacity.” Secondly, USAID believes that management training gives NGOs a great advantage in capacity building. However, the training must be environment and context sensitive. “Learning-by-doing” is emphasized as a vital counterpart to formal training.<sup>65</sup>

Converting an organization into a social enterprise is another way of building an organization’s capacity. An NGO can attain this status by entering the market in two different ways: by either engaging in market operations to generate a profit or by developing work which engages the market. An example of the former consists of a NGO running a print shop or publication business to earn an income subsequently used for the organization’s development initiatives. In the later, the organization can work to improve the local people’s access to the market.<sup>66</sup> For instance, the NGO can take part in the domestic or international markets circulate crafts made by the local people.

Patel argues that a major part of capacity building in the developing world, especially Africa, is increasing access to technology and consequent information and knowledge. She states, “It is vital for these countries to have increased global connectivity, community access to knowledge and capacity building to participate in the information society through the creative adaptation and use of new technology.”<sup>67</sup> Development and progress cannot be attained without entering this new age of technology.

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<sup>65</sup> USAID Executive Summary.

<sup>66</sup> Bebbington, 1760.

<sup>67</sup> Patel, 249.

### ***5. Use of Local Resources***

Utilization of local resources and management inputs because reduces dependency on outside funding and provision. Using local resources increases predictability for future sustainability, since sustained benefit flows will in the end need to rely primarily if not completely on the local organizations.<sup>68</sup>

### ***6. User Charges***

User charges present one way for a program to offset continuing costs by earning an income while maintaining service provision. Benefits of user charges include: more or better use of the services or goods because people are more willing to pay for private goods. At the same time, user charges cut on over consumption, because people will not spend more than they can on the good or service.<sup>69</sup>

On the other hand, user charges might prevent people from utilizing resources because they cannot afford the fee. Although different prices can be applied based on income and payment abilities, these types of systems can become extremely difficult to implement. In addition, it can often be complicated to install a user charge if the service was provided for free during the initial stages of the program when outside funding was available.<sup>70</sup>

### ***7. Local Government Funding***

Local government funding tends to be a more appropriate channel for receiving funding versus the central government of the host country. Since grassroots projects are the focus, local government systems could have a budget for such endeavors. In addition,

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<sup>68</sup> VanSant, 12.

Morss and Gow, 236.

<sup>69</sup> VanSant, 9-10.

<sup>70</sup> VanSant, 10 and Morss and Gow 230.

as stakeholders, the local government would have more interest in funding such projects.<sup>71</sup>

However, this source of funding obviously depends on the financial and organizational infrastructure of the state. Central governments, and subsequently, local governments often lack funds to commit to development in general or to an individual project. While planning a sustainable project, it is imperative to assess local government resources before planning on getting it.

### ***8. Micro-Lending and Microfinance***

Microfinance is defined by CGAP<sup>72</sup> as the supply of loans, savings, and other basic financial services for poor people. Micro refers to the use of small amounts of money, to help distinguish it from formal bank services. Bebbington asserts that rural finance services, such as credit and loans, have great success not only in sustaining an NGO, but also in developing individual lives and communities.<sup>73</sup> In fact, Microfinancing has become such a progressive concept in the fight against poverty that the Nobel Committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to one of the creators of the microfinance system, Muhammad Yunus.<sup>74</sup> “Professor Muhammad Yunus established the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh in 1983, fueled by the belief that credit is a fundamental human right. His objective was to help poor people escape from poverty by providing loans on terms suitable to them and by teaching them a few sound financial principles so they

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<sup>71</sup> Morss and Gow, 231.

<sup>72</sup> “CGAP is the leading independent resource for objective information, expert opinion, and innovative solutions for microfinance. We work with the financial industry, governments and investors to effectively expand access to financial services for poor people around the world. Our mission is to help alleviate poverty by advancing access to finance” (cgap.org).

<sup>73</sup> Bebbington, 1761.

<sup>74</sup> Nobelprize.org.

could help themselves.”<sup>75</sup> This effort not only positioned Professor Yunus to receive the prestigious prize, but more importantly he facilitated the elevation of individuals and communities out of poverty.

According to KIVA,<sup>76</sup> comprehensive impact studies have confirmed various positive influences of microfinance on households and communities in the developing world. It helps very poor households meet basic needs and creates enterprise stability and growth. In addition, microfinance supports women's economic participation, consequently promoting female empowerment and eventually chipping away at gender inequality and improving household well being. Microfinance also allows the poor to take advantage of economic opportunities. In fact, several studies show that clients who join and continue to participate in microfinance programs have better economic conditions than non-clients. A few studies have also shown that with time some clients have graduated from poverty.

“By reducing vulnerability and increasing earnings and savings, financial services allow poor households to make the transformation from ‘every-day survival’ to ‘planning for the future.’” These steps forward produces individual and community building as more children are able to attend school and more people live without hunger and in better living conditions. Increased health is also a direct result. Household by household, communities are able to grow stronger.

Microfinance can also be profitable for the organization providing the loans. For instance, the November 2001 Issue of the MicroBanking Bulletin provided data from

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<sup>75</sup> Nobelprize.org.

<sup>76</sup> Kiva is the world's first person-to-person micro-lending website. Through the site, individuals can directly lend to unique entrepreneurs in the developing world. Kiva's mission is “to connect people through lending for the sake of alleviating poverty.”

sixty-two self-sufficient microfinance organizations. The average return on assets for this specific group is 5.5%. This does not suggest that all microfinance becomes profitable.

Environment with extremely poor clients who live in remote areas are not conducive for profit.

**Brief Case Study: Sinomul Mahila Samit (SMS)**

Michael Edwards conducted a study which attempted to recognize the factors enabling four projects in India to be successful in reaching a certain level of sustainability and cost-effectiveness. One of these projects originates a part of Save the Children Fund (SCF)'s *River Project*. *River Project* was an all encompassing initiative providing aid for healthcare, education, agriculture, and economic development. Due to financial constraints, *River Project* eventually handed over the credit program component of its program to a local organization called "Sinomul Mahila Samiti" (SMS).

Edwards notes that the credit program became cost-efficient when the *River Project* handed it over to local hands. The transition, "resulted in an increase in the number of beneficiaries from 3,000 to 5,400 in under a year, simultaneously cutting administration costs by 75%- reaching almost twice as many people for roughly a quarter of the cost incurred by SCF."<sup>1</sup> SMS has now also reached sustainable benefits since it covers all of its administrative costs through service charges on the loans that it administers.<sup>2</sup>

Edwards also noticed several improvements in the daily lives of those benefiting from SMS. The loan services had created an increased sense of confidence among the recipients as they were able to access more resources. The people also acquired organizational and managerial skills. Also, women were empowered since they were given the opportunity to take a leading role by receiving a loan.<sup>3</sup>

This case study of SMS demonstrates that micro-credit lending can be a valuable resource for sustaining an organization. With time, micro-lending can not only produce enough income to sustain costs of the lending, but also produce a profit which can be reintegrated into other aspects of the program. This case-study also shows the strength of local participation and ownership of an initiative. In addition, micro lending improves the lives of the benefiting community economically and in terms of capacity building.

<sup>1</sup> Edwards, 367.

<sup>2</sup> Edwards, 366.

<sup>3</sup> Edwards, 365.

## **2.c.2 Application to AEP-AYC Planning for Sustainability**

1. Local Participation: AEP and AYC enjoy all of the benefits described in the literature of having commenced the cause with local participation. On the other hand, having chosen such an impoverished community with extremely broken infrastructures due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and government inefficiency, the search for local resources remains unfulfilled.

2. Role of Women: In Kafue, local participation and the role of women go hand in hand because of trends of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In Shikoswe, most adults who have thus survived the HIV/AIDS pandemic are women. An influx of women can also be attributed to the fact that many households headed by mothers had moved to Shikoswe after the death of the fathers and the loss of income. Living in Shikoswe represents a step back in their life. Therefore, AYC leaders and WOM are inherently women. This statement should not present a notion that if more men comprised the demographic that the leaders would be men.

3. Empowerment: AEP firmly believes that change in developing countries depends on the empowerment of women and, going back to the previous paragraph, would most likely have female leaders even if more males were present. Since Zambia still remains a patriarchal society in which woman subordination still thrives, cultural norms do not allocate initiative or leadership to be taken by women. AEP, AYC, and especially WOM are continually working to empower the women of the community to overcome these norms. AEP sometimes remains frustrated with the lack of initiative taken by Mrs. Banda and Mrs. Chama, but must remember the realities of the society. While respecting the local traditions, AEP and AYC try slowly to change habits already strongly anchored even in the youth. For example at the beginning of the feeding program, only female members helped the cook with the preparation, serving of the food and the cleaning, meanwhile the older male members were first to be served. During a “town meeting,” the directors of the center explained to the youth that the center is a place where everyone is equal. Since then, female and male youths equally help and there is no special order of who is being served first (including the younger ones who, before, were served last).

4. Capacity Building: AEP and AYC are allocating funds for leadership training of the two center directors. In addition, facilitating WOM into a social entrepreneurship has been an idea that AEP and AYC have had floating around since the creation of AYC. AEP and AYC would like to enter both local market operations and the world market. This will tie more closely into micro-lending, but by creating a market operation, such as a small chicken farm or entering the world market with selling of local crafts could greatly increase the capacity of this tight-knit community. AEP and AYC do not yet have the funding to pursue these ideas. In addition, these types of operations are risky because of the impoverished levels of the community.

5. Local Resources: AEP and AYC use local resources as often as possible like hiring locals for centers repairs and furniture building, buying food from local business people for the feeding program. AEP and AYC are trying to partner with an organization which distributes food to the underprivileged. In the case of Zambia, WorldVision has a monopoly on all donated food supplies by the US. Although AEP and AYC members have attempted to work with WorldVision (making several trips to headquarters in Lusaka, meeting with Supplies Manager, writing letters, etc), as of today AEP and AYC have been unable to receive a commitment from WorldVision.

AEP and AYC's minimal budget also created a limitation spending on transportation which decreases opportunities for communication with other potential organizations to partner with.

6. User Charges: User charges, at this point could not be implemented because of the endemic poverty of all those who utilize AYC. This community can barely afford food,

let alone user charges for the center's resources. As the literature suggests, user charges would prevent people from having access to the benefits that AYC provides.

7. Local Government Funding: The government represents a futile resource with barely has enough financial support to function efficiently and effectively, let alone have to resources to provide for community development projects.

8. Micro-lending: At this point in time, coordinating micro-lending with members of WOM appears to be AYC's most promising resource theoretically, both in terms of individual and community economic stimulus, but also in terms of empowerment and capacity building. The revenue produced by micro-lending could help solidify the Cycle of Sustainability.

For example, if WOM could buy more and better sewing machines, they could make more school uniforms. AYC already made a deal with the local public schools to authorize the students on AEP scholarship to not buy their uniforms from the school but to have the WOM make them and AEP paid WOM for them.

As for AYC, its first attempt to run a "business" was unsuccessful. Computer classes for adults were organized and the community was very interested in participating but the fees, even minimum (\$12 for a six week and 6 hours per week program) were too high.

### **2c3: Need for improvement**

The lack of personnel with optimal capacity and local resources available in Kafue present a difficult environment for reaching higher levels of sustainability. AEP and AYC need to improve upon finding undiscovered/untapped sources. Realistically, if AEP began withdrawing finances in the near future, the benefits provided by AYC would



not be sustained. A long-term plan needs to be set, with intense resource investigations, long term capacity building of youth and community members, and leadership building for leaders. At the same time, AEP needs to be patient and understand the cultural norms which delay the process of sustainability. If AEP wants to begin expanding and opening other centers, it needs to do more fundraising and have a much larger budget. At this point, AYC is in no state nor does it have to future prospects to have funds cut.

This presents an interesting cycle in which AEP and AYC find themselves. As AEP's pilot, AYC needs to show progress in benefit flows and sustainability to prove the quality of AEP unique holistic approach. However, AYC finds itself in such an impoverished environment that sustainability will be a long process; therefore AEP's result will not be immediate. AEP needs to improve monitoring and tracking benefit flows, while AYC needs to improve upon finding resources for sustaining the current benefits being provided.

### **3. ACHIEVING LEGITIMACY**

"The literature suggests that organizations need legitimacy for long-term survival and sustainability."<sup>77</sup> Therefore, it is essential to review the concept of legitimacy, the various means to attain it, how to increase it, and finally manage it.

#### **3.a Definition of Legitimacy**

Suchman's definition for legitimacy will be used for the purposes of this paper. He explains that, "Legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system

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<sup>77</sup> Brinkerhoff, 10.

of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions.”<sup>78</sup> Bebbington reinforces this definition as he emphasizes that the legitimacy of an organization derives from its efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery.<sup>79</sup>

This definition appears concrete enough, yet legitimacy has many abstract implications. The basis for creating legitimacy remains very subjective and open to interpretation based upon any individual society’s socially constructed norms.

The following literature will help explore and explain the various facets of legitimacy in an attempt to bring clarity to the concept of legitimacy and its value and significance in terms of creating sustainable development projects or organizations.

### **3.b Components of Legitimacy**

#### ***1. Transparency***

Atack affirms that the first part of legitimacy is “representativeness” (i.e. transparency, accountability, and participation).<sup>80</sup> An organization must be transparent in all of its actions and expenditures. The importance of periodic evaluations parallels transparency. During evaluation periods, the organization, affected community, and stakeholders must address these issues of “representativeness” and transparency which will create accountability among all the groups.<sup>81</sup>

#### ***2. Accountability***

An organization is liable not only to its partners, beneficiaries, staff and supporters, but also to its trustees, donors and host governments.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, “multiple accountabilities” may be a more appropriate term is these responsibilities and liabilities

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<sup>78</sup> Suchman in Brinkerhoff, 1.

<sup>79</sup> Bebbington, 1716.

<sup>80</sup> Atack, 858.

<sup>81</sup> Tembo, 33.

<sup>82</sup> Edwards and Hume in Atack, 859.

overlap all levels of an organization's infrastructure. For instance, donors require evidence that the materials or money they donate actually reaches the intended target group. If an organization remain unaccountable, not proving where funds are distributed, donors will no longer see the value of contributing and could potentially withdraw.<sup>83</sup>

### ***3. Organizational Values and Cultural Support***

NGOs inherently uphold certain core values (most share the common principles of unselfishness and helping others). Any person involved with any given initiative (donor, staff member, recipient) will be confident in and will respect that initiative if they can relate to or recognize these integral values.<sup>84</sup> This respect, confidence and consequent reliance creates legitimacy.

In addition, "Legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions."<sup>85</sup> For instance, the organization should not be looking for private capital gain.<sup>86</sup> Also, cooperation should be at the basis for the work ethic dynamic, as opposed to coercion by an authority figure.

Cultural support for an organization is gained by shared values systems and consequently creates legitimacy. Meyer and Scott explain this as "...the extent to which the array of established cultural accounts provide explanations for its existence, functioning, and jurisdiction..."<sup>87</sup> of the organization. If the benefiting groups can relate

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<sup>83</sup> Tembo, 32. *Tembo describes this as "value for money."*

<sup>84</sup> Kwak, 13.

<sup>85</sup> Suchman in Brinkerhoff, 1.

<sup>86</sup> *This should not be confused with the organization itself earning an income to keep its benefits sustainable. In addition, people working for the organization obviously needs to make a living and would earn money- this however should not be misconstrued into exploiting an organizations resources for capital gain.*

<sup>87</sup> Meyer and Scott in Brinkerhoff, 1.

to the organization and sees the necessity in its existence, the benefiting group will deem the organization legitimate and necessary.

For example, legitimate organizations comply with societal norms and meet societal expectations and are consequently accepted and valued by the surrounding community.<sup>88</sup> An organization should work towards integrating itself into the “social fabric” of the targeted area/group. Brinkerhoff affirms that an organization whose mission, actions, structures, and performance are appropriate and reach local social expectations will be viewed as trustworthy, reliable, and legitimate.<sup>89</sup>

#### ***4. “Right for the Job” and “Doing the Right Thing”***

Legitimacy is also proven when an organization confirms that it is “right for the job.” The needs of an area should be assessed before an organization establishes any projects in the given region. Based on the demands, an organization could become an integral asset to community development or give very little.<sup>90</sup>

Going back to values, the organization should have a “value based commitment” to promote the rights of the people with whom they are working.<sup>91</sup> Suchman summarizes this aspect of legitimacy in four simple words: “doing the right thing.”

#### ***5. Efficiency and Effectiveness***

Legitimacy is also measured by the effectiveness and efficiency of an organization to achieve its development goals.<sup>92</sup> The process of any action undertaken by the organization should be valued, validated, and done in the most efficient and effective manner.

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<sup>88</sup> Aldrich and Fiol in Brinkerhoff, 1.

<sup>89</sup> Brinkerhoff, 2.

<sup>90</sup> Suchman in Brinkerhoff, 3.

<sup>91</sup> Atack, 860.

<sup>92</sup> Atack, 860.

### **3b2: Application to AEP-AYC**

As AEP and AYC provide increasing benefits to the Kafue youth and community, and demonstrate to American donors the value of each dollar donated, legitimacy of the organizations are slowly building. AEP and AYC need to continue this progress and reach high levels of legitimacy to attract larger donations, as well as to influence more people in developing world.

#### **3.b.3 AEP – AYC Evaluation**

1. Transparency: AEP is extremely transparent in terms of allocation of funding and donations through a categorizations system of restricted and unrestricted funds. When a donor makes a contribution toward a certain program or project (i.e. feeding program or students sponsorship) one hundred percent goes toward that program.

AEP and AYC could not always make these claims of accountability. AYC's first director misused funds for personal use, obviously not producing proof of expenditures. AEP and AYC fired this director. This situation showed AEP and AYC that one person should not be able to access funding single handedly. Therefore, procedures were modified and installed. A process was installed where the bank required signatures of two AYC board members for money withdraw. Problems arose when schedules did not sync and two members could not go to bank together. Access to money needs to occur on a monthly basis for paying salaries and rent, as well as the feeding program.

Therefore, during the summer of 2008 another system was established where one board member has been given the responsibility of paying salaries and bills. Each person receiving money must sign with a witness. That board member is also in charge of receiving the money for the feeding program but must have these expenditures signed off

by the treasurer. All banking accounts are monitored by members in the United States. This system has enough checks and balances that, thus far, the financial records have been completely transparent.

2. AEP and AYC remain accountable to all constituencies. Donors are given proof that their donations go toward the specific program that they requested. For instance, donors receive letters and pictures of a sponsored youth when they choose to donate to the sponsorship program. AEP facilitates conversations (through letters and email) between the student and donor to create a relationship.

3. AEP was established upon the very core values reviewed in the literature. American donors relied solely on these values when beginning to give to this organization. The progress that AEP has made over the years, combined with staying true to these values has retained our donors support.

The fact that AEP built AYC with local support shows the shared value system between the American and Zambian sides of these projects. AEP and AYC keep the realities of local cultural and societal norms at the forefront of efforts because local participation is just a major part of the organizations' methodology.

4. *“Doing the Right Thing”*: AEP is proving legitimacy by “doing the right thing.” The community established the need for AYC, and is now gaining an advantage through resource and benefit flows.

When beginning the process of establishing AYC, AEP was faced with a difficult decision. The Catholic Church offered to assist funding the costs of opening the Youth Center and donating a building for the center, but in return requested that only youth from the congregation be able to benefit, keeping the resources and benefits within their

specific community. AEP decided that the aid in funding was not worth neglecting various non-catholic groups in the community. The organization chose to not take short cuts, and do what would be most beneficial for the community as a whole, not just one select group.

#### **3.b.4: Need for improvement**

AEP and AYC are slowly gaining legitimacy by, for the most part, adhering to the guidelines set by the literature. But as the organizations grow, they need to stay equally transparent and good-willed. Otherwise, legitimacy can be easily lost.

Although AEP and AYC are doing a much better job of producing financial transparency, certain issues must be improved upon. Often time in Kafue, transactions are paid cash and receipts are not always receipts available. For example, when buying food for the feeding program (vegetable, fruits, etc), the directors first try to buy from parents of center members who may be growing small gardens to make a profit. Therefore, receipts are not provided. Even at the local market, receipts are not often available. Therefore, AYC always runs the risk of having money diverted from its initial purpose. The organizations need to create a logging system of expenditure in the center which states expenses and proves the benefit flow.

The fact that AEP is transparent with allocating finances based on the donor request, AEP finds itself with enough money for some programs, but not for all aspects of the organization. People are more enthusiastic in giving money to send a student to school or feed him or her, but not to pay for shipping a container even if it is to send computers that the students are using to improve their education. The results are less tangible, and therefore less attractive. So donations are not covering organizational and

administrative costs like rent or container shipments of good. AEP needs to improve money allocations while keeping transparency.

### **3.c Managing/Increasing Legitimacy**

Legitimacy remains a qualification that has to be earned, deserved, and can be easily lost if not paid attention to. With the means to attaining legitimacy already discussed, the following will illustrate the necessary channel for managing, and if needed, increasing legitimacy.

#### ***1. Environment and Stakeholders***

An organization can increase legitimacy by conforming to the surrounding environmental pressures. If an organization does not morph to fit the local environment and gain local consent, legitimacy will not increase. To help reach this point of recognition, an organization can adhere to structures, procedures, systems, terminology consistent with other organizations of the same type that already have legitimacy.<sup>93</sup> Adopting already proven paths to legitimacy increases success rates.

A key component of managing legitimacy is the dynamics of the stakeholders integrated in the organization and project. Obviously, not everybody can be pleased nor will everyone want to invest in an organization. It is important to incorporate key environmental stakeholders based on the comparative social, political, and economic powers in the area. Ruef and Scott explain that the essentiality of understanding who does the legitimating and in turn, incorporating them in an organization's system.<sup>94</sup> Thus,

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<sup>93</sup> Brinkerhoff, 7.

<sup>94</sup> Ruef and Scott in Brinkerhoff, 9.



involving powerful stakeholders can increase legitimacy, but also pleasing, imitating, or working with more powerful partners or organizations can create legitimacy.<sup>95</sup>

## ***2. Building a Reputation***

Building a reputation also increases levels of legitimacy. Once a reputation is developed and legitimacy attained, an organization can more readily take risks, deviate from the norm, and have room to change and grow.<sup>96</sup> Information, transmission and communication with a legitimate voice and vocabulary are a part of building a reputation and will help increase legitimacy. Brinkerhoff asserts the imperativeness of using the correct terminology in connecting an organization's goals and activities.<sup>97</sup>

### **3.c.2: Application to AEP-AYC**

AEP and AYC need to continue managing and increasing legitimacy to keep growing. Legitimacy has guided these organizations' growth thus far. AEP and AYC cannot afford to become complacent.

### **3.c.3: AEP – AYC Evaluation**

1. Environment and Stakeholders: AEP and AYC started off on the right foot by, from the beginning, incorporating local stakeholders in the creation of the center. AEP and AYC keep the most important stakeholders, the youth, at the forefront of operations. For instance, by the end of the first year of sponsorships, twenty-five percent of girls on sponsorship were pregnant. To supplement abstinence programs certain board members advocated for condom provision to the older students at the center. The AYC Board was split on this issue. Some members worried about the reputation of the center, while other concentrated on the safety of students. Instead of deciding within the board, the idea was

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<sup>95</sup> Lukes in Brinkerhoff, 9.

<sup>96</sup> Deephouse and Carter in Brinkerhoff, 9.

<sup>97</sup> Brinkerhoff, 8.

presented at a town meeting of older youth center members. At the end of a two hour debate, the vote, by a vast majority was to provide condoms.

The center is managing legitimacy through this notion that the youth are in charge. It would be hypocritical to have a progressive youth center exclusively run by adults.

2. Reputation Building: AYC is steadily building a reputation in the Kafue community. An example of built reputation is the fact this for the 2009 scholastic school year, one of the public school will cover the costs of tuition for five AYC youth members to show gratitude for AYC's efforts of keeping students in school and supplementing their education.

A Zambian tradition calls for last respects be paid to a deceased at the burial by individually laying a flower on the grave. When a family member of one of our students from the center passes away, a lot of the youth attend the funeral. Laying the flowers is done in a hierarchical way with the priest calling upon immediate family, extended family, neighbors and friends. At these funerals, "Members of the Amos Youth Centre" are called to come pay respect. Unfortunately, these burials occur on a daily basis, but the fact that AYC is called up is a sign that our organization is well respected and its efforts admired in the community..

### **3.c.4 Need for improvement**

AEP and AYC need to expand upon stakeholder involvement, both in the United States and Zambia. At this point, the same board members and volunteers number has not grown much since the creation of both organizations.

Although AYC is continuing to build a reputation, AEP greatly needs to continue building this concept. Right now, the donor pool for AEP is a close-knit community group. By building a reputation, the donor pool can be expanded as people who do not hold a close personal tie to organization members will be willing to donate funds.

#### **4. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE: A PRIORITIZED LIST OF STEPS FOR SUSTAINABILITY**

##### **4.a Short Term- Year 2009**

1. AEP needs to expand fundraising and raise more money to be allocated to AYC.
2. Dependent on an increased budget, AEP and AYC must continue expanding current programs which comprise the holistic approach to education (academic, HIV/AIDS awareness, sponsorship program, and feeding program).
3. By May 2009, AEP will receive results from the external evaluation from the Penn State University Program. It will then have to assess the recommendations and create a strategic plan for the future.

Once this evaluation comes out, AEP and AYC should plan to have personal evaluations during the summer of 2009. This way an evaluation process will be complete.

4. AEP and AYC must broaden community outreach to increase stakeholder involvement, continue building a reputation and legitimacy, while also trying to find untapped resources which could assist reaching sustainability.
5. The potential which Micro-lending presents, and low start up costs demonstrate the attraction of venturing into this fields. AEP and AYC should aim to offer a micro-loan to five entrepreneurs in Kafue. If the project does not work, loses will be minimal. But the potential for sustainability is too great to not attempt a micro-lending endeavor.

6. In the Summer 2009, I will be moving to Kafue for one year. With this evaluation close in mind, I will work together with the directors of the center to expand on programs and increase community outreach. I will specifically tracking benefit flows, as well as assessing community demographics.

#### **4.b Long Term Vision**

1. The major, concrete, long term vision of AYC is to be able to build its own center in Kafue. Once funds to construct a building are found, sustainability will be easier to achieve since reoccurring costs will be greatly cut.
2. This evaluation has proven the sustainability of AYC is not in the near future. By combining all recommendations presented in the paper, as well as the external evaluation soon to come, AEP and AYC need to create a long term strategic plan. On the ground, AYC will not be able to provide for itself for a long time and therefore long-term commitment donations need to be found. AEP and AYC need to prove how unique and beneficial this youth center is to attract long-term funding, both for AYC to begin running on its own and for AEP to begin expanding and opening other centers.

### **5. FINAL THOUGHTS**

This paper has become very useful exercise to realize where AEP and AYC stand, as well as how they can improve, what methods they will need to improve to reach the next level. In an extremely short period of time, AEP and AYC have made considerable progress in benefiting not only the youth of Kafue, but the community as well. From this evaluation, two main conclusions can be drawn. First, AYC has a very difficult road

ahead in terms of reaching sustainability. The environment does not provide the necessary resources for AYC to function without outside aid. With regards to this conclusion, AEP understands the benefit of AYC and would never begin cutting funds without a concrete plan for sustainability. Secondly and on a lighter note, both AEP and AYC are on the way to gaining increased levels of legitimacy and support. These are great strides for reinforcing the strengths of the two organizations.

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