

# MANAGEMENT SUSTAINABILITY FACTORS OF SMALL NGOs IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: THE CASE OF LEBANON

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## ABSTRACT

The article is presenting the case of independent NGOs, operating in Lebanon, not benefiting of regular support agreement of big international donors with the unprecedented influx of Syrian refugees in Lebanon NGOs are playing a major role in implementation of projects funded mostly by international donors in this context small Lebanese NGOS struggle gain recognition from donors their sustainability and long-term viability are the issues of this article among the trends identified in the research the challenge to act independently from political pressure in developing managerial plans to ensure sustainability.

**Keywords:** Sustainability, management thinking, political dependence, corruption.

## Introduction

The turbulent economic and political environment of the XXI century have impacted negatively on the population and have affected the growth of non-governmental organizations (NGO) worldwide. As active members of any society NGOs must endeavor to master the dynamic environment in which they pursue their mission because contextual factors evolve and influence the development momentum of a society.

In developing economies NGOs are highly essential in providing vital services that would not otherwise be provided by the public or private sectors (Randle and Dolncare, 2011).

This issue is relevant to the NGO's Operating in the Middle Eastern countries subject to political turmoil and instability since what is now known as "Le Printemps Arabe".

In Lebanon with the massive influx of Syrian refugees on the national territory, international organizations and donor parties are becoming more active in supporting NGOs operating on the field.

When exposed to the requirement of international donors, the NGO sector shows concern to enhance its management capacity in order to gain required know-how for its long-term development and sustainability.

Donors focus on "*Capacity*" of NGOs. In recent publications, academics have developed organizational assessments tools with USAID assistance. In an attempt to consider a set of generic categories of NGO organizational capacity

“Jerry Vansant of the Duke University Center of International Development” proposes a composite set of measurement categorized in three clusters:

1. Organizational resources
2. Organizational performances
3. Organizational sustainability

The purpose of this paper is to focus on the third cluster i.e the “Organizational sustainability of NGOs”.

Sustainability of NGOs has become an issue of concern for stakeholders. Since 2008 the OECD, the UNICEF, the World Bank in their reports as well as many authors of various fields of expertise are giving attention to the sustainability of NGOs.

Looking at the trend of international political and social situations we notice that NGOs play a vital role in alleviating the current and future suffering of the poorest people in the world and in the Middle East. This becomes a reason to ensure sustainability for NGOs as their actions need long term support from donors as well as long-term presence for the beneficiaries. Smallness and vulnerability of local NGOs is viewed as a handicap by resources providers when considering the sustainability of actions.

As compared to other social science disciplines and humanities the publications in NGO management field are recent and their number is growing showing the interest and attention given to this sector.

In a published research: “Public Management Review”, Jeffrey Unerman and Brendan O’Dwyer(2009) consider the issue of how relevant NGOs are as a focus of academic research. They ask the question to know: how big does a sector or a public service need to be to make it of significance or interest for academic research?

Based on OECD statistics of 2008 they mention (OECD 2009b) that the aid sector is a large area of public spending. Looking specifically at the developing aid and the functions of NGOs is not a straight forward task. Statistics for the amount of developing funding flowing through NGOs globally are rather opaque (Agg 2006, Moreno 2006, Oller 2006, Sadoun 2006)

The overall size of the development aid of NGO sector is problematic. Furthermore, as many of the development aid activities of these NGOs are targeting the poorest in society, a relatively small level of resource could be arguably regarded as having the potential to make a significant difference to the life experiences of those whose income is very low.

This paper aims to focus on the long-term development issues of NGOs operating in Lebanon, expressing it as a sustainability issue linked to management activities.

The wide-angle interest will concentrate on the terms sustainable and sustainability and their implications on major stakeholders of the NGO Sector. The attention is on the term: sustainability management. Sustainability as “terminology” has become embedded in our everyday language, it is the ability to maintain balance of a certain process or state in any system (Barr,S. 2008, p.30) Through a literature review, the methodology adopted will question the “meaning of sustainability for NGOs and the criteria for the development of sustainable NGOs that will have a role in sustainable activities” (Allan,N. Gibband and Deepak,R. Adhikary 2000) .

Deepak Adhikary in his article titled: “Strategies for local regional NGO development: combining sustainable outcomes with sustainable organizations”, published in 2002, shows that the key to the much sought-after combination of sustainable outcomes and organization is viewing the NGOs as entrepreneurial small organizations, with a focus upon dynamic stakeholder development, entrepreneurial management and strategic business development. In the empirical part of the paper, the aim is to show, how is sustainability management understood, accepted and implemented by the stakeholders involved in the NGO activities in Lebanon. The methodology implemented in the empirical part is an exploratory qualitative survey.

The study includes local NGOs who work with International NGOs but do not have preferential partnership agreements with them. The definition of an NGOS is contested in the academic publication (Gray, 2006). Many authors put a question mark as to the classification of an NGO as a commercial organization, or a public sector body, or a civil society body (Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal, 2007).

The following two definitions will be adopted as the background canvas of the paper:

- a- NGO is defined as a not for profit organization offering services some of which may be at or below full recovery cost (Uphoff 1996).
- b- Mayntz (1991) defines NGOs as societal actors and shows that NGOs can learn to perform the role required of them as a network. The network is assumed to have three key components: a forum for direct, joint activity with members retaining their independence, provision of reciprocal interdependences, an emphasis upon core competencies to allow members to achieve something that no individual member might achieve separately (Human and Provan 1997)

In order to operate, NGOs need the support and funding of donors. In their article published in 1997 under the title: “NGOs, States and Donors” Hulme and Edwards develop a list of assumptions, donors look for when selecting NGOs as optimum intermediary agencies (Hulme and Edwards 1997). They state that:

- NGOs are essentially “bottom up” organizations, meaning that they are more likely to draw their support from the local community, and are therefore more sensitive to its needs.
- NGOs are more likely to be entrepreneurial specifically the small nascent NGOs. They show independence from political and bureaucratic pressure.
- They are dependent for survival upon credibility with the local consumer of their services, they are flexible informal.
- They operate with tight resources.
- They are likely to be less susceptible to major forms of corruption.

However, NGO “sustainability over time” is a factor taken into consideration by the donors. The smallness and vulnerability of local NGOs is seen by resource providers as a risk factor to their potential for guaranteeing on going delivery and sustainability of their programs. NGO sustainability refers to the capacity of the NGO sector to effectively functioning and being viable in the long-term. Organizational sustainability is seen to be closely linked with program sustainability. In particular there is a perceived problem of NGOs having the

necessary capacity and continuity to be the main players in management of projects supported by external donors (Putzel 1998) the remaining of this paper is organized as follows:

- Section 1 presents literature review deemed necessary to develop a conceptual framework for the empirical research section, and to help design the survey questionnaire. The information is presented around three axes:

- a- The management concerns of the NGO sector in developing environment
- b- NGO sustainability
- c- The concept of sustainability and sustainable organizations

- Section 2 explains the methodology of the study. The qualitative approach is used as opposed to the quantitative survey. Structured in depth interviews were completed with key individuals of selected NGOs as well as with representatives of stakeholders in the NGO environment.

- Section 3 is the analysis of the information gathered in the empirical survey. The findings of the analysis are presented in the conclusion.

The following may constitute trends derived from the research for further deeper analysis of the topic.

-The request for professional training since the team to manage is composed of volunteers and employees. (quote from respondent :key to success of NGOs is professional management and good governance)

- Better understanding of management issues.

- Although many NGOs are comprised of small groups of people surviving on a project -by-project basis. Networking advantages are not properly evaluated due to cultural factors.

- Political “dependence” in funding turns out to be a major difficulty to overcome. This may affect the long-term planning processes.

## **Section 1: Literature review**

### **A: MANAGEMENT CONCERNS OF NGOs IN DEVELOPING ECONOMIES**

In the last decade the unparalleled acceleration of globalization has impacted the living stream of worldwide population. Many countries witnessed the prominence of civil society with NGOs becoming an essential part of this civil society.

This environment has erected new opportunities for NGOs in their quest for sustainable development around the globe (Stoll and Stoll, 2010). Traditionally development aid has been regarded as an activity where those with resources generously give part of what is theirs to those in need.

The literature review section will start with selected definitions of NGOs, expose issues in management, focus on two components of sustainability literature such as the sustainability approach of NGOs and sustainable organizations.

From the recent literature review covering themes related to the NGOs we will shed the light on definitions and use them as a guideline to further our exploration in this field.

According to United Nations, an NGO is any non-profit, voluntary citizen's group, which is organized on a local, national level, task-oriented and driven by people with a common interest (UNDP 2002). They comprise the sector of society that attempts to hold business and other institutions accountable for their social responsibility (Weidenbaum 2009).

O'Dwyer and Unerman (2007) state that NGOs can be broadly differentiated by their essential organizational attributes, comprising the types of activities they engage in and their level of operation (at international, national or local community level). They further identify six categories of NGOs: welfare, development, development education, networking, research, and advocacy.

Salamon and Anheier (1999) identify five key characteristics of NGOs as follows: NGOs are organized and as a consequence possess some degree of internal organizational structure and organizational boundaries. They are private and are institutionally separate from government. They are self-governing, able to control and manage their own affairs. NGOs involve some degree of voluntary participation in the conduct or management of the organization.

Scholars writing in the field of NGO activities have examined in their research the roles and functions of NGOs in contemporary society. A number of studies have also tried to identify factors that would enhance NGOs' efficiency and effectiveness. For example, Greatbanks et al (2010) investigated the issue of performance management and reporting in nonprofit organizations. The study examined the nature of performance criteria demanded of NGOs by funding bodies, which in some cases do not align with the values and goals of the NGOs. Results of the study suggest that a number of reporting criteria required by funding bodies provide little or no value to the NGOs. This situation is putting a question mark on the accountability and transparency required in the operations of NGOs. In a study conducted in 2007 O'Dwyer and Unerman analyzing the nature of accountability in NGOs, found a lack of real accountability among the NGOs. Lack of resources, organizational commitment, guidance and expertise from the funders contributed to skepticism towards adoption of the core tenets of social accountability to beneficiaries.

In fact many studies conducted in developing countries (Philips 2005, Young and Merschod 2009) converge to the same conclusion that there is still room for enhancing the management and strategic thinking in NGOs operating in developing and transitional countries, countries that score high in corruption practices. In many situations, the programs funded by donor organizations ended after only the pilot stage was accomplished.

Greatbanks et al (2010) examined the nature of performance criteria demanded by funding bodies to NGOs, in an approach investigating the issue of performance management and reporting in nonprofit organizations. The findings indicate that performance reporting tend to be more aligned with NGOs values and goals than the goals of funding bodies. One explanation given to this issue is that NGOs goals need to be presented and interpreted in a more contextual and comprehensive basis than straightforward standardized requirements set by international bodies.

In the previous paragraphs we presented the literature review related to management issues in NGOs. In the following part, attention will be given to sustainability issues, their understanding, the impact and role for NGOs and the related stakeholders

## **B-NGO SUSTAINABILITY**

NGO sustainability refers to the capacity of the NGO sector functioning effectively and being viable in the long-term. USAID (2010) developed the NGO Sustainability Index to assess the level of a country's NGO development.

The sustainability index is made up of a composite of seven indicators: legal environment, organizational capacity, financial viability, advocacy, service provision, infrastructure, and public image.

In recently published articles, many researchers showed concern about the possibilities of enhancing NGO development. The topics they analyzed are presented in the following paragraph. The subjects discussed dig into the USAID sustainability index.

### **a- Human resources**

It is essential for NGOs efficiency and effectiveness that the organization develops a viable and coherent human resources policy.

It is argued that the ability to attract and retain human resources is an indicator of NGO's credibility and their ability to produce tangible results. According to Diachenko (2010) the ineffectiveness of most NGOs in developing countries is partly due to a weak human resources base .A major challenge for the NGOs is the possibility of attracting professional and skilled managers as well as qualified staff and volunteers .

Volunteers are people who offer their capabilities and experiences to the NGOs without getting any material compensation.

There seems to be room for improving the human skills and providing training on various aspects of strategic planning, proposal writing, creating, partnership with other sectors need to be provided (Arenas et al. 2010). The challenge in this type of trainings is to adapt the programs to the local tradition and culture (Peterson 2010)

### **b- Financing**

One of the challenges facing NGOs is the issue of funding and financial viability. When, the major source of funding for NGOs' activities is through social contracting with the government or when funding from various sources is under "political influence", projects or social contracts tend to be short- term. This does not help NGOs to implement long-term programs. Transparency of the processes are not always clear (Makhmutova and Akhmetova, 2011).

### **c- Transparency and accountability**

Public trust is a basic requirement for an NGO, in order to attract funds and to facilitate the networking with other NGOs. This turns out to be a challenging issue when the NGO is looking for financing coming from simple donors and not necessarily international institutions (Prugsamatz 2010).

Whatever the situation, the long-term sustainability and financial autonomy of NGOs depend on their ability to generate funds internally and to negotiate long term contacts at the national and international level.

The resource dependency of international donors has significant implications for the forms of accountability promoted and practiced within the NGO sector as well as a source of transparency in their activities.

The public needs to “find” evaluation criteria for the activities of NGOs in the communities they operate.

A starting point to enhance public trust and generate financial support from citizens is public disclosure of financial activities. An ideal scenario would be a combination of local watchdog agencies, and code of ethics.

#### d- Governance and management structure

Governance is defined as the relationship among various participants in determining the direction and performance of organizations (Diochin 2010). Governance constitutes an organization’s board of directors and the senior management team. According to Stid and Bradach (2009), sound organizational governance and management practices are essential if nonprofits are to improve their impacts over time. A board of directors constitutes the policymaking body of any organization, its members assume fiduciary responsibility (Peterson 2010), and help in developing a coherent and long-term strategy. Effective board of directors thus has an impact on organizational performance and plays a role in establishing performance standards (Greatbanks et al, 2010). Founders of NGOs have the perception that boards of directors play the role of direct supervision, which they consider very intrusive. Competent boards, working in conjunction with the senior management would help the NGOs develop the vision and strategies that creates the innovation needed for long-term viability and sustainability in the sector (Sarros et al, 2011).

As looks obvious from the above information, NGOs need to enhance professional management approach in order to play a major role in the societal development of developing countries and to ensure their viability and sustainability in an ever changing environment.

### **C- THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATIONS**

In the recent publications on sustainability of NGOs many articles questioned the link between sustainable outcomes of NGOs and sustainable organizations.

The next paragraph exposes the issues covered by authors, considering that NGO activities may represent a sector of its own in developing economies. NGOs often provide services that government or other official institutions may not be providing to the needy citizens.

The contributions are extracted from varied disciplines ranging from strategic managerial thinking to small business management, to entrepreneurial culture characteristics, to regional development strategies, to personnel motivation, to strategic motivation and many more.

NGO as an entrepreneurial organization is a term that many authors include in their research topics, sometimes even using the metaphor of the NGO as an entrepreneurial small organization. (Allan and Deepack Adhibary- 2000).

Not to be underestimated is the considerable international debate around this issue of combining sustainable outcomes for small organizations- NGOs- with sustainable organization (Hulme and Edwards 1997)

There are advantages and disadvantages for NGOs operating as small enterprises (Allan and Deepack 2000).

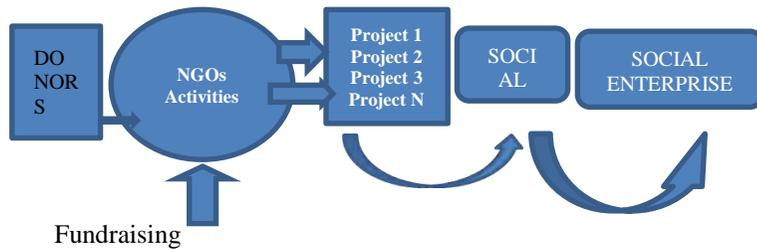
For many donors, organizational sustainability is seen to be closely related with program sustainability. To survive NGOs do not only need healthy internal organization and management, but also long-term support from donors.

There is a perceived problem of NGOs having the necessary capacity and continuity to be the main players in management of projects supported by external donors (Putzel 1998). NGOs, operate on donors' resources, with relatively little or no "independent" revenue.

Their environment is subject to the same unpredictable and uncertain factors surrounding any entrepreneurial small business.

Non-financial efficiency is another issue of concern for NGO management. This means utilization of non-financial resources such as staff, time, the networking and collaborating abilities with other entities, as well as the quality of services provided. Management has to provide funding for the flow of operational expenses supported outside the time frame of projects.

If we take into consideration the following graphic representation of the NGO environment.



NGOs play the intermediary role from donor to beneficiaries. The projects are the means of transmission i.e appropriate projects are candidate to turn in the long term into social enterprise impacting the close circle of project implementation.

Social enterprise has gained widespread acclaim as a tool for addressing social and environmental problems such as poverty, inequality and environmental degradation (Dacin, Dacin and Tracey, 2011; Short, Moss&Lumpkin, 2009). The joint pursuit of social and financial aims distinguishes social enterprises from both commercial organizations where social responsibilities are ancillary to financial concerns and nonprofits that rely on donor support to pursue social welfare aims (Besharov & Smith, 2012; Dacin et al. 2011). The social enterprise becomes a hybrid organization since commercial goals and social welfare concerns become integrated issues for decisions makers.

Scholars agree that social enterprise entails the integration of social welfare and commercial aims in an organization's core, creating divergence and difficulties in their managerial approach when deciding the goals to be pursued by the organization. These result in tensions in management in established social enterprises although the impact of their activities may be rewarding for society. It looks obvious that NGOs have a group of supply-side customers to satisfy if they are to survive. The focus of their activity and their management processes can easily be distorted by the potential dominance of their concern for the "supply-side" namely the donors (Gibb 1998).

Sustainability of outcomes should not be therefore sacrificed to the pursuit of sustainability of the organization (NGO) via the path of chasing resources from "supply-side" initiatives. NGOs need to be active on both the beneficiary market as well as the donor market.

On the donor market NGOs get access to funds to conduct their projects. On the beneficiary market the NGOs offer the right services to the right beneficiaries to fulfill their mission. This outcome will impact the community in which they are operating and affect their image as service providers creating a "halo" effect and classifying them on preferred list of donor parties.

Borrowing from the small organization strategic management literature (Olsen and Brotcan 1995, Atherton and Hannon 1996) we can write that the NGO with a strategic business focus will see itself in the dynamic context of moving from where it currently is to an achievement of a strategic goal of sustainable outcomes and organizations. This involves that NGOs see themselves as business organizations with capacities feeding forward to future performance (Gibb and Scott 1985).

In this context networking is becoming a major strategic device for NGOs. Networks contribute to adaptability and problem-solving. Participating members can more swiftly discover and adapt new techniques.

Networking does not mean working only with like-minded groups, it means building partnerships to tackle issues that would be impossible without particular strategic alliances.

Through this solidarity created by the networks, NGOs can be stronger to reach their objectives as organizations. NGOs need to conduct time bound projects, to strive for impact and remain independent while engaging with donors, staff and beneficiaries. There is a perception that local NGOs are controlled by local elites not closely identified with the beneficiaries living in poverty, because those who can communicate with the people at “head office” are frequently seen to be educated people from comparatively wealthy backgrounds (O’dwyer and Unerman 2010)

At the heart of the concern for sustainability lie two basic ideas.

- First the principle of sustainability becomes “a must to be” for NGOs, a sign that they are serious about breaking of charity concern to embrace a more professional approach to development (Dichter 1997).

- Second sustainability is seen as an important ingredient in the attempt to build on development successes (Hulme and Edwards 1997).

In an article published in 1997 Dichter exposes the following point of view:

“NGOs have had to shift from a position where “sustainability” was never before a value to one in which the drive for sustainability overshadows their energies and, in some instances, displaces their original missions and activities”.

While in an article published the same year Fowler (1997) writing about strategic issues for NGOs, expresses a totally different point of view. He shows that the key challenge for NGOs is the struggle to link clearly vision, mission and role.

According to his writing, strategic management will allow NGOs to deal with funding difficulties and maintaining the required links with donors (Mosley, Marconick and Katz 2012)

Other authors have also highlighted the positive impact of the strategic thinking in NGOs, showing and demonstrating that strategic management can have a fundamental effect on NGOs beyond the potential funding benefits (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2000).

For example, strategic management can help NGOs build and enhance relationships with key stakeholders such as donors and partners and establish collaborations with external organizations (Basler & McClusky, 2005).

Moreover, strategic management might assist NGOs not only to efficiently utilize limited resources, but also to support program and project effectiveness and efficiency (Mara 2000, and Akan, 2008).

The literature has heavily underlined the adoption of strategic management thinking in NGOs as a mechanism to improve performance (Morrisette and Oernam, 2013, Bryson, 2011).

This idea has been rejected by other writers such as Stone and Al (1999) who claimed that the relationship between strategic management processes and NGOs performance is a “Black Box”; this concern has roots in facts expressed by Tober (1991) and Wolch (1990) who found in their studies that many NGOs do not utilize strategic management philosophy but they are rather more concerned with short-term planning and informal planning procedure approaches. In an article published in 2016 Mohammed Aboramadam from the University of Pavia, Italy and Elio Borroni from the Bocconi University, Italy demonstrate that NGOs intending to achieve goals in terms of fundraising, financial sustainability,

credibility and financial efficiency of programs should consider the role of strategic management practices.

The published results of their research also suggest that sound strategic approach can lead to better non-financial performance or “Program Performance”. This means that NGO members need to analyze their present situation, evaluate opportunities, threats, weaknesses strengths, stakeholders and need of the communities. This will allow them to define better their strategic alternatives in terms of the expressed and identified needs of the communities.

The contribution Allan Gibb and Deepack Adhikary (2000) bring in their article: “Strategies for local and regional NGO development”, shows the interesting link in combining sustainable outcomes of NGO activities with sustainable organizations. Their conclusion is that the key to the much sought-after combination of sustainable outcomes and organizations is in dynamic stakeholder network development, entrepreneurial management, strategic business development and strategic alliance building.

According to the information presented in the above section we notice there is still room for the debate concerning the role of strategic management in the sustainable management of NGOs, one common agreement is however expressed in the importance of professional management of NGOs.

## **Section 2: The empirical research**

### **A -EMPIRIC RESEARCH DESIGN**

In this section the empirical research of “Management sustainability factors of small NGOs in developing countries: The case of Lebanon” explains the methodology implemented. It will expose the following points:

- a-The research approach and design
- b -The research objectives
- c -The profile of interviewed individuals, source of the information
- d -Data collection procedures and measurements
- e -Data analysis and main findings presentations

As the research based published articles in the field of management sustainability of small NGOs operating in developing countries is not abundant a qualitative research methodology is implemented. NGO managers, NGO board members, NGO employees and volunteer, beneficiaries, donor bodies, institutions engaged in providing training services to NGOs, stakeholders in NGO environment constitute valuable source of information for the research problem: to understand the factors affecting the management sustainability of small NGOs. Several in depth interviews were conducted with ten representatives of the above population. Respondents are considered as opinion leaders since they are actively involved either directly or indirectly in the humanitarian field.

The respondents group composition is:

- 2 volunteers
- 1 donor party
- 2 employees

- 2 General managers of small NGOs
- 3 Board members of small NGOS

The same interview guideline was used as a canvas for the meeting with the respondents (interview guideline in appendix A). The one to one interviews gave the possibility to the author to go in depth in many issues raised during the interview and gave the opportunity to the respondents to express freely their point of view.

The qualitative methodology provides a flexibility of digging into various aspects of the problem while allowing respondents involvement. Nvivo qualitative research software was used for the interpretation of collected data. The research objectives are mentioned below as a prediction to what is to be expected field work.

- 1-To assess the “understanding” of the sustainability issue in the NGO sector in the challenging Lebanese environment.
- 2-To highlight how the impact of NGO influence their credibility in their community, their beneficiaries and the measurement of the impact.
- 3- How independent or “free of pressure” are NGO in decisions.
- 4- Are size, type of activity, number of employees and /or volunteers affecting the management performance of the NGO activities.
- 5- To assess the importance of networking.
- 6- To identify the challenges of managing employees and volunteers
- 7- The role and importance of operational and strategic management.
- 8- The role and involvement of board members.
- 9- To answer the question: “Can an NGO support or become a social enterprise.
- 10-What are the requirement of donor parties for financial Sustainability.

For the purpose of optimum use of the Invivo software in the analysis of collected data, the following points are to be taken into consideration:

- The determination of codes for analysis. A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a short sentence that symbolically assigns a salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data (Saldana, 2008).
- Two types of “nodes” or codes were used.
  - Open coding explains distinct concept and categories
  - Axial coding uses the concept and categories while re-reading it (Research Rundowns, 2018).

This will insure that all important data were measured and recognized properly. The nodes are connected to the questions, to determine a pre-perception of whether the actual answers could relate to the codes or not. To overcome the weakness of relying only on pre-set codes and to cover all the issues presented in the answers, emergent codes were applied during and after the interview making the process of creating codes more hybrid. Emergent codes are those ideas, concepts, actions and meanings that come up from the data and are different from the pre-set codes. The importance of the results from the interview is to measure the codes that are developed by frequently used words. Regardless of the list, the pivotal factor was the determination of which area were of focus to compare with theories presented in the literature review.

Therefore, a data table is developed to generate the important coding and link the connection of similarities to the answers from the participants. Based on

the answers obtained is was decided that the list of 10 coding, presented in table 1 can best reflect the essence of the collected responses. In qualitative research, it is common and of great use, to code the frequent answers when interviewees have the choice to talk “freely and openly”

Table 1 displays the pre-set codes before the interview

1.Strategic management issues	6. Challenging Lebanese environment
2.Impact measurement on community	7.Professionalisme in activities
3.Professional links with donors	8. Donors as source of funding
4.Importance of networking	9. Independence of any type of pressure
5.Volunteer management issues	10.Understand the concept of social enterprise

The coding after the interviews, gave a wide range of nodes that where to be implemented as a list. The Qualitative Research Program ‘Nvivo’ issued the percentages of the most frequent words. Below is a list following the twenty most frequent used words during the interviews, by percentage with a total score of 20,61 % of 100%.

Figure 1: Twenty most frequent words during interview

Words	count
ngo	123
ngos	77
Donors	52
professional	48
activities	48
impact	43
community	37
Management	37
Board	33
Environment	30
lebanon	30
political	30
volunteer	29
Financial	28
funding	28
impact	27
Resource	25
Members	24
networking	23

List developed by using ‘Nvivo’.

The list of frequent used words during the interview gave an indication of importance of the results to be measured by the codes. However, regardless of the list, the essential factor to analyze is which area were of focus to compare the concept to the theory. Therefore, a data table consisting of important and major codes was presented, to link the similarities and connections of the answers from the interviewees.

The data of the major coding is presented in the following tables. It is related to the ten-coding mentioned earlier. They represent the most important findings that were interesting to be developed further. A common approach in qualitative studies is to code the frequent answers, which is of great use to have a more significant and accurate analysis of the answers.

Table 2: Data of major codes

Major codes	Answers	Major codes	Answers
<b>Strategic management</b>	Social enterprise, to create and operate towards a business model. Training, stronger reputation, diversify, importance of professional management approach. Prepare proposals and develop projects. Being intermediary	<b>Measurements</b>	Difficulties of measuring impacts, no measurement criteria, lack of tools to measure
<b>Donors</b>	Becoming more professional, looking at the reputation and impact of the company, selective	<b>Networking</b>	Build strong network, networking is crucial, collaboration with other NGOs can be essential
<b>Environmental challenge</b>	Turbulence, political turmoil, “mushrooming”, political interference	<b>Financial lacks</b>	Financial planning is critical, financial resource scarcity, sources of funding
<b>Major challenges</b>	Transparency, bureaucracy, corruption, independency	<b>Volunteer management</b>	Voluntarism is decreasing, NGO is becoming more professional, commitment, potentiality for better management
<b>Professionalism</b>	Training the volunteers and employees, better change agents	<b>Proposal writing</b>	Lack of how to write, have a need to be trained, gives the opportunity to disregard from political influence, strengthens a better call for proposals

“Nvivo”, measures the frequency of the most repeated words and gives a score of 100%. shows the details of the calculated coverage of significant themes during the interviews, the collection of the most covered words are all references from the 10 interviews. (Appendix B)

## **B-DATA ANALYSIS**

After the information was collected, similar answers were coded into nodes by accordance of the questions and the answers. The results had a wide range of similarities as well as for some unique responses. Furthermore, themes were reviewed to assure the essential fit to the data before proceeding for implementation of the data. A necessary revision of coding was actionized in order to clarify any mistakes and errors, and to assure that the actual codes fit the answers. Finally, information that was collected from the data analysis gave significant and final thoughts towards the conclusion and recommendations that could be applicable for the sustainability of the NGOs. Appendix C shows the percentage of each question to be incorporated within one to three most frequently codes found on each query.

### Main findings

This part will analyze the data gathered from the qualitative study exhibiting the respondent's answers affecting the managerial sustainability of the current NGOs in Lebanon. What seems to be interesting to exhibit is the frequent need for independency that respondents expressed as a priority while showing concern for their lack of professional management. The concept of social enterprise is not yet clearly anchored in the mindset of NGO decision making although it turns out that some NGOs operate like small entrepreneurial businesses (Adhikary 2002). However sustainability and management issues are deeply interlinked in the respondents consciousness (Dichter -1997). Volunteerism is not increasing, this is putting pressure on the human resource management issue of NGO and converging to the contribution of Diachenko (2010) expressing that part of the ineffectiveness of NGOs in developing countries is partly due to a weak human resources base.

Political pressure and interference are often mentioned as critical cornerstone for small NGOs in Lebanon. Independence from external negative forces may affect positively impact on the communities in which the small NGOs operate. Hope will raise as to the sustainability of the NGO community contribution regardless of political power and influence. Quote from respondent: "Corruption and political pressure are two big problems in Lebanon, they are like "cancer" and until now nobody has found a cure for it!"

Lack of professional proposal writing skills turns out to be a concern. The strong belief is that Professional proposal writing will allow NGOs to get directly in touch with donors by participating to calls for proposals. A common conclusion from all participants is the belief that proposal writing can strengthen them and give them better opportunity for healthy management practices freed from any external political pressure. Projects can be managed with an efficient professionalism. NGO decision makers can take the chance to strengthen their credibility and reputation amongst the donors. This observation supports the contribution brought by Crittenden & Crittenden (2000), Morrisette & Oerman (2013) and Bryson (2011) in the literature review. Proper management thinking may go beyond funding benefit.

While lacking professional managerial skills NGO members strive to have a long-term role acting as intermediaries between the stakeholders and the beneficiaries. The interesting point to highlight is that all respondents find it

difficult to develop the right balance between the two parties they cooperate with. This situation is not allowing them to play by the “rules of the game” and take the chances to turn into social enterprises as has been expressed.

As per the definition of sustainability adopted in this paper, respondents’ answers reflect that NGO activities contribute 50% in the sustainability of the NGO while donors contribute for the remaining 50% of the sustainability of the NGO.

One factor the respondents have identified as a challenge to the sustainability is the turbulent environment putting pressure on the priorities of donor parties. Furthermore, the size of the NGO matters as per the respondents. It was repeatedly mentioned that the smaller the size is, the better the possibility of developing beneficial, direct links with projects developers. The small size reduces the risk of bureaucratic inefficiencies, even in the lack of organized structure.

There seems to be a unanimous agreement on the need for clear impact measurement criteria, since this will allow the NGOs to comply with donors’ professional requests. This request is embedded in the better understanding of the management issues. The measurement criteria will facilitate impact evaluation on the communities and also help identify NGO networks to belong to.

Strategic management approach and thinking are highly valued and considered a necessity for the healthy and sustainable management of the NGO. Strategic management will fill a gap by implementing proper strategic planning and defining the road map for existence or survival. This issue coming from the field research was also covered in the contribution of Arenas and al 2010 and Perterson 2010 presented in the literature review of the article.

The pressing request for independence is obvious. Total independence includes independence from political pressure, corruption, bureaucracy and even unequal subsidy distribution to NGO operating in certain geographic areas. Financial resources needed for the sustainability of NGOs should not be under the interference of any political party.

Respondents consider that a social enterprise should be totally independent and free in the support activities provided to the community in which it operates. This issue of political influence in financing NGO activities was developed by the authors Makhmutova & Akhmetova (2011). A consensus emerges in the answers obtained as to the challenges of creating an equilibrium between the demands of the beneficiaries and those of the donor parties. This equilibrium can be reached only when the NGO is professional in its approach. Sound management approach facilitates volunteer recruitment. Professionalism facilitates the transparency in all aspects of the NGOs decision areas and eliminates corruption.

Worth mentioning is the fact that NGOs are willing to rely on the “new or younger” generation to implement much needed professional touch. This changes NGO activities into a professional organization and encourages the efforts deployed by stakeholders for stepping away slowly from any political or environmental pressure. NGOs are not totally independent in their activities. The main concern is that the non-governmental organizations are operating under high political pressure in the country. There is a higher need for better transparency amongst the operating NGOs in the country.

Answers indicate that the environmental turmoil Lebanon is facing is affecting the overall sustainability of NGOs. This includes political interference,

higher expectation from donors as to the management of funds. NGO decision makers have a strong need for understanding and implementing Strategic Management requirements.

## C- CONCLUSION

The approach of *professional management* within the NGOs in Lebanon, is to be considered as a critical agenda to approach. Professional proposal writing is a recurrent request and may pave the path to a trend. This skill will allow NGOs to better comply with donors' requirements and access to funding resources away from any type of pressure. The strategic thinking can also highlight the importance and the necessity of the networking activities for independent NGOs. Networking is not highly regarded by small NGOs because of the negative perception often linked with the political dependence, however Hume and Edwards (1997) focused on the importance of networking.

Despite the debate presented in the article around the impact of strategic management approach in NGOs, *Strategic Management* thinking is highly valued by NGO decision makers. There seems to be a need for training management issues since the gap between the field realities in Lebanon and the management requirements is wide.

As mentioned in the literature review (Arenas et al. 2010) there seems to be room for improving the human skills and providing training on various aspects of strategic planning, proposal writing, creating, partnership with other sectors. The challenge remains in adapting the programs to the local tradition and culture (Peterson 2010) and overcoming the handicap set by the small size of private, independent NGOs

High political influence, corruption, bureaucracy, higher donor demands and turbulent turmoil, create conditions of dependency and affect negatively the sustainability of the non-governmental organizations operating in Lebanon. This gives shape to the challenging environment NGOs have to cope with.

The question of NGO governance, especially, the reasons for creating a board of directors and practicing transparency is not yet fully understood among small NGOs. The demand for strategic management thinking is strongly expressed. Within the context of *key success for NGOs*, the findings reveal the need to involve "younger" generations in NGO activities. This resource can be better trained in strategic thinking and managerial issues and can develop better planning for the activities of the NGOs. Their vision for long term planning can help them better understand the need for networking. The need for creating the community of NGOs to impact positively society.

## Appendix A Questionnaire

- 1- What will be the definition to give to the “concept of NGO sustainability?
- 2- Is sustainability related to :
  - the duration of the projects in terms of months or years or types of projects
  - the life span of the NGO
  - regular link with donor as source of funding
- 3- What is more important a one-time very successful project or small projects that last over time?
- 4-How is the impact of NGO operations measured? Do you develop criteria for this measurement?
- 5- Do you think that NGOs in general are managed professionally? And what about your NGO? (if applicable)
- 6- Can you give the definition of a professional management for an NGO?
- 7-Do you think that there might be any type of impact or relation between:
  - the size ,
  - the number of employees
  - the number of volunteers
  - the type of activitiesOf the NGO and the management approach of the activities
- 8-Are the NGOs integrated in the communities in which they are active? and how much is their impact influencing their credibility in their environment and vis a vis their stakeholders?
- 9- Are the projects dictated by the need of the community or are they developed because there are findings available by donors for specific projects? (or there are the possibility of obtaining financing for a certain type of project)
- 10 -Can the following terminology be used in the context of an NGO:
  - Organizational resources: financial, human, material ...
  - Organizational performance
  - Organizational sustainability
  - Are they relevant, interlinked or independent
- 11- Can you explain them in the context of the NGO
- 12-What is strategic management for NGOs and who should make the strategic Management decisions?
- 13-Usually in Lebanon what is the time duration of planning for the NGO activities?
  - Are plans short term (6 months) midterm (9 months to 18 months) or longer
  - Are there budgeting plans?
  - What type of other planning issue should NGO decision makers pursue?
- 14 -What is the main objective of an NGO?
- 15- How would you explain:” a social enterprise” and what link or relation can exist between a social enterprise and an NGO
- 16-How independent can or should NGOs be of:
  - Political pressure
  - Bureaucracy from inside the NGO i.e. “managerial style”
- 17-Is it easy to find the right balance between the donor “market” and the beneficiaries “market”?

18-What are the major difficulties NGOs face in the current environment in Lebanon

19 -Are there specific types of donors with who you would prefer to work and collaborate

20-What is networking? Do you think NGO should engage in networking

21- What are according to you the keys of success of NGOS:

Good structure

Number of years of experience

Experienced staff (employees)

Experienced volunteers

Good board with Connections

Energetic and highly involved board members

Professional GM or other (specify)

## Appendix B

Table 3: Calculated coverage of important themes during interview

Coverage of 'Independent' during interview	Coverage of 'environmental challenges' during interview	Coverage of 'networking' during interview	Coverage of 'professional management' during interview
Reference 1: 6.92%	Reference 1: 1.34%	Reference 1: 7.00%	Reference 1: 2.87%
- 3.82%	- 3.22%	- 6.39%	- 10.65%
- 2.23%	- 4.26%	- 4.86%	- 3.51%
- 2.59%	- 1.44%	- 5.24%	- 4.39%
- 2.63%	- 3.46%	- 1.95%	- 4.74%
- 4.30%	- 2.80%	- 1.22%	- 10.09%
- 4.04%	- 3.02%		- 4.49%
- 5.97%	- 5.45%		- 5.74%
	- 7.63%		
	- 2.73%		
Reference 2: 0.66%	Reference 2: 1.32%	Reference 2: 2.99%	Reference 2: 3.09%
- 4.94%	- 8.04%	- 6.54%	- 1.42%
- 2.31%	- 0.96%	- 1.08%	- 4.22%
- 3.52%	- 1.49%	- 3.92%	- 2.31%
- 0.68%		- 7.72%	- 2.30%
		- 9.35%	- 4.79%
Reference 3: 3.01%	Reference 3: 5.97%	Reference 3: 4.29%	Reference 3: 2.83%
- 4.92%		- 4.86%	- 4.03%
		- 1.91%	
Reference 4: 2.99%	Reference 4: 6.02%		Reference 4: 6.73%
- 2.75%			
Reference 5: 2.51%			
Total percentage: 60.79%	Total percentage: 59.15%	Total percentage: 69.32%	Total percentage: 78.21%

Coverage of 'impact or relation' during interview	Coverage of 'credibility' during interview	Coverage of 'sustainability' during interview	Coverage of ' Key success of NGOs' during interview
Reference 1: 5.68%	Reference 1: 4.16%	Reference 1: 7.20%	Reference 1:10.29%
- 2.20%	- 8.96%	- 7.66%	- 3.97%
0%	- 4.06%	- 4.08%	- 3.79%
- 5.58%	- 5.36%	- 1.19%	- 4.58%
8%	- 5.55%	- 7.75%	- 1.39%
- 6.29%	- 3.96%	- 6.03%	- 5.33%
9%	- 3.91%	- 3.02%	- 4.81%
- 3.64%	- 6.10%	- 8.62%	- 10.52%
4%	- 4.04%	- 4.99%	
- 2.63%			
- 2.02%			
- 5.60%			
- 6.10%			
- 3.81%			
Reference 2: 4.98%	Reference 2: 3.42%	Reference 2: 5.34%	Reference 2: 2.51%
- 9.04%	- 9.18%	- 0.69%	-
- 1.39%	- 3.92%	- 2.16%	
3.96%	- 1.72%	- 11.11%	
9.66%	- 1.36%	1%	
- 7.17%	- 2.66%		
7.77%	- 3.36%		
- 2.75%	- 4.06%		
5.55%	2%		

- 3.19%			
- 3.97%			
Reference 3: 3.40%	Reference 3: 2.72%		
	- 3.19%		
Reference 4: 1.34%	Reference 4: 3.94%		
	- 3.98%		
Reference 5: 4.50%			
Total percentage: 97.85%	Total percentage: 89.5%	Total percentage: 69.84%	Total percentage: 47.19%

The objective of this measurement is to detect and collect information about pivotal themes that gives an intermediary position towards the main fundamentals. Since the participant might not be aware of the significant matter of the topic, the coverage of it would assure and determine how well the participants answered the inquires. Looking through table 3, significant specter of different interest to different themes has been displayed, allowing to answer based on important matter as a consideration, backing the fundamentals.

## Appendix C

Table 3: Percentage of frequent codes based on each question

Question	Frequent codes (answers)	Percentage (%)
Q1: Concept of NGO sustainability	A1: Environment	41%
	A2: Years	29%
	A3: Services	30%

Question	Frequent codes (answers)	Percentage (%)
Q2: Sustainability related	A1: Activities	50%
	A2: Donors	50%

Question	Frequent codes (answers)	Percentage (%)
Q3: One-time/ small projects	A1: Small projects	43%
	A2: Beneficiaries	38%
	A3: Better impact	19%

Question	Frequent codes (answers)	Percentage (%)
Q4: Measurements	A1: Lack of criteria	38%
	A2: Professional demand	31%
	A3: Donors	31%

Question	Frequent codes (answers)	Percentage (%)
Q5: Professional management	A1: Proposal writing	51%
	A2: Need of professional approach	49%

Question	Frequent codes (answers)	Percentage (%)
Q6: Definition of professional management	A1: Board	48%
	A2: Members	27%
	A3: Structure	25%
Question	Frequent codes (answers)	Percentage (%)
Q7: Impact or relation	A1: Volunteers	38%
	A2: Employees	38%
	A3: Size	24%

Question	Frequent codes (answers)	Percentage (%)
Q8: Integration/ impact	A1: Credibility	40%
	A2: Reputation	38%
	A3: Funding	22%

Question	Frequent codes (answers)	Percentage (%)
Q9: Community/ donor needs	A1: International specter	42%
	A2: More demanding	30%
	A3: Professionalism	28%

Question	Frequent codes (answers)	Percentage (%)
Q10: Terminology	A1: Organizational sustainability	50%
	A2: Financial, human resources	50%

Question	Frequent codes (answers)	Percentage (%)
Q11: Context of NGO	A1: Beneficiaries	50%
	A2: Coordinating the funds	50%

Question	Frequent codes (answers)	Percentage (%)
Q12: Strategic management	A1: Board members	53%
	A2: Managing competition/ strategies, planning/ need training in proposal writing	36%
	A3: Strategic role	11%

Question	Frequent codes (answers)	Percentage (%)
Q13: Time duration of planning or issues	A1: Environmental influence/ issues	46%
	A2: Political situation	39%
	A3: Ideal: mid to long term planning	15%

Question	Frequent codes (answers)	Percentage (%)
Q14: Main objectives	A1: Intermediary role	49%
	A2: Change agents	37%
	A3: Handle existence of beneficiaries	14%

Question	Frequent codes (answers)	Percentage (%)
Q15: Social enterprise	A1: Being independently	55%
	A2: Supporting the community	45%

Question	Frequent codes (answers)	Percentage (%)
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Q16: How independent are NGO	A1: Insufficient independency in the country	50%
	A2: High political pressure/influence, corruption/ bureaucracy	50%

Question	Frequent codes (answers)	Percentage (%)
Q17: Balance between the market (donors and beneficiaries)	A1: Challenging	100%

Question	Frequent codes (answers)	Percentage (%)
Q18: Environmental challenges	A1: High political influence	50%
	A2: Donor demands	25%
	A3: Turbulency/ turmoil	25%

Question	Frequent codes (answers)	Percentage (%)
Q19: Specific type of donors	A1: No specifications, open for any type of donors	100%

Question	Frequent codes (answers)	Percentage (%)
Q20: Networking	A3: Still needs development and to become successful. Transparency.	45%
	A2: It is vital and give positive benefits	45%
	A3: Networking with other NGOs	10%

Question	Frequent codes (answers)	Percentage (%)
Q21: Success keys of NGOs	A1: Volunteer commitment	41%
	A2: Professionalism / younger generation	38%
	A3: Clean operation	21%

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