

## The Impact of Capacity Building on Development Outcomes in Mezam

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of capacity building on development outcomes within non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The study adopted a mixed-methods research approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative techniques to generate comprehensive and robust findings. The target population comprised staff members from 12 accessible NGOs, yielding a total sample size of 120 respondents. Quantitative data were collected using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire, which was administered to all 120 staff members to assess perceptions of capacity-building initiatives and their influence on development outcomes. In addition, qualitative data were obtained to complement the survey findings and provide deeper insights into institutional practices and contextual factors influencing capacity development. The findings revealed that capacity-building initiatives have a statistically significant and positive impact on development outcomes, including improved organizational effectiveness, enhanced staff competencies, and better project implementation performance. These results underscore the critical role of continuous training, skills development, and institutional strengthening in achieving sustainable development objectives. Based on the findings, the study recommends that local administrative authorities prioritize funding, policy support, and institutional collaboration for capacity-building initiatives within NGOs to enhance development effectiveness. Furthermore, future research should examine the long-term effects of capacity-building interventions on project sustainability, organizational resilience, and community-level development impacts.

**Keywords:** impact; capacity building; development outcomes; project; sustainability

### INTRODUCTION

Management operates in a continuously dynamic environment wherein traditional approaches, implementation strategies, and delivery modalities have lately become inadequate (Teece, 2007). In this context, and emerging from the compounded challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, NGOs are undergoing internal transitions. To ensure continued impactful delivery of objectives, we aim to outline the challenges and propose recommendations for a system-wide change. Capacity building for situational adaptive management as the answer provides a need for a more context-responsive, agile management approach that anticipates uncertainty and promotes adaptive strategies. The adaptive management approach (AMA) is anchored on continuous analysis, experimentation, learning, and adaptation based on inclusive dialogue, which directs decisions and actions to improve the results of interventions. The AMA enforces high levels of awareness, context responsiveness, and strengthened relationships internally between programs and portfolios, as well as externally, with partners through regular and

open dialogue, to get a shared understanding of on-the-ground problems, review assumptions, and make joint decisions. With this comes improved organizational synergies, a sense of safety and trust, and unity of purpose borne from enhanced internal collaboration and coordination in support of the overall project vision and strategic direction.

Capacity building brings in the ability to weigh in during learning sessions, as we review how the context is changing, and subsequent decisions on course-corrections or adaptations, and the involvement of relevant technical representation in the design of adaptive processes (budgeting, governance, and management arrangements) (Brownson, Fielding & Green 2018). Over the last couple of decades, dynamic interactions between national growth and local community development have been of considerable interest to both government and non-governmental agencies. This is because development projects are aimed at alleviating poverty and ameliorating the living conditions of the local population, hence, good and necessary for societies at all times.

Despite their importance, their actual impact is difficult to assess since the projects are often inefficiently or ineffectively managed. Pimoljinda and Siriprasertchok (2017) explained that sometimes the population wants exactly what was obtained elsewhere as a development project to be reproduced in their area. The design of a particular project may succeed somewhere but may not be appropriate in another context, or may not even succeed at all in a particular area if required actions and measures are not taken. This paper aims to explore the rationale for and impact of institutional and organizational capacity building for the success of development objectives, with a specific focus on the role of international organizations, local NGOs, and community organizations.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Conceptual Framework Rationale for Capacity Building

Capacity building refers to the continuous process of developing and enhancing the skills, knowledge, and resources that individuals, organizations, and communities need to survive, adapt, and excel in a rapidly evolving environment. It encompasses a broad range of activities, such as training, organizational/institutional development, and empowering entities to improve their effectiveness and sustainability. In the context of development outcomes, capacity building is centered on elevating the capabilities of local organizations, governments, and community groups to plan, manage, and implement initiatives that deliver long-term development outcomes. Capacity building is widely recognized as a key component of sustainable development because it ensures that local actors are empowered to take ownership of the outcomes, continue the work after external support ends, and foster local resilience. The United Nations Development Program defines capacity development as a process through which individuals, organizations, and societies obtain, strengthen, and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time. UNDP's approach to capacity development revolves around four key pillars: Institutional Arrangements, Leadership, Knowledge, and Accountability. These pillars serve as the driving forces behind capacity changes at various levels, ensuring sustainable transformation across institutions and communities. Through these efforts, international organizations help build stronger governance systems, develop human capital, and promote greater local ownership of development initiatives.

Capacity building is particularly important for entities operating in developing countries like ours, where institutional structures may be weak/fragile, and resources are limited. Effective capacity building lays the foundation for sustainable development by strengthening the ability of local actors to adapt to changing conditions, manage development outcomes effectively, and achieve long-lasting results. This process is critical for institutions such as international NGOs and local governments, as it allows them to be more resilient

and better equipped to face future challenges. Development outcomes that invest in capacity building typically experience more durable and profound impacts, contributing to long-term improvements beyond the immediate goals.

### Development Outcomes

Capacity building is integral to the success of development outcomes, particularly when external funding or technical assistance phases out. Without local institutions having relevant and competent capacities, many projects risk failure once support is withdrawn. Capacity building ensures that local stakeholders have the knowledge and tools to manage development initiatives effectively, allowing the benefits to persist well beyond the project's lifecycle. For international organizations, the relevance of capacity building to development outcomes can be understood through several lenses: Institutional arrangements: Establishing robust policies, processes, and systems that allow organizations to function effectively.

- *Leadership development*: Supporting the ability of local leaders and institutions to inspire and motivate change within their communities.
- *Knowledge*: Enhancing access to and sharing of knowledge at both individual and institutional levels, fostering learning and innovation.
- *Accountability*: Ensuring public institutions are responsive and answerable to citizens through effective monitoring and feedback mechanisms (MEAL)

These areas of focus contribute to the sustainability of development outcomes by embedding skills and systems within local contexts. By supporting these pillars, international organizations align their capacity-building efforts with the broader goals of sustainable development, emphasizing local ownership and institutional resilience.

### Capacity Building for Local NGOs and Community Organizations

At the grassroots level, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community groups play a critical role in development. Capacity building for these actors focuses on equipping them with the tools and knowledge necessary to implement and sustain development interventions effectively. Local NGOs often serve as the primary link between international donors and the communities they serve, making their capacity to manage resources, engage stakeholders, and execute outcomes essential for long-term success. By investing in the capacity of local NGOs, development outcomes are more likely to be successful because these organizations are well-positioned to understand local contexts, engage communities, and ensure that outcomes are tailored to specific needs. This process aligns closely with sustainable development principles, emphasizing local ownership, participation, and self-reliance. The capacity to manage development outcomes at the local level is often linked to:

- *Project management:* Local staff must be trained to plan, execute, and monitor the implementation of outcomes, which is primordial for achieving desired outcomes and mitigating risks.
- *Organizational development:* Building strong, resilient institutions that can manage resources, comply with legal frameworks, and maintain transparency is essential for long-term success.
- *Community engagement:* When local communities are actively involved in project design and execution, the likelihood of long-term success increases, as these communities become more invested in the outcomes.

Capacity building for local NGOs typically addresses:

- *Resource mobilization and management:* Developing/strengthening the ability to secure funding, manage financial resources, and ensure transparency in operations.
- *Leadership development:* Strengthening the leadership skills of NGO personnel to enable them to manage teams, engage with stakeholders, and advocate for community needs.
- *Program implementation:* Providing technical training/expertise that equips NGOs with the knowledge to design, implement, and monitor outcomes that address local development challenges.

Similarly, capacity building efforts for community organizations help enhance local engagement and ownership of development outcomes, ensuring that the benefits of these initiatives are sustained through community-driven solutions.

Historically, capacity building and training activities remain the core of many internationally funded development projects, which have focused much more on delivering products while trying to provide local people with prescriptive advice and developing their abilities to work through their resource management and conservation problems by themselves (Kaplan, 2000; Black, 2003). They started this initiative because of the long timeframe within which many of the projects run, which needed innovative learning approaches and the development of 'soft' skills that evidently take time to develop, as well as the agendas of funding bodies and researchers. There was also a need for a change in facilitator mindset; with a move away from dependency on past solutions and trained behaviours, and instead freeing participants to respond uniquely to unique situations (Kaplan, 2000). Therefore, capacity building for adaptive management or co-management would create enabling conditions for learning, which involve a concern with issues of power, culture, institutions, worldviews, and values (Armitage, Berkes, and Doubleday, 2010).

Also, capacity building for adaptive management helps strengthen local and institutional capacity, where the community takes the lead on the ground

to solve diverse and not strictly comparable challenges and find long-term sustainable solutions to their own resource management and conservation dilemmas. In this regard, Mistry et al. (2011) developed an integrated and conservative approach for adaptive management called the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) system. The PBL is a development and instructional approach built around a complex problem that is complex and requires information-gathering, changing, and tentative reflections. It uses scenarios directly linked with skills developed through capacity building, essential for an adaptive management approach. Even though not void of weaknesses, it complements capacity building for adaptive management by contributing to enabling local actors to change their own realities by themselves.

### Project Management

Capacity building plays a critical role in strengthening the project management capabilities of local organizations and institutions, which is fundamental to the effective execution of development outcomes. Development initiatives often require robust planning, resource allocation, and coordination across various stakeholders. Building project management capacity focuses on key elements such as:

- *Strategic Planning:* Training stakeholders to perform thorough needs assessments and develop realistic, data-driven plans that align with local development goals and the broader objectives of the project.
- *Resource Coordination and Implementation:* Developing skills for managing resources effectively and coordinating activities across various project components to reduce delays and inefficiencies.
- *Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):* Equipping organizations with the ability to regularly assess project performance, make necessary adjustments, and maintain accountability throughout the project lifecycle.

These elements are critical in helping local organizations reduce reliance on external expertise and increase ownership of development outcomes, leading to greater sustainability.

### Organizational Development

This dimension addresses the strengthening of the internal structures, processes, and systems of organizations, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community-based organizations, to enhance their efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability (confer authors like Wilenski, 1988; UNDP, 1997, and Brinkerhoff et al., 2010) for greater details. Capacity building also strengthens the broader organizational structures and systems required for long-term project sustainability. When local institutions have robust internal governance, clear decision-making processes, and sound financial management, they are better positioned to manage

development outcomes beyond their immediate implementation period, and continue delivering results long after external support has ended. Organizational development within capacity building includes:

- *Governance and Accountability:* Developing governance structures that promote transparent decision-making processes and clear lines of accountability.
- *Resource Management:* Strengthening an organization's capacity to manage financial, human, and material resources effectively, ensuring operational efficiency, transparency, and accountability.
- *Institutional Resilience:* Supporting organizations to adapt to changing environments and emerging challenges, such as political or economic shifts, enabling them to continue operating effectively and achieving results.

Capacity building in organizational development helps local institutions become more resilient, better equipped to manage outcomes, and more capable of delivering sustainable development outcomes. Investing in organizational development reduces the risk of project failure and creates a foundation for sustainable progress, as local institutions gain the capacity to manage challenges independently.

### **Community Capacity Building**

This dimension emphasizes the strengthening of the capabilities and resources within local communities to identify, prioritize, and address their own development needs and challenges (Sillitoe, 2002).

### **Institutional Capacity Building**

This dimension deals with the development of the broader institutional environment, including policies, laws, regulations, and social norms, that shape and enable the capacity-building process at the organizational and individual levels (Grindle, 1997).

### **Network and Partnership Capacity Building**

This dimension focuses on enhancing the ability of various stakeholders, such as government, civil society, private sector, and development partners, to collaborate, coordinate, and form effective networks and partnerships to address complex development challenges (Eade, 2007).

### **Policy and Advocacy Capacity Building**

This dimension involves developing the skills and capabilities of individuals and organizations to engage in policy formulation, implementation, and advocacy, enabling them to influence decision-making processes and promote positive change (Smillie, 1995).

### **Systemic and Enabling Environment Capacity Building**

This dimension addresses the broader, system-wide conditions and factors that facilitate or hinder the capacity building process, such as political,

economic, social, and cultural dynamics, as well as the overall governance structures and power dynamics (Lopes and Theisohn, 2003).

These dimensions highlight the multi-faceted nature of capacity building, addressing the capabilities and competencies at the individual, organizational, institutional, community, and system-wide levels. The literature emphasizes the importance of understanding and addressing these various dimensions to achieve holistic and sustainable capacity development. The Authors to implement and realize them, therefore, become paramount.

### **Interconnection between Capacity Building**

The inexhaustible aspects of capacity building presented above provide a solid foundation for not only understanding its conceptual underpinnings but also creating a pathway from capacity building to adaptive management and to the success of development projects.

In light of the above, we have combined the definitions of capacity building and that of adaptive management and defined Capacity building for the success of development projects. In the study, we considered capacity building as the process of developing the knowledge, skills, systems, and structures that enable individuals, organizations, institutions, and communities to continuously learn, adapt, and respond to the challenges of their changing environments, in order to achieve their development goals.

Capacity building is driven by several key factors. First, the increasing complexity and uncertainty of environmental challenges necessitate flexible and responsive management strategies. Second, stakeholder engagement and collaboration enhance knowledge sharing and foster a sense of ownership among communities. Third, the integration of scientific research and traditional knowledge supports informed decision-making. Fourth, training and education initiatives empower individuals and organizations to implement adaptive practices effectively. Additionally, policy frameworks that promote adaptive management create an enabling environment for capacity development. Lastly, funding and resource allocation are crucial for sustaining capacity-building efforts over time (Williams and Brown, 2013).

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working on development projects often have specific capacity-building needs to enable adaptive management approaches. NGOs require support in enhancing their governance structures, strategic planning, and leadership succession to ensure long-term sustainability and mission alignment. Also, upgrading technology and improving operational infrastructure are vital for enhancing efficiency, communication, and service delivery within NGOs, and developing robust systems for measuring outcomes and impacts is necessary for assessing program effectiveness and informing future decision-making (National Council of Nonprofits, 2024).

Effective financial practices, including budgeting, fundraising strategies, and diversifying income sources, are essential for maintaining operational stability and securing resources. Investing in training and professional development for staff and volunteers is crucial to building skills in program implementation, volunteer management, and community engagement. Again, engaging in partnerships and networks can enhance resource sharing and knowledge exchange, allowing NGOs to amplify their impact and avoid duplication of efforts (Williams & Brown, 2013). By addressing these capacity-building needs, NGOs can improve their operational effectiveness and better fulfill their missions.

The interconnection between capacity building and adaptive management, as highlighted above, is understood as a mutually reinforcing relationship. That is to say Capacity building enables and directly supports the implementation of adaptive management, while adaptive management helps to strengthen the capacities required for effective and sustainable development initiatives.

The conceptual link presented below highlights the importance of integrating capacity building and adaptive management as complementary strategies in development projects. By building the necessary capacities and enabling adaptive approaches, development initiatives can better navigate complex, uncertain, and dynamic contexts and achieve more enduring and impactful results.

According to Kaplan (2000), adaptability is defined as “the willingness (to change) and the ability of a person to adapt to a changing environment, work methods, work hours, tasks, responsibilities, and behavior by others.” In simple terms, we will refer to it here as an individual’s or organization’s ability to adjust effectively to new laws, regulations, or compliance requirements. This involves not only understanding the changes but also implementing necessary adjustments in processes, practices, and behaviors to meet new standards.

### Effective strategies

- *Needs Assessments:* Conducting thorough assessments to understand the specific challenges, gaps, and opportunities in the target organization or community before designing the capacity-building program.
- *Stakeholder Engagement:* Involving local stakeholders, including community leaders, government representatives, and other key actors, in the design and implementation of capacity-building programs. This helps ensure that the programs are aligned with local priorities and that there is buy-in from those directly involved.
- *Culturally Appropriate Methods:* Incorporating local knowledge, practices, and languages into training materials and delivery methods to make the programs more accessible and relevant.

### Fostering Local Ownership and Leadership

Another critical strategy for successful capacity building is fostering local ownership and leadership. When local organizations and communities take ownership of development outcomes and capacity-building programs, they are more likely to maintain the results. Encouraging local leadership involves transferring decision-making power to local stakeholders and empowering them to lead the process. This can be achieved by investing in leadership development programs, mentoring, and coaching for individuals in key positions within local organizations. Strong leadership at the local level helps to drive momentum and maintain focus on long-term goals. Developing partnerships between local organizations, governments, and international actors is essential for promoting knowledge sharing and capacity building. Partnerships create opportunities for cross-learning, where local organizations can benefit from the experiences of other institutions facing similar challenges. Collaboration between international development organizations and local actors also ensures that knowledge is transferred in both directions. This approach encourages the exchange of best practices and facilitates mutual learning. By building partnerships, capacity-building programs can harness a wider range of expertise and resources.

A key aspect of monitoring and evaluating capacity-building efforts is the establishment of clear metrics and indicators to assess progress. These indicators should be designed to measure both short-term outputs and long-term outcomes. Short-term indicators might include the number of individuals trained or the completion of specific capacity-building activities, while long-term indicators should focus on institutional improvements, sustainability, and the ability of organizations to maintain development gains over time. To address the challenge of inadequate monitoring and evaluation, robust M&E systems should be integrated into the design of capacity-building initiatives from the beginning. Effective monitoring begins with setting clear, measurable objectives at the outset of the capacity-building initiative. This allows for progress to be tracked against predefined goals and data-driven adjustments to be made to ensure that the initiative is aligned with the overall development objectives of the organization or community.

### THEORETICAL LITERATURE

#### Transformational Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1998)

This theory focuses on how individuals change their frames of reference through critical reflection, leading to personal and social transformation. Capacity building fosters effective communication skills and strategic leadership by encouraging participants to reflect on their experiences and assumptions. This reflective process enhances their ability to lead and communicate effectively within development projects. This theory is crucial for understanding

how capacity building can lead to transformative changes in individuals and organizations involved in development projects.

This theory focuses on the process of change in individuals' frames of reference through critical reflection. It is particularly relevant in capacity building as it highlights the need for individuals to develop new perspectives and skills to engage effectively in development projects. By promoting transformational learning, capacity building initiatives can empower participants to critically assess their experiences and adapt their practices, ultimately leading to more successful project implementations (Ertsås and Irgens, 2021). This theory emphasizes the importance of critical reflection in personal and organizational development. It encourages a deeper understanding of the underlying assumptions that influence behavior, leading to more effective leadership and communication in development projects.

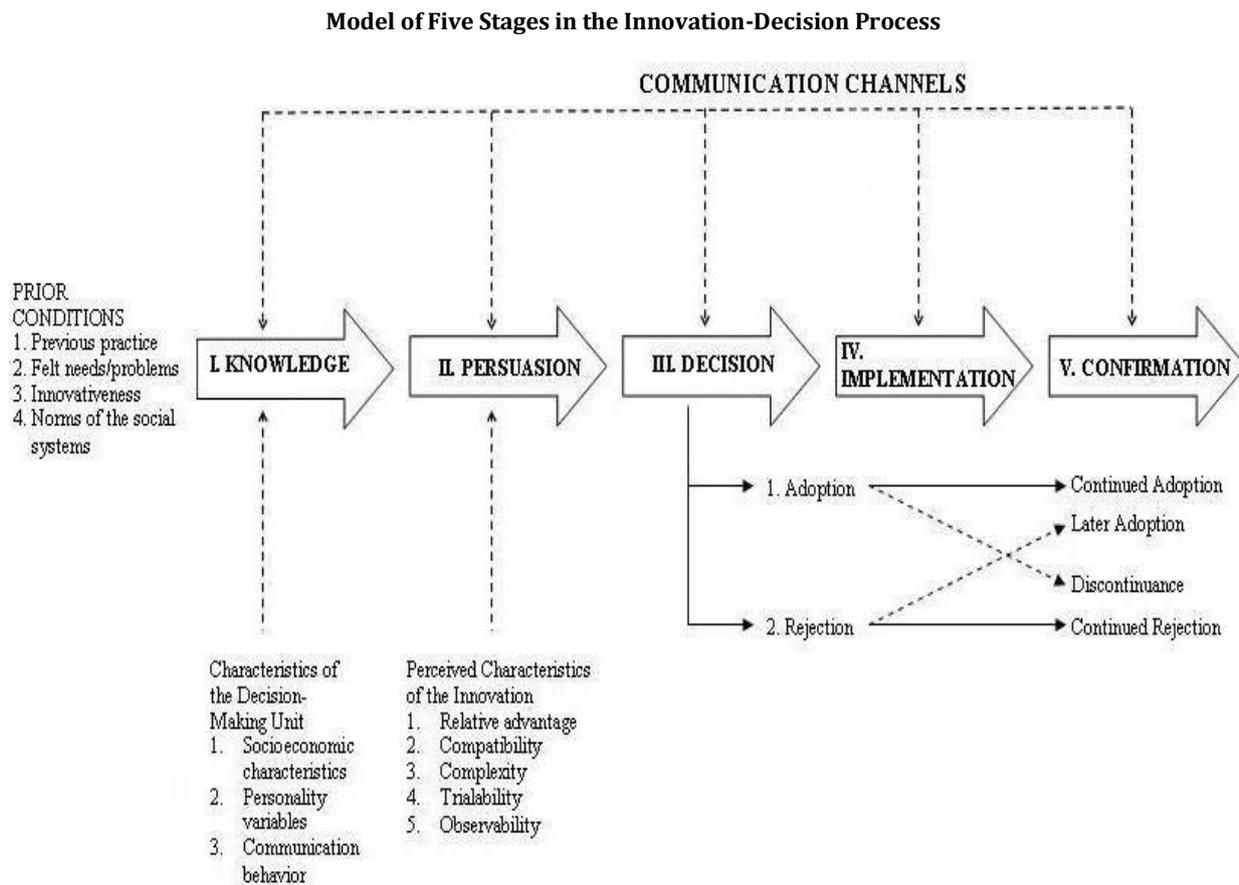
Some critics argue that the theory may not account for the emotional and social dimensions of learning. Additionally, it may be challenging to implement in contexts where critical reflection is not culturally accepted. Integrating Emotional

Intelligence frameworks could enhance the understanding of how emotional factors influence transformational learning (Goleman & Intelligence, 1995).

**Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2002)**

This theory explains how new ideas and technologies spread within a community or organization. It emphasizes the role of communication channels, social systems, and the perceived attributes of innovations in facilitating adoption. Capacity building enhances adaptability to regulatory changes by equipping stakeholders with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand and implement new practices. Effective communication skills foster collaboration and information sharing, which are crucial for the successful adoption of innovations in development projects. Understanding this theory helps identify how capacity building can facilitate the adoption of innovative practices in development projects, leading to improved outcomes.

A diagram illustrating the stages of innovation adoption (knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation) better explains this theory, as shown.



**FIGURE 1:** Individual attitudes toward or against innovation are crucial in influencing individual decisions. *Source:* Adapted from Chen et al. (2022).

The Diffusion of Innovations theory explains how new ideas and technologies spread within a community or organization. This theory emphasizes the importance of building capacity among stakeholders to facilitate the adoption of innovations. In the context of development projects, enhancing the capacity of individuals and organizations to understand and implement new practices can lead to greater success in project outcomes. By fostering an environment where innovations can be effectively communicated and adopted, projects are more likely to achieve their goals (Bergeron *et al.*, 2017). The theory provides a structured approach to understanding how innovations can be effectively disseminated within communities. It highlights the importance of communication and social networks, which can enhance the success of development projects by ensuring that stakeholders are informed and engaged.

Critics argue that the theory may oversimplify the complexities of social change and ignore the influence of power dynamics and cultural contexts. Additionally, it may not adequately address the barriers to adoption faced by marginalized communities. Future research could integrate insights from the Social Capital Theory to better understand the role of community networks in facilitating innovation adoption (Putnam, 2000).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study was a quantitative analysis. In agreement with Amin (2005), a correlational study describes the important prerequisite for the realization of the regression (pp.139-140).

### Population Samples

The population of this study includes all the workers in twelve (12) selected NGOs in Mezam, actively involved in development projects. The NGOs were made based on their relevance to the research subject (carrying out capacity building) and their accessibility and convenience.

## FINDINGS

### Descriptive Statistics

TABLE 1: Variables Description.

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
Success of Development Project	119	4.277311	0.4702032	1	5
Adaptability to Regulatory Changes	120	4.279167	0.4927876	1	5
Effective Communication Skills	120	4.295833	0.473116	1	5
Strategic Leadership Skills	120	4.261111	0.4958904	1	5

Obs: number of observations, Std. dev: Standard deviation, Min: minimum, and Max: maximum.

This table presents descriptive statistics for three key variables: Adaptability to Regulatory Changes, Effective Communication Skills, and Strategic Leadership Skills, based on a sample of 120 respondents. All variables were measured on a 5-point scale, likely ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The mean scores for all three variables are closely clustered around 4.2, indicating generally high levels of perceived capacity across all three areas.

The sample population of 12 NGOs, which is accessible, is 120 staff. The questionnaire illustrates the assessment of capacity-building initiatives' impact on NGO development project success. The close-ended uses a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)

### Techniques for Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The Spearman correlation was the tool used in testing the association between two variables. The data from the questionnaire have been analyzed using two techniques employed in recent literature by Berkley and Beratan (2021). The Univariate analysis helped us to summarize the data and analyze individual variables, and the Multivariate analysis analyzed the relationships between the dependent and independent variables. This technique began by first conducting a confirmatory factor analysis using ordinary least squares (OLS) econometric techniques, then proceeded to apply the Pearson Correlation test to measure the strength of association between the variables, and finally ended up using the Bootstrapping Construct Result for accuracy.

### Spearman Correlation is expressed as:

$$\alpha = \frac{k}{k-1} \left( 1 - \frac{\sum \sigma_k^2}{\sigma^2} \right)$$

When;

$\alpha = KR_{20}$  (since parts are individual items.

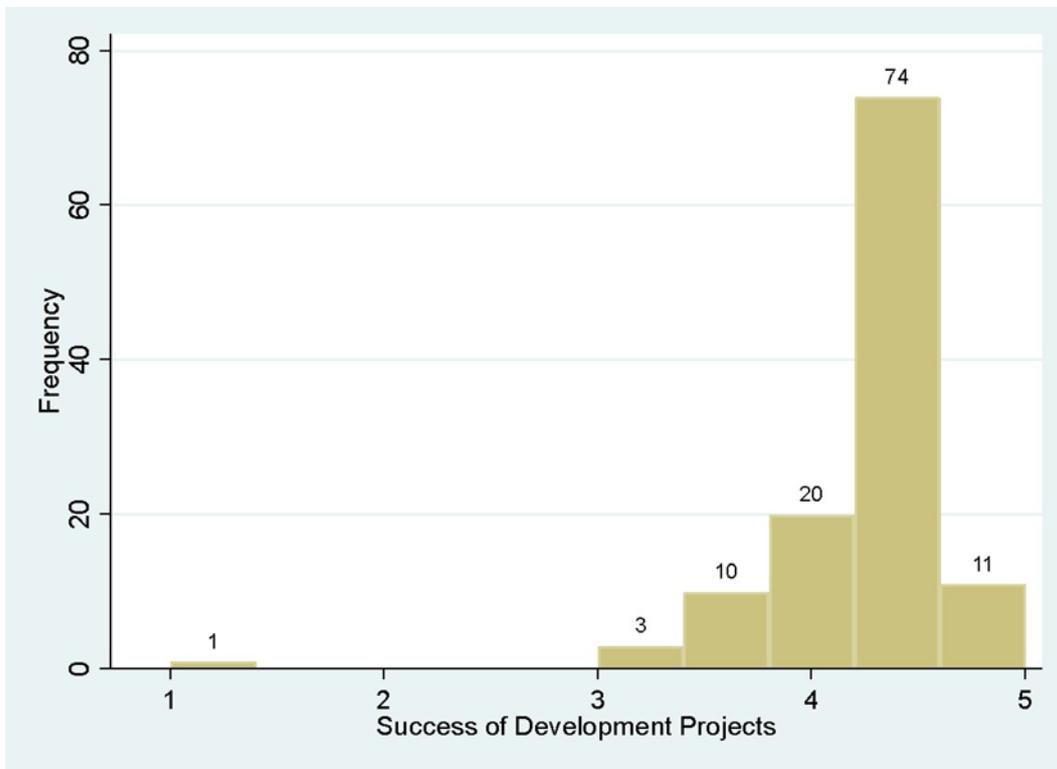
$k$  = Number of items.

$\sum \sigma_k^2$  = sum of the variances of the  $k$  parts, usually items of the test.

$\sigma^2$  = Standard Deviation of the whole test.

### Research Question

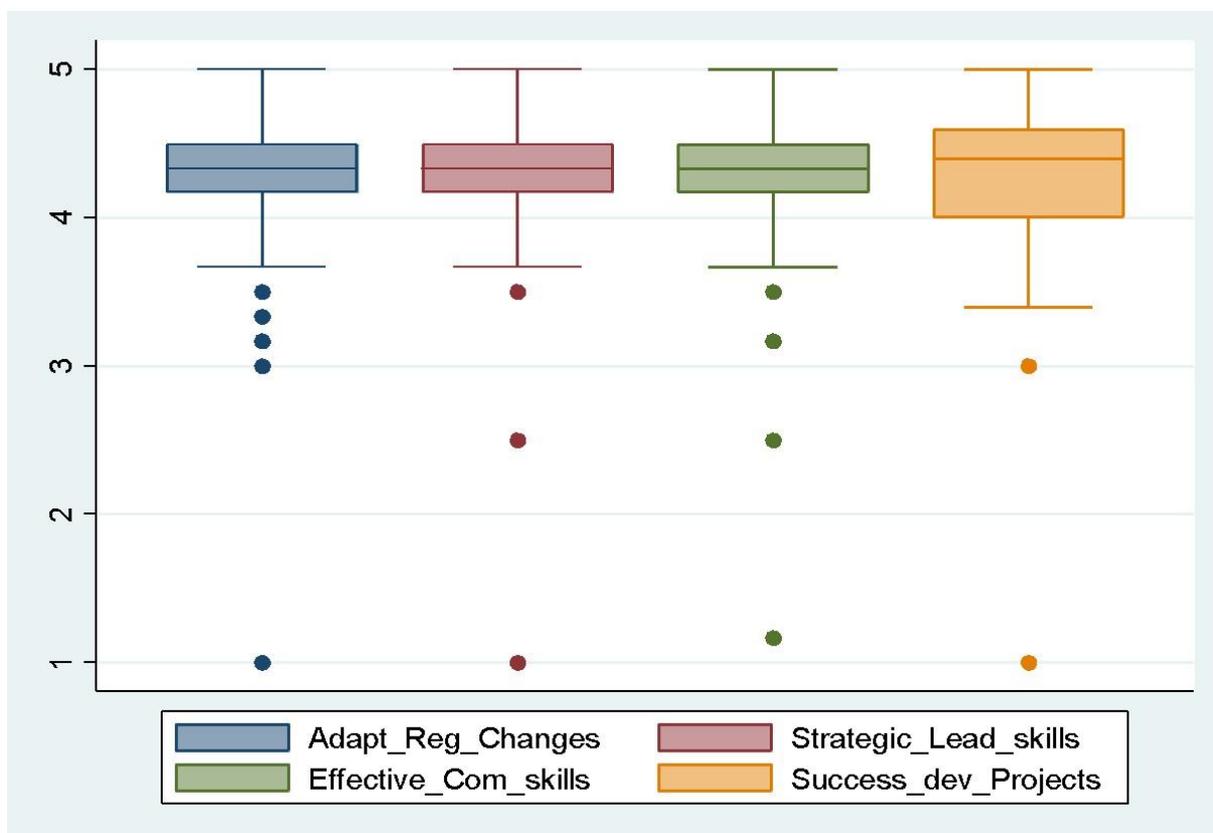
The research question that was investigated in this study was as follows: Does capacity building influence development?



**FIGURE 2:** Success of Development Projects.

This diagram illustrates the distribution of responses regarding the success of development projects, in relation to capacity-building initiatives by NGOs in Bamenda. The data shows a strong positive skew, with the majority of respondents (74) selecting option 4, indicating agreement that capacity building has a positive impact on project

success. Very few respondents chose options 1-3, suggesting minimal disagreement or neutrality. This distribution implies that capacity building is perceived to have a significant positive influence on the success of development projects among the surveyed population, which includes NGO technical services staff.



**FIGURE 3:** Adaptability and Regulatory Changes.

This diagram compares four aspects: adaptability to regulatory changes, strategic leadership skills, effective communication skills, and the success of development projects. All four variables show similar distributions, with median values around 4 (agree) on the Likert scale. The boxes, representing the interquartile ranges, are relatively compact, indicating consistency in responses.

Some outliers are present, particularly on the lower end, but they are few and can affect the results. The similarity in distributions suggests that respondents perceive a strong positive relationship between these capacity-building elements and project success. This implies that enhancing adaptive capabilities, leadership skills, and communication effectiveness could significantly contribute to the success of development projects for NGOs.

**Baseline Model Findings**

*Impact of Capacity Building on the Success of Development Projects of NGOs*

*Dependent Variable: Success of Development Projects*

*Method: Ordinary Least Squares (OLS)*

**TABLE 2: Baseline OLS Model Results.**

Independent Variables	Coefficient	Std. Err.	t	P >  t	[95% Conf. Interval]
Adaptability to Regulatory Changes	0.173289**	0.084113	2.06	0.042	0.006676 — 0.339901
Effective Communication Skills	0.379824***	0.090587	4.19	0.000	0.200389 — 0.559260
Strategic Leadership Skills	0.298165***	0.085566	3.48	0.001	0.128675 — 0.467654
Constant	0.636129**	0.256120	2.48	0.014	0.128805 — 1.143453

*\*, \*\*, \*\*\* signify significance level of 10%, 5% and 1% respectively.*

The baseline OLS model results show that all three independent variables significantly impact the success of development projects. Adaptability to Regulatory changes has a positive coefficient of 0.173289, significant at the 5% level. This suggests that a one-unit increase in adaptability is associated with a 0.173289 unit increase in project success, holding other factors constant. Effective communication skills have the largest coefficient of 0.379824, significant at the 1% level. This implies that improving communication skills has the strongest positive impact on project success among

the variables studied. For every one-unit increase in communication skills, project success is expected to increase by 0.379824 units, ceteris paribus.

Strategic leadership skills also show a strong positive impact with a coefficient of 0.298165, significant at the 1% level. This indicates that enhancing leadership skills substantially contributes to project success. The constant term of 0.636129 is significant at the 5% level, suggesting a baseline level of project success when all other variables are zero.

**Bootstrap Robustness Findings**

*Impact of Capacity Building on the Success of Development Projects of NGOs*

*Dependent Variable: Success of Development Projects*

*Method: Bootstrap*

**TABLE 3: Bootstrap Robustness Model Results.**

Independent Variables	Coefficient	Std. Err.	t	P >  z	[95% Conf. Interval]
Adaptability to Regulatory Changes	0.173289*	0.099091	1.75	0.080	-0.020930 — 0.367504
Effective Communication Skills	0.379824**	0.120307	3.16	0.002	0.144027 — 0.615621
Strategic Leadership Skills	0.298165**	0.104798	2.85	0.004	0.092765 — 0.503564
Constant	0.636129	0.467467	1.36	0.174	-0.280090 — 1.552347

*\*, \*\*, \*\*\* signify significance level of 10%, 5% and 1% respectively.*

The bootstrap results largely confirm the findings of the baseline OLS model, but with some differences in significance levels. Adaptability to regulatory changes remains positive but is now significant only at the 10% level (coefficient: 0.173289). This suggests that while still important, its impact may be less robust when accounting for potential sampling variability. Effective Communication Skills maintains its strong positive impact with a coefficient of 0.379824, now significant at the 5% level. This reinforces its importance as a key factor in project success, even under more stringent statistical conditions.

Strategic Leadership Skills also remains significant at the 5% level with a coefficient of 0.298165, further confirming its substantial role in project outcomes.

The constant term in the bootstrap model (0.636129) is no longer statistically significant. This change suggests that the baseline level of project success may be more variable or less certain when accounting for potential sampling variations. Overall, the bootstrap results support the main findings of the OLS model, with communication and leadership skills showing the most robust positive impacts on project success.

The findings presented above indicate a significant positive impact of capacity building on the success of development projects. Specifically, the coefficient for adaptability to regulatory changes is 0.173, which is statistically significant at the 5% level. This finding aligns with previous studies that emphasize the importance of adaptability in project success. For instance, Njoh (2011) found that projects that could adjust to changing regulations were more likely to succeed in Cameroon. The context of Bamenda, with its unique regulatory environment, may further enhance the relevance of adaptability, as local NGOs often face fluctuating policies that require quick adjustments (Akumbom and Abuengmoh, 2022). These results support the first specific hypothesis (H01) that the adaptability of regulatory changes significantly affects the success of development projects of NGOs.

Capacity building should not be treated as a stand-alone intervention but rather as an integrated component of a development agenda. One of the most effective strategies for enhancing capacity-building efforts is ensuring that they are tailored to the specific needs and characteristics of the local context. This involves conducting thorough assessments of the political, social, cultural, and economic environments to understand the unique challenges and opportunities within a community or organization. A context-specific approach ensures that capacity-building initiatives are not only relevant but also more likely to yield sustainable outcomes. Local actors must be engaged in the design and implementation phases of capacity-building efforts to provide insights into the most appropriate interventions. This participation promotes ownership and ensures that capacity-building activities reflect the realities of those on the ground.

### **Resilience and sustainability**

In the context of Bamenda, already affected by socio-political instability, the community had the capacity to absorb shocks, adapt, and recover from the combined impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing conflict on the long-term viability of livelihoods, environmental systems, and urban services. Residents deploy relocation and mobility to adapt to socio-economic stressors, including disrupted economic activities and halted education factors that were intensified during the COVID-19 period and amplified by the conflict. It highlights heterogeneous resilience capacities, where financially secure residents adapt differently from vulnerable groups, pointing to inequalities in adaptive potential (Mofor, Chianebeng & Doumtsop, 2024). The pandemic responses, such as lockdowns and quarantine, altered residents' engagement with natural resources, shaping attitudes toward resource conservation, usage intensification, and management practices. It suggests that COVID-19 heightened awareness of resource scarcity and the need for sustainable environmental practices in the urban context.

The rapid urbanization in many African cities, including Bamenda in Cameroon's North-West Region, has intensified ecological pressures on fragile urban and peri-urban ecosystems. These pressures arise from population growth, unplanned spatial expansion, and increased demand for land, housing, energy, and basic services. When external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic occur, they interact with these existing vulnerabilities, amplifying environmental degradation and undermining urban resilience and sustainability (Kongnso, Donfack Emmanuel, & Kawah Awah, 2024). In the aftermath of COVID-19, initiatives such as zero-waste programs and community-based resilience efforts in Bamenda have emerged as important responses to the environmental, social, and economic disruptions caused by the pandemic. These initiatives contribute meaningfully to the discourse on sustainability, participatory governance, and environmental stewardship, particularly in a city already facing compounded challenges of rapid urbanization, limited municipal capacity, and socio-political instability.

Zero-waste and community resilience initiatives in Bamenda exemplify how grassroots action can address environmental degradation while fostering social solidarity and adaptive capacity in the aftermath of COVID-19 and a challenging socio-political environment. These efforts contribute significantly to sustainability discourse by demonstrating that environmental stewardship and community participation are not peripheral but central to resilient urban recovery. Strengthening and scaling such initiatives will be critical for building a sustainable and shock-resilient future for Bamenda. A defining feature of Bamenda's sustainability initiatives is their community-driven nature. Local residents, youth groups, women's associations, faith-based organizations, and civil society actors play central roles in organizing clean-up campaigns, awareness programs, and environmental monitoring. This participatory approach enhances local ownership of environmental interventions, builds trust and collective responsibility, and encourages behavioral change beyond short-term projects. In the post-COVID context, such community participation has been critical for rebuilding social cohesion disrupted by lockdowns, economic hardship, and restricted mobility. Environmental action has thus served not only ecological goals but also social resilience and community healing.

Community resilience efforts in Bamenda extend beyond waste management to include urban gardening, reforestation, climate awareness campaigns, and livelihood diversification initiatives. During and after COVID-19, such local innovations proved essential for coping with supply chain disruptions and economic uncertainty. They demonstrate that resilience is not only about infrastructure but also about adaptive social and ecological practices.

Despite their positive impact, zero-waste and community resilience initiatives in Bamenda face several constraints, such as limited financial and technical resources, inadequate policy support and integration into formal urban planning, and security challenges that restrict movement and participation in some areas. Addressing these limitations requires stronger collaboration between communities, local authorities, NGOs, and development partners to scale up successful models and embed them in long-term sustainability strategies. By integrating these initiatives into broader urban development frameworks, Bamenda can advance a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable post-pandemic trajectory.

### Foreign Aid Retrenchment

Shifts in global political priorities, most notably the retrenchment of foreign aid during the Trump administration in the United States has significantly altered the international development landscape (Schroyer, 2018). Reductions in foreign assistance, increased conditionality, and a broader climate of donor apathy have exposed the vulnerabilities of aid-dependent development models, particularly in fragile contexts such as Sub-Saharan Africa. These dynamics underscore the urgent need for capacity training focused on local resource mobilization, effective management of scarce resources, and the design of sustainable and resilient projects.

The Trump administration's "America First" policy framework prioritized domestic interests, leading to cuts or proposed cuts to foreign aid budgets, greater emphasis on short-term strategic interests over long-term development, and reduced funding predictability for social, environmental, and governance programs (Kates, Wexler & Rouw, 2025). For countries and cities already grappling with compounded crises such as conflict, pandemics, and climate stress, this retreat intensified uncertainty. Many development initiatives reliant on external funding faced downsizing or collapse, revealing the structural fragility of donor-dependent programming. Beyond specific policy shifts, donor fatigue and competing global crises (geopolitical conflicts, climate emergencies, and domestic economic pressures in donor countries) have contributed to a general decline in development funding. This donor apathy manifests in reducing grant availability, increased competition among NGOs and community organizations, shorter funding cycles, and stricter reporting requirements. As a result, organizations are often forced to focus on survival rather than long-term impact, undermining project sustainability and institutional learning (Kates et al., 2025). In this constrained funding environment, capacity training must move beyond traditional project implementation skills to emphasize local resource mobilization. This includes:

- Community fundraising and membership-based financing;
- Public-private partnerships and local business engagement;

- Social enterprise models that generate internal revenue;
- Leveraging local government contributions and in-kind support.

Training practitioners and community leaders to identify, access, and manage local funding sources reduces dependency on volatile external aid and strengthens local ownership. With fewer resources available, capacity building must also prioritize efficient and accountable resource management. Financial management and transparent budgeting, cost-effectiveness and prioritization under constraints, monitoring and evaluation focused on learning and adaptation, and risk management and contingency planning are skills that ensure that limited funds are used strategically, maximizing impact while minimizing waste an essential requirements in low-resource, high-risk environments. Projects designed primarily to satisfy donor requirements often struggle to survive beyond funding cycles. Sustainable projects are those that communities can maintain, adapt, and scale using locally available resources long after external funding ends.

The retrenchment of foreign aid under policies such as those pursued during the Trump administration, coupled with growing donor apathy, has highlighted the limitations of externally driven development models. In response, capacity training must be fundamentally reoriented toward local funding strategies, efficient resource management, and sustainability- and resilience-centered project design. Empowering local actors with these competencies is not merely an adaptation to reduced aid; it is a strategic shift toward more autonomous, durable, and contextually grounded development pathways (*America First: Foreign Aid in the Trump Administration*, 2025).

### Implications of Foreign Aid Retrenchment on the Bamenda Community

Foreign aid retrenchment has significant socio-economic, institutional, and humanitarian implications for the Bamenda community, particularly given its fragile context marked by socio-political instability, displacement, and weakened local economies. Foreign aid has historically supported essential services in Bamenda, including health care, education, water and sanitation, and humanitarian relief. Aid retrenchment reduces funding for clinics, schools, psychosocial support programs, and internally displaced persons (IDP) assistance, leading to service gaps and declining quality of life, especially for women, children, and vulnerable populations.

Many local NGOs and community-based organizations in Bamenda rely heavily on external donor funding. Reduced aid leads to staff layoffs, program closures, and diminished community outreach. This weakens grassroots development efforts, erodes institutional memory, and limits local capacity to respond to crises and development needs.

Foreign aid has supported livelihood programs such as skills training, micro-enterprise development, and agricultural support. Retrenchment exacerbates unemployment, particularly among youth and women, increases household vulnerability, and deepens poverty levels in already economically strained communities.

As donor-funded programs decline, local councils and decentralized authorities face increased pressure to fill service delivery gaps without corresponding increases in financial or technical capacity. This strains governance structures and may reduce trust between citizens and local authorities. Aid retrenchment often results in reduced investment in training, leadership development, and institutional strengthening. This undermines long-term resilience, adaptive management capacity, and sustainable development planning within the Bamenda community.

With fewer formal support systems, households increasingly rely on informal networks, remittances, religious institutions, and traditional solidarity systems. While these mechanisms provide short-term relief, they are often insufficient to address structural development challenges. Economic hardship, unemployment, and reduced social support can exacerbate social tensions, increase crime rates, and contribute to instability. In fragile settings like Bamenda, aid retrenchment may indirectly undermine peacebuilding and social cohesion efforts. Despite its challenges, foreign aid retrenchment can create incentives for local innovation, domestic resource mobilization, community self-help initiatives, and partnerships with the private sector. However, this positive outcome depends on strong leadership, adaptive governance, and targeted capacity building.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Effective communication skills emerged as the most influential factor, with a coefficient of 0.380, significant at the 1% level. This result corroborates findings by Kimengsi and Balgah (2016), who highlighted that effective communication is crucial for stakeholder engagement and project success in rural Cameroon. The emphasis on communication in Bamenda is particularly pertinent due to the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the community, which can complicate interactions. This contextual factor may explain why some studies conducted in more homogenous settings reported weaker correlations between communication skills and project outcomes (Akumbom and Abuengmoh, 2022).

Strategic leadership skills also showed a strong positive impact, with a coefficient of 0.298, significant at the 1% level. This finding is consistent with the work of Mujabi et al. (2015), who identified leadership as a critical determinant of project success in Uganda. However, contrasting results have been reported in other contexts, where leadership was not found to significantly influence project outcomes. (Akumbom and Abuengmoh,

2022) The difference may stem from the specific challenges faced by NGOs in Bamenda, where strong leadership is essential to navigate local political dynamics and resource constraints effectively.

The constant term in the model is 0.636, indicating a baseline level of project success even in the absence of the examined capacity-building factors. This suggests that while capacity building is important, other contextual factors also contribute to project success. For example, Balgah (2018) noted that community support and local resources play a significant role in the sustainability of development projects in Cameroon.

The acceptance of all three hypotheses in this study reinforces the notion that capacity building significantly enhances project success in Bamenda. This finding is supported by the work of Labonne and Chase (2011), who found that community-driven development projects that included capacity-building components were more successful in enhancing social capital. The consistent results across different studies highlight the importance of capacity building as a universal strategy for improving project outcomes, even as local contexts vary.

The goal of capacity building is to enable local institutions and communities to maintain and expand the benefits of development outcomes in the long term. When capacity building is effectively implemented, local actors can take greater responsibility for the success and continued operation of development interventions, ensuring that results are sustained beyond the immediate project lifecycle. Capacity building further supports sustainability by embedding best practices within institutional frameworks. Thus, long-term sustainability can be achieved through;

1. *Ownership and Accountability*: Promoting responsibility for maintaining and expanding development outcomes at the local level.
2. *Institutionalization of Best Practices*: Embedding effective project practices within local policies and frameworks, ensuring they continue to be applied beyond the project's initial funding phase and after the project's conclusion.
3. *Continuous Adaptation*: Encouraging a culture of learning and adaptation within local institutions, where organizations regularly review and improve their practices over time based on project outcomes as well as evolving challenges and opportunities.

Capacity building provides the foundation for local actors to manage development results and adapt to new challenges, leading to more durable and long-lasting development outcomes. Despite the clear benefits of capacity building in development outcomes, there are several challenges that arise during the implementation phase.

These challenges can hinder the effectiveness of capacity-building initiatives and prevent local actors from fully realizing their potential. Addressing these barriers is critical for the long-term success of development outcomes. One of the most common challenges is the lack of adequate financial and human resources. Many local organizations, particularly in developing contexts, face significant funding constraints, which limit their ability to invest in capacity-building activities. Additionally, skilled human resources may be scarce, further hindering the capacity of local institutions to absorb new skills and practices. Without adequate resources, local organizations may struggle to access the training, technical assistance, and knowledge necessary to build their capacity. This, in turn, affects their ability to sustain development results over the long term. International donors and development partners must prioritize sustainable funding mechanisms and work closely with local actors to ensure that capacity-building activities are adequately resourced.

Another common challenge in implementing capacity building initiatives is resistance to change. Local institutions, especially those with established structures and practices, may resist adopting new systems or methods introduced during capacity building programs. This resistance can stem from a lack of trust in external actors, fear of losing control, or the perception that new methods may not align with local traditions or cultural norms. Overcoming this resistance requires more than just training. It involves creating a collaborative environment where local actors feel empowered to contribute to the design and implementation of capacity-building activities. Building trust through continuous engagement and emphasizing the benefits of new approaches can help mitigate resistance and facilitate smoother transitions.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are essential for assessing the effectiveness of capacity-building initiatives. However, many local organizations lack the necessary systems and expertise to implement robust M&E processes. This can lead to a lack of data on the progress and outcomes of capacity-building activities, making it difficult to adjust programs based on real-time performance. Strengthening M&E systems within local organizations is crucial for ensuring that capacity building efforts are on track and delivering the desired results. Training in data collection, analysis, and reporting, as well as the development of tailored M&E frameworks, can address this gap and help local institutions better understand the impact of their capacity-building efforts.

## CONCLUSION

This study on the impact of capacity building on the success of development projects of NGOs in Bamenda globally yielded positive results. This implies that enhanced needs-based capacities from training and workshops significantly contribute to project success in Bamenda. The findings indicate that effective training and development initiatives

lead to improved adaptability, communication, and leadership skills within these organizations, ultimately enhancing their operational effectiveness and project outcomes. Given these insights, the next steps involve formulating recommendations that address both policy and practical aspects. These recommendations will focus on giving advice on strengthening capacity-building programs, fostering community engagement, and ensuring that NGOs are equipped with the necessary resources and skills. Capacity-building programs that are designed without considering the specific local context may fail to meet the unique needs of the target organizations or communities. One-size-fits-all approaches often overlook the cultural, social, political, and economic factors that shape local development challenges. This can result in capacity-building efforts that are irrelevant or ineffective in addressing the core issues faced by local institutions. To address this challenge, capacity building initiatives must be context-specific, tailored to the unique circumstances of the local actors involved. This requires a deep understanding of local dynamics and a participatory approach in the design and implementation of capacity-building programs. By ensuring that capacity building efforts are relevant to the local context, development outcomes can achieve more meaningful and sustainable outcomes.

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