

## **Service Delivery in Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Kenya: an Examination of the Contribution of Board of Directors**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to identify the extent to which board of directors contribute to service delivery in NGOs in Kenya. The objectives of the study were two: to establish the determinants of quality service in NGOs and to determine the board roles which lead to higher contribution of board members to service delivery. The study used the descriptive research design. The target population comprised 180 managers of local civic organizations non-governmental organizations in Kenya. Simple random sampling was applied to select a sample size of 60. Questionnaires were used to collect data. The tool used to analyze data was the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Data was interpreted using percentages, means and standard deviations. Pearson correlation was computed to determine the association between the roles of the board members and contribution to service delivery. The results were presented using tables and figures. The roles of the board members that were found to be of most importance with regard to boards' contribution to service delivery included fundraising, managing resources and also adequate oversight of the organizations.*

### **Introduction**

Researchers have documented the contribution made by Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) in providing service to the poorest people in communities (Ferrington, Bebbington, Wellard and Lewis, 1993). In this connection, Carroll (1992) points out that one of the visible and most observable roles played by NGOs in development work is service delivery. In this role, the most basic goods and services are provided by NGOs to the neediest communities. In Kenya, the importance of the important role played by NGOs in service delivery has been recognized by the Kenya government. Brass (2011) indicates that since 2002, the Kenyan government, through different ministries and provincial administrations reached out to NGOs to encourage them to engage in the policy-making process and in service delivery.

In order to impact in service delivery, organizations need to provide effective service which meets the needs of the recipients. When the service meets the needs of the recipients, then it is likely to be perceived to be good or of high quality. In the business sectors, there is a big concern on provision of quality service with an aim to improve organizational performance. In this regard, scholars have documented the prominent determinants of quality service as integrity, reliability, responsiveness, availability and functionality (Jonson, 1995). Although NGOs are service delivery organizations, it is not clear what their determinants of service quality are. Another aspect of concern with regard to service delivery in NGOs has been the components of organizational systems which affect service delivery in organizations. Several components which affect service delivery have been identified. In this regard, Crow and Lockhart (2013) showed that the most important organizational system with regard to service delivery is governance structure which includes organizational structure, roles and responsibilities of board members and problem solving. Of these three aspects researchers have focused on structure (Teixeira, Koufteros, Peng, and Schroeder, 2008) and problem solving (Cohen, 2006). Few scholars have focused on the roles of board members in relation to contribution to effective service delivery in NGOs. The responsibility of the management board is to provide good governance which would result to effective service delivery (Salas, Eduardo, Gerald, Goodwin and Burke, 2009). In Kenya, the NGO sector is regarded as the charitable sector. It provides services which include food aid, health, water and sanitation, education and many other services.

The sector complements the national government in supporting development. Both international and local NGOs are functional in Kenya (Hunger Safety Net Programme, 2011).

### ***Theoretical Background and Concept***

Miller-Millesen (2003) classified the typical functions of non-profit boards into three theories; the agency theory which suggests that the duty of the board is to resolve any conflict relationship between the board and the top management and align to the interest of the stakeholders and, ensure that their (stakeholders) interests are protected. The second is the resource dependency theory. Going by this theory, in non-profit organizations the board functions as a resource, therefore this theory is more applicable to non-profit organization's governance (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). The board provides the link between the organization donors and also the different kinds of expertise that are required by the organization through their social networks, the board members are able to secure relational capital and the board capital which combines both the human capital and the relational capital (Hilman and Dalziel 2003). Another function is classified as the institutional theory which aims to describe how and why these activities take place in non-profit boards. This study borrows from the three theories mentioned before.

### ***Roles of Board of Directors and Service Delivery in NGOs***

A board of directors is a group of people legally charged with the role to govern a corporation (McNamara, 2008). The author adds that in a NGO the board reports to the stakeholders particularly the local communities which the NGO serves. Hendry (2005) remarked that the work of boards is not just about ensuring accountability for performance, even though this is important, it is also, and primarily, about ensuring good performance. To perform satisfactorily, a board requires an effective board's policy framework with comprehensive written expectations for each member where all board members are expected to act in the best interest of the organization rather than their own or third party interests (Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations, 1999). The board's role needs to be well defined. Lack of a clear definition of the board's role has been a major obstacle in exploring its effectiveness (Letendre, 2004; Sonnenfeld, 2004). McNamara (2008) provides an elaborate list of roles and responsibilities of board of directors. These include providing continuity to the organization by providing vision and mission, hiring the chief executive, acquisition of resources to finance the organizations activities, accounting to stakeholders about services, prudent management of resources, making decisions about the organizational services, promoting public image of the organization, assessment of self-performance and serving as the court of appeal for NGO employees. Snow (2011) states that Boards enable NGOs to fulfil legal requirements, play oversight roles, promote organizations missions and fundraise for the organizations. Despite the numerous roles outlined for board members in NGOs, there is no evidence that the board through their roles contribute to effective service delivery. Research in Kenya has focused on the collapse of service in NGOs due to lack of proper management (Ochieng and Andrew, 2009). Kathuri (2014) focused on the effects of organizational systems on service delivery in civil organizations in Marsabit County. This study addressed the contribution of board members to service delivery.

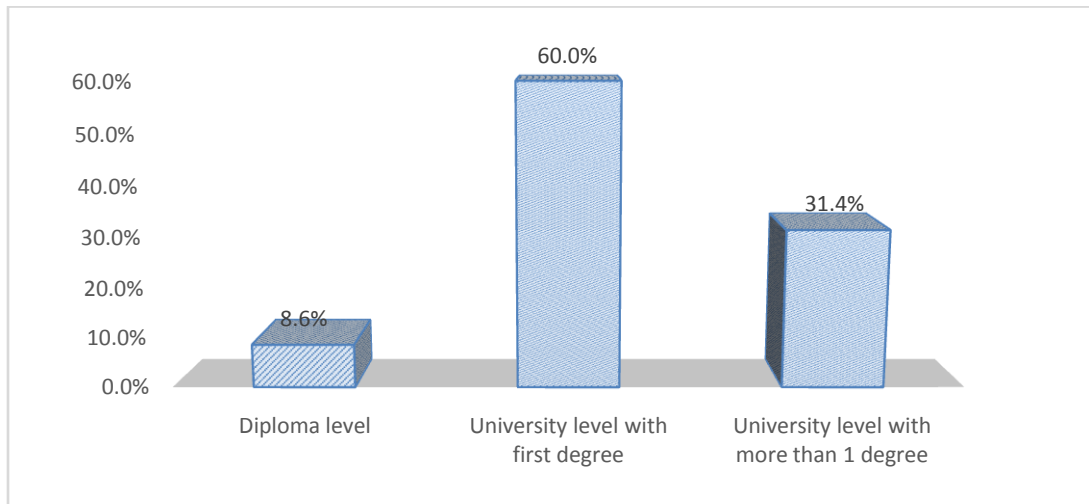
### ***Methodology***

This study used the descriptive research design. The target population was 180 managers of rural based NGOs which had activities in Kenya. They were deemed the appropriate population because they were well versed with the roles and responsibilities of NGO board members. A simple random sampling was applied to collect a sample of 60 respondents. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected using a questionnaire. The qualitative data was analyzed according to thematic areas. The quantitative data was analyzed using the SPSS tool. It was interpreted using, percentages, means and standard deviations. Pearson correlation was computed to determine the association Board of Directors roles and contribution to service delivery

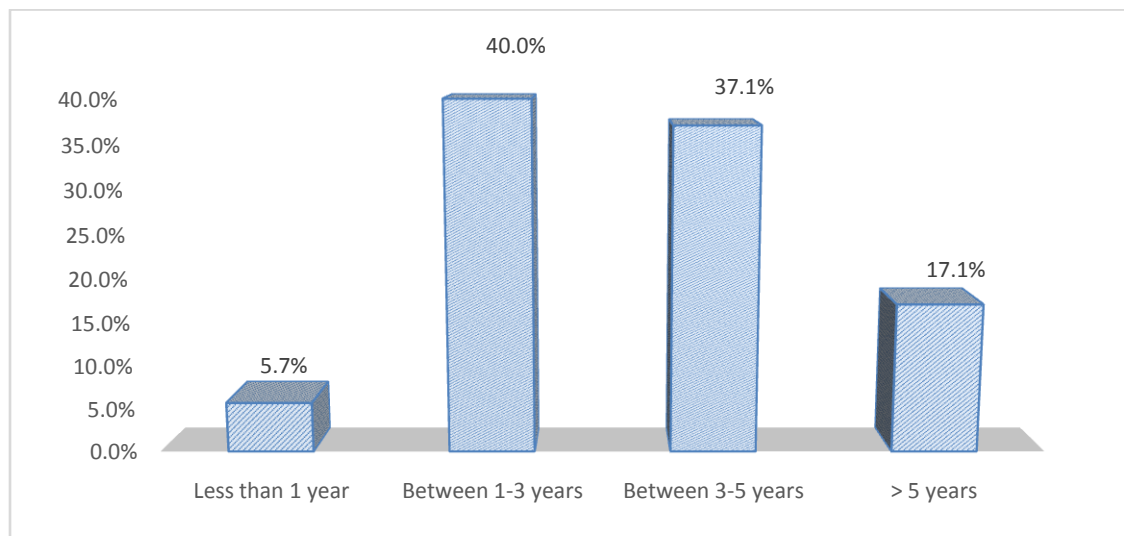
### ***Findings***

#### ***Profile of Respondents***

A response rate of 95% was realized from the respondents in this study. Findings from the respondents who participated in the study showed that majority were males (68.6%) as compared to the females who constituted 31.4%. From Figure 1, it is evident that a most of the respondents had received university level education. Also, a majority of the respondents had over one year's service as shown in Figure 2.



**Figure1 - Level of Education of the Respondents**



**Figure2 - Length of Time Worked in the Organization**

### ***Determinants of Quality Service***

Concerning the first research objective which sought to address the determinants of quality service in NGOs. The respondents were required to write down the factors they considered important in service delivery. They identified four factors in the following order: number of beneficiaries reached, the quality of the service, usefulness of the aid provided and timely completion of projects. According to the respondents, the number of beneficiaries was a prominent factor in aid delivery. This was because those in the populations who depended on the NGOs for support hoped for provision of the basic utilities which included food aid, health, water and sanitation, education and many other services. The more the number of beneficiaries reached with these supplies, the more the respondents felt their needs were addressed. The quality of service was important in the sense of logistics and coordination of delivery of aid. Sometimes the logistics were poor aggravated by the poor road network which contributed to the failure to reach some beneficiaries.

### ***Board of Directors Contribution to Service Delivery***

The respondents were required to give their opinion on the extent to which the board's roles and responsibilities contributed to service delivery.

Results in Table 1 show that high means in most of the factors tending towards a great extent. Fundraising and managing financial resources indicated the highest means of 4.49 with a standard deviation of 0.742 and 4.48 with a standard deviation of 0.812 respectively.

**Table 1: Board of Director's Roles Contribution to Service Delivery**

Issue	Great extent(%)	Some extent (%)	Some little extent (%)	Too little extent (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Fundraising	60	34.4	2.7	2.9	4.49	0.742
Adequate oversight of the organ	31.4	60	2.9	5.7	3.26	0.747
Managing resources	57.1	34.6	5.4	2.9	4.48	0.812
Assess own performance	44	31	13.6	11.4	3.16	0.652
Monitor programs	40	33	24.1	2.9	3.17	0.822
Budget	54	33	5.2	7.8	3.22	0.664
Promoting organ. mission	45.7	28.6	17.1	8.6	3.11	0.993

### Pearson Correlation between Board of Director's Roles and Contribution to Service Delivery

The results in Table 2 Show that 5 roles of Board of directors were positively and significantly correlated to service delivery. These included, fundraising ( $r=0.564<0.01$ ), proper oversight of the organization ( $r=0.458<0.05$ ), organizational plans ( $r=0.418<0.01$ ) monitoring programs ( $r=0.349<0.05$ ) and assessing board of directors performance ( $r=0.231<0.01$ )

**Table 2: Pearson Correlation between Board of Director's Roles Contribution to Service Delivery**

Issue	Results	N
Fundraising	.564** .001	57
Adequate oversight of the organization	.458* .012	57
Managing resources	.347 .061	57
Assess own performance	.231** .002	57
Monitor programs	.349* .041	57
Budget	.234 .628	57
Promoting organization mission	.418** .002	57

\*\* Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2- tailed), \*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level

### Discussion and Conclusions

The study also sought to find the determinants of quality service in NGOs in Kenya. The study established that the determinants were number of beneficiaries reached, the quality of the service, usefulness of the aid provided and timely completion of projects. These findings were different from that of Johnson (1995) who indicated that in the banking sector the prominent determinants of quality service as integrity, reliability, responsiveness, availability and functionality. From this observation, it is reasonable to conclude that quality service parameters may differ in various countries. This could be because needs targeted by NGOs might be country specific. Fundraising was shown to be of top importance regarding the contribution of a board to service quality. This is confirmed by Hilman and Dalziel (2003) who in their study showed that the boards which provides the link between the organization financial providers and also the different kinds of expertise that are required by the organization and that through their social networks, are able to secure relational capital and the board capital which combines both the human capital and the relational capital. Other important roles were adequate oversight of the organizations and the board of directors paying great attention to organizational plans. These observations were as evidenced by Hendry (2005) who remarked that the work of boards is not just about ensuring accountability for performance. Even though this is important, it is also, and primarily, about ensuring good performance within the organization. Based on the findings, this study concluded that the roles of fundraising, proper oversight of the NGO entity, promoting organizational mission, monitoring programs and Board of directors assessing their own performance were positively and significantly correlated to service delivery. On that basis the study made several recommendations. The study recommended that board members should be actively involved in fundraising for their NGOs to ensure resource adequacy.

The Board of Directors should play the oversight role effectively and ensure that monitoring and evaluation structures are in place to assess impact in service delivery. The Board of directors should also assess their own performance. That measure would keep them attentive to the performance of their roles.

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