Knowledge Management and Non-Profit Organizations:

Catalyzing Sustainable International Development Initiatives

by

DIANNE LOSING

A Thesis Submitted to the College of Interdisciplinary Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies

Royal Roads University
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

Supervisor: Dr. Ann Dale
January 2020

COMMITTEE APPROVAL

The members of Dianne Losing's Thesis Committee certify that they have read the thesis titled *Knowledge Management and Non-Profit Organizations: Catalyzing Sustainable International Development Initiatives* and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the thesis requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies.

Dr. Ann Dale [signature on file]

Dr. John Bordeaux [signature on file]

Lee Sentes [signature on file]

Final approval and acceptance of this thesis is contingent upon submission of the final copy of the thesis to Royal Roads University. The thesis supervisor confirms to have read this thesis and recommends that it be accepted as fulfilling the thesis requirements:

Dr. Ann Dale [signature on file]

Creative Commons Statement

Abstract

Though small and medium-sized non-profit organizations have a great deal to contribute to the delivery of international development initiatives with sustained outcomes and impacts, there remains the prevailing issue of securing the resources to do so. Competition for shrinking financial support is increasing and funders are becoming more selective with their investment dollars, often favoring NPOs that demonstrate the capacity to implement sustainable quality programs. As non-profit organizations strive to achieve its social mission it may look to the knowledge management practices that for-profit organizations employ for achieving its capital mission when faced with the same issue. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of knowledge management practices that small and medium-sized NPOs may adopt to better deliver on its social mission with the potential to better position it for funding opportunities. Its focus is on exploring the knowledge needs and sharing strategies of the NPO among its community knowledge groups. Included are its beneficiaries, staff and volunteers, funders and donors, experts, community partners and stakeholders, and cultural knowledge that will contribute to developing an integrated approach to implementing impactful and sustainable outcomes in the communities in which they work. Valuable insights to the more common strategic elements for effectively addressing the many and varied complexities in an international development context were mostly of a social tacit or community type knowledge and employed sharing practices of a social interaction nature such as (a) connections and partnerships, (b) participation, (c) collaboration, (d) decision-making, (e) building capacity, and (f) establishing an exit strategy to deliver an integrated and long-term sustainability effort.

Keywords: knowledge management, non-profit organizations, international development, community knowledge, sustainability, knowledge properties, knowledge sharing

Acknowledgements

Completing this thesis in my lifelong learning journey has been a truly amazing experience that I have my spirit guides to thank for encouraging me to trust that everything happens in its own divine time and to just keep going. This was much the same greatly appreciated support I received from my thesis supervisor Dr. Ann Dale and thesis committee members who were all so very patient in helping me get to the finish line.

It is to the research participants that I owe an enormous debt of gratitude. They so willingly gave of their precious time to take part in the interview process, sharing their perspectives, telling of their experiences, and painting a picture of the realities of international development. These people are action takers and their relentless focus on leaving a community better off than when they found it inspires hope and admiration. I am honoured to be associated with them and sincerely hope this study will provide valuable insights for international development NPOs, especially those of small and medium size, for delivering integrated and impactful sustainability outcomes that will ultimately benefit the communities in which they work.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction

A great deal of time and effort is spent by non-profit organisations (NPOs), especially those of small and medium size, to secure the resources they need for implementing impactful international development programmes and projects in developing countries. Even so, far too often we learn of cases where these initiatives did not meet their initial objectives, nor were they sustainable over the long-term. Some development practitioners and funders would say that they did not withstand the *walk away test* which questions if the efforts and results inspired by the NPO led to outcomes where financial support was no longer needed.

As a result, funders are becoming more selective when making decisions about the NPOs with which they will invest by carefully examining what the organisation does, why they do it and perhaps, most importantly, how they do it (Westley, Patton, & Zimmerman, 2006, p. 170). With financial support shrinking, NPOs are seeking "to raise additional funds in the face of increased competition" (Helmig, Jegers, & Lapsley, 2004, p. 112). Ringel-Bickelmaier and Ringel (2010) suggest this is especially characteristic of the development sector where international organisations are competing with local, regional, and national organisations to get their projects funded (p. 525). For donors, considering NPOs who can not only meet funding criteria but also provide evidence that as a result of the initiative the community is better off and the benefits will persist beyond their involvement, can be a critical factor in deciding whether the NPO will receive any kind of funding (Mataira, Mirelli, Matsouka, & Uehara-McDonald, 2014, p. 240). In other words, does the NPO have the capacity or *know-how* to implement impactful development initiatives that will be sustainable when they leave the community?

When faced with the same dilemma of increased competition and the drive for efficiencies in sustaining a vital business concern in for-profit organisations (FPOs), the practice of knowledge management (KM) has been applied. According to O'Dell and Hubert (2011), KM is a strategy “about creating and managing the processes to get the right knowledge to the right people at the right time and help people share and act on information in order to improve organizational performance” (p. 2). The value of KM is created when NPOs seek out knowledge sources in the development context and act on the collective know-how that will support and improve organizational learning and strategic decision making (Mougeot, 2017, p. 185). When determining the ‘right knowledge’ it is important to consider the distinction made by Michael Polanyi (1966) that there are two types of knowledge, *explicit* and *tacit.* Riege (2005) puts forth that it is tacit knowledge, the *knowing-how* contained in a person’s head, as opposed to explicit knowledge, the *knowing-about* contained in documents and databases (Connell, Klein, & Powell, 2003, p. 141) that represents invaluable organizational capital (p. 19). Sharing ‘‘tacit knowledge among multiple individuals with different backgrounds, perspectives, and motivations becomes a critical step for organisational knowledge creation to take place’’ (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995, p. 85).

Hume and Hume (2008) state that, though, KM initiatives in FPOs and NPOs vary in size and complexity, “the outcome in supporting decision making to support the organisation’s performance is the same for all organisations” (p. 137). The fundamental difference in FPOs and NPOs, posited by Greenaway and Vuong (2010) lies in what the organization wants to achieve with its knowledge, or its organizational strategy (p. 90). For-profit organizations pursue a capital mission such as gaining a competitive advantage to increase financial gain (Bloice & Burnett, 2016, p. 126) “while non-profit organizations pursue a self-defined mission, such as pursuing a goal that eliminates the need for the charity’s existence” (Greenaway & Vuong, 2010, p. 90). Not only does this have great impact on identifying the knowledge needs of the NPO but how pertinent explicit and, particularly, tacit knowledge is shared and acted on by both internal and external stakeholders.

Most NPOs involved in international development are generally dedicated to social missions that provide the greatest benefit to the people and communities in which they work. The problem is with very limited resources, particularly for those of small and medium size, they need to rely on funding to achieve the objectives of the organization's social mission. Mataira et al. (2014) explain it is often the case that in order to receive funding, they need to demonstrate the capacity of the organisation to deliver the best possible social return on every dollar invested for a sustainable outcome (p. 237-238). They add that many funders want to know their decision to invest is well-informed and that the return can be measured by the long-term positive effect on the lives of the individuals and communities in which the NPO operates (p. 239).

What then can NPOs learn from knowledge management practices and strategies to enable them to engage the diverse group of community stakeholders in their development projects and identify the knowledge they need to develop and implement impactful and sustainable initiatives? How can applying that knowledge to their operational and decision-making practices achieve improved results and more sustainable, desirable outcomes for the beneficiaries of these projects and programmes?

My specific research question is: What are the knowledge needs and sharing strategies for non-profit international development organisations that will result in sustainable initiative outcomes in the communities in which they work?

Chapter 2: Research Context

Examining previous research, scholarly work, and other sources relevant to the proposed study provided a theoretical base from which to draw upon in relation to the research problem being investigated. A large proportion of the research conducted on knowledge management (KM) practices is aimed at the for-profit sector in comparison to that of the non-profit sector (Hovland, 2003, p. 1). Though there remains a considerable amount of information pertaining to KM and non-profit organizations (NPOs), academic research studies become less available when incorporating the international development element. This is especially evident in NPOs of small and medium size (Hume & Hume, 2016; Tomlinson, 2016) for whom the opportunity exists to learn from the successful KM practices that FPOs employ to "support and improve the performance of the organization" (Kinney, 1998, p. 2). Tomlinson (2016) points out the importance of this observation in his 2014 study that recognizes, "Canadian small and medium sized organizations are significant development actors" (p. 2) as demonstrated in the following statistics:

> The study examined 807 charities in Revenue Canada's database, with more than 30% of their revenue devoted to overseas expenditures. Of these charities, three-quarters (75%) were small organizations (610), 17% were medium sized organizations (134), and 8% were large organizations (63). (p. 2)

Small and medium-sized international development NPOs "are concerned that their initiatives have sustained outcomes and impacts over the longer term" (Tomlinson, 2016, p. 25). As such, this significant group of non-profit organizations often direct almost all their human and financial resources to the accomplishment and advancement of their social missions (Cardoso, Meireles, & Ferreira Peralta, 2012, p. 268). Even though smaller charities may be able to operate on a slim 5-15% overhead, Mark Blumberg (2008) of Canadian Charity Law suggests that many will "legitimately have higher overhead expenses more in the range of 20-35%" (para. 14) where in this case *overhead* is considered to include administration and fundraising costs. However, money conscious donors may not find the charity's percentage of overhead costs acceptable and deserving of their support. This is especially the case where the funder may not fully understand or appreciate where the NPO's funds are allocated. The dilemma this creates for the NPO is twofold. First, the lack of sufficient resources to explore knowledge management practices is an impediment (Corfield, Paton, & Little, 2013, p.186) to build awareness of the value and benefit of knowledge sharing (Bloice & Burnett, 2016, p. 137). Riege (2005) adds that there is also a "lack of leadership and managerial direction in terms of clearly communicating the benefits and values of knowledge sharing practices" (p. 26). Secondly, the donor may choose to support another charity with less overhead expenses though not necessary as capable or with the organizational know-how to effectively accomplish its mission. More and more, these small and medium-sized international development NPOs are already competing with local, regional, and national organizations to get their initiatives funded. This increased competition for funding and resources in NPOs (Helmig et al., 2004; Hume & Hume, 2008; Corfield et al., 2013), makes KM an important organizational strategy for creating a competitive advantage (Hume & Hume, 2016; Kipley, Lewis, & Helm, 2008) when vying for development funds.

Clarifying missions and goals, and improving problem-solving and decision-making with increased effectiveness and efficiency, puts the organization in an advantageous position (Cardoso et al., 2012; Lettieri, Borga, & Savoldelli, 2004). There is, however, a uniqueness or customization of KM strategies that are applicable to the organization's mission and goals (Ragsdell, 2009; Riege, 2005). Where for-profit organizations will almost invariably apply knowledge to gaining a competitive advantage for the advancement of its capital mission and goals (Bloice & Burnett, 2016, p. 126), non-profit organizations, especially those involved in international development, may apply knowledge to gaining a competitive advantage by building capacity for the advancement of its social mission and goals (Cardoso et al., 2012, p. 268). This distinction is important for how donors perceive the NPO when selecting those with which they will invest. Rathi, Given, and Forcier (2016) explain that, “the funding generated by donors transfers directly to the products or services offered by the [charitable] organization” (p. 35). Mataira et al. (2014) concluded, “Those organisations that perform well and show results that measure progress towards their mission stand a better chance of receiving investment funds” (p. 240). Many funders and donors are taking great care to perform the necessary due diligence on those NPOs appealing for funds. The effort is to ensure that the NPO is worthy of their financial support and that it has the capacity or *know-how* to deliver effective and sustainable results that advance its social mission.

Knowledge management practices create value by utilizing organizational know-how and experience to meet goals and objectives efficiently and effectively (Dalkir, 2011, p. 3). Riege (2005) stated, and O'Dell and Hubert (2011) concurred, that organizations need “to ensure that the right knowledge is getting to the right people at the right time” (p. 32) to act on in order to improve organizational performance. For NPOs to be able to identify and seek out the requisite know-how or right knowledge, for people to share and act on to meet the goals of the organization is the challenge.

Distinguishing between Polanyi’s two types of knowledge, *tacit* and *explicit*, is important when attempting to identify requisite knowledge. Tacit knowledge is often described as that which resides within the individual’s head (Hume & Hume, 2016; Hurley & Green, 2005), knowledge that is difficult or impossible to articulate, write down and codify (Courtney, 2001, p. 23) such as expertise and know-how (Cardoso et al., 2012; Ragsdell, Espinet, & Norris, M, 2014). Explicit knowledge, on the other hand, can be described as content that has been captured in documents, databases, and other tangible forms that can be stored and disseminated (Connell et al., 2003; Courtney, 2001). To provide further clarity, Dalkir (2011) summarized in Table 1 “some of the major properties of tacit and explicit knowledge” (p. 10).

Table 1

Comparison of Properties of Tacit vs. Explicit Knowledge

Properties of tacit knowledge	Properties of explicit knowledge
Ability to adapt, to deal with new and exceptional situations	Ability to disseminate, to reproduce, to access and re-apply throughout the organization
Expertise, know-how, know-why, and care-why	Ability to teach, train
Ability to collaborate, to share a vision, to transmit a culture	Ability to organize, to systematize, to translate a vision into a mission statement, into operational guidelines
Coaching and mentoring to transfer experiential knowledge on a one-to-one, face-to-face basis	Transfer knowledge via products, services, and documented processes

It is acknowledging the diversity of knowledge types and properties, and that there is no *one size fits all* knowledge management solution, (Connell et al., 2003; Corfield, 2010; Hume & Hume, 2008) for determining the right knowledge based on the organization’s needs, its context, and the value it carries (International Organization for Standardization, 2017, p. 15). However, Cardoso et al. (2012) stated that, “Tacit knowledge is the cumulative base of know-how acquired through personal experience, and that is why it is context dependent and personalized” (p. 269). Dalkir (2011) adds that “roughly 80 percent of our knowledge is in tacit form as individuals, as groups, and as an organization” (p. 61). Most interesting and worthy of consideration is that Polanyi believed that tacit knowledge is practical knowledge and “even the most explicit kind of knowledge is underlain by tacit knowledge” (Tsoukas, 2005, p. 15). Further, Spender (as cited in

Riege, 2005) evidenced four types of organizational knowledge by combining explicit and tacit and individual and social dimensions (p. 21). Identified as the fourth type was social tacit knowledge which he called collective knowledge. It "represents all knowledge embedded in social and institutional practices, systems, workflows and culture" (Riege, 2005, p. 21). Spender (mentioned above) argued that social tacit knowledge is the ‘‘most secure and strategically significant kind of organizational knowledge'' (p. 21). The point is these many insights clearly demonstrate the importance of adequately analyzing the tacit aspect of knowledge practices to ensure it is consistent with the knowledge needs of non-profit organizations, in the international development context, who are striving to deliver value to individuals and communities in which they work.

Understanding that "knowledge primarily originates from human experience and insights" (International Organization for Standardization, 2017), p. v) discerning the needs and expectations of the individuals and communities that international development initiatives most impact, and consider of value, is of the utmost importance. There has been a shift in the approach that many international development practitioners are adopting and that is to incorporate a more participatory method of engagement with multi-stakeholders and partners with project interests (Wellens and Jegers, 2016, p. 303). It is an alternative to the former conventional approaches to development which were "top-down and linear, and often comprised Northern experts telling Southern poor people how to go about development" (Participatory Methods, n.d., para. 6). White's (1996) theory regarding representative participation, which involves giving community members a voice in the decision-making and implementation process of projects that affect them, suggests that representative participation increases the chances of development projects being more sustainable (p. 7-8). This was seconded by Tomlinson's (2016) evaluation of small and medium sized international development organizations that “highlighted the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement and partnerships as a key factor in their success in deepening their impact” (p. 25) and the example he presents of Rooftops Canada who “effectively promotes local ownership through comprehensive capacity development of local partners” (p. 23).

It is not enough, however, to identify the knowledge needs of the non-profit organisation and its many project stakeholders but also necessary to investigate how it is shared and applied that leads to improvement in organisational practices (Bloice & Burnett, 2016; Hume & Hume, 2016; Ragsdell, 2009; Ragsdell & Jepson, 2014) and intended outcomes. This is particularly important for small and medium-sized NPOs that are volunteer-driven (Gilmour & Stancliffe, 2004; Huck, Al & Rathi, 2011) and geographically dispersed (King & McGrath, 2002) which are both characteristic of those organizations involved in international development. In relation to knowledge sharing, Riege (2005) says that it “has no real value to individuals and organizations unless those people who are in need of useful knowledge receive it, accept it, and also (re-)apply it” (p. 26). Wiig (1993) takes it a step further by declaring that, “The only valuable use of knowledge occurs when we make and implement decisions” (p. 347). It is by using collective knowledge to make decisions and taking action to make effective change that value is created for the organization (International Organization for Standardization, 2017; Wiig, 1993).

Lastly, with the exception of investigative works such as Corfield (2010) and Hovland (2003), both of whom present the value of knowledge management in NPOs, there are far fewer studies that have addressed knowledge management practices specific to NPOs involved in international development. Both researchers along with Gilmour and Stancliffe (2004), and most notably, Rathi et al. (2016) call for future work to explore the importance of identifying knowledge needs and sharing practices for NPOs working in developing countries. Hence, this research project will attempt to address this gap in the literature.

It is, therefore, the preliminary ideas of Rathi, Given and Forcier (2014) and subsequent work of Rathi et al. (2016) that this research will largely draw from and build upon. The initial research attempted to understand NPO needs in regard to three knowledge types:

a) "Knowledge about our clients/community and their needs" (i.e., community-generated knowledge);
b) "The expert knowledge and experience of our staff and/or volunteers" (i.e., expert knowledge); and
c) “The documented knowledge about processes and procedures essential to the operation of our organization” (i.e., procedural knowledge) (Rathi et al., 2014, p. 3).

These same three knowledge types were used in the subsequent research Rathi et al. (2016) conducted on a much larger scale with participating NPOs where knowledge type “a” (“knowledge about our clients/community and their needs”) was rated at the highest level, as “absolutely essential” (p. 29). Further analysis of these knowledge types identified five major categories relevant to NPOs and its knowledge needs: (a) management and organizational practices knowledge; (b) resource knowledge; (c) community knowledge; (d) sectoral knowledge; and (e) situated knowledge (Rathi et al., 2016, p. 31). All five major categories have multiple subcategories and, though all are worthy of further investigation this research will focus on (c) community knowledge, as it is described by Rathi et al. (2014) as “a fundamental type of knowledge essential to the NPO” (p. 5). *Community knowledge* can best be defined as the knowledge (particularly of a tacit nature) about the community that is generated from the various groups of people or stakeholders that share “a) an interest in a mission or cause, as well as b) a discourse related to said mission" (Rathi et al., 2014, p. 4). This category is most relevant to the purpose and objectives of study that will expand on Rathi et al. (2016) findings that, "gaining a better understanding of the communities where NPOs operate is critical from both operational and strategic perspectives" and "for the success of their operational missions" (p. 29). There are six subcategories that Rathi et al. (2016) applies to the community knowledge major category that include knowledge about (a) clients and customers, (b) volunteers, (c) donors, (d) experts, (e) community partners and stakeholders, and (f) culture (p. 34).

To better align with the study's purpose of exploring what small and medium-sized non-profit organizations need to know about the community it works with in terms of engaging, creating, sharing and using knowledge to deliver impactful and sustainable initiative outcomes the major category of community knowledge and its subcategories are described in more detail. Community knowledge is deemed to be comprised of the knowledge contributions from the following community stakeholder groups (a) clients and customers – recipient or beneficiary community being impacted/served, (b) staff/volunteers (internal) - knowledge, skills, and experience, (c) funders/donors - provisions of resources and support for initiatives, (d) experts/experienced (external) - provide valuable insight for the organization (e.g., subject matter experts), (e) community partners/stakeholders - affiliations that partner (mostly in-country) with the organization, and (f) community culture - culturally aware of the context and the variety of groups affected through the work the NPO does and the communities they serve.

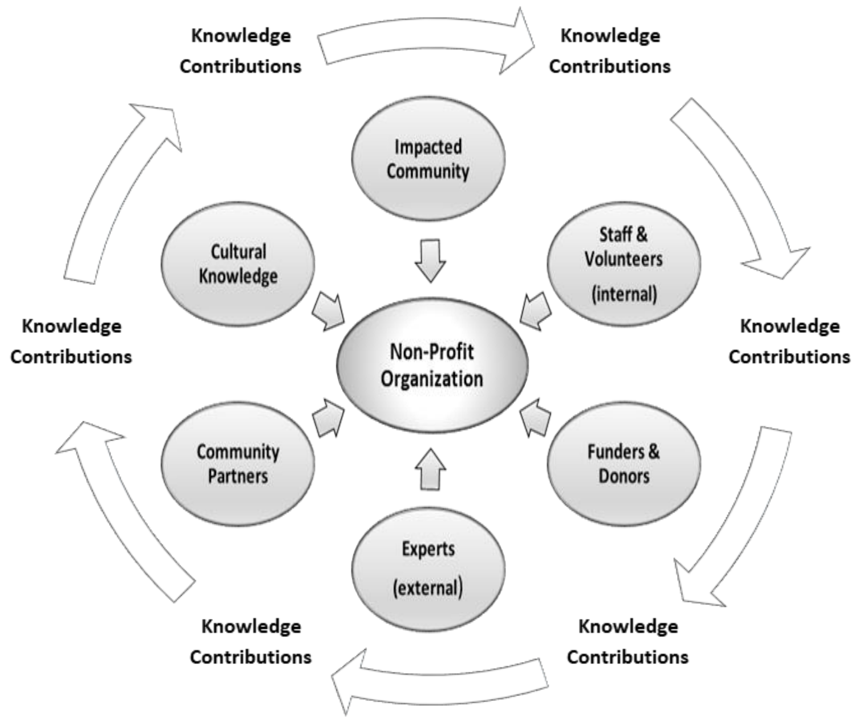

Figure 1. Community Knowledge Stakeholder Groups and Knowledge Contributions

Note: Adapted from Rathi et al. (2016) Figure 11 Model of organizational knowledge needs for NPOs (p. 42).

Adjustments made to Figure 1 reflect the community knowledge stakeholder subcategories the NPO works with and the knowledge contributions required to deliver a collective outcome. Investigating these key stakeholder subcategories will be instrumental in answering the research question and helping NPOs in international development identify knowledge needs and sharing practices to achieve organizational goals.

The impact of the study has the potential to be far reaching and provide valuable insights for international development NPOs, especially those of small and medium size, for delivering integrated and holistic sustainability outcomes. Investigating knowledge needs, amongst community stakeholder groups, and ensuring it is being shared and acted on to support strategic decision making has the potential to give the organization a sustainable competitive advantage. Riege (2005) explains that “the creation of a new or more effective sharing … does not necessarily mean an investment of large amounts of money” (p. 32). There are already many formal (explicit) and informal (tacit) ways of creating and sharing community knowledge among the multi-stakeholder groups. Building and expanding on “meaningful, diverse stakeholder inclusion and widespread community engagement are key to delivering an integrated sustainability effort” (Robinson & Dale, 2012, p. 23). Identifying the knowledge needs and sharing practices for non-profit international development organisations, that will result in impactful and sustainable initiative outcomes, in the communities in which they work will lead the way.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Enterprise-wide Knowledge Management (KM) programs implemented in for-profit organizations can be expansive and expensive with many interrelated components. In contrast, reported in the research conducted by Corfield et al. (2013) was that the modest size and limited resource base of NPOs was “recognized as a limit to the scope of their KM programs” (p. 186). To clarify, the approach to this research study is not about how to do knowledge management in small and medium-sized international development non-profit organizations. It is about looking at knowledge management practices and strategies that have been employed, mostly in the for-profit sector, and consider their applicability to the diverse and complex context in which non-profit international development organizations operate.

Research Objectives

My research objectives are the following:

- identify what small and medium-sized non-profit organizations need in terms of knowledge about engaging, acquiring/creating, sharing and using knowledge among the following community stakeholder groups: (a) clients and customers (recipient/beneficiaries), (b) staff and volunteers (internal), (c) funders and donors, (d) experts (external), (e) community partners and stakeholders, and (f) community culture (Rathi et al., 2016, p. 34) as it pertains to impactful and sustainable initiative outcomes;
- explore how acting on and applying collective knowledge to operational and decision-making processes can achieve improved results and create long term community stakeholder buy-in/ownership;
- examine how NPOs may be able to better position themselves for demonstrating to potential supporters (e.g., funders and donors) its capacity to achieve the desired impact on the recipient communities and that the benefits of their investment will persist beyond the NPO's involvement.

Research Design

Ragsdell (2009) pointed out that the initial studies into KM focused more on technology such as the use of computer systems for collecting, storing, retrieving, and sending information and therefore, opted for a positivist approach using quantitative methods (p. 3). As awareness of the importance of tacit knowledge in addition to explicit knowledge grew the qualitative element became more important (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) for understanding the people and process aspects for knowledge sharing.

As the focus of this research study is largely on identifying community knowledge needs in a social context by investigating the common experiences and perceptions of particular NPOs it is situated in the post-positivist or discovery paradigm using a qualitative approach. This paradigm reflects the ontological perspective that reality is assumed to exist but is not completely understood and must be subjected to “critical examination to facilitate apprehending reality as closely as possible” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). This is the reason that identifying cultural knowledge needs is included in the community stakeholder groups. From an epistemic perspective Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) suggested that the sharing of common experiences among select individuals or groups comprise truths that represent “a coherent domain of knowledge” (p. 75). It is the purpose of post-positivist research “to generate new knowledge that other people can learn from and even base decisions on” (O’Leary, 2007, p. 2). Avison, Lau, Myers, and Nielsen (1999) boldly stated that “To make academic research relevant, researchers should try out their theories with practitioners in real situations and real organizations” (p. 94).

The methodologies and approaches employed in the research works of Bloice and Burnett (2016); Corfield et al. (2013); Hume and Hume (2016); Ragsdell and Jepson (2014); were instrumental in constructing the research design for this study. These studies adopted an exploratory qualitative approach to researching knowledge management practices in non-profit organizations by employing a case study methodology. Case studies produce context-dependent (practical) knowledge that Flyvbjerg (2006) argued is of more value than theoretical knowledge for human learning (p. 224). The works of those noted above along with others (e.g. Hurley & Green, 2005; Lettieri et al., 2004; Rathi et al., 2016) developed theories pertaining to knowledge needs and sharing practices in not-for-profit organizations, though, not in the context of small and medium-sized NPOs working in international development. Context is particularly important in this study as it seeks to address a gap in the literature pertaining to the investigation of knowledge needs specific to small and medium sized NPOs and the reality of working with individuals and communities for sustainable international development initiatives.

Case Study Organizations

The small and medium-sized non-profit organizations from which I selected interviewees is the same criterion used by Tomlinson (2016) that states a small organization in the Revenue Canada dataset is determined to have less than $500,000 in overseas expenditures while a medium-sized organization has $500,000 to $2 million in overseas expenditures (p. 30). In addition, the organization was required to be non-governmental (secular or religious), a Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA) registered charity, and either be situated or have an extension office in the province of Alberta. The most important distinction was its mission and focus on international development initiatives with sustainable outcomes and positive impacts on impoverished communities in developing countries.

Drawing from organizations such as the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation, Canada Revenue Agency, Charity Intelligence Canada, Charity Village, Charitable Impact, and the foundation that the researcher volunteers with provided a pool of over 300 potential Alberta based case study organizations. The list was pared down for duplication and, for easier researcher access, filtered by mostly those charities that were Calgary-based and met the previously described research participant criteria. The most significant of these sources come from the foundation where the researcher has access to Calgary-based, non-profit organizations dedicated to helping disadvantaged populations around the world by fostering collaboration between and raising funds for CRA registered international development organizations. Its sixty plus, mostly small and medium-sized, non-profit member organizations work in locations across the globe in areas of specialization that range from agriculture to health care to microfinance. The researcher was, however, diligent in selecting other NPOs external to the foundation membership to allow for alternative approaches to development or theories of change (TOC).

Stein and Valters (2012) determined that though they could not find a consensus on how to define TOC it was commonly understood as an explanation of “how and why a given intervention will lead to specific change” (p. 2) in a particular context. All selected NPOs share the ultimate goal of leading their initiative to a sustainable outcome where assistance is no longer required and that impacted communities are better off than before the NPO’s involvement.

In addition to what is meant by sustainable initiatives to the NPO participants selected for this study, it draws from the definition provided in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission) as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2015, p. 10). As this study is focused on the knowledge needs of NPOs for sustainable development initiatives it looked to the 17 universal Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by member states of the United Nations, “which set out quantitative objectives across the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development” (Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2015, p. 6). Presented on the Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform (n.d.) are the 17 SDGs and their objectives. The three goals that align with the areas of specialization of the NPOs selected for this study include

- Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages;
- Goal 4: Education - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; and
- Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation - Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

Robert, Parris and Leiserowitz (2005) suggested that “another way to define sustainable development is in what it specifically seeks to achieve” (p. 12). Incorporating the specific SDGs into the research helps build awareness of the universal goals that the NPOs contribute to and provides credibility and substance to the work they do. What’s more is that these SDGs are inter-related and the NPOs may be able to capitalize on the experiences and learning of contacts in specific geographical locations in a collaborative effort that helps build development sustainability. More recent work by Robinson and Dale (2012) brought forth the idea that sustainable development requires an integrated approach to decision-making linking the social, economic, and environmental dimensions through new processes that engage communities in collaboration and stakeholder involvement.

Data Collection

The purpose of this case study follows on the research that Bloice and Burnett (2016); Hume and Hume (2016); Rathi et al. (2016); and others conducted pertaining to knowledge management practices in the non-profit sector in developed countries. Exploring particular findings in a more detailed context, in this case knowledge needs in non-profit organizations working in developing countries, required a purposive sampling approach. In this type of sampling the participants are selected according to the common criteria set out to reach the objectives of the study (Guest et al., 2006, p. 61). Further to meeting the above stated criteria for case study participants it identified NPOs that work in specific areas of specialization and geographical locations to gain an in-depth understanding of the community knowledge needs relevant to sustainment initiative outcomes. By means of purposive sampling, at least one NPO from each of the three areas of specialization: (a) education, (b) health services, and (c) water and sanitation, and operate in one of the three geographical locations: (a) Africa, (b) Asia, and (c)

Latin America were selected for the study. In order to distinguish and clarify the NPOs selected for the study Table 2 specifies the naming convention adhered to.

Table 2

Case Name and Numbering Convention for Selected NPO Participation

Area of Specialization	Geographical Location		
	Case Study 1: Africa	Case Study 2: Asia	Case Study 3: Latin America
Quality Education	1.1	2.1	3.1
Good Health & Well-Being	1.2	2.2	3.2
Clean Water & Sanitation	1.3	2.3	3.3

In keeping with the study's qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection method. This method is intended to narrow the scope of gathering data most relevant to answering the questions in the international development context. Also collected were limited amounts of data provided by the NPOs through its website, social media, and informational materials. In most cases additional information was used for clarification purposes or in support of claims made by the research participants.

An interview protocol (see Appendix C) was prepared to guide open-ended, semi-structured questions (Bowen, 2003; Guest et al., 2006) based largely on Rathi et al. (2016) findings pertaining to community knowledge and its six subcategories; clients and customers, staff and volunteers, funders and donors, experts, community partners and stakeholders, and culture. Its purpose was to build an understanding of what small and medium-sized NPOs need in terms of community knowledge and how it is shared in order to catalyze impactful and sustainable outcomes in the communities in which they work.

An invitation (see Appendix A) describing the purpose of the research along with contact information and consent form (see Appendix B) was emailed to prospective research participants with the target of securing at least one NPO from each area of specialization for each geographical location resulted in a minimum of nine participating organizations. A purposive sample (Bowen, 2008; Guest et al., 2006) was used, interviewing two individuals if available, in paid or volunteer management positions, from each organization, resulting in 18 potential interviews. They were conducted face-to-face wherever possible and social media Skype was used where necessary. All interviews were recorded and verbatim responses to each question transcribed. Though time did not permit the review of transcripts with the study participants in case of any corrections and to validate the data content (Carter & Little, 2016, p. 1321) the NPO's online information and promotional materials were easily accessible. The quality and validity of the research results were also increased by ensuring there was a sufficient number of responses in each case to permit generalization to other situations and to perform a comparative analysis (Keddie, 2006, p. 20).

In some of the cases, the NPO's development work includes more than one area of specialization and operates in more than one country or location. To keep the interviews focused, the questions asked pertained to the primary development work the NPO does in the location that the interviewee is most knowledgeable. This was considered in the selection of the NPO in order for the data to have equal bearing on the results. In an effort to maintain the integrity and credibility of the research results diligent was exercised in ensuring that fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with five interviews from each area of specialization. Ten non-profit organizations participated, four of which provided two or more interview candidates. The duration of the interviews were approximately 90 minutes each which resulted in over 20 hours of interview time that was transcribed, coded, and analysed.

Table 3

Number of Interviews Conducted

Interviews Conducted = 15	Case Study 1: Africa	Case Study 2: Asia	Case Study 3: Latin America
Quality Education (5)	3	1	1
Good Health & Well-Being (5)	1	2	2
Clean Water & Sanitation (5)	1	1	3

Data Analyses

Analyzing the data used a constant comparative method that enables the researcher to gain insights into the realities of acquiring/creating, sharing and using community knowledge from the experiences and “in the words of the participants themselves” (Mathison, 2005, p. 2). The constant comparative method is an inductive coding and analysis process that involves a systematic coding procedure where new or incoming data is compared to the data and thematic coding of the previous interview content and coding (Bowen, 2008, p. 139). There were three levels in the coding process used to analyze the research data. The initial, Level 1, consisted of open coding where the six community knowledge categories in the interview guide were used as “labels” for organizing the data from the interview transcripts. As each new transcript was completed the data was compared to the previous one for similarities, differences, and general patterns. This provided a summary of common notions (substantive labels) the respondents held regarding knowledge needs in each of the categories. The process continued bringing new interview data into the study and coding it appropriately until data saturation was achieved. This means “no additional data are being found whereby the (researcher) can develop properties of the category" (Guest et al., 2006, p. 64). Level 1 coding concluded when the category or theme had already been explained and any new data was replicated or redundant in the codes already devised (Hyde, 2003, p. 48).

Determining at what point data saturation has occurred is difficult and there are no explicit guidelines (Bowen, 2008, p. 137). Guest et al. (2006) recognized that though it is difficult to generalize, twelve interviews are considered to be enough for saturation to occur in a purposive sampling. The difficulty in achieving data saturation is compounded by time constraints, resource availability and allocation, and novice researchers. This study took the advice of Guest et al. (2006) regarding important points for achieving data saturation by ensuring (a) a degree of structure in the interview, (b) content is about shared experiences, and (c) participant homogeneity/purposive sampling (p. 75-76). Following Hyde's (2003) lead, data was considered saturated in this study when the input appeared in more than half of the interviews (p. 48).

At that point, coding and analysis moved on to Level 2, axial coding, which drew out the common terms and key findings from each of the categories. It also explored what relationships or connections existed within the category. Those codes or subthemes led to Level 3, selective coding, which was the last step taken in the process to identify the core variable(s) that emerge from connecting and consolidating the subthemes across all the categories.

Based on the analysis of the data, the elements of knowledge needs and sharing practices in small and medium-sized NPOs working in the international sustainable development context was delineated. Respondents' answers to questions pertaining to what knowledge is needed and by whom, how it is obtained, shared, and applied to inform decision-making within and between community stakeholders provided valuable insights in regard to the development and implementation of sustainable initiatives.

Chapter 4: Results

The results of the research are summarized in this chapter as findings from the three case studies comprised of small and medium-sized non-profit organizations (NPOs) engaged in education, health, or water and sanitation development initiatives in Africa, Asia, or Latin America. Interview participant responses are presented according to the first category pertaining to the NPO itself, followed by the six subcategories that comprise community knowledge, and the last category regarding sustainable development.

Category 1.0: Non-Profit Organizations (NPO)

To establish a basis of the NPO the first section of the interview questions pertained to the primary development work it performs, the area of specialization with which it is aligned, and the geographical location in which it operates. Understanding *how* and *why* the NPO came to be working in its specific location provided context for the remaining questions related to knowledge needs and interactions with diverse community stakeholder groups to deliver an integrated sustainability effort.

As illustrated in Figure 2 the interview participants' answers to what the NPO does and where they do it were straight forward and easily categorized due to employing purposive sampling.

Areas of Specialization

- **Education**
  - Nursery
  - ECD
  - Pre-school
  - Grades 1 - 5
  - Scholarship Program
  - Skills Training & Business Mentoring
- **Health**
  - Women & Girls Health Management
  - Maternal, Newborn & Child Health
  - Doctor (Resident) Training
  - Clinics & Hospitals
- **Water & Sanitation**
  - Safe Water Filters
  - Water Access
  - Water Systems Management
  - Design & Construction

Geographical Locations

- **Africa**
  - Ethiopia
  - Kenya
  - Nigeria
  - Rwanda
  - Uganda
  - Tanzania
- **Asia**
  - India
  - Myanmar
  - Nepal
- **Latin America**
  - Columbia
  - Guatemala
  - Haiti
  - Honduras
  - Mexico
  - Nicaragua
  - Peru

How & Why Came About?

- Connection(s) to community
  - Established/Long-term relationships
  - Lived/ Worked/ Volunteered/Interested in area
- Most in Need
  - Rural/Remote (no other NGOs)

Problem/Solution?

- How & Why = Solution approach to Problem/Issue
- Purpose/Raison d'être
- Social Mission
  - Unique

Figure 2. Knowledge about the Non-Profit Organization

How the NPO came about working in a specific geographical location was predominantly answered by the interviewees that they themselves had developed long-standing connections to the area or that the NPO they are associated with had been established in the country over a long period of time, some for over 30 years. One interview participant hails from, and several had lived and worked in, the location in which the NPO operates while others had volunteered in the same area or region. In another instance where the NPO kept getting bigger and invited family members to participate in projects in various global locations the interviewee said they were interested in a Central American location where there were no other NGOs providing the same type of development opportunities they were able to offer.

Table 4

NPO Connection to Community

NPO Connection	Founder	Employee	Volunteer
Lived & worked in location	2	1	
Lives & works in location		2	
Works in location		2	
Volunteered in location	3	1	2
Interest in location	1		1

Why the NPO came to work in specific locations was most often due to its familiarity with the community as a result of the long-term connections it had established and the solid relationships that had been built. A keen awareness and understanding of the community's needs and lack of basic services had been developed. Wanting to help and recognizing in some of the more rural or remote areas that there were no other non-profit organizations operating, a way to make a difference was envisioned.

The answers to how and why most often revealed the organization's *raison d'être* or social mission of the NPO and its development initiatives in the countries determined to be in most need. For instance, the need for an Early Childhood Development School may not be addressed solely for the sake of quality education, or even to meet the pre-school requirement for the child to be able to attend primary school, but rather in the interest of child safety. This was evidenced in Kenya where small pre-school children often accompany their mothers selling goods on the side of road or in between the cars throughout the day to earn a meager income. The child is most often made to stay in the ditch or on the side of the road as there are many vehicles and other dangers in these busy thoroughfares. A concerned interview respondent further explained:

> It's dangerous, you know, to have them on side of the road and you're selling, and you could lose focus for a moment and he or she get hit by a car. So, we identified that as a huge problem. So, we decided that if we are going to do this thing [launch ECD] we should start from the basics. Right? So, we decided to solve that problem first.

Category 1.1: Knowledge about Clients and Customers

As illustrated in Figure 3 this category explores knowledge needed about the recipients or beneficiary community most impacted or being served by the development initiative.

Figure 3. Knowledge About Clients and Customers

When asked to describe the people and the communities in which the NPO works all the interviewees responded that most evident was how extremely poor they are ranging from low income to heavily impoverished. Another clear distinction made was that they are mostly marginalized populations such as the urban slums in Kenya, indigenous farming communities in Guatemala, and refugee settlements on the India/Myanmar border. In some cases, these areas and residents are completely unrecognized by the government so there are no basic services such as education, health care, clean water and sanitation, housing, electricity, or land deeds. In addition, the communities are often in remote or rural areas some of which are extremely isolated, also neglected by government and even other NPOs, once again limiting the provision of basic services. Among the most marginalized in the communities are the women and girls who have no voice in many of these patriarchal societies. This is even though they, one respondent says, “are basically responsible for everything” as the men are frequently absent with seasonal or away from home work to supplement income. For the most part, gender inequality and lack of education was prevalent in the communities with which the NPOs work.

When asked how the NPO engaged the people of the communities to participate in the development and implementation of the initiative a typical approach taken was to seek out government officials, community leaders, elders, and people with natural leadership abilities to share the challenges of the community and provide insights. Educating and conducting awareness activities and events, needs assessments and analyses, surveys, focus groups, and interviews played a major role in engaging and gathering input from the community. There was a strong movement toward building community committees that are all inclusive (e.g., gender, ethnicity, race, religion) to give *voice* to otherwise “forgotten, lost or ignored” populations. This was evidenced in the creation of the Women’s Health Committees in Guatemala where they are educated on health matters as well as “advocating for their health rights.” Or, the School Building Committee in Nepal that is required to have representation from all levels of the community with an individual from each caste and at least one woman. The same is true for a “cross-tribal review board that interviews prospective students for selection in school programs with a limited number of ‘free’ spots” in Kenya. Additionally, the development of community committees such as the Community Water Management Committees in Nicaragua “are building the capacity for the community committees to manage their own water systems”. The interview respondent added that they want 65% women to participate in the development of the committees, take on leadership roles, and advocate that water is a basic human right.

"Empowering the committees themselves to identify the best solutions and make decisions on moving forward" was a common objective and in a few cases "standing up for their rights."

To establish an understanding of not only what the NPO required in terms of knowledge about the communities it serves, it was important to ask about the community's awareness and perception of the NPO. Though the responses were from the NPO's perspective and would need to be corroborated by independent interviews with the community, which falls outside the scope of this study, the predominant thought was that the longevity and stability of the NPO in the community, with its clear and consistent communication, had built relationships founded on trust and earned respect. In contrast there was on limited occasion the impression that initially the community "wants to get as much as possible out of the NPO while they are there" or "see us as very rich and a way out for them" until community partnerships and buy-in is established by seeing the projects through.

Category 1.2: Knowledge about Staff and Volunteers

This category explored the knowledge needed by the NPO in terms of its board, employees, and volunteers and the role they play in the achievement of the organization's mission and goals as depicted in Figure 4.

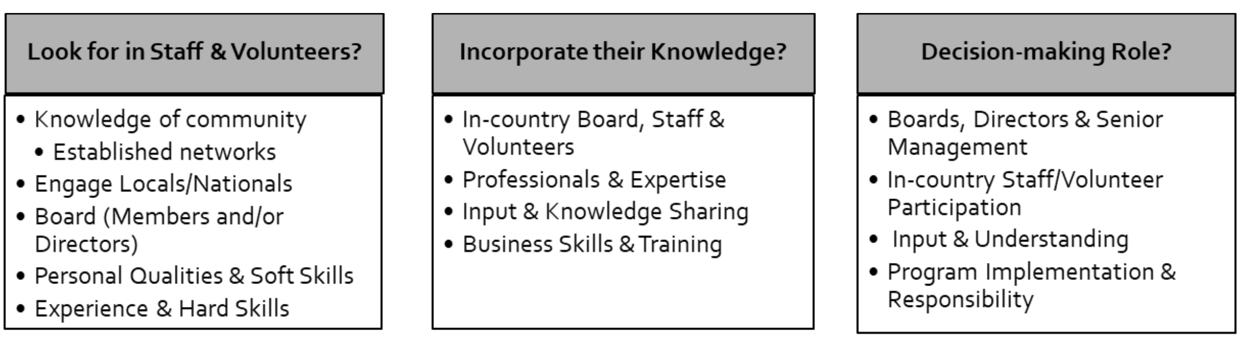

Figure 4. Knowledge about Staff and Volunteers

All participating NPOs claimed to have no or very few paid employees working in their operations. In fact, half of the NPOs reported to be *volunteer only* as are all board members in all the organizations. With the one considerable exception where the NPO employed approximately 50 in-country staff to meet the objectives of a large government sponsored development project, the approximate number of staff that the NPOs do employ ranged from one to eight in Canada and much the same for in-country employees. It follows then that when asked how and what the NPO looks for in its staff that match or align with the objectives of its initiatives the answers were predominantly, “bring on people from the community that live there” and “engage local people who the community trusts.”

Personal qualities and soft skills that NPOs look for in staff were often discussed prior to and in more depth than hard skills and experience. Remarks included, “have to have heart . . . a genuine desire to help others” and “need to have passion and know how to get things done.” Perhaps most frequently expressed by participants was the “need to believe in the mission and that they can make a difference.” One respondent stated that “the number one key skill you need to have is the ability to listen.” Many others agreed that listening to what the community is saying is very important on a number of different levels. There was also the need to “engage front-line field staff from the community that can speak or learn the local language.” Looking for people with an “awareness and respect for local culture, needs and priorities” and “problem-solving skills” were also considered of value to work in complex situations and unstable environments.

Incorporating the knowledge and experience of those working in the area of specialization and familiarity with the country, or others similar to it, is desirable whether the role is board member, employee, or volunteer. It was noted that for key positions finding people with suitable experience in-country or others from outside with familiarity working in the country was difficult. A number of the NPOs engage groups of volunteers from Canada comprised of professionals (e.g., engineers, dentists, optometrists, teachers, doctors, etc.) to assist in the development work. However, there was general agreement that in-country board members, key management people, and field staff "know how things work and the processes required" and "already have a network there." One participant said she works with the NPO's trusted in-country manager to provide background information and advisement on matters and issues. Another participant exclaimed that their in-country manager "has worked with [NPO] a long time, is very knowledgeable about the cultural context, the issues that can occur, the strategic planning and methodology that should be used for sustainability."

Though all of the NPOs said they encourage input from their employees and volunteers in both Canada and in-country in regard to program design, more than one noted that this was the case "especially in the proposal stage such as getting and accumulating all the data." Another area were those individuals, mostly volunteers, who have business backgrounds bring entrepreneurial and skills training to many of the projects. One of those five individuals said their local volunteer chapter in Canada is made up of businesswomen who have all ran their own businesses, so their approach is very much "business-driven." Another said their "NPO's roots are in running a large successful for-profit business organization and transfers its skill set and business acumen to accomplishing their mission in the non-profit world."

It was widely recognized by the NPOs that it is important for their boards, employees, and volunteers to share knowledge, experiences and lessons learned across the organization. In one case the participant said, "Anybody who manages a project [Country/Project Managers] is on a committee to report back and share stories and experiences with other Country PMs." Another participant presented his thoughts, "Each project you keep learning, the knowledge keeps building and we're starting to amass a fair amount of it." Encouraging input and sharing knowledge gained at all levels of the organization, both at home and in-country, is a practice mostly all the NPOs promote. Other NPOs say "decisions regarding project selection is made at the [Board] Director level after a thorough analysis of needs has been made in-country by people who really understand what's happening on the ground." The next level influential in program design decision-making are, "paid staff with expertise and responsibility" (e.g., Executive Director, Program Director, etc.) and once again it is stated that the "executive staff have lived in-country and have a very good understanding of the culture and the way things work." Additionally, "in-country managers definitely have a say in proposed projects, and they're all experienced enough to know when to say no or go." A concluding comment was that the NPO's "leadership style is open communication and all staff on the ground are encouraged to provide their input on key decisions . . . helps *us* in making the best decision."

Category 1.3: Knowledge about Funders and Donors

This category investigates the knowledge needed by the NPO in terms of its funders and donors and the role they play in the provision of resources and support for initiatives as depicted in Figure 5.

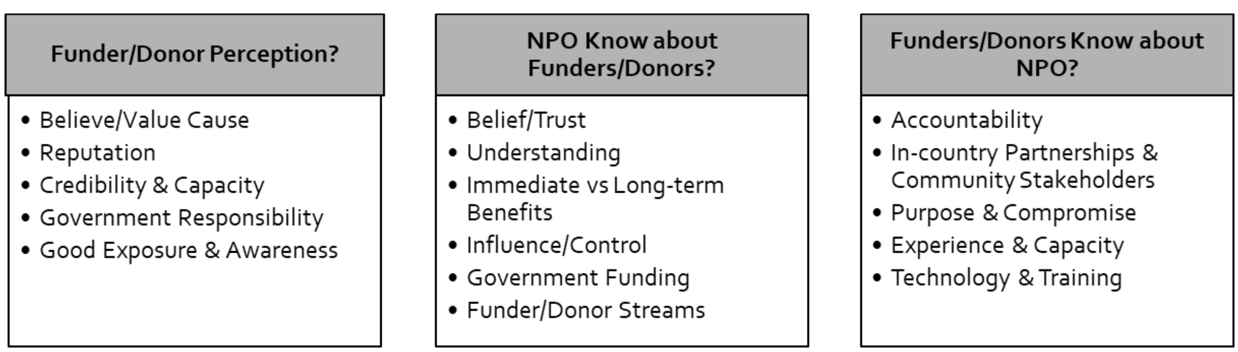

Figure 5. Knowledge about Funders and Donors

The first question asked the participants what the perception was that funders and donors held of their organization and its capability to implement sustainable initiatives. Many replied that their “funders believe in the cause” and that “the NPO is making a difference.” General opinions thought to be held by the funders and donors were that the NPO was reputable, credible, and can be trusted. This was evidenced in comments such as “the reach and reputation of the parent NGO [registered charity] provides legitimacy and credibility” and “the NPO is thought to have a great reputation and looked upon as an expert in their area of specialization as a result of their long history in the region or the breakthrough work they have done.” A related comment was the “NPO has credibility because it is run by a well known and respected for-profit business organization with extensive experience in the industry.” Several participants suggested that supporters may believe in or be familiar with and trust the fund-raising person or founder and therefore support the cause (e.g., family, friends, colleagues). Several of the participants said, “the biggest donors have an attachment of some type as do the ones [volunteers] that travel with us” and another said they “are long-term people with some type of connection to the project.”

Posing the question about what the NPO needed to know about potential funders and donors to seek their support was met largely with gaining an “understanding of what the funder's project objectives and priorities are” and “is it a partner or funder relationship?” This led to the NPO wanting to discern the “desired involvement and participation” and “degree of control and influence in decision-making” of potential supporters in the initiative. Two other participants voiced the consideration that “do they clearly understand the context?” and “do they have the expertise?” For instance, it was related by several NPOs that “the problem is it’s easier to get private donations to build a school or dig a water well than it is to do capacity building” and “funders/donors want to see evidence” or “tangible results” quickly. Another challenge presented by donors was that they viewed the development initiative as the responsibility of the in-country government.

When the question was turned around asking the NPO what they believed potential donors needed to know about them to make a favorable funding decision there were three common schools of thought. The first was that the NPO has a long established and “trusted partnership with the community” and that “the community contributes resources to the project.” The second was demonstrating that the NPO has the expertise to “move beyond identifying problems to providing solutions and has the capacity to do so.” Third was that the NPO “is accountable for what they clearly state they're trying to accomplish” and have demonstrated the capacity to manage donor funds/resources, have a good track record, and a history of completion. Others added that they maintain records, tracking, statistics, measurement, updates, and share stories of impact and “what’s happening on the ground” with their supporters. Conversely, one respondent questioned, “What’s their [funder/donor] capacity to give and adequately support the program?” A notable and widely held view was in regard to the NPO’s purpose and its resistance to compromise its mission and goals for funds. Examples included that the “NPO will not compromise the model that has been found to work and certain conditions that funders must agree to for any amount of funds” and

> If the funder wants to do something, we’ll listen and look into it but if it’s not something the community needs we will be very clear with them and discuss why we can’t see how it’s going to benefit that community and fit our mandate but that we will work with them to see what we can do together.

Category 1.4: Knowledge about Experts

This category investigates the knowledge needed by the NPO in terms of subject matter experts (summarized in Figure 6) who are individuals external to the organization that provide knowledge and expertise in the area of specialization.

Seek Out & Engage Expert Resources?
• Connections & Networks • In-country NGOs, Partners & Community Intel • Technology & Training • Professional Services & Expertise • Academia

Decision-making Role?
• NPO Expertise • Consultants & Advisors • In-country Partners • Government

Figure 6. Knowledge about Experts

When asked how the NPOs seek out and engage expert resources outside the organization the response greatest by far was by connecting and networking with others through various means (e.g., contacts, associations, events/functions, conferences, email, meetings, internet, courses, social media, lists, questionnaires, etc.). One participant said, "maintain good set of networks/database" and "call key people for advice if looking to change something." Online research was a huge source of information for examining non-governmental and civil society organizations, foundations, associations, institutions, etc. to discover what experts are doing in their respective areas of specialization that align with the NPO's mission and objectives.

The second part of the question asked what role, if any, experts play in the actual decision-making of project/program development and implementation. Nearly all NPOs said they look to other NGOs "not only in-country but anywhere doing the same or related work," their in-country partners, and community intel when casting about for a person with special knowledge pertaining to their development initiative. One participant said that they "involve other experts mostly through other NGOs in the area" and another said, "trust the local NGOs to know who to approach for expert engagement." Using local intelligence from the community and several variations on the phrase, "somebody knows somebody that knows somebody" was repeated on numerous occasions. In regard to incorporating in-country partner expertise the comment was made that it was "much easier to make the decision to invest in a community when partnering with somebody who knows what they're already doing from 20 years of experience."

Another source of expertise several of the NPOs appealed to was academia as evidenced in this participant's response, "we're developing in collaboration with university profs to do research on the innovations we're doing and to document and share what we're learning." At least two other NPOs are partnered with in-country post-secondary educational institutions and they work together to develop program design for their initiatives.

Utilizing volunteer groups of professionals that pay their own way or are sponsored by organizations to work as a team in a developing country to deliver professional services directly to beneficiary populations have much to offer in the provision of professional services and expertise. They [donor volunteer brigades] "provide expert opinions that often influence decisions."

A number of the NPOs engage external consultants and advisors such as Gender Advisors, Fund Developers, and Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, Learning (MEAL) Consultants to name a few. It was this group the NPOs said played the biggest role in the decision-making of the project/program design. Comments such as, "[consultant/advisor] provides great insight into the work we're doing and is able to bring expertise to us to emphasize certain program aspects" and "professional advisors provide input to data collected from surveys, focus groups, field visits, etc. to help formulate strategy plan."

The NPOs commented on several occasions that having been in the country for a long time and worked on numerous projects, it is they "who have the expertise and knowledge of in-country context to advise and make decisions on the program's design, development and its implementation." It was noted, however, that "experts hold the non-profit accountable for the decisions they make that can negatively impact someone else."

Category 1.4: Knowledge about Community Partners and Stakeholders

This chapter sets out the results of the category investigating knowledge needed by the NPO in terms of community affiliations and stakeholders that partner with the organization (summarized in Figure 7).

Find Partners/ Stakeholders?	Factors for Selection?	How Knowledge is Shared?	Decision-making Role?
• Community Leaders • Government & Universities • In-country Contacts • Partner NGO • Networking & Internet	• Reciprocity & Willingness • Values & Objectives Alignment • Responsibility • Qualities & Attributes • Influence & Power	• Community Events & Activities • Follow Up & Learnings • Community Partnerships	• Implementation • Needs Recognition • Government & Power Imbalance • In-country Funders/Donors

Figure 7. Knowledge about Community Partners and Stakeholders

Though this category does have one more question than the other categories, all of which generated good response from the participants, this category inspired the most conversation. The first question asked about how to seek out community partners or affiliations that participate in the same sector and/or are addressing the same problem. Once again the participants pointed to their own already established contacts in the region as resources for connecting them to “the people to talk to.” One participant said she “knows people from other NGOs that are or have worked in the region who have shared their in-country contacts.” Very often, as indicated by the following responses, it is the interviewee from the NPO who “knows actors in the region from being there a long time” and the “NPO has been around for many years so knows many people in the region, some of whom have been partners.” Another participant says they, “seek out in-country partners by just being on the spot and asking questions and discover through local people who's who.” “Identifying a community leader recognized and respected in the community . . . knows issues” was another response as was, “an elder, elected official or ombudsman is good to engage.” Connecting with the in-country universities and government people through conferences, associations, research and finance institutions and building relationships to enact change came up on several occasions. One suggestion was made to “find out through the municipality who's working on similar projects in the area and are they willing to pool resources?”

Though most responses pertained to the in-country approach the interview participants from the NPOs take to seek out potential partners and affiliates, there were some responses that talked about networking and making online connections. Several said to search online for other NGOs doing the same or similar work and talk to them about how their program objectives align with the NPO’s initiatives. Another participant said they “get the word out via video, social media (e.g., LinkedIn) that we’d like to partner with existing factories and trade schools.”

The questioning next turned to the factors the NPO considers for selecting an appropriate community partner in the development and implementation of the initiative. Experience, knowledge, capacity, and skill set were standards routinely mentioned by all participants in one way or another. It was the large number of respondents that talked about reciprocity and mutually beneficial relationships reflected in statements such as, “must be a win-win relationship where each participating party has equal to put into the project” and “opportunities to help and learn from each other” that were considered the most desirable. NPOs also looked for partners that have an interest and willingness to work and coordinate activities together, collaborate. Other qualities and attributes looked for in potential partners included trust, passion, legitimacy, history of success, and honesty which was reflected in the statement by one NPO who said they have “zero tolerance for corruption of any kind.” There were a number of respondents who indicated that a consideration for them was that the “partner is aligned with the same values doing similar works and similar mission.” Others required that their partners, “be local” and capable of taking on responsibilities such as hiring, managing, monitoring, evaluating and supervising implementation staff. Another noted that their in-country partner NGO was chosen because it was able to meet the NPO's requirements of what they wanted to do. It was also deemed by two of the NPOs that it was important to “connect with the people who understand the need and have the authority to approve the project” and “have influence or power to do something.”

Moving on to how knowledge is shared between the NPO, the community partner, and the impacted community led to the respondents citing various engagement methods that were mostly of a social interaction nature. They included community meetings, events and activities, presentations, workshops, training sessions, and home visits as examples. One said that is was important for the NPO and the in-country partner to “participate in community events and activities and been seen as a unified effort to improve the situation” and that it “builds trust.” Another said the NPO program model includes a prepared slide presentation (for which one must be certified and is consistent across the world) related to health management. The elders are the guides on the cultural aspects and the translators deliver the session to the community through the partner NGO. Whatever practice the NPO uses to share knowledge many emphasized that “constant communication is key.” This is evidenced by activities such as regular visitations and follow-up of development initiatives in the impacted community for measurement and evaluation, quality control, and lessons learned purposes. It was noted that the NPO’s “presence or regular visitation to project communities are very important to see and learn what is working and what is not.” Another clearly stated, “The sharing process has to be built into the project plan . . . regular opportunities for people to share what's going on and be prepared to make changes and adapt the project to what you're learning.” A summarizing statement provided by a respondent was that “each of the partners including the community must take responsibility for project completion otherwise it would be more costly, and we may not be able to finish them.”

The last question in this section asked what type of role community partners and stakeholders play in the decision-making of the project design and implementation. In most cases the NPO works with or through an in-country community partner, who are often NGOs, that one respondent said, “are integral in the decision-making process as they are representative of the impacted community with first-hand knowledge of what is working and what is not.” Another said that they “partnered with a known organization in-country who had implemented a similar program to write up a major proposal . . . had a fair amount of input to how to design the program.” Sometimes the in-country partners are referred to as the implementing organization as denoted in this respondent’s reply, “Community committees (comprised of all levels of society and female participation), the municipalities, and the in-country implementing partner organization all have input to decision making.” In the case where the community itself is the partner the respondent said, “input from in-country staff and volunteers and the beneficiaries themselves is critical to decision-making.” It appears that though the majority of community partners and stakeholders do play a role in decision-making, as it pertains to the implementation of the project, this is not always true for the project design. For instance, two respondents declared, “partners on the ground make all decisions pertaining to the program implementation but must adhere to the program model and abide to certain conditions” and “program can be customized but in-country partners are not part of the original program design.” There was concern on the part of several respondent’s who cautioned against “coming in with your own solutions.” Another voiced their thoughts on the matter:

> It always concerns me when you see bad examples of external development workers who have all the answers and come in and tell everybody what to do because it worked over in this other country, but they don't know the specifics of the particular context they're in where it may not.

Category 1.1: Cultural Knowledge

This category explores the knowledge needed by the NPO to gain an understanding or become culturally aware of local beliefs and values specific to the community most impacted by the development work of the NPO. As depicted in Figure 8, there were only two questions in this section.

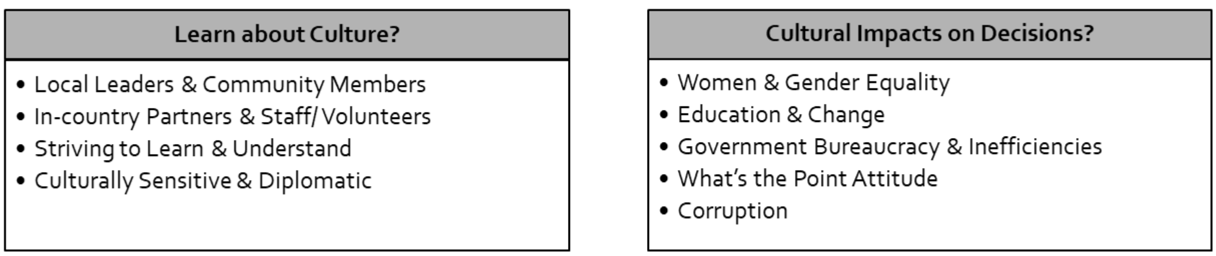

Figure 8. Cultural Knowledge

The first asked about how the NPO *learns* of the cultural elements in the community's everyday existence or way of life and the second asked how these cultural elements *impact decision-making* pertaining to the initiative. The responses were as diverse as the communities in which the NPOs work and it was difficult for respondents to stay focused on specifically answering what the questions asked. They were far more eager to tell stories about the distinct cultural elements they experienced and share a multitude of compelling accounts of how they work in and with the communities in consideration of them. There were, however, some matters that they mostly all agreed on such as it is "important to understand from those who actually live in the community and have profound, intimate knowledge of what the customary beliefs are." Other common comments included, "Depend on key local leaders or people you're working with in the community to develop an understanding and ensure that there's cultural alignment for the project." Another said they too depend on their partner NGO [in-country] to make them aware of any cultural elements in each and every community; and yet another said they "have in-country staff in communities who relay and help navigate cultural issues." Building trusted relationships came up frequently and many concurred, "it's a long process that involves a lot of observation, interaction, and the time to gain an understanding of a different cultural context." Striving to learn and understand was another common thread as evidenced by this comment, "Go in as learners. Tell them you want to learn about their culture which is why a really good translator or guide the first few times is critical so that they understand what you're doing there". Also, "strive to understand and respect old traditional cultural and religious beliefs" with examples of indigenous ways of knowing and being, tribalism, caste system, child marriage, and midwifery to name a few. A piece of advice given by one respondent was, "Even though some traditional cultural beliefs are now illegal they are still held strong" which is found to be especially true in the remote areas in which most of the NPOs work.

Gender inequality and a patriarchal social system is prevalent in nearly all the communities. A couple respondents explained that it is not only the men but also "women (grandmothers and mothers) teach their daughters that their role is going to be to drop out of school at Grade 4 or whatever and then you got to find a husband." Many of the respondents related that "children were often taken out of school by parents to work or help out at home though may stay in school for the meal if provided." This is even though other respondents said they heard in many communities, "Going to school and finishing an education is understood by almost everyone in Africa that it's the way out of the way in which they live." An example is a story a volunteer told of her experience in a Kenyan urban slum that is only able to admit so many students with no fees at the school her NPO sponsors:

> We would have two little kids every day looking over the fence [of the school] and I finally said like, "Who are those two kids?" and they said, "They walk every day here and they stand looking over the fence hoping to learn."

It was observed by most other respondents, not just in Africa, that an interruption in education or any education at all is the biggest barrier to improving the situation and conditions they live in, especially women and girls. One respondent lamented, "there's no social construct pertaining to gender equality" and another added that there is a "lack of education in regard to what "gender" is and the female biology." Understanding the value of education is often jeopardized when the cultural norm dictates that young girls are not allowed to attend school due to their menstrual cycle, or do not have uniforms, and the resulting number of days missed can force girls to drop out altogether. It puts them at greater risk of early childhood marriage and getting pregnant at a younger age, increasing infant mortality. Another issue was brought up by a respondent who says where they work in Nepal is "a district where a lot of them [girls] are promised into marriages at a very, very young age." She further explains:

> If they're promised into marriage and then they're seen talking with a boy or something happens they can break that off. Well, the parents have had to pay a dowry, it's shame on the family, like this can destroy the families.

When education means everything to these girls and the opportunity to attend school is taken away sexual exploitation often results. "And in fact, the traffickers know it" said one respondent and went on to share what she has learned from her experiences in Rwanda:

> The traffickers would go to a girl and say, “I can get you an education” or they’d go to the parents and say, “I can get her an education” and then they’d take her, and she doesn’t get an education at school she gets an education in sexual exploitation. But the key—the draw is to get her an education. And so, girls who don’t have an education generally are victimized more so than girls that do.

Corruption is a common element in the communities where the NPOs work with half of them citing examples such as some African children in orphanages and homes are not actually legal orphans.

> They’re [parents] not able to provide adequate food or housing for their child they’ll turn their children over to the orphanage because the orphanage will get government funding and they’ll get international humanitarian aid funding. It’s a somehow corrupt system because the orphanage knows the parents and so the children end up going home to the parents on like school breaks and holidays, and things like that.

Other examples included, “Everybody’s taking their little bit all along the way and you’re uneducated and a buffoon if you don’t try to take some bit off of something including the police” and “This state [where NPO works] is one of the most corrupt in Columbia . . . many of the governors have gone to jail for corruption.” Further comments made concerning government bureaucracies and inefficiencies generally entailed (a) biases toward favored individuals and groups in regard to providing resources or awarding contracts, (b) the length of time required for decisions and approvals, and (c) *the way it’s always been done* mentality without considering options/alternatives for ways in which issues could be addressed.

Category 2.0: Sustainability

The last set of results (summarized in Figure 9) pertains to sustainability.

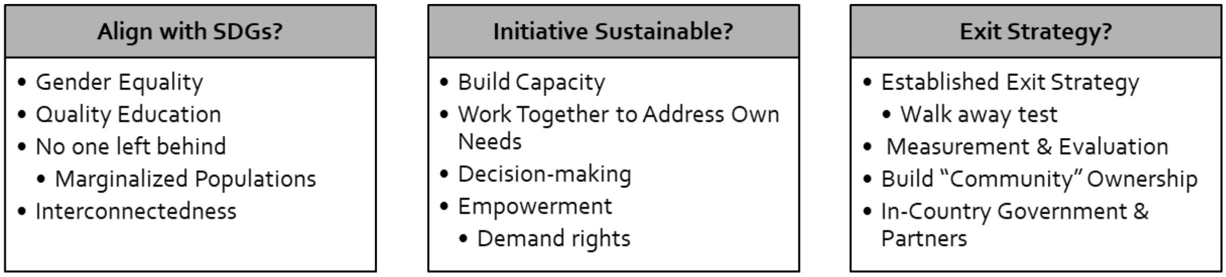

Figure 9. Sustainability

The first question in this category investigated the NPO's awareness of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and how the work it does aligns with specific goals. The majority of the respondents were aware of the SDGs and those most relevant to their organization's mission and goals. Several made mention of the SDGs that pertain to the NPO on its website and some have promotional materials indicating how targeted goals have been incorporated into current projects. As NPOs whose work focuses on education, health, and water and sanitation were selected for the study it stands to reason that Quality education (SDG 4), Good health and well-being (SDG 3), and Clean water and sanitation (SDG 6) were the three SDGs mentioned most frequently. However, it became clear that the work of most NPOs "fill the bill" on many of the SDGs as each goal generally interacts with others. One respondent explained, "There are maybe five [SDGs] that we don't touch on all the rest of them somehow or another are impacted by what we're doing." Gender equality (SDG 5) came up frequently as whether the NPO is working with a community in Nepal to support a school for girls, helping reduce maternal and newborn deaths in Guatemala, or reducing the amount of time women must spend walking for water in Nicaragua, gender equality is a core issue. Quality education (SDG 4) was also mentioned to a large degree, no matter where the NPO's primary focus lies, with one interviewee suggesting that "education is the biggest barrier for everything" especially getting out of poverty. The interviewees agreed that ultimately the work they do is about ending poverty

(SDG 1) in the marginalized populations with which they operate. A respondent stated in reference to their work in a Kenyan urban slum, “They [government] don’t recognize those people as being alive. So, they’re very much kind of forgotten.” Several other respondents cited examples that go against the UN’s pledge for the SDGs that, “no one will be left behind.” One interviewee summed up the effort to contribute to the SDGs by expressing “how critical it is that we all work together on the same goals” and “if we focus on these we will . . . make a lot of headway.”

How an initiative will become sustainable after the implementation is complete appears to depend on what sustainability means to the NPO. Though four of the ten NPOs studied use the word *sustainability* in their mission statements, and two in their core values, none of them explain what it means to the organization. When asked about sustainability in the interviews the responses varied, and it was discovered that sustainability means many different things to the NPOs and to the community stakeholders. To one NPO, “Sustainability is the continual improvement of the quality of instruction and program delivery, not numbers” while to another it means, “Have you bettered the community?” They do, however, almost all agree that working together with the community to address their own needs is a major element in working towards a sustainable outcome where support from the NPO is no longer required. One respondent advised to “get the community input, get the donors input, get them all together and look for that common ground” on how the initiative will be sustainable. Another said that when the community identifies a need for which they want support from the NPO a lot of questions are asked such as, “How are you going to sustain that?” and “What’s your capacity to actually participate?” Others say much the same, “train professionals in-country to solve their own problems” and “build capacity to set up own enterprises to address own needs.” Along with community capacity building came the concept of *empowerment* as reflected in this statement, "It's not about empowering a person it's empowering a community." There were, however, differing thoughts on empowerment revealed in the interviews. One of which talked about "demanding government funding for basic needs such as safety, water, health, and education" and encouraging "civil society to demand their basic human rights." Examples included this respondent explaining, "Women's groups had started advocating for the [Honduran] government to reopen them [health clinics] and . . . the government has agreed . . . . because we're teaching people that you have the right to have access to health." Another said, "We wouldn't need to be funding them" if "civil society would insist on water rights for this region [Nicaragua] and work with the community water committees, and the government would finally respond with the proper resources." Consequently, continued the respondent, "the first step is . . . teaching them what their rights are and teaching them that the law says they can get these rights." The other perspective on empowerment pertained to decision-making as in this statement from a respondent working in Kenya, "You work together with the community where you empower them to make leadership decisions on program and project proposals" and this one from an NPO worker in Guatemala:

> The key piece around the Women's Health Committees is really about empowering those women to make decisions and showing them that they can make decisions. It's teaching them that they have the right to make decisions and that their community benefits.

The committees are also an inclusive approach to engaging diverse community members to deliver an integrated sustainability effort. One respondent demonstrates this in a story about a school building committee in a rural Nepalese community where "we ended up with six people on the committee and every caste was represented and there was a female on the committee as well." Another talks of where maintaining fairness in student selection for free schooling in a Nairobi slum was a big concern so a cross-tribal committee was formed to conduct interviews and make the final decision.

The last item discussed with the interview participants questioned the consideration and implementation of exit strategies in the NPOs' development initiatives. There were several comments made from some of the longer established NPOs (e.g., 25^{+} years) that they do not have a formal exit strategy mostly due to the NPO's history of being more of an aid organization as opposed to a development one. However, it was recognized by many of the NPOs that building the capacity of local communities to develop, implement and sustain their own solutions is becoming an increasingly major portion of their development work. There was belief among many respondents that determining at what point the "locals take it [the initiative] over and they have ownership and they have all the skills and abilities needed to run their own thing" needs to be established in the form of an exit strategy at the outset of the project. One respondent reasoned that it is about very clear goal setting, measurement and evaluation. Determining, "What are we actually trying to accomplish?" and "working towards where we'll be able to say we've accomplished what we set out to do here so we can go somewhere else" is the exit strategy they set out for themselves. A cause for concern to most of the NPOs was evidenced in statements such as, "the big thing is anything that we're doing it should not be completely dependent on us from the start . . . and it should have some type of exit strategy" and "It's not always good to be forever working with the same partner . . . . if the idea is to build sustainability and independence." Many of the NPOs associated their walk away or exit strategies to project funding. This was indicated by comments such as, "We walk away all the time because we only have project funding . . . . our projects end and there's no opportunity to apply again." Another comment was that the community and partner organizations are very much aware that “the project is the project it lasts from this date to this date” and then the NPO will walk away unless it can get more funding to extend it. Most, however, agreed with the respondent who explained, “My exit strategy is to have [recipient community] develop their own independent fund development structure so that they don’t depend on me as the sole contributor or my organization as the sole contributor.” Working with the community stakeholders to secure their own source of funding and appealing to continuing support from the in-country partner(s), local governments, institutions, and within the country itself are strategies many of the NPOs are attempting to implement in their exit plans.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The Non-Profit Organization (NPO)

Even though the case studies selected were a result of purposive sampling there were many deep-seated reasons for the NPOs to be working in their area of specialization and specific geographical location, all of which reflected their *raison d’être* and approach to accomplishing their social missions. When discussing the purpose of the work NPOs do and where they do it is important to recognize that their stories are distinctly unique due to the complexity of each and every situation and the community-knowledge they require to adequately address its needs. Given, Forcier, and Rathi (2013) explained that “community-generated knowledge informs the mission and goals of the NPO, which in turn generates procedural and expert knowledge” (p. 9). Similarly, when determining why a particular development initiative is needed it is important to consider much more than simply the surface issue such as lack of education, health care or water and sanitation services. Many of these NPOs have established long-term connections to the community and have dug deep into understanding its specific needs. Learning through experience, NPOs recognize that if there is a lack of any of these basic human services, building a school, a health clinic, or digging a water well is not always the solution to the problem. The research reveals that rarely is the issue what it appears to be at the outset. When defining the problem and determining the solution it is important to not only consider the resulting impact by taking specific actions but what would be the consequence if the action were not taken? For example, an NPO that strives to increase access to health education and menstrual management for females understands the far-reaching consequences of missing days at school due to their menstrual cycle. Whether it be Africa, Asia, or Latin America it can force girls to drop out altogether putting them at greater risk of early childhood marriage, getting pregnant at a younger age, and becoming a target for sexual exploitation. Each context must be carefully examined by the NPO in conjunction with community stakeholder input to understand why and how the initiative must be designed and implemented to deliver maximum benefit.

In the complex world of international development it is acknowledging the diversity of knowledge types and properties, and that there is no one size fits all knowledge management solution (Connell et al., 2003; Corfield, 2010; Hume & Hume, 2008) for determining the right knowledge based on the organization's needs, its context, and the value it carries (International Organization for Standardization, 2017, p. 15). The NPO's approach to their development initiatives will be based on what they have learned through experience and that "the knowledge that emerges through the network of interactions with community members is extremely valuable for the achievement of organizational goals" (Rathi et al., 2016, p. 34). Strategies for engaging and incorporating community knowledge and working collectively towards long-term solutions to address the distinct problems of the community is the approach the NPOs are attempting to implement impactful and sustainable development initiatives.

Recipient/Beneficiary Community (Impacted/Served)

There is nothing new in the learning that the engagement and participation of the impacted community is essential to obtain intimate knowledge of the host of problems and the underlying causes of which they live with every day. This is especially evident in the cases examined where the impoverished communities are marginalized populations with characteristics that often overlap and compound the issues in many ways. Further are elements of *intersectionality* where the interconnectedness of classifications such as gender, race, and class (e.g., Indigenous women and girls living in an extremely poverty-stricken patriarchal society) cross over and leave them discriminated against and excluded on more than one front based on their identity (OECD, 2018, p. 41). Van der Hoogte and Kingma (2004) posited that “the intersections of different identities determine the social position and power of each person” (p. 47). Consequently, “women within minority groups lose out in terms of power and position not only because they are women, but because of their minority identity” (Van der Hoogte & Kingma, 2004, p. 49). The problem extends beyond gender and it is an important concept for NPOs to understand, especially those who are Canadians working in international development contexts and are accustomed to power and privilege. One interview participant living and working largely with women in Honduras related that “there’s no social construct pertaining to gender equality” such as how many women can do the same jobs as men, how women don’t have the same opportunities as men in the community, how men are the ones with all the power and all the money. Another working in Guatemala said, “It’s hard for people and I imagine it would be very hard for Canadians to understand the level of patriarchy that is here.” This difference in identities leads to inequality and a power imbalance in the relationship. NPOs must work hard to not only develop a deep understanding of the cultural differences but to collaborate with others on what the issue means for long-term policy and practice in development work, particularly in marginalized populations (Van der Hoogte & Kingma, 2004, p. 55).

Smith, Willms, and Johnson (1997) remind us that participatory action research emerged "as an approach to the creation of knowledge and the improvement of life" that came from working with marginalized peoples of the Global South in the early to mid-seventies (p. 175). Numerous participatory methods have evolved in development practices, based on the same premise, and continue to share the common concept: "enabling ordinary people to play an active and influential part in decisions which affect their lives. This means that people are not just listened to, but also heard; and that their voices shape outcomes" (Participatory Methods, n.d., para. 1). The learning may be in how individuals are engaged and representative participation encouraged to promote inclusive partnerships and buy-in from the community. The research data informs us that partnerships are formed through the longevity and stability of the NPO in the community and the building of relationships founded on trust and respect by means of consistent communication. One respondent laments that when other NGOs 'parachute' in, train, and then leave that it infers they already know what the needs are and how the community works. The respondent adds, "they don't have that community buy-in in the same way that we as a community development organization has. If you're not listening . . . you're not doing community development." The NPO the respondent is with has been in the country for over 30 years. That is not to say that every NPO must have a long-term commitment to that extent, but it does say that the NPO has deeply rooted relationships and an intimate knowledge of their partner community's needs. For instance, another respondent explained that though it is extremely important to mandate participation of women in community development you must be very careful not to add to their already demanding workload of managing the livelihoods of their families in the absence of their husbands and partners. There needs to be the “will” to learn how to balance responsibilities, such as women’s leadership support groups in community, so that they are able to reap the benefits of participation in the initiatives. This is testament to Sarah White’s (1996) theory about how vital it is to give community members a voice in the decision-making and implementation process of projects that affect them and that representative participation increases the chances of development projects becoming more sustainable (p. 7-8). One respondent summed it up by stating that incorporating input from the impacted community into the decision-making and how the project is going to unfold is “critical because it’s not going to work if it doesn’t meet their needs, right?”

Staff and Volunteers (Internal)

In the non-profit sector organizations strive to direct practically all of its increasingly difficult to obtain resources to its development initiatives and the advancement of its social mission. In an effort to remain cost effective NPOs need to rely on limited staff and largely on volunteers to provide the knowledge required to deliver on its commitments. For this reason, half of the NPOs interviewed reported that they operated on a volunteer only basis and this was also true of all board members in all the organizations. This is in contrast to the for-profit sector where the organization’s mission is to earn profit through its operations and investment can be directed to either securing or building knowledge resources to continually improve its efficiencies and financial performance. In addition to the NPO’s few key staff members they depend on the involvement of volunteers to bring a diverse range of skills, experience, and knowledge to support and achieve its mission and strategic objectives. The uptake of this critical social capital brings immense value to the development and sustainability of the initiative through their firsthand knowledge of the community, a deep understanding of its needs, its culture and language, how things work and don't work, and an already established network.

The additional benefit of volunteers is that they often approach specific NPOs for the reason that "they believe in the mission" and are aligned with its core principles or values. One respondent said "it's their dedication to help their own area and their own people" that is a compelling reason to engage volunteers who are highly motivated to work with others to improve the community. This is true for whether they are in-county or in Canada and most often there is some kind of connection to the community and support of the NPO's mission. Many non-profit organizations say they would not be able to exist if it were not for the volunteers.

Ragsdell et al. (2014) pointed out that volunteers are under no obligation to share their knowledge and expertise as might be the conditions of employment or by formal KM practices embedded in for-profit organizations. They offer that volunteers in the non-profit sector enter projects with a difference set of values and motivations than for-profit team members (p. 269). Perhaps the most notable contribution volunteers bring is their passion and belief that they can make a difference. In the absence of formal KM sharing practices these attributes in volunteers can lead to sharing knowledge though informal KM practices represented by a set of activities or actions such as "sharing stories about past work events; sharing experiences and ideas; informal meetings and conversations about the organization, solutions for tasks and work problems; open and critical dialogue and reflection about the organization and work issues" (Cardoso et al., 2012, p. 269). It was widely recognized by the NPOs that it is important for their boards, employees, and volunteers to share knowledge, experiences and lessons learned across the organization and they largely do in an informal manner. However, few do so on a formal basis mostly due to a lack of process and time constraints.

Though encouraging input and sharing knowledge gained at all levels of the organization is a practice promoted by mostly all the NPOs, both in Canada and in-country, there is a divergence among them regarding the actual level at which the decision-making of the project/program design and implementation are made. In addition to the NPO’s Board Members/Directors, it is those in senior management roles (e.g., CEO, Executive Director, Program Director, Accountant of the Project, etc.) who are mainly responsible for creating and delivering on its social mission, that are very influential and mostly control the decision-making as it pertains to project/program selection and design. Even though it is said that there is “lots of dialogue between in-country staff and senior management about what works and what doesn’t, what is important and what’s not” it appears by comments such as “country managers [volunteer] are responsible for program implementation” and “local volunteers are responsible to carry out implementation” that they are more about the doing than the deciding what to do.

Funders and Donors (Resources/Support)

Small and medium-sized NPOs most often have an attachment to the development initiatives for which they continually seek resources, both human and financial. They choose the work they do based on familiarity of the geographic location and an in-depth understanding of the communities and its needs. NPOs believe that the social mission and goals they strive for are best achieved through the well-thought-out approach of delivering the services they offer in the appropriate context. Similarly, funders and donors are found to support initiatives in locations or areas of specialization with which they too have a connection. Believing in the NPO’s cause and that it is making a difference is often the first step in the funder’s consideration of providing support. This is important as there could be a number of NPOs operating in a specific region (although nearly all NPOs interviewed were unwavering in their commitment to serve in locations where other NPOs are not) to which the funder is connected, and the decision may well come down to who can best deliver cost effective results. Directing virtually all funds raised to the NPO's development projects leaves a bare minimum to cover administration costs let alone funds to invest in formal KM systems (Supyuenyong & Swierczek, 2013, p. 78). The knowledge held by those in large organizations is widespread and often difficult to locate. Small to medium-sized NPOs have an advantage in that their founders, staff and volunteers typically have the capacity, as a result of their own experiences and learnings, to more effectively share knowledge through informal social interactions. It is a much smaller circle of key people with know-how and should they require assistance beyond their own expertise they have many connections and networks on which they can draw that are in strong support and willing to help the NPO's social mission.

Funders and donors who believe in what an NPO does, and in some cases why they do it, do not necessarily have an appreciation of how the NPO approaches the development initiative to accomplish its mission and specific sustainable project goals. A number of the NPOs relayed that unfortunately there are funders that want to see concrete evidence of results in very short time frames. Examples provided by interview participants included the major difference between establishing Community Water Management Committees in Nicaragua who "are building the capacity for the community committees to work with the municipalities to manage their own water systems" as opposed to "groups coming in drilling wells and then some other group comes in and puts latrines beside the well." With no coordinated water management plan the health of the aquifers and natural water systems are greatly jeopardized. The same is true for creating a School Building Committee in Nepal where they are responsible to take ownership and realistically conceive of how the community will sustain its operation once it is built. This type of deliberation significantly affects the design, the time, and the funds required to develop and implement a sustainable initiative. This also applies to reactions from donors who say the project is the responsibility of the local government without being fully aware that many of the NPOs work in marginalized communities. Often they are totally unrecognized by the government such as the urban slums in Kenya or refugees on the India Myanmar border that are completely without government provision of basic needs and services.

These are some of the fundamental understandings most NPOs make great effort for its funders and donors to have knowledge of and the context in which they exist. They give good reason for NPOs needing to know how involved and influential the donor wants to be in the decision-making of the development initiative and their capacity to contribute. On the knowledge sharing front, it provides an impetus for the NPO and various funding stakeholders to come together to discuss project needs and measurement requirements that support the development and effectiveness (Mougeot, 2017, p. 181) of sustainable initiatives.

Experts/Experienced (External)

There is much benefit for small and medium-sized NPOs to adopt for-profit knowledge sharing practices that would enable them to incorporate staff and volunteer knowledge and expertise (internal) with that of experts (external) to the organization to help them make more effective decisions. Though, NPOs are typically “under-resourced and dependent mainly on public and private funding to survive,” says Cardoso et al. (2012) they can still benefit from KM sharing practices (p. 268). Engaging other NGOs or subject matter experts (SMEs) outside the organization who are authorities on the NPO’s area of specialization and can provide unique insight valuable to the delivery of its social mission are sought out in any number of ways. Online research is a huge resource for NPOs seeking out experts to connect or network with and most often used face-to-face or social media as a means to communicate. It takes on the form of tacit knowledge which Hume and Hume (2016) described as undocumented "how and why to do something" and "how to adapt" expertise" (p. 110). Partnering with academic institutions and volunteer brigades also have much expertise to offer in the what and the how of executing inclusive, effective professional services to recipient communities.

At the same time, several of the NPOs reported that, "much of the expertise already exists within the NPO or is recruited to further the initiative." Corfield (2010) makes a good point that "what is mere information in one place can be knowledge in the hands of someone with the expertise to use it, in a context where it can give value" (p. 37). Experts have extensive experience and knowledge in many specialty areas in the same or similar countries and often act as consultants/advisors on required processes, both academic and practical. This expertise comes from learning through experience in diverse countries and communities and though the program may appear basically the same, being flexible and able to accommodate each community's distinct requirements in program development and implementation may be quite different. "The applicability of lessons learned, even if it's one of your own, on one development project to another needs to be carefully examined in the community context," advised one of the respondents. This gives good reason to trust local NGOs to provide contacts and references of experts to engage, especially those who are as close in proximity to the community as possible, and the importance of understanding local culture and the way things work. It was recommended by one participant to "pay attention, connect, and compare with those, not only in-country, but anywhere doing same or related type of work." Examples included NGOs, international service organizations such as the Rotary Club, universities, government officials and leaders, etc.). Another said to "look for awareness and respect for local culture, needs and priorities, and real caution about coming in with own solutions because it may not fit the context." It was even suggested that it could do more harm than good and does not accomplish what they set out to do.

Community Partners and Stakeholders

Overwhelmingly, the respondents reported that selecting and working with a community partner or group of stakeholders is critical for the development and implementation of a sustainable initiative. Their wide range of connections and far reaching networks provide the NPO with many prospective in-country community partners to assist in project delivery. One respondent summarized the selection of its in-country partner with the rationale that they [a local NGO] were already working in the area and had a good reputation and working relationship with the community people. The respondent explained that this is important as the NPO "is often a step away from the community and it's the partner that then works with the communities." The interviewee added that "affiliation with a reputable and legit partner makes the NPO more credible." NPOs also rely on the knowledge and expertise of other NGOs that have many years investment in the country and have come to learn what might work, what might not, and why. They have already done much work and say, "it is not necessary to reinvent the wheel." As many of the NPOs prefer to operate in areas where there are no other NGOs they must rely on local knowledge. How the NPO engages the people of the communities to participate and its importance is discussed in Category 1.1: Knowledge about Clients and Customers (p. 32).

It is evident that when selecting a community partner that most of the NPOs look to partnering with other NGOs, preferably those in-country, that are aligned with the same values and doing similar work with a similar mission. It must be "give and take" said one participant "with each partner benefiting in some way by working together." Seeking out partners with considerable experience addressing the problem is of the utmost importance for NPOs. Sharing in-depth knowledge, experiences and collaborating on problem solving with a trusted partner is efficient for the partners and effective for the community. Even more so, sharing “expertise, know-how, know why, and care-why” (Dalkir, 2011, p. 10) in the field is a valuable opportunity for tacit knowledge exchange and learning.

The opportunities the NPO, community partner, and impacted community take to share knowledge between each other is generally through social events and activities throughout the duration of the project. Most often these interactions are fact-to-face and when the NPO is not in the country the work carries on through the community partner with community members and other stakeholders (e.g., government, universities, suppliers). For this reason, it is critical that the community trusts and has confidence in the in-country partner so that continual progress is made on the initiative in the NPO’s absence or where its capabilities and skills sets are more appropriate to the context. In a few cases, the community partner was instrumental in conducting needs assessments and required research as the NPO does not speak the local languages and “they’re very rural people so it would be a tough relationship to build with a lot more resources.” Working together in this manner helps build capacity in the community and enhances the knowledge needed to more effectively accomplish joint project goals. Nonaka (as cited in Hurley & Green, 2005) reminds us that “tacit knowledge is exchanged through joint activities rather than through written or verbal instructions” (para. 3.2.). There was general agreement that the “NPO’s presence or regular visitation to the impacted communities is very important to see and learn what is working and what is not.” Another suggested that the sharing process has to be built into the project plan. They said it provides “regular opportunities for people to share what’s going on and be prepared to make changes or adapt the project to what you’re learning.”

It was noticed that fairly often the in-country community partner is referred to as the implementing partner or organization. This can be attributed to the reality that in most cases the implementation of the development initiative is their major responsibility. For this reason, they are considered by many of the NPOs an integral part of the decision-making process as it relates to implementation. They are representative of the impacted community with first-hand knowledge of how things get done and the processes required to carry out an initiative that will sustain long term benefits. Another NPO offered that they had partnered with a well-known organization in-country, who had implemented a similar program, to write up a major proposal as they had a fair amount of input on how to design the initiative. Others say their partners on the ground make all decisions pertaining to the program implementation though must adhere to the program model and abide by certain conditions. Another says their program can be customized by the in-country partners, but they are not part of original program design. The extent to which community partners and stakeholders play in the decision-making of the initiative design and implementation varies depending on the situation and their roles and responsibilities. Most would agree, however, that community partners and stakeholders understand their communities better than outsiders do in terms of the practicality of implementing a sustainable initiative. One respondent provided their considered opinion that, “On the other hand, outsiders might have new ideas that could potentially work so it’s a mutual education process where the importance of a very good working relationship and respect is critical.”

Cultural Knowledge (Community)

Developing cultural awareness of the communities in which the NPO works is perhaps the most crucial factor in working together to deliver impactful and sustainable results. How the NPO learns of cultural elements pertaining to the community’s everyday existence or way of life that impact the development initiative is generally through (a) local leaders and community members, (b) in-country partners and stakeholders, and (c) NPO board, staff and volunteers. It is those who actually live in the community or have a profound, intimate knowledge of its customary beliefs and the context in which it exists are the voices that must be heard. One respondent advised that there is a need to be culturally sensitive and diplomatic when encountering those things that Canadians do not understand or make sense to them. A second piece of advice from another respondent was that there is a cross-over between listening to understand cultural beliefs and listening to understand the problem.

The respondents report that cultural elements are very often the reason they are involved in the development initiative to begin with and understanding the social context of the community has huge impacts on decision-making. Among the most frequently raised issues was gender equality in a patriarchal social system. It was prevalent in nearly all the communities and was often associated with lack of education in some manner. In fact, in nearly every case the research participants cited “education” as being the main component in addressing cultural issues (e.g., kids looking over school fence, menstruation and female health, schoolgirls promised in marriage, sex traffickers offering education, etc.). It was even applied to government bureaucracies and inefficiencies in its resistance to learn new ways. Though corruption was raised as a common cultural occurrence in at least half of the interviews the NPOs say its existence must be acknowledged and what it means in the context of the initiative. An example of being culturally aware and developing strategies for understanding what the issues are and how they can be dealt with comes from Central America. An NPO working in a specific area has an ombudsman in-country to check on their partner organization and contractor due to the general consensus on water provision. The interviewee says this is done in response to an UN estimate that almost 50% of budgets invested in water systems is wasted because of corruption, bribery and stealing by cutting corners on the job.

Cultural elements are wide and diverse, and it is their uniqueness that makes each project complex and distinctive in the manner in which it is developed and implemented. An interviewee representing an NPO working in another Central American country tells us that you must “listen carefully to what the issue is and if it is an underlying cultural belief.” An example was provided:

> In the case of Maternal Newborn Child Health one of the main issues is that because people are so poor when a woman wants to go to the hospital to have a baby or when a woman’s having complications in her pregnancy her husband won’t allow her to go to the hospital because he can’t afford it.

There were a number of cultural issues in this scenario. One is that it was a very traditional society where mid-wives are crucial in the community because the practice is for children to be born at home. It is often a matter of pride where there is a lack of funds and in this particular case the husband was also perturbed about, “Who’s going to take care of the kids if she goes to the hospital?” This is were experts such as Gender Advisors are brought in to “work on different strategies to implement gender sensitive themes in each of the activities and provides training to field staff” and also “works with staff on specific cases that are troublesome.”

Words of caution from some of the respondents included, “know your place and do not overstep” and explore the possibilities in terms of meeting practical needs so that “you’re not trying to overturn culture or change culture all at once but you’re supporting people to explore more equitable ways of doing things.” These may very well be some of the same factors applied in for-profit organizations when attempting to introduce transformative change.

Sustainability

The interview participants selected were from NPOs whose areas of specialization primarily aligned with the following three of the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals: (a) SDG 3, Good health and well-being; (b) SDG 4, Quality education; and (c) SDG 6, Clean water and sanitation. It became clear with further discussion, whether the interviewee was fully aware of the SDGs prior to the interview or not, that they all had varied and unique ideas about how the SDGs relate to them and the work performed by the NPO. It also became evident that due to the interactive nature of the SDGs that the interviewees saw the NPO contributing in many more ways than what was considered its primary goal. For instance, where clean water and sanitation (SDG 6) is the NPO's focus it follows that good health and well-being (SDG 3) is closely connected. This is evidenced by two of the participants who explained that "severe lack of access to safe, clean drinking water is not only extremely detrimental to health – especially that of children – it also impedes economic and social development." One of the interviewees expounded on no less than eight other SDGs they take into account in relation to their water projects such as: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16), when advocating "Water is a basic human right"; Quality Education (SDG 4) and Gender Equality (SDG 5), where "Women/children spend considerable portion of day seeking water, which takes time away from other important activities such as school, work, and the ability for women to participate in the development of their communities and take on leadership roles"; Life on Land (SDG 15), when building in-country capacity related to sustainable water and land management; and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17), by recognizing the "SDGs can only be realized with a strong commitment to global partnership and cooperation." The importance of understanding interactions between the SDGs and the ability to exchange knowledge with global partners is illustrated in the research work done by Nilsson et al. (2018) and the introduction of an SDG interactions knowledge platform (p. 1496). A global knowledge base that enables sharing experiences and good practices to understand the diversity of solutions in different contexts facilitates “joint learning processes to innovate development pathways” (Nilsson et al., 2018, p. 1497) to sustainability. A few of the respondents mentioned that when appealing to government funding sources (e.g., Global Affairs Canada) it is important to understand the criteria related to the SDGs and ensure there are measures being taken to address specific elements in the context of their project proposal.

In addition to the three major sustainable development goals to which the NPOs interviewed are aligned, the research showed a strong element of gender equality (SDG 5) in the initiatives. In a number of cases it appeared that the efforts undertaken with respect to gender equality are long-term and have been a major consideration for the NPOs before the SDGs were introduced and some even before the Millennium Development Goals of 2000 – 2015 (Sustainable Development Goals Fund, n.d., para. 1). This time around the UN has pledged “no one will be left behind” which means including even the most marginalized in the sustainable development goals (Moorhead, 2016). Though women are recognized as those among the most marginalized in this study so too are those living in extreme poverty, Indigenous populations, refugee settlements, communities in remote or rural areas, some of which are extremely isolated and neglected by government, and even other NPOs seriously limiting the provision of basic services. This is evidenced by the response of a Nepalese development worker when asked about determining communities to partner with, “Basically, anything that is working in . . . forgotten, lost, ignored areas is what our focus is. So, areas where other people are not going.” Leaving no one behind requires the identification and inclusion of marginalized populations with which the

NPO works to support more impactful and sustainable outcomes. “Their voices must be heard, and their active participation as agents of change needs to be promoted” (“Leaving no one behind,” 2018).

For the purposes of this study *sustainability* is determined to mean the results and efforts inspired by the NPO (a) will lead to an outcome where support is no longer required, and/or (b) the community will be better off and the benefits will persist beyond the NPO’s involvement. How the initiative will become sustainable largely depends on what sustainability means to the NPO and the community stakeholders. Though there were varied interpretations of sustainability in the context of the work each NPO performs and the location in which it operates almost all agreed that working together with the community to address their own needs is a major element in working towards a sustainable outcome. Building awareness of options, alternatives and generating own solutions to problems helps the community to develop a sustainability plan with the assistance of the NPO. A development worker in Guatemala further explained the importance of this approach as it relates to localities developing their own community infrastructure.

> If we do 100% of it then it’s not theirs, right? It needs to be theirs it’s not ours. If people really believe it’s a need then they’ll just want your support. They don’t really want you to do it for them.

Building capacity and training into the projects (e.g., leadership, management, technological, etc.) was the most often mentioned strategy to enable communities to carry on the initiatives after the NPO has departed. Bowen (2005) shares, “The degree to which development programs are sustainable depends on the degree to which stakeholders have the capacity and are willing to address issues and solve problems” (p. 86). There was a distinction made by one NPO respondent who said, “when you’re doing a community development project it’s really different from just providing services, right? You're building capacity within that community to do stuff long after you're gone."

Along with capacity building came the concept of *empowerment* for which where were two angles to consider in regard to movements to empower the community. One pertained to empowering the community to make demands of the government for funding of basic needs (e.g., safety, water, health, and education) as well as encouraging communities and its members, especially women, to demand their human rights (e.g., basic rights and freedoms). The other aspect was to empower the community and its members through education and capacity building to make decisions pertaining to program design, development, and implementation of their own sustainable solutions to problems. This is inline with Robinson's (2004) approach to sustainability that calls for the engagement of the community in deliberation and decision making regarding "the kind of future they want to try and create" (p. 380). Many of the NPOs explained how the formation of community committees is an inclusive approach that combines building capacity and instilling a sense of empowerment to take ownership of the initiative and maintain its sustainability.

What an *exit strategy* means to an NPO is similar to what sustainability means to the NPO in that there are many different thoughts and approaches to the role it plays in the continuation of the development initiative when the funder exits. When the outcome of a development initiative is more about delivering a product or service, as opposed to capacity building, it is more likely to have an exit strategy as part of the project budget and management plan. Even then, exit strategies are difficult to formulate with the unfathomable unknowns in the complex world of development and it is impossible to plan for all contingencies (e.g., natural disasters, conflict, refugee crisis, etc.). One example put forward was that in which an NPO provides women and girls access to menstrual health management and education. It goes far beyond crossing cultural boundaries to support these women and girls and may lead into areas that are riddled with conflict such as the Middle East. A NPO practitioner laments about refugees and displaced persons, “there’s so many women that need these things [menstrual kits] and there’s such a huge population that are on the road now because of what’s going on in their own countries” it is extremely difficult to pre-determine and adhere to a date of exit. This does not, however, detract from the need for a well-developed monitoring and evaluation plan, though, it does illustrate the complexity of an exit strategy and how the NPO must be flexible and able to respond to the ever-changing world. Thoughts from one of the respondents were that “as far as exit strategies go versus sustainability … there needs to be feedback. You need to constantly be assessing the needs of the community and what we’re providing is that meeting their needs?”

Many of the NPOs report that it is at their senior management level that there is a growing awareness of the need for an exit strategy to be integrated into the project or strategic plan. Discussing and answering questions regarding exit such as, “when we’re gone what’s going to happen?” and at what point do they say they are done in a community and can move on? Knowing when to leave is especially difficult for those NPOs whose work entails a great deal of capacity building and an exit strategy has not been established at the onset of the initiative. Many believe there is always more they can do but at the same time they do not want the community stakeholders and in-country partners to become dependent on them by staying too long. NPOs must remain true to the ultimate goal of building the capacity of local communities to develop, implement and sustain their own solutions to the point where outside resources (human and financial) are no longer required. As one respondent put it, “Our whole motive was capacity building so that they [community partners] are better able to live their mission and their vision and how you go about it." Working together with the community to develop a collective exit strategy must become part of the development project framework (Amadei, 2014, p. 149) to ensure the results and efforts inspired by the NPO will continue beyond their involvement.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

Non-profit organizations, especially those of small and medium size, will continue to be challenged by securing the resources they require to implement impactful and sustainable international development initiatives (Greenaway & Vuong, 2010, p. 93). With increased competition for shrinking financial support the opportunity exists for NPOs to look to applicable knowledge management practices employed by for-profit organizations as an important strategy for advancing it mission and goals. Consider that where FPOs are *financially focused* and use knowledge to pursue a capital mission that will result in gaining a competitive advantage to increase financial performance, NPOs are *outcomes focused* and can use knowledge to pursue a social mission that will result in a development initiative where the community is better off and the benefits will persist beyond its involvement (Bloice & Burnett, 2016, p. 126). Pursuant to the findings in this study there is concurrence with the Greenaway and Vuong (2010) theory that the fundamental difference in FPOs and NPOs lies in what it "wants to achieve with its knowledge" (p. 90) and the knowledge required to deliver on its respective mission outcomes within the organization's context.

This study built largely on Rathi et al.'s (2014, 2016) research that investigated knowledge needs in the non-profit sector and found community knowledge, which is comprised of knowledge generated from six multifaceted groups of mission interested people and stakeholders, to be "a fundamental type of knowledge essential to the NPO" (p. 5) and that "gaining a better understanding of the communities where NPOs operate is critical from both operational and strategic perspectives" and "for success of their operational missions" (p. 29). Just as there is no clear-cut way to do international development that will guarantee desired results and outcomes there is no one type of knowledge property or sharing process that an NPO will employ in accomplishing its mission. However, there were distinct tendencies that emerged when comparing knowledge properties and sharing processes between non-profit and for-profit organizations as illustrated in Figure 10.

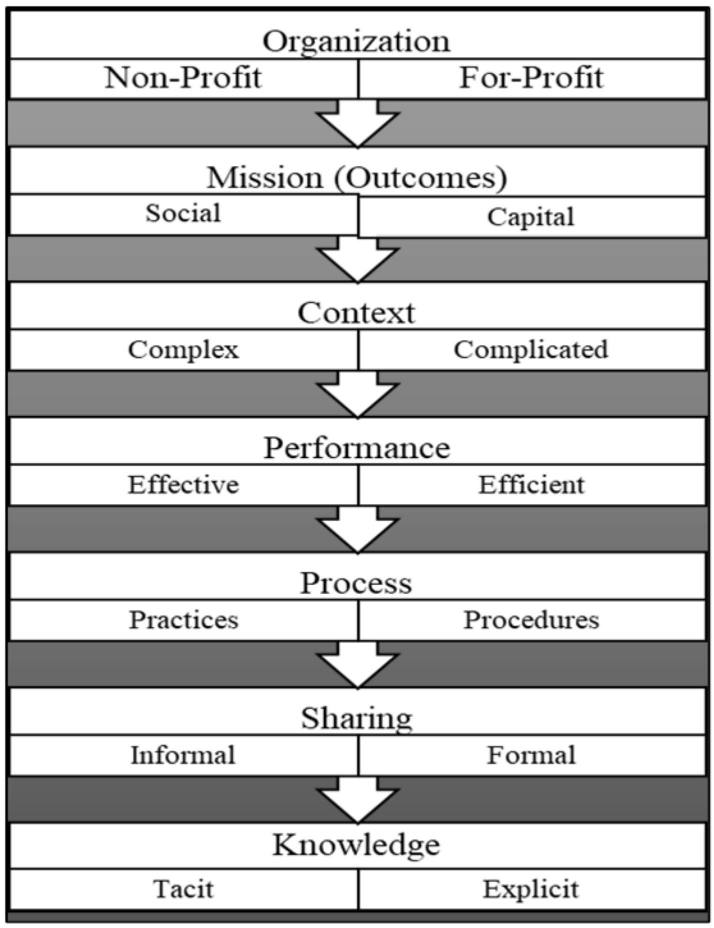

Figure 10. Comparison of Non-profit and For-profit Tendencies for Knowledge Properties and Sharing Processes

The breadth and depth of the international development initiatives examined in this study is illustrated in Figure 2. It provides context pertaining to the primary development work the

NPO performs, the area of specialization with which it is aligned, and the geographical location in which it operates. Though it is safe to say that the work of the NPOs in this study is ultimately about reducing poverty, the deep-seated reasons for each NPO's purpose and its mission are uniquely different. Addressing the issues in each of these contextual elements singularly is a complex task but fully comprehending how they "interact with each other in unanticipated ways to create a new reality" (Britt, 2016, p. 2-3) heightens the level of complexity. Furthermore, the NPOs participating in this research study focus mainly on marginalized populations where there are often individual elements of intersectionality such as gender, race, and class that overlap and compound issues of discrimination and disadvantage. As the NPOs attempt to take a more inclusive and equitable approach to sustainable development where the voices and needs of the people and communities most impacted are heard and understood (OECD, 2018, p. 41) it becomes evident that the engagement of multiple and diverse stakeholder groups to participate in the development and implementation of the initiatives adds even greater complexity. The study demonstrates that consideration of the multitudinous combinations of these diverse elements or context that must be taken into account, fully understood, and assessed makes solutioning for international development initiatives extremely complex.

While the NPOs recognize the value of using collective or community knowledge to make decisions and taking action to make effective change, integrating differences in the perspectives of funders and donors, staff and volunteers, experts, partner organizations (domestic and foreign) and perhaps most significantly the recipient community and its cultural, economic and geographical elements can be a huge undertaking for any NPO let alone one of small or medium size with notoriously scarce resources. It lends credence to the criticality of gaining a substantive understanding of what the knowledge needs and sharing strategies are for non-profit international development organisations that will result in sustainable initiative outcomes in the communities in which they work.

The study was based on the premise that knowledge management is "about creating and managing the process to get the right knowledge to the right people at the right time and help people share and act on information in order to improve organizational performance" (O'Dell & Hubert, 2011, p. 2). As the research unfolded it became clear that it is more about enabling people to obtain or draw upon the knowledge they need to support efficient and effective decision-making pertaining to project results and outcomes.

The theories of Snowden and Boone (2007) pertaining to knowledge needed for decision-making in complex organizational and situational contexts (p. 73-74) provided great insight into what the findings of the study revealed. They explained the characteristics of a complex context by contrasting it with a complicated context. The latter consists of many *interconnecting parts* or elements where at least one right answer exists like in the continuous operation of a machine. The former consists of many *interacting individuals* or elements that are unpredictable where no right answers exist like in the relationships between different people, circumstances, and situations in social change and development (Westley et al., 2006; Britt, 2016). The distinguishing aspect between a complicated and complex context was the ability to predict how a machine or process will act (complicated) but not a human being (complex). In relation to understanding the knowledge needed to support decision-making for solutioning in development initiatives the significance of this is further amplified in Kurtz & Snowden's (2003) critical distinction between efficiency and effectiveness where, "Human groups need to be effective; machines and structured human interactions (such as manufacturing processes or the application of rules of engagement) need to be efficient" (p. 482). For instance, when contemplating a process an FPO might apply in a complicated context such as producing vehicles, it is not difficult to picture a series of steps and actions (procedures) taken in order to move the product through to completion in the most cost-efficient way possible. The steps or actions employed are continually analysed for business process improvement opportunities to increase efficiencies and the official or formal documented procedure is updated accordingly.

Though several studies (Cardoso et al., 2012; Hume & Hume, 2008; Hurley & Green, 2005) indicate that KM processes are actions such as engaging, creating, acquiring, sharing and using knowledge to increase organizational effectiveness the NPOs in this study made little or no mention of formal documented procedures for performing these activities. Understanding that there is no general formula or right answers in a complex context where development projects are rarely if ever the same holds that following a formally designed process is not likely to be efficient or effective. However, the research discovered that the content of formally documented sources such as stories, lessons learned, and good practices outlining what did and did not work in similar situations can be useful when perusing for applicability to a current set of circumstances. Of even greater benefit was the many informal practices of creating and sharing community knowledge among the multi-stakeholder groups. The findings reflected Riege's (2005) notion that formal knowledge sharing processes may not necessarily be needed because "It is mostly in informal networks that people trust each other, voluntarily share knowledge and insights with each other, and collaborate actively and willingly" (p. 25). This was found to be particularly the case when the NPO is addressing complex situations where they need to bring in whoever is needed at the time and usually do so in an informal way. Many of the NPOs repeated that they can build on the practical experience of an individual or group and use the knowledge that is applicable but must be careful of trying to replicate something that worked in one development project that does not fit the context of another.

This is of great significance for the reason that Polanyi (1966) believed that practical knowledge is tacit knowledge which resides only within individuals and is difficult to articulate such as “expertise, know-how, know-why, and care-why” (Dalkir, 2011, p. 10). Tacit or practical knowledge differs from explicit knowledge which can be described as content in documents and databases (Connell et al., 2003, p. 141) such as policies, processes, and procedures. This is not to say that knowledge is one type or the other. In fact, Tsoukas (2005) brought forth that Polanyi (1966) considered “even the most explicit kind of knowledge is underlain by tacit knowledge” (p. 15) due to its origin in the mind of the knower (Dalkir, 2011, p. 48). It is, however, important for the purposes of this study to have a general conception of the properties of tacit and explicit knowledge (see Table 1) when determining the right type of knowledge based on the organization’s needs, its context, and the value it carries (International Organization for Standardization, 2017, p. 15) to deliver desired results and outcomes in the communities it serves.

Through the in-depth insights provided by 15 interview participants representing 10 non-profit international development organizations it was determined that the community knowledge they tend to seek out to deliver impactful and sustainable initiative outcomes is of an experiential or practical (tacit) nature. It is experiential in the sense that it is those with sound knowledge gained through personal experience or acquired expertise (Rathi et al, 2014, p. 8) that the NPOs reach out to exchange ideas, knowledge and learning from similar contexts. It most often leads to some form of social interaction to solve complex international development problems as there is no manual or defined process as there might be in complicated for-profit purpose driven organizations (i.e., product or service delivery). The NPOs understand that though it is unlikely to encounter the exact same contexts in their development initiatives because they are complex, there exists prior knowledge that can be examined for applicability and built on. In light of these findings the discipline of knowledge management, as it pertains to the non-profit international development practitioners in this study, may not be so much about getting the right knowledge *to* the right people but getting the right knowledge *from* the right people at the right time to help people share and act on information in order to make efficient and effective decisions.

It is important to reiterate that there is no one right way or the other to approach international development in terms of knowledge needs and sharing practices. However, the research does tend to indicate that capital missions with complicated contexts lend themselves more to formal processes for efficiency purposes and social missions with complex contexts lean toward practices, mostly informal, for effectively delivering desired outcomes. Further, tacit knowledge tends to be shared in the form of informal practices which are actions or activities largely social in nature while explicit knowledge tends to be shared in the form of formal processes that follow a procedure and does not require human interaction to perform. As Figure 10 is designed to generally illustrate knowledge properties and sharing tendencies within the context of the study it may understate the complexity and informal sharing that also occurs in for-profit organizations.

In an effort to support small and medium sized non-profit organizations, especially those with an international development focus, it would be helpful to conduct further study on how NPOs may be able to better position themselves for demonstrating to potential funders its capacity to deliver an integrated and holistic sustainability effort that provides the greatest benefit to the communities where investments are made. Further exploration of the continually emerging social enterprise sector, whether structured as a for-profit or non-profit entity, has the potential to discover a powerful interdisciplinary approach to where resources may be directed for optimizing knowledge management practices required to deliver on sustainable organizational mission outcomes.

Recommendations

The elements of knowledge needs and sharing practices identified by the research study's small and medium-sized NPOs working in the international sustainable development context varied depending on the community knowledge required to deliver on its respective mission outcomes. There were, however, core variables that emerged from connecting and consolidating the subthemes across all the community knowledge stakeholder categories. Some of the more common strategic elements, mostly of a social tacit or collective type knowledge, that employ sharing practices of a social interaction nature, are outlined for the consideration of similar type NPOs wishing to improve impactful and sustainable development initiatives.

Connections and partnerships. The knowledge that small and medium sized NPOs have of the people and the communities in which they work is generally acquired through the building of long-standing trusted relationships. Many of the international development practitioners are either connected to the community on a personal level through their own experiences and/or the NPO they are associated with has been established in the geographical location over a long period of time. In either case the connections and relationships have led to an in-depth knowledge of the community's needs that has in some cases formed the raison d'etre for the NPO's mission or at the very least established a strong belief and support in the NPO's development efforts. Often this appears to be the case with resource funders and donors who also have some type of connection or attachment to the initiative be it the area of specialization, location, and even the fund-raiser (e.g., family, friends, colleagues). In the size of the NPOs studied there is typically a much smaller circle of key people with the capacity or know-how to implement impactful development initiatives that will be sustainable. However, should the NPO require assistance beyond their own expertise they have many connections and networks on which they can draw to provide substantive support and the willingness to assist in the advancement of the NPO's social mission. Recognizing the utmost importance of establishing connections and partnerships with those stakeholders that comprise the community knowledge group, it is perhaps the in-country community partner that is most valued. The in-country partner is representative of the impacted community with first-hand knowledge of its cultural context and the issues that can occur. They understand what works and what does not and how to get things done. Most significantly they have a vested interest in seeing initiatives through for the betterment of their communities.

Participation. The NPOs involved in this study have long since learned that the engagement and participation of multi-stakeholders and partners with mission interests is exceptionally beneficial to achieving desired results and outcomes. Nowhere is this more important than enabling the participation of the impacted community to play an active and influential role in bringing forth the challenges that affect their lives. What stood out in this study was the recognition that inclusion is especially important for the marginalized populations with whom these NPOs work and none more so than that of women and girls. Inclusion meant that not only was the ability to really *listen* deemed to be of great significance but more so for all voices to be heard and help shape outcomes. Further, encouraging representative participation fosters keen insights and lived experiences that can only be known by those who are most impacted. It promotes inclusive partnerships and buy-in from the community that are founded on trust and respect by means of consistent communication. Giving community stakeholder groups a voice in development initiatives increases the chances of it becoming more sustainable if they believe they have been heard and their needs have been addressed.

Collaboration. Having acknowledged the importance of multi-stakeholder participation in development initiatives, especially marginalized populations, the necessity of taking a step further to collaboration was recognized. While encouraging participation will bring about stakeholder involvement and the contribution of valuable input to the initiative it does not always lead to participants taking an active role in solutioning the problem. Whereas, in this study, collaboration is considered to be more than sharing multiple stakeholder perspectives. It is about *working together* in support and achievement of a shared vision and mission. It is seen on a number of different levels such as when NPOs share stories, lessons learned, and other experiences they have acquired on multiple projects with internal staff and volunteers and discuss their applicability to over-coming challenges on other projects. Collaboration was also seen when NPOs exchange knowledge and experiential learnings with other NGOs, subject matter experts, academia, and other resources in a determined attempt to arrive at a solution or to resolve an issue. Most notable in this study was the expansiveness of the collaborations that occurred between the NPO and its in-country community partners. In a few cases this partnership included in-country governments, universities and, of course, the community itself. However, it was the in-country or sometimes called implementing partner that the NPO hugely worked together and collaborated with to achieve the mission outcomes.

Decision-making. The purpose of making connections, encouraging participation, and engaging in collaboration is very much aligned with the revised notion that for the NPOs in this study, the practice of knowledge management is about creating and managing the process of getting the right knowledge from the right people at the right time to help people share and act on information in order to make efficient and effective decisions. It was observed that the vast majority of the NPOs recognized the value of using collective or community knowledge and how an integrated approach is not only effective but efficient in decision-making and taking action to enact change. Even so, it was evident that there was not always active and equal representation by all community stakeholder groups in the actual decision-making or official determination of the best solution to the problem(s) the NPO was attempting to resolve. Most noticeably under-represented at the decision-making table was the impacted community, who are largely marginalized populations, and especially women. This is not to say that they were not involved or did not participate in providing valuable input and greater clarity on identifying needs, issues, and problems. Many even collaborated on potential alternatives for addressing the core of the issues, but they did not always have a voice in the final selection of the alternative that would be put into action. This is an important consideration for NPOs as many recounted that working together for equitable decision-making has a profound effect on the lives of the impacted community as it is by them that the change must be embraced and sustained.

Building capacity. Working together with the impacted community was most often about building capacity and empowering its members to undertake the development, implementation, and sustainment of their own solutions to the problems they face in their everyday lives. In one way or another all of the NPOs talked about the importance of building capacity within the communities in which they work so that the benefits of the development initiative will persist beyond the NPO's involvement. Building capacity took the form of providing education and helping the communities develop and strengthen the skills, knowledge, and resources needed to sustain the development initiatives for which they will ultimately take ownership. Skills training, particularly as it pertained to building technological, leadership, and management capabilities, was essential to enable the community to move forward on its own volition. Also, important to understand is that capacity building is not specific to the impacted community but essentially encompasses all community stakeholder groups that contribute to community knowledge. This includes the NPO itself; its staff and volunteers; funders and donors; all levels of government, especially local; universities and other experts; community partners; and certainly, those most impacted by the initiative. Continually building capacity or know-how in the community knowledge stakeholder groups to enable impacted communities to solve their own problems reduces dependence on the NPO to sustain long-term development initiatives. NPOs who demonstrate that the application of the knowledge and know-how stemming from its collective experience results in the delivery of impactful development initiatives, that will be sustainable when they leave the community, lends it credibility and positions it as a worthy organization for the investing of funds and resources.

Begin with the end in mind. Perhaps one of the most difficult but important components of the development project plan is formulating an exit strategy due to the unknown unknowns in the complex world of international development. Though not all research participants have made devising an exit strategy a standard component in their project plan there was a dawning recognition of its value in establishing goals and objectives in conjunction with community stakeholders at the very start of the project. Some NPOs cautioned that if an exit strategy is not put into place at the beginning of a project it is very difficult to introduce one half-way through and even more so at its end. It is much better to update the exit strategy as development unfolds than it is not to have asked at the outset of the initiative if it will withstand the walk away test.

Exit strategy and long-term sustainability. As the purpose of the exit strategy is to basically ensure the long-term sustainability of benefits after the initiative ends, it makes good sense to collectively determine at the beginning what needs to be accomplished in preparation for the departure of the NPO and its support. A collective understanding of accomplishments or desired results and outcomes align well with the setting of objectives and their measurement and evaluation. However, the challenge with complex project environments is that though there is a shared vision and mission there is not a step by step approach with definitive measurement goals on how it will be attained. This underlies the criticality of understanding what long-term sustainability means to the impacted community and determining at what point they believe they will have the capacity in terms of knowledge, skills, resources, funding, etc., to take ownership of the initiative. The know-how required by the community to sustain long-term benefits after the NPO steps back supports the development of criteria for sustainability. It is advised to prepare with the community a development evaluation or systematic reflection plan that measures progress. Simply put, it is a reality check that monitors what is working and what is not. The measurement of objectives through constant communication, feedback, and consultation with partners and stakeholders is required to assess and provide for adaptations that must be made to the initiative to ensure the needs of the community are being met. Continue to question, will the efforts and results inspired by the NPO lead to sustainable outcomes and impacts where the community is better off and the benefits will persist long after their involvement?

References

Amadei, B. (2014). *Engineering for sustainable human development: A guide to successful small-scale community projects*. Reston, Virginia: American Society of Civil Engineers.

Avison, D., Lau, F., Myers, M., & Nielsen, P. (1999). Action research. *Association for Computing Machinery. Communications of the Acm,42*(1), 94-97.

Bloice, L., & Burnett, S. (2016). Barriers to knowledge sharing in third sector social care: A case study. *Journal of Knowledge Management, 20*(1), 125-145.

Blumberg, M. (2008). How Much Should a Canadian Charity Spend on Overhead such as Fundraising and Administration? Retrieved from https://www.canadiancharitylaw.ca/blog/how_much_should_canadian_charity_spend_on_overhead

Bowen, G.A. (2003). *Social Funds as a Strategy for Poverty Reduction in Jamaica: An Exploratory Study* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 3130417)

Bowen, G. A. (2005). Local-level stakeholder collaboration: A substantive theory of community-driven development. *Community Development, 36*(2), 73-88.

Bowen, G. A. (2008). Naturalistic inquiry and the saturation concept: A research note. *Qualitative Research, 8*(1), 137-152.

Britt, H. (2016). Complexity-aware Monitoring Discussion Note. *Available at: usaidlearninglab. org/.../discussion-note-complexity-aware-monitoring [Accessed: 9 September 2014]. United States Agency for International Development*, 1-13.

Cardoso, L., Meireles, A., & Ferreira Peralta, C. (2012). Knowledge management and its critical factors in social economy organizations. *Journal of knowledge management*, *16*(2), 267-284.

Carter, S., & Little, M. (2016). Justifying knowledge, justifying method, taking action: Epistemologies, methodologies, and methods in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research, 17*(10), 1316-1328. doi:10.1177/1049732307306927

Connell, N. A. D., Klein, J. H., & Powell, P. L. (2003). It's tacit knowledge but not as we know it: Redirecting the search for knowledge. *The Journal of the Operational Research Society, 54*(2), 140-152. Retrieved from https://ezproxy.royalroads.ca/login?url=https://search-proquestcom.ezproxy.royalroads.ca/docview/231257241?accountid=8056

Corfield, A. (2010). *Knowledge management in international development charities* (Order No. 10081831). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1779948604). Retrieved from https://ezproxy.royalroads.ca/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.royalroads.ca/docview/1779948604?accountid=8056

Corfield, A., Paton, R., & Little, S. (2013). Does knowledge management work in NGOs?: A longitudinal study. *International Journal of Public Administration*, *36*(3), 179-179.

Courtney, J. (2001). Decision making and knowledge management in inquiring organizations: Toward a new decision-making paradigm for DSS. *Decision Support Systems, 31*(1), 17-38.

Dalkir, K. (2011). *Knowledge management in theory and practice* (2nd ed.) Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. Retrieved from https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.royalroads.ca/lib/royalroads-ebooks/reader.action?docID=3339244

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 12*(2), 219-245.

Gilmour, J., & Stancliffe, M. (2004). Managing knowledge in an international organisation: The work of voluntary services overseas (VSO). *Records Management Journal, 14*(3), 124-128.

Given, L., Forcier, E., & Rathi, D. (2013). Social media and community knowledge: An ideal partnership for non-profit organizations. *Proceedings of the American Society for Information Science and Technology,50*(1), 1-11. doi:10.1002/meet.14505001064

Greenaway, K., & Vuong, D. (2010). Taking charities seriously: A call for focused knowledge management research. *International Journal of Knowledge Management, 6*(4), 87-97. doi:10.4018/jkm.2010100105

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. *Handbook of qualitative research*, *2*(163-194), 105.

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? *Field Methods, 18*(1), 59-82.

Helmig, B., Jegers, M., & Lapsley, I. (2004). Challenges in managing nonprofit organizations: A research overview. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, *15*(2), 101-116.

Hovland, I. (2003). *Knowledge management and organisational learning: An international development perspective: An annotated bibliography*. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Huck, J., Al, R., & Rathi, D. (2011). Finding KM solutions for a volunteer-based non-profit organization. *Vine, 41*(1), 26-40. doi:10.1108/03055721111115539

Hume, C., & Hume, M. (2008). The strategic role of knowledge management in nonprofit organisations. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing,13*(2), 129-140.

Hume, C., & Hume, M. (2016). What about us? Exploring small to medium Australian not for-profit firms and knowledge management. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, *20*(1), 104-124. https://doi.org/10.1108/JKM-12-2014-0497

Hurley, T. A., & Green, C. W. (2005). Knowledge management and the nonprofit industry: A within and between approach. *Journal of Knowledge Management Practice*, *6*(1), 1-10.

Hyde, C.A. (2003). Multicultural Organization Development in Nonprofit Human Service Agencies: Views from the Field. *Journal of Community Practice, 11*(1): 39–59.

International Organization for Standardization. (2017). *Draft international standard ISO/DIS 30401: Knowledge management systems - requirements*. Geneva: ISO.

Keddie, V. (2006). Case Study Method. In V. Jupp (Ed.), *The SAGE dictionary of social research methods* (pp. 20-21). doi 10.4135/9780857020116

King, K., & McGrath, S. (2002). Who is in the driving seat? Development cooperation and democracy. In *Learning, democracy and citizenship. Symposium, Oxford*.

Kinney, T. (1998). Knowledge management, intellectual capital and adult learning. *Adult Learning, 10*(2), 2-3. doi:10.1177/104515959901000201

Kipley, D., Lewis, A., & Helm, R. (2008). Achieving strategic advantage and organizational legitimacy for small and medium sized NFPs through the implementation of knowledge management. *Business Renaissance Quarterly, 3*(3), 21-42.

Kurtz, C., & Snowden, D. (2003). The new dynamics of strategy: Sense-making in a complex and complicated world. *IBM Systems Journal*, *42*(3), 462-483. doi:10.1147/sj.423.0462

Leaving no one behind. (2018, August 17). Retrieved from https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/sustainable/leaving-no-one-behind.html

Lettieri, E., Borga, F., & Savoldelli, A. (2004). Knowledge management in non-profit organizations. *Journal of Knowledge Management, 8*(6), 16-30.

Mataira, P., Morelli, P., Matsuoka, J., & Uehara-McDonald, S. (2014). Shifting the paradigm: New directions for non-profits and funders in an era of diminishing resources. *Social Business, 4*(3), 231-244. doi:10.1362/204440814X14103454934212

Mathison, S. (2005). *Encyclopedia of evaluation.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781412950558

Mougeot, L. (Ed.). (2017). *Putting knowledge to work: Collaborating, influencing, and learning for international development*. Rugby, UK: Practical Action Publishing.

Moorhead, J. (2016, February 4). From Widows to Indigenous People; Can the SDGs Really Leave No one Behind. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/nginteractive/2016/feb/04/sustainable-development-goals-marginalised-people-leave-no-one-behind

Nilsson, M., Chisholm, E., Griggs, D., Howden-Chapman, P., McCollum, D., Messerli, P., . . . Stafford-Smith, M. (2018). Mapping interactions between the sustainable development goals: lessons learned and ways forward. *Sustainability science*, *13*(6), 1489-1503.

Nonaka, I., & Takeuchi, H. (1995). *The Knowledge-Creating Company: How Japanese Companies Create the Dynamics of Innovation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

O'Dell, C., & Hubert, C. (2011). *The new edge in knowledge: How knowledge management is changing the way we do business*. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.

O'Leary, Z. (2007). Research credibility (post-positivist). *The Social Science Jargon Buster.* London: SAGE Publications Ltd. doi: 10.4135/9780857020147

OECD. (2018). Development co-operation policies and approaches to leave no one behind in *Development Co-operation Report 2018: Joining Forces to Leave No One Behind*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/dcr-2018-14-en.

Participatory Methods. (n.d.). About Participatory Methods. Retrieved from http://www.participatorymethods.org/page/about-participatory-methods

Ragsdell, G. (2009). Inhibitors and enhancers to knowledge sharing: lessons from the voluntary sector. *Journal of Knowledge Management Practice*, *10*(1), 1-9.

Ragsdell, G., Espinet, E., & Norris, M. (2014). Knowledge management in the voluntary sector: A focus on sharing project know-how and expertise. *Knowledge Management Research & Practice*, *12*(4), 351-361. doi:10.1057/kmrp.2013.21

Ragsdell, G., & Jepson, A. (2014). Knowledge sharing: insights from Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) Festival volunteers. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, *5*(3), 279-296.

Rathi, D., Given, L., & Forcier, E. (2014). Understanding the Types of Knowledge Representations that Meet Non-Profit Organizations' Knowledge Needs. *Proceedings of the American Society for Information Science and Technology,51*(1), 1-10. doi:10.1002/meet.2014.14505101051

Rathi, D., Given, L., & Forcier, E. (2016). Knowledge needs in the non-profit sector: An evidence-based model of organizational practices. *Journal of Knowledge Management, 20*(1), 23-48.

Riege, A. (2005). Three-dozen knowledge-sharing barriers managers must consider. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, *9*(3), 18-35.

Ringel-Bickelmaier, C., & Ringel, M. (2010). Knowledge management in international organisations. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, *14*(4), 524-539. doi:10.1108/13673271011059509

Robert, K., Parris, T., & Leiserowitz, A. (2005). What is Sustainable Development? Goals, Indicators, Values, and Practice. *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, 47(3), 8-21. doi:10.1080/00139157.2005.10524444

Robinson, J. (2004). Squaring the circle? Some thoughts on the idea of sustainable development. *Ecological Economics, 48*(4), 369-384. doi:10.1016/j.ecolecon.2003.10.017

Robinson, P., & Dale, A. (2012). Generational Responses: Why a Third? In W. Dushenko, A. Dale, & P. Robinson (Eds.), *Urban sustainability: Reconnecting space and place* (pp. 13-28). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Smith, S., Willms, D., & Johnson, N. (1997). *Nurtured by knowledge: Learning to do participatory action research*. IDRC, Ottawa, ON, CA.

Snowden, D., & Boone, M. (2007). A leader's framework for decision making. *Harvard Business Review, 85*(11), 68-76.

Stein, D., & Valters, C. (2012). *Understanding theory of change in international development.* (JSRP and TAF collaborative project) (JSRP Paper 1). Justice and Security Research Programme, International Development Department, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK.

Supyuenyong, V., & Swierczek, F. (2013). Knowledge management process and organizational performance in SMEs. *International Journal of Knowledge Management, 7*(2), 1-21. doi:10.4018/jkm.2011040101

Sustainable Development Goals Fund. (n.d.). *From MDGs to SDGs.* Retrieved from https://www.sdgfund.org/mdgs-sdgs

Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs

Sustainable Development Solutions Network. (2015). *Getting Started with the Sustainable Development Goals: A Guide for Stakeholders*. Retrieved from http://unsdsn.org/resources/publications/sdg-guide-getting-started-with-the-sdgs

Tsoukas, H. (2005). Do we really understand tacit knowledge? *Managing Knowledge: An Essential Reader*, *107*.

Tomlinson, B. (2016). *Small and medium-sized Canadian civil society organizations as development actors: A review of evidence*. (Deslibris). Halifax, NS, CA: Inter-Council Network. (2016).

Van der Hoogte, L., & Kingma, K. (2004). Promoting cultural diversity and the rights of women: The dilemmas of 'intersectionality' for development organisations. *Gender and Development, 12*(1), 47-55.

Wellens, L., & Jegers, M. (2016). From Consultation to Participation: The Impact of Beneficiaries on Non-profit Organizations' Decision Making and Output. *Non-profit Management and Leadership*, *26*(3), 295-312. doi:10.1002/nml.21191

Westley, F., Patton, M., & Zimmerman, B. (2006). *Getting to maybe: How the world is changed*. Toronto: Random House Canada.

White, S. (1996). Depoliticising development: The uses and abuses of participation. *Development in Practice*, *6*(1), 6-15.

Wiig, K. (1993). *Knowledge management foundations: Thinking about thinking: How people and organizations create, represent, and use knowledge*. Arlington, Tex.: Schema Press.

Appendix A

Invite to Prospective Research Participants

I am excited to embark on a study of the following topic, to be conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies graduate degree at Royal Roads University: **Knowledge management and non-profit organizations: catalyzing sustainable international development**. The purpose of the research is to identify what small and medium-sized international development non-profit organizations (NPOs) need in terms of knowledge in order to catalyze impactful and sustainable outcomes in the communities in which they work.

I will be conducting interviews with Alberta based small and medium-sized international development NPOs whose areas of specialization are either education, health services, or water and sanitation and work in one of the geographical locations; Africa, Asia, or Latin America. Based on the work you do in these communities; I respectfully request you as an interview participant. For those of you who may be familiar with me, and to eliminate any conflict, perceived or otherwise, I would like to make clear that this research study is separate from my volunteer position at the Fig Tree Foundation. It is in no way associated with the foundation's process of reviewing and/or awarding funding to member organizations.

It is your vast experience that can contribute much to understanding the realities of knowledge management practices that engage diverse stakeholder groups and community participation in a collective approach to developing and implementing sustainable initiatives that will be explored. In private conversation I will ask you to share with me your organization's needs in terms of engaging, sharing and using knowledge among the recipient individuals/community, staff/volunteers, funders/donors, experts/experienced, community partners/stakeholders, and community culture as it pertains to impactful and sustainable initiatives. The interview will follow a semi-structured guideline. It will take about 90 minutes to complete with the possibility of follow-up questions for clarification at a later date. Though the entire interview will be recorded, the respondent is anonymous and the information is confidential. I will use code numbers or pseudonyms on all recordings and transcripts to disguise the participants.

Foreseeable risks of the study are minimal to none and there are no direct benefits to you as an interviewee. However, the study is intended to provide valuable insights for NPOs to better position themselves for demonstrating to potential funders its capacity to deliver an integrated and holistic sustainability effort that provides the greatest benefit to the communities where investments are made. Upon approval the final thesis will be made publicly accessible at which time an email will be sent to all participants that contains a link to the research results.

You, of course, have the option to freely decide whether or not to participate in this research study with the absolute right to withdraw at anytime without consequence. However, once your comments become part of an anonymous data set I will no longer be able to distinguish it from other data for withdrawal. If you would like to provide your valuable input, please reply to this email as soon as possible so that we may schedule an interview at a time and place that is convenient for you. At that time, I will present the informed consent form (attached for your perusal) and secure your signature prior to the interview.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Dianne Losing

Appendix B

Research Participant Consent Form

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Certification of Consent

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print Name of Participant ______________________________

Signature of Participant ______________________________

Date ______________________________

day/month/year

Appendix C

Interview Guide Template

Interview Guide		
Community Knowledge		• comprised of the knowledge contributions from the following community stakeholder categories • represents the needs of creating/acquiring, sharing, and using knowledge about the community it works with to deliver collective sustainable initiative outcomes
Category		**Questions**
1	**Non-profit organisation (NPO)**	• small and medium-sized international development practitioners
		Q1. How would you describe your organization's primary work or area of specialization?
		Q2a. In what geographical location(s) does your organization perform this work? **Q2b. How did your organization come about working in the geographical location(s)?** (e.g., why the project was needed, how was the need expressed to you)
1.1	**Knowledge about Clients and Customers**	• recipient or beneficiary community being impacted/served
		Q3. How would you describe the people in the communities in which you work that are most impacted by the initiative(s)?
		Q4. How are they engaged to participate in the development and implementation of the project/program, particularly in decision making and long term "solutioning"? (e.g., needs assessment, project planning, buy-in, ownership, etc.)

		Q5. What is the community's perception of your organization and its beliefs? (e.g. what do they know about you, do they trust you and your approach to implementing a sustainable initiative, funder or partner?)
1.2	**Knowledge about Staff and Volunteers (internal)**	• knowledge, skills, and experience
		Q6. How and what do you look for in staff and volunteers to 'match' organizational initiatives? (e.g., align with organization's values, key/episodic volunteers, skills, experience, team player, etc.)
		Q7a. How do you incorporate their knowledge into the achievement of the organization's mission and goals? (e.g., mentor, share best practices and lessons learned, etc.)
		Q7b. Do they play a role in the decision making of the project/program design and implementation?
1.3	**Knowledge about Funders and Donors**	• provisions of resources and support for initiatives
		Q8. What is the perception funders/donors have of your organization and its approach? (e.g., capability to implement sustainable initiatives)
		Q9a. What do you need to know about potential funders/donors to apply/accept for funding?
		Q9b. What do you believe potential funders/donors need to know about you to make the decision to approve funding? (e.g., understand essential problem)
1.4	**Knowledge about Experts (external)**	• subject matter experts **-** provide unique insight valuable for the organization
		Q10a. How do you seek out and engage 'expert' resources external to the organization? (e.g. civil societies, other NGOs "in country", academia, etc.)
		Q10b. What type of role do they play in the decision making of the project/program design and implementation?

1.5	**Knowledge of Community Partners and Stakeholders**	• affiliations that partner (in-country) with the organization • strategic partnership in the community
		Q11. How does your organization seek out community partners or possible 'affiliations' that participate in the same social arena and/or are addressing the problem?
		Q12. What are the factors you consider for selecting the appropriate community partner to align with in the development and implementation of the initiative? (e.g., what you need to know about them, relationship building, trust, etc.)
		Q13. How is knowledge shared between your organization, the community partner, and the impacted community?
		Q14. What type of role do they play in the decision making of the project/program design and implementation?
1.6	**Cultural Knowledge**	• culturally aware of the variety of groups affected through the work of the NPOs and in the communities they serve (context)
		Q15a. How do you learn of the cultural elements in the community's everyday existence or way of life that have impacts on the initiative? (e.g. customary beliefs, local values, social forms, etc.)
		Q15b. How do these cultural elements impact how decisions are made? Please provide example(s).
2	**Sustainability**	**Q16. How does the work you do align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals?**
		Q17. How will your initiative become sustainable after the implementation is concluded?
		Q18. What is your exit strategy?