

Chapter-5

The Strategic Planning of NGOs: Assessing the efficacy

This chapter presents the analysis on strategic planning. In particular the chapter will discuss how well the NGOs studied implemented their strategic plans. It will also discuss how the NGOs managed the strategic planning process stages of preparation, formulation, implementation; and monitoring and evaluation and the roles and responsibilities carried out by key players in strategic planning process. These are the board, management, donors, consultants and communities or beneficiaries.

5.1 Implementation of the strategic plans

The strategic plans of the NGOs studied had two parts. These were project activities and organizational capacity building activities.

Table 5.1: Strategic plan implementation in BRO

Project Implementation	Rating
Improve service delivery activities	
Develop and implement beneficiary driven programs for volunteers	2
Improve internal and external communication	2
Implement a job oriented education program	3
Examine current modes of operation and institute measures aimed at decentralization and empowerment of crucial office bearers	3
Acquire vehicles, computers, video camera, satellite dish and relevant components, e-mail and printing equipment	3
Organizational Capacity Building	
To improve financial base and to be self-sustaining by the end of the strategic planning period	
To improve financial base and to be self-sustaining by the end of the strategic planning	1
Seek donor funds to finance construction of buildings and other rentable property	1
Reduce donor dependency by developing and implementing a number of fundraising activities e.g. selling publications, football matches etc.	0
Enforce timely remittance of membership fees	5
Review records and financial management system	4
Training in financial management	4
To improve core competencies, work ethics and image of leadership	
Diversify board membership to include other professionals who are not church leaders	0
Eliminate suspicions and mistrust from public through press conferences, publicity of the new vision and mission statement	3

Reduce dysfunctional appointments of executive members by developing a code of conduct and work ethics	2
Introduce modern, appropriate leadership styles conducive to open communication and criticism	2
Introduce a new business culture, monitor and maintain standards and discipline	3
Develop and implement a cultural change program	2
Develop an annual program of reviewing the strategic plan	3
To improve institutional capacity	
Conduct a functional and staffing review of head office and regional office	2
Filling identified posts	2
Develop career paths for staff members	3
Develop and implement appropriate staff development programs	3
Develop and implement management succession plans	2
Develop two way communication channels	2
Review conditions of service	2
Develop accurate job descriptions (with performance measures) for each job	0
Develop and implement an appropriate performance management tool together with guidelines	0
Develop and implement an appropriate performance appraisal together with its guide	0

Table 5.2: Strategic plan implementation in RGVN

Project Implementation	Rating
Communities behavior prevalence	
Increased access to income generating activities to vulnerable groups	3
Advocacy and lobby on access to modern technology in agriculture	4
Advocacy on access to youth friendly services	2
Availability of youth friendly centers	5
Livelihood security	
Ensure that targeted communities have access to economic resources	3
Empower the communities with skills in sustainable utilization and management of natural resources	3
Instill a sense of responsibility and ownership in the rehabilitation of natural resources	2
Promotion and protection of human rights	
Increase community understanding of human rights	4
Grants provision	3
Organizational Capacity Building	
Financial sustainability	
Ensure RGVN has adequate financial, material and human resources to effectively deliver its services	4
Organizational Structure	

Ensure RGVN's structure clearly matches with its strategy	4
Policies, systems and procedures	
Identify and develop the needed policies, systems and procedures	3
Governance	
Conduct board training to clarify roles and responsibilities of the board	0
Reinforce tenure periods of current board members	4
Diversify board membership by including youths and a financial professional	4
Internal relationships	
Team building intervention	4
Identify ways of attracting, retaining and motivating staff	4

Table 5.3: Strategic plan implementation in NEADS

Project Implementation	Rating
Improved priority services	
Improve services in program areas	4
Improve members' access to facilities	4
Improve quality of life of members' life e.g. nutrition	4
Organizational capacity building	
Improved and effective governance and management performance	
Establish relevant and functional governance/management structures and policies	2
Improve and sustain leadership capacity	3
Improve management and governance accountability to stakeholders	3
Enhanced coordination and implementation of programs	
Improve coordination of NEADS programs	2
Improve understanding of NEADS Program priorities and goals among stakeholders	3
Improved institutional capacity	
Improve the human resource development and management for NEADS staff and volunteers	4
Improve the sustainability of NEADS programs resource base	3
Improve the name recognition for NEADS	4
Improved environment for protection of downstream people's rights	
Improve the participation and involvement of public in program and policy decision making	3
Improve the respect for rights for underprivileged people	2
Establish an policy for staff and volunteers on office management	5

Table 5.4: Strategic plan implementation in DBC

Program implementation	Rating
Foster behavior change with regard to HIV and AIDS	2
Empower the youths and their communities	3
Contribute towards the fight against HIV and AIDS among children	0

and the youths	
Strengthen youths empowerment initiatives	4
Lobby and advocate for policy development, review and implementation	4
Acquisition of Life skills by the youth	3
Internal capacity building	
Expand the financial and material resource base	2
Develop a staff, board and volunteer development plan	0
Develop appropriate policies, systems and procedures	3

Table 5.5: Strategic plan implementation in SKD

Project Implementation	Rating
Research, documentation and information dissemination	0
Training in human rights, gender and governance issues	4
Facilitating capacity building and networking	4
Process interventions for partner Organizations	0
Grants provision	4
Capacity development in resource mobilization and utilization for partner CSO	3
Internal Capacity Building	
Expanding and diversifying the financial resource base for sustainability	2
Develop and implement a skills and competences development plan	3
Review policies, systems and procedures	0
Review roles and responsibilities within secretariat	2
Develop and implement a board development plan	3
Promote the changed image and identity of SKD as an people friendly organization	0
Develop a public relations policy to enhance relations with stakeholders	1
Cultivate and enhance a culture of tolerance to promote shared values	2

Table 5.6: Strategic plan implementation in CRD

Project implementation	Rating
Foster behavior change with regard to Rikshaw Pullers	2
Empower the youths and the communities	2
Contribute towards the financial sustainability among the Rikshaw Pullers	2
Strengthen youths empowerment initiatives	3
Lobby and advocate for policy development, review and implementation	4
Acquisition of Life skills by the youth in relation to their opportunities	0
Internal capacity building	
Expand the financial and material resource base	2
Develop a staff, board and volunteer development plan	0
Develop appropriate policies, systems and procedures	3
Review roles and responsibilities within secretariat	4
Develop and implement a board development plan	2
Promote the changed image and identity as an people friendly organization	0

Develop a public relations policy to enhance relations with stakeholders	2
Cultivate and enhance a culture of tolerance to promote shared values	3

Table 5.7: Strategic plan implementation in SSA

Project Implementation	Rating
Research, documentation and information dissemination	0
Training in human rights, gender and governance issues	1
Facilitating capacity building and networking	3
Capacity development in resource mobilization and utilization for partner Organisations	1
Internal capacity building	
Expanding and diversifying the financial resource base for sustainability	2
Develop and implement a skills and competences development plan	0
Review policies, systems and procedures	1

Table 5.8: Strategic plan implementation in SDCCC

Project Implementation	Rating
Foster behavior change with regard to communities on personal hygiene	2
Empower the youths and their communities	2
Contribute towards the fight against exploitations among children and the youths	2
Strengthen youths empowerment initiatives	1
Lobby and advocate for policy development, review and implementation	0
Acquisition of Life skills by the youth	1
Internal capacity building	
Expand the financial and material resource base	2
Develop a staff, board and volunteer development plan	1
Develop appropriate policies, systems and procedures	2

Table 5.9: Strategic plan implementation in TDMS

Project implementation	Rating
Empower the women through livelihood opportunities	3
Strengthen youths empowerment initiatives	2
Lobby and advocate for policy development, review and implementation	1
Acquisition of Life skills by the youth	1
providing Education to the children	2
Internal capacity building	
Expand the financial and material resource base	2
Develop appropriate policies, systems and procedures	2

5.1.1 Performance of the NGOs studied in project implementation: On project strategies, the NGOs studied were generally more successful in implementing transactional (resource transfer and provision to communities and beneficiaries) than transformational

strategies. Transformational strategies are those aimed at bringing about lasting deeper change at community or beneficiary level (Covey, 281-282). Transformational project activities promote the rights of human agents to engage with and transform determining structures that maintain the status quo whether embodied in the state or the market (Wood, 3).

The tables above show that the NGOs studied, on project implementation, generally, managed to:

- Improve access to services and facilities to the beneficiaries;
- Supporting youth friendly centers and;
- Improve community awareness of human rights.

They generally failed to:

- Lobby and advocate for policy development, implementation and review,
- Facilitate process interventions among partner CSOs,
- Conduct research, documentation and information dissemination and;
- Instill a sense of ownership and responsibility among communities and beneficiaries.

The failure to effectively implement ‘transformative’ project strategies and their activities indicate that the NGOs studied were still at a lower stage of development and therefore had less capacity.

5.1.2 Performance of the studied NGOs on capacity building: On capacity building strategies, the studied NGOs were generally more effective in acquiring resources and building skills and competences. They were less effective in process interventions; and collaboration and networking. In capacity building, they managed to:

- Improve financial and human resource base,
- Define roles and responsibilities within the organization and
- Develop some organizational policies, systems and procedures.

They have however generally failed to:

- Ensure financial and organizational sustainability,
- Implement effective staff, board and volunteer development plans,
- Implement effective organizational policies, systems and procedures and
- Develop collaboration and networking strategies.

Based on the self-assessments of the implementation of the strategic plans the average level of implementation for all the NGOs was 46%. The level of implementation was higher for project activities (60%) as compared to organizational capacity building activities (40%).

While the NGOs studied generally accused donors of not being enthusiastic about organizational capacity building which the donors did not deny, the donors also pointed out that the studied NGOs rarely included requests for organizational capacity building in their funding proposals. The donors said, this could be out of ignorance of the importance of capacity building on the part of the organizational leaders or it could be deliberate as capacity building implies improving the organization's professionalism that may stand in the way of 'selfish motives of some leaders'. For example, capacity building may mean putting in place financial policies, systems and procedures that may make it difficult to abuse the organization's money. The low organizational capacity of the NGOs studied was a major explanation of the low implementation levels of the project activities because organizations 'cannot deliver beyond their capacity'.

Because of the general lack of higher level capacities the studied NGOs could only succeed in implementing transactional rather than transformational activities. Low investment in capacity building can only lead to ineffectiveness in strategic planning implementation.

The strategic plans' contribution to the NGOs studied' legitimacy, relevance and sustainability are discussed below. This discussion will shed some light on the benefits the NGOs studied obtained from implementing the strategic plans. This will be followed by a discussion on the reasons the NGOs studied went through the strategic planning process and how the different reasons affected the implementation of the strategic plans.

5.2 The strategic plans' contribution to the studied NGOs legitimacy, relevance and sustainability: Direct attribution of change to one particular process such as strategic planning is difficult because there are so many factors at play. What is both possible and paramount is to 'plausibly associate' changes with the strategic planning process (James, 2; French and Bell, 334). These changes will be discussed under legitimacy, relevance and sustainability. Since strategic planning is aimed at achieving relevance, legitimacy and sustainability, an indication of these as a result of the strategic planning process is an indicator of the effectiveness of the strategic planning processes in the NGOs studied.

5.2.1 Legitimacy: Gaining legitimacy means listening to the people the NGO serves and also listening to the context (Bose, 172). This may mean involving the people in identifying projects and in managing the projects. Where this is not possible it may mean finding ways that will make the people identify with the projects and how they are run. In short, legitimacy translates into ownership of the organization and its services by the people it serves. Legitimacy makes it possible for the NGO to institutionalize itself among the beneficiaries or to become part of the value system of the people it serves.

BRO, RGVN, SKD, NEADS, CRD and DBC were able to show how the implementation of their strategic plans has helped to improve their organizational legitimacy. Through the implementation of the strategic plan, most religious communities recognize BRO and SKD as important institutions and they are happy to be associated with it. They work through churches and community based organizations, which are the strongest grassroots groups. Committees from these institutions are entrusted with responsibilities and resources, which make them feel part and parcel of BRO and SKD. It is important to note however that BRO's legitimacy is linked to 'political issues but not basic needs that most people consider more important'.

RGVN, NEADS, DBC and CRD observed that with the implementation of their strategic plans, there is more ownership of their activities by the communities they target. They are building centers that the communities 'regard as their own'.

SSA, SDCCC and TDMS were not able to articulate how the strategic plan has helped them to improve their legitimacy. BRO and RGVN among others have managed to transform themselves into institutions or valued organizations among to the people they serve. BRO has managed to achieve this because people identify with its religious identity and values. RGVN has managed to do this because it is a youth led organization targeting the youths, the targeted youths and communities are therefore able to identify with the organization. Other NGOs studied do not yet have adequate resources to them to entrench themselves among the youths as well as communities they serves. Their relationship with their partners is therefore often more transactional than transformational as it is based on resource transfer and provision.

5.2.2 Relevance: Relevance is closely related to the purpose or justification of the existence of the NGO. Relevance means having the right purpose and that purpose being

translated in desirable changes in the lives of the people the organization serves. It goes beyond just providing a relevant service or project to having that service transforming people's lives (Smith, 14-15). Relevance highlights the role of NGOs as civil society organizations where building civil society means 'empowering individuals to live in the modern world' (Grugel, 89). Kiondo et al (1999) observed that most local NGOs concentrate on providing basic services rather than genuine empowerment of the communities they serve.

The NGOs studied like SSA, SDCCC and TDMS were not able to demonstrate relevance as much as the BRO, SKD, RGVN, NEADS, CRD and DBC. Even among the NGOs studied, it was only BRO and RGVN that were able to demonstrate relevance resulting from the implementation of its strategic plan. For instance when issues to do with abuse of human rights or governance at local level or intervention come up, people in the respective areas look up to BRO and RGVN the 'voice of the voiceless'. NEADS played a key role in mobilizing people to fight for the affected downstream population of big dams. While their partners felt the role NEADS was playing as a 'resource and capacity building service provider' was very relevant, NEADS was not very comfortable with this role because it was becoming more and more difficult to get donor funding in this role. In contrast, SKD was able to raise funds for supporting their partner Community Based Organizations (CBOs). This again points out to the apparent difference between donors funding for religious organization and other NGOs. While funding for organizational capacity building in general is dwindling, grassroots community based NGOs like SSA, SDCCC and TDMS seem to be more affected than their counterparts studied.

DBC works for Female Sex Workers in one of the townships in Cachar District. DBC attributed the developments among the masses to their civic education efforts which they were doing along their HIV and AIDS activities.

Generally, NGOs that had more relevance in the past, like SSA, TDMS and SDCCC could not keep its pace with their counterparts because of their faults in designing strategy.

5.2.3 Sustainability: The sustainability of an NGO is closely related to its relevance in the sense that those NGOs that are making a difference or bringing about real change will be more attractive to donors and other sources of resources. They will also be more owned by the people the NGO serves.

Implementing the strategic plans generally led to an improvement in the financial and organizational sustainability of the NGOs studied. Organizationally, BRO has an image that people believe in. This has been the major source of its sustainability. As a result of the goodwill BRO has never had any funding crisis. As a result of the strategic plan RGVN has managed to secure a long term partnership agreements with donors after the formulation of the strategic plan.

NEADS has diversified its donor base though they are still struggling to find donors to fund their core business of 'capacity building for human rights of Community Based Organizations'. SKD, CRD and DBC have managed to improve their financial and organizational sustainability. They have diversified their donor base and financial resources. DBC has managed to raise its own money and with funding from some donors has managed to build its own offices, a guesthouse and a youth center. In areas where DBC has stopped working because projects came to an end the committees continue to function on their own. This is rare amongst most NGOs. Soon after leaving a community, the projects and their benefits also cease.

BRO, RGVN, CRD, NEADS, SKD and DBC have managed to become relatively more financially and organizationally sustainable as compared to SSA, SDCCC and TDMS. The challenge for NGOs to become more financially and organizationally sustainable is to demonstrate more relevance and earn more legitimacy from the communities they serve and their funding partners but these NGOs could not perform at par.

Efforts to become financially and organizationally sustainable however, were generally not supported by donors. BRO's efforts to become financially and organizationally sustainable to constructing their own buildings and offices were not supported by donors. Efforts to raise their own resources to this goal were not successful because, 'they could not find viable activities that could raise substantial financial resources'. RGVN had the same experience. Donors were not willing to support them on their plans to invest in acquiring their own premises and offices for example. BRO got Rupees 10, 00,000.00 per year through consultancies towards the goals of achieving financial sustainability but could not invest the money towards this end. Achieving sustainability therefore would require adequate resources for running the current programs or having extra money on top of the money required for running the current programs. It would also require a clear strategy or

plan on how that money would be used. BRO did not have such a plan and neither did they have a special group of people to take responsibility of this major task. This also means that achieving sustainability would require commitment from leadership to ensure that such mechanisms are in place. In short, financial sustainability efforts must go hand in hand with organizational sustainability efforts.

While it is generally difficult to get donor money for organizational capacity building, it is worth noting that RGVN, BRO, NEADS, SKD and CRD were quite successful in getting this type of support. A donor has funded RGVN to ‘comprehensively build its organizational capacity’. Before going through the strategic planning process, CRD was renting small offices in a small building. Now they have moved to a larger building and they are renting an entire floor. The offices are better equipped. They have recruited almost all the professional staff within the same period. The staff number has increased from 7 to 26. This has improved the organization’s image. In the same period DBC has diversified its donor base beyond three donors to nine. As a result of the above investment in capacity building, CRD has managed to increase its membership from 32 to 200 members and there are a 100 more Community Based Organizations (CBOs) who are currently being assessed for membership. There is more transparency among the CBOs being served. There is an increasing awareness of sharing responsibilities and improved leadership in the CBOs. It is therefore not all donors who are not enthusiastic about organizational capacity building.

The challenge for all the NGOs studied is to find more viable alternative sources of income at the scale that donors are currently funding them and to gradually reduce their dependence on donor funding or to develop capacity to negotiate for ‘quality funding’ that facilitates rather than hinder the strategic planning. BRO and RGVN seem to be moving in the right direction. The implementation of their strategic plans as a result of these efforts also seems to be responding positively.

5.3 Reasons for calling for the strategic planning process: The NGOs studied went through the strategic planning process for a number of reasons. These were: following a donor imposition, recognizing the need to be more focused and identify organizational priorities, to get a funding or marketing tool and as a chronological requirement.

5.3.1 Following a Donor: SDCCC, TDMS and SSA went through strategic planning process because donors specifically asked them to do so. The donors felt these

organizations lacked focus and that the strategic planning process would help them to become more focused. Those NGOs that went through the strategic planning process because donors asked them to do so, demonstrated less ownership to the strategic plan. TDMS did not even bother to get the final draft of the strategic plan document. Only the director and a few board members knew about the strategic plan. SSA never consciously referred to the strategic plan except for ‘proposal writing’ purposes.

5.3.2 Recognizing the need to have a strategic plan: SKD, CRD, NEADS and DBC consciously felt that they were operating in a haphazard manner and that they were doing too many things or spreading themselves too thin. They felt they needed to focus more in order to make more impact. Though the strategic planning process was self-initiated as compared to SDCCC, TDMS and SSA, these NGOs also felt that a strategic plan document was a donor requirement and that it was a prerequisite for funding. They therefore also developed the strategic plan document as a fundraising tool. Specifically, DBC and SKD consciously went through their strategic planning process with the aim of achieving long-term financial and organizational sustainability.

5.3.3 Chronological requirement: Finally, BRO and RGVN also went through the strategic planning process because their previous strategic plans had expired. In other words they went through the strategic planning process as a ‘chronological requirement’ while the other organizations (whose strategic planning processes were the first ones) went through the strategic planning process because they felt strategic plans were a ‘new requirement for NGOs’.

Those NGOs that had undergone the strategic planning process for more than one time (BRO and RGVN) outperformed those that went through the strategic planning process for the first time. They seemed to gain from a better understanding and appreciation of the strategic planning process and better experience in the organization and choice of resource persons to help facilitate the process.

5.4 The strategic planning process: This section will discuss how the NGOs studied managed the strategic planning process stages of preparation, formulation, implementation; and monitoring and evaluation.

5.4.1 Preparation: The NGOs prepared for their strategic planning processes differently. BRO, NEADS, SKD, CRD and DBC prepared for the strategic planning process by

developing a 'working mission statement' to guide the formulation of the strategic plan. BRO provided all the resources regarding the strategic planning with support from a donor. TDMS and SSA did not have any prior meetings at board or management levels to make preparations from the strategic planning process. There were no individuals assigned with the responsibility to manage the strategic planning process in SDCCC.

SKD, CRD DBC, RGVN, BRO and NEADS however, conducted assessments with their beneficiaries to get their input into the strategic planning process. In addition to the community assessments, BRO and RGVN also conducted internal organizational assessments. Through the assessments all members of staff and the board contributed to the process by stating their perceived organizational priorities. Even those who did not eventually participate in the strategic plan formulation workshop made their input at this stage. The assessment findings were discussed among the members of staff as a way of preparing for the formulation workshop. They invested considerably into the preparation for the strategic planning process.

BRO and RGVN made relatively better preparations for their strategic planning processes. This would seem to indicate that better preparations leads to better performance of the strategic plans formulated.

The NGOs studied show that for preparation of the strategic planning processes to be effective 5 points are critical. These are: clarifying the purpose of strategic planning, ensuring a collective understanding of the strategic planning process, ensuring ownership by organization of the process and support mechanisms to manage the process and need for an organizational assessment.

i. Understanding of the strategic planning process: In the NGOs studied, the understanding of the strategic planning process was low. There was an assumption among the key players in the strategic planning process that they understood the strategic planning process. Except BRO and RGVN all the studied NGOs went through the strategic planning for the first time. The results show a heightened understanding of the strategic planning and more benefits for BRO and RGVN. Conducting a strategic planning awareness activity would therefore be an important part of the preparation stage. Such an activity would enable the people in the organization to ask the questions they have and to express the

expectations and fears they may have so that the organization will reach a common understanding of the strategic planning process and what would make it effective.

a. Ownership of the strategic planning process: The NGOs studied that went through the strategic planning process because a donor asked them to do so, demonstrated less ownership to the strategic plan. TDMS did not bother to get the final draft of the strategic plan document. Only the secretary and a few board members knew about the strategic plan. TDMS's implementation of the strategic plan was mostly 'unconscious'. SSA never consciously referred to the strategic plan except for 'proposal writing purposes'.

b. Task forces to manage the strategic planning process: As a sign of readiness, the organization needs to put in place a task force or group of people to manage the strategic planning process. The task force takes the overall responsibility of driving the strategic planning process. None of the NGOs studied had a task force to manage the strategic planning process. This responsibility in the NGOs studied was mostly left with the director or no one at all. The lack of a task force or a group of people to manage the strategic planning process led to the absence of a team or individuals to 'hold the process' undermining its effectiveness as a result.

ii. Organizational assessments: None of the NGOs studied had formal assessments especially with the communities or beneficiaries during their preparation for their strategic planning processes. An organizational assessment helps to understand the organization, its environment, opportunities, challenges, strengths and weaknesses. Based on this understanding it is possible to determine the organization's priorities. BRO and RGVN had some partial assessments and they outperformed than other studied NGOs respectively.

The output of the preparation stage must be an ideal picture of the organization and its beneficiaries and the raw ideas to turn those pictures into reality. Another invisible output should be a way of thinking in the organization that will take the whole strategic planning process as a continuous organizational learning process.

Asking the organizational members to deeply reflect on why they need a strategic plan is one way of encouraging this strategic thinking in the organization.

The findings of the study are in agreement with the literature review which identified the following as being key issues to effective preparation for the strategic planning process:

- Recognizing the need for strategic planning.

- Putting in place a team to manage the strategic planning process.
- Agreeing on the roles and responsibilities of the team and other players in the process; and
- Conducting organizational and community assessments.

5.4.2 Formulation: A diverse group of participants attended the formulation workshops in all the NGOs studied. The participants included representatives of the board, management, donors and other NGOs and institutions.

DBC felt that the participants of the strategic planning formulation workshop were not given enough time to do a deeper analysis of the environment and the organization in order to arrive at effective strategic decisions. They felt that this happened because the workshop included activities, which were skipped during the preparation stage. As a result, they did not have enough time to articulate focus, projects, indicators, targets and budgets. They had to do extra work on the document produced after the workshop. They also felt that since they did not do adequate work during the preparation stage to identify their organizational priorities, the participants from the other organizations in the workshop ‘manipulated them as they pushed for priorities which were not essentially their own’.

RGVN and BRO however, managed to develop strategic plan documents that they were generally satisfied with. They were able to attribute this to adequate time invested in the preparation stage. Reflecting on their previous experience helped them to understand the current process better. They also attributed it to a better understanding and more experience of the same consultant who facilitated the previous strategic planning process.

It must be noted that both RGVN and BRO on one hand and NEADS, SKD, CRD and DBC on the other involved participants from other organizations in their formulation processes. RGVN and BRO indicated that the participants from the other organizations added some value through their participation. They said they were able to give them objectivity and independence which could be difficult to achieve if they were not involved. This was not the case in SSA, SDCCC and TDMS. They had given more attention to preparation internally before inviting the outsiders. As a result they knew generally what they wanted out of the process which made manipulation by the outsiders difficult. In addition RGVN and BRO said they gave an indication in their invitations of the type of people they would need to participate in their formulation process. They asked for people

whom they felt would add value through their experience and expertise. SSA, SDCCC and TDMS did not do this. Patel (101-105) emphasized that the quality of people participating in the strategic plan formulation is critical in deciding the effectiveness of the strategic planning process.

In all the NGOs studied however, the strategic plan document formulated was not consciously translated into a financial plan and budget. In addition, no support mechanisms were put in place to ensure effective implementation.

The table (5.10) presents the essential components of an effective strategic plan. It shows whether the strategic plans of the NGOs studied had these elements or not.

Table 5.10: Components of Strategic Plans

strategic plan element	BRO	RGVN	CRD	NEADS	SKD	DBC	SDCCC	SSA	TDMS
Analysis of organization's uniqueness	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
An ideal picture the organization is working towards future	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Vision statement	present	present	present	absent	present	present	present	present	present
Mission statement	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	Present	present
Values statement	present	present	present	absent	present	absent	absent	present	absent
External environmental scan	done partially	done	done	done partially	done	done partially	absent	absent	absent
Internal audit	done	done	done	done	done	done	absent	absent	absent
Conscious strategic choices and issues	partially done	done	partially done	not done	not done	not done	not done	not done	not done
Identification of goals	done	done	done	done	done	done	not done	not done	not done
Identification of strategies	mixed up with activities	done but not consciously used	done but not consciously used	mixed up with activities	done but not consciously used	mixed up with activities	not done	not done	not done
Identification of projects and activities	done	done	done	projects not clear	done	projects not clear	Projects not clear	Projects not clear	not done
Clarity of indicators and targets	clear indicators, no targets	clear indicators, no targets	clear indicators, no targets	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Financial plan and budget	present	present	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent

- i. Analysis of organizational uniqueness: In order to ensure focus and concentration, a strategic plan document is supposed to clearly identify what sets the organization apart from all the others. An analysis of this aspect is the basis for the organization's competitive advantage and the identification of its particular niche and particular strengths. An organization's unique contribution will only come when it consciously put its uniqueness to use. As a marketing and organizational self-motivation tool, the uniqueness 'statement' should form part of the introduction of the strategic plan document (Drucker, 50-52). All the NGOs studied did not conduct any assessments or analysis of their uniqueness.
- ii. Ideal picture: A strategic plan must show an agreed ideal picture of the organization some years from now. This picture acts as a destination towards which the whole organization is consciously moving. It describes what the people and stakeholders would like to see the organization by a certain date in various components like: material and financial resources; skills and competences; policies, systems and procedures; structure; programs; culture; values and leadership styles etc. The ideal picture acts as a magnet pulling the organization to its desired future. The picture also acts as a basis for gauging the general progress in achieving the goals in the strategic plan. All the NGOs did not have an ideal picture or destination that they were consciously moving towards.
- iii. Vision, mission and values statements: All the NGOs studied had vision statements. They also had mission statements. Three had values statements. The organizations however did not demonstrate consciousness of their visions and mission statements. Senior members of staff and board members when asked at random could not remember their organization's vision and mission statements. The values statements were mostly just a listing of the values without explaining what they mean in the context of the organization and how they would be lived practically.
- iv. External environmental scanning and internal audits: In the NGOs studied, environmental scanning was generally partially done. The SWOT analysis used in the external and internal analysis failed to come up with a trend analysis of what factors were shaping their organizational life like in the previous five to ten years and what predictions in the period to be covered by the strategic plan from these trends. In addition, the SWOT analysis lacked understanding of the national and international frameworks affecting the organizations.
- v. Making strategic choices: The external environmental scanning and internal audit point to the issues that the organization must respond to in terms of strategic choices.

Strategic choices guide the organization to what goals and strategies to pursue. Strategic choices enable the organization to concentrate its efforts and resources for maximum impact.

Coming up with strategic choices enables organizations to have space and time for deep reflection, articulate their change or development strategy and then the skills in translating this thinking into the actual strategic plan. The studied NGOs did not undergo this process of consciously making strategic choices or at least it was not deep enough. Lack of strategic choices is a major weakness that robs strategic plans of their power to move organizations forward.

vi. Strategies, projects and activities; indicators and targets: Most of the NGOs studied came up with strategies but more attention was paid to projects and activities as compared to the strategies. Much of the attention was paid especially those projects and activities that were likely to be funded by donors. Internal capacity strategies and activities were given even less attention relative to the project strategies and activities. Most of the NGOs studied did not have indicators and targets to assess the progress or the implementation of the strategic plans. This is one of the explanations why the monitoring and evaluation of the strategic plans was weak.

vii. Financial plan and budget: Financial planning is a process through which the NGO converts the activities in the strategic plan into an organizational budget for the whole period of the strategic plan, which indicates how much the NGO is worth during the period of strategic plan. That amount becomes the goal in fundraising that the organization must seek to attain. It is also an indicator of how much energy an NGO must put into its fundraising efforts. All the NGOs studied did not take their strategic planning documents to the stage of formulating financial plans and budgets.

The above analysis shows that the strategic plan documents produced were generally of poor quality. It is difficult to effectively implement; monitor and evaluate such plans. The NGOs studied show 3 causes that lay in the way of effective formulation of the strategic plan document. These were: the competence of the consultant, the ability of the participants to engage at a strategic level and the time allocated to the workshops.

viii. Consultants' competence: In all the NGOs studied the documents produced showed gaps in the consultants' competence. None of the documents had all the necessary components of a strategic planning document. None of the documents had

the ‘ideal pictures’ for the NGOs and their beneficiaries and yet the very purpose of strategic planning is to get to some destination. They were planning to get to the destinations that they did not know.

The models or processes used by consultants also showed gaps in their competence. An analysis of the process followed to formulate the preparation and formulation of the strategic plans did not show any particular model being followed. This confirms Patel’s (83) observation that there is a general lack of awareness of strategic planning models among consultants and organizations.

5.4.3 Implementation: Implementation converts the strategic plan document into actual work (Drucker, 45). All the NGOs studied did not have a clear mechanism to consciously implement their strategic plans. There were no people assigned with the responsibility to ensure effective implementation of the strategic plan. There were no deliberate efforts to communicate the strategic plans and their ‘new demands and implications on the board, staff and volunteers’.

DBC implemented HIV and AIDS projects which were not in strategic plans. DBC did this because ‘they needed the money’. SDCCC could not implement a number of their projects because their traditional donors had scaled down their financial support. A main donor left the country after falling out with the government. BRO and RGVN generally managed to implement more of their activities as compared to their counterparts. This is mostly because they had more funding in relative terms. All the NGO studied however generally failed to effectively engage in policy advocacy work mostly due to lack of skills and competence in this area. Local NGOs are more suitably qualified to engage in advocacy and lobbying work as they are close to the communities they serve and understand their situation better (Young, 13).

For all the NGOs except BRO and RGVN, the implementation of capacity building activities was relatively lower as compared to the project activities. A donor has funded BRO to address its organizational capacity building issues. They have already developed organizational policies, systems and procedures in the areas of finance, administration and human resources including monitoring and evaluation. But these are yet to be adopted after approval from the board. Others said they could not pay much attention to their organizational capacity building issues because ‘much of their energy went to mapping out ways of survival as they were experiencing a funding crisis’. They also said that the donors were not enthusiastic about funding their capacity building

efforts. They had to fund the little capacity building that they did from their own funds earned from consultancy work.

BRO and RGVN have managed to implement their organizational capacity building activities much more than the other studied NGOs. BRO has managed to establish regional coordinating committees. They have trained their officers in various specific fields. They have also developed a management information system though this is yet to be adopted. RGVN has hired professional staff and they have a more diversified funding base.

The results of the study show that only 46% of what is planned in the strategic plan documents was actually implemented. In addition to the factors stated in the preparation and formulation stages, the factors specific to the implementation stage included: the fact that NGO leaders do not know how to implement the strategic plans and donor influence.

i. Knowledge and capacity to implement strategic plans: Once the strategic plan document has been produced the leadership of the organization must make a decision to transform the organization conforming to the image of the strategic plan (Jakes, 130). The NGO leaders need to communicate the strategic plan to such a point that the strategic plan is internalized and that it becomes part of the culture of the organization. Strategic plans in the NGOs studied were rarely adequately communicated to the staff. Only the director and a few members of senior staff and the board knew about the strategic plan. Lack of communication of the strategic plan leads to low ownership and commitment to its implementation. It is important to ensure that the strategic plan has a 'line of sight' meaning that mechanisms are put in place to ensure that every person in the organization from the board chair to the last employee or volunteer know the strategic plan and their place in the strategic plan and how their place is linked to those of the other individuals and departments.

Staffing is another change needed to ensure effective implementation of strategic plans. Though RGVN and BRO were able to hire more professional staff, the NGOs studied generally did not think through the staffing implications of their strategic plans. None of them had a strategy on staff attraction, retention and motivation.

Timing is another factor worth considering. The timing between the formulation and implementation of the strategic plans was often too short. Time is needed for both internal and external communication and education of the strategic plan to internalize it before it can be effectively implemented. Time is also needed to market the strategic

plan to donors and other stakeholders. Funding processes often take too long. Usually by the time donors release their funds, one year of the strategic plan has already passed. The studied NGOs did not give adequate time between formulation and implementation leading to funding gaps. BRO had to wait for one year before their projects in the strategic plan could be funded.

Local NGOs do not operate in a vacuum. Their effectiveness often depends on the activities of other organizations and stakeholders. All the NGOs studied did not have a conscious collaboration strategy. They mostly worked in isolation and sometimes in competition with other NGOs and institutions.

The NGOs studied did not seem to know that they need support mechanisms to ensure that the strategic plan will be implemented. There were no mechanisms to ensure that the strategic plans would be implemented. Beckhard and Pritchard (6) advised that organizations must have an implementation committee to ensure that the strategic plan document will be implemented. In the studied NGOs there were no such committees.

Staff job descriptions must be aligned to the strategic plan. The studied NGOs lacked the skill and capacity to turn the strategic plans to individual work plans. Strategic planning was not tied to personal or individual planning.

ii. Donor influence: The studied NGOs found themselves in a situation where they had to make a decision between ‘sticking to their mission and starve or bend to donor priorities and survive’. TDMS, SDCCC and SSA chose to ‘starve’ and DBC and NEADS chose to survive by implementing projects outside their mandate. By choosing to survive however the organizations undermined their own legitimate mandate. SSA eventually got a 3 year funding contract from a donor who ‘was impressed by SSA’s adherence to its mission and sense of identity and focus’. The donor was from outside the country. The lesson learnt is that NGO’s need to widen their scope for donors in order to identify those that fund their priorities and that such donors are likely to be impressed by organizations that choose to ‘starve’ rather than compromise their mission, identity and focus because of survival needs.

5.4.4 Monitoring and evaluation: All the NGOs studied did not have functional monitoring and evaluation systems. RGVN and BRO had just developed their monitoring and evaluation systems but these are yet to become functional. The NGOs studied were more familiar with monitoring and evaluation of project activities and not the strategic plan. None of the NGOs studied had a monitoring and evaluation system that consciously focused on the strategic plan. Evaluations that happened concentrated

on particular projects that the particular donor funded and not necessarily the strategic plan.

All the NGOs studied did not effectively monitor and evaluate their strategic plans. This was due to four main reasons. The first one was wrong motives for monitoring and evaluation. The second one was culture of 'busyness'. The third was a culture of not valuing accountability. The fourth and last one was lack of knowledge.

i. Purpose of monitoring and evaluation: Evaluations in NGOs are mostly donor driven. They are aimed at evaluating the specific donor's interests but not the strategic plan as such. The literature review identified the purpose of monitoring and evaluation as being twofold: accountability to donors and organizational learning. Monitoring and evaluation in this NGO mostly concentrates on accountability as compared to organizational learning. As a result of ignoring organizational learning, organizational capacity building of the NGOs was undermined. Organizational learning enables the organization to sharpen its practice by building its organizational capacity (Hailey and James, 123).

ii. Culture of busyness: The donors interviewed indicated that they were under pressure to demonstrate results to the taxpayers of the money that they channel to NGOs. As a result they also exerted pressure on the local NGOs through giving deadlines, targets and short term funding with no guarantees for subsequent funding. This created a 'culture of busyness' in the NGOs studied as a result. They spent more time working on projects and less if any time on reflecting and learning from their practice. In addition, the members of the board and management interviewed did not seem to know about or appreciate the importance of reflection and learning in their organizations. None of the NGOs had a functional reflection and learning system because they did not create space and time for conscious reflection and learning, they could not draw insights to improve their strategic planning processes.

iii. Culture of not valuing accountability: The NGOs studied did not have functional monitoring and evaluation systems to periodically assess the performance of the strategic plans. In addition, none of the NGOs studied had functional performance appraisal systems to assess individuals' performance. BRO and RGVN had been talking about putting these systems in place for years. DBC and NEADS had been asked by donors to develop monitoring and evaluation systems but these were, 'yet to be adopted'. SDCCC, SSA and TDMS simply did not have these systems in place. This shows that monitoring and evaluation; and performance appraisal systems are not

a priority among the NGOs studied. Where these are in place, it is usually upon a donor's insistence. This also explains why all evaluations carried out in these organizations were commissioned by donors and not the board or management.

iv. Lack of knowledge: Taking monitoring and evaluation as a mere accountability tool to flash to donors and making it a donor rather than organizational priority and the resultant culture of busyness are sustained by lack of knowledge of monitoring and evaluation in general and monitoring and evaluation of strategic plans in particular. For the NGOs studied, two factors stood in the way of effective monitoring of the strategic plans that demonstrated lack of knowledge. The first one was that they did not have conscious strategies in their strategic plans upon which to base their monitoring and evaluation efforts at that level. The second one was that the boards and management were weak and did not have the capacity to monitor the strategies even if the strategies existed. In reviewing strategic plans for example, more emphasis was placed on how the projects and activities were implemented as compared to how effective the strategies pursued were. Underlying this is lack of knowledge of monitoring and evaluation of strategic plans. Strategies are 'broad preferred alternative conceptual how's to achieve goals while activities are the actions taken to implement the strategies on a daily basis (Shapiro, 10). Monitoring activities enables the organization to measure efficiency, while monitoring strategies enables the organization to measure effectiveness and legitimacy, relevance and sustainability.

Besides commissioning impact assessments, which they rarely do, local NGO boards are supposed to ensure that all the lower levels of monitoring and evaluation of the strategic plan illustrated above are aligned towards the achievement of impact. This means that in addition to commissioning impact assessments every 3-5 years, the boards need to play a continuous oversight and governance role in monitoring and evaluation as well. This role among the boards that were studied was not well known and it was not adequately appreciated. This is a general problem among local NGOs (HIVOs, 5).

The results of the study are in agreement with the literature review which identified misunderstanding the purpose of monitoring and evaluation leading to an over emphasis on upward accountability to donors at the expense of organizational learning as a key hindrance to effective monitoring and evaluation of strategic plans. In addition the study identified culture of busyness, culture of not valuing downward accountability to communities served, failure to differentiate monitoring and evaluation of strategic plans

and that of projects and activities as extra factors hindering effective monitoring and evaluation of strategic plans.

5.5 The strategic planning process and the levels of complexity model: The factors affecting the effectiveness of the strategic planning process identified and discussed in the stages of strategic planning above are located in the levels of complexity model below to show the level at which they belong. This will help to understand what types of interventions are needed to address the challenges they pose and the amount of energy needed in those interventions. By placing the factors at the appropriate levels, the NGO is able to identify the strengths to build on, problems to tackle and the weak areas to strengthen. The model below shows the levels from simple to those more complex.

Table 5.11: Factors affecting the effectiveness of the strategic planning process

Level of complexity	Factor affecting the strategic planning process
1. Financial and material resources	Limited time given to strategic planning workshops No time for monitoring and evaluation No money given to projects that are not donors' priorities Less money given to capacity building efforts
2. Skills and competences	Lack of collective understanding of the strategic planning process No assessment to gauge organizational priorities to address in strategic planning No task force to manage and lead the strategic planning process Low competence of consultants Inability of participants to engage at strategic level Lack of knowledge among NGO leaders in the NGOs studied to implement; monitor and evaluate strategic plans The NGOs studied not aware of national and international frameworks like donor funding priorities. These were not referred to in any of the strategic plan documents.
3. Policies, systems and procedures	Short term, project based funding from donors No monitoring and evaluation systems for the strategic plans
4. Relationships	Unequal relationships between donors and local NGOs studied Consultants employed on one off basis and not on partnership basis
5. Vision and mission	Wrong purpose for going through the strategic planning process
6. Values	Limited ownership of the strategic planning process by the NGOs studied NGO leaders of the NGOs studied wanting strategic plans only as fundraising tools Culture of busyness
7. Task environment	Wrong purpose for going through the strategic planning process by donors. Donors funding only their priorities

The analysis above shows that factors affecting the effectiveness of the strategic planning process occur at all levels from simple to the most complex. It also shows that most of the factors are at the simple levels of material and financial resources; and skills and competences. It is important to note however that while it is important to address these lower factors, if the factors at the higher levels have not been addressed (even if they are unrelated) interventions at the lower levels will have little or no value. This is because the higher factors form the foundation that ensures

effective and sustainable use of the lower level interventions (James and Hailey, 108-136).

Further, the highest level and therefore the most complex is the task environment. In their external environment, the NGOs studied have little if any control over donors' purposes and priorities in their funding practices. Building their internal organizational capacity, however would still give them room for maneuver, either through gaining negotiating power with the donors or identifying alternative sources of funding. Edwards (1) observed that, "the environment is crucial but not determinant; therefore, organizational choices always provide some room for maneuver". While the task environment is largely outside the circle of control of the local NGOs, they can best invest their energies working on those levels that they have some control over. This is the essence of strategizing. RGVN and BRO, found alternative sources of 'unrestricted funds'. Through these efforts, they became more empowered to negotiate more developmental relationships with donors and consultants. This also helped them to develop enough 'shock absorbers' to enable them ignore non-developmental donors while they looking for donors who are genuinely interested in their development. Local NGO leaders can decide to have precise purposes for going through the strategic planning processes. It would help them to own and commit the strategic plans. The studied NGOs did not consciously do this.

Lastly, the way to deal with the challenges in level 1 or the material and financial resources is simply to provide the needed resources. Simply signing a cheque or making time available can solve most of the problems at this level. Problems in level 2 can be solved by provision of information, knowledge and training. These are the simplest and most common forms of intervention. One of the reasons is that challenges at these levels are the most visible and most felt (James, 126-127). Problems at the higher levels are often less visible, less tangible, less felt and least addressed. These problems cannot be addressed by training or provision of resources. The most effective way to address these challenges is through process interventions. Process interventions are based on reflection and learning in the organization. Reflection and learning helps the organization to surface and confront its contradictions. The starting point is the ideal picture. The organization creates regular space and time to reflect on how its policies, systems and procedures; relationships; vision and mission; and values are helping or hindering it from

reaching its destination as stipulated in the ideal picture. Answers from this reflection guide the modifications or changes the organization needs to make so that it is aligned to its ideal picture. The NGOs studied tended to focus their efforts more on getting financial and material resources and less on the higher levels of capacity building.

It is worth remembering that process interventions to address the higher level challenges require more energy and consciousness in the organization. This is why the NGOs studied avoided it and rush to the familiarity of training and resource provision. Training and resource provision however without the foundation of process interventions cannot bring about lasting change in the organization that will eventually ensure effective strategic planning processes and organizational effectiveness.

In the NGOs studied, the implementation of the strategic plans was generally low (46%). The NGOs studied 'resource transfer and provision' activities were implemented more than 'transformational' activities.

Project activities were implemented more (60%) than organizational capacity building activities (40%). This was because there was less enthusiasm by both donors and organizational leaders to invest in organizational capacity building. There was also generally less knowledge on how to effectively build the capacity of the organizations. BRO and RGVN had higher levels of implementation (60%) as compared to other studied NGOs (40%).

The NGOs that were proactive in starting their strategic planning processes were relatively more effective than those that were reactive or were told by a donor to go through a strategic planning process. BRO and RGVN therefore had relatively more effective strategic plans than those of their counterparts. All the strategic planning processes however were not consciously aimed at achieving a strategic fit or relevance, legitimacy and sustainability.

In all the NGOs studied, there was a conspicuous lack of 'process consciousness' as the strategic planning process was mostly limited to the formulation stage. The specific factors that hindered the strategic planning processes at preparation stage included: the need to have an agreed and shared purpose of the strategic planning process among all the key players, ensuring adequate awareness and understanding of the strategic planning process to help clarify expectations; ensuring ownership of the process especially by the local NGO; having a task force to manage the process;

and conducting organizational assessments to identify issues to guide the strategic planning process.

Factors at the formulation stages included: the need for competent consultants, the capacity of the participants and adequacy of time given to the formulation stage. Factors at the implementation stages included the organization's knowledge and capacity to implement the strategic plans; and the influence of donors on the organization's priorities. Lastly, at the monitoring and evaluation stage, the factors included: misunderstanding the purpose of monitoring and evaluation or overemphasizing accountability at the expense of learning; the culture of busyness; and the culture of not valuing accountability; and the inability to differentiate between the monitoring and evaluation of strategic plans from monitoring and evaluation of projects and activities.

5.6 Players in Strategic Planning Process

5.6.1 The board: In strategic planning, the board of an NGO is supposed to initiate the process, participate in the preparation and formulation processes, approve the strategic plan document formulated, fundraise for the implementation of the strategic plan, and ensure appropriate policies, systems and procedures to facilitate the implementation of the strategic plan; and finally monitor and evaluate the implementation of the strategic plan.

The board is also supposed to engage in strategic thinking as a basis for providing effective strategic leadership.

In all the NGOs studied, the board was represented at the formulation workshop. The board also endorsed the strategic plans formulated in SSA and TDMS; this was done informally as the boards did not get to discuss the formulated strategic plan documents. In the NGO of TDMS, the board chair had not yet read the strategic plan document one year after its formulation. In CRD, most of the board members present at the time of the formulation of the strategic plan had moved on as their terms of office tenure had expired and the new ones who replaced them had not been oriented to the strategic plan.

In all the NGOs the board did not participate in fundraising. They also did not play any role to ensure that the organization had appropriate policies, systems and procedures to ensure effective implementation of the strategic plan. Finally, the board did not play any role in consciously monitoring and evaluating the strategic

plan. Generally, the boards did not play their governance role regarding strategic planning. This is despite the fact that the boards of BRO, NEADS, CRD, DBC and SKD have undergone board development training workshops. This brings to question the effectiveness of the trainings or the commitment of the board members.

It is worth noting that in BRO and RGVN, management initiated and led the strategic planning process. In BRO a donor initiated and led the strategic planning process. In RGVN and SKD, the board initiated the strategic planning process. RGVN and BRO outperformed their counterparts. From this observation it seems active involvement of boards in the process leads to more effective strategic planning processes.

The NGOs studied reveal that the boards and board members were mostly appointed by the director; they follow rather than lead management. Appointment to the boards was based on other factors apart from an individual's potential or actual contribution to the board and the organization. The study would therefore seem to suggest that, most boards are at the organizing stage and are following rather than the leading type.

Three further factors explain the ineffectiveness of the boards. These are commitment, capacity and failure to provide strategic leadership.

i. Commitment: All boards had gone through training to orient them to their roles and responsibilities. However, they were still not carrying out some of their expected roles and responsibilities, such as using the strategic plan as a governance tool in fundraising, ensuring appropriate policies, systems and procedures; and monitoring and evaluation. This could indicate that their commitment was low. Greenleaf (55) advised that, "no one step will more quickly raise the quality of the total society than a radical reconstruction of the boards that are predominantly made up of able and dedicated servant leaders". The importance of commitment is also emphasized by Drucker (6) when he stated, "I have never seen anything being done well unless people were committed".

ii. Board capacity: Related to commitment is the issue of capacity. The board members might have wanted to be committed but lacked capacity. It seems the trainings they went through did not translate into capacity to perform their expected roles and responsibilities. The board members said they did not have enough time and expertise to get 'effectively involved in the complex process of fundraising'. They also said they did not have the knowledge and experience of monitoring and evaluating strategic plans as a practice. It is also worth noting that while the NGOs

studied had budget lines for staff development, none had a budget line for board development. This led to the suspicion by some donors and consultants that in NGOs where management was stronger than the board, management deliberately wanted to keep the board weak so that they could exercise more power.

iii. Failure to provide strategic leadership: The apparent lack of commitment and capacity led to failure for the boards to engage in strategic thinking as a basis for providing strategic leadership. The NGOs studied did not demonstrate that the boards had capacity for strategic thinking and leadership. Board meetings were characterized by discussing financial and project activities without including scanning the environment in order to detect emerging issues and address them proactively. When reading financial reports for example, they could not adequately decipher the strategic meanings and implications behind the reports. For instance, they could not consciously relate the amount of money spent to the impact being realized.

5.6.2 Management: It comprises of the top executives who are responsible for the managing the NGO affairs. Management carries out the delegated function to prepare, formulate and implement the strategic plan. Management is also supposed to monitor and evaluate the projects, which in turn is supposed to inform the monitoring and evaluation of the strategic plan by the board.

In RGVN, NEADS, SSA, SDCCC, TDMS, DBC and CRD management took a leading role in the strategic planning process. It was only in BRO and SKD in which the board delegated the strategic planning process to management. In all the NGOs, management took the leading role in implementing the strategic plans. It is important to note however that management did not consciously implement the strategic plans. They implemented projects and activities, which in turn contributed to the implementation of the strategic plans. In other words, in implementing the projects and activities they did not consciously see the big picture of the strategic plan.

All the organizations studied lacked a 'performance culture'. None of them had functional performance appraisal and monitoring and evaluation systems. This made it difficult for management to measure the performance of the projects and the strategic plan.

In all the NGOs, management took a leading role in fundraising for the implementation of the strategic plan. Donors generally dealt with management while ignoring the board on funding matters.

The above facts indicate that management is generally more developed than the board. This constrains effective strategic planning because management is essentially short term oriented while the board is long term and therefore more strategically oriented (Greenleaf, 64). By saying that management was more generally developed than the board does not necessarily mean that management was as effective as it should be. In SSA, the director was fired for incompetence and failing to provide 'strategic direction' on recommendation from a donor and a consultant. In all the NGO, management failed to communicate the strategic plans so that they could be internalized in the organizations.

The NGOs studied were characterized by management taking a more active role in the strategic planning process, ineffective policies, systems and procedures; and relatively high levels of informality. With increasing organizational consciousness and demands for more 'order' most of them are struggling with the call to professionalism. It can be concluded therefore that most of the NGOs are in a limbo between the dependent and independent stages of organizational development. In addition, two main factors stand in the way of effective strategic planning for management. These were mismatch in stages of development between the board and management and insufficient knowledge of the strategic planning process.

i. Mismatch in stages of development between the board and management: Since in most of the NGOs the board was weaker than management and that they could not effectively monitor and evaluate the strategic plans, the boards could not hold management accountable on the performance of the strategic plans. In addition, management is usually busy with the implementation of projects and not the strategic plans as such. In addition, as members of staff are paid while board members are volunteers, the problem of management being stronger than the board is the possibility of self-interest and self-serving tendencies. In the NGOs studied, except for BRO and SKD, the boards did not know how much money the organization had at the point of the study; for example, the number of donors the organizations had and the donors dealt directly with management. Greenleaf (64) observed that management will inevitably begin to decline in the effectiveness of their role in the strategic planning process if the board does not demand from them distinction as servants of the people they serve". Because of this lack of accountability, Lawson (20) observed that for the majority of NGOs, their strategic plans once completed are

not looked at again. None of the NGOs studied had clear and conscious mechanisms to make their strategic plans 'living documents'.

ii. Knowledge of the strategic planning process: Though management may be relatively more developed than the board in the NGOs studied and that they often took a leading role in the strategic planning process, their understanding of the process was often lower than assumed. None of the NGOs had an orientation or awareness raising session to ensure collective understanding of the strategic planning process. The managers interviewed observed that their strategic planning processes ended with producing the strategic plan document. They were not adequately equipped or coached on how to effectively implement the strategic plans.

5.6.3 Donors: Donors are financing partners to the strategic planning process. They are supposed to fund the priorities of the NGOs. Donors are also interested in the results their funds would produce so that they can justify their continued support to the organizations (HIVOs, 5).

In NEADS and DBC, the donor asked the organization to go through the strategic planning process. The other organizations studied decided to go through the strategic planning process on their own. In all the NGOs generally, the donors' priorities and not necessarily those of the NGOs were the ones the donors funded. This was especially the NGO in TDMS and SSA. SSA had to go without funding for one year. DBC had to implement HIV and AIDS projects which were outside their core activity because 'they could not find sufficient funding in human rights'.

In all the NGOs studied, it was also observed that donors funded project implementation more than organizational capacity building activities. Being results oriented, donors want to invest in activities that can directly translate into results on the ground. Capacity building does not directly translate into results on the ground and donors did not enthusiastically invest in it.

On a positive note RGVN, NEADS, DBC and BRO observed that some donors are more developmental in their approach. They emphasize a partnership approach. They help them not only with money but also advice and guidance on capacity building. Ensuring a partnership approach however is still a major challenge among the donors of the NGOs studied. Having more financial and expertise power makes an 'adult to adult relationship' with the NGOs difficult. Strategic planning would be more effective if both the NGOs and the donors worked as genuine partners in

accomplishing the missions of the NGOs. DBC has the view that donors funding HIV and AIDS are more flexible towards funding organizational capacity building. In conclusion, donor practices in general hindered effective strategic planning in the NGOs studied through: stringent, inflexible and imposed conditionality; funds allocated at project rather than organizational basis, short term funding and failure to guarantee continuity of funding; funds not arriving on time as agreed; and failure to ensure genuine partnership between the donors and the local NGOs they were supporting.

5.6.4 Consultants: The role of consultants in strategic planning is to add value and fill gaps in terms of independence, objectivity and knowledge and experience in the organizations they support (French and Bell, 10). The role consultants will play in an organization therefore will depend on the organization's levels of knowledge, experience, objectivity and independence. In all the NGOs studied, consultants were involved in the formulation stage. They facilitated the process of coming up with the strategic plan document.

The consultant who facilitated the formulation of NEADS's strategic plan came from a business background and according to NEADS he had limited knowledge and experience with NGOs and was therefore not very effective. RGVN felt the consultant did not give them adequate guidance during the formulation workshop.

Given the stage of development and their levels of knowledge and experience with strategic planning, the NGOs studied felt that consultants could play a role beyond just formulation. They however observed that donors usually are not willing to support acquisition of consultants' services for this purpose. Though they support hiring consultants to conduct evaluations, usually these are project and not strategic plan evaluations.

All the NGOs studied complained about the need for more professionalism from the consultants. They also observed that the consultants could play a key role in negotiating with and convincing donors for more comprehensive support to the strategic planning processes. While acknowledging this challenge the consultants who facilitated the strategic planning processes for NEADS, RGVN and BRO noted that the organizations they supported together with their donors did not show as much enthusiasm for this negotiation. The donors regarded such moves as 'soliciting unjustified work by the consultants'.

The NGOs studied indicate that the consultants are mostly in their early stages of development. Three main factors stood in the way of effectiveness of the consultants in the strategic planning process. These were relationships with the client, limiting the scope of the strategic planning process; and failure to promote a developmental approach to strategic planning.

i. Relationships with clients: In the NGO studied the relationships between the consultant and the organization was often transactional and one off. Much emphasis was given to the formulation stage. The consultants mostly helped the organizations to formulate their strategic plans but did not support them to turn their plans into achievement. No arrangement was made for follow up.

Strategic planning consultants come in two forms. These are strategic planning content experts and strategic planning process experts. Since the consultants in the NGOs involved were mostly involved in the formulation stage and not through the whole process, they were mostly content and not process experts. Process consultants are more effective in helping local NGOs going through strategic planning processes (French and Bell, 10). Process consultants are more effective in helping NGOs go through strategic planning processes because they are facilitators while the organizations creates its own content. The consultant may usually not be an expert in the thematic areas that the organization works in. The organization usually knows their field better than the consultant (unless he or she is an expert in the particular field). The organization therefore takes more ownership of the product produced. Ownership of the strategic plan document produced is critical for the effectiveness of the strategic plan (Hailey and James, 2006: 3).

ii. A developmental versus a service provision approach: Related to the above is the issue of whether consultants should take a service or a developmental approach when helping organizations to go through their strategic planning processes. In a service approach, the client asks for a specific service from the consultant and the consultant provides that service. The assumption is that the client knows what they are looking for. But taking into account the stage of development of the NGOs studied and their capacities for example, this may not always be true. In the developmental approach, the client does not come to a consultant asking for a specific service but a developmental question or questions or issues they are facing and they are open to exploration and the most appropriate intervention that might enable them to address the issues identified. The questions or issues may be addressed through a strategic

planning process or not. A strategic planning process may not always be appropriate. In all the NGOs studied the consultants were approached and asked to facilitate the strategic planning process and they went ahead to facilitate the strategic planning processes without questioning. Senge et al.(1-4) and Sorgenfrei and Wrigley (3) identified the capacity for strategic thinking as a critical prerequisite for effective strategic planning. The general absence of ‘ideal pictures’ in the NGOs studied is one indicator of lack of this capacity. A developmental approach would deal with building capacity for strategic thinking to ensure success in strategic planning. In addition Smillie and Hailey (110–113) observed that having established core values, highly effective leadership and formal and informal systems for adapting to change may be more important than strategic plans alone. A developmental approach would ensure that these issues are dealt as a prerequisite for effective strategic planning.

5.6.5 Beneficiaries: Beneficiaries are supposed to provide information on their priorities that will inform the NGOs as their input into the strategic planning process. In addition, communities are supposed to hold the NGOs accountable on their ‘promises as stipulated in their strategic plans’ (Kaldor, 12).

One way of doing this is through conducting consultations with the communities at the beginning and throughout the entire strategic planning process. Only CRD, BRO, RGVN, DBC, SKD and NEADS conducted consultations with their beneficiaries prior to the formulation of the strategic plans. SSA, SDCCC and TDMS did not. BRO, NEADS, SKD and RGVN had some representatives from the beneficiaries in the strategic plan formulation workshops. The level of input from the beneficiaries was however insignificant and did not shape the ensuing strategic plan document. Staff generally regarded the involvement of the beneficiaries as mere tokenism especially in BRO and SKD. SDCCC, TDMS and SSA went beyond soliciting information from the beneficiaries. They conducted special workshops to present the draft strategic plans formulated for further input and validation. BRO and RGVN outperformed their counterparts respectively. This would seem to suggest that more involvement of communities or beneficiaries result in more effective strategic plans. The communities and beneficiaries however were generally not able to hold the NGOs accountable in their implementation of the strategic plans. It was only in DBC where the beneficiaries questioned them on why they were implementing an HIV and AIDS project when they were supposed to be implementing human rights projects.

DBC's beneficiaries were able to question them when they implemented an HIV and AIDS project.

The NGOs studied found themselves in a situation in which on one hand the communities or beneficiaries could not clearly articulate their needs and on the other hand was the challenge for donors to fund priorities of the communities when they did not match with their own priorities.

All the NGOs studied seemed to be skewed more towards the donor priorities. They did not have any clear picture of where the communities were at the time of engagement and where they want to get them to at the end of their relationship. Such pictures would enable the NGOs to address the priorities of the communities or beneficiaries. This would also form a basis for the communities or beneficiaries to hold the NGOs accountable.

In summary, the communities and beneficiaries in the NGOs studied were characterized by people who could not make claims and demands on the NGOs serving them, people who could not hold the NGOs accountable; low ownership and responsibility of the development initiatives; and lastly people with low self-esteem who felt inferior to officials from the NGOs serving them and therefore could not take a questioning stance.

Here we have discussed the roles and responsibilities played by the key players in the strategic planning process in the NGOs studied. Generally, all the players: the board, management, donors, consultants and the communities did not play their roles effectively. The key challenges faced by the board were low commitment, inadequate capacity and failure to provide strategic leadership. For the management the factors included lack of knowledge and capacity to effectively implement the strategic plans. For the donors the factors included stringent, inflexible conditions attached to their money, project rather than organizational based funding; short-termism and failure to establish genuine partnerships with the local NGOs they supported. The consultants too failed to establish partnership relationships with the local NGOs they served, they limited the scope of strategic planning by excluding it from a wider OD framework and they promoted a 'service rather than developmental approach' to their work. The communities failed to participate at a 'strategic level' in the strategic planning process and failed to hold the NGOs accountable for the performance of the strategic plans.

This chapter showed that in the NGOs studied, the implementation of the strategic plans was generally low (46%). The NGOs studied implemented 'transactional' or 'resource transfer and provision' activities more than 'transformational' activities. Project activities were implemented more (60%) than organizational capacity building activities (40%) because there was less enthusiasm by both donors and organizational leaders to invest in organizational capacity building. There was also generally less knowledge on how to effectively build the capacity of the organizations.

The NGOs that were proactive in starting their strategic planning processes were relatively more effective than those that were reactive or were told by a donor to go through a strategic planning process. All the strategic planning processes however were not consciously aimed at achieving strategic fit or relevance, legitimacy and sustainability. In all the NGOs studied, there was a conspicuous lack of 'process consciousness' as the strategic planning process was mostly limited to the formulation stage.

The chapter also discussed the roles and responsibilities played by the key players in the strategic planning processes in the NGOs studied. Generally, all the players: the board, management, donors, consultants and the communities did not play their roles effectively. The variants of the stages of development of the different players showed that the players in the NGOs studied were mostly at their early and therefore ineffective stages of development. Improving their roles and responsibilities in the strategic planning process would need building their capacity so that they can move to the next stages of development and higher levels of capacity.