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**The Role of NGOs in Community
Development and Poverty Alleviation
in Belize**

非政府組織在伯利茲社區發展和扶貧
中的作用

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the perceptions of respondents regarding poverty alleviation and community development initiatives in Belize, with a specific focus on the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Data was collected through a survey questionnaire, and a cross-tabulation analysis was conducted to identify patterns and trends among the responses. The findings revealed that a significant proportion of respondents expressed concerns about the effectiveness of NGOs in poverty alleviation, with 40% agreeing that NGOs contribute significantly to poverty alleviation in Belize City. Moreover, the results indicated a varied perception of NGOs' ability to reach the target population, with 30% agreeing that NGOs were effective in reaching vulnerable populations. Similarly, respondents had mixed views on NGOs' effectiveness in improving access to basic needs, with 33% strongly agreeing and 17.8% disagreeing. The study also highlighted the importance of collaboration between NGOs and the government. It was found that 36.7% of respondents agreed that NGOs collaborated with the government for poverty alleviation and community development efforts. Overall, the findings underscore the complex nature of poverty alleviation and community development in Belize, with a range of perceptions regarding the effectiveness of NGOs. The results emphasize the need for NGOs to strengthen collaboration, improve targeting and outreach, enhance monitoring and evaluation, foster capacity building, engage in advocacy, promote transparency and accountability, foster knowledge exchange, and utilize strategic communication approaches. By addressing these recommendations, NGOs can enhance their contributions to poverty alleviation and community development in Belize.

Keywords: NGOs, Belize, community Development, poverty alleviation

摘要

本研究旨在調查受訪者對伯利茲減貧和社區發展舉措的看法，特別關注非政府組織 (NGO) 的作用。通過調查問卷收集數據，並進行交叉表分析以確定答復中的模式和趨勢。調查結果顯示，相當一部分受訪者對非政府組織在扶貧方面的有效性表示擔憂，40% 的人同意非政府組織為伯利茲市的扶貧做出了重大貢獻。此外，結果表明，人們對非政府組織接觸目標人群的能力有不同的看法，30% 的人認為非政府組織能夠有效地接觸弱勢群體。同樣，受訪者對非政府組織在改善滿足基本需求方面的有效性也有不同的看法，33% 的人強烈同意，17.8% 的人不同意。該研究還強調了非政府組織與政府之間合作的重要性。調查發現，36.7% 的受訪者同意非政府組織與政府合作開展扶貧和社區發展工作。總體而言，調查結果強調了伯利茲減貧和社區發展的複雜性，人們對非政府組織的有效性有各種看法。結果強調，非政府組織需要加強合作、改善目標定位和外聯、加強監測和評估、促進能力建設、參與宣傳、提高透明度和問責制、促進知識交流以及利用戰略溝通方法。通過落實這些建議，非政府組織可以加大對伯利茲減貧和社區發展的貢獻。

關鍵詞：非政府組織、伯利茲、社區發展、扶貧

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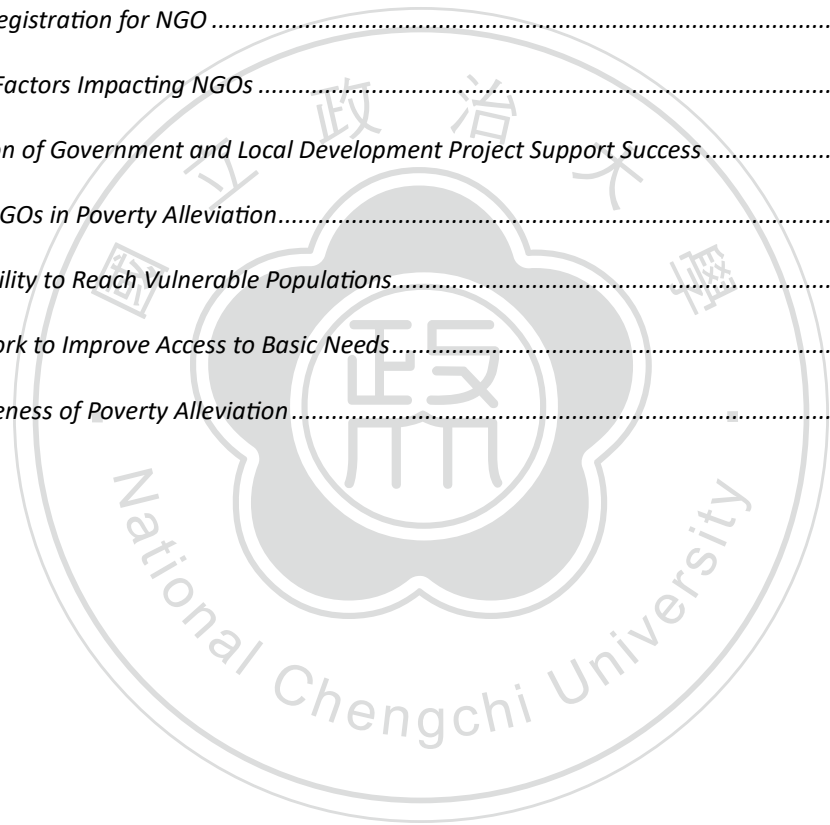
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Chapter I— Introduction

Introduction

For a long time, developing countries have had the priority of addressing the critical issue of poverty in political and development spheres, which has sparked numerous international efforts and initiatives to do so. Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), which are considered to be in the "Global South" or "Third World," have remained at the center of discussions about inequality around the world. Because of this, the region is a crucial location for discussions about the potential contributions that governments and Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) can make to the overall problem of poverty and development. This is in relation to how NGOs, on an asymmetrical basis with governments, have contributed to social regulation and overall community development through their on-the-ground and field-based humanitarian relief activities. NGOs are becoming more visible, well-liked, acknowledged, and legitimate on a global scale from the perspectives of civil society, governments and the public and private sectors. This is due to the fact that numerous NGOs continue to serve as impetuses for raising the quality of life, particularly through their participation in service delivery.

Acting as catalysts, non-governmental organizations have become important actors in development and poverty reduction at the local, national, regional, and global levels. In 2000, poverty-related issues were included in the Millennium Development Goals¹, thus establishing Sustainable Development Goal 1, which aims to end poverty in all its forms everywhere. With the endeavor to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), several countries in LAC have

¹ In 2015, world leaders agreed to take serious actions against extreme poverty, hunger and disease, by adopting anti-poverty goals called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2017).

become engaged in efforts towards eradicating poverty². Belize is one of the LAC nations that is actively participating in and making progress in achieving the SDGs. The country has aligned its national development strategy, known as the Belize Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy, with the SDGs ("The Government of Belize," 2016). One area in which Belize has made significant progress is poverty alleviation. The country has achieved a 50% reduction in poverty rates since 2000, demonstrating a commitment to reducing income inequality and promoting social inclusion (World Bank, 2021). This achievement is a testament to Belize's efforts in addressing the SDG of poverty alleviation.

However, despite the progress made, Belize still faces significant challenges in its continuation of alleviating poverty, due to the fact that many Belizeans still lack access to basic and fundamental human rights. In this particular situation, different approaches to development have been explored. Thus, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have assumed a more significant role in the development sector as a solution to address the gap between the needs of citizens and the limited assistance currently offered by the Government of Belize (GOB). When GOB is unable to offer adequate services or supportive conditions to help citizens sustain their needs, alternative methods of service delivery and/or mechanisms to hold governments accountable become necessary. This is especially in cases where marginalized groups are excluded from existing state institutions. It is for this reason, that aside from what is done by Governments, Non-Governmental Organizations tend to be included in discussions surrounding poverty alleviation where they have found an ideal role in bridging the service delivery gap.

² The UN emphasizes the importance of eradicating poverty in all its forms and in all parts of the world. According to the UN Sustainable Development Goal 1, eliminating poverty in all its dimensions is the first step towards achieving sustainable development (UN, 2015).

Despite the fact that NGOs play a significant role in bridging the service delivery gap in numerous community groups in Belize, questions have been raised about their legitimacy as members of civil society who represent the people they serve and about their capacity to accomplish the goals that brought them into being. Still, NGOs continue to be a major source of funding and optimism for programs aimed at reducing poverty and promoting community development in Belize. As such, the importance of NGOs in development must thus be regularly evaluated since they are becoming more significant participants in the development process.

At the same time, even though NGOs are significant participants in Belize's development process who claim to be working to improve the lives of the poor, a sizeable section of Belize's population still lives in poverty. This brings into question, firstly, what causes this and secondly, if this is the case, how do NGOs in Belize operate? Given this, study on the importance of NGOs in development has become extensive, where numerous studies have shown the drawbacks of NGOs' involvement in reducing poverty as well as the challenges to their legitimacy and productivity. In light of this, a closer examination of the crucial role NGOs plays in the global development goal of eradicating poverty, their effect in local contexts, and their actual operations in Belize, is necessary. As a result, this study evaluates the value of NGOs by carefully assessing their operations towards poverty reduction and its vital components, as opposed to solely concentrating on their impacts.

Background of Study

The vast majority of efforts in social research initiatives have the objective of reducing a particular negative phenomenon. This study is no exception. Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon that remains a global issue, especially in young developing countries such as

Belize, where there is a state of insufficiency in which individuals struggle to acquire basic needs. Poverty, an issue that has taken on unsettling proportions in Belize, is the deleterious social phenomenon under consideration in the scope of this research. As a result, Civil society's community development and safeguarding from resource insecurity continue to be the focus of stakeholders who are driven to reduce the impacts of poverty among the people that they serve. For this reason, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have become influential "development" actors in the developing regions of Latin America and the Caribbean, where high rates of poverty and inequality continue to be a significant development challenge despite governmental efforts to reduce them. This explains the need for concerted efforts in poverty alleviation and the implications for community development since the government alone cannot be relied upon. Given this, Non-Governmental Organizations continue to be established within the LAC with the goal of serving the underserved populous and essentially filling in gaps that are often left unaddressed by local and central governments. Therefore, this study attempts to demonstrate that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are useful in mitigating poverty as well as steering community development.

As such, this study set out to determine the role of NGOs in poverty alleviation and assess their efforts in community development in Belize. The research offers an empirical and theoretical analysis into the role that NGOs have played in Belize's development. The study's major goal was to investigate if and how much NGOs are able to assist states, in this context, Belize, improve its ability to fairly and effectively address poverty and foster community development. This research presents the case for a bottom-up approach to development in which NGOs take into account adopting community development efforts that

acknowledge the significance of being engaged in dialogue with civil society and the state, as they serve as agents of change.

Statement of the Problem

Poverty is a complex issue that affects countries around the world, including Belize. Belize struggles with high levels of poverty, which has severe implications for its economy and society (Benítez et al., 2015). Poverty remains a pressing issue in Belize, hindering the country's progress and well-being of its citizens. According to the September 2021 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) research, 35,7% of the population of Belize resided in multidimensionally poor households. The poverty index serves as a valuable tool, capturing the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and what it actually looks like on the ground. Under these circumstances, there is a recognized urgency to address poverty and to embark on various poverty reduction initiatives. To chart a way forward, sustainable solutions that tackle underlying causes are required to achieve significant progress in poverty reduction in Belize.

Since the alleviation of poverty is the most important aim of development work, poverty and community development are inherently intertwined (World Bank, n.d.). Poverty hampers community development by perpetuating social and economic inequalities and creating barriers to progress (The World Bank Group, 2019). NGOs, as key actors in the development landscape, have a crucial role in poverty reduction and community development (World Bank, 2008). They play a critical role in reducing poverty's direct impacts while simultaneously empowering individuals and communities to improve their own circumstances. Therefore, community development initiatives can help tackle poverty by addressing its root causes, promoting

inclusive growth, and ensuring equitable distribution of resources (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

What is more, prior research highlights the point that, NGO initiatives often improve the social standing of the poor; however, not every initiative is successful in actually reaching the poor. Although there is conflicting data about the effectiveness of NGOs in reducing poverty, it has been widely accepted that they have the institutional potential to do so. In the case of Belize, Belizean NGOs dedicated to social development play a significant role in designing and implementing social programs, campaigns, and projects that directly benefit underserved communities. However, their consistent provision of high-quality services and performance outcomes is challenged by several problematic factors. These problems shall be identified and solutions to them proffered in the findings. By overcoming these challenges, NGOs in Belize can further advance their poverty alleviation efforts through active participation in community development.

Purpose of the Study

From the available literature gathered in this study, it became abundantly evident that there is ongoing controversy over the viability of NGOs' community development and poverty reduction efforts in underprivileged and marginalized areas of Belize. Although there are several references to NGO-based initiatives, there has been little analysis of the impact and role NGOs have had in enhancing community development or achieving poverty alleviation. The lack of academic research and evidence in this area of study together with the restricted amount of in-depth reports, is adequate to support this claim. As a result, the purpose of this thesis is to address this analytical shortcoming by examining and evaluating the roles of NGOs in poverty alleviation activities in Belize through the larger context of community development.

The underlying premise of this thesis is that poverty alleviation and community development are synergetic. Community development and poverty alleviation are complex challenges that require collaborative efforts from various stakeholders. Non-governmental organizations play a pivotal role in addressing these issues through their unique approach to community development (Thompson, 2016). This thesis aims to discuss the roles of NGOs in community development and poverty alleviation, highlighting how they fit within the larger picture of poverty eradication efforts. Additionally, it will explore the ways in which community development contributes to poverty alleviation.

Research Aims and Objectives

The main aim of this study was to investigate NGOs and their role in poverty alleviation strategies in Belize through an assessment of their approaches and relationships. The objectives are listed in synchrony with the research questions that follow:

1. To assess the impacts of NGOs in Poverty Alleviation in Belize.
2. To identify specific poverty alleviation strategies or approaches utilized by NGOs in Belize
3. To identify the extent to which NGOs contribute to addressing poverty in Belize.
4. To determine the relationship between community development and poverty alleviation.
5. To determine the perceptions of people in Belize about NGOs poverty alleviation initiatives.
6. To ascertain the extent to which community development has enabled poverty alleviation.
7. To identify the challenges faced by NGOs in Belize.

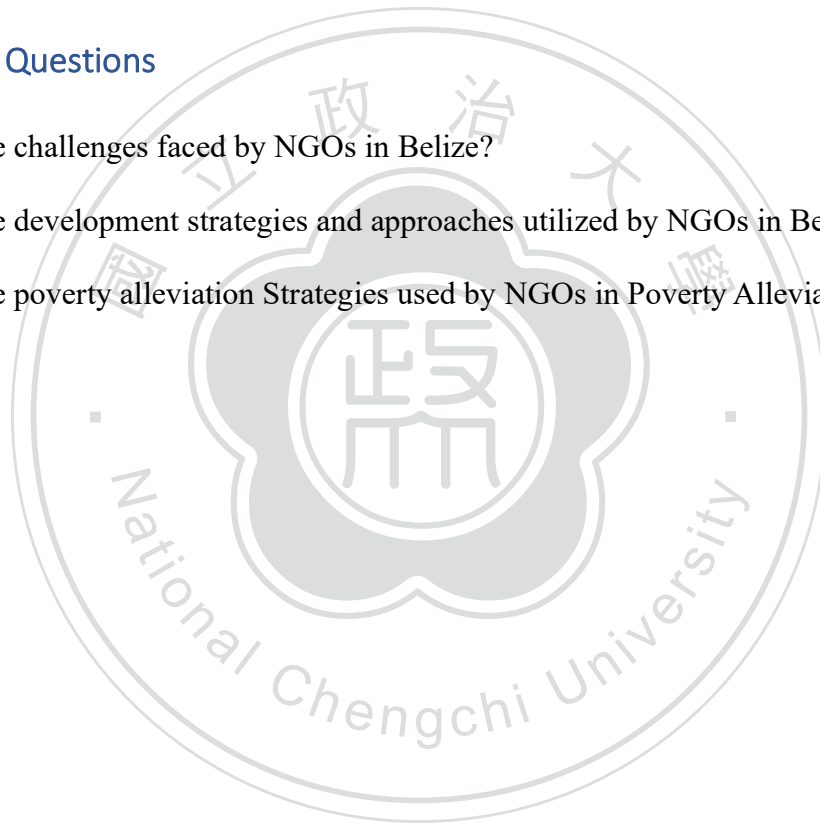
Research Questions

The main questions this thesis aimed to answer was:

- A. What role do NGOs play in alleviating poverty in Belize?
- B. How do NGOS work on alleviating poverty?
- C. What is the Impact of NGOs in Poverty Alleviation in Belize?
- D. Does Community Development impact poverty alleviation? How and to what extent?

Sub Research Questions

- 1) What are the challenges faced by NGOs in Belize?
- 2) What are the development strategies and approaches utilized by NGOs in Belize?
- 3) What are the poverty alleviation Strategies used by NGOs in Poverty Alleviation in Belize?



Scope of the Study

Geographical Scope

Poverty alleviation research is of utmost importance in Belize due to the significant impact it can have on the country's development and the well-being of its population (Shoemake et al., 2019). Belize³, as a small developing country⁴ that shares a unique status within Latin America and the Caribbean, faces numerous challenges in tackling poverty, making high-quality research essential to develop effective policies and interventions (Shoemake et al., 2019). It is geographically located to the immediate south of Mexico (bordering the north), east of Guatemala (bordering the west) and north-west of Honduras. The country's population is quite small, with the most recent census⁵ reporting the population being slightly above 400,000 persons⁶. Despite being rich in natural resources and having a diverse cultural heritage, Belize faces significant challenges due to its high poverty levels.

The country's poverty rate stands at approximately 41.3%, indicating that a significant portion of the population lives below the poverty line (Benítez et al., 2015). This level of poverty is a cause for concern, as it hinders the development and well-being of individuals and the overall nation. Understanding and tackling the critical issue of poverty in Belize, is crucial for several reasons, including the need for sustainable development.

Poverty research is important for sustainable development. This is due to the fact that Poverty is not solely an economic issue. It has implications for social, environmental and cultural

³ Belize is considered a member of the Organization of American States and also shares membership among the CARICOM countries in the Caribbean.

⁴ According to the United Nations, a developing country is a nation with a relatively low standard of living, undeveloped industrial base, and moderate to low Human Development Index (HDI). This index compares poverty, literacy, education, life expectancy, and other aspects for nations throughout the world.

⁶ Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, Population and Housing Census 2010.

aspects of development. By studying poverty in Belize researchers can shed light on the interconnections between poverty and other⁷ development challenges. This holistic understanding is essential for formulating comprehensive development strategies that promote sustainable and inclusive growth in Belize. By investigating the various dimensions of poverty in Belize, such as income inequality, lack of education, healthcare, accessibility, and social disparities, Civil Society⁸ can identify targeted measures to address these issues. Additionally, by employing Belize as the research scope, it enables policy makers, agents of change and agenda setters the opportunity in advancing Belize on the path towards the sustainable development goals.

Furthermore, poverty alleviation research in Belize has wider implications for Latin America and the Caribbean as a region (Orozco et al., 2021). Many countries in the region face similar challenges of high poverty rates and inequality. Thus, research conducted in Belize can provide valuable insights and lessons that can be applied to other countries facing similar issues⁹ (Orozco et al., 2021). Therefore, investing in poverty alleviation and community development research in

⁷ Other development challenges include: environmental degradation, gender, inequality and organization.

⁸ Development NGOs, charities, women's organizations, neighborhood associations, faith-based groups, trade unions, professional associations, social movements, and advocacy organizations are examples of civil societies. Civil society's social development and safeguarding from resource insecurity continue to be the focus of stakeholders who are driven to reduce the impacts of poverty among the people that they serve. Non-Governmental Organizations, whether they be transnational or national, are established with the goal of serving the underserved populous and essentially filling in gaps that are often left unaddressed by the local governments. It is for this reason, this research focused on Development NGOs as an extension of Civil Society that actively engages in poverty alleviation efforts.

⁹ A study by Orozco et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of regional cooperation in addressing poverty and inequality challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean. Therefore, poverty alleviation research in Belize helps contribute to a broader understanding of poverty dynamics in the region and facilitates the development of region-specific strategies (Orozco et al., 2021). Therefore, collaboration and knowledge-sharing among Caribbean and Latin American countries can strengthen regional poverty reduction efforts (Orozco et al., 2021).

Belize is not only crucial for the country but also for the broader region's sustainable development (Shoemake et al., 2019; Orozco et al., 2021).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its examination of the role of Belizean NGOs in poverty alleviation and community development. Understanding the significance of the study can provide valuable insights and contribute to various stakeholders and fields. This research holds importance for policy development, as the findings can inform policymakers in Belize about the support, regulation, and approaches to engagement with development NGOs involved in poverty alleviation and community development. The study's results can aid in the design of more effective strategies to enhance the capacity and sustainability of these NGOs.

Moreover, the study's findings have practical implications for NGOs themselves. By identifying the risks and challenges faced by NGOs in poverty alleviation efforts and community development, the research can help NGOs develop strategies to overcome functional, operational and organizational challenges and maintain their ability to consistently offer quality services to underserved communities. The significance of this study also extends to academia and the research community. It contributes to the existing literature on NGOs' role in poverty alleviation and community development, particularly in the context of Belize. Scholars and researchers can build upon these findings to further investigate and advance knowledge in this field.

Lastly, the significance of this study extends to the communities and individuals affected by poverty and limited access to services. By shedding light on the challenges faced by NGOs in delivering sustainable and impactful interventions, the research ultimately aims to contribute to the improvement of living conditions and opportunities for underserved populations in Belize.

Conceptual Overview: Defining NGOs, Poverty and Community Development

Understanding Poverty: Analyzing Its Definition

Poverty has been a complex and pervasive issue throughout human history, affecting individuals, families, and entire societies. Its impact on various dimensions of human well-being, such as health, education, and social mobility, has raised concerns among researchers, policymakers, and humanitarian organizations. This study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of poverty by defining the concept and exploring its root causes. By examining various scholarly sources and incorporating societal perspectives, we can gain insights into poverty's multifaceted nature and identify potential solutions to address this persistent global challenge. Understanding and defining poverty is essential for developing effective policies and strategies to address this problem. The United Nations (UN) has been at the forefront of these efforts, providing a comprehensive definition of poverty that takes into account various factors and dimensions. In this research, the concept of poverty was viewed and analyzed in its multifaceted nature, as indicated by the UN, due to NGO activities extending in a multitude of social dimensions.

The United Nations defines poverty as a multifaceted issue that encompasses both material deprivation and the lack of basic human rights and opportunities. According to the UN (2020), poverty is not solely defined by income level but also by the lack of capabilities that allow individuals to live a dignified life¹⁰(UN, 2020). This definition highlights the importance of considering not only economic indicators but also human rights and social dimensions in poverty eradication efforts. Thus, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2019)

¹⁰ According to the UN (2020), this includes Lack of access to education, healthcare, clean water, and sanitation.

states that poverty is a complex issue that cannot be reduced to a single indicator and incorporates various dimensions such as health, education, standard of living, and social exclusion. This multidimensional approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of poverty and enables targeted interventions (UNDP, 2019). Furthermore, the UN's commitment to eradicating poverty globally and its acknowledgment of the specific challenges faced by different demographic groups demonstrate a holistic approach to addressing this global challenge. Therefore, a thorough understanding of the UN's definition of poverty is essential for developing effective policies and strategies to combat poverty in all its forms.

What is an NGO?

The term "NGO" was introduced in 1945 by the United Nations (UN) to differentiate between the participation rights of intergovernmental specialized agencies and the international private sectors. The UN charter, specifically in Article 71¹¹, recognized the significant role of NGOs in the evolving UN system. Since then, NGOs are an integral part of the global civil society and play a crucial role in addressing various social, environmental, and humanitarian issues (United Nations, n.d.). These organizations operate on an independent basis, without governmental control or profit motives, and aim to advocate for sustainable development, human rights, and social justice (United Nations, n.d.).

In this context, the United Nations defines NGOs as "private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide

¹¹ Article 71 indicates that, "The Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence. Such arrangements may be made with international organizations and, where appropriate, with national organizations after consultation with the Member of the United Nations concerned."

basic social services, or undertake community development" (United Nations, n.d.)¹². What is more, NGOs are considered private organizations, according to the World Bank, that engage in activities to alleviate suffering, advance the interests of the poor, preserve the environment, offer social services, or engage in community development (World Bank, 2005:1). The World Bank Group¹³ (2001:1) additionally distinguishes between three ¹⁴categories of NGOs: advocacy, operational, and development. Development NGOs, are of special importance to this thesis. This is due to the fact that development NGOs aim to reduce poverty and encourage social or political change on a large or small scale.

Given this, NGOs encompass a wide range of organizations, including charities, foundations, advocacy groups, and development agencies (United Nations, n.d.). Their activities are supported by diverse sources, including private donations, grants, and partnerships with governments, corporations, and international organizations (United Nations, n.d.). NGOs operate on principles of voluntarism, inclusivity, and transparency (United Nations, n.d.). By operating through these principles, one of the primary roles of NGOs is to fill gaps where governments are unable or unwilling to address critical issues. In areas of critical issue, NGOs act as first responders, ensuring that basic human needs are met and essential services are provided (Oxfam, 2021). It is for this reason, this thesis examined NGOs and their role as the first responders to alleviating poverty in the developing nation of Belize.

¹² Another resourceful definition of NGOs that is important to this research is taken from The World Association of NGOs (WANGO), who defines an NGO as “any not-for-profit organization that is not established by a governmental entity or intergovernmental agreement and which is organized on a local, national, sub-regional, regional, or international level” (WANGO, 2022).

¹³ NGOs are defined by the World Bank as private organizations that seek to alleviate suffering, promote the interests of the poor, preserve the environment, offer social services, or engage in community development (World Bank, 2005:1).

¹⁴ It should be acknowledged that the main focus of this research was on the role of NGOs community development and poverty reduction initiatives rather than the various NGOs' titles.

What is Community Development?

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2019), community development is a multidimensional approach aimed at improving the social, economic, and environmental conditions of a specific neighborhood, city, or region. This approach involves various actors, such as residents, community organizations, local government institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), working together to identify and address the needs and aspirations of a community. When addressing social concerns, community development is frequently employed as a bottom-up strategy, especially to help underserved populations. Community development encompasses a wide range of activities, as stated by the World Bank (2020), including infrastructure development, education and skills training, healthcare services, income generation programs, and the promotion of social inclusion and participatory decision-making processes. This comprehensive approach aims to empower individuals and communities, enhance their capacities, and promote sustainable development.

One of the key aspects of community development is its ability to empower individuals and communities and promote sustainable development. As stated by Butler (2018), community development recognizes that communities are not passive recipients of aid or development initiatives but active agents capable of driving and influencing positive change. By involving residents in the planning and implementation of projects, community development facilitates ownership and promotes a sense of responsibility among community members. This empowerment leads to improved social cohesion, increased access to resources, and enhanced livelihoods, resulting in greater resilience and sustainability.

The United Nations recognizes the significance of community development in achieving sustainable development goals (UNDP, 2019). In its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

the UN emphasizes the vital role of community organizations and local governments in implementing and monitoring progress towards the goals. The agenda stresses the need to strengthen partnerships between governments, civil society, and the private sector to support community-led development initiatives. The UN also promotes the principle of leaving no one behind, ensuring that the voices and needs of marginalized and disadvantaged communities are heard and addressed through community development interventions.

The importance of community development lies in its ability to empower individuals and communities, enhance their capacities, and promote sustainable development. It recognizes that communities are not passive recipients of aid or development initiatives but active agents capable of driving and influencing positive change. By involving residents in the planning and implementation of projects, community development facilitates ownership and promotes a sense of responsibility among community members. Empowered communities are more likely to have improved social cohesion, increased access to resources, and enhanced livelihoods, leading to greater resilience and sustainability.

Chapter II- Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

NGOs Under the Scope of Civil Society

Civil society theory recognizes NGOs as key actors within the broader civil society framework (Anheier, 2014). NGOs are defined as independent, non-profit organizations that work beyond state or market boundaries to address societal issues (Anheier, 2014). Their unique position allows them to bridge the gaps left by governments and markets by representing the interests and concerns of marginalized communities (Paley, 2001). NGOs operate at the grassroots level, engaging with communities and empowering them to create sustainable change (Paley, 2001). NGOs make significant contributions to poverty alleviation and community development through various approaches.

Firstly, NGOs implement direct poverty reduction programs by providing essential services and resources to the most vulnerable populations (Kabeer, 2005). For example, NGOs offer access to education, healthcare, clean water, and sanitation, enabling communities to break the cycle of poverty (Kabeer, 2005). Secondly, NGOs engage in capacity-building initiatives that empower individuals and communities to participate actively in their own development (Chambers, 1995). Through skill-building programs and awareness campaigns, NGOs foster autonomy and self-reliance among marginalized groups (Chambers, 1995). This approach enhances social cohesion and enables communities to identify and address their unique needs in a sustainable manner. Thirdly, NGOs play a crucial role in advocacy and policy-making processes (Fowler, 2000). By representing marginalized voices, NGOs can influence national and international policy agendas, demanding more equitable resource allocation and social justice

(Fowler, 2000). Their involvement ensures that poverty alleviation and community development remain on the policy radar and drives systemic change (Fowler, 2000).

NGOs hold immense potential for sustainable change in poverty alleviation and community development. As part of civil society, NGOs have the ability to mobilize resources and expertise from multiple actors, including governments, businesses, and individuals (Nelson, 2020). This collaboration enhances the effectiveness of interventions and promotes collective responsibility towards poverty reduction (Nelson, 2020). Furthermore, NGOs act as intermediaries between the state and communities, facilitating dialogue and cooperation (Brass, 1996). They bridge the gaps between policy formulation and implementation, ensuring that community needs are considered and met in development initiatives (Brass, 1996). This bridging role strengthens accountability and fosters democratic governance at the local level (Brass, 1996). Therefore, civil society theory provides a conceptual framework for understanding the role of NGOs in poverty alleviation and community development. NGOs, as part of civil society, bring added value to these efforts due to their independence, flexibility, and grassroots engagement. Their contributions range from direct service provision to capacity-building and advocacy.

Institutional Theory

The Institutional Theory (Brammer, Jackson & Matten, 2012) provides a valuable lens through which to analyze the behavior and dynamics of organizations operating within a specific socio-political context. In the context of this study on Belizean NGOs and their role in poverty alleviation and community development, the Institutional Theory offers a theoretical framework

to understand the influence of institutional pressures on the strategies and actions of these organizations.

According to the Institutional Theory, organizations are not only influenced by internal factors but also by external pressures arising from their institutional environment. This environment includes regulatory frameworks, cultural norms, and expectations that shape organizational practices and decision-making. By conforming to these institutional pressures, organizations seek to gain legitimacy and social acceptance. In the context of Belizean NGOs, the Institutional Theory helps to illuminate the factors that shape their behavior and actions in poverty alleviation and community development initiatives. It recognizes that these NGOs are subject to various institutional pressures, including those from the government, donor agencies, and the local community. For instance, NGOs must comply with regulatory frameworks and meet the expectations of funders and stakeholders to maintain their legitimacy and access to resources.

Examining the institutional environment in which Belizean NGOs operate allows for a deeper understanding of the challenges they face in accessing funding and resources. The Institutional Theory helps to explore the complexities of funding mechanisms, donor requirements, and accountability measures that influence the ability of NGOs to consistently offer quality services in the post-pandemic world. By analyzing how NGOs navigate these pressures, the study can identify strategies employed by NGOs to secure sustainable funding and maintain their effectiveness in poverty alleviation efforts.

Furthermore, the Institutional Theory also highlights the potential of NGOs to challenge and influence existing institutional arrangements. NGOs often engage in advocacy, mobilization, and policy influencing activities to address systemic issues related to poverty and social development. By examining how NGOs navigate institutional pressures while advocating for

change, this study aims to assess their impact and potential for transformative social development in Belize.

To sum, the Institutional Theory serves as a relevant theoretical framework for understanding the behavior, strategies, and challenges faced by Belizean NGOs in poverty alleviation and community development efforts. By considering the influence of institutional pressures, this study seeks to shed light on the role of NGOs within the broader institutional context and their potential to drive social change in Belize.

NGO Development Approaches: The Bottom-Up Approach

Development has been a global priority for decades, aiming to improve the well-being and living standards of individuals and communities (Yunus, 2007). Within this framework, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have emerged as critical actors, employing diverse approaches to tackle the complex challenges associated with poverty alleviation and community development (Mortished & Martin, 2007). One such approach, the bottom-up development approach, places communities and individuals at the center of the development process, fostering their active participation and empowerment (Li, 2007).

The bottom-up approach focuses on grassroots-level engagement and decision-making processes, emphasizing the importance of several approaches such as:

1. **Participatory Decision-Making:** NGOs employing the bottom-up approach prioritize community participation in decision-making processes (Li, 2007). By involving individuals in the identification of development priorities and the planning, implementation, and evaluation of projects, NGOs like Oxfam ensure that community

needs and aspirations are genuinely represented, fostering a sense of ownership and long-term success (Li, 2007).

2. **Capacity Building and Empowerment:** NGOs build local capacity by providing training, resources, and knowledge that empower communities to take charge of their own development. The organization BRAC, for example, focuses on empowering women through education, skill development, and entrepreneurship programs, enabling them to actively contribute to their communities' progress (Yunus, 2007).
3. **Advocacy and Policy Influence:** Bottom-up approaches encourage NGOs to engage in advocacy and policy dialogue (Yunus, 2007). Through research, lobbying, and awareness campaigns, organizations like ActionAid effectively advocate for policies that address the root causes of poverty, yielding sustainable and equitable development outcomes (Action Aid International, n.d.).
4. **Collaboration and Partnerships:** NGOs working with a bottom-up approach collaborate with local stakeholders, government bodies, and other organizations to foster sustainable community development (Li, 2007). By forging partnerships, combining resources and expertise, and leveraging networks, NGOs maximize their impact and support holistic community development (Li, 2007).

Through these approaches, it recognizes that communities possess the ability to understanding in-depth, their own challenges, strengths, and aspirations, thus making them best suited to determine their own development priorities (Li, 2007). Therefore, empowering individuals and communities to drive their own progress.

NGO's, Poverty Alleviation and Community Development

Community development and poverty alleviation are complex challenges that require collaborative efforts from various stakeholders. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a pivotal role in addressing these issues through their unique approach to community development (Thompson, 2016). This research hypothesized that Community development acts as a moderator in between the relationship of NGOs and poverty alleviation. This is because, by implementing community development programs that empower individuals and communities, NGOs contribute to poverty alleviation and the creation of sustainable, inclusive societies. In a study named, “On Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Their Part towards Sustainable Community Development¹⁵”, the authors examine the role and impact of non-governmental organisations towards Sustainable Community Development. In it, they highlight that:

“According to the United Nations, community development is a process in which citizens work alongside government officials to improve the economic, social, and cultural

¹⁵See: Abiddin, N.Z.; Ibrahim, I.; Abdul Aziz, S.A. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Their Part towards Sustainable Community Development. *Sustainability* **2022**, *14*, 4386. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14084386>

Jones, G.E. *Progress in Rural Extension and Community Development*; John Wiley and Sons: London, UK, 1982. As Cited by Abiddin, Ibrahim, & Aziz (2022).

“United Nation. *Popular Participation in Decision Making for Development*; UNO Publications: New York, NY, USA, 1956”. As Cited by Abiddin, Ibrahim, & Aziz (2022).

conditions of the entire society, enabling them to contribute fully to national progress and integrate these communities into national life. Jones coined the term “community development,” which encompasses community participation, empowerment, and capacity. As a result, there are two primary facets to the community development process. To begin, participation by individuals in the effort to improve their standard of living as much as possible through their initiative. Second, providing technical and social services in a manner that fosters initiative, self-reliance, and mutual understanding”.

NGOs Community Development Efforts in Belize

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a crucial role in community development in Belize (BEP, 2020). With their dedication, expertise, and resources, NGOs actively contribute to addressing local challenges, promoting sustainable development, and uplifting the quality of life for individuals across Belizean communities. The following are several ways in which this is carried out:

1. Enhancing Education

NGOs in Belize make substantial efforts to improve access to quality education, particularly in underprivileged communities. For instance, the Belize Education Project (BEP) has collaborated with the Ministry of Education to address educational disparities and promote inclusive learning environments (BEP, 2020). By offering scholarships, teacher training workshops, and supporting infrastructure development, BEP has increased educational opportunities for marginalized students. Additionally, Belize Institute for Social Research and Action (BISRA) works towards reducing illiteracy rates by implementing literacy programs, adult education, and providing learning resources to

remote areas (BISRA, 2019). These initiatives by NGOs have significantly contributed to the educational empowerment of Belizean communities.

2. Improving Healthcare

Healthcare is another vital aspect of community development, and NGOs in Belize actively engage in initiatives aimed at improving healthcare accessibility and service delivery. The Belize Medical Brigade (BMB) organizes medical missions and collaborates with local healthcare providers to provide free or affordable healthcare services to underserved communities (BMB, 2021). NGOs like Hand in Hand Ministries and Belize Red Cross contribute by constructing healthcare facilities, providing medical training, and distributing essential medicines to those in need (Hand in Hand Ministries, 2021; Belize Red Cross, 2020). These efforts have led to enhanced healthcare accessibility and improved health outcomes in Belizean communities.

3. Promoting Environmental Conservation

Belize, with its rich biodiversity and fragile ecosystems, requires effective environmental conservation efforts. NGOs in Belize actively work towards protecting the environment and promoting sustainable practices. The Environmental Research Institute (ERI) conducts research, provides training, and develops environmental policies to address critical issues such as deforestation, pollution, and climate change (ERI, 2021). Friends for Conservation and Development (FCD) focuses on protecting Belize's vast protected areas, including the Maya Mountain Massif and the Chiquibul Forest Reserve, through

partnerships, monitoring, and public awareness campaigns (FCD, 2020). These NGOs have played a crucial role in preserving Belize's natural resources for future generations.

4. **Advancing Economic Development**

NGOs also contribute to community development by supporting economic growth and entrepreneurship. The Belize Enterprise for Sustainable Technology (BEST) promotes sustainable energy practices and fosters the development of renewable energy industries through capacity building, training programs, and policy advocacy (BEST, 2021). They collaborate with local communities to provide affordable and clean energy solutions, stimulating economic development and reducing reliance on non-renewable resources. Belize Trade and Investment Development Service (BELTRAIDE) focuses on supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Belize by providing entrepreneurship support, business development services, and fostering export-oriented industries (BELTRAIDE, 2020). These initiatives have empowered local communities to generate income, create employment opportunities, and contribute to sustainable economic growth.

What one can gather from this, is that NGOs play a dynamic role in community development and poverty alleviation efforts in Belize. Their advocacy, service provision, capacity-building, and collaborative efforts make them valuable actors in addressing complex poverty-related challenges (Thompson, 2016). By implementing community development programs that empower individuals and communities, NGOs contribute to poverty alleviation and the creation of sustainable, inclusive societies. NGOs contribute to poverty alleviation by complementing

government efforts and addressing gaps in service provision. This complementing of government efforts can only be effectively done through collaboration efforts.

Collaborative Efforts of NGOs

The collaborative efforts of an NGO and its parallel partner in the public sector, remains a key requirement in the successful implementation of any policy. The education campaign that is driven by the government can almost make or break the entire process, as the wider population is influenced by decisions that are not fully tabled for discussion (Alaerts, 2020). Policy implementation is hindered significantly by the lack of collaboration between the many moving parts who work to set the policy in motion. A lack of coordination and misconceptions regarding the roles of each player is a significant factor that results in confusion and misappropriation of valuable resources. The politicians in a parliamentary democracy, like the one present in Belize, play a significant part in the collaboration process. They act as the glue that brings together the representatives of the government ministries and the stakeholders from the community-based entities. Without this collaboration, there would be a lowering of the quality and standards during the policy process. Policies that are designed to be rolled out in phases are especially vulnerable to failure if there is a lack of collaboration. The onus is on the government to ensure that the actor's roles are well define and check and balance is in place to prevent corruption and facilitate collaboration. Of note, human resource capacity building remains a key area of opportunity that is experienced by various sectors and stakeholders (Wu, et al., 2015). Low and Davenport (2002), sees this as a major area of focus, as stakeholder's capacity building becomes increasingly important as the work of an NGO is funded and moves past its initial phases (Low and Davenport, 2002). The authors Wilkins, Phillimore and Gilchrist (2016) go on to note that the inputs from

both the public sector and the NGO must be transparent, equitable and sustainable for it to continue to produce the outcomes desired.

Outcomes are the events, occurrences, or changes in conditions, behavior, or attitudes that indicate progress toward a project's goals (Smith, 1973). Outcomes are specific, measurable, and meaningful. The first, likely outcome comes from the buy-in from the community. This is surely a short-term outcome that can eventually evolve into a long-term impact. To garner buy-in from the community regarding each of the potential implements will be difficult to achieve if their mediums through which the call for action is made is not as effective as the message is. This need is prevalent in many areas of project management in Belize and there is a serious need for capacity building in the area of data analysis and reporting. As Mitchell, et al. (2015) reported, this capacity building should also target key stakeholder agencies, including the appropriate ministerial offices in the country in an effort to track how effective and financially feasible the operations of a project has been.

The Belize Network of NGOs, in its Strategic Plan 2021-2023 (BNN, 2021), outlines this very venture as it seeks to improve the stability and reputation of NGOs operating in Belize. Its vice-chair, Janell Chanona, in the strategic plan highlighted the partnerships and joint declarations with social partners and the Government of Belize to guide the improvement of the services offered by NGOs to the communities. These include monitoring and evaluations studies that will improve the accuracy of communications that are held between stakeholders from NGOs and local government (Wahlen, 2014).

Key, long-term impacts that must be considered can be determined from a cross-section analysis and M&E, which can reveal the potential direct impacts to the stakeholders and society at large. Adapting better practices when it comes to policy creation is critical to

the health of our country's public domain. As Hudson, et al. (2019) opines, there are numerous factors that have contributed to the degradation of policy implementation, much of which can be rectified. There are a few, vital recommendations that would help to improve the efforts of the NGOs in creating and implementing policies in Belize. Froyla Tzalam in BNN's communique (2021) encouraged government-led policy implementation teams which partner closely with representatives from the local NGOs, to help improve the monitoring and evaluation of policy planning. This is a role that actors in policy implementation must adapt in Belize. Yet, rather than simply adapt, it must be extensive and exhaustive. Implementing a strong monitoring and evaluation agency would mitigate the issue of corruption and financial dishonesty that has consistently affected the implementation process (Hudson, et al., 2019). The authors Waylen, et al., (2019) postulates that evaluation mechanisms will also assist governments in understanding what areas of the policy formulation process needs to be amended. This recommendation is one of the best practices successfully utilized by developing countries such as Singapore to transform their policy creation process (Quah, 2013).

The roles of policy actors have become skewed over the years (Papoola, 2016). Many of those who are institutional actors have become monarchical in their approach to policy creation and implementation, while those non-governmental actors have taken a backseat in the process. There is evidence that much of the policy work done today in the region is done from the position of power, with the executive abusing the power it has been given. This has resulted in corruption, lack of continuity in government policy, and a lack of unity between key policy actors. Although there are significant differences between the roles of policy actors, the similarities are pronounced. Their jobs are all focused on the betterment

of public life and the country at large. This objective must always stand as paramount in the minds of the actors as policies are initiated and implemented Hickey (2015).

There must be a consorted effort by government and its actors to reduce the effect and the extent to which politics influences policy formulation. Public policy is important for the masses, not only those affiliated with political parties. This limitation of political influence will allow stakeholders to more effectively contribute to the discourse during the formulation process, thus resulting in more community-centric policies. Curbing the policies that benefit only the rich will allow for more effective functioning in public administration. As Finnetty (2001) stated, it is paramount that local governments utilize policy actors more effectively by clearly delineating and broadening their roles in the planning process. This application extends to the work that the local government and NGOs seek to continue executing in Belize.

The lack of continuity in policy implementation when there are changes in government must be addressed (Finnetty, 2001). The lack of consistency does not benefit government nor public and only results in a loss of resources, man-power and the removal of policies that sought to benefit the public. As the primary actors, incoming governments must fairly evaluate policies and programs that are in place and refrain from automatically cutting funding from programs that have been shown to be effective. Legislative statutes should be put in place to protect these policies so that new seats of power cannot simply discontinue them on a whim. This way, there can be a continuum of effective policy and a demand for proper evaluation.

NGO Barriers to Achieving Development and Poverty Reduction in Belize

While NGOs in Belize have the potential to contribute significantly to poverty alleviation and community development, they also face several challenges. To explore the primary challenges that NGOs face in Belize and their implications for achieving sustainable development and poverty reduction, the research drew upon a range of scholarly sources to substantiate the points made. The challenges highlighted in this research are:

1. **Limited Financial Resources:**

One of the primary challenges faced by NGOs in Belize is the lack of sufficient financial resources (Davis & Davis, 2018). Limited funding restricts their capacity to implement effective development programs and initiatives. According to Sandiford and Obermeyer (2017), NGOs in Belize often struggle to secure substantial grants and donations due to competing priorities and limited availability of funds. Insufficient financial resources hinder the scale and impact of poverty alleviation initiatives, limiting the ability to address the root causes of poverty.

2. **Inadequate Infrastructure:**

NGOs face significant challenges in accessing and utilizing basic infrastructure, especially in rural and marginalized communities (Davis & Davis, 2018). This includes inadequate transportation systems, limited access to communication technologies, and lack of electricity and water supply. As highlighted by Davis and Davis (2018), the absence of infrastructure restricts the reach and effectiveness of NGOs, making it difficult to provide essential services and conduct sustainable community development programs in remote areas.

3. **Limited Local Capacity and Expertise:**

Another challenge faced by NGOs in Belize is the limited availability of skilled human resources, particularly in rural communities (Savorgnan & Burkett, 2018). This scarcity of expertise hampers the organizations' ability to design and implement locally relevant poverty alleviation strategies. According to Savorgnan and Burkett (2018), the lack of technical and management skills among local communities poses a significant obstacle to achieving sustainable development goals in Belize. NGOs often find it challenging to find qualified personnel who can spearhead community-driven projects.

4. **Inadequate collaboration and Coordination:**

Insufficient collaboration and coordination among NGOs, government agencies, and local communities impede the success of community development and poverty alleviation initiatives (Walmsley, 2019). Walmsley (2019) argues that the lack of effective partnerships and networking limits the exchange of knowledge, resources, and best practices among stakeholders. This fragmentation leads to duplication of efforts, inefficient resource allocation, and a fragmented approach to poverty reduction. Enhancing collaboration and coordination can significantly improve the overall effectiveness of NGOs in Belize.

5. **Political instability and Corruption:**

Political instability and corruption in Belize pose significant challenges to NGOs' efforts towards community development and poverty alleviation (Transparency International, 2020). Transparency International (2020) highlights the country's struggles with corruption and a weak governance framework, impacting the effectiveness of development funds, project implementation, and overall progress. NGOs must navigate

these challenges cautiously and develop strategies to mitigate corruption risks, ensuring resources reach the intended beneficiaries.

6. Lack of Sustainable Funding Mechanisms:

Sustainable funding mechanisms are crucial to address long-term development goals and achieve poverty reduction (Short, 2019). However, many NGOs in Belize face challenges in securing ongoing funding beyond short-term project-based grants. As stated by Short (2019), the absence of sustainable funding mechanisms constrains the ability of NGOs to plan and implement poverty alleviation efforts in a holistic manner. Developing strategies to diversify funding sources and build long-term partnerships with donors is essential to overcome this challenge. Addressing these challenges will require a collaborative effort involving NGOs, government agencies, and local communities to develop innovative solutions and strengthen the enabling environment for impactful community development and poverty alleviation initiatives.

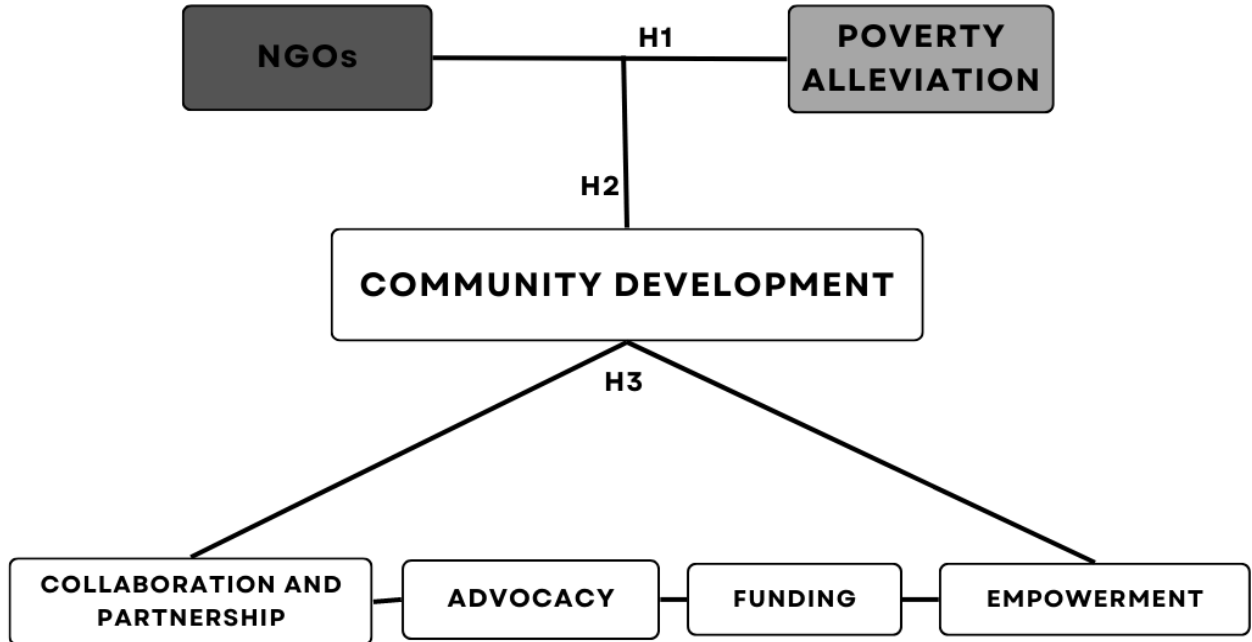
Chapter III Methodology

As Creswell (2014) suggests, a solid research methodology enables researchers to address gaps in the literature and create a meaningful and impactful contribution. In the effort of doing so, this chapter discusses the research methodology, including the research design, methods for gathering and analyzing data, and any ethical issues that were especially relevant to gathering the primary data. The thesis objective was to evaluate the importance of NGOs in reducing poverty in Belize, by carefully analyzing their operations and key elements. Below follows the discussion of the research methodology and design.

Research Framework and Hypothesis

The research framework was developed based on the literature review. Figure 1 demonstrates that the independent variable of the thesis was NGOs; the dependent variable was poverty alleviation, while the mediator was community development, which was to have a mediating effect on the relationship between NGOs and poverty alleviation. Then, the moderators were Empowerment, Capacity building, Advocacy and Collaboration and Partnerships which explicate the triangular relationship between NGOs, community development and poverty alleviation.

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of NGOs in Poverty Alleviation



From this framework, NGOs' functions in poverty alleviation are, among others, a bottom-up approach which employ strategies that prioritize the active participation and empowerment of communities. This framework relates to the literature from this thesis that indicates this current bottom-up approach of NGOs, involving increased collaboration, advocacy, empowerment and capacity building, is the most sustainable way of reducing poverty. Therefore, by focusing on these moderators, this section will provide an overview of literature from journal articles, reports and organisational websites which were studied to determine the possible impact made by NGOs on poverty alleviation.

Research Hypothesis

Following the research framework, these were the hypothesis that the study used:

Hypothesis 1: Development NGOs have a direct role in poverty alleviation

Hypothesis 2: Community development mediates the relationship between NGOs and poverty alleviation.

Hypothesis 3: NGOs community development efforts serve as a means to efficiently tackle poverty.

Research Design

A research design offers the structure for data gathering and analysis. A research design, according to Yin¹⁶ (1994:19), "is the logical chain that relates the empirical data to a study's initial research question and, in the end, to its conclusion. It serves as a research reference that offers accurate guidance for successfully completing a study. In regards to the review of literature, it summarized various points of view on the body of knowledge on NGOs, their activities, and connections to both community development and poverty reduction. I began my assessment of the literature by examining and providing a broad overview of the connections between poverty, community development, and NGOs and discussed their interdependence. This was then condensed with an emphasis on NGOs' efforts, especially in Belize, and their difficulties in eradicating poverty.

A Quantitative Research Design

The researcher adopted a quantitative research approach to carry out the study's aims. Explanatory, descriptive, and experimental research approaches are utilized in quantitative

¹⁶ See Yin, R K. (2003): *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Third Edition, Sage Publication, London.

studies. The methodology utilized in this study was quantitative since it involves the methodical gathering of data that could be measured. As a result, a questionnaire survey was utilized to collect opinions about the contribution and influence that NGOs make to Belize's efforts to reduce poverty. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to compile the survey's data. The collected data then underwent a descriptive analysis. Charts, graphs, and cross-tabulation tables were used to present the findings of the SPSS processing of this descriptive data.

Data Instrument

The instrument that was utilized to gather the data from the respondents was a self-administered, anonymous questionnaire that was sent via Google Forms. The instrument consisted of thirty-five (35) questions divided into two (2) sections: demographics and Likert scale questions. The first section included close-ended questions that gathered information on age, gender, and overall experience in the NGO. The second section comprised Likert scale questions that explored the research questions. The demographics section aimed to gather information about the age, gender, overall experience in NGOs, and specific involvement with NGOs in Belize. This section provides a profile of the respondents, allowing for a better understanding of the perspectives represented in the study.

The Likert scale questions delved into the research questions posed to evaluate the role of NGOs in the current state of community development in Belize. These questions explored the risks faced by donors when funding NGOs, the types of NGOs receiving more attention and access to funding, the presence of unregistered NGOs, barriers to registration, disparities in accessibility and support among NGOs in "Good Standing" versus those who are not, lessons

learned from NGOs collaborating with government projects, and how NGOs perceive their role in poverty alleviation and community development.

Questionnaires were developed using Google Forms, and links were distributed through messaging tools such as WhatsApp, Messenger, email, and other forms of social media communication by the researcher. A total of one hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires were sent out, with the goal of obtaining ninety (90) respondents who would successfully complete them. A formal letter of request preceded each questionnaire to assure respondents from the various NGOs that their participation would be confidential. After securing consent from all sample participants, the questionnaire was issued to the sample population.

Sample Population

The sampling population was procured using the purposive sampling technique. According to Etikan, Musa & Alkassim (2016), this sampling technique relies on the researcher's own judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in the study. It was considered the ideal methodology as it allowed the researcher to establish a sample population that encapsulated the community and profile being targeted. The sampling styles that could be used in purposive sampling included the typical, extreme or deviant styles, critical, maximum variations, and homogeneous style.

The typical variant was employed when the researcher sought to investigate a phenomenon considered typical among the members of the population. The extreme variant aimed to highlight outliers within a particular trend to better understand the behavior of the broader population. The critical case sampling involved investigating one case from which data and behavior could be analyzed. The findings from a critical investigation could then inform future research into similar

cases (Klar & Leeper, 2019). The maximum variation or heterogeneous purposive sample included a broad spectrum of cases to help researchers determine patterns. Finally, the homogeneous purposive sample was used when the researcher sought to ensure that the members of the sample had similar characteristics (Klar & Leeper, 2019). For the purpose of this research, the homogeneous purposive sampling technique was utilized.

Sample Size and Population

In part with the research objectives, the study had a good population size and sample size. The sample size and population included NGOs operating in various social sectors, including sexual and reproductive health, environment, religious, social services, education, youth, and culture. Each potential respondent was requested to participate in the research study. The participants selected for this research were located in Belize, with most establishments found in the Belize and the Cayo districts. The research aimed to analyze the offerings that the NGOs had developed, as well as their best practices in procuring resources, aid, and allies in partner projects.

According to the most recent Belize Network of NGOs newsletter (2022), there are an approximate 50 NGOs that are in “Good Standing”. Another source from Griffith (2016) surmised that there are approximately 135 registered and unregistered NGOs. Given this, a sample size of 45 was calculated based on the estimated size of 50 “good standing” NGOs, using the Raosoft sample size calculator¹⁷ at a margin of error of 5%, confidence level of 95% and response distribution of 50%. However, only 90 questionnaires were completed.

¹⁷ See <http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>

Data Collection and Analysis

After the completion of the questionnaire, data was compiled by downloading the data in Excel format. This was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The data that was gathered was analyzed descriptively. Given the nature of this study, which required both a quantitative and a qualitative approach to data analysis, this was the approach taken when analyzing the collected data. The descriptive data was processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). With SPSS, data analysis was conducted, and the results were expressed in the form of charts, graphs, and crosstabulation tables.

Delimitations of the Research

Several limitations were experienced by the researcher during doing this investigation. Being a case study that concentrates on a small region with few NGOs, it may be challenging to derive findings that can be applied generally across many fields and organizations working to reduce poverty or build communities. Additionally, there wasn't much information in the area under study that was documented in primary, secondary, and all other pertinent sources. Therefore, this research made use of the few data on Belize that was accessible. Given this, the researcher found it challenging to provide a thorough history of the NGOs role in reducing poverty in Belize.

Chapter 4- Results

This chapter presents the results of the survey conducted to investigate the effects and role of NGOs in community development and poverty alleviation in Belize. The data collected from the questionnaire responses of individuals who have worked in or founded NGOs from the Belize and Cayo districts, and offers valuable insights into various aspects related to NGO funding, registration barriers, disparities among NGOs, collaboration with government projects, types of donations received, transparency, and accountability.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections: demographics and Likert scale questions. The demographics section aimed to gather information about the age, gender, overall experience in NGOs, and specific involvement with NGOs in Belize. This section provides a profile of the respondents, allowing for a better understanding of the perspectives represented in the study. The Likert scale questions delved into the research questions posed to evaluate the role of NGOs in the current state of social development in Belize. These questions explored the risks faced by donors when funding NGOs, the types of NGOs receiving more attention and access to funding, the presence of unregistered NGOs, barriers to registration, disparities in accessibility and support among NGOs in "Good Standing" versus those who are not, lessons learned from NGOs collaborating with government projects, and how NGOs perceive their role in poverty alleviation and community development.

By examining the responses from a diverse range of individuals involved in NGOs, this chapter sheds light on the current state of NGO practices and their influence on social development in Belize. The findings presented here will contribute to the existing literature on NGO engagement in poverty alleviation and guide policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders in their efforts to enhance the effectiveness and impact of NGOs in Belize.

Table 0-1 Age*Gender Crosstabulation

Age * Gender Crosstabulation

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
Age	18-24	Count	12	4	16
		% of Total	13.3%	4.4%	17.8%
	25-34	Count	5	11	16
		% of Total	5.6%	12.2%	17.8%
	35-44	Count	10	8	18
		% of Total	11.1%	8.9%	20.0%
	45-54	Count	11	11	22
		% of Total	12.2%	12.2%	24.4%
	55 and above	Count	13	5	18
		% of Total	14.4%	5.6%	20.0%
Total		Count	51	39	90
		% of Total	56.7%	43.3%	100.0%

The presented table offers a cross-tabulation analysis of age and gender among the survey respondents, providing valuable insights into the demographic composition of the sample and the perspectives represented in the study. The gender distribution reveals that among the respondents, 56.7% identified as male, while 43.3% identified as female. This slight gender imbalance indicates a slightly higher representation of males within the sample.

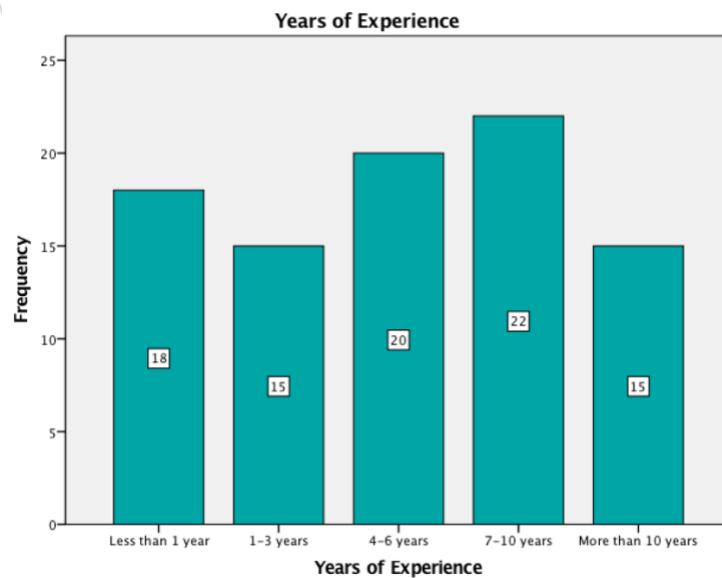
Examining the age distribution, the respondents are categorized as follows: 17.8% fall within the age range of 18-24, another 17.8% belong to the 25-34 category, 20.0% are aged between 35-44, 24.4% fall within the 45-54 age range, and the remaining 20.0% are aged 55 and above. Notably, the largest age group represented in the sample is the 45-54 category, accounting for 24.4% of the total respondents.

The distribution of years of experience among the respondents provides valuable insights into the expertise and knowledge represented in the study. The data reveals the following breakdown: 20.0% of the participants reported having less than 1 year of experience working in NGOs, 16.7% had 1-3 years of experience, 22.2% had 4-6 years of experience, 24.4% had 7-10 years of experience, and 16.7% had more than 10 years of experience.

Among the respondents, 20.0% reported having less than 1 year of experience in the NGO sector. These individuals are relatively new to the field, and their perspectives may reflect a fresh outlook on the role of NGOs in community development and poverty alleviation. The 16.7% who had 1-3 years of experience represent those who have gained some experience in the field and may have developed insights into the challenges and opportunities involved in NGO work.

A notable portion of the respondents, comprising 22.2%, indicated having 4-6 years of experience in NGOs. This group includes individuals who have spent a considerable amount of time in the sector and may possess a deeper understanding of the intricacies involved in community development and poverty alleviation efforts. Furthermore, 24.4% of the participants reported having 7-10 years of experience in NGOs, indicating their significant involvement in the sector. Their extensive experience may provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by NGOs and the strategies that contribute to successful community development and poverty alleviation initiatives.

Figure 2 Years of Experience Among Respondents



Moreover, 16.7% of the respondents reported having more than 10 years of experience in the NGO sector. These individuals bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the study, having witnessed the evolution of NGO practices and their impact on community development and poverty alleviation over an extended period. Their insights can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the long-term dynamics and trends within the NGO sector.

Table 0-2 NGO Experience in Belize*Founder Crosstabulations

Worked NGOs in Belize * Founded an NGO Crosstabulation

		Founded an NGO		Total	
		Yes	No		
Worked NGOs in Belize	Yes	Count	7	83	90
		% of Total	7.8%	92.2%	100.0%
Total		Count	7	83	90
		% of Total	7.8%	92.2%	100.0%

The cross-tabulation table had examined the relationship between respondents who had worked at an NGO in Belize and those who had founded an NGO of their own. Among the respondents, 7.8% had reported that they had both worked at an NGO in Belize and had founded an NGO of their own. This had indicated a small proportion of individuals who had actively engaged in both roles within the NGO sector.

On the other hand, the majority of respondents, accounting for 92.2%, had worked at NGOs in Belize but had not founded their own NGOs. This distribution had highlighted the prevalence of individuals who had gained experience working in NGOs in Belize without taking on the additional responsibility of establishing their own organizations. It had suggested that the majority of respondents in the sample had primarily been involved as employees or volunteers within existing NGOs, rather than assuming the role of founders or leaders. The fact that the majority of respondents (92.2%) have worked at NGOs in Belize but have not founded their own organizations suggests that there is a significant presence of established NGOs in the country. These NGOs likely offer opportunities for individuals to gain experience, contribute to social development, and

address poverty-related issues through their work. The high percentage of respondents who have worked at NGOs indicates a relatively robust NGO sector in Belize, where individuals can actively participate and make a difference.

Additionally, the relatively small proportion of respondents (7.8%) who have both worked at an NGO in Belize and founded their own NGO highlights the entrepreneurial spirit and initiative of a select group of individuals within the NGO landscape. These individuals have taken on the additional responsibility of establishing and managing their own organizations, potentially to address specific needs or gaps in the existing NGO sector. Their presence suggests a degree of innovation and diversity within the NGO landscape, where different approaches and models of engagement are being explored. It is also worth considering the external factors that may influence the NGO landscape in Belize, such as the availability of funding from both domestic and foreign sources, government policies and regulations, and the specific social and economic contexts within the country. Another key factor to be explored are the barriers, or perceived barriers that is intrinsic to the creation and running of an NGO. These barriers are important to identify, as they play a significant role in the effectiveness of an organization.

Table 0-3 Perception of Bureaucratic Barriers to NGOs

Bureaucratic Barriers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	17	18.9	18.9	18.9
	Neutral	22	24.4	24.4	43.3
	Agree	28	31.1	31.1	74.4
	Strongly Agree	23	25.6	25.6	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

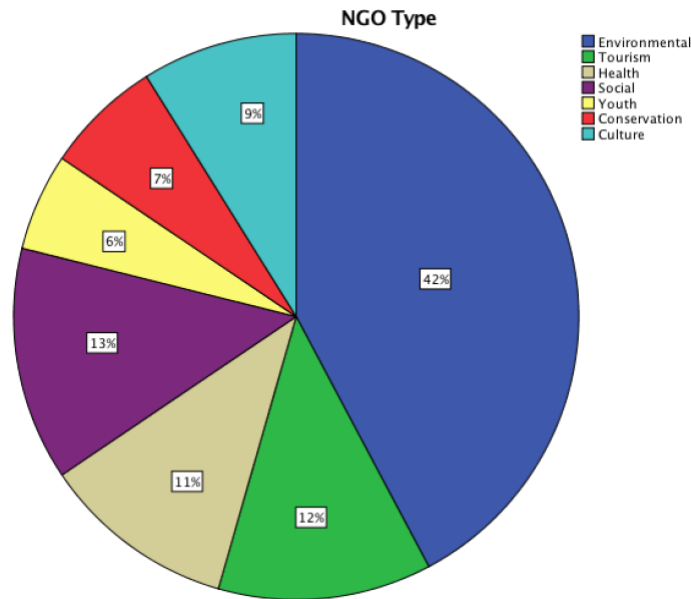
Among the respondents, 18.9% disagreed that bureaucratic processes act as barriers for NGOs in Belize. These individuals hold the opinion that bureaucratic procedures do not significantly hinder the functioning and effectiveness of NGOs in the country. Approximately

24.4% of the respondents expressed a neutral stance on the issue, indicating that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. These individuals likely have a more nuanced perspective, recognizing that bureaucratic processes may have both positive and negative impacts on NGOs.

31.1% of the respondents agreed that bureaucratic processes act as barriers for NGOs in Belize. This suggests that a significant portion of the participants perceive bureaucratic hurdles, such as complex registration procedures or burdensome reporting requirements, as hindrances that can impede the operations and efficiency of NGOs. A notable 25.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that bureaucratic processes act as barriers for NGOs. These individuals hold the firm belief that bureaucratic obstacles significantly hamper the functioning and impact of NGOs in Belize. They may perceive bureaucracy as creating unnecessary delays, administrative burdens, or limitations on the ability of NGOs to carry out their missions effectively.

The cumulative percentage shows that a substantial majority of the respondents (74.4%) either agree or strongly agree that bureaucratic processes act as barriers for NGOs in Belize. This indicates a prevailing perception among the participants that bureaucracy poses challenges and obstacles to the effective operation and functioning of NGOs. The perceptions connected to the results on bureaucratic barriers for NGOs in Belize reveal important insights into the experiences and viewpoints of respondents. These perceptions can provide a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by NGOs in navigating bureaucratic processes. The responses span a range of opinions, from disagreement to strong agreement, indicating that there is diversity in perceptions regarding bureaucratic barriers. This diversity suggests that individuals' experiences and interactions with bureaucratic processes may differ, leading to varying viewpoints on the extent of the barriers faced by NGOs.

Figure 3 NGO Type by Respondent



A significant proportion of the respondents (42.2%) reported their involvement in environmental-focused NGOs. This finding indicated a notable emphasis on environmental conservation, sustainability, and protection of natural resources among the NGOs in Belize. It aligned with the country's rich biodiversity and the recognition of the importance of environmental preservation in the region (Cawich et al., 2020). The survey results showed that 12.2% and 11.1% of the respondents identified their participation in tourism-focused and health-focused NGOs, respectively. These figures reflected the presence of organizations dedicated to promoting tourism-related initiatives and addressing health-related issues in Belize. The findings underscored the acknowledgment of the significant role played by the tourism and healthcare sectors in the country's development, leading to the establishment of specialized NGOs in these areas. The analysis indicated that social-focused NGOs accounted for 13.3% of the respondents, youth-focused NGOs represented 5.6%, conservation-focused NGOs accounted for 6.7%, and cultural-focused NGOs comprised 8.9%. These figures highlighted the diverse range of NGOs addressing social issues, youth empowerment, conservation efforts, and cultural preservation in Belize. The

distribution of NGOs across these areas emphasized the multi-faceted nature of development challenges and the concerted efforts made by organizations to address them. Additionally, the presence of tourism, health, social, youth, conservation, and cultural-focused NGOs highlighted the holistic approach taken to address various development challenges.

Table 0-4 Cost of Registration for NGO

		Cost of Registration			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	23	25.6	25.6	25.6
	Disagree	21	23.3	23.3	48.9
	Neutral	1	1.1	1.1	50.0
	Agree	23	25.6	25.6	75.6
	Strongly Agree	22	24.4	24.4	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

Based on the findings, it is evident that a significant proportion of respondents expressed concern regarding the challenges posed by high registration fees for NGOs in Belize. Specifically, 25.6% of the participants strongly disagreed with the statement, indicating a strong belief that high registration fees do not pose a challenge for NGOs. Additionally, 23.3% disagreed with the statement, suggesting that they held a similar view, although perhaps not as strongly.

On the other hand, 25.6% of the respondents agreed with the statement, while 24.4% strongly agreed. These figures indicate that a considerable portion of the participants believed that high registration fees do indeed present challenges for NGOs in Belize. These challenges may include financial barriers, limited resources for operations and program implementation, and difficulties in establishing and sustaining NGOs.

It is worth noting that only a small percentage of respondents (1.1%) expressed a neutral stance towards the statement. This suggests that the majority of participants had a clear opinion regarding the impact of high registration fees on NGOs, with relatively few remaining undecided. These findings highlight the mixed perceptions and viewpoints regarding the influence of high

registration fees on NGOs in Belize. The differing opinions may stem from various factors, including the financial capacity and resources of the respondents' organizations, their experience with the registration process, and their understanding of the operational and financial challenges faced by NGOs.

The data underscores the significance of registration fees as a potential barrier to entry and sustainability for NGOs in Belize. High registration fees can limit the ability of smaller organizations or those with limited financial resources to establish and maintain their operations, thereby hindering their contributions to social development and community engagement (Oberoi, 2020). The challenges imposed by high registration fees may disproportionately affect grassroots initiatives and individuals seeking to address pressing social issues.

Table 0-5 Political Factors Impacting NGOs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	23	25.6	25.6	25.6
	Disagree	17	18.9	18.9	44.4
	Agree	22	24.4	24.4	68.9
	Strongly Agree	28	31.1	31.1	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

The findings indicate that a significant proportion of the respondents expressed the view that political factors do play a role in the ease of NGO registration in Belize. Specifically, 31.1% of the participants strongly agreed with this statement, while an additional 24.4% agreed. These figures suggest a prevailing belief among the respondents that political factors have an impact on the registration process for NGOs.

Furthermore, 18.9% of the participants disagreed with the statement, indicating that they did not perceive political factors as influential in the ease of NGO registration. Similarly, 25.6% strongly disagreed, expressing a firm conviction that political factors do not play a role in the

registration process. These varying responses indicate a diversity of perspectives among the participants regarding the relationship between political factors and the ease of NGO registration. The disagreement and strong disagreement categories may reflect the belief that the registration process is primarily governed by legal and administrative requirements, rather than political considerations.

Conversely, the agreement and strong agreement categories suggest that a substantial portion of respondents believe that political factors, such as government policies, regulations, and the political climate, can significantly influence the ease of NGO registration. Political factors may encompass bureaucratic hurdles, favoritism, corruption, or the extent of political support for NGOs.

Table 0-6 Perception of Government and Community Development Project Support Success

Perception of Government Support Success * Local Development Projects Success Crosstabulation

Count		Local Development Projects Success					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Perception of Government Support Success	Strongly Disagree	5	5	8	8	7	33
	Disagree	7	5	6	6	6	30
	Neutral	6	7	5	4	5	27
Total		18	17	19	18	18	90

Analyzing the table, we observe that the perception of government support success was distributed among the respondents as follows: 36.7% strongly disagreed, 33.3% disagreed, and 30% were neutral. On the other hand, the success levels of local ¹⁸development projects were distributed as follows: 20% strongly disagreed, 18.9% disagreed, 21.1% were neutral, 20% agreed, and 20% strongly agreed.

¹⁸ Local action, which is a key component of community development, aims to enhance social well-being and includes individuals cooperating to advance their shared interests. The capacity of people to band together and cooperate toward shared objectives is an illustration of this ability. As is the case, the phrase "local development" is used in this section of the thesis, where it refers to the recognition and harnessing of the resources and inherent abilities of a community.

To determine the success rate when the government is involved in local development projects, we can examine the frequencies and percentages in the relevant cells. For example, out of the total sample, 18 respondents strongly disagreed with the success of local development projects when the government was involved, which represents 20% of the total respondents. Similarly, 17 respondents disagreed, 19 respondents were neutral, 18 respondents agreed, and 18 respondents strongly agreed.

The perceived low rate of success when the government is involved in local development projects can be influenced by several factors. Here are some possible explanations:

Lack of Trust: The perception of low success could stem from a lack of trust in government institutions and their ability to effectively implement and manage development projects. If there is a history of corruption, inefficiency, or inadequate resource allocation, it can erode confidence in the government's capacity to achieve positive outcomes.

Bureaucratic Processes: Government involvement often entails navigating complex bureaucratic processes, including obtaining permits, securing funding, and adhering to regulations. Excessive red tape and administrative hurdles can hinder the progress of projects, leading to delays, increased costs, and frustration among stakeholders.

Limited Resources: The government may face constraints in terms of financial resources, technical expertise, and capacity to oversee and support local development initiatives. Insufficient funding or inadequate allocation of resources can hinder the implementation and sustainability of projects, leading to perceived low success rates.

Political Interference: Political factors and partisan interests can influence the prioritization, implementation, and allocation of resources for local development projects. Political

favoritism, nepotism, or the diversion of funds for personal or political gain can undermine the success and effectiveness of government-supported initiatives.

Communication and Collaboration: Effective communication and collaboration between government entities, NGOs, and local communities are crucial for successful project implementation. Inadequate communication channels, limited community involvement, and a lack of coordination among stakeholders can lead to misalignment, misunderstandings, and project failures.

Lack of Accountability: The perception of low success may arise from a lack of accountability mechanisms within the government. If there is insufficient transparency, oversight, and monitoring of projects, it can contribute to a sense of disillusionment and skepticism regarding the government's commitment to achieving positive outcomes.

Socioeconomic Factors: Socioeconomic disparities, including poverty, limited access to education and healthcare, and inadequate infrastructure, can create underlying challenges that affect the success of local development projects. If these broader socioeconomic issues are not effectively addressed, it can hinder the impact of government interventions.

Table 0-7 Role of NGOs in Poverty Alleviation

NGO Role in Poverty Alleviation

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	1	1.1	1.1	1.1
Disagree	4	4.4	4.4	5.6
Neutral	11	12.2	12.2	17.8
Agree	40	44.4	44.4	62.2
Strongly Agree	34	37.8	37.8	100.0
Total	90	100.0	100.0	

The table presents the respondents' perceptions regarding the role of NGOs in poverty alleviation in Belize. Among the respondents, 1.1% strongly disagreed, 4.4% disagreed, 12.2%

were neutral, 44.4% agreed, and 37.8% strongly agreed with the statement concerning the role of NGOs in poverty alleviation.

The findings indicate that a majority of the respondents (82.2%) expressed positive perceptions by either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the notion that NGOs play a role in poverty alleviation. This suggests a recognition of the significance of NGOs as key actors in addressing poverty and implementing initiatives to uplift the disadvantaged populations in Belize. The high percentage of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing reflects the confidence placed in NGOs and their potential impact in poverty alleviation efforts. It signifies the perceived effectiveness of NGOs in designing and implementing interventions that target the root causes of poverty, provide support to vulnerable groups, and foster socio-economic development.

The positive perceptions of NGOs' role in poverty alleviation may stem from their unique characteristics, such as their ability to mobilize resources, implement community-centered approaches, and provide targeted assistance to marginalized communities. NGOs often have a more flexible and localized approach compared to governmental institutions, allowing them to adapt to the specific needs of the communities they serve.

However, it is important to acknowledge the presence of a small percentage of respondents who expressed disagreement or neutrality regarding the role of NGOs in poverty alleviation. These differing perspectives could be influenced by various factors, including personal experiences, varying levels of exposure to NGO activities, or differing beliefs about the responsibility of NGOs versus government in poverty reduction.

Table 0-8 NGOs Ability to Reach Vulnerable Populations

NGOs Reach Target Population

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	10	11.1	11.1	11.1
Disagree	15	16.7	16.7	27.8
Neutral	18	20.0	20.0	47.8
Agree	27	30.0	30.0	77.8
Strongly Agree	20	22.2	22.2	100.0
Total	90	100.0	100.0	

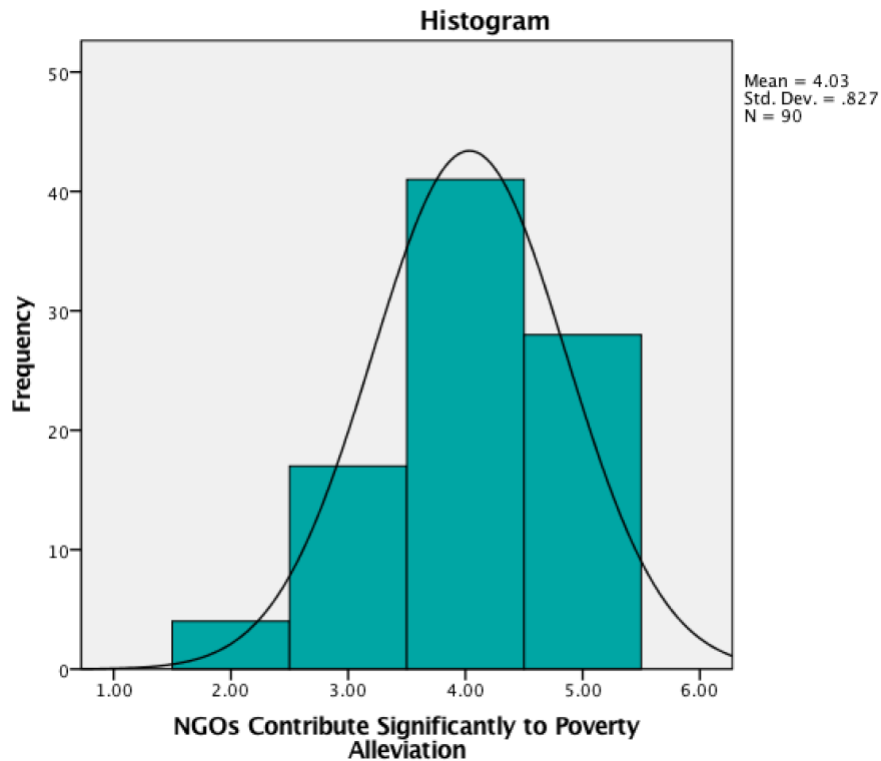
Based on the data, it can be observed that the respondents had varying opinions regarding the NGOs' ability to reach the target population. A considerable proportion of respondents expressed positive perceptions, with 30% agreeing and 22.2% strongly agreeing that NGOs were able to reach the target population. This indicates that a significant number of respondents believed that NGOs in Belize were effective in reaching and providing services to vulnerable communities.

On the other hand, a portion of the respondents held more critical views. Approximately 16.7% disagreed and 11.1% strongly disagreed with the NGOs' ability to reach the target population. These responses suggest that some individuals felt that NGOs were not successful in effectively reaching and addressing the needs of the vulnerable population in Belize. Furthermore, a significant number of respondents (20%) expressed a neutral stance, indicating a lack of a strong opinion or uncertainty about the NGOs' reach. This may be attributed to a lack of awareness or limited knowledge about the specific efforts and impact of NGOs on the target population.

The results for this question were quite varied but may be an indicator of the respondents' level of satisfaction with the work they are able to do with the limited resources they have. The effectiveness of NGOs in reaching the target population can vary depending on the specific context and geographical location. Different regions or communities in Belize may have varying levels of infrastructure, accessibility, and resource availability, which can impact the reach and effectiveness

of NGOs. Respondents from different areas may have different experiences and perceptions based on the presence or absence of NGOs in their specific locality.

Figure 4 Histogram of Respondent Perception of NGO Impact on Poverty Alleviation



The rate of response was analyzed for the question posed regarding the level of contribution and impact NGOs have had in the alleviation of poverty. Because the sample was mainly centralized in Belize City, this data can be looked at through that lens. The analysis of the respondents' thoughts on the contribution of NGOs to poverty alleviation reveals varying perspectives and perceptions. As demonstrated in Figure 4, the results support theoretical hypothesis 1, whereby the research proposes that NGOs have a direct impact on Poverty alleviation.

Overall, the majority of respondents expressed a positive view regarding the contribution of NGOs to poverty alleviation in Belize City. Specifically, 76.4% of respondents either agreed (45.3%) or strongly agreed (31.1%) that NGOs made a significant contribution to poverty

alleviation. This indicates a general recognition and acknowledgment of the positive impact NGOs have had in addressing poverty-related issues.

On the other hand, a small proportion of respondents disagreed (3.8%) or held a neutral viewpoint (19.8%) regarding the contribution of NGOs to poverty alleviation. These responses suggest that there is a subset of individuals who may not perceive NGOs' efforts as significantly effective in addressing poverty-related challenges.

The positive responses indicating agreement or strong agreement with NGOs' significant contribution to poverty alleviation could be attributed to several factors. These include:

1. **Visible Impact:** Respondents who have directly witnessed or benefited from the services, programs, or initiatives provided by NGOs in Belize City are more likely to perceive their significant contribution. Tangible outcomes such as improved access to basic necessities, education, healthcare, or livelihood opportunities can reinforce the belief in NGOs' positive impact on poverty alleviation.
2. **Collaborative Efforts:** NGOs often collaborate with government agencies, local communities, and other stakeholders to address poverty-related challenges comprehensively. This collaborative approach may contribute to a greater perception of NGOs' significance in poverty alleviation, as their efforts are integrated and synergized with multiple actors in the city.
3. **Public Awareness:** Effective communication, awareness campaigns, and public engagement activities carried out by NGOs can enhance the visibility of their poverty alleviation efforts. When individuals are informed about the initiatives, achievements, and

overall mission of NGOs, they are more likely to recognize their contribution to addressing poverty in Belize City.

4. **Personal Values and Beliefs:** Respondents who hold strong personal values related to social justice, equality, and poverty reduction may be more inclined to acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of NGOs in poverty alleviation. These individuals may align their beliefs with the mission and values of NGOs, leading to a positive perception of their contributions.

While the overall response indicates a general agreement on the significant contribution of NGOs to poverty alleviation, it is essential to consider the perspectives of those who disagreed or held a neutral viewpoint. Further analysis and exploration of these viewpoints can help identify areas for improvement, address gaps, and enhance the effectiveness of NGOs' poverty alleviation strategies in Belize City.

Table 0-9 NGOs Work to Improve Access to Basic Needs

Improved Access to Basic Needs

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	5	5.6	5.6	5.6
Neutral	16	17.8	17.8	23.3
Agree	39	43.3	43.3	66.7
Strongly Agree	30	33.3	33.3	100.0
Total	90	100.0	100.0	

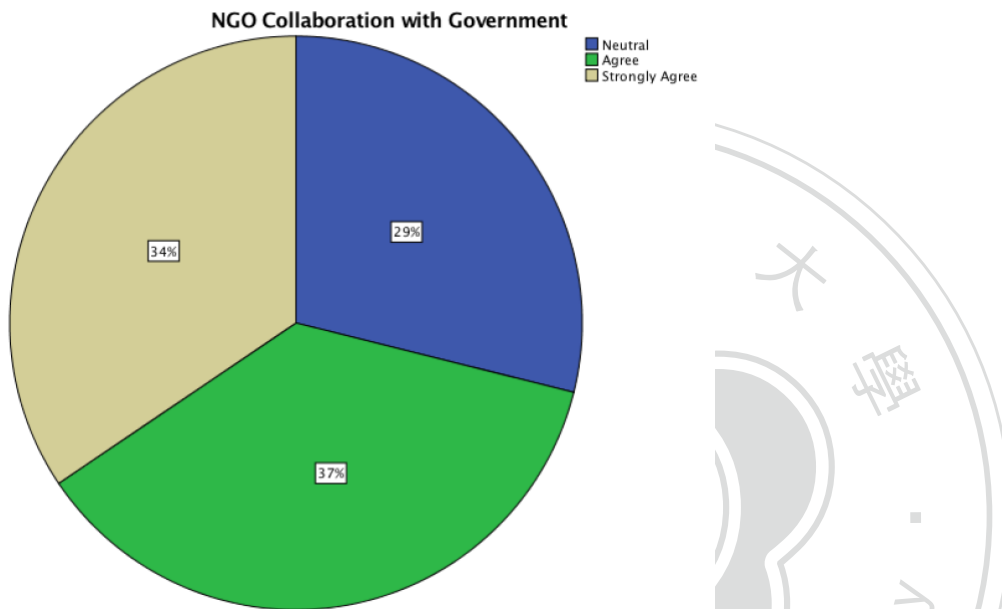
Overall, a majority of respondents expressed positive views regarding NGOs' ability to improve access to basic needs for vulnerable populations. Specifically, 76.6% of respondents either agreed (43.3%) or strongly agreed (33.3%) that NGOs were effective in enhancing access to basic needs. This indicates a general recognition and acknowledgment of the role played by NGOs in addressing the needs of vulnerable populations and improving their access to essential resources.

On the other hand, a small proportion of respondents disagreed (5.6%) or held a neutral viewpoint (17.8%) regarding NGOs' ability to improve access to basic needs. These responses suggest that there is a subset of individuals who may not perceive NGOs' efforts as effective in fulfilling the needs of vulnerable populations. The positive responses indicating agreement or strong agreement with NGOs' ability to improve access to basic needs can be attributed to several factors:

1. **Tangible Outcomes:** Respondents who have directly observed or experienced the positive impact of NGOs' interventions in providing access to water, food, and shelter are more likely to perceive their effectiveness. Tangible outcomes such as improved infrastructure, distribution of resources, or provision of emergency relief can reinforce the belief in NGOs' ability to address basic needs.
2. **Targeted Approaches:** NGOs often design and implement programs specifically tailored to meet the basic needs of vulnerable populations. By focusing their efforts on these specific areas, NGOs can demonstrate their commitment to addressing the fundamental requirements of individuals and communities, leading to a positive perception of their ability to improve access to basic needs.
3. **Partnerships and Collaborations:** NGOs often collaborate with government agencies, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders to enhance their impact on improving access to basic needs. These partnerships allow for a coordinated and holistic approach, leveraging resources and expertise, which may contribute to a greater perception of NGOs' effectiveness in addressing basic needs.
4. **Awareness and Information Dissemination:** NGOs that effectively communicate their activities, successes, and impact in improving access to basic needs can contribute to a

positive perception among the public. When individuals are informed about the tangible outcomes and transformative changes brought about by NGOs, they are more likely to recognize and appreciate their efforts.

Figure 5 NGO Collaborative Efforts with the Government of Belize



The analysis of the table regarding respondents who have collaborated with the Government of Belize for poverty alleviation and community development efforts indicates a range of perspectives on NGO collaboration. Among the respondents, a significant proportion indicated positive experiences and attitudes towards collaborating with the Government of Belize. Specifically, 71.1% of respondents either agreed (36.7%) or strongly agreed (34.4%) that they have collaborated with the government for poverty alleviation and community development efforts. This suggests a willingness among NGOs to engage in partnerships and collaborative initiatives with the government to address social and developmental challenges.

Additionally, a substantial number of respondents (28.9%) expressed a neutral viewpoint regarding their collaboration with the government. This neutral response may stem from

respondents who have not had direct experience or involvement in such collaborations or those who may not have a clear opinion on the matter.

Table 0-10 Effectiveness of Poverty Alleviation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	16	17.8	17.8	17.8
	Disagree	20	22.2	22.2	40.0
	Neutral	20	22.2	22.2	62.2
	Agree	15	16.7	16.7	78.9
	Strongly Agree	19	21.1	21.1	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

Finally, a notable portion of respondents expressed reservations or skepticism about the effectiveness of NGOs in poverty alleviation. This includes those who strongly disagree (17.8%) or disagree (22.2%) with the notion that NGOs are effective in addressing poverty. These responses might indicate concerns about the impact, efficiency, or overall effectiveness of NGOs' poverty alleviation efforts.

On the other hand, a considerable proportion of respondents either agreed (16.7%) or strongly agreed (21.1%) with the effectiveness of NGOs in poverty alleviation. These respondents recognized the positive contributions made by NGOs in addressing poverty-related issues. Their agreement suggests that they perceive NGOs as playing a significant role in implementing initiatives and programs that effectively alleviate poverty.

Vitaly, a substantial number of respondents (22.2%) expressed a neutral stance regarding the effectiveness of NGOs in poverty alleviation. This neutral response may stem from respondents who lack sufficient knowledge or experience to form a clear opinion or who are unsure about the overall impact of NGOs in poverty alleviation.

Importantly, some of the NGOs identified as foundationally impactful on community development and poverty alleviation are as follows:

1. Community Baboon Sanctuary Women's Conservation Group (CBSWCG): This NGO, located in the Community Baboon Sanctuary in Belize's rural area, focuses on sustainable development and poverty alleviation through community-based conservation efforts. They have implemented projects promoting eco-tourism, sustainable agriculture, and community empowerment, contributing to economic opportunities and poverty reduction.
2. Belize Enterprise for Sustainable Technology (BEST): BEST is an NGO that focuses on renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and environmental conservation. They have worked on projects promoting clean energy solutions, supporting small-scale farmers, and empowering rural communities through capacity building and entrepreneurship programs, which contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development.
3. Hand in Hand Ministries: This NGO operates in Belize, primarily focusing on housing and community development initiatives. They work with low-income families to build safe and affordable housing, provide educational support, and implement community projects that improve living conditions and break the cycle of poverty.
4. Belize Red Cross Society: As a humanitarian organization, the Belize Red Cross implements various programs to address social vulnerabilities, including poverty. Their initiatives include disaster response and preparedness, health and sanitation projects, community education programs, and social support services, which aim to uplift vulnerable populations and enhance their resilience.
5. Ya'axché Conservation Trust: This NGO operates in the Toledo District, promoting biodiversity conservation, sustainable agriculture, and community development. Through their initiatives, they have worked on poverty alleviation by supporting sustainable

livelihoods, providing training and capacity building, and promoting eco-friendly practices that enhance both environmental and economic sustainability.



Chapter 5- Conclusions

In conclusion, based on the analysis of the data provided, several key insights regarding NGOs in Belize have emerged. The questionnaire tool's responses shed light on the perceptions and experiences of individuals regarding the role of NGOs in poverty alleviation, community development projects, government collaboration, and their effectiveness. These insights provide valuable information for understanding the current landscape of NGOs in Belize and their impact on addressing socio-economic challenges.

Firstly, the analysis revealed that respondents held diverse views regarding the role of NGOs in poverty alleviation. A significant proportion of participants expressed agreement or strong agreement that NGOs contribute significantly to poverty alleviation in Belize City. This indicates a positive perception of the impact of NGOs in addressing the challenges of poverty in the region. However, a notable number of respondents held neutral or disagreed with this viewpoint. This suggests that there is a segment of the population that may not perceive the efforts of NGOs as effectively addressing poverty-related issues.

Furthermore, when examining the respondents' opinions on the effectiveness of NGOs in poverty alleviation, the findings indicate a mixed perception. While some respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the effectiveness of NGOs, a substantial number of participants held a neutral or disagreed stance. This divergence in opinions highlights the need for further investigation into the factors that contribute to the varying perceptions of NGOs' effectiveness in addressing poverty in Belize.

In terms of the ability of NGOs to reach the target (vulnerable) population, the responses were also varied. While a significant proportion of participants agreed or strongly agreed that NGOs were successful in reaching the target population, a notable percentage of respondents held

neutral or disagreed. This suggests that there may be challenges or limitations that hinder the ability of NGOs to effectively reach and serve vulnerable populations in Belize.

Another important aspect explored in the survey was the perception of respondents regarding the collaboration between NGOs and the government in poverty alleviation and community development efforts. The majority of participants agreed or strongly agreed that NGOs have collaborated with the government in these endeavors. This finding indicates a level of partnership and coordination between NGOs and the government in addressing societal challenges. However, a significant number of respondents held a neutral stance, suggesting that there may be room for improvement in terms of strengthening collaborations between NGOs and the government to maximize their collective impact.

Additionally, the analysis delved into respondents' thoughts on the NGOs' contribution to improving access to basic needs, such as water, food, and shelter, for vulnerable populations. The findings demonstrated a generally positive perception, with a considerable number of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with NGOs' role in enhancing access to basic needs. This implies that NGOs in Belize have made significant strides in addressing the fundamental needs of vulnerable populations. However, it is worth noting that a portion of respondents held a neutral or disagreed stance, indicating that there may still be gaps or challenges in ensuring universal access to these basic necessities.

The analysis of the data pertaining to NGOs in Belize reveals a complex landscape with diverse perceptions and experiences. While there is a generally positive perception of NGOs' contribution to poverty alleviation and community development, the findings also highlight areas of improvement and challenges that need to be addressed. It is essential for NGOs in Belize to actively engage with the varying perspectives and concerns expressed by the respondents in order

to strengthen their effectiveness and impact. To further enhance their impact, NGOs should focus on building partnerships and collaborations with the government and other stakeholders. Strengthening these relationships can lead to more coordinated efforts, better resource allocation, and increased efficiency in addressing poverty-related issues. Moreover, there is a need for continuous monitoring and evaluation of NGO programs and projects to ensure that they are reaching the target population effectively and producing tangible results. Addressing the varying perceptions of effectiveness and impact requires a multi-faceted approach. NGOs should strive for transparency and accountability in their operations and communicate their successes and challenges to the public, which can be done by sharing success stories and showcasing evidence-based practices, NGOs can build trust and credibility among the stakeholders and the wider community.

It is also important for NGOs to engage in advocacy and policy dialogue to address the underlying structural issues contributing to poverty in Belize. By actively participating in policy discussions and advocating for change, NGOs can influence the development of effective policies and programs that address the root causes of poverty and promote sustainable development.

In conclusion, while the analysis of the data provides valuable insights into the perceptions and experiences regarding NGOs in Belize, it also highlights the need for further research and exploration. Future studies could delve deeper into the factors that influence the varying perceptions and effectiveness of NGOs, explore the specific challenges faced by NGOs in reaching the target population, and examine the impact of collaborative efforts between NGOs and the government. Such research can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of NGOs in poverty alleviation and community development in Belize, ultimately contributing to more informed and evidence-based interventions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and analysis presented in this thesis, several recommendations can be made to enhance the effectiveness and impact of NGOs in poverty alleviation and community development efforts in Belize. These recommendations aim to address the challenges identified and capitalize on the opportunities for improvement.

1. **Strengthen Collaboration:** NGOs such as the Belize Red Cross Society, the Belize Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (BANGO), and the Ya'axché Conservation Trust should actively seek opportunities for collaboration and partnership with the government, other NGOs, community-based organizations, and relevant stakeholders. By working together, organizations like these can enhance coordination, resource-sharing, and knowledge exchange, leading to more comprehensive and sustainable poverty alleviation initiatives.
2. **Improve Targeting and Outreach:** NGOs like the Belize Council for the Visually Impaired (BCVI) and the Belize Audubon Society should conduct thorough needs assessments to identify the most vulnerable populations and areas requiring intervention. By collaborating with these NGOs, others can learn from their expertise in reaching visually impaired individuals and their efforts in promoting environmental conservation. Additionally, NGOs should invest in targeted outreach strategies to reach marginalized and remote communities, ensuring that no one is left behind in poverty alleviation efforts.
3. **Enhance Monitoring and Evaluation:** NGOs like the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE) and the Community Baboon Sanctuary Women's Conservation Group should establish robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness and impact of their programs and projects. By adopting the practices and experiences of

these NGOs, others can strengthen their monitoring and evaluation systems. Regular monitoring will enable NGOs to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement, while evaluation will provide evidence of their contributions to poverty alleviation. This information can inform decision-making, resource allocation, and program adjustments.

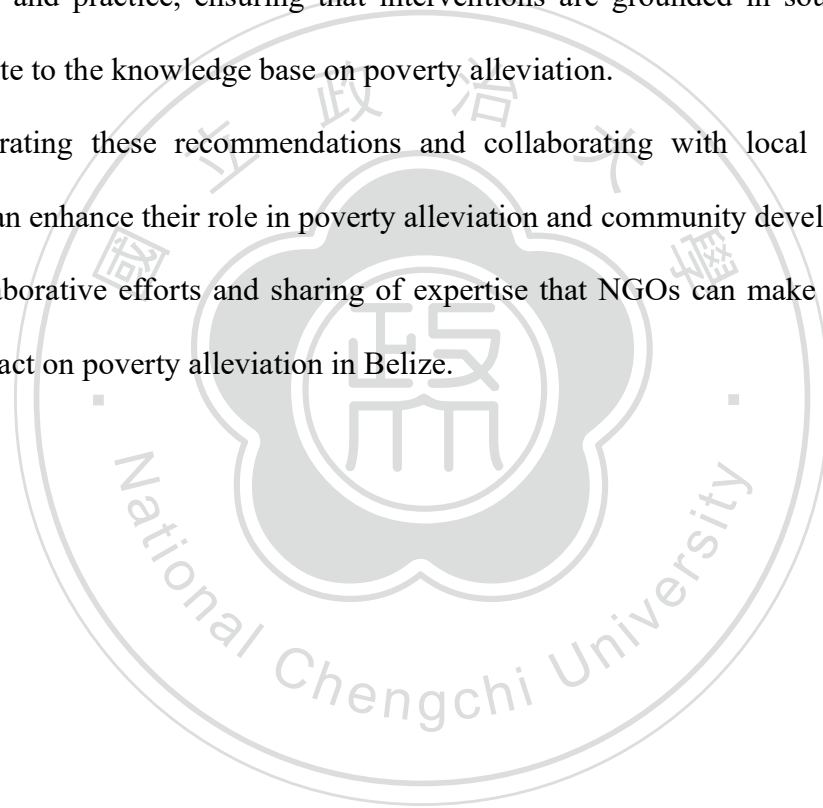
4. Foster Capacity Building: NGOs like the Belize Enterprise for Sustainable Technology (BEST) and the Belize Wildlife & Referral Clinic (BWRC) should invest in capacity building initiatives for their staff, volunteers, and community members. By collaborating with these NGOs, others can learn from their expertise in sustainable technology and wildlife conservation. Building the capacity of individuals and organizations involved in poverty alleviation will enhance the quality and sustainability of interventions.
5. Enhance Advocacy Efforts: NGOs like the Belize Network of NGOs (BNN) and the Youth Enhancement Services (YES) should engage in advocacy and policy dialogue to address the underlying causes of poverty and influence policy decisions. By collaborating with these NGOs, others can strengthen their advocacy efforts. By advocating for social justice, equitable resource allocation, and sustainable development, NGOs can contribute to systemic change and create an enabling environment for poverty alleviation efforts.
6. Promote Transparency and Accountability: NGOs such as the Belize Association of Planners (BAP) and the Belize Institute of Environmental Law and Policy (BELPO) should prioritize transparency in their operations, including financial management, program implementation, and reporting. By collaborating with these NGOs, others can learn from their practices in transparency and accountability. Clear communication of goals, activities, and impact will foster trust among stakeholders and increase accountability. NGOs should

also engage in participatory approaches, involving beneficiaries and communities in decision-making processes.

7. Foster Knowledge Exchange and Learning: NGOs like the Belize Council for the Visually Impaired (BCVI) and the Belize Audubon Society should actively participate in knowledge-sharing platforms, networks, and conferences to learn from others' experiences and share their own lessons learned. By collaborating with these NGOs, others can benefit from their knowledge and experiences. This exchange of knowledge and best practices will contribute to the continuous improvement of poverty alleviation strategies and enhance the collective impact of NGOs.
8. Engage in Strategic Communication: NGOs like the Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA) and the Belize Cancer Society should develop effective communication strategies to raise awareness about their work, impact, and the challenges faced by vulnerable populations. By collaborating with these NGOs, others can learn from their effective communication practices. Engaging with the media, utilizing social media platforms, and collaborating with local influencers can help amplify their voices and mobilize support for poverty alleviation initiatives.
9. Explore Innovative Approaches: NGOs like the Belize Enterprise for Sustainable Technology (BEST) and the Belize Audubon Society should embrace innovative approaches and technologies to enhance the efficiency, reach, and impact of their programs. By collaborating with these NGOs, others can learn from their innovative practices. This may include leveraging digital platforms for service delivery, exploring social entrepreneurship models, and adopting sustainable and eco-friendly practices.

10. Foster Collaboration with Research Institutions: NGOs like the Ya'axché Conservation Trust and the Belize Institute of Environmental Law and Policy (BELPO) should collaborate with research institutions in Belize, such as the University of Belize and the Environmental Research Institute, to conduct rigorous studies on poverty-related issues, evaluate program effectiveness, and generate evidence-based recommendations. By collaborating with these NGOs and research institutions, others can bridge the gap between research and practice, ensuring that interventions are grounded in sound evidence and contribute to the knowledge base on poverty alleviation.

By incorporating these recommendations and collaborating with local Belizean NGOs, organizations can enhance their role in poverty alleviation and community development efforts. It is through collaborative efforts and sharing of expertise that NGOs can make a significant and sustainable impact on poverty alleviation in Belize.



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Annex I

Questionnaire Permission Letter

Dear Respondents,

Thank you for your time and effort in completing the following questionnaire for the research entitled “The Role of NGO’S in Community Development and Poverty Alleviation in Belize”. This thesis acts an academic requirement for a Master’s Degree in International Studies from Taiwan’s National Chengchi University. To successfully fulfill all requirements, I am conducting a research study focused on NGOs and development in Central America and the Caribbean. In order to facilitate this study, you are asked to complete the following survey as promptly and accurately as is possible. As the administrator of the survey, I will ensure that your identity is kept confidential and that all the information gathered is used only for this analysis and interpretation of this study. Should you have any questions, feel free to contact me at the number or email provided.

Thank you in advance for your participation and prompt responses.

Annex 2

Questionnaire Tool

What is your age? *

Mark only one oval.

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55 and above

What is your gender? *

Mark only one oval.

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

How many years of experience do you have working in NGOs? *

Mark only one oval.

- Less than 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-10 years
- More than 10 years



Have you worked specifically in NGOs in Belize? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

Have you founded an NGO in Belize? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

Barriers to NGO Registration:

Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree.

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Complex bureaucratic processes act as barriers to NGO registration.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
High registration fees pose challenges for NGOs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of knowledge about registration requirements hampers NGOs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Political factors affect the ease of NGO registration in Belize.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
NGOs that focus on the micro-environment (local development) are less likely to successfully register.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Types of NGOs and Access to Funding:

Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree.

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Environmental NGOs receive more attention and funding.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Health-related NGOs receive more attention and funding.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Education-focused NGOs receive more attention and funding.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
NGOs focused on poverty alleviation receive more attention and funding.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural and arts NGOs receive more attention and funding.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Disparities among NGOs:

Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree.

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
NGOs in good standing receive more support and resources.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Access to international partnerships is limited for NGOs not in good standing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
NGOs in good standing receive more government support.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
NGOs in good standing have better access to capacity-building programs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is a perception that "grassroots" NGOs focus more on local development.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Collaboration with Government Entities:

Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree.

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
NGOs collaborating with government projects have better outcomes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Streaming methods enhance the effectiveness of NGOs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Collaboration with government projects helps NGOs access additional funding.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Collaboration with government projects enhances the visibility of NGOs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Collaboration Projects yield successful results at the local level.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Impact on Poverty Alleviation:

Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree.

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
NGOs play a significant role in alleviating poverty in Belize.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
NGOs effectively target and reach the most vulnerable populations in poverty.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
NGO programs and initiatives have contributed to reducing poverty rates in Belize.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
NGOs have helped improve access to basic necessities (food, water, shelter) for impoverished communities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
NGOs have facilitated skills training and employment opportunities for individuals living in poverty.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
NGOs have collaborated with government agencies and community organizations to address poverty effectively.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>