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Research Article

Financial Sustainability Of Non-Profit Organizations (Npos): An Empirical Study Of Select Npos In North East India

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Abstract: Sustainability is the ability of administrators to maintain an organization for a long period. Financial sustainability refers to the resources that enable for-profit and nonprofit organizations to grab opportunities and respond to unexpected risks while preserving the organization's core operations.However, depending on the business, the manner of revenue generation, and the organization's objectives, the concept of financial sustainability may differ significantly between for-profit and nonprofit organizations. This article investigated the various factors affecting the financial sustainability of non-profit organizations (NPOs) operating in North East India. Using random sampling method, 51 NPOs operating in North East India were selected. A structured questionnaire consisting of an assessment of NPO's sources of revenue, their relationship with the donors, and other practices that lead to the longevity of the organization was used to collect the data. The analysis of the data revealed the following: 1) Donor relationship and income diversification have a significant effect on the financial sustainability of NPOs in North East India. 2) Variable income diversification is significantly correlated to donor relationship. 3) Financial management and financial sustainability are significantly correlated to income diversification. 4) Management competencies are significantly correlated to financialmanagement.

Keywords: *Non-Profit Organizations, Donor Relationship Management, Financial Management, Financial Sustainability, Income Diversification, Management Competence*

Financial sustainability is very crucial to the survival of a non-profitable organization (NPO). Bowman (2011)defined financial sustainability as an organization's ability to retain financial capacity for a long period. It is the ability of an NPO to identify and create resources so that it can continue to operate even if a donor withdraws funding. Financial sustainability is essential for non-governmental organizations' long-term viability and effectiveness (Dresner, 2002). Nonprofit leaders, present and potential funders, and the communities that nonprofits serve have all been interested in the financial sustainability of nonprofit organizations (nonprofits) for a long time. Nonprofits, on the other hand, confront a slew of obstacles in establishing and sustaining financial viability(Sontag-Padilla et al., 2012).It is the goal of all NPOs, however, the percentage of the organizations that achieve financial sustainability remains quite low(León, 2001). A research report presented by The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe states that insufficient funding, the need for training in fundraising and capacity building are common needs of the majority of the NPOs(*Problems, Progress and Possibilities*, 1997). Decreased donor funding and reduced fund allocations for the regionled the Non-Governmental Organizations in Central Asia,incapableof sustainingthemselves (Alymkulova & Seipulnik, 2005).Thus income diversification is no more just aneed but a necessity to attain financial sustainability.

Background of the Study

The Final Report on: *Non-Profit Institutions in India:A Profile and Satellite Accounts in the framework of System of National Accounts*, (2012) states that there were only 144,000 registered societies in India till 1970, and the number of NGOs created after 1990 has soared, with a relatively uniform growth trend across all states.

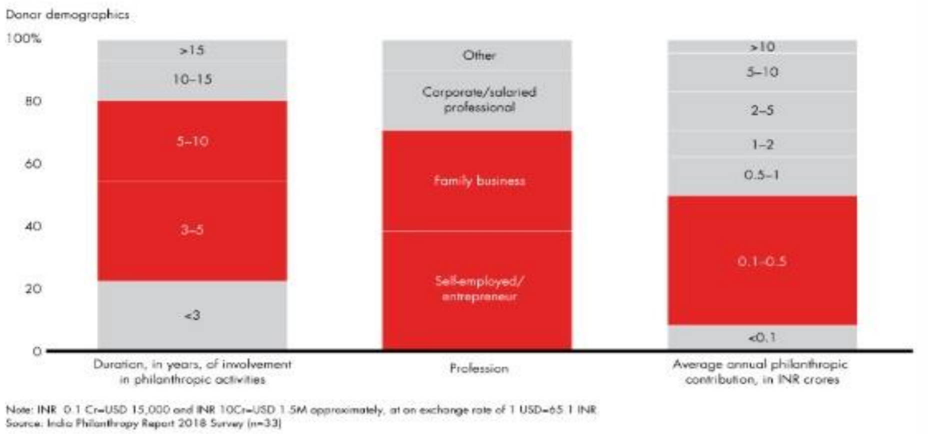
Table 1: Societies Registered in Different Periods in India(*Final Report on: Non Profit Institutions in India A Profile and Satellite Accounts in the Framework of System of National Accounts*, 2012)

	Period of Registration	**No. of Societies (in lakh)**		
		Rural	**Urban**	**Total**
1	1970 and before	0.72	0.72	1.44
2	1971 to 1980	0.97	0.82	1.79
3	1981 to 1990	3.51	2.01	5.52
4	1991 to 2000	6.73	4.50	11.23
5	2001 to 2008	6.66	4.68	11.35
	Information not available	0.05	0.37	0.42
Total		**18.63**	**13.11**	**31.74**

The Govt. of India perceives that some NGOs are functioning against the interests of the Govt. with the help of foreign funds and interests. This led the Govt. to tighten the rules on NGOs over the past two years and has stepped up scrutiny of NGOs registered under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA)(Reuters, 2018). It has come to light that many of the NGOs have not met the minimum criteria, not filed the returns and failed to show the sources of their funds(Lakshmi, 2013). Bain & Co. surveyed Indian donors and about two-thirds of surveyed said that NGOs need to improve the impact they are making in the lives of beneficiaries. A quarter of donors are holding back on donations until they perceive evidence that their donations are having an effect(*India Philanthropy Report 2017: The Indiviudal Philanthropist's Path to Full Potential*, 2017).

Figure 1: Demographics of the Donors Interviewed by Bain & Co.

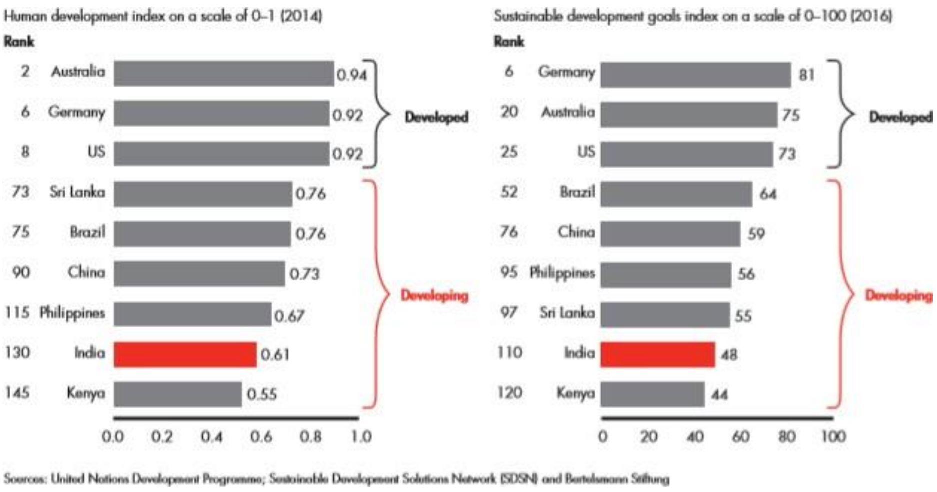
Source:(Bhagwati et al., 2018)



Over the last few years, India has seen a rise in charitable giving. Despite the fact that fundraising remains one of the most pressing challenges in the development industry, it has seen consistent growth in recent years, owing mostly to private sources. Though the current trend is encouraging, yet, a stronger push for more generous funding and resources are required because India continues to fall behind in terms of practical results. Despite government initiatives such as *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Jan DhanYojana*, and *Swachh Bharat India*, they have had little influence. In 2014, the country was placed 130 on the Human Development Index, and in 2016, it was ranked 110 on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Index.According to conservative projections, India will suffer a cash shortfall of almost INR 533 lakh crores ($8.5 trillion) if the SDGs are not met by 2030. To attain these objectives, it will require significant funding as well as fundamental reforms in policy and service delivery. Although the government remains the primary force of change, NGOs play an important role.(*India Philanthropy Report 2017: The Indiviudal Philanthropist's Path to Full Potential*, 2017).

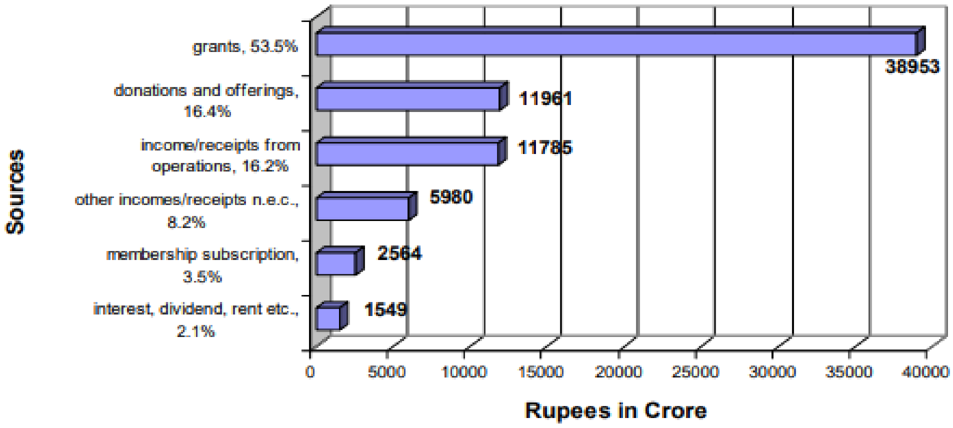
Figure 2: Social Development Indexes

Source:(Bhagwati et al., 2018)



Several studies on the sustainability of NGOs have been conducted. According to them financial sustainability is one of the primary difficulties that NGOs face now and will encounter in the coming decade(Wachira, 2016). A study by the National Accounts Division Central Statistics Office Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation Government of India (2012) found that the majority of Indian NPOs depend on Govt. grants for their daily operations. The distribution of sources of funds is given in Figure 3. It may be seen that 53.5% of the funding for these societies comes from grants(*Final Report on: Non Profit Institutions in India A Profile and Satellite Accounts in the Framework of System of National Accounts*, 2012).

Figure 3: Distribution of Sources of Funds (Source: Government of India, 2012)



Financial sustainability is the key to the survival of NGOs. They find it difficult to generate sufficient and continuous funding for their work (Diddams, 2011).Even if they have only limited resources they prefer to wait for grants from Govt. or for the donor's contribution. High dependency on Govt. grants and donor contributions amount to 69.9% of their funds. It is not a correct tendency because as the government and the donors shift their focus, the NPOs will turn out to be financially unsustainable. This necessitates more research in determining financial sustainability and identifying the determinants of sustainability in local NGOs.NPOs play a critical role in the economic development of India. However, they face the biggest issue in terms of financial sustainability. This has been complicated by the withdrawal of the FCRA license of the NPOs and the introduction of other restrictions by the Govt.(Lakshmi, 2013). From 2011 to 2017, Govt. of India has cancelled the FCRA of 18868 NPOs. Due to this, the foreign funding of NPOs has come down drastically from Rs. 17,773 crores received from 2015-16 to only Rs.6,499 crores in 2016-17 (*Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs): India - Indpaedia*, 2017). NGOs in India are risking closure due to dwindling donor, government and foreign funding, which may become a challenge to continuethe services provided by them(*Summary of Challenges and Opportunities Facing NGOs and the NGO Sector*, n.d.).

Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions

1. Does the relationship between NPOs and their donors have an impact on their financial sustainability in North East India?
2. What effect does income diversification have on the financial sustainability of NPOs of North East India?
3. Does financial management affect the financial sustainability of NPOs in North EastIndia?
4. Does management competence have an effect on the financial sustainability of NPOs in North East India?

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study was to figure out what factors influence the financial sustainability of non-profits in North East India. The research is guided by the following specific objectives.

1. To study the impact of donor relationship management on the financial sustainability of NPOs in North EastIndia.
2. To determine how income diversification of NPOs affect the financial sustainability of NPOs in North EastIndia.
3. To study the impact of financial management on the financial sustainability of NPOs in North EastIndia.

4. To studythe effect of management competence on the financial sustainability of NPOs in North EastIndia.

Literature Review

Francois(2015) identifies three major factors related to the financial sustainability of NPOs. They are: the inherent factors, the collateral factors and the environmental factors. The inherent factors are directly related to financial sustainability. They can determine and influence the financial sustainability of an organization. Some of the Inherent factors of financial sustainability are: financial management, budget factors affecting financial sustainability, factors affecting financial sustainability, financial statement analysis, financial sustainability plan, social enterprise, fund-raising, grant seeking and investment risk management. Collateral factors are indirectly linked to financial sustainability. The collateral factors either (a) influence the planning, implementation, or monitoring of financial sustainability; (b) facilitate greater long-term viability; (c) help create an external or external environment that fosters financial sustainability initiatives or activities, or (d) help maintain a path toward financial sustainability. Some of the Collateral factors of financial sustainability are: governance, leadership, strategic planning, human resources and job satisfaction, needs assessment, asset mapping community relations, service delivery, technology, program evaluation, social marketing and organizational transformation. Environmental factors are social, economic, and political issues that may affect funding, support,andoperationsofanon-profitorganizationinwaysthatdeterminewhethersuchthe organization will survive.

Chang & Tuckman(1994) reported that source of revenue and financial strength is related. The study suggested that nonprofits with several sources of revenue are likely to have a strong financial position than the ones which have a fewer sources of revenue.León, (2001) opined that achieving financial sustainability is a long-term goal requiring the entire organization to cooperate. Ahmed & Islam (2009)investigated the engagement of governance in the financial management of the NPOs and reported that board members with knowledge of NPO’s financial management make significant contributions in terms of planning, accounting, reporting, legal compliance and effective policy making. Ahmed & Islam(2010)concluded that quality of governance makes an impact on the financial management of NPOs. Okorley & Nkrumah (2012)found that management competence is one of thekey factorsforthe financial sustainability of local NGOs in Ghana. The study reported a positive correlationwith management competence and the sustainability ofNGOs.

Lekaj(2013)revealed that financial management is a key factor for any organization's health, success and sustainability. It allows the manager to make proper decisions that will benefit the whole organization and the communities and or markets they serve. Muriithi (2014) reported that proper governance structures, top management leadership with all the required qualification, skills, competence and experience, and staff policies motivate and maintains employees are central to sustainability of NGOs in Africa.

Blackbaud(2015) reportedthat the management and reporting activities of a nonprofit must emphasize stewardship for the donated resources, and the organization must be able to show that the resources were used as directed by the donor.Omeri (2015)noted that the shrinking foreign donor funding had a significant influence on the NGOs' financial situation. It showed that diversification of income, management competence and strategic financial planning were important factors in the financial sustainability of NGOs in the region. *Grow Your Giving: Donor Cultivation Strategies for Every Nonprofit* (2016) pointed that attracting new donors is very significant to all kinds of NGOs. Wachira(2016)recommended that the NGOs to hire competent management staff because it significantly affects the financial sustainability of NGOs.He further reported that donors contribute when they are connected to the cause. After the initial donation, donors may develop a sense of commitment not only to the cause but also to the organization when they feel their contributions are valued and used effectively and efficiently. These feelings of satisfaction and commitment can help in elevating the donors’ gifts when it is combined with increasedcommunication.

Chepkemoi & Njeru(2017)found out that Nairobi's local NGOs had in place budgeting and financial management tools to ensure prudent use of the available resources. Through financial management and practices, local NGOs were able to plan and utilize their financial resources prudently which made them both sustainable and attract more financial support.Kimunguyi (2017)reported a positive correlation between financial mechanisms and financial health. The NGOs that were financially healthy was found to follow diversified funding mechanisms. The report revealed that the Government policies had an impact on the influence of funding mechanisms, budgetary processes and cash management practices but not on corporate governance of NGOs in the health sector.

A study by Wandera & Sang(2017)found that budget control, financial reporting, incomesource diversification and donor relationship management have positive and significant effects on the financial sustainability of NGOs in South Sudan. The research concluded that various budget control activities along with the participation of both staff and other stakeholders in the budgeting process contributed significantly to the financial sustainability of NGOs. Pembleton (2018) stated that NPOs should diversify their revenue to hedge against the fund scarcity and the over-dependence on a few donors. A diversified financial portfolio reduces negative cash flows, increases accounts receivables, lower debt, and increases the ability to assess risks, analyze budgets, and create innovative revenue streams. Axelrad(2019) reported that very often NPOs focus their priorities wrongly. Often they spend most of their energy on donor acquisition but fail to retain them for long. Donor retention is verysignificant.

Research Methodology: 1,17,528 registered NPOs in North East India constituted the population. Using simple random sampling techniques 51 were selected for the current study. The design followed was the survey method. To collect the data, the adapted version of 'Factors Affecting Financial Sustainability of Local NGOs in Kenya, Kiambu County' developed by LilianWangechiWachira (2016) was used. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data.

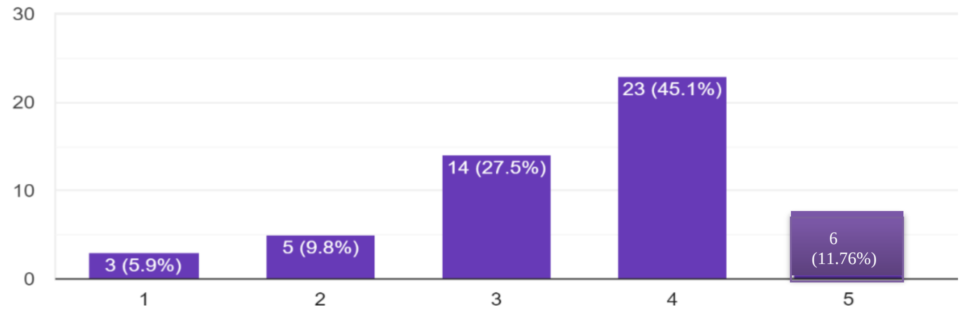
Data Analysis

Demographic Profile of the Respondents: In this study, 68.6% of respondents were male and 31.4% were females. 70.59% of the respondents were below 35 years of age and 29.41% were above 35 years of age. The age indicated the better involvement of younger persons in the management of NPOs in North East India. As far as the educational qualification is concerned 60.8% of respondents had a Master's Degree and 39.2% had an Under Graduate Degree which is an indication that respondents' higher level of education makes the information provided credible, as they would be able to assess the questions better. This survey also indicated that 43% of organizations were in existence for more than 11 years, 22% between 6 - 10 years and 35% below 5 years ofexistence.

Donor relationship management and financial sustainability: The respondents indicated the extent to which donor relationship affected the financial sustainability of their organizations. From the findings, 43.1% stated that donor relationship management affected the financial sustainability of the NPOs to a very great extent, 37.3% indicated to a great extent, 15.7% indicated to a moderate extent, 3.9% indicated to a little extent while 0% indicated to no extent. These findings show that donor relationship management affects the financial sustainability of NPOs largely. The respondents agreed that their organizations have established networks and regular communication with donors for financing, systems for tracking donors and have strong accountability. However, they agreed that they could not meet the strict requirements for donorfinancing.

Income Diversification and financial sustainability: The respondents indicated the extent to which income diversification affected the financial sustainability of their organizations. From the findings, 45% of the respondents indicated that income diversification affected the financialsustainability of their organization to a great extent, 11.76% indicated to a very great extent, 27.5% indicated to a moderate extent, 9.8% indicated to a little extent while 5.9% indicated to no extent (figure 4). These findings show that income diversification affects the financial sustainability of NPOs to a great extent.

Figure 4: Extent to Which Income Diversification Affect Financial Sustainability



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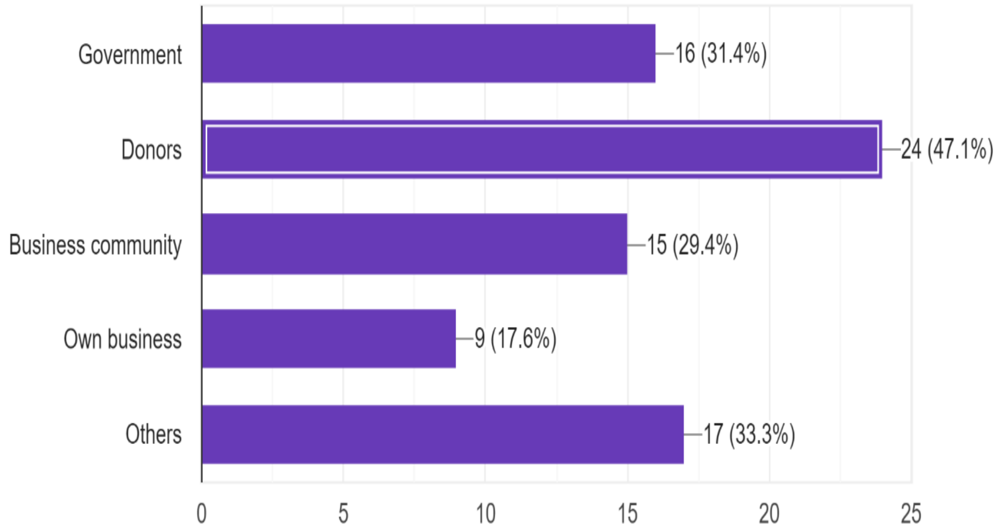
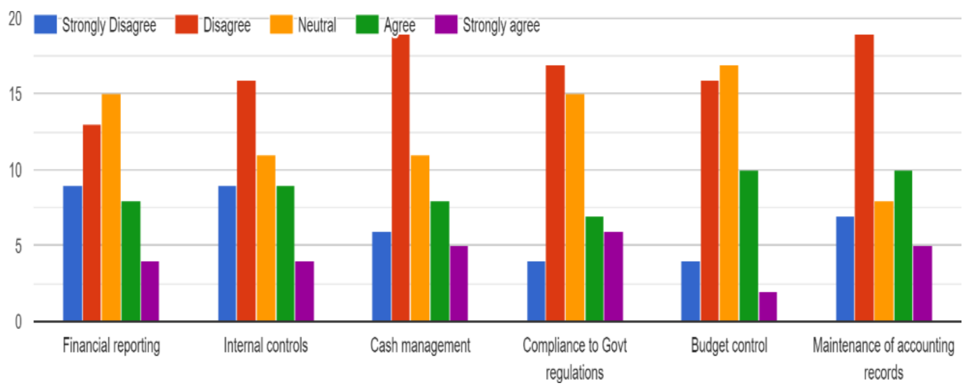
The study sought to determine the sources of funding for the NPOs in North East India. 47% reported that their organizations were funded by donors. 31.4% of the respondents stated that their organizations were funded by the government; while 29.4% indicated business community and 17.6% indicated that their organizations were funded through their income from business and 33.3% indicated that they had other sources of revenue (figure 5). This shows that despite having various sources of financing/funding majority of the non-profit organization in North East India are funded through donors.

Figure 5: Sources ofFinance



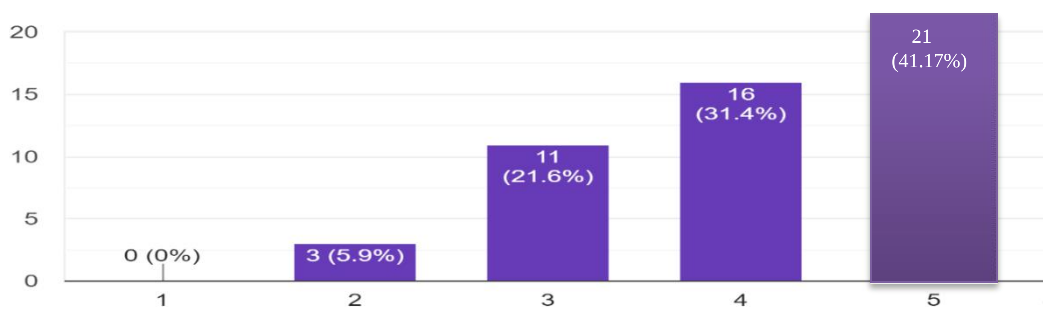
Financial management and financial sustainability: The study sought to measure the impact of financial management practices on the financial sustainability of the NPOs in North East India. The study found that financial management practices such as financial reporting, internal controls, cash management, compliance with Govt. regulations, budget control and maintenance of accounting records do not affect their organizations' financial sustainability (figure6).

Figure 6: Financial Management Practices Affect Financial Sustainability



Management competence and financial sustainability: The respondents specified their level of agreement that management competence affects the financial sustainability of their organizations. From the findings, 41.1% of the respondents strongly agreed, 31.4% agreed, 21.6% were neutral while 5.9% disagreed on the statement that the management competence affected the financial sustainability of their organization (Figure 7). These findings indicate that management competence is perceived to affect the financial sustainability of the NPOs in North EastIndia.

Figure 7: Management competence and financialsustainability



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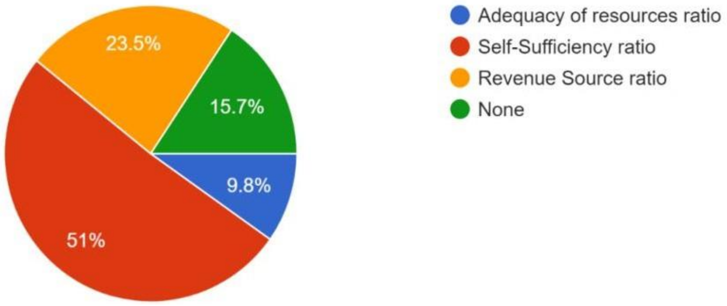
Status of the organizations in terms of financial sustainability: The respondents were requested to indicate the status of their organization in terms of financial sustainability. From the findings, 49% of the respondents agreed that their firms were financially sustainable, 31.4% indicated neutral, while 19.6% disagreed with the statement. This shows that the majority of the NPOs in North East India are financially sustainable. The study sought to discover the mode and the method of measurement used by NPOs in North

East India in measuring their financial sustainability. 51% of the respondents indicated that their organizations used the self-sufficiency ratio as the main ratio to measure financial sustainability, 23.5% indicated Reliance on revenue source ratio and 9.8% indicated adequacy of resources ratio as the mode and measure while 15.7% did not use any of these methods to measure the financial sustainability (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Ratios to measure financial sustainability



Correlation Analysis

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

	Donor Relationship	Income Diversification	Financial Management	Management Competencies	Financial Sustainability
Donor Relationship	1				
Income Diversification	.433**	1			
Financial Management	.501**	.288*	1		
Management Competencies	.505**	.268	.629**	1	
Financial Sustainability	-.176	.310*	-.076	-.138	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis showed (refer to Table 2) that the factors like income diversification, financial management and management competencies are significantly correlated to donor relationship while financial sustainability is negatively correlated; financial management and financial sustainability are positively correlated to income diversification; and management competencies significantly correlated to financial management.

Regression Analysis

Table 3: Model summary and Anova Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	.472	.223	.155	2.664

a. Predictors: (Constant), Management Competencies, Income Diversification, DonorRelationship, Financial Management b. Dependent Variable: FinancialSustainability

ANOVA[a]

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean Sqaure	F	Sig.
Regression	93.586	4	23.396	3.297	.019[b]
Residual	326.454	46	7.097		

Total	420.039	50			

a. Dependent Variable: FinancialSustainability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Management Competencies, IncomeDiversification, Donor Relationship, Financial Management

Model	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
(Constant)	8.641	2.616		3.303	.002
Donor Relationship	-.201	.098	-.342	-2.059	.045
Income Diversification	.390	.118	.481	3.318	.002
Financial Management	.014	.089	.026	.152	.880
Management Competencies	-.054	.084	-.111	-.636	.528

Table 3: Regression Coefficients [a]

a. Dependent Variable: Financial Sustainability

The regression analysis was used to check whether the four independent variables can predict the dependent variable. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Tables 3 and 4. The variable Donor Relationship (b = - 0.342, p = .045) is significant and its coefficient is negative. The variable Income Diversification (b = 0.65, p = .002) is significant and its coefficient is positive indicating that the greater the proportion of income diversification better the financial sustainability of the organization. It does not mean that income diversification causes financial sustainability but rather, can influence. Thus, higher levels of income diversification are associated with better financial performance and sustainability of NPOs in North East India. The variable Financial Management (b = 0.26, p = 0.880) is not significant but the coefficient is positive. The variable Management competencies (b = -0.111, p=0.528) is not significant, and the coefficient is negative. This indicates that management competencies are not an important factor in predicting financial sustainability. The results show that the donor relationship and income diversification are significantly related to financial sustainability, and the other variables financial management and management competencies are not significantly related to the financial sustainability of NPOs in North EastIndia.

From the findings, the value of R square was 0.223. It is an indication that there was a variation of 0.223 on the financial sustainability of NPOs in North East India due to changes in donor relationship, income diversification, financial management and management competencies at a 95% confidence interval. This shows that only 22.3% of changes in the financial sustainability of NPOs in North East India could be accounted for by changes in donor relationship, income diversification, financial management and management competencies.

The one-way ANOVA test indicates that none of the variables does have any kind of significant relationship with the number of years of the existence of the organization i.e., the variables donor relationship, income diversification, financial management, management competencies and financial sustainability do not make any significant impact on the number years the organization was in operation (refer Table 5). All the respondents irrespective of their organizations’ years of existence perceived the variables as an independent.

Table 4: One-Way ANOVA Analysis of the Organizations' Existence

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Donor Relationship	Between Groups	.310	2	.155	.399	.673
	Within Groups	18.658	48	.389		
	Total	18.969	50			
Income Diversification	Between Groups	1.640	2	.820	1.648	.203
	Within Groups	23.877	48	.497		
	Total	25.517	50			
Financial Management	Between Groups	2.272	2	1.136	1.854	.168
	Within Groups	29.403	48	.613		
	Total	31.674	50			
Management Competencies	Between Groups	2.948	2	1.474	2.827	.069
	Within Groups	25.026	48	.521		
	Total	27.974	50			
Financial Sustainability	Between Groups	3.600	2	1.800	2.006	.146
	Within Groups	43.071	48	.897		
	Total	46.671	50			

Findings

1. The first objective was to study the impact of donor relationship management on the financial sustainability of NPOs in North East India. According to the data, 80%of respondents agreed that the donor relationship had a significant impacttheir organizations' financial sustainability. Though, the variable donor relationship does not directly correlate with the financial sustainability of the NPOs in North East India but indirectly do. It is significantly correlated to income diversification, financial management and management competencies. The multiple regression analysis shows a significant effect on financial sustainability. The study is in line with the study done in South Sudan which found a significant relationship with financial sustainability(Wandera & Sang, 2017).

2. The second objective was to determine how income diversification of NPOs affects the financial sustainability of NPOs in North East India. According to the collected data, 57%of the respondents indicated that income diversification has a significant impact on the financial sustainability of their organization to a great extent. On the sources of funding of the non-profits in North East India, the study found that 78% of the respondents indicated that donors and government-funded their organizations. This shows donor dependency is very high and they have not adapted any income diversification strategy. The result showed that the variable income diversification is significantly correlated with donor relationship, financial management and financial sustainability but it does not show any significant correlation with management competencies. The multiple regression analysis showed that income diversification has a significant effect on financial sustainability. The work ofChang & Tuckman (1994)and Crișan & Dan (2018)reported the same result that revenue diversification greatly affects financialstrength.

3. The third objective was to study the impact of financial management on the financial sustainability of NPOs in North East India. This revealed that financialmanagement practices such as financial reporting, internal controls, cash management, and compliance with Govt. regulations, budget control and maintenance of accounting records do not affect their organizations' financial sustainability. However, these NPOs follow the necessary financial management practices. The analysis of the data revealed that the variable financial management significantly correlated to donor relationship, income diversification and management competencies. However, it did not show a correlation with financial sustainability. The multiple regression analysis also did not show a significant effect on financial sustainability. The current study contradicted the findings ofAhmed & Islam (2009) and Chepkemoi & Njeru (2015).

4. The fourth objective was to study the effect of management competence on the financial sustainability of NPOs in North EastIndia. The study found that 72% of the respondents agreed that their organization's financial sustainability was affected by management competence. According to the findings, management competence has a positive correlation with donor relationship and financial management. However, it does not show a significant correlation with financial sustainability. The multiple regression analysis also did not show a significant effect on financial sustainability. The study contradicted the findings of Muriithi (2014) and Okorley & Nkrumah,(2012).

Conclusion

Financial management is essential for the health, success and sustainability of any organization, regardless of its status, nature and management. The achievement of financial sustainability is an ongoing process that must be part of the day-to-day management of the organization: Donor relationships, income diversification, financial management and management skills that help it financially sustainable. Achieving financial sustainability is no longer an impossible dream of non-profits rather, is both a necessity and an obligation for NPOs since it ensures the ability to accomplish the respective missions. The primary finding of the study was that the majority of NPOs in North East India surveyed agreed with the factors identified as significant in establishing the sustainability of the NPOs in North East India except financial management and management competencies. The age and size of the NPOs in North East India, however, was found to be not significant in determining financial sustainability.

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