



UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

CHANGE THE WORLD FROM HERE

**Learning From The Past: Building a Model for Sustainable
International Development Poverty Reduction Programs in the
Central African Region**

by

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Abstract

This project works to understand is what makes international development programs that are implemented by foreign organizations effective in ensuring participants maintain self sufficiency. This is done by consolidating information from a variety of sources including literature and previous studies and a series of expert interviews in order to build a model for international development programs. This model is built using information from poverty reduction programs based in the Central African region but the model is comprehensive enough to be adapted for different programs. The main components in this model are; needs-based assessment, indigenous leadership, implementation, and evaluation. The value of the incorporation of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in international development programs is also highlighted.

Key words: international development, poverty reduction, sustainability, comprehensive model, empowerment, needs-based assessment, indigenous leadership, implementation, evaluation, diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging

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Table of Contents

Learning From The Past: Building a Model for Sustainable International Development Poverty Reduction Programs in the Central African Region	1
Abstract	2
Acknowledgments	3
Table of Contents	4
List of Figures and Tables	5
Section 1. Introduction	6
Section 2. Literature Review	7
Section 3. Methodology	15
Section 4. Data Analysis	16
Section 5. Comprehensive Model:	20
Section 6. Recommendations	26
Section 7. Conclusion	27
Section 8. References:	29
Section 9. Appendix	33
Section 10. Author's Bio	34

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Sustainability Trifecta	10
Figure 2: Sustainable Capacity Development Venn Diagram	12
Figure 3: Comprehensive Model	21
Figure 4: Fibonacci Golden Spiral	26

Section 1. Introduction

International development is a constantly updating and changing field. As new things are learned and improved the field must collectively adapt in order to ensure that the work that is being done is successfully, beneficial, and sustainable.

This research project is working to shed more light on international development programs focused on poverty reduction in the Central Africa Region; to improve programs and attempt to build a loose model that can be adapted for different communities and different programs. While the research is specified to poverty reduction programs in the Central African Region the underlying structure and fundamentals of this model and research can be loosely applied to other types of international development in other geographic locations. This model is an amalgamation of different techniques and recommendations for how to build a program.

The information presented here will need to be updated and altered over time and as new information comes to light and new situations occur. In this current moment this model and this research are an effective and sustainable way to create, implement, and evaluate poverty reduction programs.

Research Questions

This project had one main research question.

Are International Development poverty reduction programs that are implemented by foreign organizations in the Central African Region effective in ensuring participants maintain self sufficiency for 5 years or more after the organizations leaves?

To help focus and break down that question there were three sub-questions.

What are organizations doing to ensure the effectiveness of their programs?

How are organizations planning for the long-term sustainability of the outcomes of their programs?

Is successful international development possible when it is guided or aided by foreign organizations?

Ultimately, if this project was successful, answering this main question and the three sub questions would accomplish the project's objectives.

Objectives And Values

Initially this project was an investigative study and an attempt to answer the question of whether international development work when implemented by foreign organizations was ethical, sustainable and ultimately beneficial.

However over the course of this project, the research developed into something greater. The project itself became a part of international development work, attempting to ensure that international development would be ethical, sustainable, and beneficial.

With this updated purpose, the project objectives became to build a comprehensive model, address the problem of unsustainable and unsuccessful programs, and to work toward a future of collaboration and equity with a life of dignity for all. Ensuring that along the way honesty and integrity were valued and strived for in the research and analysis.

The nonprofit sector, collectively, is working toward advancing changes that are beneficial and lasting. This project, in particular, is working to ensure that international

development programs are increasingly so. International development is a large field and as such programs have a wide range of methodologies and success rates. The model this project builds is not an attempt to require all programs to employ a singular methodology but instead encourages organizations to have specific components included in each program.

Section 2. Literature Review

Literature Introduction

As a field International Development is complex with a complicated history and is ever-changing, updating, and improving. All of this is compounded by the fact that these interactions are peoples' lives, livelihoods, homes, cultures, and traditions that are being infringed on. As such it is of the pinnacle importance that extreme caution and care must be taken when engaging in international development programs and working with communities.

An effective model for these programs will be sustainable, ethical, beneficial and adaptable; yet there is no one size fits all approach. This project looks particularly at poverty reduction programs in the Central African Region in order to control for underlying structures and factors that differ from community to community. Some of the factors include; government intervention or lack thereof, physical conflicts, differing environmental elements, reasoning behind the issue area, and many others. Focusing on the Central African Region will help limit how different those factors are and provide a small level of similarity but by no means uniformity.

In addition to all the afore mentioned factors there are also historical and societal contexts to contend with. On the continent of Africa in particular the specter of colonialism and the attitude of imperialism still hang heavy. Failing to acknowledge that shortcoming can be detrimental to the program and the participants.

This project utilizes a literature review to collect a variety of studies and international development theories to synthesize them into a singular four-pronged adaptable model. The model is then compared and verified by three experts in the field of international development who all work in different stages of the organizational system. Through a series of interview the model is investigated and edited until it was deemed complete.

Definition Of Terms

There are several terms and concepts in this project that have multiple definitions or uses. In order to control for confusion and misunderstanding these terms will be defined and alternate terms presented and defined as well. Many of these terms and concepts coincide or overlap with definitions and usage. These definitions and explanations are not attempting to present the only definition but simply how this project will utilize them.

Western: The term Western refers to ideas, attitudes, beliefs, or even people that are represent ideologies and mentalities prevalent in mainly in America, Canada, and Europe. These ideas can also be present in other countries and communities around the world but they often reflect to some degree the ideas of colonialism or imperialism. In international development these ideas manifest as detrimental assumptions and decisions that harm non-Western communities. While the title Western comes from the Euro-Centric cartographical view, that view point is not

perpetuated, here the term is used simply because it is an established term. A chief example of negative Western attitudes, assumptions, beliefs, and people is the white savior complex.

White Savior Complex: White savior complex, or perhaps better described as western savior complex is an ideology that stems from a feeling of entitlement and superiority. It is not often intended with malice but can be a subconscious attitude. An example of white savior complex is when an inexperienced untrained Westerner decides to travel across the world to the continent of Africa and execute international development program believing that anything they can do will improve these “poor people’s” lives and that the Westerner is in fact here to teach these people all the things they don’t know. This is well-intentioned but exceptionally problematic for a number of reasons. White-savior complex can take many forms including unwanted interventions, interventions that force Western ways of life on unaccepting people, and judging conditions and situations by Western standards and ideas. The overarching idea of this concept is that it is an individual with Western ideas feeling as though they have authority and knowledge that is better and can save these people engaging with communities in ways that are unethical or un-beneficial.

Success: For this project and on a larger level for poverty reduction programs success is mutually inclusive with sustainability. A program cannot be determined as successful if its positive outcomes and impacts are not sustained. As for what measurement should be used to determine success, it will vary for program to program but this project will look mostly at adopted attitude, behavior, mindset, and landscape change. Essentially if participants are integrating the program and its effects into their lives. These changes must be sustained during the program as well as after a community has graduated from the program and the organization is no longer directly executing the program and interacting with the community. The term effective may be used in substitute for success

Sustainability: Sustainability has many definitions and meanings depending on its usage, and sustainability in the relation to the concept of international development will be covered more extensively later in the literature review. The basic usage of sustainability in this project can best be described by this textbook quote that, “Programmatic sustainability [is] (the ability to develop, mature, and cycle out programs to be responsive to constituencies over time).” (Bell, Masaoka, Zimmerman; 2010) Sustainable international development can refer to environmentally sustainable development but in this project it will refer to international development that has impacts that can be maintained by the host community and the effects will ripple outwards having positive impacts on the community and its future generations.

Program and Project: Program and project are being defined together because they will be used as a singular term; program will refer to both. A project has a more limited life span and objectives (smaller scale) while a program often has a longer lifespan and broader objectives (larger scale). While there are some distinctions between the two, program will be used to refer to both international development poverty reduction programs and projects.

Impact, Outcome, and Effect: Impact, outcome and effect are all terms used to describe what occurs to a participant or their community after a program has been executed. Effects are small or large ways that the program has manifested in the community and what change it has made. Outcomes are the smaller changes that occur throughout the program leading up ultimately to the impact which is the large scale change that is the greater goal of the program. Outcome and impact are not used interchangeably but effects can be used to describe both.

Indicators

Success, as previously mentioned, is often determined by a set of indicators that are chosen, usually by the organization. While this project does not follow a singular organization's model but instead builds its own, the indicators will also be unique to this project. Since the project does not have actual programs the indicators will be loosely defined and general.

While some programs will work to affect change on an infrastructural level using indicators like policy change, the growth of human capacity, or the advancement of civil society; this project and model is attempting to affect change on a more direct intervention level. The indicators that will be utilized and assessed for are integrated attitude, behavioral, mindset, and landscape change; the sharing of information and resources (including trained techniques) with non-participant community members; a lowered Multi Dimensional Poverty Index, and the impact of these indicators lasting for at least 5 years after a community has graduated.

The model is not tied to these specific indicators and an organization should determine its own indicators as long as sustained impact is included. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have several indicators and objectives that can be utilized or used as inspiration. These chosen indicators are simply for research and analysis purposes.

Historical Context

Every region that international development takes place, and every region in the world, has historical context that will shape attitudes and actions of those living in the place and those traveling to the place. For this project a singular region was chosen in order to control for some of the factors that affect different regions. The Central African Region was chosen because it is a common place for international development to occur and has a rich and complex culture and history. The region is a geographically huge area and cannot be simplified to a few historical assumptions but in order to clarify, this paper will define and explain some of the historical context.

Since the entire continent of Africa was colonized, how the infrastructure was developed, how governmental systems were established, and even how the country lines were drawn all were done by external powers and to serve their own purposes. The effects of those decisions had lasting consequences and many of the concerns plaguing the continent of Africa particularly the Central African Region can be explained by them. Paul Collier's *The Bottom Billion* is a book that explains why certain countries, communities, and groups of people are continually unable to progress. (Collier, 2007)

Collier explains that there are Four Traps that inhibit development and progress. They are "The Conflict Trap," "The Natural Resource Trap," "Landlocked with Bad Neighbors" or "Bad Governance in a Small Country." (Collier, 2007) These four traps are have different detrimental

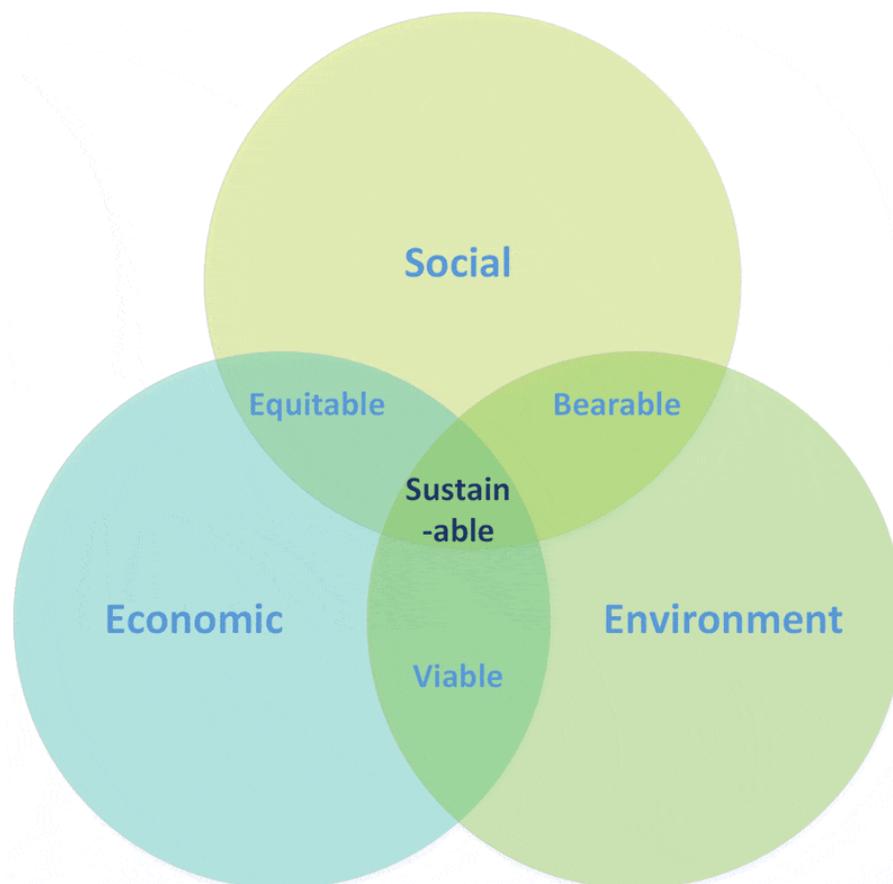
effects but ultimately they keep the poorest countries poor. (Collier, 2007) These traps are also highly prevalent in the Central African region particularly the “Landlocked with Bad Neighbors” trap which becomes a vicious cycle. If there is no recognition that these traps and external factors exist then the program cannot properly address what is occurring in the region and the programs will not be targeting the appropriate aspects.

Understanding historical context allows for all parties to understand fundamentally what they are working for or against. Actions by governments, organizations, and people in the past have dramatic effects on the present day especially in a field like international development and particularly in a region like Central Africa. The lingering effects of colonialism and imperialism still color the attitude and actions of much interaction in that region both domestically and internationally. If work is to be truly beneficial and sustainable then the historical context must be recognized and addressed.

International Development

International Development is a field of development that focuses on building and elevating economies and infrastructure around the world. There are different theories and methodologies surrounding the best way to perform international development. These theories are used to create models and templates for international development programs.

While the term sustainable development has only been in use since the 1970s and 1980s it has been in more recent dialogue that true sustainable development has actually started to become actualized and discussed in all the arenas that it operates in; social, economic, and environmental. (Glennie, 2012)



If development is to be truly sustainable then it must incorporate those three aforementioned arenas. Development that is deemed sustainable development is done so because it will have a broad and encompassing approach that will make the impacts sustained in the long term.

Sustainable development not only includes aspects from different arenas but also includes elements that may not usually be considered as a part of international development. Often times the dynamics of the international economy are understated but sustainable development must also consider how the international economy may have to shift. (Glennie, 2012) If the wealth gap continues to increase between countries then the development that is occurring will have a smaller and less substantial impact. (Glennie, 2012) Development is not simply “improving” one country while the rest of the world remains stagnant, there must be comprehensive change and interaction between countries if the world is to progress.

Sustainable development is not static, the definition will adjust and change and improve upon itself as the international sphere learns how to better progress. (Bebbington, 2000) Innovation has always been and will continue to be a large factor in international development. (Bebbington, 2000) Innovating new approaches to combatting some of the great concerns of this age is the only way to solve them, the solutions that have been tried for decades are not making significant enough impact to combat these problems. (Ogden, Prasad, Thompson; 2018) It is through innovation that new ideas will be created and implemented.

One of these innovations is the concept of capacity development. It is easy to skip over the stage where a foundation is laid and tested and move straight into direct intervention or infrastructural development. However that foundation is a key component to ensuring that development is sustainable and targeting the appropriate concerns.

Building capacity should be a priority in sustainable international development because no matter how successful a program may appear to be, if the receiving party does not have the capacity to manage, sustain, and progress the program and the impacts it has on the community then the efforts are wasted. There are three layers to capacity development; personal, organizational, institutional. (Stefir-Younis, Tavanti; 2011) A balanced combination of the three layers is ideal for proper capacity development. (Stefir-Younis, Tavanti; 2011) Using that balanced combination to specifically build on existing capacity is more efficient and should be the focus. (Stefir-Younis, Tavanti; 2011)



<http://www.sciinstitute.org/capacity.html>

Capacity development may seem secondary to a direct intervention but in fact capacity development should work in tandem with a direct intervention. It is through capacity development at the three levels that direct interventions are sustained and effective.

Sustainable international development can be complex and jam packed with different theories and requirements. While it can be complicated sustainable international development is working toward a common goal of progress on the international level. In order to accomplish this common goal there are a few components and concepts that can make the process successful and sustainable.

Model Foundation

The reoccurring tropes in the literature reflected empowerment, logistics, and partnership. These themes: empowerment, logistics, and partnership; comprised the base that could be used to formulate the four component model.

Empowerment

The first theme of empowerment was presented in different ways. The article *Are We Messing with People's Resilience? Analysing the Impact of External Interventions on Community Intrinsic Resilience* is a study on the potential detrimental effect failed or inappropriate programs

may have on the host community. (Béné, 2019) Prioritizing empowerment is a direct counter to that potential negative result. Béné conducts a case study on a program that is being implemented in Burkina Faso working to determine how resilient and adjustable a community is after a program concludes. (Béné, 2019) While ultimately there was no official determination that development programs could be eroding a community's resilience there was no confirmation of the opposite. (Béné, 2019)

The conclusion ultimately is that it is pertinent to consider the long term effect of development programs and how consistent interventions may be damaging if they are not executed properly and if they don't prioritize the appropriate aspects. (Béné, 2019) Empowerment is a method of ensuring that even if the intervention does not have the intended results the participants may still have benefited in some way or will at least be at less of a disadvantage.

The piece *Business Models for Building Refugee Resilience* stressed the importance of empowerment but also dignity with the program participants and in how the program was executed. (Victor, Davis Pleuss; 2018) Empowerment and dignity are reflective of one another. If an organization promotes dignity in their programs then empowerment will follow and vice versa.

Victor and Davis Pleuss emphasize that work with refugees requires empowerment and dignity because often refugees are viewed as burdens or in need of care. (Victor, Davis Pleuss; 2018) While this is not the case empowering refugees and treating them with dignity and as deserving of dignity will enable refugees to feel more capable and deserving of dignity and respect. This cycle will perpetuate empowerment and invite greater development and progress.

Logistics

The second reoccurring trope among the literature was surrounding logistics; how the program was implemented and what the program methodology was. Considering how connected logistics are to the execution of the program and the program success it is unsurprising how frequently it was discussed in the literature.

Agudo-Valiente, Gargallo-Valero, and Salvador-Figueras' piece *Perceptions of Final Beneficiaries about the Performance of Cross-Sector Partnerships: A Case Study Applied to the 2008 Zaragoza International Exhibition on Water and Sustainable Development* and was one piece that discussed overall program logistics. The authors argue that the execution of the program will directly affect the impact size of the program. (Valiente, Valero, Figueras; 2019) If a program that is targeting short term impact is properly executed then the small impact will spread and have a larger impact in the long term. (Valiente, Valero, Figueras; 2019)

This piece articulates the importance of a properly executed program and how it can have more substantial effects if the program is implemented properly. More importantly if a program is not implemented properly it can be presumed to determine that it can have detrimental effects or at least a smaller less sustainable impact.

Promoting the Sustainability of Development Institutions: A Framework for Strategy is another article that promotes the importance of logistics. (Brinkerhoff, Goldsmith; 1992) Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith lay out a series of guidelines that they have deemed essential for program impact sustainability. The guidelines are determined based on the assessment of studies

of several development programs and the analysis of many unsustainable programs. (Brinkerhoff, Goldsmith; 1992)

These guidelines presented in the Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith piece highlight the necessity of maintaining an appropriate methodology. If a program is to be successful and sustainable it must be executed properly and it must incorporate certain components into its implementation. (Brinkerhoff, Goldsmith; 1992) Program content is vital but it should be noted that if that content is not implemented properly then it will not matter how high quality the content is. If participants are not engaged with appropriately then the material will not be integrated into lives and impacts.

Jindran Cekan presents one of the most important articles in this literature review. Focused on evaluation and presenting a negative example of what happens when a program is not sustained, *When Funders Move On* centers on how organizations must plan ahead. (Cekan, 2015) The article features a scenario where an organization fails to transition out of a community properly due to a failure to properly plan ahead and implement their program. (Cekan, 2015) This results in a disheartened and damaged community left in the middle of program that they are ill-equipped to complete. (Cekan, 2015)

Cekan articulates a concept that is worrying and problematic. If an organization does not prepare all components of their program from executing and implementing their program, to graduation, and transition out of the community and the implementation stage then that community and the program impact are at a disadvantage and likely to be unsustainable. (Cekan, 2015) If the focus is solely on the program content and material but not how it is being delivered then the program efforts could be wasted. In order to properly build a program the material should be created but the implementation format must be arranged as well.

Participation

The third and final reoccurring trope among the literature was related to empowerment but centered explicitly on community participation. Empowerment is the ideology and the reasoning behind what manifests as community participation. However it is possible to have empowerment that does not directly involve the community and it is possible to have community participation that is not empowering. Failing to have the combination of the two is a programmatic deficiency.

Local Institutions and Participation for Sustainable Development explicitly states the indispensability of the community's role. (Norman, 1992) Defined as local institutions in this article, Norman argues that local institutions are a key player and can provide significant benefits to the organization executing the program.

There are many unique privileges that local institutions have access to that would be advantageous to the organization. (Norman, 1992) More importantly though local institutions allow the organization to better understand engage, and interact with the participants and as such the program impact can be greater and more likely to be sustained.

The necessity of a collaborative effort between the organization and the community was underlined by McConville and Mihelcic's piece *Adapting Life-Cycle Thinking Tools to Evaluate Project Sustainability in International Water and Sanitation Development Work*. (McConville, Mihelcic; 2007) This piece is similar to Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith's piece in that it lays out

specific guidelines that will allow an organization to improve its programs sustainability and success.

This article assesses a broad range of aspects and then applies them to a case study in Mali to verify their argument. (McConville, Mihelcic; 2007) With so many different guidelines and aspects that this study examines the article could go in multiple directions and there are multiple possible interpretations. The most important takeaways for this project, revolve around valuing the participant community and what its assets are. (McConville, Mihelcic; 2007) This aspect cannot be overlooked when building a program and should not be overlooked for the strength and support it adds to every program.

Empowerment, logistics, and participation are the foundation for the comprehensive model. These three tropes will be combined with analysis from the expert interviews. Regardless if an organization utilizes the comprehensive model these three aspects are vital to a successful program and should be consider and integrated into as much of an organization's work as possible.

Section 3. Methodology

For the methodology for this project; the approach taken was of a combination comparative and collaborative research. This included a literature review and a series of expert interviews to accomplish the objectives.

The literature review and the accompanying analysis laid the foundation for what would become the model; using the literature and previous studies to understand what was deemed successful vs unsuccessful and the reasoning as to why.

The series of expert interviews molded the foundation into a comprehensive model. Through discussion with three experts about their experiences and understanding of successful programs, it was discerned what components should be included in a model. The interviews added, updated, and improved the information verifying and solidifying it into the final product.

The comparative research aspects came in the form of comparing the interviews, and the literature, finding the gaps and holes and filling them in within the model. The collaborative research was exemplified with the collection of various literature, studies, and experiences that were used to fortify and support the argument.

The literature review provides the backbone of the project which is subsequently the foundation for the model. The expert interviews through verification, testing, and cross referencing refined the information gleaned from the literature and studies to ultimately build the model. However the limitations of this research should be noted.

While all information provided is accurate and true to the best knowledge, the model may be able to be improved upon and refined with continued literature analysis and interviews. This model will also have to be updated over time as new information comes to light and new unforeseen situations and circumstances occur. If this model and poverty reduction work is to continue to be ethical, sustainable, and beneficial then it cannot be allowed to stagnate but instead must constantly search for the best answers and information.

Section 4. Data Analysis

Data Analysis Introduction

When investigating the various methods for building and implementing a program for international development, there are many differing theories and ideologies, and when implementing these theories and ideologies there is also the overarching problem that theory does not always play out in application. This can be difficult to account for and the best solution is to take note of how they may fall short and prepare and adjust. This model will focus on application over theory but will briefly cover a few international development theories.

The application aspects were learned of through expert interviews with individuals employed in a nonprofit that have poverty reduction programs in the Central African Region. These individuals were able to provide a depiction of reality and experience in how programs are carried out in the field and what that has taught them in creating new programs and working with new communities.

Expert Interviews

In order to bolster the information obtained from the literature and gain a more experienced-based perspective, three interviews were conducted for this project. The analysis of the interviews and the information obtained from them was used to refined and build upon the literature review foundation to mold a comprehensive model.

The three interviewees worked in three different arenas at a singular organization. Since the interviewees did not serve as representatives of their organization, the organization name will remain anonymous but it should be noted that the organization is an international poverty reduction organization that currently operates programs around the world including in the Central African Region.

The three arenas these individuals worked in are all experiential field based work. The first interview which will be referred to as Interview One was the Director of Programs. The interview referred to as Interview Two was the Country Director for a singular country. The third interview, Interview Three, was the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer for all the programs. Each interview and interviewee exemplified different components at different stages of the program process.

Interview One

Interview One placed emphasis on the program as a whole. This included how a program is implemented, carried out, and evaluated as well as how an organization function in relation to its programs. There are several concerns that must be managed and considered at this level, such as the saturation of program participants in a region, graduation and transition of programs, and the completion of thorough evaluations continuously and more wholistic evaluation less frequently. (Interview 1, 2020)

Program saturation involves determining the number of participants a program must engage with in order to ensure that the full community is impacted appropriately by the programs outcomes and impact. (Interview 1, 2020) Not engaging with every community but instead having an “operational threshold” allows for an organization to “use [its] limited resources to reach the most people in the shortest amount of time.” (Interview 1, 2020)

The graduation and transition of programs focuses on how to shift programs out of the implementation phase. Graduating a program can only be done if the program impacts can be sustained after the organization is no longer engrained in the community. (Interview 1, 2020) Transition is the step that actually involves the shift of the organization out of the community, it must be done smoothly, ethically, and professionally.

As the interview that provided insight on all programs as a whole, Interview One also discussed the importance of evaluation. Evaluations are conducted frequently during the program implementation phase as well as “impact evaluations” occur every few years. (Interview 1, 2020) Once a program graduates there are still evaluations albeit less frequently and most focused on impact evaluation. (Interview 1, 2020)

Interview Two

The Second Interview involved a more in-depth look at the methodology of the program. Discussion in this interview centered on the timeline of the program and the importance to be cautious of programs with fixed end dates, discussion of the capacity of domestic governments or organizations to participate, and discussion of the programs intended impact size and speed. (Interview 2, 2020)

The timeline of the program emphasized the caution of programs that had fixed end dates that has little to no flexibility because if those programs did not have the intended impact in the time period then there was no way to extend the project and ensure that the proper impact was made. (Interview 2, 2020) Having hard end dates is also dangerous because if a program is scheduled to transition out but the community doesn't have the capacity to sustain the program then the program may fail. There will still be effects on the microlevel for the community but “a short timescale for individuals cases they can show a lot of success but the macro environment is still going on” and there is no guarantee that, “they were able to internalize and sustain that change.” (Interview 2, 2020)

That was the second highlight of Interview Two, capacity. The capacity to handle development programs and funding of the different parties must be verified before, during and when the program intends to transition out. This will ensure that the outcomes and impact the program has can be sustained and managed without the organization in the community. (Interview 2, 2020)

Another caution from Interview Two was toward programs that attempt to reach too many people too fast. (Interview 2, 2020) Scaling programs too quickly or through exact replication instead of altering the program to fit the community can result in unsubstantial programs. (Interview 2, 2020) For more impactful results impact size many not be as large or as fast as is considered glamorous.

Interview Three

The Third Interview was with the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer and centered on those two topics. The discussion was primarily on evaluations and the importance of wholistic actions and followthrough.

The Third Interview emphasized how important attribution was in evaluation and for an organization as a whole. (Interview 3, 2020) If an organization's intervention is not directly

correlated with what is being evaluated then the evaluation is inconsequential for the improvement of the program. (Interview 3) The data that is collected may also be misleading or inaccurate.

Interview Three also mentions Innovations for Poverty Action's CART principles. (Interview 3, 2020) The CART principles argue that data collected in an evaluation must be credible, actionable, reliable, and timely. (Interview 3, 2020) This also lines up with attribution, "the golden ticket." (Interview 3, 2020) Evaluation is performed for a reason, to learn about and improve programs, and if the evaluation is not conducted properly, no attribution, then the evaluation is unable to do the assigned task.

In Interview Three there was also discussion about when evaluation should happen. As mentioned in Interview One as well, there should be evaluation during the year, impact evaluation every few years, *and* there should also be post-program evaluation. (Interview 3, 2020) In the same way that evaluations must be attributed to the organizations interventions so that the program can be improved and updated, there should be post program evaluation in order to be able to assess the sustained impact of the program and how the graduation and transition were successful or unsuccessful. Evaluation is a tool to attempt and better the organization and its programs, it should be utilized as such. (Interview 3, 2020)

Common Themes

The interviews all had a few common themes and reoccurring highlights. The three most significant of those themes are the importance of empowerment, what is success and how to define it, and having an accurate and appropriate theory of change that includes a wholistic approach. (Interview 1,2,3; 2020) Each of these themes guided the creation of a comprehensive model and lines up with one or more of the four components.

Empowerment

The most reoccurring and emphasized theme across the three interviews was empowerment. Every interview stressed the importance of empowerment. This was labeled slightly differently by each interviewee including local partner, community buy-in, community involvement, partnership, indigenous leadership, and empowerment. (Interview 1,2,3; 2020) While labeled differently they all represented the same thing, the importance and necessity of empowerment and ensuring that participants in the programs feel empowered.

"Every single participants needs to feel empowered" if there is no empowerment there is a lack of investment in the program. (Interview 3, 2020) With no investment in the program then there is less incentive to take part in the program and care about the potential positive impacts. The program must not only include but be based on community involvement, community ownership. (Interview 1, 2020)

If there is no indigenous leadership that guides the program there will be a disconnect between the organization and the participants, a lack of cultural respect, which is the breeding ground for failed programs. Providing "stoves that don't fit the culture" does not invoke trust nor a desire to adopt the program techniques into participants lives. (Interview 3, 2020)

The theme of empowerment was the main reasoning behind the indigenous leadership component of the model. While the incorporation of indigenous leadership cannot guarantee that

participants feel empowered by the program; it will increase the likelihood that the program is created and executed in a manner that will encourage empowerment amongst its participants.

Success

Each interviewee discussed success, what defines it, and how it manifests in the field. Since the interviewees are all from the same organization they have similar definitions of success. The indicators, outcomes, and impacts they strived for work toward a common goal.

Success could be defined on two levels, the first level would be the level that is demonstrated in participants lives. (Interview 2,3; 2020) The other level would be on the governmental or policy level. The governmental or policy level would focus on “the adoption of logic models into policy,” or the advancement of civil society. (Interview 2, 2020) Other ways to define success rest on meeting the indicators set by the organization and seeing the new techniques integrated into the participants lives. (Interview 1, 2020) Or success can manifest as “behavior change” and a shift in levels of violence in a region. (Interview 3, 2020) But success ultimately depends on intent and should be determined early on. (Interview 2,3,;2020) If the intent of a program is focused on impact on participants lives then the indicators and impacts should be as well.

In connection to the comprehensive model evaluation ties into the theme of success. Depending on how you define success, what indicators and impacts are assessed for, then evaluation is how an organization verifies their success or lack thereof. If a program is to be deemed successful and if not, if it is to work to strive for success, evaluation must be a main component.

Wholistic Approach/Theory Of Change

Utilizing a wholistic approach to guide the intervention of the organization is the third reoccurring theme amongst the interviews. A wholistic approach will provide a broad and stable foundation for the organization’s program. While a theory of change is not required it is a positive way to approach how to build and execute a program.

A holistic approach or a theory of change would cover a range of the important factors to consider in a program. For the three interviewees those include impact size, impact scale, implementing a watershed model, and a three pronged approach. (Interview 1,2,3; 2020) While not every program will include those aspects in their program they represent what needs to be considered in every program.

The impact size and scale refers to how an organization intends to engage with participants, how many, and to what level. A program must have a set saturation level or critical mass, often determined by previous external studies, that exemplifies how many participants must take part in the program to have a sustainable impact on the community. (Interview 1,3; 2020) If a program does not predetermine this and instead strives to reach too many people then it can dilute the program effects. (Interview 2,3; 2020) The watershed model represents the decision an organization must make in regard to how they will choose and contact the participants communities. Using something like a watershed model that is based on landscape and shared resources allows for a greater connection between communities and in turn with the organization; strengthening the impact the program can have. (Interview1, 3; 2020) The three-

pronged approach is the actual program that will be executed and the various aspects and techniques included in it. Not every organization has to use a three-pronged approach, this organization chooses to in order to target the three areas they deem to most important in poverty reduction; environmental, economical, and spiritual (sometimes manifested as social) In targeting three areas the approach is more wholistic and intrinsically more sustainable because of it. (Interview 2, 2020) If a program is targeting a slightly different group of participants or area in poverty reduction the approach might shift but it should still attempt to be as wholistic as possible. (Interview 1, 2020) That is the most important part, targeting multiple aspects to ensure the sustainability of the program.

Tying the wholistic approach and the theory of change to the comprehensive model is the needs-based assessment and implementation. A needs-based assessment is performed so that a theory of change, or something akin to it, can be created to determine what the proper approach and intervention would be and then ensure that the program is wholistic and stable. The implementation component is necessary to confirm that the theory of change is executed in the appropriate manner and that when the wholistic approach is executed all the components are included and enacted.

The literature analysis was a foundation which provided empowerment, logistics, and partnership. The information and experiences learned from these interviews including the common themes empowerment, success, and a wholistic approach. Empowerment, logistics combined with the wholistic approach, partnership, and success were the components that were refined and formed into a comprehensive model.

Section 5. Comprehensive Model:

An effective model for poverty reduction programs in the Central African Region and around the world will be sustainable, ethical, beneficial, and adaptable. This model is a four part comprehensive template for both building and executing programs.

The four components included are needs-based assessment, indigenous leadership, implementation, and evaluation. These four components line up with equity, diversity, inclusion, and diversity respectively. In order for this model to be applied and utilized correctly the organization must apply all of the four components and apply them to the extent that diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) are an integral part of their programs and their organization.

It should be noted and emphasized that while this model can help build and execute successful poverty reduction programs, if those building and executing the programs are not properly trained then the model cannot be guaranteed to be successful. Being equipped with the proper training, resources, and mindset are just as vital, if not more so, than the programs being executed.

This model works to counter the “white savior complex” as much as possible, but an untrained individual, regardless of their race, seeing a problem in the field, creating an organization to fix that problem, and using this model to build programs is still guilty of the “white savior complex” to some extent. “White savior complex” is not only about where you come from or what you look like but the mindset and the approach you come with.

The best way to combat those problematic and detrimental mindsets, attitudes, assumptions, and actions is to educate.



Needs Based Assessment And Equity

The first component is what should be conducted before even deciding to official execute a program in the community and is the needs-based assessment. Needs-based assessment was articulated well by the second interviewee who explained it is about determining, “if there is a need for change and if the community recognizes a need for change.” (Interviewee 2, 2020)

If a community does not feel that they are in need of change than there is little an organization can do to partner with this community, aside from forcing them to engage in practices the organization has deemed necessary which is unethical as well as unsustainable and non-beneficial.

This needs-based assessment component is also about determining the assets of a community, asset-based training. This layer of the component is about understanding the strengths of the community and how those strengths can be utilized to achieve what the community deemed necessary.

Needs-based assessment, and performing it at the beginning of the process, is essential because it will lay the foundation for a partnership between the community and the organization instead of a hierarchal relationship. This components will ensure that the program that is

executed addresses the proper concerns. It will prevent assumptions being made by the organization about what is necessary and helpful and prevent the execution of a program that is unhelpful and unwanted and ultimately has detrimental effects.

Needs-based assessment aligns with equity. Equity is often mistaken for equality or used interchangeably; however there are a few key differences. Equality is having access to the same rights and privileges. Equity is ensuring equal access to the same rights and privileges and that those rights and privileges are equal.

The most common explanation of equality compared to equity is demonstrated with an illustration. Three individuals stand at a fence, only one of those individuals can see over the fence. Equality is illustrated by providing three stools of the same height for the individuals to stand on, however now the tallest individual can see far over the fence and into the field beyond while the shortest individual can barely see over the fence. Equity is demonstrated as providing stools to the two individuals who cannot see over the fence, stools of differing height so that the three individuals are now all the same height and able to see the same amount over the fence and into the field beyond.

In relation to poverty reduction programs, equity would be the needs-based assessment step. The act of determining how tall of a stool each individual needs to see over the field; what resources need to be accessible to having a lasting positive impact. An organization has strengths and a community has strengths, equity is seeing where the community doesn't have strengths and using the organization's strengths to bolster the community's. Equity invites a partnership and collaboration toward a common goal.

Indigenous Leadership And Diversity

Indigenous leadership centers empowerment and includes community buy-in and community participation. Indigenous leadership can manifest in a few different forms including a local organization partner, a country-based staff, and community leaders. It can be included incorrectly and in ways that do not encourage success.

Indigenous leadership is not just randomly picking people that are from the larger country but truly seeking out and finding skilled and trained individual who understand the community, its members, and its needs.

Proper indigenous leadership will be included in and provide valuable insight in every step of the way. Although needs-based assessment is the first step when considering a community to partner with, indigenous leadership must be included in the assessment and the initial interactions with the community.

When a decision is made to attempt to partner with a community, indigenous leadership should be reached out to; that channel should be opened and explored fully before venturing into community and before any permanent decisions are made. The interactions will not stop there and even after the program is executed, communication should be consistent and extensive between the indigenous leadership and the organization.

The indigenous leadership component is necessary for several reasons. Including community voices will ensure that there is an understanding between the different groups and will build a partnership between them. It will also assist in creating positive dynamics, interactions, and attitudes between the different parties. The interactions should be focused on

facilitation instead of training. (Interviewee 2, 2020) The foreign organization is not there to teach the community but instead they are there to connect resources and build access to those resources for the community. Interviewee One explained that, “One of [their] organization values is interdependence not independence and not dependence.” (Interview 1, 2020) This value is in place to encourage the treatment of indigenous leadership and organization headquarters as equals. (Interview 1, 2020) That is the essence of indigenous leadership, understanding that first there must be a local partners and second that that local partner is an equal and will be respected as such.

The resources the organization connects the community to, are often available in the country but not accessible to the community. The organization is not *better* than the community they simply have access to more resources. While indigenous leadership is tied to diversity it also aligns with equity as well. The resources needed exist but the access to them is not equitable. The partnership between the indigenous leadership and the organization and the connection to resources it allows is how it is made equitable.

Despite the connections to equity, indigenous leadership is about diversity. Not diversity in that it is a professional requirement but diversity in that this incorporation is actually vital to success; including other voices in the discussion, valuing their contributions and understanding at a fundamental level why diversity is necessary. Diversity is necessary because in order to serve, engage, and partner with a community you must understand and appreciate that community and those who are a part of it. Diversity is necessary because great ideas and wisdom come from everywhere and everyone and they need to be heard if solutions are to be found and executed.

Implementation And Inclusion

The third component of the model is implementation. Implementation encompasses several of the stages that manifest the program; implementation is the field-based level. This component includes the methodology of the program, the execution of the program, and the graduation of the program. There are several requirements of a program that are categorized in the implementation stage that must be completed in order to properly fulfill this component.

Communicating to the participants of the intention of the program and the non-permanent status of the program at the beginning, verifying capacity of the community and supporting institutions before program execution and before graduation, instituting program adjustments if necessary, continual securing funding, and graduating the program and the professional and ethical transition out of the execution and implementation phase. All these layers are included in the implementation component.

Communication with program participants is to be ethical in program implementation but also to encourage the inclusion aspect. Inclusion connects to implementation in that the organization must include participants in the discussion, this connects implementation to equity and diversity as well. Verifying the capacity of the community is an organization performing due diligence because “international development is capacity development”. (Stefir-Younis, Tavanti; 2011) For a program to be implemented properly there must be verifications that the program and the program impact can be sustained. If there are found to be shortcomings in the capacity of the community or supporting partners, adjustments must be made to the program to remedy the

complication. The organization must then verify the capacity of the community and the supporting partners before graduation and the program transitioning out of a community.

This can be a long process and should not be rushed. If the capacity is not at the level expected then the organization must maintain the implementation stage until the capacity is developed to ensure self-sufficiency and lasting impact. This process could take months or years and is why there are several steps to maintain this process. The graduation and transition out is the final stage of implementation. Suddenly abandoning a community is unethical not to mention unsustainable. This often occurs if funding is dramatically decreased or lost and an organization has to cut programs. That is why it is important to prevent the detrimental situation that occurs when “funders move on” by working to the best capability to secure funding on a flexible long term scale until after a program has officially graduated. (Cekan, 2020) Implementation is the component that covers the most steps for the program but each one is vital for a successful program.

As previously stated inclusion is the pillar of DEIB that lines up with implementation. Inclusion is including the community in the discussion but it also revolves around the inclusion of the program into the community. The participants community must not be bystanders or even just participants they must be partners. This program should not manifest as something being done to the community but as a partnership between the community and the organization.

Evaluation And Belonging

The final component of the comprehensive model is also the first component in some ways. Evaluation is completed during the program, after the program has graduated, and the data collected is utilized in creation and execution of the next program. The data will allow for the improvement, updating, and adaptation of the next program in the next community to encourage success.

Evaluation is not simply assessing the community the program is operating in but rather measuring specifically for the indicators and outcomes the program has had. The data must be attributed to the program that is being operated, otherwise it is false and inaccurate data. (Interview 3) The data collected must also not be “cherry-picked” but remain as raw and un-manipulated as possible. (Interview 3) Evaluation is done to verify and cross reference that the outcomes are having the intended impacts. Both to ensure that the needs determined in the needs-based assessment are being addressed but also to ensure that program is operating smoothly and participants are satisfied.

If there is a disconnect between participants' satisfaction with the program and its impact then the program may not be targeting the proper things or it may not be manifesting or executed properly. Evaluation is the chance for an organization to find any problems or dissatisfaction and work to correct mistakes. Failing to take advantage of the chance for rectification would be a serious oversight by the organization and detrimental to the participants and the intended impact.

Many organizations do not evaluate their programs or evaluate enough particularly after a program graduation. Correcting this habit is a specific and suggested way to increase the likelihood of sustainable impact. If a community is withdrawn from by an organization and there are no verifications done to determine how the program impacts were maintained then the organization has no way to determine if this program is effective and will be in the next

communities they partner with. Evaluation is for the participants but it is also for the organization.

Evaluation is where belonging comes in. Equity, diversity, and inclusion are all important components but if belonging is missing then the first three components are hollow, shallow, or incomplete. Belonging is closely related to inclusion, but belonging takes inclusion one step further.

Evaluation is done to ensure that programs are successful, that the intended outcomes are occurring and that they are being sustained. Evaluation also measures whether partners have created lasting impact in their lives, if they have taken this program and made it their own. Evaluation ensures that the program and the positive impact it has had, now belongs to its partners.

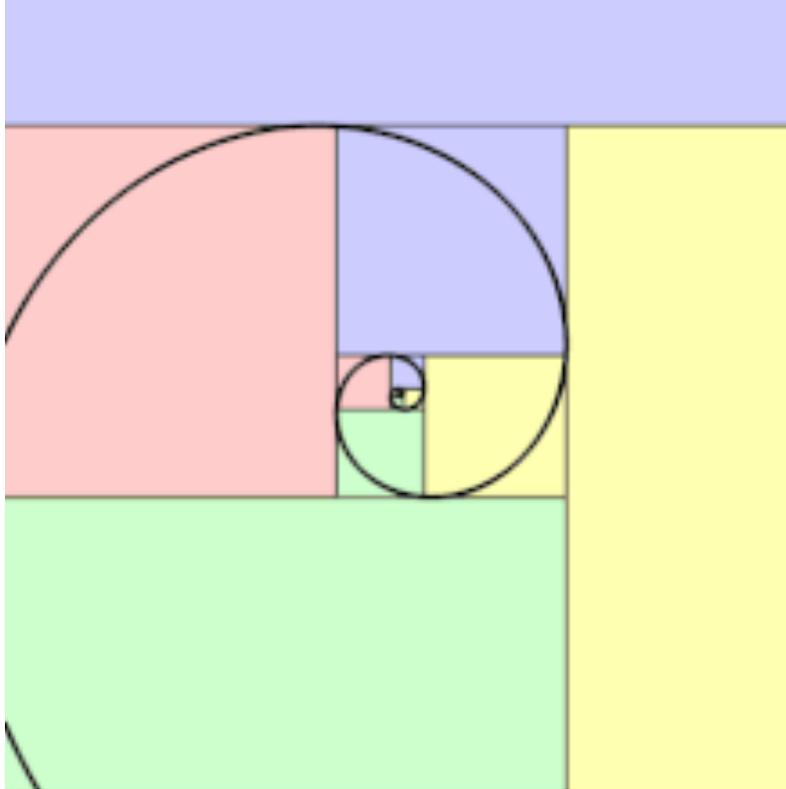
If a program's impacts are to be sustained the program and its outcomes must be incorporated into the community, into the lives and livelihoods of the community members. When there is ownership and responsibility of the program and for the impacts the program is having on their lives, belonging has been accomplished. The deserved and earned ownership of the positive change in their lives encourages hope and builds dignity, and a program that encourages a life with dignity is a successful program.

Collectivity

Each component aligns directly with one of the four pillars of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging but they are all collectively interconnected. A proper program includes all four components but it becomes an effective and sustainable program when the four components all connect to each other and to DEIB.

The pillars of DEIB are always relevant and necessary but they have been particularly relevant in America this past Summer of 2020 during this time of racial and cultural awakening. However these pillars are just as relevant and necessary when interacting with other countries and cultures. These components reflect these pillars because fundamentally that is what is necessary in a successful international development program particularly in poverty reduction programs in the Central African Region. The incorporation of respect, dignity, and the pillars diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging exemplify a desire to understand the partner communities and the potential negative attitudes and beliefs that often accompany this work; and a commitment to counter the negative attitudes, beliefs, and outcomes.

This comprehensive model sheds light on how to ensure that this work is beneficial, ethical, and sustainable. This model is a cycle or rather a Fibonacci golden spiral with each component building on the other continuing indefinitely. In the same way that the organization and the partner communities must build on and collaborate with each other to accomplish their collective goals.



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_spiral#/media/File:GoldenSpiralLogarithmic_color_in.gif

Section 6. Recommendations

In line with all this collected information, experiences, and the comprehensive model; these are the recommendations that accompany it.

Impact Size

The first recommendation is regarding impact size. Doing this work and implementing these programs correctly may not be doing this fast and large. The struggles of poverty reduction and international development have existed and persisted for a long time because these issues are complex and difficult. The solutions to the problems will require time and innovation and be complex and difficult to carry out. It is important to remember when executing programs that scale does not equal success, it is about quality over quantity.

There is a time and place for short term or emergency relief; where the goal is to provide goods or services to as many people, as possible as fast possible. However poverty reduction programs are not that time or place. Scaling programs too quickly or too largely will most often result in unsustainable, unethical, or simply non-beneficial programs.

Adaptability Not Replicability

Centering adaptability not replicability is the second recommendation. Every community is different and as such the programs that are executed there must be as well. An organization

should not try and perfectly replicate the program in a new area simply because it was successful previously.

Evaluation exists for several reasons and one of those reasons is in order to learn, grow, change, and better each program. To help learn from past mistakes or past successes and understand how to adapt that successful program for this new community.

It is important that funding organizations also understand the importance of adaptability not replicability. Asking an organization to “copy and paste” a program from one community to another or one country to another will not necessarily benefit the participants and that should be the priority when executing a new program.

Consider Capacity

Remember to consider capacity is the third recommendation. Capacity development is a field of international development on its own and it is very important to be conscious of that.

Governments, communities, organizations, and programs all have limited capacities; both for operations and for money management. This is not a criticism or a negative aspect but is simply due to external factors such as personnel size and training. Assuming the party can perform activities or maintaining programs it cannot will not encourage success will likely result in the opposite.

It is important to not attempt to hand off or even execute programs and large monetary donations that parties don't have the capacity to sustain or manage. It can be just as important, beneficial, and noble to partner with a community to focus on building capacity over executing a program; especially since every program is essentially working toward capacity development on some level.

Indigenous Leadership

The final recommendation is not necessarily a recommendation but more of an emphasis on indigenous leadership. It is very easy to fall into the trap of the “white savior complex” and the comprehensive model works to counteract that with every component. The indigenous leadership and the needs-based assessment component are two of the most important ways to counter that.

Indigenous leadership represents and manifests as the organization's connection to the community, to understanding the community members and its capacity. Proper needs-based assessment will come out of interaction with the indigenous leadership and treating them as equals. They will be able to provide insight and understanding of the community and what it is searching for and what the organization can do.

Indigenous leadership is a key component to ensuring that equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging are being valued in the organization and its programs.

Section 7. Conclusion

This project worked to build and investigate international development and build a model to improve how programs were built and executed. Narrowing the focus to poverty reduction programs allowed for a more in depth analysis. Specifying the Central African Region was done

in order to use a similar historical context in a region where the specter of imperialism and colonialism still hang heavy and many actions and attitudes are affected by that history.

This project's use of a literature review determined the focal points as empowerment, logistics, and partnership. The series of expert interviews contributed the themes empowerment, success, and a wholistic approach. Comparing and combining these two sets of themes allowed for the development of a comprehensive model.

The comprehensive model includes four components; needs-based assessment, indigenous leadership, implementation, and execution. These four components line up with the four pillars equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging respectively. Each component exemplifies one of the pillars and each pillar exemplifies one of the components. Each element and pillar is vital in a unique way.

If sustainable international development intends to progress and the international sphere with it, there must always be improvement and updates made to the models, theories and practices that are employed. There can be no stagnation and no exclusion of voices from the discussion. The world can progress positively and steadily but only through collaboration, partnership, and equity.

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Section 9. Appendix

Interview Questions

- a) RQ1: What are organizations doing to ensure the effectiveness of their program?
 - (1) How do you define a program as effective?
 - (a) What indicators and goals used to determine success?
 - (b) How do you measure those indicators?
 - (2) How do you evaluate your programs
 - (a) How often do you evaluate?
 - (b) What are your evaluation methods?
- b) RQ2: How are organizations planning for the long-term sustainability of their programs (and the outcomes of those programs) at program inception (or even organization inception)?
 - (1) When creating a program does your organization plan for anything after implementation?
 - (a) What is the next step after implementation?
 - (b) Is the procedure the same for all programs and countries your organization works in?
 - (2) What is the procedure when transitioning from program implementation?
 - (a) Does your organization make it clear to participants when beginning implementation that your organization is not a new fixture?
 - (b) Does your organization work with governments or other stable forces in a foreign country when possible?
- c) RQ3: Is successful international development even possible when it is guided or aided by foreign organizations?
 - (1) How strongly does your organization rely or not rely on indigenous leadership?
 - (a) How does your organization work to recruit and hire indigenous leadership if at all?
 - (b) Does your organization often struggle to convince your participants to work with them?

Section 10. Author's Bio

Amelia Ashley is a nonprofit professional working for international development projects. Amelia is a dedicated professional for the respect of human rights, food security, and access to clean water and sanitation. She is recognized for her cross cultural intelligence and accompaniment attitudes with a diverse populations. Amelia strives to approach all situations with patience, intelligence, grace, and a determined attitude.

Throughout her academic career Amelia has studied Diplomacy & World Affairs with an emphasis in International Development as well as History with a focus in African Studies at her undergraduate institution Occidental College in Los Angeles, California. Amelia Ashley is currently a full time student. She followed the completion of her undergraduate degree with the pursuit of a master's degree in Nonprofit Administration with an emphasis in International Relations and Sustainable Development at the University of San Francisco School of Management.

Amelia Ashley is inspired by believes in working toward equality and respect for all people, fighting for all to have the opportunity to embrace a life with dignity, and striving for the betterment of the planet