Review

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Their Part towards Sustainable Community Development

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Abstract: Background: Alternative healthcare, community development, social justice, and education are all areas where non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are increasingly being recognised or promoted, but these efforts are hampered by government inefficiency and resource constraints. However, the statement of non-profit organisations is more complicated than simply comparing them to the government, as they may also suffer from a lack of resources and ineffective management, just like the government. Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to examine the role and impact of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) towards Sustainable Community Development in and to identify the challenges these organisations face. Method: Throughout this investigation, a wide range of sources from academic journals, reports, and even company websites were consulted to gather data. This article includes data on the number of NGOs in Malaysia, which can help us obtain a better sense of the sector. To find out just how rapidly these non-profits are expanding, the project's goal is to track their progress. A systematic literature review method was used to screen the retrieved articles from three online databases. Findings: Eight articles have been chosen for further analysis in this study. In total, four challenges and four recommendations have been identified. Conclusions: To that end, this article offers some suggestions for improving already-existing non-profit organisations so that they serve the community as a whole.

Keywords: non-governmental organisations (NGOs); sustainable community development; programme development; training

1. Introduction

In the final two decades of the twentieth century, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) began to play a role in politics in the majority of countries, although these organisations initially focused on social welfare. Simultaneously, academics' interest in NGOs is growing. Between 1987 and 1997, numerous empirical studies on NGOs were conducted, with a focus on government, democratisation, the formation of civil society, and also on NGOs in the global system. Simultaneously, governments and communities in the majority of countries have begun to reveal and highlight various complex societal issues such as consumerism, women's empowerment, the environment, and human rights [1]. With these coincidences, an NGO can become involved in complex societal issues as part of its role during this time.

Meanwhile, NGOs are generally defined by four characteristics: they are voluntary, non-partisan, non-profit, and non-criminal. According to Salamon and Anheier [2], seven distinct characteristics were used to categorise and differentiate NGOs. The seven characteristics are as follows: (1) formal (officially registered and governed); (2) private (having a separate organisation from the government); (3) non-profit distributing (different from the objectives of establishing a business organisation); (4) self-governing (privately managed); (5) voluntary (worked voluntarily); (6) non-religious (not motivated by preaching); and (7) non-political (not involved in promoting candidates in elections). These characteristics are particularly useful for identifying and differentiating NGOs from other organisations.

Willets [3] classifies NGOs into two broad categories: operational and campaigning. Operational NGOs are non-governmental organisations whose primary mission is to carry out development projects for underserved populations such as the poor, disabled, elderly, and oppressed. Meanwhile, campaigning NGOs are organisations whose primary objective is to influence a country's policymaking process. Understandably, operational NGOs require resources in the form of financial support, equipment, or volunteer labour to carry out their projects and programs. In comparison to operational NGOs, campaigning NGOs rely on more intangible resources to mobilise the activities they manage, such as ideas, experience, expertise, and time from other members and individuals. Thus, NGOs are defined as development actors that can contribute to the strengthening of social relations and cross-networks that can serve as a foundation for collective action and increased democratic participation.

In defining sustainable community development, its definition emphasises the importance of striking a balance between environmental concerns and development objectives while also enhancing local social relationships. Sustainable communities not only protect and enhance the environment but also promote more humane local societies. It is a combination of both Sustainable Development and Sustainable Community, whereby the community lives in a sustainable environment and social interaction [4]. On the other hand, community development is the voluntary participation of individuals in an organised process aimed at achieving the desired outcomes, most notably in the areas of education, health, recreation, and housing. It is an activity carried out at the community level that is an organised effort to raise the social, economic, and environmental standards of society with the least amount of external assistance possible [5]. Community development can help local communities improve their socioeconomic situation and make better use of available resources [6,7]. Community development shifted to resource mobilisation during the pre-industrial era. During this period, community development became focused on workforce expansion and self-defence, which was accomplished through resource mobilisation. Since the modern era's focus on community development shifted significantly, the primary goal of societal development has been to improve people's social well-being.

Furthermore, Khalid [8] stated that NGOs excel at organising ordinary communities in such a way that they can be viewed as reinforcement social capital, a role that can obviate service delivery. Local communities, on the other hand, should be involved in all development plans. This is due to the observations which had demonstrated that NGOs are extremely effective at developing communities and that people are willing to join these organisations for the benefits they provide. As such, this article examines the role and impact of NGOs in community development, the challenges that NGOs face, and the direction that NGOs should take in community development.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Except for political parties and private organisations, the term non-governmental organisations (NGOs) refers to nearly all organisations that are not sponsored by the government. The organisation must be entirely voluntary and must operate within the confines of the laws of the country in which it operates. NGOs are competently run organisations that seek to alleviate human suffering and promote the development of poor countries [9] through a variety of methods, including funding projects, assisting in the provision of services, and building capacity [10].

As identified by Stromquist [11], NGOs perform three primary functions: (i) providing direct services such as providing shelter and aid, caring for unfortunate welfare; (ii) providing educational services such as initiating educational awareness and encouraging critical analysis on the social environment; (iii) defending public policy such as advocating for corruption prevention or no smoking policy. Baccaro [10] demonstrates how certain NGOs can promote the organisation and empowerment of the poor, particularly women, through training for group members, awareness-raising, and other social services, among other

methods. The ability to gain control socially, politically, economically, and psychologically, according to Zimmerman and Rappaport [12], is defined as the ability of an individual to gain control through access to information, knowledge, and skills; making decisions; and individual self-efficacy, community participation, and perceived control.

Over time, NGOs seek to promote sustainable community development through capacity-building and empowerment activities. Langran [13] defined capacity building as the process by which NGOs enable community development. NGOs are frequently formed to help people develop their capabilities. Additionally, NGOs are commended for promoting community autonomy and empowerment by assisting community groups and facilitating participatory processes [14].

2.2. The Concept of Community Development

A community is a well-defined social unit, for example, a group or association of people who share common needs, interests, functions, and values. Moreover, community development is a process in which agencies assist community members in identifying and taking collective action on issues that matter to them. Community development empowers residents and strengthens and connects communities [15]. Community development has grown to be one of the most powerful social forces in the process of deliberate and effective change [16].

According to the United Nations [17], community development is a process in which citizens work alongside government officials to improve the economic, social, and cultural conditions of the entire society, enabling them to contribute fully to national progress and integrate these communities into national life. Jones [18] coined the term "community development," which encompasses community participation, empowerment, and capacity. As a result, there are two primary facets to the community development process. To begin, participation by individuals in the effort to improve their standard of living as much as possible through their initiative. Second, providing technical and social services in a manner that fosters initiative, self-reliance, and mutual understanding [19].

According to Pearce [20], a community development strategy should incorporate three critical components: unified empowerment, unified leadership, and revolutionising through discourse. Rural and urban communities should be involved in all stages of the development process, including need assessment, planning, and implementation. In this context, community development can be used for a variety of purposes, including (1) improving health; (2) improving education; (3) improving recreation and housing; (4) developing community leaders; (5) motivating communities to organise community-based plans to solve their problems; (6) strengthening local communities' capacities to identify their incomes and interests; (7) establishing clear support among the community; and (8) enhancing operational community grunt.

Meanwhile, sustainable community development offers new challenges to a society that demands more attention and collaboration from various parties. It is an integration of two major concepts, namely, sustainable development and sustainable community. Here, communities are expected to be able to live in an environment that is sustainable and socially sustainable, including economic as well. In other words, a sustainable community adapts continuously to meet its residents' social and economic needs while preserving the environment's capacity to support them [21]. Therefore, NGOs have to mobilise communities to become self-sufficient. It assists communities in discovering their potential and in relying on their resources to achieve their goals which eventually contribute towards sustainable community development [22].

2.3. The Relationship between NGOs and Community Development

Based on this research, it can be stated that NGOs are essential in the promotion of sustainable community development that strikes a balance between environmental concerns and development goals while also strengthening local social ties. Sustainable

communities provide for the economic needs of their residents, improve and protect the environment, and promote the growth of humanitarian communities, among other things.

According to William [23], the following six functions of NGOs are critical to community development: (1) infrastructure development and operation; (2) support for innovation, demonstration, and pilot projects; (3) facilitation of communication (NGOs can facilitate communication upward from people to the government and downward from the government to the people); (4) technical assistance and training; (5) research, monitoring, and evaluation; and (6) advocacy (NGOs play roles from advocates for the poor to implementers of government programmes).

NGOs play an important role in community development by assisting communities in developing their social, capital, and human resources; enhancing knowledge and skills; encouraging people to take part in activities; and acting as a link between communities and systems. Involvement in these activities will result in their strengthening, which will be achieved as a result of community development [24]. Ultimately, this results in long-term, environmentally friendly community development [22].

2.4. NGOs in Malaysia

According to Tumin & Norhadi [25], the activities of NGOs in Malaysia before and following the declaration of independence for Tanah Melayu in 1957 can be understood through the lens of specific themes. These themes include communalism, welfarism, universalism, as well as cooperative and confrontational modes of thought. During the colonial period, for example, the establishment of NGOs to represent the interests of the major races, namely Malay, Chinese, and Indian, was heavily influenced by racism or communalism. Additionally, as was customary for the immigrant community at the time, welfare NGOs were established to address issues exacerbated by migration from the country of origin (China and India) to Malaya.

This is not to say that the two themes of understanding NGOs have ceased to be prominent following the declaration of independence. Even before 1969, the issue of racism was frequently and loudly raised, both by political party leaders and non-governmental organisation leaders. However, following independence, it was discovered that in addition to the establishment of organisations to protect similar NGOs, beginning in the 1970s, non-communalistic and universalistic issues such as consumerism, environmentalism, and feminism became the focus of NGO activity [25].

The process of strong community development among Malaysians is generally successful, with the government spearheading these energies to ensure political stability and justice, as well as socioeconomic peace. Malaysia frequently serves as a model for other countries in terms of community relations, owing to Malaysia's success in fostering harmony among diverse ethnic groups. The majority of these successes are the result of collaborative efforts between various stakeholders, including NGOs.

Until September 2021, there are currently 82,675 NGOs registered in Malaysia. The state of Selangor has the highest number of NGOs, and the state with the lowest number of NGOs is the Wilayah Persekutuan Labuan, which has only 270 NGOs. According to the category, the Welfare category has the highest number of NGOs in Malaysia with 27,109 NGOs, while the Safety category has the lowest number of NGOs with only 658 NGOs. The number of active organisations by state and number of active organisations by category are as shown in Tables 1 and 2, respectively, based on data from the Registrar of Societies of Malaysia (ROS) [26].

Since NGOs, like political parties, government bodies, the media, and certain figures can influence policymaking, some NGOs may have divergent or conflicting goals of struggle and values. Confrontational relations between NGOs and the government frequently occur when there are disagreements or conflicts of opinion on an issue for which NGOs advocate, such as some human rights and environmental issues.

Table 1. The number of active NGOs by state.

State	Number of NGOs
Selangor	19,863
Kuala Lumpur	10,391
Johor	10,143
Perak	7095
Sabah	5692
Pulau Pinang	5410
Sarawak	4677
Pahang	3753
Negeri Sembilan	3723
Kedah	3476
Melaka	2699
Kelantan	2216
Terengganu	1986
Putrajaya	711
Perlis	570
Labuan	270

Source: Registrar of Societies of Malaysia [26].

Table 2. Number of active NGOs by category.

Category	Number of NGOs
Welfare	27,109
Social	20,274
Recreation	8654
Mutual Benefits (Death Benefit)	1896
Culture and Arts	3936
Trade	5715
Profession	1120
Human Rights	850
Safety	658
Religious	12,675

Source: Registrar of Societies of Malaysia [26].

Nonetheless, numerous NGOs have developed cooperative and collaborative relationships with the government to bring attention to a particular issue. Typically, representatives from such NGOs are invited to serve on advisory councils alongside representatives from other sectors, such as higher education institutions, the media, and the private sector. The preceding discussion demonstrates that NGOs will continue to have a place in Malaysia's government and society in the future.

3. Methods

A substantial amount of literature was analysed in this study, including journal articles, reports, and even organisational websites, to ascertain the possible impact of NGOs on community development. Following that, several electronic databases were used to conduct the document analysis and literature reviews, including Google Scholar, Scopus, and Wiley. Several keywords were used, including "non-governmental organisations' role" and "community development." The retrieved articles were analysed with a systematic review process involving three steps, namely, identification, screening, and eligibility and explain in the following subchapter.

3.1. Systematic Review Process

i. Identification

The first phase in the systematic review process is the identification which involved keywords identification for information searching purposes. Table 3 shows the keywords used for searching the related articles in each search engine. The keywords were obtained

from several sources including dictionaries, thesaurus and keywords from previous literature. At the end of this process, a total of 180 documents from Scopus, 247 documents from Google Scholar, and 118 documents were retrieved from Wiley. In total 545 documents were retrieved.

Table 3. Keywords and search strings.

Databases	Keywords Used
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (("non-governmental organisation" OR "nongovernmental organisation" OR "NGO") AND ("community development")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2022) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2021) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2020) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2019) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2018) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2017) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2016))
Google Scholar	allintitle: "non-governmental organisation" OR "nongovernmental organisation" OR "NGO" "community development"
Wiley	"NGO" anywhere and "non governmental organization" anywhere and "community development" anywhere

ii. Screening (inclusion and exclusion criteria)

Screening is a process to include or exclude articles according to criteria determined by the authors with the assistance of specific databases [27]. To determine the suitability of the articles, eligibility, inclusion and exclusion criterion were determined including a timeline (between 2016 to 2022), document types (articles journal with empirical data) and language (English). Articles with other criteria were excluded from this study. After the identification process, a total of 324 articles were removed.

iii. Eligibility and duplication exclusion (Manual Screening)

Eligibility is a process that includes or excludes articles manually according to the authors 'specific criteria [27]. At this phase, the articles retrieved were thoroughly reviewed, with articles that did not match the criterion being rejected. This includes duplicate documents. A total of 117 articles were detected to be redundant and left a total of 104 documents for eligibility process screen manually for literature focusing on NGOs and community development. Then, another eligibility criteria for the articles are that it should include the role of the NGOs or impact of the programs, strategies, or interventions towards the sustainability of community development. After a thorough process of reading and screening, a total of 14 articles were selected for further analysis in this study.

3.2. Data Abstraction and Analysis

The articles were then evaluated, reviewed, and analysed. A total of 14 articles were analysed using thematic analysis as the first stage to extract statements and data based on the study's objective. Following the analysis of the role and impacts of NGOs, an examination of the challenges confronting NGOs engaged in community development, as well as several recommendations were made to strengthen NGOs' commitment to community development. There are four challenges identified, which include networking, poor governance, lack of funding, as well as imbalance, dangerous, and conflict-prone communities. So, four insights toward improvement have been suggested, which are government support, community support, adequate training for NGOs, monitoring and evaluation mechanism for NGOs, and support for women NGOs.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 4 shows the selected literature search from 2000–2020 on the role and the impact of NGOs in community development in various countries. The challenges faced by NGOs in community development are also discussed in this section. In addition, this section also provides the way forward of the NGO with several recommendations are proposed.

Table 4. Literature search result.

Author, Year	Objectives	Country	Method	Sample	Main Findings
Hashim A., Sidi S. H., Abubakar B. Z., Umar B. F., Aliero H. M. & Yelwa F. J. (2020) [28]	To identify the roles of NGOs in community development.	Zamfara State, Nigeria	Survey	58 registered local NGOs	The study shows that local NGOs make significant contributions to community development through community self-help efforts, training and retraining, and the formation of sensitization and awareness of community members.
Osiobe, E. U., Osiobe, S. A. & Olushola, P. A. (2019) [29]	To explore, illustrate and analyze dilemmas regarding the availability of per capita income of NGOs in Nigeria, return on foreign capital and local capital.	Nigeria	NGO-Donation-system dynamics model (NGOD–DEM)	Lugbe, Nigeria's community	The results illustrate how the activities of NGOs promote economic growth and development in the community.
Mapfumo, F. N. (2017)) [30]	To identify the role played by Caritas Zimbabwe in community development in Murewa.	Zimbabwe	Qualitative research methodology and case study research design	Residents of ward 30 of Murewa Rural District	The research has shown that Caritas has embarked on a few community development activities that include infrastructure development, income-generating projects, environmental management, as well as assisting council in enhancing service delivery.
Bashir, S. (2016) [31]	To relate NGOs' roles and contributions to community development.	Balochistan, Pakistan	Qualitative and quantitative method using the questionnaire	International and National NGOs	The main finding of this study is that NGOs play a very important role in community development and are appreciated by the community. However, more effort needs to be put in by many NGOs for the well-being of the whole community.
Bhaker, S. K. (2014) [32]	To examine the process of people's participation and level of satisfaction of rural people.	India	Case study	8 NGOs in India	This study highlights the role of NGOs and the casual relationship between NGOs and rural development.
Ismail, M., & Sha-haruddin, W. Y. B. W. (2014) [33]	To focus on social entrepreneurship orientation practices in community development programs in Malaysia.	Malaysia	Qualitative approach by interviewing informants	13 NGOs in Malaysia	The findings show that the social entrepreneurship approach through business strategy is still less practised by NGOs in Malaysia. The finding also shows that most NGOs that implement community development programs are aimed at providing social value to improve the quality of life of the community in various aspects such as economics, education, and health.
Enyioko, N. C. (2012) [34]	To analyze the NGOs' role in promoting sustainable agriculture such as promoting awareness programs and upgrading development facilities.	River State, Nigeria	Interview	6 NGOs in River State, Nigeria	The analysis of the study shows that NGOs are very prominent in the implementation of effective government programs towards sustainable rural development through NGO activities that have been carried out.

Table 4. *Cont.*

Author, Year	Objectives	Country	Method	Sample	Main Findings
Mosweunyane, D. (2010) [35]	To demonstrate that NGOs are useful in the development	Botswana, Africa	Qualitative research	NGOs in Botswana	This study demonstrates adequately that NGOs in Botswana did not have any impact on sustainabledevelopment.
Tahiru, A., Sackey, B., Owusu, G., & Bawakyillenuo, S. (2019). [36]	To assess if NGOs' climate change adaptation methods are sufficiently localised and progressive to enable long-term adaption.	Northern Region of Ghana	Interview and Focus Group Discussion	NGOs and farmers in the municipality	They focus on providing direct and indirect capability development initiatives such as giving farmers with relevant data on climate change and its impact on crops, developing farmers' knowledge and skills to cope effectively with climatic variables, establishing the foundations to develop various capitals, directly assisting in coping and adaptive livelihood activities, funding to build livelihood capitals, and engaging in impact offsetting strategizing.
Sitanggang, H., Harahap, R. H., & Kadir, A. (2021). [37]	To provide in-depth information to describe and analyze activities conducted by Mercy Corps Indonesia	Indonesia	Qualitative research	-	The NGO Mercy Corps Indonesia participates in the strengthening activity of Farmer Groups in Sinambela Village, through Livelihood activities such as counselling, field meetings, and the creation of demonstration plots, and also activities to strengthen the organisation and management of Farmer Groups in Sinambela Village.
Aprilia, D., & Widodo, A. (2021). [38]	to describe the function of NGO LPPSLH in enabling penderes or coconut sugar farmers and how the empowerment process takes place.	Pasinggangan village, Banyumas district, Indonesia	Interviews, observation, and document analysis.	The penderes and the facilitators from LPPSLH	LPPSLH, as a facilitator, encourages farmers to participate in the ant sugar organic certification programme. LPPSLH assisted penderes farmers in empowerment projects, particularly in rural regions, by providing education, facilitation, and advocacy.
Margaret, S., & Kala, N. (2013). [39]	To study the impact of NGO interventions on the empowerment of women	Chennai, India	Interviews	Women beneficiaries of the selected NGOs in Chennai, India	The respondents have a moderate level of empowerment, and there was a substantial difference in their level of empowerment before and after joining the NGO interventions. The non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were able to have a significant influence on the empowerment and development of the women participants.

Table 4. *Cont.*

Author, Year	Objectives	Country	Method	Sample	Main Findings
Kunapalan, H., Ismail, N. B., & Yatiban, A. B. (2020). [40]	To find out how NGOs assist refugees to access basic facilities in Malaysia	Malaysia	Literature Review	-	UNHCR with assistance from the NGOs and other corporate bodies align together to operate learning centres for the refugee's children as well as provide funds and monetary aid to support their education.
Breckenridge, T. A., Black-Hughes, C., Rautenbach, J. & McKinley, M. (2019). [41]	To evaluate the effectiveness of the NGO's programs through an analysis of the historical data, observational behaviours, and reported emotions of the 49 orphans	Eastern Cape, South Africa	Interviews, intervention programs and observation	49 orphaned children	The NGO interventions consisted of cognitive-behavioural strategies at small group and community levels.It is found that the destructive or low self-esteem behaviours declined for the majority of the children who participated in the 'orphan groups' over 6 months.

4.1. Challenges Faced by NGOs in Community Development

NGOs, as an integral part of civil society, play a critical role in the administration of a wide variety of complex and diverse activities. They face management challenges on both the internal and external fronts when it comes to carrying out their trusts [22]. Numerous studies and practices have demonstrated that NGOs face obstacles such as political interference, a lack of funding, ineffective networking, and poor governance. The following are significant findings regarding the challenges faced by NGOs engaged in community development.

To begin, one significant challenge that NGOs face is ineffective communication and networking. It also is associated with the duplication of efforts, contradictory policies at the community level, a lack of experience-based learning, and the inability of NGOs to address the structural causes of underdevelopment at the local level [36,42,43]. Additionally, destructive competition for resources erodes the sector's reputation and the effectiveness of NGO activities at the community level. As a result, there is widespread suspicion of NGOs, a culture of secrecy, and a lack of transparency. Numerous NGOs, large and small, intervene at the community level without conducting a community mapping exercise and implement projects without regard for ongoing community initiatives. Many communities have been characterized by tensions between NGOs, with one fighting another with resources but no community presence and another with community presence but no resources [44].

Secondly, another major problem encountered by NGOs is poor governance. The understanding of good governance varied widely, with some regions showing very little understanding of why NGOs are required to have boards or what their roles, responsibilities, and functions should be. Mawere [45] explained that many NGOs mismanage their resources, frequently with the involvement and encouragement of their boards. As a result, many NGOs operate inefficiently [36,42]. This issue has been well documented in the majority of developing countries, where individuals have increased their involvement in forming NGOs as a means of self-sufficiency.

The third difficulty that NGOs face is obtaining sufficient, appropriate, and sustainable funding for their work. The lack of funds and funding support is a significant impediment to achieving the desired goals. Funds are critical for NGOs to implement their projects, programs, and activities that benefit their communities' development [46]. They have a difficult time convincing donors to abstain from dealing with their funding situation [47]. They believe there is an alliance of certain individuals and non-governmental organizations that controls access to donor funds. They can mobilize insufficient resources and frequently do not seek funding locally, preferring to attend for international donors to approach them. There is a strong reliance on donors and a tendency to tailor interventions to donor

preferences. Additionally, there is a deficiency in financial, project, and organizational sustainability [44]. As a result, funding agencies, donors, and sponsors are critical to all non-governmental organizations [48].

Finally, many NGOs operate in unbalanced, dangerous, and conflict-prone communities or collaborate with predatory individuals such as those who cause political interference or who may misuse the funding or grants allocated for the NGOs for their advantages. In some constituencies, NGO activists acknowledged that local politicians' and civic leaders' interference was a significant impediment to their work [36,49]. NGOs are frequently unaware that the constitution and laws exist to safeguard them against such intimidation.

4.2. Direction for Improvement

Following a review of the literature on the role and challenges faced by local NGOs in community development, several recommendations are made to ensure that NGOs become more effective at providing community development services while also contributing to economic growth and stability in the area.

Governments, other organizations, and individuals should strengthen their support for NGOs, including by providing a supportive work environment, financial resources, equipment, and technical reporting. Governments should foster an enabling environment for community development initiatives by providing funding to NGOs to carry out community-based programs. Even though past research had identified several links of government funding with causing isomorphism, loss of autonomy, mission drift, and crowding out in the NGOs [50], it is crucial as it can contribute towards the sustainability and development of the NGO sector. In return, NGOs should create a dedicated database to assist the government and all other interested parties. The construction of a database that includes both social and environmental variables from existing high-quality datasets may be necessary to evaluate the relationship between social and environmental issues over time [4]. This database can be used by all interested parties to develop programs that address the need for individuals to improve their standard of living.

Next, beneficiaries of community development programs and activities should continue to support NGOs in their communities and ensure the maintenance and continuity of completed community development projects. NGOs should always involve beneficiaries in planning, implementing, and evaluating their community development activities. This will increase the project's sustainability and ownership. The purpose of NGOs is not only to assist the government but also to act as a backbone for the poor and vulnerable, particularly during difficult times such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The community views NGOs' efforts as evidence of their unwavering compassion in the face of disaster. Research by Kucheryavaya [51] has clearly stated that people believe the NGOs must first and foremost address basic everyday social problems and that the primary focus of NGOs' activity should now be on specific social actions and direct assistance to people. For this, NGOs are suggested to have formed coalitions to receive support from other network institutions and to promote their activities on a larger scale through networking and federations.

Other than that, local NGOs should also be trained to supplement government efforts in the area of community development. NGOs can be formed as a result of the ideas, experiences, interests, and great spirit of specific individuals or groups to address societal issues or desires. It is especially important for the NGO leaders to have good leadership skills to manage the NGO effectively. NGO leaders exhibit a chameleon-like ability to balance competing demands and a variety of roles depending on the circumstances and individuals involved; for example, balancing their vision with the practical needs of local communities, as well as donor demands or the vested interests of local politicians [52]. Thus, they require training that can support these roles. Furthermore, the NGOs' founding principles and strengths are centred on achieving their objectives, which include providing educational opportunities and skills development, controlling and managing disease, assisting victims of natural disasters, empowering women's economic empowerment, and advocating for human, social, economic, political, and cultural rights.

NGOs must demonstrate a greater commitment to community development activities, particularly through self-help promotion. A monitoring and evaluation mechanism for NGOs is required to ensure that community development programs and services reach the area's most vulnerable residents. The management of NGOs should consider hiring sufficient personnel to assist the project team in conducting monitoring and evaluation activities throughout the project. Additionally, management should establish a routine for conducting periodic staff needs assessments for Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) in collaboration with the monitoring and evaluation staff/focal point [53]. This monitoring and evaluation can be carried out by a third-party organization as well for better accountability.

Working women's non-governmental organizations are growing in strength; they should be involved in a variety of programs and training. Women, as significant assets of the country, must be optimally developed to enable them to contribute actively to community development. The fact that some women's non-governmental organizations (WONGOs) were downsizing and/or closing as a result of financial constraints is concerning; the majority of them were skeletal naturally, resulting in coverage compromises, according to a recent study [54]. Although this research has a different demographic, it is important not to disregard the findings because this may occur in Malaysia, thereby hindering women's empowerment. Meanwhile, the government is very interested in promoting women's empowerment through Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls, which is being implemented in partnership with NGOs that advocate for gender equality and women's empowerment in the developing world [55]. As a result, strengthening women's NGOs is an effort that should be highlighted by all parties because it will have benefits from various perspectives on community development.

In a nutshell, community development should not be solely the responsibility of the government. Individuals, communities, NGOs, and other organizations must all be involved in efforts to serve the poor. The objectives of the programs should be clearly understood by the entire community. The full support of all parties will result in a better outcome that may benefit all parties involved.

5. Conclusions

Throughout this systematic review article, the role and impact of NGOs in promoting sustainable community development has been discussed. From this research, it can be concluded that sustainable community development is not a one-time effort. As much as NGOs play an important part in initiating as well as advocating sustainability through their programs and interventions, it is also vital to engage other stakeholders to further ensure the effectiveness of this effort. In addition, continuous monitoring and assessment should be performed by NGOs to find out how much impact every program or strategy that has been carried out has towards developing sustainable community development.

In addition, the challenges faced by these NGOs in their efforts towards the sustainability of community development has also been identified. Although NGOs play a significant role to facilitate the sustainability of community development strategies, effective networking and teamwork between stakeholders, capability development, or training for continuous improvement in the quality of life, good financial planning, as well as ongoing consultation or facilitation and advocacy are very much needed. As they are facing various challenges, stakeholders should emphasise strengthening the efficacy of NGOs in delivering community development services, as well as encouraging economic growth, development, and stability in the region. Overall, it is intended that NGOs would be more imaginative in the future in terms of picking a suitable, interesting, and effective medium for executing their programmes, thus contributing to being more successful in tackling the difficulties faced. A considerable increase in the contribution of NGOs to community development may be obtained with a clear grasp of the study's purpose.

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