

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

**THE NEXUS BETWEEN CAMPAIGNING NGOS AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS IN
ZIMBABWE**

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ZIMBABWE**

by

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ABSTRACT

In Zimbabwe's contested socio-political space, campaigning NGOs play a crucial role in promoting sustainable livelihoods but often face challenges in translating advocacy into tangible, lasting community benefits. This issue affects vulnerable communities, making it essential to find more effective and sustainable approaches.

The aim of this study was to analyse the relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe, exploring the factors that contribute to the "advocacy-impact gap". To achieve this, the study used a qualitative approach, utilising a multiple-case study design, gathering data from three NGOs (AAZ, ZELA and ZIMCDD). Information was collected through document analysis, key informant interviews with NGO staff and campaigners, and focus group discussions with community members across six diverse districts, chosen purposively to ensure a representative sample of experiences.

The results revealed a disconnect between NGO advocacy efforts and sustained livelihood improvements at the community level. While NGOs were effective in raising awareness and building capacity, communities expressed concerns about the short-term nature of interventions, the difficulty in attributing improvements to advocacy, and the gap between policy "wins" and on-the-ground realities.

This study contributes a new, context-specific Campaigning NGOs Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (CNGO-SLF), which incorporates "Relational Power" as a key asset and centres the "politics of power, influence, and access" to provide a more robust analytical tool for strengthening the work of campaigning NGOs in contested spaces. In summary, this research tackles the challenge of bridging the advocacy-impact gap by offering a new framework for understanding and strengthening the role of campaigning NGOs.

Key words: Sustainable Livelihoods; Campaigning NGOs; Advocacy, Zimbabwe, Policy Influence.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own original work and that it has not been previously submitted, either in whole or in part, to any other university for the purpose of obtaining a degree. I further declare that this work has not been published elsewhere, except in the form of prior conference papers and/or journal articles. Furthermore, I attest that all sources used in this research have been appropriately cited and acknowledged within a comprehensive list of references, and that this work does not infringe upon the intellectual property rights of any third party.

Abel Sibanda

Student Number: 22394564

DEDICATION

For Archiford John Scholtz.

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The culmination of this PhD journey, spanning over three years, has been an experience far richer and more complex than I could have ever imagined. It is with profound gratitude that I acknowledge the many individuals whose support, guidance, and unwavering belief in me made this possible. I always say a PhD is an experience, not *just* a qualification, and this experience has been profoundly shaped by the contributions of many. The submission of this work is a moment to express my sincere thanks – Asante Sana, Thank You!

My deepest appreciation goes to my two exceptional supervisors, Professor Nirmala Dorasamy and Dr. Wonder Muchabaiwa. Their guidance transcended the typical role of academic supervisors. Professor Dorasamy consistently went above and beyond, readily responding to my queries – texts, calls, and emails – even on weekends. Her dedication to my progress was invaluable. I remember often seeing her responses in the morning and wondering, “Does she ever rest?” She was dedicated to supporting what she took in as a clueless, ambitious student, and helped to cultivate me into a thoughtful intellectual. Dr. Muchabaiwa, with his calm demeanour and keen eye, identified subtle yet crucial points for refinement. He consistently made a compelling case for their correction, significantly strengthening the quality of this work. I am eternally indebted to these two great guides.

My journey truly began during a 2022 assignment with ActionAid Zimbabwe, where I had the privilege of interacting with young people from Binga, Mbire, Chimanimani, and Chipinge. Upon returning, I found myself grappling with a fundamental question - how did my seemingly small contribution fit within the larger, complex picture of development work? This question proved surprisingly difficult to answer. My search for clarity led me to two seminal papers – “What do Non-Governmental Organisations do?” by Eric Werker and Faisal Ahmed, and “Silences in the NGO Discourse” by Professor Issa Shivji. While offering both complementary and contradictory perspectives, these works, rather than providing definitive answers, sparked a series of increasingly nuanced and complex questions.

Further interactions within Zimbabwe’s civil society revealed persistent tensions between direct service delivery and structural advocacy/campaigning – a debate about the most effective approach for NGOs in the Zimbabwean context. When the opportunity arose to pursue doctoral studies, I chose to dedicate my research to campaigning and advocacy NGOs. My aim was to gain a deeper understanding of their impact on communities and, ultimately, to inform better practice for professionals like me. The core of this research, therefore, revolves around questions of impact, relevance, attribution, and the ongoing tension between NGOs and the state in Zimbabwe. In all this I have met people who in conversations were not aware that they were helping me in refining my academic thoughts, to them I am thankful.

I am profoundly grateful to the entire team at ActionAid Zimbabwe, especially Rumbidzayi Makoni, Kundai Chikoko, and Happymore Chibvura. They provided invaluable support during my early years as a programmer in the NGO sector. For better or for worse, they allowed me to experiment with new models of working, and, to everyone’s surprise (including my own), it worked most of the time. Their practical insights into the realities of campaigning NGOs’ work in Zimbabwe were indispensable in those formative years.

This research would not have been possible without the generous participation of the informants and community members across six districts in Zimbabwe. They willingly shared their time, experiences, and perspectives through lengthy interviews and discussions. This

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Finally, this work represents a period of intense personal and intellectual growth. The submission of this thesis marks an opportunity for me to say, from the very core of who I have become - Asante Sana, Thank You!

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ACRONYMS

AAZ: ActionAid Zimbabwe

ACDEG: African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance

AFRODAD: African Forum and Network on Debt and Development

AGRA: Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa

AIDS: Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

AU: African Union

BRAC: Building Resources Across Communities (originally Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee)

CBOs: Community-Based Organisations

CBNRM: Community-Based Natural Resource Management

CCJP: Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace

CiZC: Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition

CSOs: Civil Society Organisations

CNGO-SLF: Campaigning NGOs Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

COP: Conference of the Parties

CSMM: Civil Society Monitoring Mechanism

DRM: Disaster Risk Management

ECOSOC: Economic and Social Council (of the UN)

ECOZI: Education Coalition of Zimbabwe

EPAs: Economic Partnership Agreements

ERC: Elections Resource Centre

EU: European Union

FAZ: Forever Associates Zimbabwe

FCDO: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (UK)

FPC: Fambidzanai Permaculture Centre

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GNI: Gross National Income

GNU: Government of National Unity

GoZ: Government of Zimbabwe

GPRS: Gender Responsive Public Services

GTPS: Gender Transformative Public Services

HDI: Human Development Index

HIPCs: Heavily Indebted Poor Countries

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

HRBA: Human Rights-Based Approach

HZT: Heal Zimbabwe Trust

IDI: Institut de Droit International

IFIs: International Financial Institutions

IMF: International Monetary Fund

IKS: Indigenous Knowledge Systems

ISALS: Internal Savings and Lending Schemes

LRP: Local Rights Program

MDC: Movement for Democratic Change

MFWA: Media Foundation for West Africa

MSF: Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders)

NAYO: National Association of Youth Organisations

NCA: National Constitutional Assembly

NDS1: National Development Strategy 1 (Zimbabwe)

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organisations

NHIA: National Health Insurance Authority (Ghana)

NHIS: National Health Insurance Scheme (Ghana)

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PELUM: Participatory Ecological Land-use Management

POS: Political Opportunity Structure

PPT: Political Process Theory

PPP: Purchasing Power Parity

PRA: Participatory Rural Appraisal

PVO: Private Voluntary Organisation

RAU: Research and Advocacy Unit

SAFIRE: Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources

SADC: Southern African Development Community

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

SEJA: Social and Economic Justice Activists

SLF: Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

SMEs: Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

UK: United Kingdom

UN: United Nations

UNCED: UN Conference on the Environment and Development

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNFCCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

USAID: United States Agency for International Development¹

WEF: World Economic Forum

WSF: World Social Forum

WTO: World Trade Organisation

ZANU-PF: Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front

ZELA: Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association

ZESN: Zimbabwe Election Support Network

ZIMCDD: Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development

ZLHR: Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights

ZOPPA: Zimbabwe Organic Producers and Processors Association

ZRBF: Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund

ZCC: Zimbabwe Council of Churches

ZICC: Zimbabwe Independent Complaints Commission

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The pursuit of sustainable development, particularly the eradication of poverty and the promotion of resilient livelihoods, is a paramount global challenge of the 21st century. As articulated in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), sustainable development necessitates a holistic approach that integrates social, economic, and environmental dimensions (United Nations 2015). Within this complex multi-actor landscape, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have emerged as critical actors, playing increasingly diverse roles in shaping development agendas and influencing policy at the local, national, and international levels. This study examines the nexus between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe, focusing on the work of three prominent organisations—ActionAid Zimbabwe (AAZ), the Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA), and the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCDD). By analysing their strategies, interventions, and perceived impacts, this research aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the role of NGOs in campaigning for sustainable livelihoods within a challenging socio-political and economic context.

1.1.1 Understanding sustainable livelihoods

The concept of sustainable livelihoods has gained prominence as a central tenet of international development discourse, providing a framework for understanding and addressing the multifaceted nature of poverty and vulnerability (Scoones 1998; Serrat and Serrat 2017). Born out of the growing consciousness of the impact of human conduct on the natural environment as highlighted by the Brundtland Commission when the term “sustainable development” was coined (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987) and the human development concepts of the 1990s driven by ideas of Amartya Sen and others (McNeill 2007), the sustainable livelihoods ideas grew to become a core tenant of the development discourse. In conceptualising the idea of sustainable livelihoods, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), as articulated by Chambers and Conway (1992), emphasises the importance of diverse livelihood assets (human, social, natural, physical, and financial); the influence of external factors (vulnerability context); and the role of institutions and policies in shaping livelihood strategies and outcomes. Since its inception in the 1990s, the SLF has significantly influenced development thinking and practice. Scoones (2009: 181) observed that the SLF has made a tangible difference across the world, leading to shifts in aid allocation, the recruitment of professionals with new skills and values, and a greater emphasis on

understanding local contexts. Importantly, it has helped bring the poor and marginalised people into the planning and decision-making processes of development.

Adopted by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and other major development players across the world, the sustainable livelihoods discourse, albeit focusing on rural development, reached a peak in the first decade of the 21st century, and its influence plummeted and lost momentum thereafter (Scoones 2009: 181). However, discourse on sustainable livelihoods was further rejuvenated with the adoption of the SDGs by the United Nations in 2015 as an expansive element beyond rural development. The SDGs, with their interconnected goals related to poverty eradication (SDG 1), food security (SDG 2), decent work (SDG 8), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), climate action (SDG 13), and sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12), are all directly linked to the core principles of sustainable development (United Nations 2015). The SDGs have reinforced the importance of a holistic approach to development, one that integrates social, economic, and environmental dimensions and addresses the structural causes of poverty and vulnerability.

Decades of observation and research have shown that achieving sustainable livelihoods requires an integrated approach that recognises the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental factors (Bebbington 1999; Scoones 2015; Singh and Singh 2021). Social dimensions, such as education, health, and social inclusion, are fundamental for building human and social capital (Alkire 2002; Abbas *et al.* 2024). Economic factors, including access to markets, credit, and employment opportunities, are essential for generating income and improving living standards (Ellis 2000; Ayoo 2022). Environmental sustainability, encompassing the responsible management of natural resources and the mitigation of climate change impacts, is crucial for ensuring the long-term viability of livelihoods (Batra 2023; Hariram *et al.* 2023).

The pursuit of sustainable livelihoods as a “public good” necessitates the involvement of various actors, including governments, the private sector, civil society organisations, and the communities themselves (Hoon and Hyden 2003; Sammak 2024). Governments play a critical role in creating an enabling environment through policies, regulations, and investments in infrastructure and public services (Norton and Foster 2001; Sammak 2024). The private sector contributes to economic growth and job creation, while civil society organisations, particularly NGOs, play a vital role in advocating for the needs of marginalised communities, promoting social justice, and holding governments and corporations accountable (Lewis 2020).

Historically, many NGOs focused primarily on service delivery, providing essential services like healthcare, education, and humanitarian aid (Hailey 1999; Banks and Hulme 2012). However, towards the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries, a significant shift occurred, with NGOs increasingly engaging in advocacy, campaigning, and policy influencing

to address the root causes of poverty and inequality (Mitlin, Hickey and Bebbington 2007; Lewis, Kanji and Themudo 2020). This transformation coincided with the growing prominence of the SLF in development discourse, creating a synergistic relationship between theory and practice. While the SLF provided a framework for understanding the complexities of livelihoods, the rise of campaigning NGOs offered a means of influencing the broader structures and processes that shape those livelihoods. However, despite their parallel evolution, the intersection between the SLF and the work of campaigning NGOs has not been adequately examined. Available research such as by Franks *et al.* (2004), Nikkhah and Redzuan (2010), Mabon *et al.* (2021) and recently Siloko (2024) cover the relationship between the SLF and NGOs in general not particularly campaigning NGOs. Those that cover campaigning NGOs such as Chapman and Fisher (2000), Duong (2017) and Cascant-Sempere (2022) cover other subjects except for the NGOs' work on the attainment of sustainable livelihoods. This is especially true in specific socio-political contexts like that of Zimbabwe where the discourse on NGO campaigning is primarily on the abstract democratisation gap. This study contributes to addressing that gap.

1.1.2 The rise of campaigning NGOs

The evolution of the non-governmental organisation (NGO) sector has been marked by a significant shift from a primary focus on service delivery to a growing emphasis on advocacy and campaigning (Mitlin, Hickey and Bebbington 2007; Cascant-Sempere 2017). This transition reflects a growing recognition that sustainable development requires not only addressing immediate needs but also challenging the underlying structural causes of poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation (Chapman and Fisher 2000; Klugman 2011). Campaigning NGOs, characterised by their focus on influencing policy, raising public awareness, and mobilising for social change, have emerged as key actors in this arena (Hulme 2013; Yanacopulos 2019). They have become increasingly influential in shaping national and international agendas, holding governments and corporations accountable, and advocating for the rights and interests of marginalised communities (Levy and Williams 2020).

Campaigning NGOs employ diverse repertoires of contention (Tilly 2010), a concept that encompasses a wide range of tactics, including lobbying, public demonstrations, litigation, research, and media advocacy. These organisations leverage their expertise, networks, and mobilising capacity to shape public discourse, influence policy debates, and hold governments and corporations accountable (Hulme 2013; Levy and Williams 2020). Their increasing importance in shaping policy and influencing public discourse is underscored by their ability to frame issues, build coalitions, and navigate the political opportunity structure (POS) (Meyer 2004; Cascant-Sempere 2017).

Strategic framing, a core element of NGO advocacy, involves connecting livelihood issues to broader values such as human rights, social justice, and environmental sustainability (Haalboom 2011; Delina 2018). By framing issues in a way that resonates with diverse audiences, campaigning NGOs make their advocacy more compelling and persuasive (Hervieux and Voltan 2018). For example, framing climate change as a threat to food security and livelihoods garners broader support than a purely environmental framing. They also employ tactics like leveraging on both traditional and new media to amplify their messages (Thrall, Stecula and Sweet 2014; Duong 2017), and engaging influential people (celebrities) and utilising the power of storytelling to connect with audiences (Thrall, Stecula and Sweet 2014). These tactics have given campaigning NGOs unparalleled power to influence policy and practice changes in their preferred direction across the world (Smith 2019; Willets 2019). The rise of campaigning NGOs reflects a broader trend towards increased citizen participation in governance and a growing demand for accountability from both state and non-state actors. As these organisations have gained prominence, they have also faced increased scrutiny regarding their own accountability, legitimacy, and effectiveness (Banks, Hulme and Edwards 2015; Goncharenko 2023). This has led to ongoing debates about the role of campaigning NGOs in development, their relationship with the state and other actors, and the most effective strategies for achieving lasting social change.

1.1.3 The Zimbabwean context

Zimbabwe presents a unique and challenging context for the study of campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods. The country's socio-political and economic landscape has been shaped by a complex interplay of historical factors, including a legacy of colonial rule, a protracted liberation struggle, and a controversial land reform program in the early 2000s (Chigumira *et al.* 2019; Scoones, Mavedzenge and Murimbarimba 2019). These historical factors continue to influence land tenure, resource access, and power relations, particularly in rural communities. Since the turn of the millennium, Zimbabwe has experienced protracted periods of economic instability, characterised by hyperinflation, currency fluctuations, and high unemployment rates (Siambombe 2023). This economic volatility, coupled with political contestation and state repression, has created a precarious environment for livelihoods (Helliker, Chiweshe and Bhatasara 2018; Ncube, Nyambi and Mangena 2021; Bushu and Kufakurinani 2024).

The civic space in Zimbabwe has been increasingly constrained, with the government enacting restrictive legislation, such as amendments to the Criminal Law Code in 2023, and employing tactics of surveillance and intimidation against civil society organisations (Kabonga, Zvokuomba and Musara 2022; Dendere and Taodzera 2023). The 2025 Private Voluntary Organisations (PVO) Amendment Act, further regulates the activities of NGOs, raising

concerns about the shrinking space for independent civil society action (Moyo 2024a). This challenging environment has forced NGOs to adopt adaptive strategies, balancing their advocacy goals with the need to navigate a complex and often hostile political terrain.

Despite these challenges, Zimbabwe has a vibrant civil society sector, with numerous NGOs working on a wide range of issues, including human rights, governance, environmental protection, and economic justice (Muneri 2016; Muchadenyika 2017; Musekiwa, Zhou and Mandiyanike 2023). This study focuses on three prominent campaigning NGOs—ActionAid Zimbabwe (AAZ), the Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA), and the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCodd). AAZ, part of the ActionAid International Federation, focuses on poverty eradication, social justice, climate justice, women’s rights, and humanitarian work, with a strong emphasis on community empowerment and rights-based approaches (AAZ 2024a). ZELA is a premier public interest environmental law organisation that seeks to promote environmental justice, sustainable and equitable use of natural resources, and the protection of environmental rights through litigation and advocacy (ZELA 2020b). ZIMCodd is a socio-economic justice coalition of individuals and civil society organisations (CSOs) in Zimbabwe that campaigns for sustainable debt management, social and economic justice, and accountable and transparent public finance management (ZIMCodd 2023). These organisations represent diverse thematic focuses and employ a variety of advocacy and campaigning strategies, making them valuable case studies for understanding the role of campaigning NGOs in promoting sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe.

Livelihood challenges are prevalent across Zimbabwe, affecting both urban and rural communities. High levels of poverty (Mhlanga and Ndhlovu 2021; Freeman and David 2022), inequality (Nhapi 2022), and food insecurity (Mutenje *et al.* 2010), coupled with the impacts of climate change (Hlatshwayo and Qutieshat 2024), create significant obstacles preventing the attainment of sustainable livelihoods. The country’s dependence on rain-fed agriculture, combined with recurrent droughts and extreme weather events, further exacerbates livelihood vulnerabilities, particularly in rural areas (Kumalo 2022; Toromade *et al.* 2024). These challenges are compounded by issues of land tenure insecurity, limited access to markets and financial services, and inadequate provision of essential services, such as healthcare and education (Macheka, Maharaj and Nzima 2021). The work of campaigning NGOs, therefore, is crucial to addressing these challenges, advocating for policy changes, and empowering communities to build more resilient and sustainable livelihoods.

1.2 Statement of the problem

This study grapples with the central problem of the often-tenuous link between the advocacy efforts of campaigning NGOs and the realisation of tangible, sustainable improvements in community livelihoods, particularly in the complex socio-political and economic context of Zimbabwe. While these organisations play a vital role in raising awareness, mobilising support, and advocating for policy changes that, in principle, should contribute to poverty reduction and enhanced well-being (Mitlin, Hickey and Bebbington 2007; Lewis, Kanji and Themudo 2020), a critical gap exists between these efforts and their demonstrable, lasting impact on the ground. This disconnect raises fundamental questions about the effectiveness of current campaigning NGO approaches and underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of how these organisations can effectively contribute to sustainable livelihoods in challenging environments like Zimbabwe.

1.2.1 The gap between advocacy and impact

Despite the proliferation of campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe and their active engagement in advocating for policy reforms, attributing specific livelihood outcomes to their interventions remains a significant challenge. This difficulty stems from several interconnected factors. Firstly, the causal pathways between advocacy and impact are often complex and indirect, involving multiple actors, shifting political landscapes, and extended timeframes (Gen and Wright 2013; Weible 2023). Isolating the specific contribution of NGO advocacy amidst this web of influences is inherently difficult (van Wessel 2018; van Wessel, Ho and Tamas 2021).

Secondly, the project-based nature of many NGO interventions, driven by donor priorities and funding cycles, often leads to short-term engagements that fail to address the underlying structural causes of poverty and vulnerability (Banks, Hulme and Edwards 2015; Brass *et al.* 2018). As highlighted in chapter eight, communities in Zimbabwe perceive NGOs as transient actors, “touching and leaving” without fostering genuine long-term transformation. This raises concerns about the sustainability of livelihood improvements and the potential for creating dependency rather than empowerment.

Thirdly, the traditional SLF, while useful in understanding livelihood components, has been criticised for its limited attention to power dynamics, its depoliticization of poverty (Li 2007), and its tendency to oversimplify complex realities (Shen, Hughey and Simmons 2008). As further discussed in chapter two, these limitations hinder a comprehensive analysis of how advocacy efforts interact with existing political and economic structures to shape livelihood outcomes. In the Zimbabwean context, where issues of governance, corruption, and political repression significantly impact livelihood opportunities, a more nuanced framework that incorporates political and power dynamics is essential. These challenges call into question the

effectiveness of current NGO strategies and highlight the need for new models of engagement that bridge the gap between advocacy and tangible, sustainable change—models that account for the specific socio-political context of Zimbabwe.

1.2.2 The Importance of community perspectives

A critical dimension of this problem lies in the often-overlooked perspectives of the communities that campaigning NGOs aim to serve. As demonstrated in detail in chapter eight, a significant disconnect exists between the NGOs' self-perceptions of their impact and the lived experiences of community members. While NGOs often emphasise their contributions to policy change, capacity building, and awareness raising, communities express a desire for more sustained engagement and tangible support that directly addresses their immediate needs and long-term aspirations. This divergence in perspectives highlights the potential for misalignment between NGO intentions and community expectations, raising questions about the relevance and effectiveness of NGO interventions. Understanding community experiences, priorities, and perceptions of NGO impact is therefore crucial for developing more responsive, appropriate, and ultimately, more impactful strategies to attain sustainable livelihoods. By prioritising community voices and incorporating their feedback into program design and implementation, NGOs can enhance the legitimacy, effectiveness, and sustainability of their interventions. Without this crucial perspective, even well-intentioned advocacy efforts fail to translate into meaningful improvements in the lives of those they aim to serve, underscoring the need for a more participatory and community-centred approach to development.

1.3 Research aim and objectives

This study aims to examine the role of campaigning NGOs in promoting sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe through an analysis of their programmatic intentions, activities/campaigns, and community impact, focusing on three prominent organisations—AAZ, ZELA and ZIMCODD.

1.3.1 Research aim

The overarching aim of this research is to examine the role of campaigning NGOs in promoting sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe through an analysis of their programmatic intentions, activities, and campaigns, and the impact of three campaigning NGOs: AAZ, ZELA and ZIMCODD.

1.3.2 Research objectives

To achieve this aim, the study is guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To identify the key livelihood issues and challenges that campaigning NGOs address in urban and rural areas of Zimbabwe. This objective seeks to understand the specific problems and obstacles facing communities that these organisations aim to tackle through their interventions.
2. To evaluate the development approaches used by campaigning NGOs in their quest to attain sustainable livelihoods in urban and rural areas in Zimbabwe. This objective involves analysing the strategies and methodologies employed by the NGOs, assessing their alignment with the principles and components of the SLF, and examining their adaptation to the specific contexts of urban and rural Zimbabwe.
3. To examine the impact of the work of campaigning NGOs in influencing the vulnerabilities, policies, structures and processes, livelihood assets, strategies, and livelihood outcomes of urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe. This objective focuses on assessing the tangible and intangible impacts of NGO interventions on various aspects of community livelihoods, including their resilience to shocks, access to resources, and overall well-being.
4. To provide recommendations for improving campaigning NGOs' work to enhance the sustainability and resilience of urban and rural communities' livelihoods in Zimbabwe. Based on the study's findings, this objective was intended to lead to the formulation of practical and actionable recommendations for NGOs, policymakers, communities, and funding partners to strengthen the effectiveness of interventions and foster more sustainable livelihood outcomes.
5. To develop a context-specific model for the strengthening of urban and rural livelihoods by campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe. This objective involves synthesising the research findings and theoretical insights to create a tailored framework that can guide the design, implementation, and evaluation of NGO interventions in the Zimbabwean context, considering the unique challenges and opportunities present.

By achieving these objectives, this research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe, offering insights for policy and practice in the field of development as part of the broader public administration pursuit for the "public good".

1.4 Research questions

This study is guided by an overarching research question that encapsulates the core inquiry: *What is the link between the work of campaigning NGOs and the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe?*

1.4.1 Sub-questions

To address this central question comprehensively, the research explores several specific sub-questions, organised around the key objectives of the study. These questions are informed by both the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) and the Political Process Theory (PPT), and they probe the multifaceted relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in both urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe.

1. Relating to objective 1 (Key livelihood issues and challenges)

- What are the key livelihood issues and challenges that campaigning NGOs address in urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe?
- How do these issues and challenges vary between urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe?
- What are the underlying social, economic, political, and environmental factors that contribute to these issues and challenges as understood by communities and the campaigning NGOs?

2. Relating to objective 2 (Development strategies and approaches)

- What development approaches and concepts do campaigning NGOs employ in their work in urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe?
- How do these approaches and concepts align with the principles and components of the SLF?
- What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of these approaches in addressing livelihood challenges in the Zimbabwean context?

3. Relating to objective 3 (Impact of campaigning NGOs on sustainable livelihoods)

- What effect do campaigning NGOs have on the vulnerability context of urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe?
- What effect do campaigning NGOs have on policies, institutions, and processes to enhance sustainable livelihoods in urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe?
- What effect do campaigning NGOs have on urban and rural communities' livelihood strategies in Zimbabwe?
- What effect do NGOs have on urban and rural communities' livelihood assets in Zimbabwe?
- What effect do NGOs have on the sustenance of livelihood outcomes in urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe?

4. Relating to objective 4 (Recommendations for improvement)

- Based on the study's findings, what are the key recommendations for improving campaigning NGOs' work to enhance the sustainability and resilience of urban and rural communities' livelihoods in Zimbabwe?
- How can campaigning NGOs better address the identified livelihood issues and challenges, particularly in relation to the vulnerability context, policy influence, livelihood strategies, asset building, and the sustenance of outcomes?

5. Relating to objective 5 (Context-specific model)

- What are the key elements of a context-specific model for enhancing sustainable livelihoods that is tailored to the work of campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe?
- How can this model be applied in practice to strengthen the impact of campaigning NGOs in both urban and rural communities?

These research questions guided the data collection and analysis process, ensuring a comprehensive and in-depth examination of the nexus between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. They provided a framework for exploring the multifaceted dimensions of this relationship, from the identification of livelihood challenges to the evaluation of NGO strategies and their impact on community well-being. The answers to these questions, presented in chapters six, seven and eight, form the basis for the recommendations and the proposed model for strengthening the role of campaigning NGOs in fostering sustainable livelihoods, as discussed in chapter nine.

1.5 Rationale for the study

This study was motivated by a critical need to bridge theoretical and empirical gaps regarding the effectiveness of campaigning NGOs in fostering sustainable livelihoods, particularly within challenging socio-political contexts. While a growing body of literature acknowledges the shift from traditional service delivery to advocacy-focused NGO work (Cascant-Sempere 2017; Banks and Bukenya 2022) and the theoretical potential of campaigning to achieve far-reaching, sustainable change (Chapman and Fisher 2000; Hickey and Mitlin 2004), there has been a dearth of rigorous research demonstrating a direct link between campaigning interventions and tangible, lasting improvements in community well-being, especially measured against the SLF. Zimbabwe, with its complex history, economic volatility, constrained civic space (Dendere and Taodzera 2023), and diverse livelihood challenges, presents a crucial case study. This study makes significant contributions to the multiple academic disciplines concerned with sustainable development, particularly in understanding the role of campaigning NGOs in promoting sustainable livelihoods in challenging environments. By focusing on the Zimbabwean context, the research provides a nuanced

analysis of how these organisations navigate a complex socio-political landscape and strive to build community resilience and well-being. The significance of this study lies in its theoretical, practical, and empirical contributions, which are outlined in this section.

1.5.1 Theoretical contributions

This study advances the theoretical understanding of the relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods, particularly in contexts marked by political and economic instability. Firstly, it goes beyond simplistic assessments of NGO impact, going into the complexities of their interventions and the often-unintended consequences of their work. By critically examining the nexus between advocacy efforts and tangible livelihood outcomes, the study challenges conventional assumptions about the effectiveness of campaigning NGOs and highlights the need for a more nuanced and context-sensitive approach.

Secondly, the study offers an innovative integration of two prominent theoretical frameworks—the SLF and the PPT in its construction of the Campaigning NGOs Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (CNGO-SLF). This unique synthesis allows for a more holistic analysis of the factors that shape livelihood outcomes, bridging the gap between the SLF’s focus on community-level assets and vulnerabilities and the PPT’s emphasis on political opportunities, mobilisation structures, and framing processes. By combining these lenses, the research provides a more comprehensive understanding of how campaigning NGOs operate within and seek to influence the broader political economy.

Thirdly, the study addresses the limitations of the traditional SLF by explicitly incorporating considerations of power, politics, and context. The development of the Campaigning NGOs Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (CNGO-SLF) represents a significant theoretical contribution. This new model moves beyond the traditional five capitals to include “Relational Power” as a distinct asset, acknowledging the crucial role of power dynamics in shaping access to and control over resources in a contested political space. Furthermore, the CNGO-SLF emphasises the “politics of power, influence, and access” as a core component, highlighting the importance of understanding and engaging with formal and informal institutions, policies, and governance structures which are often marred with patronage. The “fluid livelihoods” component further enhances the framework’s applicability to dynamic contexts like Zimbabwe, recognising the constantly evolving nature of livelihoods and the need for adaptive and responsive interventions. This context-specific model offers a more robust and relevant tool for analysing and strengthening the work of campaigning NGOs in challenging environments, such as Zimbabwe.

1.5.2 Practical contributions

The findings of this study have significant practical implications for campaigning NGOs, policymakers, communities, and funding partners. The research provides a nuanced understanding of community perspectives on NGO interventions, highlighting areas where NGO efforts are perceived as effective, as well as areas where there is a disconnect between NGO intentions and community experiences. This understanding informs more participatory and community-cantered approaches to program design and implementation, ensuring that interventions are aligned with local needs and priorities. Moreover, it helps NGOs to better communicate the impact of their advocacy work to communities, bridging the gap between macro-level policy changes and tangible improvements in people's lives.

The study offers concrete recommendations for improving NGO programming and fostering more sustainable livelihood outcomes. The recommendations for NGOs to strengthen the nexus between advocacy and tangible community benefits, ensure sustained engagement, enhance inclusivity, and address power dynamics provide a practical roadmap for enhancing the effectiveness of their interventions. The study also provides specific recommendations for communities, the government of Zimbabwe, and NGO funding partners, emphasising the importance of collaboration, accountability, and long-term commitment to sustainable development. By adopting the proposed CNGO-SLF, campaigning NGOs can enhance their strategic planning, program design, and evaluation processes, ensuring that their interventions are more contextually appropriate, responsive to community needs, and ultimately more effective in promoting sustainable livelihoods.

1.5.3 Empirical contributions

This study makes a valuable empirical contribution by filling a critical research gap in the understanding of community perspectives on the work of campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe. While existing literature often focuses on service delivery NGOs and general NGO perspectives or relies on quantitative indicators of "impact" often as demanded by donors, this research provides a qualitative, in-depth exploration of how communities perceive and experience the interventions of these organisations. By giving voice to the intended beneficiaries of NGO campaigns, the study offers a more nuanced and grounded understanding of the complex relationship between advocacy efforts and livelihood outcomes. The focus group discussions across six diverse districts provided a rich dataset that has captured the heterogeneity of community experiences and highlights the importance of context-specific approaches.

Furthermore, the focus on Zimbabwe provides valuable insights into the role of campaigning NGOs in a challenging and rapidly changing socio-political context. Zimbabwe's unique

history, marked by economic turmoil, political contestation, and a shrinking civic space, offers a critical case study for understanding how NGOs navigate complex environments and strive to promote sustainable livelihoods amidst complex adversities. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by civil society actors in the Southern African region and beyond, offering lessons that can inform development practice in other contexts marked by political and economic instability. By grounding the analysis in the specificities of the Zimbabwean context, the study adds depth and nuances to the broader literature on NGOs, sustainable livelihoods, and development in Africa.

1.6 Research methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach, utilising a multiple-case study design to explore the complex relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. A qualitative approach was chosen for its strength in providing in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural settings, capturing the nuanced perspectives and experiences of individuals and groups (Denzin and Lincoln 2011; Tisdell, Merriam and Stuckey-Peyrot 2024). The multiple-case study design, focusing on AAZ, ZELA, and ZIMCDD, allowed for a comparative analysis of NGO strategies, interventions, and impacts across different thematic areas and organisational contexts as recommended by Yin (2009).

Data collection involved a triangulation of methods to ensure a comprehensive and robust dataset. Primary data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 27 key informants, including NGO staff members (at management and project implementation levels) and actively engaged campaigners affiliated with the selected organisations. Focus group discussions were conducted with 180 community members across six districts (Harare Central, Harare Rural, Epworth, Chitungwiza, Binga, and Nkayi), representing both urban and rural contexts and areas where the selected NGOs have a significant presence. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, targeting individuals with direct experience and knowledge of the NGOs' work and its impact on livelihoods (Patton 2002; Staller 2021). Secondary data were collected through a review of relevant literature, including academic publications, NGO reports, government documents, and media articles.

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This iterative process involved familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and refining them, and defining and naming the core themes that emerged. NVivo qualitative data analysis software facilitated the organisation, coding, and analysis of the data, ensuring a rigorous and systematic approach.

The study prioritised the trustworthiness of its findings. Following Lincoln (1985) and Connelly (2016), trustworthiness was addressed through multiple strategies: credibility was enhanced through triangulation of data sources and member checking; transferability was addressed through detailed descriptions of the research context; dependability was ensured through a detailed audit trail of the research process; and confirmability was supported by a transparent data analysis process and the use of NVivo software.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Durban University of Technology's Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC). Informed consent was secured from all participants, and measures were taken to ensure confidentiality, anonymity, and the minimisation of harm. The researcher also engaged in reflexivity, acknowledging and mitigating potential biases throughout the research process.

The study acknowledges certain delimitations, including the focus on campaigning NGOs (excluding service-delivery organisations), the selection of three specific NGOs, the geographical focus on six districts within Zimbabwe, and the primary reliance on qualitative data. Limitations include the potential for researcher bias, the reliance on self-reported data, and the inherent challenges of attributing specific livelihood outcomes solely to NGO interventions. These limitations and delimitations are discussed in greater detail in chapter five. While the findings are not statistically generalisable, they offer rich, context-specific insights into the complex dynamics between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. A full discussion of the research methodology, including sampling procedures, data collection instruments, ethical considerations, and the data analysis process, is provided in chapter five.

1.7 Definition of key terms

To ensure clarity and consistency throughout this study, the key terms are defined as follows:

- **Livelihood:** This encompasses the capabilities, assets (material and social resources), and activities required for a means of living (Scoones 1998: 5). According to (Ellis 2000: 3), a livelihood includes the assets (human, natural, social, physical, and financial capitals), the activities, and the access to these activities (mediated by institutions and social relations) necessary for a means of living. A livelihood's primary purpose is to earn an income and sustain a better life (Natarajan *et al.* 2022: 2).
- **Sustainable livelihoods:** This concept refers to the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources), and activities required for a means of living that can withstand and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation

(Scoones 1998: 5; Natarajan *et al.* 2022: 2). A livelihood is considered sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, without undermining the natural resource base (Carney 1998). It emphasises the need for a holistic approach to poverty reduction—one that considers the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of well-being, and that is resilient in the face of external shocks and stresses (Scoones 2015). The term is further operationalised by the SLF, which is discussed in detail in chapter two.

- Campaigning NGOs: These are formal, non-profit, non-governmental organisations that primarily engage in advocacy and campaigning activities to influence public policy, raise awareness, and mobilise support for social, economic, and environmental change (Willems 2019). They are distinct from service delivery NGOs, although the lines between the two can sometimes blur in practice (Peter Willems 2011; Cascant-Sempere 2022). In the context of this study, campaigning NGOs are understood as formal, independent social organisations that mainly advocate for change at various levels (local, national, international) using a mix of strategies with a focus on public engagement and influencing policy and practices across government, businesses, civil society, and other social actors.
- Vulnerability context: This term refers to the external environment in which people exist and that affects their livelihoods (Orhon, Akcakaya and Dalkılıç 2020: 4). It encompasses the trends, shocks, and seasonality that can impact livelihood assets and strategies. These can include economic downturns, climate change impacts, natural disasters, conflict, and policy changes, among others. It is one of the core components of the SLF, highlighting the dynamic and often unpredictable factors that can undermine livelihood security (Scoones 1998).
- Livelihood assets/capitals: these are the resources upon which people draw to build their livelihoods. The SLF identifies five core capitals: human capital (skills, knowledge, health, and the ability to labour), social capital (networks, relationships of trust, and memberships in groups), natural capital (natural resources like land, water, and forests), physical capital (infrastructure, tools, and technology), and financial capital (savings, credit, and income) (Chambers and Conway 1992; Scoones 1998; Natarajan *et al.* 2022). This study's proposed CNGO-SLF adds a sixth capital—relational power, which refers to the ability of individuals and groups to influence decision-making processes and shape the institutions and policies that affect their lives.
- Livelihood strategies: These are the range of activities and choices that people make in order to achieve their livelihood goals (Ojong 2011: 9). Livelihood strategies often

involve a combination of activities and may include diversification (engaging in multiple activities), intensification (increasing inputs or effort in a particular activity), or migration (moving to seek opportunities elsewhere), among others (Nguyen Dang and Lebailly 2011: 3).

- Political opportunity structure (POS): This concept, drawn from social movement theory, refers to the features of the political environment that either encourage or discourage collective action and advocacy (Meyer 2004; Bracey 2015). It encompasses factors such as the degree of openness or closure in the political system, the stability or instability of political alignments, the presence or absence of elite allies, and the state's capacity and propensity for repression (Bracey 2016). POS significantly influences the strategies and effectiveness of campaigning NGOs (van der Pas 2022: 17).
- Repertoires of contention: This term, coined by Tilly (2010), describes the set of tactics and methods used by social movements and advocacy groups, including NGOs, to advance their claims and challenge existing power structures. Repertoires of contention can include protests, demonstrations, boycotts, lobbying, litigation, media campaigns, and other forms of collective action.
- Framing: This refers to the process by which NGOs and other actors strategically construct and communicate their messages to influence public perception and understanding of an issue (van Peel 2022: 8). Framing involves selecting certain aspects of a problem, defining its causes and consequences, and proposing specific solutions (Colín Ramírez 2022: 28). Effective framing can shape public discourse, mobilise support, and influence policy debates (Risley 2011; Mendelsohn *et al.* 2024).
- Advocacy: This encompasses a range of activities aimed at influencing public policy and decision-making processes (Gurung 2014: 7). It can involve lobbying policymakers, conducting research and analysis, raising public awareness, building coalitions, and engaging in public campaigns to promote social, economic, or environmental change.
- Campaigning Particularly in the context of NGOs, refers strategic and organised effort aimed at achieving specific social, political, or environmental change by influencing public opinion, policy decisions, and societal norms. It involves a planned series of actions (Saunders and Roth 2019) centred around a particular issue or cause, utilising diverse repertoires of contention (Tilly 2010) that includes tactics such as lobbying, public demonstrations, media advocacy, research, and community mobilisation (Hadden and Jasny 2019). Unlike general advocacy, campaigning is typically more focused and time-bound, with clearly defined objectives and target audiences

(Klugman 2011; Deveau 2018). The goal is to exert pressure on governments, corporations, or other socio-economic actors to alter their policies and practices while simultaneously shifting public attitudes and behaviours to foster a more just and sustainable society.

These definitions provide a common vocabulary for understanding the key concepts and frameworks employed throughout this study. They also serve as a foundation for analysing the complex dynamics between campaigning NGOs and the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods in the Zimbabwean context.

1.8 Overview of chapters

This study is structured into nine chapters, each contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the role of campaigning NGOs in promoting sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. The chapters are as follows:

- Chapter One: Introduction – This introductory chapter sets the stage for the study by providing background information on sustainable livelihoods, the rise of campaigning NGOs in the specific Zimbabwean context. It outlines the research problem, the gap between NGO advocacy and tangible community impact, and highlights the importance of understanding community perspectives. The chapter presents the study's aim and objectives, research questions, research methodology, rationale of the study, and defines the key terms used throughout the study.
- Chapter Two: Theoretical and conceptual foundations: Public Administration, NGOs, and sustainable livelihoods – This chapter establishes the disciplinary and theoretical foundations of the study. It grounds the research within the principles of New Public Administration, focusing on social equity and responsiveness as key governance outcomes. The chapter then explores the rise of campaigning NGOs as significant political actors within a multi-actor governance landscape and introduces the two primary analytical lenses for the study: the Political Process Theory (PPT) to analyse their strategies, and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) to define and assess the developmental goal. After critically examining the limitations of these frameworks when applied in isolation, the chapter culminates in the presentation of a new, integrated model—the Campaigning NGOs Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (CNGO-SLF)—which serves as the primary analytical tool for the remainder of the thesis.
- Chapter Three: Campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods: Global and regional perspectives – This chapter examines the broader context of campaigning NGOs,

exploring their evolution, roles, and impact on the global stage. It explores the debates surrounding the definition, legitimacy, and effectiveness of these organisations, drawing on international literature and case studies. The chapter also discusses the power dynamics between global and local NGOs and examines the challenges and critiques faced by campaigning NGOs operating at the international level. The chapter concludes with a focus on campaigning NGOs in Africa, setting the stage for the subsequent focus on Zimbabwe.

- Chapter Four: Campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe – This chapter narrows the focus to the Zimbabwean context, providing an in-depth analysis of the socio-political and economic landscape in which campaigning NGOs operate. It examines the specific challenges to sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe, including poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, and political repression. The chapter introduces the three case study NGOs—AAZ, ZELA, and ZIMCodd—and outlines their respective intentions, thematic focus areas, and operational strategies. It also explores the legal and regulatory framework governing NGOs in Zimbabwe, highlighting the constraints and opportunities within the existing civic space.
- Chapter Five: Research methodology – This chapter details the research design and methodology employed in the study. It outlines the ontological and epistemological stances guiding the research, justifying the choice of a qualitative, multiple-case study approach. The chapter describes the population and sampling techniques, data collection methods (semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis), and the data analysis process, which utilised thematic analysis supported by NVivo software. It also addresses ethical considerations, delimitations of the study, and strategies for ensuring the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings.
- Chapter Six: Livelihood issues targeted by campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe – This chapter presents the first set of empirical findings, focusing on the key livelihood issues addressed by the three case study NGOs. It examines the multifaceted nature of these issues, their underlying causes, and their variation between urban and rural communities. The chapter analyses how NGOs identify and prioritise these issues, highlighting their understanding of the vulnerability contexts and the interconnectedness of social, economic, political, and environmental factors. The chapter concludes by analysing the programmatic challenges faced by NGOs in their work, which are also in themselves livelihood issues for the communities these NGOs aim to serve.
- Chapter Seven: Strategies of campaigning NGOs in pursuit of sustainable livelihoods – This chapter explores the diverse strategies employed by the three case study NGOs

to navigate the POS in Zimbabwe. It examines how they mobilise resources, frame livelihood issues, and engage in various repertoires of contention, including advocacy, lobbying, litigation, community mobilisation, and the development of alternative development models. The chapter analyses the factors influencing the choice of strategies and highlights the dynamic and adaptive nature of NGO interventions.

- Chapter Eight: The Influence of Campaigning NGOs' work on communities' attainment of sustainable livelihoods – This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis of the research findings, examining the effect of campaigning NGOs on sustainable livelihoods from both the perspectives of the NGOs and the communities they serve. It explores the complex relationship between NGO interventions and community experiences, highlighting areas of convergence and divergence. The chapter analyses the findings through the lens of the five research questions addressing the third objective of the study, focusing on the NGOs' influence on vulnerability, policies, institutions and processes, livelihood strategies, livelihood assets, and the sustenance of livelihood outcomes.
- Chapter Nine: Discussion of findings, recommendations, and conclusions. This concluding chapter synthesises the key findings of the study, discussing their implications for theory, policy, and practice. It critically reflects on the role of campaigning NGOs in quest for the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe, highlighting both their contributions and limitations. The chapter presents the refined CNGO-SLF model, incorporating the insights generated from the research. It then offers a set of recommendations for campaigning NGOs, communities, the Zimbabwean government, and funding partners of campaigning NGOs, aiming to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of NGO interventions. The chapter concludes by highlighting the study's contributions to knowledge, suggesting areas for future research, and making a final case for the vital role of campaigning NGOs in promoting sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe and other similar contexts.

1.9 Conclusion

This introductory chapter has established the foundation for an in-depth exploration of the complex relationship between campaigning NGOs and the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. It has situated the study within the broader global context of sustainable development, highlighting the evolving role of NGOs, and particularly, the rise of campaigning organisations focused on advocacy, policy influencing, and social mobilisation. The chapter has underscored the multifaceted livelihood challenges faced by communities in Zimbabwe, exacerbated by a history of economic instability, political contestation, and environmental

vulnerabilities. Against this backdrop, the study focuses on three prominent campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe—AAZ, ZELA, and ZIMCODD—examining their intentions, strategies, and interventions through the lens of sustainable livelihoods.

This chapter set the stage for a thorough investigation into how these organisations affect the context of vulnerability, policies, livelihood strategies, assets, and ultimately the maintenance of livelihood outcomes in both urban and rural communities. It did this by stating a clear research aim, objectives, and specific research questions. The integration of the SLF and the PPT provides a robust theoretical foundation.

This study's significance lies in its potential to bridge the gap between advocacy efforts and tangible, sustainable improvements in the lives of Zimbabweans. By examining both NGO perspectives and community experiences, the research was aimed at generating a nuanced understanding of the factors that contribute to successful interventions, as well as the limitations and challenges inherent in the campaigning NGO model. The findings will not only inform the work of NGOs and policymakers in Zimbabwe but also contribute to the broader scholarly discourse on sustainable development, the role of civil society in challenging environments, and the complexities of fostering community resilience.

Having established the critical gap in understanding the nexus between campaigning NGO advocacy and tangible livelihood improvements in Zimbabwe, this study will now proceed to build the analytical framework required for this investigation. Before delving into the empirical context of NGO work in Zimbabwe and globally, it is first necessary to establish the theoretical and conceptual foundations upon which this research is built. Therefore, the following chapter, will ground the study within the discipline of Public Administration, explore the evolution of NGOs as political actors, and critically examine the key theoretical tools—the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) and Political Process Theory (PPT). This will culminate in the presentation of the integrated framework used to guide the subsequent analysis.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS: PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, NGOS, AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter establishes the disciplinary, conceptual, and theoretical foundations for the study. It serves to contextualise the research within the field of Public Administration, explore the evolving role of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) as key governance actors, and build a comprehensive theoretical framework for analysing the nexus between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods. The chapter argues that understanding the impact of campaigning NGOs on sustainable livelihoods, particularly within politically contested spaces, requires a politically informed lens that traditional development frameworks, when used in isolation, often lack. By systematically reviewing and critiquing existing theories, this chapter constructs the analytical scaffold upon which the empirical investigation of this thesis is built.

To achieve this, the chapter follows a “funnel approach,” moving from broad disciplinary principles to the specific analytical tools required for this research. It begins by grounding the study in the principles of New Public Administration, a school of thought that emphasises social equity, citizen participation, and state responsiveness as core values of governance. From this broad disciplinary anchor, the discussion narrows to the dynamics of multi-actor governance and the strategic role of campaigning NGOs as political actors engaged in policy advocacy. It then introduces and critically examines the two primary analytical frameworks that inform this study—the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), which defines the developmental goal, and the Political Process Theory (PPT), which explains the strategic pursuit of that goal.

The central argument of this chapter is that a comprehensive understanding of the nexus between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in a context like Zimbabwe necessitates an integrated theoretical approach. Neither the SLF’s focus on assets and vulnerabilities nor the PPT’s focus on political strategy is sufficient on its own. Therefore, this chapter culminates in the presentation of a new, integrated framework—the Campaigning NGOs Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (CNGO-SLF)—conceptually designed to bridge the analytical gaps identified in existing models and provide a robust tool for this specific research purpose. This chapter is thus structured to build a deliberate intellectual argument, starting with the broad field of public service and progressively focusing on the specific theories and concepts that illuminate the unique intersection of advocacy, governance, and development in Zimbabwe.

2.2 Grounding the study in public administration

This study, while focused on Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), is fundamentally grounded in the discipline of Public Administration. The core of the research—examining how organisations influence the conditions for sustainable livelihoods—directly engages with central questions of how public services are managed, how public policy is implemented, and how the “public good” is achieved in a complex, multi-actor environment. By analysing the strategies and impacts of campaigning NGOs, this research explores an essential facet of contemporary governance, where non-state actors increasingly perform roles and influence outcomes traditionally associated with the state.

2.2.1 Core tenets of public administration

At its historical and conceptual core, Public Administration is the field of inquiry and practice concerned with the implementation of public policy and the management of government

activities to serve the collective needs of a society (Shafritz *et al.* 2022). As a discipline, it emerged from the recognition that the effective execution of state functions required a systematic approach, distinct from the political processes of law-making. Woodrow Wilson's seminal 1887 essay, "The Study of Administration," famously articulated this politics-administration dichotomy, arguing for a professionalised and business-like public service focused on efficiently and economically carrying out the will of the state (Wilson 1887). This foundational view positioned public administration as the action-oriented arm of governance, responsible for translating political decisions and legal mandates into the tangible services and outcomes that shape citizens' daily lives, from infrastructure and public safety to education and healthcare (Rosenbloom, Kravchuk and Clerkin 2009).

While the strict separation of politics and administration has been extensively debated and largely revised, the ultimate and enduring goal of public administration remains the achievement of the "public good". This concept, though central, is inherently normative and contested; it refers to the shared values and interests that a community identifies as essential for its collective well-being, security, and prosperity (Bozeman 2007; O'Flynn 2021). The "public good" is not a static or universal set of outputs but a value-laden construct that evolves with societal norms and political discourse (Moore 1997; Brieger, De Clercq and Meynhardt 2021). In a developmental context, achieving the public good is not just about maintaining administrative order or providing basic infrastructure. It is fundamentally about creating an enabling environment where all citizens, particularly the most vulnerable, have the opportunity to lead dignified, secure, and resilient lives (Grindle 2004; Keping 2018). This involves ensuring equitable access to resources, protecting fundamental rights, and creating inclusive institutions—goals that directly align with international development agendas like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Fukuda-Parr 2016). Consequently, the effectiveness of public administration can be measured by its success in creating and sustaining the conditions necessary for its citizens to flourish.

2.2.2 The evolution to New Public Administration (NPA)

The traditional model of Public Administration, heavily influenced by Weberian ideals of bureaucracy which prioritised efficiency, neutrality, and hierarchical control (Weber 1978; Cockerham 2015), faced a profound intellectual and practical challenge in the mid-20th century. The social and political turmoil of the late 1960s and 1970s, particularly in the United States, exposed the inadequacies of a value-neutral, efficiency-driven administrative state in addressing deep-seated societal problems like poverty, racial inequality, and urban decay (Henry 2015). This discontent culminated in the first Minnowbrook Conference in 1968, a pivotal event that gave rise to the New Public Administration (NPA) movement (Cepiku, Costumato and Mastrodascio 2024). NPA represented a paradigm shift, rejecting the long-held politics-administration dichotomy and arguing that public administrators could not and should not be detached from the social and political consequences of their actions.

NPA scholars and practitioners, led by figures like H. George Frederickson (1971, 1980), advocated for a proactive and normative approach to public service (Valencich 2024). They argued that the pursuit of efficiency without a moral compass was insufficient and often detrimental to the public good. Instead, NPA championed a new set of core values intended to make public administration more relevant and just. Chief among these was social equity, the principle that public services should be administered in a way that actively reduces economic and social disparities and promotes fairness for all citizens, especially the most disadvantaged (Frederickson, 1971). This was a direct challenge to the traditional focus on universal, but often inequitable, service delivery. Complementing this was a strong emphasis on citizen participation, advocating for moving away from top-down, expert-driven models towards more inclusive processes that involve citizens in the decisions that affect their lives

(Denhardt and Denhardt 2015). This in turn required greater responsiveness from public institutions, ensuring they were attuned to the needs and demands of the public rather than just the internal logic of the bureaucracy. The legacy of NPA continues to influence contemporary public service, particularly through its emphasis on a value-laden administration where public managers are encouraged to use their discretion to advance justice and equity (Cepiku, Costumato and Mastrodascio 2024; Valencich 2024).

This paradigm shift is central to the present study. The work of campaigning NGOs, which champion the rights of the marginalised, advocate for equitable resource distribution, and demand greater government responsiveness, aligns directly with the core tenets of NPA. When these organisations challenge discriminatory policies or amplify the voices of excluded communities, they are, in effect, acting as external agents pushing the state and other governance actors to adhere more closely to the principles of New Public Administration. The pursuit of sustainable livelihoods, as a development objective, can be seen as a tangible and modern expression of NPA's commitment to social equity. A sustainable livelihood is, by definition, one that is equitable, resilient, and allows for dignity and participation—precisely the outcomes envisioned by the NPA movement. Therefore, analysing the strategies and impacts of these NGOs provides a critical lens through which to examine the ongoing struggle for a more equitable and participatory form of public administration in practice.

2.2.3 Sustainable livelihoods as a public administration outcome

This study reframes the concept of sustainable livelihoods not just as a development goal pursued by external actors like NGOs, but as a key indicator of effective and equitable public administration. When the state and its associated governance structures function correctly, they create the institutional and policy environment that enables citizens to build secure and resilient livelihoods (Meyer and Auriacombe 2019). Effective public administration manifests in the reliable provision of public services (health, education), the protection of property and resource rights, the maintenance of stable economic conditions, and the establishment of social safety nets—all of which are fundamental components of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) (Scoones 1998).

Conversely, the prevalence of precarious livelihoods, high vulnerability to shocks, and systemic poverty, as seen in the Zimbabwean context, can be interpreted as a symptom of public administration deficits. Therefore, when campaigning NGOs advocate for changes in policies affecting land rights, social protection, or natural resource management, they are not simply undertaking “development projects”; they are engaging directly in the sphere of public administration. They are highlighting failures in the existing administrative system and advocating for reforms that would allow it to better achieve its core purpose: attaining the public good, realised here as the attainment of sustainable livelihoods for all citizens.

2.3 Non-state actors in governance: The rise of the campaigning NGO

The traditional, state-centric model of Public Administration has undergone a significant transformation over the past few decades. The idea of the state as the sole provider of public goods and the exclusive driver of development has given way to a more complex and dynamic understanding of governance. This section explores this shift, focusing on the emergence of non-state actors, particularly Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), as central players in the governance. It details the strategic evolution of NGOs from service providers to political actors and defines the “campaigning NGO” as a key focus of this study.

2.3.1 The shifting development discourse and multi-actor governance

The late 20th and early 21st centuries witnessed a shift in the understanding of how development is achieved and how societies are governed. The traditional, state-centric model of Public Administration, which positioned the state as the sole provider of public goods and the exclusive driver of development, has given way to a more complex and dynamic understanding of governance. The rise of globalisation, the push for democratisation, and the perceived failures of state-led development models in many parts of the world led to a growing recognition that the state, while crucial, is not the only actor in the governance arena (Stoker 1998; Peters and Pierre 2020). This has given rise to the concept of multi-actor governance, which acknowledges the intricate web of relationships between the state, the private sector, and civil society in shaping policy, delivering services, and addressing complex societal challenges (Koopmans *et al.* 2018; Sørensen 2022).

In this multi-actor set up, non-state actors, including Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), are no longer seen as peripheral entities but as integral components of the governance process (Islam and Jahan 2025). They play a variety of roles, from complementing state efforts in service delivery to holding governments accountable, promoting citizen participation, and advocating for policy change (Lewis 2020). This is particularly true in the Global South, where NGOs often step in to fill gaps in public service provision and act as a voice for marginalised communities. This increased involvement has led some to describe NGOs as “shadow states” (Avant and Hauffer 2009) or the accusation of taking power and authority from the state (Shivji 2006), highlighting their significant, and sometimes controversial, role in policy administration and development work.

2.3.2 NGOs’ strategic shift from service delivery to campaigning

Within the broader evolution of the NGO sector, a significant strategic shift has occurred: the move from a primary focus on direct service delivery to an increasing emphasis on advocacy and campaigning (Mitlin, Hickey and Bebbington 2007; Cascant-Sempere 2022). While traditional development NGOs focused on providing tangible goods and services—such as healthcare, education, and food aid—a growing number of organisations now prioritise influencing the policies and structures that create the need for such services in the first place. This transition reflects a fundamental re-evaluation of how to achieve lasting social change and marks a move from treating the symptoms of poverty to addressing its root causes as further discussed in chapter three.

This strategic shift is driven by several key factors and a compelling theoretical rationale. First, scholars and practitioners began to question the long-term effectiveness and scalability of small-scale service delivery projects. Chapman and Fisher (2000), in their influential work, argued that campaigning, by targeting policy change, could produce results that benefit a much larger population than targeted development interventions, which are often confined to specific villages or communities. For example, a successful campaign for a national policy on free primary education could impact millions of children, whereas a service-delivery NGO might only be able to build a few schools.

Second, Hickey and Mitlin (2004) contended that advocacy is often more cost-effective and leads to more sustainable change. Direct service provision can be resource-intensive and often creates a dependency that collapses once project funding ceases. In contrast, a change in law or public policy is institutionalised and, in theory, becomes a permanent feature of the governance landscape, enforced by the state. This approach aims to create an enabling environment where communities can claim their rights and access services from the state, rather than relying on the temporary support of an external organisation.

The funding landscape has also played a crucial role in accelerating this transition. Major donors, recognising the limitations of traditional aid models, have increasingly prioritised funding for advocacy, governance, and rights-based approaches (van Wessel and Hilhorst 2015). This has incentivised many NGOs, including those with a history of service delivery, to reorient their strategies towards campaigning to align with available funding streams and donor expectations.

This evolution represents a fundamental change in how NGOs engage with Public Administration. Instead of acting as parallel or complementary service providers—essentially performing functions that might otherwise be carried out by the state—they are now actively seeking to *change the policies* that govern the public sector itself. They are moving from a role of implementation to one of influence, engaging directly with the political and administrative processes that shape the lives of the communities they serve. This positions them not as apolitical development partners, but as strategic actors within the public sphere, aiming to alter the very rules by which public administration operates.

2.3.3 The campaigning NGO as a political actor

This strategic shift from service delivery to advocacy has firmly positioned the campaigning NGO as a political actor. A campaigning NGO can be defined as a formal, non-profit, non-governmental organisation that primarily engages in advocacy and public engagement to influence policies, practices, and social norms as will further be defined in chapter three. Their core function is to challenge existing power structures, raise public awareness, and mobilise support for social, economic, and environmental change. Unlike traditional service delivery NGOs, whose work can often be framed as complementary to the state and technically focused, the work of campaigning NGOs is inherently political.

They operate within the contested terrain of policy debates, power struggles, and competing interests, seeking to alter the distribution of resources and opportunities within society—a fundamentally political endeavour. Their success depends not only on their technical expertise but also on their ability to navigate complex political landscapes, build coalitions, and effectively communicate their messages to diverse audiences. Understanding the strategies and tactics employed by these political actors is therefore crucial for analysing their role in fostering sustainable livelihoods. This study, by focusing on campaigning NGOs, examines this political dimension of development, setting the stage for a detailed examination of their strategies in the chapters that follows.

2.4 The politics of administration: Policy advocacy and the quest for influence

The shift of NGOs towards advocacy fundamentally alters their relationship with the state and situates them squarely within the realm of politics. Public Administration is not a neutral, technical exercise; it is an arena of competing values, interests, and power dynamics (Waldo 1955). When campaigning NGOs seek to influence policy, they are not just offering suggestions; they are participating in the political process of defining public problems and shaping administrative outcomes. This section explores how NGOs function as political actors and introduces the Political Process Theory (PPT) as the primary theoretical lens for analysing their strategies of influence.

2.4.1 NGOs as policy entrepreneurs

In the complex and often crowded world of policymaking, issues do not automatically command the attention of government officials. They must be actively promoted by dedicated proponents who invest significant resources—time, energy, reputation, and finances—to

highlight a particular problem and advocate for a specific solution. John Kingdon (1984), in his influential work on agenda-setting, labels these actors “policy entrepreneurs.” This study posits that campaigning NGOs are quintessential examples of modern policy entrepreneurs. They function by identifying issues overlooked or ignored by the formal political system, framing them as pressing public problems, and persistently pushing for their inclusion on the policy agenda. Their work involves more than mere protest; it is a strategic and entrepreneurial effort to alter the priorities of the administrative state and influence the allocation of public resources and attention.

The entrepreneurial function of campaigning NGOs manifests in two critical, often simultaneous, activities: defining problems and proposing viable solutions. Firstly, these organisations actively work to influence Kingdon’s (1984) “problem stream” by constructing and framing certain conditions as urgent public crises requiring state intervention. Through rigorous research, data analysis, and strategic communication, NGOs transform abstract or technical issues into compelling public narratives. For instance, an issue like national debt is framed by an organisation like ZIMCODD not as a mere balance-of-payments concern, but as a profound social justice problem that directly impacts the funding of essential public services like healthcare and education, thereby affecting the livelihoods of ordinary citizens. Secondly, effective policy entrepreneurs do not simply identify problems; they come armed with solutions to influence the “policy stream.” Campaigning NGOs invest in developing credible and technically sound policy alternatives, drafting model legislation (such as ZELA’s model policy on Artisanal and Small-scale Mining), and presenting evidence-based recommendations that demonstrate the feasibility of their proposed course of action (Stone 2002). This positions them as credible, solution-oriented actors rather than simply critics, enhancing their legitimacy in the eyes of policymakers and the public.

Finally, the success of a policy entrepreneur hinges on their ability to navigate the “political stream” by building support and seizing opportunities. Policy entrepreneurs understand that influence is amplified through collective action and that no single actor can typically force a policy change alone. Consequently, campaigning NGOs work diligently to build broad advocacy coalitions (Gaventa and Mayo 2009; Scott 2022), that bring together other civil society organisations, social movements, academic institutions, and, crucially, reform-minded “insider activists” or “policy champions” within state structures (Yeatman 2020). By forging these alliances, they create a united front, demonstrate widespread support for their cause, and increase the political cost of inaction for decision-makers (Diani, 2003). By performing these functions—defining problems, proposing solutions, and building coalitions—campaigning NGOs act as crucial catalysts, working to align the problem, policy, and political streams to open a “policy window” (Kingdon 1984) and ensure their issues are not only heard but also formally acted upon within the administrative and political systems.

2.4.2 Analysing strategies of influence: The Political Process Theory (PPT)

To understand *how* campaigning NGOs operate as political actors and policy entrepreneurs, this study employs the Political Process Theory (PPT) as its primary analytical tool. While the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) provides a crucial lens for understanding community needs and assets (the “what”), PPT offers the necessary framework for analysing the “how” of achieving transformative change. Originating from the study of social movements, PPT has emerged as a dominant framework for explaining the dynamics of collective action and its interaction with the broader political environment (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2009; Rutland 2013; Tarrow 2022). Though initially developed to explain the rise and impact of social movements, its applicability to the strategic work of campaigning NGOs is well-established (McCauley 2016; Cascant-Sempere 2017). At its core, PPT emphasises that the success of

such groups is not solely dependent on their grievances but on the strategic interplay between the political opportunities available to them, the mobilising structures they can command, and the cognitive frames they construct to inspire action (Meyer 2004; Rutland 2013). This contextual understanding is crucial for this study, as it provides the theoretical apparatus to analyse the dynamics that enable and constrain Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs in their efforts to influence the conditions for sustainable livelihoods.

The PPT is a multifaceted framework that illuminates the dynamic interplay of factors influencing the effectiveness of campaigning NGOs. Central to this theory are four key components. First is the Political Opportunity Structure (POS), which refers to the consistent—but not necessarily formal or permanent—dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for collective action by affecting expectations for success or failure (Meyer 2004; Tarrow 2022). These are the “windows of possibility” that arise, creating a more or less conducive environment for social change (Bracey 2016; Gardbaum 2020). Such opportunities can manifest in various forms, such as the introduction of new legislation, divisions among political elites, shifts in public opinion, or crises that destabilise the status quo (Caren 2007). For this study, the POS lens is essential for examining how the selected NGOs strategically identify and exploit these windows—however narrow—to advance their agendas within Zimbabwe’s generally restrictive political landscape.

Leveraging political opportunities, however, requires organisational capacity, which is captured by the second component: Mobilising Structures. These are the formal and informal resources that an organisation can command (McCarthy and Zald 1977). They encompass both *internal* organisational resources—such as funding, skilled staff, a dedicated volunteer base, and established communication channels—as well as *external* networks, such as alliances and coalitions with other organisations, community groups, or even reform-minded individuals within government agencies (Forsén 2018). The theory posits that strong organisational foundations and well-developed networks are critical for planning and executing effective campaigns, amplifying an organisation’s reach and influence (Bracey 2016).

Beyond the structural context and organisational capacity, PPT places significant emphasis on the cognitive and cultural work of Framing Processes. Framing refers to the strategic process of constructing and communicating narratives to shape public perception, define grievances, and inspire collective action (Snow and Benford 1988). This involves selecting specific aspects of a complex problem, attributing blame (diagnostic framing), proposing solutions (prognostic framing), and issuing a call to action (motivational framing) (Benford and Snow 2000). For instance, a campaigning NGO might frame the climate crisis not merely as an environmental issue but as a threat to food security and human rights, a frame more likely to resonate with a broader audience (Nisbet 2009). By understanding how Zimbabwean NGOs frame their messages on issues like debt, mining, and social justice, this study gains valuable insight into their strategies for mobilising support and pressuring policy targets.

Finally, these strategies are enacted through Repertoires of Contention, the toolkit of actions that groups use to make their claims (Tilly 2010). This repertoire is not infinite but consists of a learned set of performances, which can range from “insider” tactics like lobbying, providing expert testimony, and participating in formal consultations, to “outsider” tactics like public demonstrations, boycotts, strategic litigation, and media campaigns (Kriesi 2004; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2009). The choice of tactics is a strategic decision, influenced heavily by the prevailing POS, the available mobilising structures, and the chosen frames. In a restrictive

context like Zimbabwe, NGOs often favour less confrontational repertoires or engage in a dual-facing approach, combining public-facing mobilisation with discreet, behind-the-scenes engagement.

These four components are not isolated but interact dynamically. Strong mobilising structures allow an organisation to recognise and seize political opportunities. Effective framing can help create those opportunities by shifting public opinion. The perceived political opportunities, in turn, influence which repertoires of contention are deemed viable. Applying the PPT, therefore, allows for a systematic analysis of these inputs and their intended outputs. As illustrated in **Figure 2.1** of the thesis, mobilisation structures, political opportunities, and framing processes are the key inputs that, when channelled through effective repertoires, can lead to process outcomes (policy shifts) and, ultimately, long-term impacts (the attainment of sustainable livelihoods).

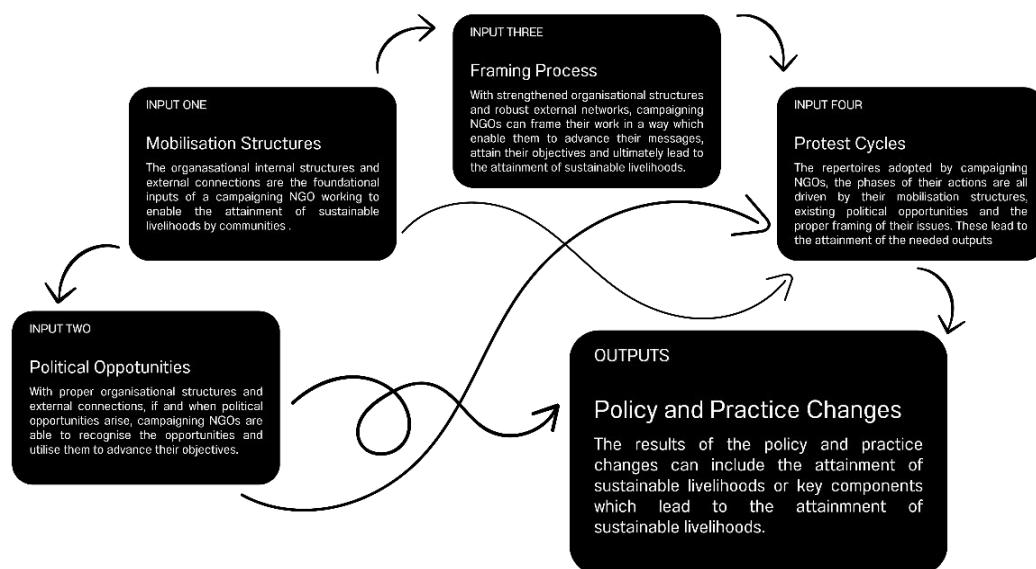


Figure 2.1: Connections of the PPT, campaigning NGOs’ work and the attainment of sustainable livelihoods

Source: Author generated

While PPT offers a powerful analytical lens, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations and address critiques to ensure a comprehensive understanding. One major critique is its perceived overemphasis on political factors, potentially overshadowing the significance of cultural, economic, or psychological dimensions (Zhang 2018; Gardbaum 2024). Critics argue that by prioritising political opportunities and structures, PPT can neglect the influence of deeply held cultural norms or grassroots economic grievances that also drive social change (Iyekepolo 2020). This study mitigates this limitation by integrating PPT with the SLF, a framework that is strong in its analysis of economic, social, and human assets and vulnerabilities, thereby creating a more holistic analytical model.

A second critique concerns the theory’s limited application in repressed political environments like Zimbabwe (Gardbaum 2020). The emphasis on “opportunities” may seem less relevant in authoritarian contexts where civic space is severely restricted. However, this study contends

that even within highly constrained systems, opportunities—however fleeting or narrow, still emerge, and PPT remains a valuable tool for analysing the *adaptive strategies* NGOs are forced to employ to navigate such environments. The framework helps to explain *why* NGOs might choose “quiet diplomacy” over public protest, or *how* they leverage international networks to create pressure when domestic channels are closed.

Finally, PPT is an explanatory, not a predictive, framework and has limited predictive power for specific outcomes, especially at the individual or household level (Iyekekpolo 2020). The complex interplay of its components makes it challenging to forecast the precise impact of any given campaign (van Wessel, Ho and Tamas 2021). This study addresses this by not using PPT to predict outcomes, but rather to analyse the strategic processes of NGO engagement. The assessment of actual livelihood impacts is conducted through the lens of the SLF and grounded in the empirical data gathered from communities, allowing for a process-tracing approach rather than a predictive one. By acknowledging these critiques and adapting its application, this study utilises PPT as an essential, albeit not exhaustive, tool for dissecting the political dynamics of campaigning for sustainable livelihoods.

2.5 Defining the goal: The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF)

While Political Process Theory (PPT) provides a robust lens for understanding *how* campaigning NGOs operate as political actors, it is equally crucial to define the ultimate *goal* of their interventions in the development sphere. This study posits that the overarching objective of these NGOs, in the context of development, is the promotion of sustainable livelihoods. To conceptualise and analyse this goal, this research utilises the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF). The SLF offers a holistic and people-centred approach to understanding poverty and well-being, providing a structured way to assess the various factors that shape how people make a living.

2.5.1 Origins and core principles of the SLF

The SLF emerged in the 1990s as a response to the limitations of traditional development approaches that often focused narrowly on income generation or economic growth (Hinshelwood 2003). Researchers and practitioners recognised that a more holistic lens was needed to understand the complex factors influencing poverty and well-being, moving beyond simple economic indicators like Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Scoones 1998). As defined by Scoones (1998: 5), the concept encompasses the capabilities, assets (material and social resources), and activities required for individuals to secure a means of living. A livelihood is considered sustainable when it can withstand and recover from shocks and stresses, maintain or enhance its underlying assets, and does not undermine the natural resource base upon which it depends (Carney 1998: 6). This people-centred concept, which emphasises social equity, environmental sustainability, and economic efficiency, is now prominently reflected in global, regional, and national development agendas, from the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to the African Union’s Agenda 2063 and Zimbabwe’s own National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1) (African Union 2013; United Nations 2015; Government of Zimbabwe 2021).

The SLF provides a comprehensive lens to analyse the complex factors influencing livelihoods through several key components. Central to the framework is the *vulnerability context*, which acknowledges that livelihoods are dynamic and susceptible to external influences. These fall

into three categories: shocks (sudden, unpredictable events like droughts or economic crises), trends (gradual changes like population growth or environmental degradation), and seasonality (cyclical variations in resources and opportunities) (Mutenje *et al.* 2010; Adelaja *et al.* 2021). This context underscores that livelihoods are shaped by forces often beyond individual control.

At the heart of the SLF lies the concept of livelihood assets, often visualised as a capital pentagon. These are the resources that people draw upon to build their livelihoods and are categorised into five interconnected types: human capital (skills, knowledge, health), social capital (networks, trust, group membership), natural capital (land, water, forests), physical capital (infrastructure, tools, technology), and financial capital (savings, credit, income) (Khan *et al.* 2020; Singh *et al.* 2021). These capitals are not isolated; the abundance or scarcity of one can significantly impact the others (Bebbington 1999).

Access to and control over these assets are mediated by *transforming structures and processes*. These are the larger societal institutions, policies, and processes—both formal (government, laws, markets) and informal (cultural norms, social hierarchies)—that have a profound influence on people's access to resources and the returns on their efforts (Scoones 1998; Krantz 2001). Within this environment, individuals and communities craft their *livelihood strategies*, which are the active and often creative efforts to make a living, such as agricultural intensification, livelihood diversification, or migration (Ellis 2000). The success of these strategies is measured by *livelihood outcomes*, which are not just about income but includes broader goals like meeting basic needs, building resilience, enhancing capabilities, and ensuring long-term sustainability (Scoones 2015).

2.5.2 Critiques of the traditional SLF

Despite its enduring popularity and wide application, the SLF is not without its critics. A significant body of literature has highlighted several theoretical and methodological limitations, raising concerns about the framework's ability to comprehensively capture the complexities of livelihoods and guide transformative change (Morse and McNamara 2013; Natarajan *et al.* 2022). Acknowledging these critiques is essential, as they directly inform the necessity for the integrated approach adopted in this study. The primary limitations concern the framework's tendency to depoliticise poverty, its weak analysis of power relations, and its struggle to account for the dynamic and fluid nature of livelihoods in volatile contexts.

Perhaps the most significant critique levelled against the SLF is its tendency to depoliticise poverty and livelihoods. By focusing on the technical and managerial aspects of asset portfolios and livelihood strategies at the household or community level, the framework risks obscuring the political and economic structures that create and perpetuate inequality (Li 2007). Critics like Green (2012) argue that the SLF can inadvertently frame poverty as a technical problem to be solved through better asset management, rather than as a political issue rooted in historical injustices, structural constraints, and unequal power imbalances. This is a critical flaw when analysing *campaigning* NGOs, whose primary function is to challenge precisely these political structures. This depoliticization is closely linked to the SLF's weak analysis of power. The framework often fails to provide robust tools for analysing how power operates within and through institutions to mediate access to resources and opportunities (Scoones 2009; Natarajan *et al.* 2022). Power is not a background factor; it is a constitutive element shaping who can access which assets, on what terms, and who can influence the "rules of the game." This limitation is particularly evident in its treatment of gender, where a focus on the

household as a primary unit of analysis obscures crucial intra-household inequalities and gendered power relations (Bhattacharya and Ferguson 2017; Meinzen-Dick *et al.* 2019).

Finally, the traditional SLF has been criticised for its static nature and oversimplification of issues in highly dynamic environments. The framework represented in a single diagram, can present a snapshot view that struggles to capture the constant flux, adaptation, and uncertainty that characterise livelihoods in volatile contexts like Zimbabwe (De Haan and Zoomers 2005; Mabon *et al.* 2021). Furthermore, while the five capitals offer a useful heuristic, this categorisation can be overly simplistic, reducing diverse experiences to predefined boxes and potentially overlooking critical, less tangible factors like cultural values, social identity, and political participation, which are highly salient in shaping livelihood pathways in Zimbabwe (Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2007; Rakodi 2014). This is compounded by a critique of its Eurocentric foundations, as the framework's concepts of “capital” and “individualism” may not always fully align with the communal values and diverse forms of wealth that are central to livelihoods in many non-Western societies (Natarajan *et al.* 2022; Shizha 2022). In light of these limitations, this study utilises the SLF not as a rigid theory, but as a flexible and foundational starting point. Its inherent weaknesses, particularly regarding politics and power, necessitate its integration with a more politically astute framework, the Political Process Theory explained above, to create an analytical tool fit for the purpose of this research.

2.6 An integrated theoretical framework

The preceding sections have established the limitations of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) and the Political Process Theory (PPT) when applied in isolation to the complex work of campaigning NGOs in contested political spaces. While the SLF provides a robust framework for understanding the components of livelihoods, it often overlooks the political dynamics that shape them. Conversely, while PPT offers a powerful lens for analysing political strategies, it does not inherently connect these strategies to specific livelihood outcomes. To bridge this gap, this study proposes an integrated theoretical framework: the Campaigning NGO Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (CNGO-SLF).

2.6.1 The rationale for integration

This study argues that a comprehensive analysis of the nexus between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods requires an integrated framework that bridges the gap between the what (the components of livelihoods) and the how (the political strategies used to influence them). The SLF, with its focus on assets, vulnerabilities, and outcomes, effectively defines the “what”—the substantive elements of a sustainable livelihood that are the ultimate goal of development interventions. However, its weakness lies in its limited capacity to explain the “how”—the processes of power, contestation, and strategic action through which these livelihood outcomes are shaped and achieved.

Conversely, PPT, with its emphasis on political opportunities, mobilising structures, framing processes, and repertoires of contention, provides a powerful toolkit for analysing the “how”. It illuminates the strategies and tactics that campaigning NGOs employ as political actors seeking to influence policy and challenge existing power structures. However, PPT, on its own, does not provide a framework for systematically linking these political strategies to the multifaceted and holistic concept of sustainable livelihoods.

By integrating these two frameworks, the CNGO-SLF creates a more powerful analytical tool. It allows for an examination of how campaigning NGOs' political strategies (the *how*) are designed to influence the various components of sustainable livelihoods (the *what*). This integrated approach enables a more nuanced understanding of the complex pathways through which advocacy and campaigning can (or fail to) contribute to tangible improvements in people's lives.

2.6.2 Introducing the CNGO-SLF

The Campaigning NGO Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (CNGO-SLF) is hereby introduced as the central analytical framework for this study. The CNGO-SLF as shall be presented in full in chapter nine—is a revised and expanded version of the traditional SLF, specifically designed to address the unique challenges of analysing the work of campaigning NGOs in contested political environments like Zimbabwe. It builds upon the foundational principles of the SLF but incorporates insights from PPT and critical development theory to provide a more politically informed and contextually relevant framework. The CNGO-SLF is not intended to replace the traditional SLF but rather to offer a complementary and more specialised tool for researchers and practitioners working at the intersection of advocacy, governance, and sustainable development.

2.6.3 Key innovations addressing the SLF's limitations

The CNGO-SLF introduces several key innovations that directly address the critiques of the traditional SLF and enhance its utility for analysing the work of campaigning NGOs:

- **Expanded Livelihood Context:** The CNGO-SLF moves beyond the traditional “vulnerability context” to an Expanded Livelihood Context that explicitly incorporates historical and political economy analysis. This requires an examination of how historical legacies (e.g., colonialism, land reform), macroeconomic policies, and entrenched political structures (e.g., patronage networks) shape the contemporary landscape of livelihood opportunities and constraints. This innovation directly addresses the critique of the SLF's tendency to depoliticise poverty by foregrounding the structural and historical factors that create and perpetuate vulnerability.
- **Relational Power as a Sixth Capital:** The CNGO-SLF adds *relational power* as a sixth, crucial asset to the traditional pentagon of capitals. This concept, drawing on theories of power and social capital, refers to the ability of individuals and groups to influence decision-making processes, negotiate with powerful actors, and shape the institutions and social norms that affect their lives (Hickey and Du Toit 2013). This innovation directly addresses the critique of the SLF's weak analysis of power by recognising that access to and control over the other five capitals is fundamentally mediated by power relations. For campaigning NGOs, building the relational power of marginalised communities is often a central objective of their work.
- **The Politics of Power, Influence, and Access:** The CNGO-SLF elevates the SLF's “transforming structures and processes” to a central and more explicitly political component: the politics of power, influence, and access. This component utilises concepts from PPT to analyse how NGOs engage with and seek to change governance structures. It focuses on, i) Political Opportunity Structure (POS) – How NGOs identify and navigate openings and constraints in the political environment; ii)

Mobilising Structures – The internal and external resources NGOs leverage for political action; iii) Framing Processes – How NGOs construct narratives to build support and pressure targets; and the Repertoires of Contention – The range of tactics NGOs use to exert influence. This innovation directly confronts the critique of the SLF’s apolitical nature by providing a structured way to analyse the political strategies and power dynamics inherent in campaigning work.

- Fluid Livelihoods: The CNGO-SLF explicitly incorporates the concept of *fluid livelihoods* to address the critique of the SLF’s static nature. This component recognises that in volatile contexts like Zimbabwe, livelihoods are not fixed but are in a constant state of flux, adapting to changing economic, social, and environmental conditions. This emphasis on dynamism and adaptation has significant implications for both analysis and practice. It requires researchers to move beyond static snapshots of livelihoods and to focus on the processes of change over time. For NGOs, it underscores the need for flexible, adaptive programming and a long-term commitment to supporting community resilience.

2.6.4 Operationalising the CNGO-SLF: A dual-lens approach

The integration of the SLF and PPT within the CNGO-SLF provides a robust dual-lens approach for this study, enhancing its ability to understand the complex relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. The SLF component serves as a diagnostic tool, enabling a comprehensive assessment of community needs, assets, vulnerabilities, and the broader context shaping livelihood outcomes. This allows for a nuanced understanding of how NGO interventions affect the various capitals (human, social, natural, physical, and financial) and interact with the socio-economic and political environment.

Simultaneously, the integration of PPT provides crucial insights into the *strategic actions* of campaigning NGOs. This lens illuminates how these organisations navigate the political landscape, identify and leverage political opportunities, mobilise resources through their networks and coalitions, and strategically frame their messages to influence policies and achieve their advocacy goals. By applying PPT, the study can uncover the dynamics of power, the role of alliances, and the specific repertoires of contention employed by NGOs to engage with both state and non-state actors. This understanding of the political processes underlying NGO work enriches the analysis of their ultimate impact on sustainable livelihoods.

However, integrating these two distinct theoretical frameworks presents unique analytical challenges. A key challenge is reconciling the SLF’s traditional emphasis on individual and household-level livelihoods with the PPT’s focus on broader social and political structures. This creates difficulties in attributing the impact of macro-level advocacy to micro-level livelihood changes, as the SLF does not fully capture the complex interplay between individual agency and structural constraints. Additionally, the SLF’s tendency towards technical solutions clashes with the inherently political dimensions of poverty and inequality that are central to PPT. This study addresses these tensions through a commitment to flexibility and contextualisation. Rather than applying the frameworks rigidly, they are used as heuristic devices to guide inquiry and interpretation. This approach allows for a seamless integration, creating a more comprehensive analytical tool for assessing the nexus between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities in this complex dynamic.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has established the disciplinary, conceptual, and theoretical foundations for the study, creating a robust framework for analysing the complex relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. The discussion began by grounding the research within the discipline of Public Administration, specifically highlighting the principles of New Public Administration (NPA), which prioritise social equity, citizen participation, and responsiveness. This lens allows for the framing of sustainable livelihoods not just as a development goal, but as a key indicator of effective and equitable public administration.

The chapter then explored the evolution of the governance landscape, detailing the rise of NGOs as central actors in a multi-actor governance system. It traced the strategic shift within the NGO sector from direct service delivery to a focus on advocacy and campaigning, a move that fundamentally repositions these organisations as political actors. To understand how these actors operate, the Political Process Theory (PPT) was introduced as the primary tool for analysing their strategies of influence, including their navigation of political opportunities, mobilisation of resources, and framing of issues.

Finally, the chapter examined the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) as the conceptual tool for defining the *goal* of these interventions. While acknowledging the SLF's strengths in providing a holistic view of livelihoods, its critical limitations—particularly its tendency to depoliticise poverty and its weak analysis of power—were highlighted. This critique established the necessity for a revised and more politically informed framework.

To address these analytical gaps, this chapter culminated in the presentation of the Campaigning NGO Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (CNGO-SLF). This integrated model, which synthesises the strengths of the SLF and PPT while incorporating an explicit focus on power dynamics, provides the necessary analytical lens for the remainder of this study.

Having established this robust theoretical framework, it is now essential to situate the phenomenon of campaigning NGOs within their broader operational context before applying the framework to the specific case of Zimbabwe. The strategies and challenges faced by Zimbabwean NGOs are not unique; they are part of larger global and regional trends, networks, and discourses. The following chapter, therefore, provides a comprehensive review of these global and regional perspectives, examining the evolution, strategies, and impact of campaigning NGOs on the international stage. This wider contextual analysis will provide the necessary backdrop for the subsequent in-depth examination of the Zimbabwean case in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER THREE: CAMPAIGNING NGOS AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS: GLOBAL AND REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

3.1 Introduction

The pursuit of sustainable livelihoods as building blocks to the attainment of sustainable development is a pressing, multifaceted global challenge, demanding collaborative action across all sectors and levels of governance. Amidst a complex matrix of social, economic, and environmental factors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have emerged as critical players in shaping global, regional, and national development. However, the very concept of an “NGO” remains contested; no universal agreement has been reached on its very definition, the legitimacy of NGOs is often questioned, and their contribution to the lives and livelihoods of individuals in vulnerable communities is disputed.

This chapter dissects these complexities to examine the nexus between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods, which is the core aim of this study. First, it explores various definitions and classifications of NGOs, situating the specific focus on ‘campaigning NGOs’ within a broader development scholarship. Secondly, the chapter examines the power, global influence, and criticisms of campaigning NGOs, analysing their potential connections to community-level livelihood improvements. Thirdly, a focus on Africa sets the work of campaigning NGOs within the continent’s unique context, exploring their influence, connections to local communities, challenges, and criticisms. The chapter concludes by synthesising this literature and highlighting gaps in existing NGO scholarship at the international level.

3.2 Definition of NGOs in the development discourse

The field of NGO research, despite its growing literature and rising interest, lacks a clear and consistent definition of what an NGO is. Peter Willets, who has consistently attempted to provide a definition of NGOs since the 1990s (Willets 1996, 1999, 2002, 2013, 2018), warned readers in a preface to the Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations, stating, “the reader must be cautioned: there is no common definition of what constitutes an NGO” (Willets 2019: xix). While academic publications on NGOs keep growing (Brass *et al.* 2018: 136), the term itself remains ambiguous (Willets 2019: xix). Many studies simply use the term “NGO” without explanation, assuming a non-existent shared understanding. This inconsistency makes comparisons between different NGO studies challenging, if not impossible, due to the wide range of interpretations the term can encompass. The major

attempt to find a common definition of NGOs is the work of Martens (2002). Using literature from as early as the 1910s, Martens (2002: 271) observed that there are two major tracks of NGO interpretations: the juridical approach and the sociological perspective. In juridical studies, Martens (2002) noted, the emphasis is placed on the legal status of NGOs in the national context and their implications for international law. Sociological works, instead, are based on studies of societal actors, and try to capture the term while examining more specifically the composition and functions of NGOs.

3.2.1 Juridical definitions of NGOs

Academic literature often references the narrow juridical definition of NGOs derived from their inclusion in Article 71 of the United Nations (UN) Charter. Article 71 positions NGOs as international partners with whom the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN can consult on specific matters (United Nations 1945: 31). However, this conceptualisation primarily focuses on the international nature of NGOs. While the article mentions national organisations, they are seen as exceptional cases, only consulted “in special circumstances”. Despite its influence in putting NGOs on the international scene, the UN Charter lacks a formal definition of the term. Subsequent resolutions (1993/80 and 1996/31) supplementing Article 71, while outlining provisional criteria for participation beyond the scope of the article, do not provide a clear working definition as well. The criteria in resolution 1996/31, for example, just outline the criteria for NGOs, which include features like an established headquarters, a governing body, a democratic constitution, and financial independence from governments (Martens 2002). The UN also has vaguely defined additional requirements such as “international standing”, “independent governance” and “geographical affiliation”. Some scholars mistakenly interpret these characteristics as a *de facto* NGO definition by the UN. Martens (2002: 274) condemned this form of ‘defining NGOs’, citing Archer (1983: 303), who had earlier admonished the continued use of:

... an awkwardly negative title coined by the United Nations to ‘describe’ a vast range of international and national citizens organisations, trade unions, voluntary associations, research institutes, public policy centres, private government agencies, business and trade associations, foundations, and charitable endeavours.

Within the UN itself, the NGO concept is not uniformly applied. Götz (2019: 22) gave the *Agenda 21* document adopted at the 1992 UN Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED, ‘Earth Summit’) as an example; in the document, the term ‘NGO’ carried no fewer than five different definitions. Götz (2019: 22) further noted that most specialised UN agencies and programs have, in the past decades, changed their terminology in favour of ‘civil society (organisations)’ as the cover concept for NGOs. From this reflection,

it can be concluded that juridical definitions premised on UN conceptualisations are inadequate in providing a working definition of what constitutes an NGO.

Martens (2002) brought another historical juridical attempt to define and codify NGOs in international law. These were attempts by international lawyers and social scientists who emphasised basic principles for “nonprofit private organisations” with “an international purpose and membership from different countries”. In a 1932 draft treaty proposed by the Institut de Droit International (IDI), these associations were defined as “groups of persons or associations, voluntarily created on private initiative, which perform, without seeking profits, an international activity of general interest, and do not come exclusively under national order” (Charnovitz 1997; Martens 2002). Support from governments for this codification proposal was not forthcoming and the treaty never came into force (Charnovitz 1997). Several other attempts to create NGO treaties failed during their planning phase because of the lack of support from governments (Beigbeder 1992: 16-17).

Without an internationally codified framing, NGOs are operating based on national laws that differ in defining them and in giving them rights and privileges. Mitchell (2019: 420), in explaining the operations of NGOs in the United States highlight that they are registered as ‘public charities’ regardless of what kind of work they do; this registration modality gives them tax benefits among other advantages. NGOs are also bundled together as charities in the United Kingdom, which has a robust regulatory environment (Owolabi and Awoniyi 2020: 41). In Nigeria, several NGOs are registered as incorporated trustees or companies limited by guarantee under the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA) (Owolabi and Awoniyi 2020: 40). This is an entirely different framing from the United States and United Kingdom. Problems arise for NGOs in the international sphere because of multiple legal definitions in different countries. An internationally operating NGO like Amnesty International or Oxfam, with branches in several states, falls under different national systems of law, depending on the respective jurisdiction of the country in which a branch is located; its branches are thus defined differently in each territory (Lewis 2020: 1). From existing literature, it can be noted that instead of developing a body of criteria for NGOs, juridical framing focuses on the status of NGOs under national jurisdiction, which does not help in producing a working definition of what constitutes an NGO at a global or regional level. Juridical definitions are thus inadequate in providing a definition of what constitutes an NGO.

3.2.2 Sociological definitions of NGOs.

In the same way that (Martens 2002: 271) broke down the conceptual ideas in the literature on the definition of NGOs, conversations about how to define NGOs are also based on how they are framed in sociological studies. In this, Martens (2002: 277) observed that there are also no agreed definitions. Martens (2002: 277), citing Furtak (1997: 21) and Rucht (1992:

31), noted that in most sociological studies, the term NGO has been the “rubbish bin” or “catch-all word” for everything that is simply not governmental and not for profit. Focusing on defining what NGOs are not leaves a whole lot to be explored. In different works NGOs are clustered as charities, pressure groups, interest groups, private voluntary organisations, independent voluntary sector organisations, civil society, third sector organisations, grassroots organisations, activist organisations, nonprofit bodies, and professional, voluntary, and citizens organisations, all of which have more in common and a whole lot in differences.

The ‘not governmental and not for profit’ conceptualisation of NGOs is at best inadequate and at worst misleading. For example, there are organisations such as Oxfam and ActionAid that receive governmental funding from entities such as the United Kingdom’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and other foreign government departments while operating independent of their direct influence. There are also organisations, such as Building Resources Across Communities (BRAC) operating as social enterprises, making profit and ploughing it back into communities (Cho and Sultana 2015). If the ‘not governmental and not for profit’ conceptualisation of NGOs cannot capture the premier of NGOs such as Oxfam, ActionAid and BRAC, then it becomes inadequate in providing a working definition for utilisation in this study and in NGO research in general.

Other conceptualisations of NGOs are that they are nonviolent (Davies 2019: 5) and that they do not seek governmental office (Uvin and Weiss 1998: 213). These conceptualisations are shared widely; Rosenau (2002: 262) refined the criterion of what constitutes an NGO, saying, “the only exclusion is that of organisations which openly reject the legitimacy of the political process and advocate or engage in violence”. This attribute seems to draw a distinction between NGOs and other nonstate actors, such as political parties and revolutionary movements seeking political power in different parts of the world. The two characterisations of nonviolence, and not seeking political office, are also deficient in capturing the *de facto* notion of an NGO. Examples of this deficiency are environmental organisations, such as Extinction Rebellion and Greenpeace, which at times engage in violence and destruction of property as a protest repertoire to advance their causes (Westfaul 2020; Marchese and Amado 2024). Civil disobedience has been a hallmark of environmental and climate justice organisations, helping them to advance their causes (Taylor 1998; Brown 2021; Anfinson 2022). On the second part of seeking governmental office, a question arises on what the dividing line is between seeking for governmental office and supporting or creating conditions for regime change. The idea that NGOs do not seek governmental power is weakened by cases of legitimate non-governmental organisations creating conditions for regime change and sometimes actively supporting the political opposition movements (Cox 1999; Dudouet 2009; Irvine 2013; Ismail and Kamat 2018).

Another sociological definition of NGOs, according to the organisation's criterion distinguishes them from spontaneous social movements (Merle 1988). Uvin and Weiss (1998) assert that NGOs should possess organisational attributes like a formal structure, permanent membership, offices, or stable funding sources. This view conceptualises NGOs as established institutions with self-governing arrangements (Gordenker and Weiss 2022). While acknowledging the importance of some degree of structure, this criterion also requires careful interpretation. Rigid notions of what constitutes an 'organisation' risk marginalising smaller, less formal organisations with no clear leadership structures. These groups, despite lacking traditional organisational trappings, can constitute a formidable NGO force driving changes at local and global levels, as demonstrated by the occupy movement (Bray 2014). Furthermore, the lines between formal NGOs and broader social movements are often blurred, especially in contexts where civil society collaborates to achieve shared goals. Rigidity in this definition could obscure understanding of NGO dynamics within a vibrant civil society landscape.

3.2.3 Definition by classification of NGOs

Another sociological typology of defining NGOs is according to their work; this is more a classification than a definition. NGOs are best-known for two different, but often interrelated, types of work: the delivery of services to people in need, and the organisation of policy advocacy, and public campaigns in pursuit of needed change (Yanacopulos 2019: 154; Lewis 2020: 1). This typology classifies NGOs as service delivery NGOs and campaigning/advocacy NGOs. These classifications, however, have limitations. NGOs often operate across these categories, blurring the lines between service delivery and advocacy work as demonstrated by Gooding (2014) in Malawi. Using ActionAid International and its partners as examples, Cascant-Sempere (2022) gave a further in-depth analysis of how NGOs straddle lines of service delivery and campaigning. For analytical purposes, the distinction between service delivery and campaigning/advocacy NGOs is necessary given that the two extremes are premised on different conceptual framings (theories of change).

Service delivery NGOs are premised on a needs-based approach—providing needed goods and services such as education, healthcare, food, and nurturing community investment schemes. The theory of change that premises this approach is that if people need goods and services, then NGOs should provide them with what they need to address their problems (Gideon 1998; Balgah Roland *et al.* 2015; Julius 2019). In most cases this can be accomplished without interfering with local, national, or international power structures. This, in essence, views poverty as apolitical, which led Ferguson and Lohmann (1994: 14) earlier on to chide them for being 'anti-politics machines' that promote depoliticised interventions that, predictably, fail to steer development but yet produce 'instrument-effects' or 'side effects' of expanding and entrenching bureaucratic state power to the detriment of citizens. This work,

based on the altruist, development-orientated thinking of saviourism born after the Second World War is direct and has been widely researched (Hailey 1999; Lewis 2016; Brass 2022). Themes of the effectiveness of service delivery work have been studied, including the nexus between service delivery NGOs and sustainable livelihoods. A cursory look at such literature demonstrates a positive contribution of NGOs to the attainment of sustainable livelihoods at the local level. Examples include the works of Bashir (2016) in Pakistan, Enyioko (2012: 2) in Nigeria, Dallas *et al.* (2019: 4) and Forkuor and Korah (2023) in Ghana. Nikkhah and Redzuan (2010) and Abiddin, Ibrahim and Aziz (2022) in separate general appraisals demonstrated that service delivery NGOs are prominent in the implementation of effective service delivery towards sustainable livelihoods. Springman *et al.* (2022) link this positive outlook to the privileges afforded to service delivery NGOs by governments, which see them as complementary to their work, not confrontational.

Campaigning NGOs on the other hand take a rights-based approach; they see change as systematic. The working theory of change is that problems (such as poverty and weak livelihoods) are caused by systems created by social actors (governments, private players, or religious institutions) (Hickey and Bracking 2005; Rugendyke 2007; Archer 2017; Deveau 2018). So, if there are problems, campaigning NGOs highlight the problem and advocate for 'problematic' social actors to change it, and then communities will enjoy improved lives and livelihoods (Klugman 2011). This is achieved through the proposition of new approaches and challenging practices and actions of other social actors. Campaigning NGOs such as Amnesty International, Oxfam, ActionAid, Greenpeace, and others often engage with governments, religious institutions, and corporations to change their policies and practices. The difference with service delivery NGOs is that campaigning NGOs look at issues at a macro level, moving beyond community-targeting projects to macro policy or practice changes (Hulme 2013: 23). Hulme (2013: 33) added that this approach creates sustainable changes over time. However, given that they are viewed as political, radical, or confrontational, campaigning NGOs do not often get adequate support from governments (Springman *et al.* 2022). Given these differences between campaigning NGOs and service delivery NGOs, a lack of distinction between them creates a bias, which, in turn, creates a distorted characterisation of the NGOs' contribution to the development and attainment of sustainable livelihoods.

An analysis of existing literature on campaigning NGOs also demonstrates that campaigning NGOs are often conflated with the wider civil society, especially within countries (Choudry 2020: 1343). The problem with such conflation is that civil society or civil society organisations (CSOs) encompass a broader range of actors beyond NGOs to include informal social movements, community-based organisations, professional associations, and religious groups (Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor 2001; Rainey, Wakunuma and Stahl 2017). Buckley (2022: 544)

attributed this conflation of campaigning NGOs and the civil society to the rise of a more assertive civil society especially in the 21st century. Many social movements, particularly in the Global South, utilise strategies and tactics traditionally associated with campaigning NGOs (Hadden and Jasny 2019: 637). This convergence makes it increasingly difficult to categorise for purposes of studying either the civil society or campaigning NGOs. Furthermore, the increasing collaboration between NGOs and other civil society actors further complicates categorisation (Lipschutz and McKendry 2011; Kumi and Arhin 2023). Kumi and Arhin (2023) demonstrated that NGOs often partner with social movements, community groups, or even quasi-government entities to achieve their goals. This conflation is inevitable, as can be seen by the broadening of the use of the word civil society by UN agencies at the expense of the term NGOs, which the institution created in the first place (Götz (2019: 22).

Notably, the terms “campaigning NGO” or “advocacy NGO” themselves are not without controversy. Some scholars, like Lewis (2010, 2017), argue that the emphasis on campaigning suggests a confrontational approach, neglecting the crucial aspects of collaboration and partnership-building that are often central to an NGO’s work. They point out that many NGOs, even those engaged in advocacy efforts, strive to build partnerships with governments, international institutions, and other stakeholders. This collaborative approach can be essential for achieving lasting change. The work of environmental NGOs in collaboration with intergovernmental and governmental institutions across the world stands as a key example (Green and Hadden 2021). The critique goes further, suggesting that the “campaigning” label can also downplay the educational and awareness-raising aspects of an NGO’s work (Lewis 2010). Campaigning NGOs often play a vital role in informing the public about critical issues and mobilising support for their causes. This can involve educational campaigns, community outreach programs, and working with the media to raise awareness. In response to these criticisms, some scholars advocate for alternative terms like “policy-oriented NGO” (Vyas 2010). These terms might according to their proponents, more accurately capture the multifaceted nature of this type of NGO’s work, acknowledging both the advocacy and collaborative dimensions.

3.2.4 A working definition on campaigning NGOs

NGOs operate across a spectrum, often engaging in various activities that defy easy definition and categorisation, as demonstrated by an analysis of the literature on the definition of NGOs and specifically on the conceptualisation of campaigning NGOs. After an extensive exploration of the definitions of NGOs from juridical and sociological perspectives, Martens (2002: 282) offered a synthesised definition “which includes all relevant ideal–typical characteristics”. Martens (2002: 282) defined NGOs as “formal and independent societal organisations whose primary aim is to promote common goals at the national or the international level”. This study

provisionally adopts Martens' definition; however, as Stroup (2019: 33) recommended, to delimit the population under investigation and to examine a particular component of the population under investigation, a distinction based on NGOs actions and strategy should be adopted. This study focuses on advocacy/campaigning NGOs acknowledging the extensive research on service delivery NGOs in this chapter. The definition of a campaigning/advocacy NGO adopted here builds on the definition by Martens (2002: 282), incorporating conceptualisations of Willetts (2002) as well as a synthesis of the wider literature reviewed in this section. This study thus defines campaigning NGOs as *formal, independent social organisations that advocate for change at various levels (local, national and international) using a mix of strategies, with a focus on public engagement and influencing policy and practices across government, businesses, civil society, and other social spheres*. With a clear definition of campaigning NGOs, the following section will examine their work of campaigning NGOs at the global level.

3.3 Campaigning NGOs as global actors

This section explores the complex role of campaigning NGOs at the global stage. First, it analyses the literature on the diverse issues addressed by these organisations, ranging from human rights to economic justice. The focus then shifts to examining their sources of power, including expertise, moral authority, transnational networks, and public mobilisation capabilities. The literature spotlights case studies of successful interventions, demonstrating the tangible impact of NGOs on livelihoods. Criticisms of NGOs are also explored, encompassing concerns about neo-colonialism, accountability, donor influence, and the limits of their influence when confronting entrenched global power structures. Finally, the section synthesises the literature and identifies research gaps, paving the way for a subsequent focus on African campaigning NGOs.

3.3.1 Livelihoods and community issues targeted by global campaigning NGOs.

Global campaigning NGOs play a pivotal role in addressing the complex challenges that communities worldwide face in securing sustainable livelihoods. These organisations act as key building blocks toward the broader attainment of sustainable development. Scholarship demonstrates that NGOs engage with a wide range of interconnected issues, targeting systems, actors, and policies that threaten the well-being and resilience of vulnerable populations (Rugendyke 2007; Banks and Hulme 2012; Koster, Simaens and Vos 2019). Their interventions have the potential to influence economic opportunities, environmental sustainability, and the realisation of fundamental human rights. While NGOs may focus on specific thematic areas, a holistic understanding of sustainable livelihoods demands recognition of how environmental degradation, the exploitation of labour, gender inequities,

and the marginalisation of indigenous communities often create intersecting barriers to advancement. This section examines the literature that documents the diverse livelihood-related concerns that global NGOs tackle, exploring the common strategies they employ and the ongoing debates surrounding their efficacy in promoting transformative change.

3.3.1.1 Sustainable agriculture and food security

Global campaigning NGOs play a crucial role in advocating for sustainable agriculture and food security, particularly within the context of growing corporate control over food systems and the urgent need for climate-resilient practices (Byaruhanga 2024: 2; Davila *et al.* 2024: 13). A vast body of literature examines how NGOs promote agroecological practices that prioritise biodiversity, local knowledge, and farmer-led innovation (Norgaard and Sikor 2018; Obari 2021; Iyabano, Klerkx and Leeuwis 2023). This approach stands in direct contrast to the industrial agriculture model often driven by multinational corporations and their reliance on harmful pesticides and monocultures (Kremen, Iles and Bacon 2012; Valenzuela 2016). NGOs such as ActionAid International work with smallholder farmers, building capacity and demonstrating the viability of sustainable alternatives that enhance food security and community resilience (ActionAid International 2024).

Furthermore, NGOs actively challenge the corporate concentration of power within food systems (McInnes and Mount 2017; Canfield, Anderson and McMichael 2021). They raise awareness about the negative social and environmental impacts of agribusiness, lobby for stricter regulations, and support consumer campaigns that promote ethical food choices (Lambin and Thorlakson 2018). Land rights and tenure security are also central to NGO interventions. Scholars highlight how secure land rights for farmers, particularly marginalised groups like women and Indigenous communities, are fundamental to building sustainable livelihoods (Velandar 2020; Ahmadzai, Tutundjian and Elouafi 2021). NGOs work on multiple fronts: advocating for legal reforms, documenting land grabs, and assisting communities in securing their legal claims (Khan, Shahid and Idrees 2023). In general, there is a wide body of knowledge on the interconnected NGO efforts that demand transformative change towards food systems that are just and sustainable.

3.3.1.2 Environmental justice and climate action

Environmental justice and climate action are core areas of focus for global campaigning NGOs. Literature spotlights their critical role in resisting extractive industries and unsustainable development projects that disproportionately harm marginalised communities and fragile ecosystems (Atapattu 2018). NGOs utilise multiple strategies—from community mobilisation and legal action to shareholder activism—to hold both governments and corporations accountable for environmental injustices (Vanhala 2018). Within this work, protecting biodiversity hotspots and threatened ecosystems is a key priority. NGOs often work

in partnership with local communities that possess vital ecological knowledge and have deep ties to the land. This collaboration emphasises the link between environmental conservation, Indigenous rights, and sustainable livelihoods. The climate crisis has propelled campaigning NGOs to the forefront of demanding climate reparations and adaptation finance for developing nations (Vanhala and Hestbaek 2016; Climate Action Network International 2022). NGOs at the global level frame climate change as an issue of global justice, arguing that those least responsible for the crisis bear its harshest impacts (Goodman 2009). The literature examined here demonstrates that campaigning NGOs on the global stage are engaged in the environmental justice and climate action thrusts of global governance structures. There is a general agreement in scholarship that NGOs are working to prioritise the needs of climate-vulnerable communities, enabling them to build resilience and transition to sustainable alternative systems.

3.3.1.3 Labor rights and fair trade

Global campaigning NGOs play a vital role in the struggle for labour rights and fair trade, drawing attention to the complex social dimensions of globalisation. The literature documents their efforts to expose exploitative practices within global supply chains, a system that often prioritises profit over the well-being of workers in developing nations (Raynolds 2012; Clewes 2020). NGOs employ investigative reporting, consumer campaigns, and legal tactics to shed light on issues like forced labour, child labour, and unsafe working conditions, pressuring brands and retailers to take responsibility (Beardon 2020). Furthermore, NGOs actively support worker-led movements and unionisation efforts, recognising that empowering workers themselves is crucial for sustainable improvements (Lee, Lansbury and Ng 2019). This includes facilitating training, offering capacity-building support, and utilising their leverage to advocate for protective labour laws at both national and international levels. Beyond protest tactics, NGOs champion ethical consumption and the growth of fair-trade certifications (Wheeler and Wheeler 2012). Scholars whose works are examined here analyse the potential of fair trade to create alternative supply chains that prioritise decent wages, environmental safeguards, and direct producer participation (Goff 2018). However, some have indicated that fair trade initiatives face challenges of scale and market influence (Ribeiro-Duthie, Gale and Murphy-Gregory 2021). Overall, there is general agreement that NGOs play a crucial role in advancing labour rights and fair trade within a *status quo* of exploitative global trade practices.

3.3.1.4 Human rights and conflict

Global campaigning NGOs occupy a critical position within the broad field of human rights and conflict response. The literature highlights their role in meticulously documenting abuses and demanding accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and human rights norms (Levy and Williams 2020; Hendel, Korotkyi and Yedeliev 2022). By producing credible

reports, engaging with legal mechanisms, and mobilising public pressure, NGOs work to hold perpetrators accountable and amplify the voices of victims seeking justice (Matelski, Dijkstra and McGonigle Leyh 2022). In conflict zones and their aftermath, NGOs are often engaged in highlighting rights abuses by all parties to the conflict in an objective manner compared to other players (Levy and Williams 2020). Additionally, NGOs on the global stage play a crucial role in supporting peacebuilding and reconciliation initiatives within countries by giving local civil society technical and moral support (Maigari 2022). There are academic works which criticise the role of campaigning NGOs in conflicts and peace building such as the work of Steinberg (2011); however, what is undisputed is the reality that campaigning NGOs are engaged in human rights and conflict work across the world in different capacities.

3.3.1.5 Gender equity and women's empowerment

Global campaigning NGOs are key players in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. Ochman and Ortega-Díaz (2020) spotlighted the work of campaigning NGOs on multiple fronts of the women's empowerment struggle. Campaigning NGOs actively challenge patriarchal norms and gender-based violence that perpetuate systemic discrimination against women (Dellnäs 2021; Kumari 2023). NGOs employ a range of tactics—awareness-raising, community mobilisation, policy advocacy, and legal support mechanisms—to break the cycle of violence and shift deeply ingrained attitudes about gender roles (Peltola 2022; Kumari 2023). Furthermore, NGOs are at the forefront of the struggle for reproductive rights and sexual health (Davies and Harman 2020; Matos 2022). They challenge restrictive laws and advocate for policies that prioritise women's health and bodily autonomy (O'Brien and Newport 2023). This focus reflects the interconnectedness of gender equity, well-being, and sustainable livelihoods, as lack of bodily autonomy directly undermines women's advancement. In the face of growing anti-feminist politics on the global stage (Cupać and Ebetürk 2020; Sanders and Jenkins 2022), campaigning NGOs are playing an increasingly important role in spotlighting the struggles by women and in addressing new ones as they emerge.

3.3.1.6 Indigenous rights and cultural preservation

Global campaigning NGOs play a significant role in supporting Indigenous rights and the preservation of cultural heritage. The literature recognises them as important allies for Indigenous communities, who have historically faced marginalisation, exploitation, and threats to their unique ways of life (Girard, Hall and Frison 2022). One crucial area of NGO support is defending Indigenous land rights and traditional knowledge systems (Dhialulhaq and McCarthy 2020). NGOs often collaborate with Indigenous groups, utilising legal strategies and advocacy campaigns to secure land rights, recognising that access to ancestral territories is fundamental for sustaining both culture and livelihoods (Gilbert 2020). Furthermore, NGOs act as voices

against forced assimilation and cultural erasure (Toki 2022). They challenge dominant narratives that undervalue indigenous knowledge and work to protect traditional practices and languages from extinction. A growing focus within the literature is the support provided by NGOs for Indigenous-led development initiatives (Tran, Ban and Bhattacharyya 2020; Schilling-Vacaflor and Gustafsson 2022). This approach recognises that Indigenous communities are best positioned to determine their own developmental paths, and NGOs provide resources, expertise, and advocacy to amplify Indigenous visions that prioritise ecological sustainability, cultural preservation, and self-determination.

The extensive literature explored in this section underscores the critical role global campaigning NGOs play in addressing the multifaceted livelihood challenges faced by communities around the world. From promoting sustainable agriculture to defending Indigenous rights, NGOs deploy diverse strategies across varied thematic areas, recognising the interconnectedness of these issues. Their interventions aim to empower marginalised groups, challenge entrenched power structures, and offer alternative models for development that prioritise social justice and environmental sustainability. While the scale of challenges facing global communities remains daunting, and NGOs often operate in complex competitive environments, the literature explored in this section demonstrates that they are working as catalysts in the ongoing struggle to build secure, equitable, and sustainable livelihoods. The following section will explore literature on the power and influence of campaigning NGOs to understand how they effectively advance change at the macro global level.

3.3.2 The power and influence of global campaigning NGOs

On 19 April 2000, Prospect Magazine wrote:

When 122 countries agreed to stop using and selling land mines in December 1997, the success was attributed not to the work of tireless government officials but to the 1 000 or so non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in 60 countries which had lobbied ministers on the issue for years. At the signing ceremony in Ottawa, Jody Williams, the campaign's coordinator, remarked that NGOs had come (on) their own on the international stage. "Together," she said, "we are a superpower". Her words ... encompass a shift in the balance of power in international politics, unimaginable 30 years (prior). Where once global politics were dictated exclusively by elected governments, now elected governments must compete with "civil society" ... with significant financial resources, the management structure of a multinational company and a media image that governments can only envy (Shaw-Bond 2000: 1).

This characterisation demonstrates the growth and power of campaigning NGOs at the turn of the millennium. This power has not waned; it only got stronger (Willets 2019: xx); however,

scholarly interest in the study of NGOs engaging in advocacy and campaigning has not taken up at the same pace (Smith 2019: 204). The study of campaigning NGOs has remained on the fringes; when it happens, it is often done with a positive outlook “masked by the NGO ‘halo effect’, through which groups perceived to promote ‘good’ principles are protected from scrutiny by the image of objectivity and morality” (Steinberg 2011: 26). From the limited literature available, it can be deduced that campaigning NGOs have power and influence, which is derived from their access to key global institutions, their expertise, their perceived linkages to communities, and their ability to mobilise public pressure.

3.3.2.1 Power from access to global institutions

Moloo (2011), in a critical analysis of the NGOs dynamics at the United Nations, noted that the power and influence of NGOs is premised on Article 71 of the United Nations Charter, which formally recognises the vital role of NGOs in global affairs. Earlier on, Chadwick Alger (2002: 94) had argued that this provision in Article 71 of the Charter, even though it was primarily premised around the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), NGOs started to emerge throughout the UN system. Using the ECOSOC provision as an entry point global campaigning NGOs have emerged as powerful players in shaping development agendas beyond the UN and its agencies. Campaigning NGOs have been collaborating with and challenging other global intergovernmental institutions, such as the Group of 20 (G20), challenging operational priorities of multinational companies and influencing the conduct of various social actors, such as religious institutions (Tucker 2014).

2.3.2.2 Power from knowledge and expertise

Scholars generally agree that NGOs possess deep knowledge and specialised expertise within their chosen thematic areas (Escher and Brzustewicz 2020; Doucet *et al.* 2024). Whether focused on specific facets of human rights, climate justice, or economic justice, campaigning NGOs concentrate their work within defined fields (Lewis, Kanji and Themudo 2020). Organisations such as Greenpeace and 350.org are leaders in climate justice conversations (Nulman 2022); Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International lead in human rights campaigning (Becker 2012); and Transparency International speaks with authority on anti-corruption platforms (Brusca, Manes Rossi and Aversano 2018). This specialisation creates a wealth of accumulated experience, enabling them to speak with authority on the global stage.

This level of knowledge and expertise on a subject matter allows campaigning NGOs to conduct independent research and in-depth analyses of key political, economic, and social issues, giving them in-depth knowledge of specific development challenges (Contreras and Roudbari 2022: 579). Campaigning NGOs such as Oxfam, ActionAid, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International often release authoritative research reports documenting

shortcomings of global and local systems to address key rights and development issues (ActionAid International 2023; Sakellari 2024). For example, a 2011 expert report commissioned by Oxfam and three Ghanaian NGOs caused a “major controversy” within the international development circles (Rubenstein 2013: 205). The report was titled *“Achieving a Shared Goal: Free Universal Health Care in Ghana”*. The key detail of the report was that Ghana’s National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA) had overstated the proportion of Ghanaians covered by Ghana’s National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS). The scheme was praised as a model for other countries by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organisation, and the World Bank (Schieber *et al.* 2012). Later, NHIA responded to the report’s criticisms by altering its methodology for calculating the number of people effectively covered by Ghana’s NHIS (Rubenstein 2013: 6). This and other research have been instrumental advocacy tools for activists and key reference points for policy makers (Steinberg 2011: 29). This ability of campaigning NGOs to conduct human-centric extensive research gives them power and influence at the international stage.

3.3.2.3 Power from NGOs’ moral authority

Significant policy decisions on health, education, trade, security and development are made on the global stage, as highlighted by He and Hannah (2007: 707). However, ordinary citizens are largely excluded from participating in the global governance of these issues. He and Hannah (2007) further argued that effectively the absence of global-level social contract involving international agencies, nation-states and citizens creates a legitimacy deficiency in global-level policymaking. Without legitimacy, global policy frameworks are not effective in addressing local problems. The perceived proximity of campaigning NGOs with local communities gives them moral authority to be representatives of the people at an international level, closing the legitimacy gap of global policy making (Baur and Palazzo 2011: 579; Banks, Hulme and Edwards 2015). However, this representation power, is often questioned (Peter Willets 2011) and sometimes vehemently defended (Rubenstein 2013). Rubenstein (2013) argued that if campaigning NGOs do not undermine the basic interests and voices of the poor, then they have the representational legitimacy. Beyond academic framings of the legitimacy of campaigning NGOs, by amplifying the voices of local communities on the global stage, this effectively makes them moral representatives of the poor and the marginalised (Kusaka 2017).

3.3.2.4 Power from mobilisation capacity

Scholarly works have also shown that campaigning NGOs derive significant power from their global reach and extensive mobilisation capabilities (McGann and Johnstone 2005). McGann and Johnstone (2005) added that the real story is not the proliferation of NGOs, but how these organisations have effectively networked and mobilised their members to reshape world politics. An example here is Amnesty International, with operations in over 150 countries and

a network of 10 million supporters (Amnesty International 2023: ii), which enables the organisation to rapidly activate supporters on a worldwide scale. Technological advancements, especially the widespread use of social media, have amplified their mobilising capacity (Duong 2017). McGann and Johnstone (2005) demonstrated how the convening power of NGOs has given campaigning NGOs power in shaping the global development discourse.

Platforms such as the World Social Forum (WSF), which is a global convening of campaigning NGOs, social movements and activists organised since 2001, have been key platforms in shaping the global development discourse (Grzybowski 2006: 7; Morales and Furio 2020: 130). The WSF is organised as an alternative to the World Economic Forum (WEF) an annual global gathering of the global elite in the Swiss Alps (Bond 2010). McGann and Johnstone (2005: 160) gave more examples of such gatherings organised to coincide with the official gatherings of the Group of Eight (G8), the World Trade Organisation, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. By creating an inclusive alternative gathering for the people, the WSF and other alternative convenings have demonstrated alternative power. This ability to mobilise and create a perception of a united global force is a key source of power and influence for campaigning NGOs on the international stage.

From the literature explored in this section, it is evident that campaigning NGOs possess power and influence. Their access to key institutions, specialised knowledge, perceived moral authority, and ability to mobilise popular support affords them significant influence in shaping the global agenda. While the legitimacy of their representational role may be debated, NGOs hold a unique position in filling the gaps left by traditional power structures. As the world grapples with increasingly complex interconnected challenges, these NGOs undoubtedly play a pivotal role in advocating for change and influencing global policy. The next section will explore literature on the campaigning and advocacy repertoires adopted by campaigning NGOs on the global stage.

3.3.3 Advocacy and campaigning repertoires of global campaigning NGOs

The power and influence that campaigning NGOs on the global stage possess is often translated into practicable results through actions (Dingwerth and Pattberg 2009; Bernauer and Betzold 2012; Moloney and Stone 2019). While distinct from traditional social movements, campaigning NGOs often draw upon similar strategies and tactics in their work towards their preferred ends (Saunders and Roth 2019: 138). This inherent political nature of campaigning NGOs demands acknowledgement in order to fully understand their potential contributions to lives and livelihoods of communities. Scholarly debate exists around the study of NGOs using social movements related theories (Cascant-Sempere 2022). This section will explore the literature on ways in which campaigning NGOs translate their power and influence through

the social movement-related framings. As Cascant-Sempere (2017: 48) has noted, there is systematic and empirical precedence of utilising social movements theoretical framings to understand the work of campaigning NGOs. Here Charles Tilly's concept of repertoires of contention provides a useful framework (Tilly 2010). These repertoires, encompassing tactics from research, lobbying, public mobilisations, boycotts, legal actions and protests constantly evolve, as they are shaped by their goals and the shifting political opportunities they encounter.

3.3.3.1 Research and report generation

Campaigning NGOs utilise research and expert report generation to drive change. These meticulously crafted documents often expose flaws in dominant narratives, challenge official statistics with data that reflects marginalised voices, and proactively identify emerging issues to shape global agendas (Meernik *et al.* 2012; Stroup 2019). In a discussion about what makes NGO lobbying effective, Tallberg *et al.* (2018) outlined that NGOs strategically frame their research findings to influence public opinion, media coverage, and international institutions. This evidence-based approach, rooted in expertise and rigorous methodology, grants NGOs credibility and a seat at the policymaking table. As Murphy-Gregory (2007) demonstrates, NGOs can even force governments and institutions like the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to respond to new framings of global debates. While NGOs must overcome potential limitations of vying for attention in a saturated media landscape (Thrall, Stecula and Sweet 2014), their research-driven advocacy plays a vital role in driving transformative change for marginalised communities.

3.3.3.2 Lobbying and policy advocacy

Literature on campaigning NGOs on the global stage demonstrates that they engage policymakers, government officials, and international institutions directly to push for specific policy changes or influence legislation related to their focus areas. In a paper about environmental NGOs and global environmental discourse, Partelow, Winkler and Thaler (2020) outlined how campaigning NGOs working on environmental issues have collaborated with UN agencies and institutions to shape the global environmental policies and governance infrastructure. NGOs took advantage of the formal consultative status within organisations like ECOSOC, which offers NGOs a platform within global conferences and forums. This allows them to shape debates, present expert testimony, and engage directly with key decision-makers. As Partelow, Winkler and Thaler (2020: 2) have shown, NGOs' advocacy was instrumental in the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, a landmark event that spurred the development of a global environmental governance regime. The subsequent Rio Conventions on climate change, biodiversity, and desertification continue to provide a focus for ongoing collaborations among NGOs, governments, international organisations, and other stakeholders. Beyond the climate and environmental platforms, campaigning NGOs also influence the economic (Steffek

2012) and social (Seeger 2015) dynamics due to their positioning on the right platforms at the global level. NGOs leverage their participation in these arenas to hold UN member states and other international players accountable to international commitments (Moloo 2011), scrutinising their progress on SDGs, and relentlessly pushing for bolder action on vital livelihood issues (Ogunyemi and Nwagwu 2022).

3.3.3.3 Mobilisation and protests

Campaigning NGOs strategically use protests, demonstrations, and marches to raise public awareness, generate media attention, and pressure decision-makers. Giese (2017) gave an example of the campaigning NGO Earth First! that used tactics of protest and confrontation, at times threatening to “occupy” the climate negotiations. Earlier on, Rietig (2011: 12) wrote that NGOs use “outsider” protests “to make noise” to influence official negotiations, such as during climate summits. The protest orientation of NGOs according to Cascant-Sempere (2017: 52), follows “logics of protest,” as conceptualised by Porta and Diani (2006: 170). According to this framing, NGOs leverage their mobilising power (“logic of numbers”) to demonstrate the strength of public support for their cause. They utilise disruption (“logic of damage”) to force marginalised voices into the mainstream. Furthermore, their commitment to documenting community challenges, including human rights abuses, underpins the “logic of bearing witness,” positioning them as credible advocates for change on the international forums (Leyh 2017). The scholarly works discussed here demonstrate that in employing these protest tactics, campaigning NGOs actively shape development agendas, collaborate with global institutions, and advance the interests of marginalised communities worldwide.

3.3.3.4 Boycotts and divestment campaigns

Boycotts and divestment campaigns have been a powerful repertoire within the arsenal of campaigning NGOs seeking to drive social, economic, or environmental change. As Seidman (2015: 1016) highlighted, this is “a tactical weapon, one that aims to call attention to larger issues, redrawing moral lines around acceptable behaviour and changing the calculations of multinational corporations and national governments”. The tactic leverages market forces and moral pressure to inflict reputational and financial harm on actors deemed to be acting unethically. Boycotts target consumer behaviour, urging individuals to collectively refuse to support companies linked to harmful practices (O'Rourke 2005). Divestment campaigns, on the other hand, seek to pressure institutions (pension funds, universities, etc.) to withdraw investments in targeted corporations or countries (Minefee and Bucheli 2021).

The most notable boycott and divestment campaigns include the international boycott of South Africa during Apartheid, which undoubtedly contributed to the system's eventual collapse (Seidman 2015), and the long-running boycott and divestment movement against the Israeli occupation of Palestine (Steinberg 2011; Feldman 2017). Multinational companies that have

been targeted in various campaigns include the global sportswear maker Nike (Spar and La Mure 2008), oil conglomerate Shell (Minefee and Bucheli 2021), and global coffee franchise Starbucks (Sarjono *et al.* 2024). Scholars debate the efficacy of these tactics. Proponents argue that they raise awareness, alter corporate behaviour, and demonstrate public disapproval of harmful activities (Beck 2019). Critics counter that boycotts can have unintended consequences on vulnerable workers within the targeted industries, and their impact on complex global supply chains may be difficult to trace (Mac Sheoin 2014). Despite these counterarguments, boycotts and divestment campaigns remain a potent tool for NGOs seeking to hold both governments and private sector entities accountable for actions that negatively impact livelihoods, particularly in contexts where traditional channels for redress are limited.

3.3.3.5 Legal action and strategic litigation

Legal action and strategic litigation have become a cornerstone repertoire for campaigning NGOs in their pursuit of social justice and environmental protection. This approach leverages the power of legal frameworks to challenge government policies, hold corporations accountable for wrongdoing, and ultimately influence broader societal norms (Fischer-Lescano 2021; Bedner and Berenschot 2023). Strategic litigation goes beyond simply winning individual cases. It aims to set legal precedents, influence policy debates, and mobilise public support for reform (Bedner and Berenschot 2023: 82). Numerous studies document the effectiveness of this approach. For instance, lawsuits filed by environmental NGOs have played a crucial role in curbing harmful practices like deforestation and illegal waste dumping (Zengerling 2013; Maljean-Dubois 2017). Similarly, human rights NGOs have utilised litigation to advance LGBTQ+ rights (Lazar 2023) and combat human trafficking (Hoff 2021). However, scholars also acknowledge limitations. Legal battles can be protracted and expensive, often outlasting the resources of underfunded NGOs (Fuchs 2013; Mwesigwa and Muetsasira 2021: 139). Additionally, powerful corporations and governments may use legal tactics to delay or obstruct lawsuits, making it difficult for NGOs to achieve their desired outcomes (Conde *et al.* 2023). Furthermore, the effectiveness of legal action can vary significantly depending on the specific national context and the strength of judicial institutions (Terlouw and van der Pas 2024). However, scholarly works examined here demonstrate that despite these challenges, legal action and strategic litigation remain a vital tool for campaigning NGOs. They provide a mechanism for holding powerful actors accountable, raising public awareness of critical issues, and shaping the legal landscape in ways that promote more sustainable and equitable development.

3.3.3.6 Capacity building and training

A crucial yet often overlooked repertoire of campaigning NGOs is their commitment to capacity building and training of local communities and activists. This approach recognises that sustainable change ultimately rests on the empowerment of those most directly affected by issues of livelihoods. It shifts focus away from solely pressuring governments or corporations towards building the capacity of vulnerable communities to advocate for themselves (Sanyal 2006). Eade (2007: 633) highlighted the following as areas of capacity building provided by global NGOs to the local ones - intellectual, organisational, social, political, cultural, representational, material, technical, practical, or financial—and most likely a shifting combination of all of these. The literature highlights the positive impact of such capacity building (Ishengoma 2016). When locally rooted activists are equipped with knowledge and skills, they become better positioned to hold their own governments accountable and negotiate with powerful actors (Appe and Schnable 2021). Additionally, community participation in projects driven by outside interventions is less likely to succeed without local leaders capable of ensuring those projects align with true community needs (Ishengoma 2016). While a vital approach for long-term transformation, capacity building faces challenges. It requires NGOs to take a longer-term view, prioritising the development of grassroots movements over immediate campaign wins (Appe and Schnable 2021). Furthermore, building capacity in repressive contexts can be difficult and dangerous for both local activists and their NGO partners, as shown by Fransen *et al.* (2021). Nevertheless, this strategy is a cornerstone for campaigning NGOs that are sincerely committed to sustainable livelihoods, recognising that externally imposed solutions rarely lead to lasting systemic change.

The diverse repertoires of contention employed by campaigning NGOs illustrate their multifaceted approach to influencing global, regional, and local landscapes. From rigorous research to bold protests, legal battles to capacity building of local organisations, NGOs strategically select tactics that best suit their desired outcomes and the specific context they operate within. While each repertoire has unique strengths and limitations, they collectively demonstrate the power NGOs wield in shaping policy debates, shifting public narratives, and holding powerful actors accountable. Importantly, the effectiveness of these repertoires is not solely about achieving single-issue campaign victories. NGOs, at their best, act as catalysts for long-term transformation by developing alternative models, building grassroots capacities, and utilising creative forms of advocacy that challenge the very paradigms that perpetuate inequality and weaken livelihoods. Understanding their repertoires of contention provides critical insights into both their potential and the persistent challenges they navigate in their pursuit of a more equitable and sustainable world. The following section will explore literature on the possible linkages of global campaigning NGOs' work and local changes.

3.3.4 The question of local impact

Global campaigning NGOs play a pivotal role in shaping international discourse and influencing policies with far-reaching implications. However, a crucial question lingers: Does their work translate into tangible improvements in the lives and livelihoods of people within local communities striving for sustainable futures? Directly connecting high-level advocacy in global arenas like Washington or Geneva with on-the-ground results in remote areas in the Global South presents challenges. Yet, a careful examination informed by existing scholarly publications offers insights into how these connections can be drawn, especially understanding that campaigning NGOs operate within a complex web of relationships from global institutions and regional bodies to grassroots organisations. These interconnections are vital for building bridges between global advocacy and local realities. This section explores literature that highlights several ways NGOs facilitate the translation of global influence into local outcomes, from the amplification of local voices through their campaigning networks, and the capacity building of local organisations to the setting up of international standards, which directly benefit local communities.

3.3.4.1 Amplifying local voices on the global stage

Global campaigning NGOs act as conduits, gathering information from communities and elevating their authentic voices onto the world stage (Paczynska 2006: 50). This ensures policymakers, global institutions, and other stakeholders gain an unfiltered understanding of challenges and potential solutions, potentially facilitating more responsive and targeted interventions. Paczynska (2006: 54), citing Brysk (2000: 2), acknowledges this linkage, highlighting that “conventionally powerless people have used global symbolic and normative reconstructions of international forces (through NGOs) to transform their own lives and to pioneer new forms of politics”. Through such transnational connections, local groups gain access to campaigning NGOs with platforms, adequate financial resources, expertise, and international media exposure. These transnational connections can be especially effective when the local groups exist in a highly repressive context such as Egypt (Chaudhry and Heiss 2022), Hungary (Gerő *et al.* 2023), or Venezuela (Rosales and Jiménez 2021), with few possibilities open for organising and mobilising without incurring extremely high costs. Local groups are thus reliant on global campaigning NGOs as allies to put pressure on repressive regimes and advance their issues. These representational efforts demonstrated by Paczynska (2006) have the potential to shape global policies and practices to address local challenges in ways that represent the interests of local communities.

3.3.4.2 Investing in local leadership and capacities

As highlighted in previous sections, one of the key repertoires of global campaigning NGOs is to capacitate local players. Major global donors are emphasising the 'localisation agenda' where global funders and campaigning NGOs invest in capacitating local organisations (Williams 2018; Baguios *et al.* 2021). This support for smaller, localised NGOs working directly with communities to advocate for sustainable practices, strengthen livelihood resilience, and promote fair development policies leads to direct benefits to communities. Some of the key highlights offered by Elbers and Schulpen (2013) and Pallas and Urpelainen (2013) in two separate comparative studies have demonstrated that most international campaigning NGOs engage in partnerships with local organisations, and they continue to provide them with technical support to be effective locally. This capacity building is vital for these local organisations which often lack technical and structural expertise to be effective; hence, their effectiveness is a direct benefit to the local communities they serve.

3.3.4.3 Shaping global standards for local impact

One of the primary works of global campaigning NGOs is to advance international conventions, agreements, and standards that have ripple effects at the local level (Rietig 2016; Agné *et al.* 2018; Martens 2020). Campaigns targeting land rights abuses, unfair trade practices, or environmental degradation by multinational companies can directly address threats to local livelihoods (Perrez 2019). In reviewing some international conventions, Sabyr *et al.* (2019) noted that these conventions address three issues of justice, including equality of rights (everywhere and always), equality of opportunities, and acceptable standards of living condition for all individuals and social classes. These are the pillars of stable and sustainable livelihoods if implemented within countries and communities. As now widely understood, the protection of the natural environment and the struggles to address the climate crisis are universal problems; advocacy at international levels to implement emission standards and ban certain pollutants is for the direct benefit of communities at the forefront of the climate crisis. Global standards also influence local communities, where local organisations and activists use these standards as a way to hold their local governments to account; for example, frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) are key tools for local human rights advocacy within countries (Davies *et al.* 2017). As Sabyr *et al.* (2019) noted, these frameworks raise people's hopes and aspirations, which is a key component of development and a key determinant of the aspiration towards sustainable livelihoods.

Demonstrating a direct causal relationship between campaigning work in general and global campaigning work with local outcomes is complex (Wilson-Grau 2007; Arensman 2020). Other mediating factors such as geopolitical developments, government policies, and other variables

create a muddled picture. It is thus crucial to avoid oversimplification and recognise that NGO contributions are one piece in a larger development puzzle. Assessing global NGOs solely on their high-level policy wins is insufficient. To understand their true impact on people's lives and livelihoods, the focus must shift to nuanced details of how their work empowers local actors, creates protective frameworks, and facilitates the flow of resources and expertise to address the most pressing livelihood issues of communities. From existing literature, this nuanced look is insufficient; connections drawn here using existing literature was anecdotal and theoretical. In upcoming chapters this study will provide an empirical look at this linkage between the work of campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in the specific context of Zimbabwe to provide the nuance needed in the scholarship of campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods.

3.3.5 Success cases of global campaigning NGOs

Building on the established understanding of how global campaigning NGOs can foster transformative change at the community level; this section explores several successful campaigns by global campaigning NGOs. These will be presented as reference cases, piecing together information from various academic texts. These cases help us to understand the technical linkages between the two variables under study. They explore the repertoires of the successful campaigns, the moderating factors, challenges, criticisms, 'sustainability' of outcomes, and possible implications for communities across the world. This umbrella view will help in situating the work of regional-level (African) campaigning NGOs as well as the Zimbabwean ones in upcoming sections and chapters.

3.3.5.1 Case 1: The *Fairtrade* Movement led by Oxfam and partners

Campaigning NGOs, spearheaded by organisations such as Oxfam, have been pivotal in establishing the *Fairtrade* movement and promoting its core principles of equitable trade, improved working conditions, and sustainable livelihoods for marginalised producers in the Global South (Lyon 2021). Their multifaceted campaigns, coupled with the globally recognised *Fairtrade* certification system, have reshaped consumer awareness, and influenced policies towards fairer global trade practices.

The *Fairtrade* campaigns advocate for four factors which have an impact on the attainment of sustainable livelihoods at local levels in different Global South countries. First, they were advocating for a *Fairtrade Minimum Price*, which acts as a safety net for producers, protecting them from volatile market fluctuations (Ruben, Fort and Zúñiga-Arias 2009: 779). This provides stability and contributes to more sustainable livelihoods. Second, *Fairtrade Premium*, this is a premium paid directly to producer organisations. NGOs campaign for effective use of this premium, which can be invested in community development projects, education,

healthcare, or other priorities chosen by producers themselves (Nelson and Pound 2009: 12). Third, they advocate for worker rights, and campaigning NGOs like Oxfam championed considerations for labour rights within the *Fairtrade* system. They expose exploitative practices, pressure corporations to adhere to ethical standards within their supply chains, and push for policies that protect workers' rights globally (Doherty, Davies and Tranchell 2013). Fourth, consumer awareness and market transformation involved NGO efforts to raise consumer awareness about ethical consumption choices. Campaigns promote the *Fairtrade* label, enabling consumers to make informed decisions that support marginalised producers (Anne 2000: 168).

The *Fairtrade* campaign NGOs utilise a multi-pronged approach to drive change. They focus on public education and mobilisation, using social media, documentaries, and events to connect consumers with producers' stories (Lyon 2021). Simultaneously, they apply direct pressure on multinational corporations, leveraging consumer power to advocate for greater supply chain transparency and the adoption of *Fairtrade* practices (Raynolds and Bennett 2015). Importantly, NGOs lobby governments to integrate *Fairtrade* standards into procurement and international trade agreements, pushing for institutional support of fairer trade systems (Raynolds, Murray and Wilkinson 2007).

The success and potential of *Fairtrade* campaigns face several moderating factors and criticisms. One key challenge lies in limited market penetration, as *Fairtrade* remains niche compared to conventional trade. This requires NGOs to address consumer price sensitivity and expand market access. Additionally, some critics question the rigour of *Fairtrade* certification, emphasising the need for continuous monitoring to ensure tangible benefits for producers (Doherty, Davies and Tranchell 2013). Finally, even after winning modestly in setting up systems, this is not sustainable since organisations must continue to work as watchdogs against corporate co-optation, where companies may use the *Fairtrade* label for 'fair washing' without making substantive changes to their supply chains (Doherty, Davies and Tranchell 2013).

The Fairtrade movement demonstrates the power of campaigning NGOs to reshape global markets and advocate for marginalised producers. While studies on *Fairtrade* impact show mixed results, with benefits varying due to factors like market access (Nelson and Pound 2009), its emphasis on empowerment fosters community resilience (Raynolds, Murray and Wilkinson 2007). Despite challenges, the sustained efforts of NGOs like Oxfam push for a more just and sustainable trading system, with the potential to continuously improve livelihoods in local communities worldwide.

3.3.5.2 Case 2. Loss and Damage advocacy in climate talks

Small island nations and vulnerable communities across the Global South, amplified by the support of global campaigning NGOs, have played a pivotal role in raising the issue of “loss and damage” within global climate negotiations (Vanhala and Hestbaek 2016). The loss and damage mechanism represents a crucial step towards climate justice, acknowledging the disproportionate impact of climate change on frontline communities and aiming to provide financial resources to support adaptation, recovery, and livelihood protection.

The call for the loss and damage financing framework by NGOs like ActionAid, Oxfam, Greenpeace, and others is admittedly a sustainable livelihood issue in most communities in developing countries (Gilder and Rumble 2022; More *et al.* 2022; Qi, Dazé and Hammill 2023). The core elements of the call for a loss and damage framework were to ensure compensation for climate impacts, address non-economic losses due to the climate crisis, promote community-led adaptation to climate change and hold historical polluters to account. On securing compensation for climate impacts, NGOs champion the rights of communities already experiencing irreversible losses due to climate change (Climate Action Network International 2022). They argued that loss and damage funding can help rebuild infrastructure, homes, and essential services, safeguarding livelihoods (Climate Action Network International 2022).

Furthermore, in addressing non-economic loss, campaigning NGOs argued compensation beyond financial loss as documented by Boyd *et al.* (2017). NGOs advocate for recognising non-economic losses such as cultural heritage, ecosystems, and forced displacement. Addressing these impacts is essential for sustainable livelihoods and community well-being. On promoting community-led adaptation, NGOs argued that loss and damage funding can be directed towards community-led adaptation strategies, empowering vulnerable communities to build resilience and protect their livelihoods proactively (Roberts and Pelling 2019). On holding developed countries accountable, NGOs argued that a key tenet of loss and damage advocacy is the principle of historical responsibility. NGOs push for developed nations, the major contributors to climate change, to provide financial support to those suffering the most severe impacts (Robinson and Shine 2018).

Campaigning NGOs use the following campaigning repertoires to make a case for the loss and damage framework: amplifying voices from the frontlines, generating research and evidence, building alliances, and employing a coterie of legal strategies (Vanhala and Hestbaek 2016: 117). NGOs facilitated platforms for representatives from vulnerable communities to share their firsthand experiences of climate devastation during climate negotiations, putting a human face on the issue (Calliari, Serdeczny and Vanhala 2020). NGOs gather scientific data and research on the escalating costs of loss and damage, building a

compelling case for urgent action and financial support (Fair Planet 2022). NGOs forge strategic alliances between small island states, climate justice movements, and other advocacy groups, strengthening the collective voice for loss and damage within climate talks (Robinson and Dornan 2017). Some NGOs support legal challenges and explore avenues within international law to hold high-emitting nations and corporations liable for climate-related damages (Osofsky and Peel 2018).

Campaigns for the loss and damage framework have been facing challenges from political resistance, the question of definitions of loss and damage and the question of mitigation versus adaptation. Developed nations have historically resisted loss and damage provisions, fearing unlimited financial liability (Popovich and Plumer 2021). In negotiations during the annual Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (COPs), NGOs pressed for a resolve in this political deadlock by proffering strategies to secure binding commitments (Allan and Hadden 2017; Calliari 2018). Operationalising the concept of loss and damage has been a difficult subject. NGOs were involved in debates on what constitutes loss, how to attribute it to climate change, and how to quantify and disburse funds fairly. These remain ongoing debates as countries struggle to find ways to operationalise the funding framework (Roberts and Pelling 2019; Pill 2022). Some critics also argue that focusing on loss and damage may detract from the urgent need for emissions reduction and climate mitigation (McNamara *et al.* 2018; Pflieger 2023). All these challenges and criticisms did not detract from the fact that frontline communities require support to cope with impacts already being felt.

The loss and damage campaign has achieved a significant victory with the establishment of a dedicated fund COP27 in Egypt—a testament to the tireless advocacy of NGOs in partnership with vulnerable nations (Naylor and Ford 2023). Any win in campaigning at a global level requires ongoing efforts to advocate for proper utilisation of the mechanism; in the case of loss and damage, NGOs must continue campaigning to ensure the fund's equitable governance and timely resource disbursement. This mechanism marks a turning point in climate justice, recognising historical responsibility and the unequal impacts of climate change. Successfully operationalising this fund has the potential to provide a lifeline to vulnerable communities worldwide grappling with escalating climate impacts. NGO advocacy has been instrumental in bringing the issue of loss and damage to the forefront of climate negotiations, as demonstrated by 400 of them signing an open letter prior to COP27, where the deal was finally reached (Climate Action Network International 2022). While challenges remain, the recent progress demonstrates the power of campaigning NGOs to secure climate justice and safeguard livelihoods for the most vulnerable people across the world (Dzvimbo *et al.* 2023).

3.3.5.3 Case 3: Advocacy for debt relief for developing countries

The campaign for debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries at the turn of the millennium stands as a landmark achievement in global NGO advocacy. Led by coalitions under the Jubilee 2000 banner, this movement demonstrably altered the international financial landscape and ultimately led to the cancellation of more than \$100 billion of debt owed by 35 of the poorest countries (Hamilton 2020). Put together in Barcelona in the mid-1990s by various global NGOs, which include the World Development Movement, Christian Aid, Tear Fund, and Catholic Agency for Overseas Development, the movement quickly consolidated global prominence.

Jubilee 2000 and its allies utilised a multifaceted approach to achieve debt relief. Central to their strategy was transnational advocacy, forging connections and building alliances with NGOs across the globe. This fostered a sense of international solidarity and pressured decision-makers at the international financial institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (Donnelly 2007). Moral arguments also played a crucial role, as Donnelly (2007) demonstrated, the religious angle brought by the Catholic Church through the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development proved effective. NGOs framed the debt crisis as a product of historical injustices and unfair trade practices, highlighting the moral imperative for wealthier nations to alleviate the burden on impoverished countries. Powerful campaign drives like “Drop the Debt” resonated with the public, generating pressure for change (Long 2010). NGOs also organised protests, demonstrations, and petition drives, raising public awareness and keeping the issue on the political agenda (Somers 2014). Engaging celebrities and faith-based organisations further amplified their message (Mayo 2005). Research and data analysis provided a vital foundation. NGOs meticulously documented the devastating human cost of debt burdens, demonstrating the link between debt and poverty, hunger, and limited access to healthcare (Long 2010). This evidence-based approach strengthened their arguments and countered narratives focused solely on fiscal responsibility.

The success of the debt relief campaign was shaped by several moderating factors. One key element was a shift in the global economic landscape. The recognition by international institutions like the World Bank that excessive debt levels were hindering the fight against HIV/AIDS, a pressing global challenge at the time, paved the way for debt relief initiatives (Harman 2008). However, the campaign also faced significant challenges. Internal disagreements arose within the coalition regarding the specific terms of debt relief, with some advocating for complete write-offs and others favouring more gradual approaches (Donnelly 2002; Daphi, Anderl and Deitelhoff 2022). Donor fatigue and concerns about potential misuse of funds by recipient governments also presented hurdles (Roodman 2006).

The Jubilee 2000 debt relief campaign has not been without its critics. Some, including Oxfam, a leading international NGO, argue that it merely addressed the symptom (debt) rather than the underlying causes of poverty in developing countries (Long 2010; Fridell 2013; Keet 2015). Others point out that the issue of good governance within recipient countries remains unaddressed, potentially hindering the long-term sustainability of relief efforts (Thomas 2001; Turshen 2014). The issue of sustainability also remains a major concern. Although debt relief provided immediate financial breathing room, many heavily indebted poor countries continue to struggle with external debt imbalances and high levels of poverty (Dent and Peters 2019). Further reforms in global trade, investment, and aid policies are necessary to ensure long-term economic growth and debt sustainability.

The debt relief campaign serves as a powerful example of the potential for global NGO advocacy to achieve tangible lives and livelihood outcomes in communities far removed from global metropolises of Washington, New York, London, and Geneva. The campaign gave countries reeling from debt repayment obligations breathing room to reinvest in education and healthcare—areas that build local lives and livelihoods in their local communities. Given continued poverty and countries relapsing into unsustainable debt, the case also highlights the existence of other moderating factors which may not necessarily be addressed by global campaigning.

3.3.5.4 Case 4: Advocacy for the access to essential HIV/AIDS medicines

The HIV/AIDS medicine access campaign from 1998 to 2001 stands as a pivotal moment in global NGO advocacy. The campaign began when 39 of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies initiated a court case against South Africa for violating the companies' patent rights in accordance with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) (Olesen 2006). NGOs leveraging the campaigning skills of organisations, such as Oxfam and the medical experience of the NGO, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) campaigned against the court case and the underlying logic of TRIPS in medicines (Sell 2001). The campaign played an important role in making the issue resonate in the public spheres of many countries around the world and thereby contributed to the pharmaceutical companies' eventual decision to withdraw the case (Hoen *et al.* 2011). Furthermore, the campaign led to the TRIPS waiver being placed on medicines through the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health, which has been essential in making lower-cost generic versions of patented medicines available on a large scale (Hoen *et al.* 2011). The resultant effect was the dismantling of pharmaceutical monopolies and securing affordable generic versions of key medications for HIV/AIDS and in the 2020s for COVID-19 (Sekalala and Rawson 2022). This case study illuminates the multifaceted strategies employed by

NGOs, the complex challenges faced, and the ongoing critiques and debates surrounding sustainable access to medicines.

The few repertoires utilised by NGOs in advancing access to medicines included litigation and legal challenges. NGOs partnered with legal experts to challenge pharmaceutical patents and expose loopholes in international trade agreements like the WTO's TRIPS agreement (He and Murphy 2013). They strategically used both national and international courts to argue that public health needs must supersede corporate profits and intellectual property rights. NGOs also forged alliances with a broad range of actors, including healthcare providers, people living with HIV/AIDS, labour unions, and faith-based organisations (Grebe 2011). This global network amplified their voices, fostered a sense of international solidarity, and further pressured decision-makers (Sekalala and Rawson 2022). Additionally, NGOs also employed high-profile demonstrations, targeted campaigns, and media strategies to expose the exorbitant pricing of essential medicines. These tactics humanised the issue and built public outrage against pharmaceutical profits at the expense of lives (Owen 2014). Furthermore, NGOs invested in rigorous research to document the human cost of inaccessible medicines and counter pharmaceutical industry narratives (Hoen *et al.* 2011).

The key moderating factor for the campaign was the severity of the HIV/AIDS crisis. The devastating toll of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, created a sense of urgency that galvanised global attention and forced governments and pharmaceutical companies to respond (Wogart *et al.* 2008). Another factor was the opposition from the pharmaceutical industry. NGOs faced formidable resistance from powerful pharmaceutical lobbies and governments seeking to prioritise trade interests and patent protection (Hoen *et al.* 2011). NGOs were often accused of undermining intellectual property rights, which the industry claims are essential for pharmaceutical innovation. Some academics, such as Flint and Payne (2013), years after the campaign, continue to argue that the focus on affordable generics stifles innovation and long-term investment in research and development, effectively hurting healthcare services in the long run.

The campaign for access to essential medicines demonstrates the transformative power of global NGO advocacy. It exposed the inherent tensions between corporate profits, intellectual property rights, and public health. This global campaign had a direct implication on the lives and livelihoods of people in Sub-Saharan Africa who were HIV/AIDS with no affordable medication. Because of antiretroviral treatments and other supportive mechanisms, the HIV pandemic is no longer as severe as it has been prior to the campaign effectively improving lives (Cao, Hsieh and Li 2020). Admittedly, even though the campaign achieved significant victories, its outcomes face ongoing challenges for sustainable access, especially for the poor

in remote communities. Weak healthcare systems and supply chains remain obstacles to ensuring that the most vulnerable have access to needed medicines.

Linking the four cases above to tangible livelihood improvements requires additional analysis, which is beyond the scope of this study. Success is often partial, benefits are often unevenly distributed, and there may be unintended consequences. These campaigns also represent ongoing battles rather than singular victories; progress towards the ultimate goals is often slow and almost always requires constant vigilance by campaigning organisations or local players to avoid backsliding or for the adoption and domestication of such frameworks. However, the scholarly articles, books and commentaries used to demonstrate these four cases demonstrate that there is a plausible connection between these campaigns and the attainment or the creation of an environment that allows for the attainment of sustainable livelihoods. This is a foundational element in analysing the nexus between campaigning NGOs at the regional level as well as in Zimbabwe, the primary country where this study is situated.

3.3.6 Challenges faced by global campaigning NGOs

The work of global campaigning NGOs operating on the global stage does not occur without significant challenges and critiques. This section explores the complexities that NGOs must navigate, examining factors that can undermine their efforts to promote transformative change on the international stage. These challenges encompass issues of legitimacy; power imbalances between NGOs in the Global North and South; internal organisational shortcomings; donor dependency; potential distortions of local markets; and the risk of misaligned messaging that inadvertently harms the communities NGOs aim to serve.

3.3.6.1 Questions of the legitimacy of campaigning NGOs

Global campaigning NGOs, while playing a vital role in giving legitimacy to policies formulated at the global level, have themselves been accused of often lacking the legitimacy or democratic mandate as conferred upon elected officials (Schmitz 2020). Schmitz (2020) looked extensively at the NGOs legitimacy question and concluded that not all criticisms of global NGOs' legitimacy are valid. Schmitz (2020) argued that their legitimacy is only partially based on making representative claims on behalf of those they claim to benefit. Citing Rubenstein (2013), Schmitz (2020: 1) further argued that "what matters is not that NGOs occasionally speak for others, but how they do so". Arguments put forward by Schmitz (2020) are sound; however, legitimacy is a product of perceptions, and at the moment the absence of formal accountability mechanisms, coupled with their self-appointment as champions of 'the people,' can give rise to accusations of elitism and questions surrounding their true representativeness (Sternberg 2010: 24). Given these criticisms and concerns, Teegen, Doh and Vachani (2004: 472) vehemently question the substance of incorporating NGOs as

organisations representing societal interests into the cast of important global actors. They argued that this calls into question traditional notions of global governance and value creation that posit states at the centre of governance and firms (the private sector) at the centre of value creation.

3.3.6.2 Dominance of northern NGOs at the expense of southern NGOs

The dominance of large international NGOs headquartered in the Global North perpetuates concerns about north-centric agendas and power imbalances. This bias can manifest in how NGOs set priorities, influencing which issues receive the most attention and resources. In an article defending NGOs against criticism of their representativity, Rubenstein (2013) admitted that northern NGOs sometimes inadvertently overshadow the voices and perspectives of those in the Global South, even while advocating for the very communities. Furthermore, Eade (2007) demonstrated how the capacity development initiatives by northern NGOs are disempowering. Eade (2007: 630) rhetorically asked if it is “building or undermining capacities?” and answered that “the danger (of capacity building) is that one begins to see the world through (the organisations’) eyes; and, as identities gradually merge, it is increasingly difficult to look at the world afresh, or to see ourselves (in the Global South) as others see us”. This concern is realistic; the disparity in resources between northern and southern organisations, as Rubenstein (2013) noted, exacerbates this power imbalance, making the themes promoted by northern NGOs to be dominant.

3.3.6.3 Institutional and operational failures

The institutional failures of campaigning NGOs have been well documented (Sternberg 2010: 25; Will and Pies 2016: 1080). Dolšak and Prakash (2022: 661) gave an example of institutional failure at Oxfam, a leading global campaigning NGO, which is well known for its work across the world. On February 9, 2018, the *Times of London* reported that Oxfam’s senior staff in Haiti paid earthquake survivors for sex on Oxfam premises. Although Oxfam’s top managers in the UK commissioned an internal inquiry, they covered up its report, indicating governance failure at individual and organisational levels. In the aftermath of the Oxfam case, there were multiple exposés about misconduct in other prominent NGOs, such as Save the Children (Scurlock, Dolsak and Prakash 2020), Mercy Corps (Baker 2021), and others (Dolsak and Prakash 2020). This effectively demonstrates that NGOs, in general, and campaigning NGOs, in particular, suffer from organisational failures or dysfunctionalities, which, in the case of Oxfam and others, have disproportionately affected their target communities. Even though organisations are trying to correct these deficits (Crack 2018), this breach of trust puts a dent in their work and perceived effectiveness.

3.3.6.4 Donor dependence and its distorting influence

There is a complex accountability matrix with donors that influences the work of global campaigning NGOs (Sternberg 2010: 25). Reith (2010) has shown that where control of communication, funding procedures, and processes is held by donors, NGOs are accused of getting 'too close' to donors and not showing enough accountability to those whom they are representing and working with. After extensive research following the 'money' from the UK to Kampala, Uganda, Reith (2010) noted that the role of money is a central element in how power is exercised and expressed. The power of money in the NGOs discourse in general and campaigning NGOs in particular raises legitimate questions about NGO independence and potential conflicts of interests. Some even question if these are 'non-governmental' organisations in the first place or conduits of certain governments since a significant chunk of this funding comes from governments (Sternberg 2010: 23). If global campaigning NGOs are driven by their government donors, then they are, and cannot be accountable to local communities they purport to serve (McGann and Johnstone 2005). Some campaigning NGOs, in order to avert these accountability deficiencies, have signed up to the INGO Accountability Charter, which is a commitment to accountability by international NGOs (Crack 2018).

3.3.6.5 Drowning out of local voices

Global campaigning NGOs have immense power—power to influence but also power over regional and local organisations that operate in the same space. Despite good intentions, global campaigning NGOs have been noted to replicate historic power imbalances between the Global North and South (Lee 2020: 3). Possessing greater access to resources, expertise, and connections to global media, these NGOs deliberately or accidentally overshadow smaller, grassroots NGOs based in the countries where their work is supposed to produce results (Lee 2020). This can lead to local voices and knowledge being marginalised and decisions about development priorities being made externally rather than driven by those most impacted. Rubenstein (2013: 211) wrote in-depth about how Enough and Global Witness, two northern campaigning NGOs, have advocated for miners' protections in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) without the consultation of local organisations, effectively taking away their agency in the process. There is a broader localisation agenda in the development discourse (Baguios *et al.* 2021); however, even when collaboration occurs, the financial leverage of large Northern NGOs can subtly dictate the terms of engagement (Reith 2010). Local NGOs often feel pressured to adopt priorities or align with the strategies favoured by northern partners to secure funding and support (Rubenstein 2013). This undermines local ownership of development initiatives, compromising their sustainability in the long run.

3.3.6.6 “White saviour” complex and eroding local agency

The representation power of global campaigning organisations for local communities comes with a serious risk. The harmful legacy of charity, service delivery, and campaigning is anchored in “white” saviour mentality/complex of Global North organisations. Campaigning on the global stage for the distant poor comes with the orientation of ‘white humanitarianism’ for the distant stranger (Jefferess 2023). This mindset reinforces dependency, viewing communities in the Global South as passive beneficiaries of their work rather than capable drivers of their own development. In their works, Parashar and Schulz (2021), Akurugoda (2018), and Cullen, McCorriston and Thompson (2022) touched on this saviour complex, which echoes historical legacies of colonialism, where external actors were seen as holding the solutions to problems they often likely played a role in creating. These works demonstrate that when external approaches dominate, it can erode a community's confidence in their own capacity to address challenges. This ultimately undermines the self-reliance that is crucial for long-term, sustainable livelihood improvements (Chowdhoree 2020).

3.3.6.7 Discourse Failure - unintended consequences of campaigns

Will and Pies (2016) made an argument that global campaigning NGOs also create discourse failure due to weak institutional structures around them. Will and Pies (2016) found strong evidence that poor institutions within and around campaigning NGOs can promote NGO campaigns that, in fact, do not serve the advocated interest they aim to promote. To demonstrate their argument, they presented a case of discourse failure on an NGO-led public campaign that called for a ban on the financial speculation with agricultural commodities by passive commodity index funds. The campaign aimed at improving global food security started after the international food crisis in 2007/08 and was propelled by the subsequent crisis in 2010/11. It was run by numerous NGOs with a strong focus on global food security. NGOs called on political organisations to strictly regulate the futures markets for agricultural commodities from 2010 to 2013. Right from the beginning of this NGO campaign, many scholars have publicly warned that its claims might contradict the very interest in fighting global hunger the NGOs want to advocate for. Due to the interplay of citizens’ rational ignorance with highly complex policy issues involved, specific expectations by supporters and donors together with a media bias have tempted NGOs into campaigning against banks and insurers and into exerting a lot of pressure on bureaucrats and politicians, leading them to hammer on a campaign that was detrimental to the people they were campaigning for (Will and Pies 2016). This ‘mistake’ affects the credibility of campaigning NGOs as the most trusted ally of the people they purport to serve.

3.3.6.8 Market disruptions and the challenge of balancing interests

Another concern, especially from economists, is the impact of global campaigning NGOs on the markets. The traditional belief that regulation is solely the state's responsibility and that the markets naturally work themselves to the equilibrium based on demand and supply is upended by the work of campaigning NGOs. Global campaigning NGOs are effectively functioning as moderators of production, distribution, and access to certain products, such as fossil fuels, beef and clothes, disrupting the free working of economies. Will and Pies (2016: 1082) argued that in advocating for their favoured interests, NGOs often disregard the legitimate interests of other persons or organisations, such as private players in the market. Arguments along these lines lead to condemnation of the work of global campaigning organisations that advocate for a basic minimum wage for example. Minimum wage legislations are seen as contributors to job losses which negatively affect livelihood outcomes of the low-income employees who end up losing their jobs (MaCurdy 2015: 498; Harasztosi and Lindner 2019: 2693; Hurst *et al.* 2022: 2). Barber and Bowie (2008) further demonstrated how international NGOs distort the labour market in the local communities they operate in. Economics' literature demonstrates that when companies are regulated in ways that increase labour or operations costs, they either move somewhere else or resort to automation, leading to jobs and livelihoods lost in areas they originally operated in (Mosk 2011). This criticism poses a challenge to campaigning organisations, which, in their efforts to do good may find themselves inadvertently causing more harm than intended.

The effectiveness and impact of global campaigning NGOs are challenging to measure definitively. It is inherently difficult to demonstrate a direct causal relationship between NGO campaigns and long-term livelihood improvements, as outcomes are often influenced by numerous factors. Moreover, the focus on systemic change means progress is often slow and incremental. Critics argue that some NGOs prioritise short-term, visible campaign wins over sustained grassroots engagement, potentially leading to superficial rather than transformative change (Banks, Hulme and Edwards 2015: 707). This highlights a key research gap: how can we better isolate and attribute the specific contributions of NGO work to sustainable livelihood outcomes? Addressing this complexity is crucial to understanding how NGOs can maximise their impact and ensure that advocacy efforts translate into lasting improvements for the world's most vulnerable communities. The following section focuses on regional-level organisations in Africa and their possible contribution to the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in communities.

3.4 Campaigning NGOs at the regional level (Africa)

Campaigning NGOs in Africa lack the same level of documentation as their global counterparts. Scrutinising through pieces of literature from both academic and public press, this section knitted a cursory look at the dynamics of campaigning NGOs in Africa. The primary observation is that while global campaigning NGOs primarily target institutions with global reach like the UN and international financial institutions, African campaigning NGOs adopt an entirely different dynamic. Although they contribute to and amplify global campaigns, their primary focus is on addressing African issues and influencing policy changes at the continental, sub-regional and individual country levels (Hearn 2007; Hodzic 2017: xi). They target African intergovernmental institutions such as the African Union and multinational corporations operating on the continent (Mbaya 2023: iv). Like their global counterparts, African campaigning NGOs lack formal decision-making power within formal intergovernmental bodies, but they wield influence through various channels. With fewer resources and recognition compared to global NGOs; they play a vital role in advancing key elements that have the potential to lead to sustainable community outcomes. This section examines the scholarly and mainstream press works exploring livelihoods and community issues addressed by African campaigning NGOs, their power and influence, their advocacy and campaigning repertoires, their perceived impact at local levels, illustrative success cases, and key challenges they face in the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods in Africa.

3.4.1 Livelihoods and community issues addressed by African campaigning NGOs

African campaigning NGOs work on complex livelihood and community issues that directly impact the well-being of people across the continent. The scholarly literature explored in this section highlights their strategic work in areas that underpin sustainable livelihoods, including food sovereignty, natural resource management, economic justice, and good governance. By tackling these multifaceted challenges, NGOs aim to empower communities, protect the environment, and challenge the systems that perpetuate poverty and inequality. The following subsections provides more details on the specific issues that African NGOs engage with in their pursuit for their key objectives.

3.4.1.1 African campaigning NGOs championing food sovereignty

There is ample scholarly literature that highlights that African campaigning NGOs are vocal in advancing food sovereignty across the continent. Food sovereignty, as defined in the Nyéléni Declaration (Sélingué 2007), emphasises the right of communities to define their own food and agricultural systems, prioritising local production and ecological approaches. African campaigning NGOs under the banner of the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) employ diverse strategies to promote food sovereignty. Building on the work of academics

such as (Kerr *et al.* 2023), they champion agroecological methods, providing training and resources to farmers. These sustainable techniques, rooted in local knowledge, enhance biodiversity, soil health, and resilience to climate change (Swanby 2024). This empowers communities to increase yields while protecting natural resources (Nordin 2024). NGOs also engage in policy advocacy, drawing on the research of scholars like Wittman, Desmarais and Wiebe (2010), to advocate for government support of local food markets, fair trade systems, and investment in rural infrastructure. Furthermore, they promote seed sovereignty and farmer-led research, preserving diverse crop varieties and amplifying farmers' voices in shaping their own agricultural systems (Bezner Kerr and Wynberg 2024). By combining grassroots initiatives and policy influence, African campaigning NGOs challenge conventional models of food production that perpetuate external dependencies and ecological harm. The literature spotlights the work of campaigning NGOs in Africa in fostering resilient food systems that prioritise local control, sustainability, and food as a fundamental right (Bezner Kerr and Wynberg 2024; Nordin 2024).

3.4.1.2 Natural resource management and extractive industries

African campaigning NGOs play a vital role in addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by natural resource management and extractive industries in different parts of the continent. Their focus on promoting transparency and accountability within resource governance is well documented (Hilson and Maconachie 2010; Oppong 2020). They engage in budget monitoring, expose instances of corruption or illicit financial flows, and advocate for stronger regulatory frameworks (Le Billon 2011; Njie 2015; Cusato 2021). This is crucial as natural resource wealth on the African continent often fails to translate into shared prosperity, as seen in the “resource curse” phenomenon (Arthur 2024). This focus of African campaigning NGOs is demonstrated by the participation of NGOs from over 28 African countries in the Publish What You Pay Global Campaign calling for an open and accountable extractive sector (Bond 2019; Publish What You Pay 2024).

Furthermore, NGOs play a key role in resisting unsustainable mining practices and their associated environmental damage (Reyneke, Chenga and Cronjé 2017). They campaign against irresponsible mining operations that pollute water resources, displace communities, and leave legacies of environmental degradation (Brou and Ezoua 2017). NGOs often work in partnership with communities directly impacted by mining, providing legal support, documenting environmental harms, and amplifying demands for stricter environmental impact assessments and corporate accountability (Selmier II and Newenham-Kahindi 2021). Additionally, campaigning NGOs work to promote community benefits sharing agreements (Nwapi 2017; Oshionebo 2019). These are policies and mechanisms that ensure local communities derive tangible benefits from resource extraction projects, addressing the power

imbalance between communities and large multinational corporations (Oshionebo 2018). This involves negotiating fair compensation arrangements, investing mining revenues in local development projects, and creating employment opportunities for community members.

3.4.1.3 Economic justice and trade

African campaigning NGOs are pivotal actors in the struggle for economic justice and the transformation of trade systems that have historically disadvantaged African economies. The literature spotlights their challenges to unfair trade agreements that favour developed nations and perpetuate unequal power dynamics (Pinkney 2015: 42). These NGOs critique trade policies that undermine domestic industries, limit market access for African products, and reinforce dependency on raw material exports (Prempeh 2017). Simultaneously, NGOs actively promote regional integration initiatives, emphasising the importance of intra-African trade as a driver of economic development (Draper, Edjigu and Freytag 2022). This includes advocacy for reduced trade barriers across the continent, harmonising regional standards, and investing in infrastructure to facilitate increased trade flows. Furthermore, African NGOs play a vital role in supporting informal cross-border trade and advocating for increased market access for small producers (Akaezuwa *et al.* 2020). Informal trade represents a significant part of the economic activity on the continent, particularly for women and marginalised communities (Akaezuwa *et al.* 2020). NGOs work with informal traders to navigate complex regulations, access market information, and form associations that bolster their bargaining power. Crucially, they also advocate for decent work and living wages within African supply chains, addressing the exploitation of workers on farms, in factories, and in the informal economy (Meagher 2018). Through their multi-pronged interventions, NGOs contribute to a vision for trade and economic systems in Africa that promotes equity, sustainability, and the economic empowerment of marginalised producers.

3.4.1.4 Good governance and human rights

African campaigning NGOs occupy a frontline position in promoting good governance, democratic participation, and the protection of human rights on the continent (El Hachimi and Touhtou 2023). Their work in promoting democratic participation and ensuring accountability in African governments is notable (Danhouo, Nasiri and Wiktorowicz 2018; Mlambo, Zubane and Mlambo 2020). This involves civic education campaigns to increase voter turnout, conducting election observation missions to guard against election fraud, and advocating for reforms that strengthen democratic institutions and the rule of law (Rakner 2021). Furthermore, NGOs play a critical role in protecting the rights of vulnerable groups, including refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and those facing discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation (Koko, Monro and Smith 2018; Shodeinde and Otabor 2018; Parris and Adeosun 2022). In conflict zones, NGOs advocate for access to humanitarian

aid, document human rights abuses, and support transitional justice mechanisms (van der Merwe and Brankovic 2016). NGOs contribute by raising public awareness of the issue, conducting investigative work to expose corruption, and advocating for stronger anti-corruption laws and enforcement mechanisms (Musila 2020). While NGOs often operate in politically challenging contexts, their persistent commitment to these interrelated issues serves as a vital force in promoting greater democratic accountability and advancing basic rights for all Africans.

The literature explored in this section underscores the critical role African campaigning NGOs play in tackling the multifaceted livelihood and community challenges facing the continent. From promoting food sovereignty to advocating for economic justice and good governance, NGOs operating at the African continental level and within countries are working to address basic rights, advance sustainable development models, and challenge entrenched power structures. Their interventions often prioritise marginalised groups, amplifying their voices and ensuring development agendas are inclusive and responsive to the needs of those most vulnerable in communities.

3.4.2 The power and influence of regional campaigning NGOs

The growth of campaigning NGOs across Africa marks a pivotal shift in the continent's development landscape. Organisations like the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), the African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD), and the Tax Justice Network Africa (TJNA) are influential actors in Africa's development discourse. While they lack formal decision-making power within regional intergovernmental bodies, their expertise, ability to mobilise support, and grounding in grassroots concerns give them a powerful voice. Campaigning NGOs play a crucial role in shaping development priorities within African institutions and challenge regional and in-country policies that threaten the livelihoods of the continent's most vulnerable populations.

Scholars like Hiltermann (1998) and Appiagyei-Atua (2002) highlight the power of African campaigning NGOs to pressure and embarrass governments, leveraging public scrutiny and international pressure to hold them accountable for human rights violations or unsustainable practices. This approach is particularly relevant in contexts where formal opposition channels are limited. Beyond this tactic of 'naming and shaming' tactic, campaigning NGOs wield other forms of influence. Their expertise in specific areas, such as environmental protection or economic justice, allows them to contribute meaningfully to policy discussions and offer alternative development models. Furthermore, regional networks like AFRODAD or TJNA create a united front, amplifying NGO voices and making it harder for governments to dismiss them as isolated entities. The combined effect is a growing civil society sector that plays a

crucial role in shaping Africa's development trajectory, pushing for reforms and holding governments accountable for the well-being of their citizens.

Söderbaum (2007: 1356) observed that regional NGOs in Sub-Saharan Africa are adept at forging alliances across national borders, building a unified voice for change; this is in part due to the history of the collaborations between the civil societies of different countries during the anti-colonial struggles. The trend has also been documented in Ghana by Arhin, Kumi and Adam (2018: 354), noting that coalition and partnership building is done to 'build strength in numbers'. Well-connected NGOs can easily get solidarity when they are under attack, and they get support in their own campaigns. These coalitions are often well-networked regionally, giving them the power to pressure individual governments and regional blocks to act in their preferred way. These African networks empower NGOs to push for regional cooperation, ensuring that development policies consider the interconnectedness of African communities and ecosystems, vital for long-term livelihood security.

Commenting on NGOs working with people living in slums Mayne *et al.* (2023: 387) noted that campaigning NGOs democratise government by being representatives of the poor. This representation power gives NGOs the moral authority to be on strategic platforms where decisions which affect the vulnerable are made (Mayne *et al.* 2023: 373). African campaigning NGOs often see themselves, and are seen by others, as champions of those marginalised by power structures and excluded from the benefits of development. Their power hence lies in their ability to elevate the voices, stories, and demands of communities directly experiencing poverty, displacement, landlessness, or the impacts of ecological degradation (Islam 2016). NGOs challenge narratives that favour economic elites and humanise the consequences of unjust policies by bringing these lived realities to the attention of regional policymakers. Sustainable livelihoods require addressing power imbalances and ensuring equitable participation in decision-making processes. This advocacy for equity is fundamental to creating an environment where sustainable livelihoods are possible for all.

3.4.3 Advocacy and campaigning repertoires of African campaigning NGOs.

African campaigning NGOs, in advancing their commitment to social justice and improved livelihoods across the continent, employ a diverse range of tactics to achieve their goals. This section explores literature on the repertoires of contention utilised by these NGOs, in advancing their goals and objectives. By examining the spectrum of tactics they deploy, the literature sheds light on the agency of African NGOs their strategic choices within complex political contexts, and the evolving nature of their activism in the face of ongoing challenges. The following sub-sections explore eight key repertoires that feature prominently within the literature on African campaigning NGOs.

3.4.3.1 Lobbying and advocacy

The primary repertoire that campaigning NGOs such as AFRODAD utilise is direct lobbying of continent-, regional- or country-level political players to influence their decisions (Mutasa 2006: 5; Bokosi 2017: 119). This lobbying involves both formal and informal channels of communication. Karanda and Toledano (2020: 913) observed that in formal settings, NGOs, due to their power, real or perceived, often secure meetings with government officials and regional institutions leadership to present policy briefs to committees within regional bodies or deliver expert testimony during legislative hearings. Karanda and Toledano (2020), in documenting attempts by NGOs to influence the government enterprise policies, demonstrated the robust meetings and interactions with the government formally and informally. Interactions like these between governments and campaigning NGOs create room for them to advocate for specific policy changes, drawing on their research findings and the lived experiences of the communities they represent. Informal lobbying plays a crucial role as well. By cultivating relationships with key officials, NGOs subtly raise awareness of critical issues, provide background information to inform policy stances, and build trust over time, potentially making policymakers more receptive to their advocacy efforts (Dellmuth and Tallberg 2017: 15).

3.4.3.2 Public education and awareness raising

Public education and awareness-raising campaigns constitute another key repertoire of African campaigning NGOs. The extensive use of diverse tactics to inform citizens about critical issues and build broad-based support for their advocacy goals is well acknowledged (Kanji, Braga and Mitullah 2002; Nduwimana 2004; Carr and Outhwaite 2011). This involves workshops tailored to specific constituencies like farmers, women, or youth (Yeboah, Abbey and Boampong 2024), conferences bringing together experts and stakeholders to debate policy solutions (Brouwer *et al.* 2013), and publications ranging from concise policy briefs to in-depth research reports (Stoddard 2019). Apampa (2022) spotlighted the power of new digital tools such as social media in allowing African campaigning NGOs to reach wider audiences and engage in dynamic, immediate forms of public outreach. Overall, this repertoire emphasises the role of NGOs as knowledge producers and advocates, seeking to shift public discourse, raise consciousness, and ultimately build momentum for transformative change.

3.4.3.3 Community mobilisation and organising

Another observation is that African NGOs understand that public pressure is crucial for securing lasting policy change; hence, they invest in public mobilisations and building people's power. Musila (2019: 17), analysing the spreading of anti-NGO legislations in Africa, noted that outreach to policymakers has been effective when NGO activists coalesce around a common objective and develop a coherent strategy to mobilise varied demarches, including

the identification of champions within legislative bodies to carry their message. Just like their global counterparts, regional-level campaigning NGOs organise mass public gatherings and mobilisation platforms, often alongside African or regional gatherings, be it by government or the private sector. The SADC leaders' annual summit is often shadowed by the SADC People's Summit organised by regional campaigning NGOs (Zajontz and Leysens 2015: 899). The African Mining Indaba, which brings in governments and businesses, is shadowed by the Alternative Mining Indaba organised by campaigning organisations (O'Callaghan 2018). These platforms allow campaigning NGOs to frame and influence conversations in the main government/private sector-organised forums. By framing issues in compelling ways that resonate with ordinary citizens, NGOs counter narratives that favour powerful interests and highlight the lived experiences of marginalised communities. Building public pressure in this way helps ensure that regional decisions reflect the broader interests of the people, rather than just catering to political or economic elites.

3.4.3.4 Monitoring and reporting

In the arsenal of African campaigning NGOs, there is also monitoring and reporting as a preferred repertoire. African campaigning NGOs often position them as watchdogs and key sources of information on crucial issues, as Mlambo, Zubane and Mlambo (2020) highlighted. Academic literature specifically spotlights their role in documenting human rights abuses, environmental degradation, and corruption (Welch 1995; Welch Jr 2003; Thom 2021). Rigorous data collection and in-depth reporting enable NGOs to expose wrongdoing and hold powerful actors on the continent accountable (Thom 2021). These reports, as Steinberg (2011) complained about, serve to raise public awareness and influence policy debates, often forcing governments or corporations to respond to the findings they uncover. Griffin (2013), writing about human rights NGOs, highlighted the importance of credibility and meticulous research methodologies to ensure the legitimacy of NGO-produced reports. Furthermore, NGOs utilise visual media to document abuses of power, harnessing the emotive power of photography and video (Harness 2021; Thom 2021). By shining a light on hidden injustices, NGOs play a crucial role in upholding transparency, influencing public debate, and fostering a culture of accountability across the continent.

3.9.3.5 Capacity building and training

Additionally, campaigning NGOs in Africa invest in the capacity enhancement of both local organisations and communities (Kumi and Arhin 2023). African-campaigning NGOs recognise the power of collective action. They catalyse the formation of farmer groups, savings collectives, or community-based organisations, providing a platform for shared problem-solving, resource pooling, and advocacy (Kanyako 2024). Beyond merely facilitating group creation, NGOs invest heavily in leadership training, as documented by Kumi and Arhin (2023:

167) in a West African study. This crucial element equips local leaders with organisings, financial management, and strategic advocacy skills. Strengthening these grassroots groups translates into several benefits for sustainable livelihoods. They gain the ability to negotiate better prices for their produce, create community-run savings schemes for investment, and push for improved services from local authorities. This builds local capacity for long-term, self-directed livelihood development, reducing dependency on external aid and NGO projects. Kumi and Arhin (2023) concluded that these capacity-building and community investments lead to added values in advocacy, which include (i) increased voice and impact resulting from strength in numbers, (ii) enhanced credibility and visibility, and (iii) resource provision and knowledge sharing.

3.4.3.6 International advocacy and networking

International advocacy and networking form a crucial repertoire for African campaigning NGOs, enabling them to transcend national boundaries and amplify their voices on a global stage. The literature underscores the importance of collaboration with NGOs from other regions on issues of shared concern, such as climate change or global health, for example (Holmén 2002: 4; Nyoh 2020; Chilwa 2022). These partnerships allow for knowledge exchange, the development of coordinated advocacy strategies, and the creation of a more united front in international forums (Rakner 2021). African NGOs actively participate in international conferences and human rights gatherings, raising awareness of African issues and influencing global governance processes (Schapper 2018). Engagements with international institutions like the United Nations or the World Bank allow them to advocate for policies that address the specific needs and challenges faced by African countries (Denedo, Thomson and Yonekura 2017). Furthermore, international networking facilitates access to international funding streams, enabling NGOs to secure resources for their development projects and advocacy efforts (McDonough and Rodríguez 2020). By forging strategic partnerships and actively engaging with the international community, African NGOs enhance their reach and influence, ensuring that African perspectives are heard and addressed within the broader global arena.

3.4.3.7 Social research and documentation

Writing about regionally networked environmental campaigning NGOs in Morocco, El Morchid and Allah (2021) noted that these organisations invest in social research. El Morchid and Allah (2021: 83) added that they do so to develop new programs, solve problems, justify decisions, and understand the rules of public policy. Human rights organisations on the continent also conduct research to document human rights violations or analyse the potential impacts of proposed policies (Appiagyei-Atua 2002: 280). Research by campaigning NGOs often drives conversations in the public discourse and, in some instances, leads to policy or practice

changes (Rubenstein 2013). Rigorous research allows NGOs to speak with authority, backing their arguments with solid evidence and demonstrating a deep understanding of complex challenges. This evidence-based approach grants them credibility in the eyes of policymakers and the public, making their advocacy more persuasive and difficult to dismiss (Appiagyei-Atua 2002; Welch Jr 2003; Klassen-Molyneaux 2022). Further, by shining a light on critical issues through their research, NGOs contribute to greater transparency and accountability within regional institutions and policymaking processes, which effectively has the potential for positive impacts in people's lives and livelihoods (Klassen-Molyneaux 2022: 6).

The literature explored in this section showcases the diverse and dynamic repertoire of contention employed by African campaigning NGOs. From grassroots mobilisation to international advocacy, NGOs across the continent utilise a wide range of tactics to challenge entrenched power structures, advocate for marginalised communities, and promote transformative change. The multiplicity of their advocacy and campaigning repertoires allows them to adapt their strategies to evolving contexts, navigate complex political landscapes, and build strategic alliances.

3.4.4 Possible linkages of continental campaigning to local livelihoods

African campaigning NGOs play a critical, yet multifaceted, role in shaping the environment for achieving sustainable livelihoods across the continent. Their activities, whether at the continental, regional, or national level, can have cascading effects that impact individual communities and the livelihoods of their members. However, a lack of comprehensive research on campaigning NGOs, particularly regarding their impact on livelihoods, makes it challenging to definitively map the existing, potential, and future connections between their work and positive outcomes at the community level. Despite this gap, by drawing on insights from academic studies and other reliable sources, we can explore the perceived, potential, and possible avenues of influence for African campaigning NGOs and their connections to sustainable livelihoods. These linkages primarily manifest through two main channels: first, continental conventions and frameworks advocated for at the continental level, and second, support to local organisations through accompaniment and capacity building by continent-level organisations.

Conventions and frameworks advocated for and enacted at the African or regional level have a considerable impact on the lives and livelihoods of people at the community level. Continental-level campaigning NGOs advocating for democratic governance, improved environmental standards, labour rights protections, or gender equity within regional frameworks have a direct influence on the landscape, which influences social, economic, and political outcomes at the community level (Kimutai, Oluoch and Opondo 2022). One example is the regional work by ActionAid African country offices and their partners on the signing,

ratification and domestication of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) (Machemedze: 43). The charter set standards for democratic practices and good governance within member states of the African Union (Gilbert 2013). This charter ensures that the policy environment in individual countries reflects the aspirations of their populations. This is positive because civic participation in a democratic environment has a direct implication on the development of sustainable livelihoods within communities.

On the economic front, regional trade agreements, resource revenue-sharing protocols, or infrastructure investment decisions made at the regional level directly impact individual countries' economic opportunities and the livelihoods of their people. NGOs pushing for various moderations of the ambitious Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), for example, do so with a community outcomes-centric view, which creates a favourable environment for vulnerable people and local communities (International Service for Human Rights 2022). Organisations such as TJNA and AFRODAD are working on advancing prudent economic management and pushing back against economic models disadvantaging Africans. AFRODAD, for example, campaigns against the over burdening of African countries with debt, which effectively limits the fiscal spaces of governments to fund social services as they service debts (Mutasa 2006). With limited debt and improved funding for public services, local communities are bound to be able to attain sustainable livelihoods.

The strength of campaigning NGOs at the African and regional level allows them to nurture and accompany local organisations in their own local strides. Regional NGOs such as AFRODADD often work with grassroots organisations, training them from administrative components to programmatic components (AFRODADD 2024). This involves technical training, resource sharing, or strategic guidance for local advocacy efforts. These connections boost local civil society's capacity to achieve their local goals. Additionally, given the network and reach effects of regional organisations, campaigning themes at local level often get amplified to the African continent by campaigning NGOs. Efforts to combat corruption and mismanagement within individual governments have been brought to the forefront of African public discourse due to the influence of these networks (Warf 2017). This increased accountability has the potential to deter corruption and public resources mismanagement, which are detrimental to long-term sustainable development and local livelihoods.

The examples explored in this section highlight the potential linkages between the work of African campaigning NGOs operating at a continental level and the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods within local communities. While a comprehensive understanding of these complex connections remains elusive due to a lack of research, it is evident that continental frameworks for democratic governance, equitable trade agreements, and responsible resource management can create a supportive environment for grassroots development. Furthermore,

capacity-building and strategic support provided by regional NGOs to local organisations play a crucial role in strengthening local advocacy initiatives and amplifying community concerns. Overall, this discussion reinforces the urgent need for research that decodes how campaigning NGOs directly improve livelihoods at the community level—a key focus of this study. The next section will explore two illustrative cases of continent level campaigning and local impact.

3.4.5 Illustrative cases of continental campaigning and local impact

While definitively measuring the direct impact of regional campaigns on local livelihoods remains complex, the following examples demonstrate the powerful potential of African NGOs to drive positive change and foster sustainable development across the continent. Through strategic use of research, advocacy initiatives, public awareness campaigns, and legal challenges, these organisations tackle multifaceted issues that deeply affect the lives of communities. Here we explore the two illustrative cases, one on efforts to combat illicit financial outflows and the other on safeguarding democratic rights and digital freedoms.

3.4.5.1 Case One: Combating tax evasion and illicit financial flows

African organisations, like TJNA, AFRODAD, and their national partners tackle the systemic issue of revenue loss due to tax avoidance and illicit financial flows (Abugre *et al.* 2019; Chamisa 2020). Through in-depth research, they exposed the use of tax havens and complex corporate structures designed to minimise tax liabilities in African countries (Chamisa 2020). This work, combined with lobbying efforts for greater financial transparency and public awareness campaigns about illicit financial flows, strengthens both public and political pressure for fairer tax laws. Ultimately, they advocate at the African Union level for increased regional cooperation in tackling this issue. Success in this arena would allow African governments to potentially recapture significant lost revenue, which could then be reinvested in crucial public services like healthcare and education, forming the bedrock for long-term, sustainable livelihood improvement across the continent.

3.4.5.2 Case Two: Promoting press freedom and digital rights

Organisations like the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA), Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA), and their network of national partners are vital defenders of press freedom and digital rights across Africa. Wasserman (2021) noted that these organisations relentlessly monitor and expose press freedom violations, provide legal support to journalists facing persecution, and strategically challenge repressive laws that stifle freedom. Furthermore, they conduct public awareness campaigns on digital rights and train journalists in cybersecurity, empowering both media professionals and ordinary citizens (Roberts 2021). These efforts lead to tangible outcomes like the release of unjustly detained journalists, sometimes overturning

repressive legislation, and increasing scrutiny of governments that engage in online censorship or surveillance (Lesotho 2021; Alfandika and Ufuoma 2022). A free press and secure digital space are essential for fostering transparency, accountability, and informed public discourse, all crucial components for the attainment of sustainable livelihoods. By holding governments accountable and ensuring citizens are informed, these organisations pave the way for better decision-making, resource allocation, and the protection of rights essential for long-term development.

These success stories spotlight the diverse tactics employed by African campaigning NGOs, underscoring their capacity to shape regional policy, ignite public dialogue, and ultimately contribute to a more transparent and accountable environment, which is essential for advancing sustainable livelihoods. While challenges exist in definitively measuring their impact, their role as a catalyst for change is undeniable. By tackling complex issues like economic inequality, corruption, and human rights abuses, these regional NGOs lay the crucial groundwork for communities to break free from cycles of poverty and build more resilient and prosperous lives.

3.4.6 Challenges of African campaigning NGOs

African campaigning NGOs confront a unique set of challenges that significantly impact their work and effectiveness. The main challenge is around several criticisms that threaten their moral standing in the wider development discourse. While some criticisms mirror those levelled at global NGOs, African regional NGOs also grapple with limitations specific to their operating environments. Understanding these challenges is crucial for a balanced and objective assessment of their work. Key among these criticisms are concerns about their democratic legitimacy, the potential for undue donor influence, and the lack of robust frameworks to measure their real-world impact. Additionally, African NGOs also navigate complex political landscapes with limited resources while navigating the vast spectrum of competing development priorities within the continent.

3.4.6.1 Democratic mandate deficiency

The first criticism that African campaigning NGOs face, like their global counterparts, is that they lack democratic legitimacy and that their alignment is not with the best interests of the people (Institute for Security Studies 2010). While they often champion causes in the name of marginalised communities, those communities do not directly elect them. This raises concerns about whose voices they truly represent and whether they possess the mandate to speak on behalf of the grassroots. Manji and O'Coill (2002: 568) at the turn of the millennium wrote that "(African NGOs') work contributes marginally to the relief of poverty, but significantly to undermining the struggle of African people to emancipate themselves from economic, social

and political oppression". This characterisation is continuously popular in Pan-African political discourse, and it is mainly driven by a lack of direct accountability to the communities these organisations serve (Manji and O'Coill 2002; Shivji 2006). These democratic deficits weaken public trust and undermine the long-term sustainability of livelihood-focused interventions. Legitimacy and accountability are crucial for NGOs hoping to catalyse lasting change. Without the active buy-in and trust of communities, interventions may be misaligned with local priorities or lack the grassroots ownership needed for long-term success.

3.4.6.2 Donor reliance and mission drift

The second criticism is that the funding landscape for African NGOs often involves significant reliance on donors from the Global North (Shivji 2006: 39; Wright 2012). To illustrate this, Wright (2012: 126), citing Kramer (1981: 158), quoted the African proverb, *'if you have your hand in another man's pocket, you must move when he moves'*. This reliance creates a power dynamic where NGOs feel pressured to align their work with donor priorities, potentially diverting attention and resources away from the most pressing needs identified by local communities (Wright 2012: 128). When NGO agendas are primarily driven by donor demands, there is a risk of focusing on superficial or externally defined notions of livelihood improvement, rather than those that resonate with lived realities. This is exemplified by arguments pushing back against NGOs drive for agroecology; some scholars argue that this is not in the best interests of communities and their quest for sustainable livelihoods (Njoroge 2020). This mismatch can thus lead to unsustainable projects that fail to address underlying structural limitations or result in reversals as the case of discourse failure argued by Will and Pies (2016). Furthermore, a donor-centric focus erodes local ownership of development initiatives, undermining the long-term resilience and self-reliance vital for sustainable livelihoods.

3.4.6.3 Neo-colonial and imperial linkages

The third criticism is that African campaigning NGOs were born in the womb of neo-liberalism and knowingly or otherwise are participating in the imperial project, or at least in the process of refurbishing the imperial image (Manji and O'Coill 2002: 577; Shivji 2006: 46; Sakue-Collins 2021). This criticism is based on the intellectual grounding that drives the development discourse in Africa, with Western donors putting out calls for African NGOs to apply for funding within their frame of thought and ideology. Shivji (2006) admitted that there are very fine and dedicated people working in Africa's NGO sector who are genuinely committed to the struggle to better the African continent. But Shivji (2006) further noted that, "there are serious blind spots and silences in the NGO discourse which objectively result in the NGO world participating in the imperial, rather than the (African) national, project". Shivji (2006: 46) cemented this idea by saying, "for NGOs cannot be pro-people and pro-change without being

anti-imperialist and anti-status quo”. His reaction was based on an analysis that demonstrates that poverty, weak livelihoods, and underdevelopment are products of a global imperial system and not accidental. NGOs funded by the same institutions that champion colonialism cannot thus be the solution to African livelihoods problems. To address these deficiencies, Manji and O’Coill (2002: 582); Shivji (2006: 46) argued that NGOs must engage in a critical discourse and political activism rather than assume a false neutrality and non-partisanship being driven by their Global North donors.

3.4.6.4 Limited attribution ability

The fourth concern is that African campaigning NGOs often grapple with the difficulty of definitively demonstrating the link between their advocacy efforts and long-term improvements in livelihoods. Shivji (2006: 40) noted that “while most NGOs may insert in their charters a vision or a mission statement with vague, amorphous words like ‘poverty-reduction’, ‘social justice’ ‘sustainable development or ‘sustainable livelihoods’, these are often meaningless and they are quickly forgotten” and what takes over are the so-called strategic plans and log-frames, which can be tabulated, quantified and ticked for triennium reports and proposals for more funding. Shivji (2006: 40) argued that the ‘successes’ of an NGO are measured by how efficiently it is managed and the criteria for measuring efficiency are borrowed from the corporate sector, where community interests are secondary. Even when positive outcomes are recorded, they may as well be due to multiple factors, making it difficult to isolate an NGO’s specific impact. Furthermore, systemic change is often slow and hard to quantify. While NGOs might secure important policy shifts, translating those into tangible improvements for marginalised communities can take considerable time and depend on effective implementation. Without clear methodologies to measure their contributions, NGOs struggle to prove their effectiveness, potentially hindering public support. The focus on measurable outcomes can incentivise NGOs to prioritise short-term projects with easily quantifiable benefits over tackling more complex but essential root causes of livelihood vulnerability (Shivji 2006; Banks, Hulme and Edwards 2015). An inability to articulate their contributions clearly also makes it harder for NGOs to secure public backing needed to pressure governments for sustained action on the systemic issues they challenge.

3.4.6.5 Political repression

In addition to these criticisms, campaigning NGOs also face several challenges. Chief among these challenges is political repression, which is well documented (Makoba 2018; Musila 2019). African NGOs frequently operate in political environments where governments are hostile to criticism or dissent (Hofisi and Hofisi 2013: 295; Herrold 2016; Musila 2019). Since 2004, there has been a spike in anti-NGO legislations in African countries, as depicted in **Figure 3.1** (Musila 2019). African NGOs advocating on sensitive issues like human rights,

corruption, or environmental justice often face harassment, legal restrictions, or outright bans. Cases of harassment, arrests, and deportations of key players in campaigning NGOs are rampant (German Institute for Global and Area Studies 2018; Amnesty International 2022; Selvik and Dupuy 2023; CIVICUS 2024a). This repressive environment limits their ability to engage in advocacy, hold powerful actors accountable, and mobilise public support—all crucial for advancing the cause for sustainable livelihoods.

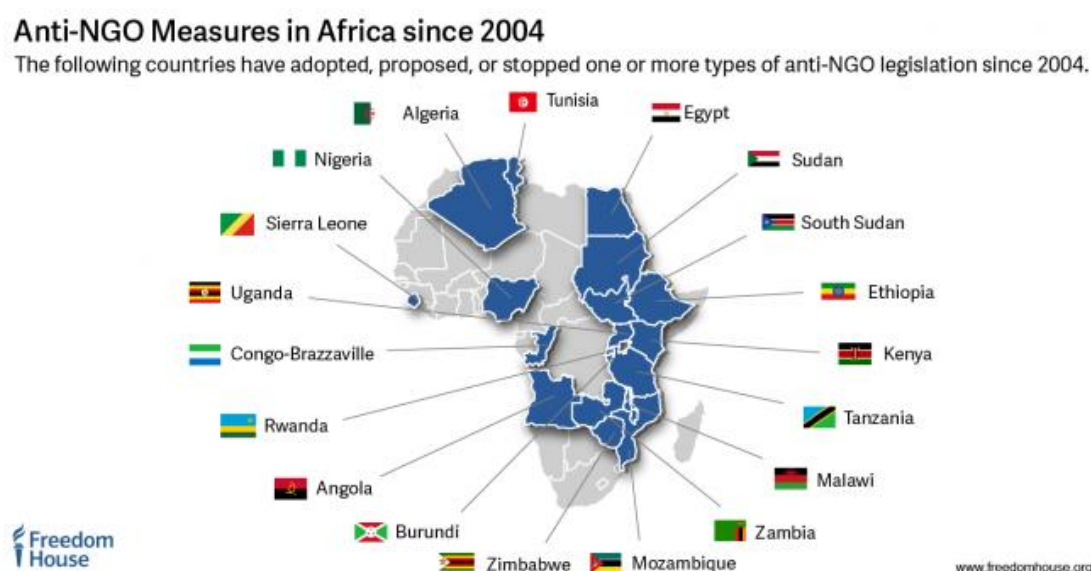


Figure 3.1 Anti-NGO legislations in Africa since 2004

Source: Adapted from (Musila 2019)

3.4.6.6. Service delivery/campaigning conundrum

The last challenge is connected to the major NGO's conundrum between campaigning and service delivery, as shown by Cascant-Sempere (2022). Shivji (2006: 40) noted that "by far the greatest number of NGOs are advocacy groups focusing on particular areas of activity such as human rights, gender, development, environment, governance, etc". In contexts of acute poverty and limited government capacity, African NGOs, if they focus on campaigning alone, risk losing the support of communities, which then seen them as 'all talk and no action' (Cascant-Sempere 2022). In practice, campaigning NGOs in Africa often confront urgent needs that go beyond pure advocacy to material support or basic service delivery in areas like healthcare or education. NGOs, to gain community acceptance and out of sheer need, are compelled to fill these gaps, potentially diverting resources and attention away from their core campaigns for systemic change. While addressing immediate needs is crucial, it highlights the challenging reality that long-term sustainable livelihood improvement requires a multi-pronged approach, supported by adequately resourced NGOs and responsive governments.

Overall, literature on campaigning NGOs in Africa has demonstrated that while they face significant obstacles, their contributions to shaping policy debates, mobilising public will and bolstering the capacity of local actors make them an indispensable force within the African development landscape. Their success in advancing sustainable livelihoods hinges on their ability to maintain deep connections to grassroots realities, embrace collaborative approaches, uphold transparency, and remain persistent in the face of setbacks. While challenges persist—and continuous evaluation and self-critique are crucial—there is reason for cautious optimism about the role of regional campaigning NGOs in working toward a future where African voices and needs guide the path towards sustainable and equitable livelihoods.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the complex and multifaceted world of campaigning NGOs, examining their operations on both the global stage and within the specific context of Africa. The chapter using framings from a vast amount of literature reached a working definition of campaigning NGOs for the study; it explored the major issues that campaigning NGOs work on around the world and, specifically in Africa. It also examined the campaigning repertoires of campaigning NGOs as well as their work and its connection to community livelihood improvements. The body of literature explored underscores the crucial role these organisations play in addressing a wide range of challenges that impact communities and ecosystems around the world.

The chapter established that global campaigning NGOs wield significant power through their ability to raise awareness, mobilise resources, and pressure governments and corporations. They play a vital role in setting international agendas, promoting human rights, and advocating for environmental sustainability. However, the chapter has also highlighted the potential pitfalls of a globalised approach. Concerns include the risk of overshadowing local voices and knowledge, promoting “white saviour” mentalities, and inadvertently disrupting local markets and economies through externally driven campaigns.

This chapter also dedicated significant attention to the critical role of African campaigning NGOs in addressing the complex livelihood and community issues facing the continent. Here, the focus lies not just on traditional campaigning but also on the multifaceted interventions undertaken by NGOs. From promoting food sovereignty through agroecological practices to combating corruption and advocating for economic justice, these organisations work to improve living conditions, empower communities, and challenge entrenched inequalities. The chapter has highlighted their dedication to marginalised groups by amplifying their voices and striving to ensure development agendas are inclusive and responsive to their needs.

Having explored the broader landscape of global and African campaigning NGOs, chapter four will explore deeper the specific case of Zimbabwe. This nation offers a compelling example of how campaigning NGOs operate within a unique political and social context. Zimbabwe has a long history of activism, and NGOs have played a significant role in advocating for democracy, human rights, and good governance, factors that contribute to the attainment of sustainable livelihoods by individuals and communities.

CHAPTER FOUR: CAMPAIGNING NGOS AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS IN ZIMBABWE

4.1 Introduction

Zimbabwe possesses a unique landscape of campaigning NGOs born out of a history of economic mismanagement, human rights abuses, and authoritarian tendencies by the government. Unlike their global and continental counterparts, Zimbabwean NGOs operate within a single, highly regulated, and often repressive civic environment (CIVICUS 2024a). Further, the nation faces immense environmental, economic, social, and political challenges, all of which significantly impact the ability of the people to attain sustainable livelihoods (Macheka 2021: 1). This chapter examines the specific definition of a campaigning NGO in Zimbabwe; it explores issues that they work on and delves into the power dynamics in their workings. The chapter will further examine the advocacy and campaigning repertoires adopted by Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs as they aim to promote sustainable livelihoods. This will be followed by an illustrative case study demonstrating the key success of Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs. The chapter will then critically examine literature on the challenges and criticisms faced by campaigning NGOs within Zimbabwe's context. The chapter will conclude by highlighting the existing gap in scholarly literature exploring the precise connection between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in the Zimbabwean context.

4.2 Defining campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe

The definition adopted for this study in chapter three is that campaigning NGOs are *formal, independent social organisations that advocate for change at various levels (local, national, international) using a mix of strategies, with a focus on public engagement and influencing policy and practices across government, businesses, civil society, and other social spheres*. In the Zimbabwean context, this definition requires further qualification, especially considering that there are local juridical frameworks that define and categorise NGOs. NGOs in Zimbabwe are mainly categorised as private voluntary organisations (PVOs), trusts and common law universitas. The Private and Voluntary Organisations Act [Chapter 17:05], serves as the operational legislation governing NGOs, especially service delivery NGOs. Some NGOs in Zimbabwe are registered as trusts by the Registrar of Deeds under the Deeds Registries Act [Chapter 20:05]. Trusts may have unlimited objectives and are intended to benefit an identifiable constituency. Universitas are organisations that have members and a constitution, unregistered but with a common-law persona. This type of NGO is not regulated by statute and is a product of common law.

The PVO Act defines a “private voluntary organisation” as:

Any, body or association of persons, corporate or unincorporate, or any institution, the objects of which include or are one or more of the following (a) the provision of all or any of the material, mental, physical or social needs of persons or families; (b) the rendering of charity to persons or families in distress; (c) the prevention of social distress or destitution of persons or families; (d) the provision of assistance in, or promotion of, activities aimed at uplifting the standard of living of persons or families; (e) the provision of funds for legal aid, (f) the prevention of cruelty to, or the promotion of the welfare of, animals; (g) such other objects as may be prescribed; (h) the collection of contributions for any of the foregoing; but does not include (i) any institution or service maintained and controlled by the State or a local authority; or (ii) any religious body in respect of activities confined to religious work; ...

This expansive definition highlights what is and what is not a private voluntary organisation by law in Zimbabwe; however, it does not give any form of categorisation according to the focus area. In practice, many entities in the wider civil society situate themselves in the main six categories as prescribed by law. Service delivery NGOs can be situated in any of the five categories depending on their focus area; however, campaigning NGOs mainly fit into the second part of category (d) which outlines “promotion of activities aimed at uplifting the standard of living of persons or families”.

Most “civil society organisations” that fit the established definition of “campaigning NGOs” are registered as trusts under the Deeds Registries Act (Saki 2009; Sibanda 2022). Trusts are dealt with by the Department of Deeds, Companies, and Intellectual Property, which is administered by the Ministry of Justice Legal and Parliamentary Affairs. Trusts typically have unlimited objectives, which are often intended to benefit an identifiable constituency. This method of registration has fewer administrative processes compared to the PVO registration, and most CSOs are registered under this to enable their work in advocacy and campaigning (Jongwe 2016: 24). Due to limited registration and operational constraints some service delivery NGOs are also registered as trusts, which effectively makes a difficult distinction between different forms of NGOs and their registration framing (Jongwe 2016: 24). Some organisations also operate as unregistered voluntary associations or organisations in terms of the common law. These entities have members, a constitution and activities that are entirely for the benefit of their members. Without formal registration, however, their operations are more constrained in both fundraising and in carrying out activities.

The Zimbabwe legal framework does not provide for a common working definition of an NGO; it does not mention the word NGO. However, these can be situated within two legal frameworks, the PVO Act and the Deeds Registries Act, and outside legal frameworks, such

as universitas. This lack of definition and the multiplicity of regulatory frameworks complicate any attempt to formulate a juridical definition of an NGOs including campaigning NGOs. Sociological definitions, as Martens (2002) categorised the forms of NGO definitions, do not offer any new explanations specific to the Zimbabwean context. Many scholars just refer to NGOs in Zimbabwe as the “civil society” without disaggregating it further (Muneri 2016; Muchadenyika 2017; Musekiwa, Zhou and Mandiyanike 2023). By doing this, scholars are succumbing to the concern raised by Martens (2002: 277) about sociological framings that end up lumping everything together. For clarification purposes, however, civil society as an umbrella term encompasses a diverse range of non-governmental actors, including community-based organisations, religious groups, professional associations, and social movements, as highlighted by Edwards (2013) in the Oxford Handbook of Civil Society. These actors may not always be engaged in either campaigning or advocacy efforts as the established definition of campaigning NGOs entails.

To establish the inclusion/exclusion criteria for certain organisations in this study, one or more factors must be considered when determining a working definition of campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe. Many civil society organisations in Zimbabwe are not strictly in campaigning or in service delivery. Organisations often conduct service delivery activities, for example, the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), a leading CSO in Zimbabwe, provides legal assistance to the people in human rights-related cases; however, the core of the organisation’s work is to advocate for human rights in general (Kaaba, Hinfelaar and Zhou 2020). The blurring of lines here requires a slight modification of the working definition of campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe. The new context-specific definition is as follows: *campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe are formal, independent social organisations that mainly advocate for change at various levels (local, national, international) using a mix of strategies, with a focus on public engagement and influencing policy and practices across government, businesses, civil society, and other social actors.* This definition reflects that some organisations recognised as campaigning NGOs also engage in service provision and other activities that may not necessarily be campaigning or advocacy. The only distinction is that the majority, of their work should be in campaigning, public engagement, and advocacy for it to be recognised as a campaigning NGO.

4.3 Key Livelihood issues addressed by campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs are stakeholders in addressing a complex web of livelihood and community challenges. This section examines their work in eight critical areas: environmental protection, climate justice, natural resource governance, human rights advocacy, political participation and democratic governance, access to essential public

services, and conflict resolution and peacebuilding. These multifaceted interventions highlight the interconnected nature of these issues and underscore the role that NGOs play in advocating for policies and practices that promote sustainable livelihoods and the well-being of Zimbabweans in various communities.

4.3.1 Environmental protection

Within the multifaceted efforts of campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe, environmental protection emerges as a crucial area of intervention (Mapira 2017: 2818; Marambanyika and Beckedahl 2017: 8). This focus is unsurprising, considering the nation's vulnerability to environmental degradation on its resource-dependent economy and social fabric, as demonstrated by Mapira (2017). Several studies and government reports have highlighted the critical role of NGOs in raising awareness about environmental threats and advocating for sustainable practices (Montana and Mlambo 2018; METHI 2020). Organisations such as the ZELA use legal strategies to challenge environmentally destructive projects and hold polluters accountable (Musemwa 2018; Soyapi 2020). Others, such as the Zimbabwe Sunshine Group, promote resource recovery and waste management practices at the community level (DEVEX 2024). It is understood that deforestation and unsustainable land management practices pose significant threats to livelihoods and environmental stability in Zimbabwe. NGOs such as the Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources (SAFIRE) work with rural communities on reforestation initiatives and promoting sustainable agriculture techniques to combat land degradation (Chigumira *et al.* 2019: 34). Studies highlight the effectiveness of community-based natural resource management initiatives spearheaded by NGOs, fostering local ownership, and promoting long-term environmental protection (Montana and Mlambo 2018; Musemwa 2018; Chigumira *et al.* 2019: 72). The literature also acknowledges that NGOs ensure that community participation over environmental solutions remains essential (Chigumira *et al.* 2019).

4.3.2 Agriculture and climate adaptation

Agriculture and climate adaptation is another area of work advanced by Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs. The urgency of climate change adaptation is a key theme in conversations advocated by Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs (Chanza 2018; Hlatshwayo and Qutieshat 2024). These are relevant themes given that Zimbabwe in general and smallholder subsistence farmers in communities in particular depend on rain-fed agriculture, which is being upended by the effects of climate change (Ndebele-Murisa and Mubaya 2015: 157). As Chitiyo and Duram (2019) and Phiri *et al.* (2021) observed, NGOs in Zimbabwe recognise the need for immediate action and advocate for policies that support climate-resilient agricultural practices. Organisations such as Fambidzanai Permaculture Centre (FPC), Participatory Ecological Land-use Management Zimbabwe (PELUM), and Zimbabwe Organic Producers

and Processors Association (ZOPPA) champion the use of drought-resistant seed varieties and promote improved water management techniques to equip farmers with tools to cope with changing weather patterns (Chitiyo and Duram 2019: 141). NGOs also initiate conversations around climate mitigation and call for climate financing; however, the literature demonstrates that the primary focus is adaptation, ensuring that communities are more resilient to the climate crisis (Hlatshwayo and Qutieshat 2024).

4.3.3 Natural resources governance

Zimbabwe possesses significant natural resources, yet their potential to drive equitable development is often undermined by a lack of transparency, corruption, and the marginalisation of local communities in decision-making processes (Saunders 2017; Chigumira *et al.* 2019). Campaigning NGOs in the country are engaged in trying to address these governance challenges. Organisations like the Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG) and the ZELA actively monitor the extractive industries, exposing cases of corruption and opaque revenue flows (Mathende and Nhapi 2017; Manduna 2023). Their research and advocacy campaigns push for greater transparency in contract negotiations, licensing processes, and the management of resource revenues, promoting accountability to the citizens who ultimately own these natural assets (Saunders 2017: 10). These organisations also act as vital watchdogs, highlighting instances where mining or other resource extraction projects displace communities without adequate compensation or consultation, as documented by (Manduna 2023). They often provide legal support to affected communities, challenging infringements of land rights and advocating for policies that uphold the principle of free, prior, and informed consent (Chatiza *et al.* 2015; Manduna 2023). Additionally, campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe champion responsible mining practices, pushing for environmental safeguards and ensuring that resource extraction aligns with the United Nations SDG) (Makaza and Chimuzinga 2020). These efforts are aimed at mitigating the negative social and environmental impacts often associated with resource extraction projects, ensuring that Zimbabwe's natural wealth contributes to the long-term well-being of people and communities rather than fuelling conflict or environmental degradation.

4.3.4 Human rights

Engagements by campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe are often themed around human rights (Muneri 2016). This focus is justified given the history of human rights abuses and continuous concerns regarding limitations on freedoms and democratic space as documented by academics such as Mhiripiri (2015) and Helliker and Murisa (2020). Organisations such as the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, a coalition of twenty-one human rights NGOs in Zimbabwe, work on the promotion of civil and political rights (Chitimira and Mokone 2016). The Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), for example, provide legal aid and

representation to victims of human rights violations such as arbitrary detention, torture, and political persecution (Kaaba, Hinfelaar and Zhou 2020). The multiplicity of campaigning NGOs also monitor elections and document instances of voter intimidation, working to ensure transparent and credible democratic processes (Sasa 2022: 119). Other specific rights NGOs work on include women's rights (Mafa and Kang'ethe 2019: 44), children's rights (Mwapaura *et al.* 2022: 7), and minority rights (Murai 2023: 2). Literature demonstrates that Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs are vocal defenders of human rights (Mhiripiri 2015; Helliker and Murisa 2020). Their work in providing legal aid, monitoring human rights abuses, and advocating for policy changes contributes to safeguarding the fundamental rights of all citizens, which are foundations for the attainment of sustainable livelihoods by individuals and communities.

4.3.5 Political participation and democratic governance

Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs play a central role in promoting citizen participation in democratic processes, demanding accountability, and strengthening the foundations of good governance. This engagement is crucial to ensure that policies reflect the needs and aspirations of the people. The primary way in which NGOs do this is through civic education, election observation, and electoral environment monitoring (Machemedze 2023). Mapuva (2007), in a study of organisations, such as the National Constitution Assembly (NCA) and ZimRights, found that Zimbabwean NGOs, through civic education, play a vital role in promoting citizen participation in governance processes, which effectively leads to more sound public policies. On the other hand, organisations such as the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) and the Elections Resource Centre (ERC) prioritise electoral integrity through monitoring campaigns, voter registration, and elections observation (Sasa 2022). ZESN and ERC conduct parallel vote tabulations, issue reports on observed irregularities, and advocate for reforms that promote free, fair, and credible elections (Gumbo 2020a: 325). Gumbo (2020a) has shown that campaigning NGOs engaging in extensive voter education campaigns, particularly in marginalised communities, explain registration processes, voting rights, and the significance of participation. Literature has shown that NGOs understand that informed and active citizens are the bedrock of a healthy democracy, and they have been working to ensure citizens' participation (Mavhiki 2016; Mapuva 2020). Additionally, NGOs also act as watchdogs for democracy, challenging legislation that restricts civic space, undermines democratic processes, and hinders citizens' participation (Chikoto-Schultz and Uzochukwu 2016b; Mavhiki 2016; Mlambo, Zubane and Mlambo 2020).

4.3.6 Access to essential public services

Campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe also work toward equitable access to essential public services, primarily education and healthcare. They actively advocate for policies and practices that dismantle the systemic barriers that prevent marginalised populations from accessing

these fundamental rights. Their multifaceted approaches, which include policy-level engagements, aim to improve the delivery and quality of essential services. In education, NGOs champion the right of all children to quality education, regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, or geographic location (Muchadenyika 2017). Simon and Sikoyo (2021: 14) documented a case of the Education Coalition of Zimbabwe (ECOZI), a coalition of NGOs advancing education in Zimbabwe, succeeding in making the government provide additional budgetary allocations to the education sector in 2020. Campaigning NGOs also advocate for increased investment in teacher training, improved school infrastructure, and the development of inclusive curricula that cater to diverse student populations (Makusha 2023). In healthcare, NGOs hold governments accountable for ensuring universal access to quality healthcare services (Community Working Group on Health 2017). NGOs champion maternal and child health initiatives, raise awareness about disease prevention, and offer HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment support. Many NGOs engage in advocacy around strengthening health systems, pressuring governments to increase budgetary allocations to healthcare, improve medicines procurement, and combat corruption within healthcare sectors (Community Working Group on Health 2017).

4.3.7 Conflict resolution and peacebuilding

Campaigning NGOs also work on fostering peace and mediating conflict in Zimbabwe (Makwerere 2017: 64). These organisations address tensions and grievances at various levels, from interpersonal disputes to broader community and national conflicts (Chivasa 2022; Chinyonga and Kurebwa 2023). First, they facilitate dialogues and mediate in conflict resolutions using their existing proximity with communities. Murwira (2022) documented how campaigning NGOs emerged in peacebuilding using the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), using local cultures, language, idioms, and practices mainly in the rural areas with the aim of transforming conflict hotspots into zones of peace. Second, they engage in peacebuilding initiatives, cultivating a culture of peace especially considering the history of political violence and political polarisation in Zimbabwe. Organisations such as Heal Zimbabwe Trust (HZZT) organise workshops and training programs that equip citizens with the skills to identify potential conflicts, engage in constructive dialogue, and promote positive social change (Murwira 2022). Third, NGOs engage in advocacy for inclusive governance and human rights to foster peace. NGOs recognise that sustainable peace hinges on just and inclusive governance. They advocate for policies that address root causes of conflict, such as social inequalities, political exclusion, and lack of economic opportunities (Tofa 2018). Campaigning NGOs are critical actors in fostering a culture of peace and resolving conflicts in Zimbabwe. Through their work in facilitating dialogue, promoting peacebuilding skills, advocating for just

governance, and supporting victims, they contribute to more peaceful communities where more stable and sustainable livelihoods can be built.

Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs operate across a broad spectrum of livelihood issues, reflecting the complex and interconnected challenges faced by communities. From environmental protection to political participation, access to essential services, and conflict resolution, NGOs tackle the root causes of poverty and vulnerability. Their combined efforts in promoting environmental sustainability, climate resilience, rights-based approaches, good governance, and peacebuilding demonstrate the holistic strategies needed to support Zimbabweans in building secure and sustainable livelihoods for themselves and future generations. Understanding the contributions of these multifaceted organisations is essential to recognising their potential as agents for social transformation.

4.4 Sources of power for Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs

Zimbabwe has numerous campaigning NGOs engaged on subjects ranging from economic justice, climate justice, women's rights to agricultural development (Chipato, Ncube and Dorman 2020; Dendere and Taodzera 2023). These NGOs occupy a complex and often challenging space, facing political restrictions, resource limitations, and competing agendas (Masunungure 2014: 20). Yet, they remain a crucial force, accumulating a lot of power and influence within existing governance structures, steering the government, corporations, and religious institutions towards their preferred policies (DuPree 2012; Aeby 2016; Dendere and Taodzera 2023). Their sources of power include moral authority in a country where trust for the government is low (Afro Barometer 2022), deep local knowledge and close relationships with communities, strategic regional and global alliances, the ability to mobilise public support, and comprehensive media engagements. Understanding the power and influence of these NGOs in Zimbabwe is necessary in order to fully examine their potential contributions as well as the obstacles they encounter in the pursuit of creating an environment suitable for the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in communities.

4.4.1 Moral authority and public legitimacy

Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs derive significant influence from their perceived moral authority. This authority is particularly prominent in a country where public trust in traditional institutions, such as the government, is eroded, as documented by the Afro Barometer (2022) in a survey. Scholars argue that NGOs cultivate this moral authority through several interconnected factors. Grassroots interventions that allow NGOs to work directly with marginalised communities play a crucial role in building NGOs' legitimacy in communities (Muchadenyika 2017). Their interventions, whether in advocating for the provision of education

or healthcare, often stand in contrast to the perceived inaction or ineffectiveness of state institutions (Dendere and Taodzera 2023). This commitment fosters trust between NGOs and the communities they serve. Transparency and accountability further bolster NGOs' moral standing. In environments where corruption plagues both the public and private sectors, NGOs that prioritise transparent reporting and the accountable use of resources have gained credibility and public confidence (Masunungure 2014). This transparency reinforces their ethical stance and their claim to represent public interests. However, NGOs' commitment to core values, such as human rights or environmental justice, is sometimes questioned as some of their activities occasionally require collaboration with government structures (Chipato, Ncube and Dorman 2020). This collaboration sometimes creates a perception of compromised moral standing, particularly because communities generally see the government as an institution that engages in repression and corruption (Kabonga and Zvokuomba 2021; Afro Barometer 2022). Despite these concerns, NGOs in Zimbabwe, compared to the state, the private sector, and other players, command unparalleled moral authority.

4.4.2 Deep local knowledge and community relationships

Campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe possess a profound understanding of the intricate dynamics, needs, and cultural sensitivities of the communities they serve. This nuanced, on-the-ground knowledge often surpasses that of the government or external factors, such as international service delivery NGOs (Chipato, Ncube and Dorman 2020). Scholars highlight how campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe cultivate trust within communities, empowering voices that are often marginalised or ignored by centralised decision-making processes (Muchadenyika 2017; Gumbo 2020a). This deep local knowledge is a consequence of the NGOs' sustained grassroots presence and participatory approaches employed in communities they work in (Machinya 2014). NGOs invest time and resources to forge meaningful relationships with communities, prioritising dialogue, collaboration, and respect for local traditions and customs (Dendere and Taodzera 2023). The practical implication of this community-embeddedness is that NGOs gain valuable insights into the root causes of poverty, inequality, or resource access issues, helping them to design projects and programs in ways that are both contextually relevant and locally sustainable (Masunungure 2014). By prioritising community participation, NGOs equip communities with tools for self-advocacy and long-term development, moving beyond just speaking for them, and towards speaking in partnership with them.

4.4.3 Local coalitions and strategic international alliances

Zimbabwean-based campaigning NGOs recognise the power of strategic alliances with local organisations, regional partners, international NGOs, donor agencies, and human rights organisations. These alliances provide essential forms of support, including access to

resources, wider platforms for advocacy and, most importantly, a degree of protection considering the restrictive political environment in Zimbabwe (USAID 2021: 10). Through global, regional, and local advocacy networks, Zimbabwean NGOs amplify their voices, raising awareness of human rights violations, restrictions to participation, or policy failures that may not receive the same attention when highlighted by one or a few organisations (Chipato, Ncube and Dorman 2020). This increased visibility pressures the Zimbabwean government or other players to respond to their concerns. As observed by USAID (2021) assessment, campaigning NGOs coalesce into coalitions and networks at the local level. Some of such coalitions include the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CiZC), the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, and the National Association of Youth Organisations (NAYO). The USAID (2021: 10) assessment further observed that these coalitions consolidate their efforts, maximising reach, and increasing leverage when advocating for policy change. Coalitions and networks, both local and international, are thus a key source of power and influence in the local governance systems.

4.4.4 Strategic media engagements

Campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe actively cultivate relationships with the media, recognising its crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing the priorities of policymakers. Tsarwe (2020: 125) situated the Zimbabwean media, especially privately owned media, with the wider civil society. Campaigning NGOs and the media often fight for the same issues in collaboration, as documented by Mugari and Olutola (2018). By forging strong connections with journalists and media outlets, NGOs strategically amplify their messages, ensuring that critical development issues reach a wider audience and remain in the public spotlight. These strategic media engagements allow NGOs to counter dominant narratives, frame debates in ways that resonate with ordinary Zimbabweans, and hold those in power accountable, ultimately pushing for policies that align with the aspirations for sustainable livelihoods. In a country where the government has a stranglehold on state media (Ruhanya 2022; Matsilele and Ruhanya 2024), campaigning NGOs have built relationships with private media and alternative media to shape the public discourse (Moyo 2011; Mungwari and Ndhlebe 2019). Existing as counterweights to state narratives, Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs have curved out an influential tool which gives them power in the local social, economic, and political discourse.

Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs possess a multifaceted toolkit that enables them to become influential forces in the Zimbabwean civic environment. Their moral authority, deep community connections, strategic alliances, and media engagements provide leverage that can be used to shape public discourse and influence policy outcomes. Understanding the NGOs' sources of power in a complex operational environment, sheds light on their role in promoting

sustainable livelihoods and advocating for the well-being of marginalised communities across the country.

4.5 Advocacy and campaigning repertoires of Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs

Zimbabwe's campaigning NGOs and broader civil society actors play a critical role in defending democratic principles, human rights, and social justice, particularly within a civic environment characterised by repression and constraining legislation. To navigate this challenging environment, they strategically employ a wide range of tactics, referred to as their repertoires of contention (Tilly 2010). This section analyses the diverse strategies utilised by Zimbabwean organisations. These strategies include public awareness campaigns, legal actions, community mobilisations, non-violent protests, monitoring and reporting, alternative development models, faith-based advocacy, and research-driven knowledge production.

4.5.1 Public education and awareness raising

Public education and awareness-raising campaigns form a foundational repertoire for Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs and civil society organisations. As the literature demonstrates, these tactics serve to inform the public about critical issues, challenge prevailing narratives, and lay the groundwork for a broader mobilisation (Bandauko 2015: 105; Maguchu and Ghozi 2022: 324). NGOs conduct workshops tailored to specific groups like farmers, youth, or women, addressing concerns such as electoral rights, access to health services, environmental protection, peace, or corruption (Moyo-Nyoni and Kiyala 2022; Phiri *et al.* 2022). These platforms bring together experts, activists, and policymakers, fostering debate and generating new ideas for advocacy campaigns (Hellum *et al.* 2013). The proliferation of social media use offers NGOs an additional dynamic platform for real-time public outreach, amplifying campaigns, and countering government narratives (Mungwari and Ndhlebe 2019). NGOs also organise community dialogues that facilitate grassroots participation, empowering citizens to identify shared concerns and develop collective strategies for addressing local injustices (Makore 2018; Dzinesa 2022). Collectively, this repertoire emphasises the role of Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs as disseminators of critical knowledge and drivers of civic engagement, a crucial step in mobilising citizens for transformative change both at the national level and in communities.

4.5.2 Legal mobilisation and strategic litigation

Legal mobilisation and strategic litigation are also crucial repertoires utilised by Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs and civil society actors. The literature highlights the use of various legal tools in instances when government decisions or actions violate human rights, environmental laws, or other development commitments (Andreassen and Crawford 2013: 29; Brickhill 2021).

The general belief is that litigation is a powerful tool to uphold the rule of law, to challenge unjust systems, and to ensure that even the most vulnerable have legal recourse to protect their rights and livelihoods. To demonstrate this, Mavedzenge (2021) presented a series of cases which were fought, and some won by campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe's legal system. Most of these cases were in connection with the enforcement of socio-economic rights since the signing of Zimbabwe's new constitution in 2013. Campaigning organisations took up cases to protect and push for the implementation of the key rights commitments of the Zimbabwean constitution (Mavedzenge (2021). Admitting that campaigning NGOs use litigation, other academics, such as Verheul (2016), characterise this as "foolishly litigious" given the lack of rule of law in Zimbabwe. Overall, what can be agreed upon is that Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs and the wider civil society actors utilise strategic litigation to advance their core commitments to communities.

4.5.3 Non-violent direct actions and protests

Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs and civil society actors, such as the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), are known for organising non-violent direct actions and protests as tactics to highlight their concerns with the government (Kasambala 2006; Mapuva 2012; Tembo and Singh 2023). Zimbabwe's case is not isolated; Boulding (2014: 18) found that "where democratic institutions are weak, NGOs encourage much more contentious political participation, including demonstrations, riots and protests". This repertoire is thus a consequence of the environment that the Zimbabwean NGOs find themselves in. Non-violent direct actions and protests are designed to generate media coverage, garner public sympathy, and ultimately force concessions from governments or institutions that are usually unresponsive (Mapuva 2012; Mungwari and Ndhlebe 2019). Scholars have documented the use of marches and demonstrations to protest electoral fraud, economic hardship, and human rights abuses in Zimbabwe since the 1990s (Mapuva 2012; Moyo 2014; Raftopoulos, Kanyenze and Sithole 2020). However, the literature acknowledges the evolving landscape of political opportunities to protest in Zimbabwe. The government has responded with increasing repression, including the use of violence and mass arrests to deter public demonstrations (Hlatywayo and Mangongera 2020; Musekiwa, Zhou and Mandiyanike 2023). This has compelled NGOs and civil society actors to adapt their tactics by utilising creative forms of protests, such as online activism to circumvent restrictions and maintain momentum (Chitanana and Mutsvairo 2019). Despite the challenges, non-violent direct actions and protests remain potent tools for Zimbabwean civil society, forcing the government to contend with citizen grievances and raising international awareness of ongoing local deficiencies.

4.5.4 Monitoring and reporting of injustices

Monitoring and reporting of injustices form a critical repertoire for Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs and civil society organisations, positioning them as watchdogs and key sources of information on crucial issues (Sibanda 2022: 15). The literature spotlights their role in documenting human rights abuses (Mwenga 2017), corruption (Maguchu and Ghozi 2022), and environmental degradation (Musemwa 2018). Rigorous data collection through surveys, focus groups, and interviews allows them to document trends and patterns of abuse, lending credibility and weight to their reports (Chikwanha 2009; Hellum *et al.* 2013; Mugari 2021). These reports serve multiple purposes. They expose wrongdoing to the public, raising awareness of critical issues that might otherwise go unnoticed (Murai 2023). Furthermore, they serve as advocacy tools, informing policymakers and international actors about the human cost of government policies or corporate practices (Muchemwa 2020: 22). By documenting human rights violations, NGOs aim to pressure the government to uphold its international obligations and ensure accountability for perpetrators. Scholars also note the government's attempts to restrict access to information and intimidate human rights defenders (Karekwaivanane and Msonza 2021; Chiweshe and Hove 2023). Despite these obstacles, Zimbabwean NGOs persist in their monitoring and reporting efforts, employing innovative strategies to gather evidence and disseminate their findings. These efforts contribute to a broader struggle for transparency, accountability, and the protection of human rights in Zimbabwe.

4.5.5 Developing alternative development models

A powerful yet sometimes ignored repertoire of campaigning NGOs involves the development and implementation of alternative development models. These models challenge mainstream economic paradigms that often prioritise growth at the expense of sustainability, social justice, and community participation (Khadse and Rosset 2017). Research highlights that NGOs play a crucial role in not just critiquing the dominant system but also in offering concrete, scalable alternatives (Nhapi 2019; Gandawa 2020). Examples include NGOs promoting agroecological approaches that prioritise biodiversity and local food security and those piloting community-owned renewable energy initiatives that provide essential services and break dependence on large-scale providers (Chitiyo and Duram 2019: 141; Hlatshwayo and Qutieshat 2024).

Gandawa (2020: 10), in a white paper proposing solutions for the development crisis in the Matabeleland region of Zimbabwe, urged the government to follow the models of delivering development that have been piloted by NGOs. Willis *et al.* (2018: 118) gave an example of the Zvandiri model developed by NGOs to address some of the key pressing issues in HIV and AIDS management. Zvandiri is a theoretically grounded, multicomponent-differentiated service delivery model for children, adolescents, and young people in Zimbabwe that

integrates peer-led, community interventions within government health services (Willis *et al.* 2018: 115). NGOs, due to limitations in funding and reach, often pilot these models in small communities where they only reach a limited number of people. The logic, however, is to demonstrate the viability of such models for the government and sometimes the private sector to intervene. The study by Willis *et al.* (2018) was an assessment of an attempt to scale up this model. The assessment showed that government buy-in is the only catalyst for seeing these models being taken up and utilised, which becomes a limitation when relations with the government are not good, as they often are. The repertoire of developing “proofs of concept” for the government holds a unique place within the strategies of Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs, and it offers a promise to provide new forms of attaining sustainable livelihoods among other community development aspirations.

4.5.6 Faith-based advocacy

Faith-based institutions hold a significant position within Zimbabwean civil society, and their moral authority and social networks form a crucial repertoire for advocacy (Saki and Katema 2011: 58). The literature emphasises the role of religious organisations in leveraging their influence to promote social justice, human rights, and community development (Saki and Katema 2011). Organisations like the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe, and the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) stand as prominent examples (Manyonganise 2020). Organisations that have been vocal have always been Christian denominations, given the majority stake Christianity has in Zimbabwe compared to other religions. The wider network of organisations rides on the moral authority of faith-based organisations, as was the case with the ‘*Save Zimbabwe Campaign*’, which was led by the Zimbabwe Christian Alliance (ZCA) (Saki and Katema 2011: 58). The campaign included campaigning NGOs and even opposition political parties.

As shown by Manyonganise (2022: 10), other campaigning NGOs took advantage of the influence of church-backed organisations, which utilises Bible-backed public statements, sermons, and workshops to raise awareness of critical issues and mobilise their vast network of churches across the country. Faith-based advocacy draws strength from the moral authority religious institutions hold within communities. Writing about the role of religious NGO groupings in peace-building, Ganiel and Tarusarira (2014) noted that they “enjoy significant trust and moral authority, commodities that are in relatively short supply in contemporary Zimbabwe”. Furthermore, when they speak out against injustice, faith-based organisations speak with a legitimacy that resonates with believers, fostering a sense of collective responsibility for social change (Manyonganise 2022). Additionally, this repertoire is often effective because churches and other faith-based organisations possess extensive social networks that extend to rural areas and marginalised populations, offering a vital platform for

outreach and mobilisation (Magezi 2017). Despite pressures to be apolitical, faith-based organising remains a powerful repertoire utilised by Zimbabwean organisations to advance their core objectives.

4.5.7 Research and knowledge production

Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs also prioritise research and evidence-based advocacy as their cornerstone campaigning and advocacy strategies. Makonese (2016) observed that they understand that to truly influence policy, arguments must be rooted in credible data and analysis. Rigorous research projects, detailed reports, and comprehensive policy briefs form the backbone of their advocacy work. This approach was demonstrated by the Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU) in 2016. Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU) (2016) produced a research report titled *Reluctant Reformers: Legislative Misalignment and the New Constitution*. The report sheds light on the government's failure to abide by the provisions of the new Constitution in respect of four main areas: (i) voter registration; (ii) operationalisation of the Zimbabwe Gender Commission and National Peace and Reconciliation Commission; (iii) the powers of the National Prosecuting Authority; and (iv) criminal procedure. The report concludes by stating that:

Zimbabwe's Constitution is currently being violated in several ways—the failure to establish constitutionally required institutions, the failure to introduce new legislation to give effect to the Constitution and the failure to amend or formally remove legislation which has become unconstitutional by virtue of the new charter, referred to by the misnomer of 'alignment.' The latter process, which merely gives formal recognition to an extant situation on account of such laws already having been rendered void, has proved a convenient fig leaf for government. (Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU) 2016)

The report by RAU has helped to highlight what is widely believed to be governmental reluctance to embrace the new constitution and ensure that citizens enjoy their constitutional rights. Academics from various institutions have made similar contributions as documented by Makonese (2016: 173). NGOs, as trusted sources of information, effectively drive change, by exposing flaws in existing policies and offering data-driven alternative solutions. By strategically framing research to resonate with Zimbabwe's specific development challenges, NGOs make their advocacy both compelling and aligned with the broader development goals of the nation.

Zimbabwe's campaigning NGOs and civil society actors employ a multifaceted arsenal of tactics to navigate a challenging political environment and advocate for positive change. From grassroots awareness campaigns and strategic litigation to protest actions, research, and

faith-based initiatives, they demonstrate remarkable adaptability in their repertoire of contention. The value of this diversity lies in its ability to address different audiences, pressure points, and facets of injustice. Understanding the full range of these tactics is crucial for recognising the potential power of civil society to create pathways toward more equitable, just, and sustainable development in Zimbabwe.

4.6 The link between national-level campaigning to community impact

At the core of this study is a stride towards the establishment of a sound link between national-level campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe and the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in urban and rural communities across the country. There are several key factors to consider; for example, can sustainable livelihoods be achieved solely through top-down policy changes? Or can advocacy lead to changes that can be felt at the local community level? The common agreement within existing literature is that national-level advocacy, if it is to be seen as valuable, should be able to provide meaningful and lasting change in the lives of ordinary Zimbabweans in local communities—urban and rural. Using available literature on the work of campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe, this section explores the complexities of establishing the link between the national-level advocacy and community impacts. The section further showcases theoretical and practical scenarios of how national advocacy efforts translate into tangible community-level impacts, which can advance the attainment of sustainable livelihoods.

4.6.1 Challenges in linking national advocacy to local impact

Establishing a direct link between national advocacy campaigns and improved community livelihoods in Zimbabwe is a complex task. While successful campaigns can influence vital policy changes, they do not guarantee automatic, positive transformations at the local level. Here the limitations in bridging the gap between national advocacy strides and tangible community impact are explored, through the examination of issues such as ineffective policy implementation, contextual variations across communities, power imbalances, the sustainability of interventions, and the question of attribution of policy or practice change to the work of campaigning NGOs. Understanding these challenges forms a basis for a holistic examination of the nexus between national level advocacy/campaigning and meaningful improvements in people's daily lives and their ability to attain sustainable livelihoods.

4.6.1.1 Difficulty in attributing advocacy and campaigning work to results

The primary challenge in pursuing the link between the national-level advocacy and campaigning work of NGOs and specific policy or practice changes is the absence of frameworks that can demonstrate a direct causal relationship. (Gen and Wright 2013: 9). The

reality of policymaking often involves a multitude of actors, shifting political landscapes, external pressures, and unexpected events (Gen and Wright 2013: 25; Weible 2023: 72). Isolating the specific impact of individual NGO campaigns amidst this complex web of influences is a challenge for researchers and NGOs themselves in evaluating their effectiveness.

Several factors contribute to this attribution challenge:

- The messy nature of policymaking—policy changes are rarely the result of a single, linear process. Campaigns and advocacy strides are often just one piece of a broader puzzle involving government actors, interest groups, public opinion, research institutions, and sometimes even international actors (Gen and Wright 2013: 9). Therefore, dissecting their specific influence and how much NGOs “tipped the scales” is thus complicated.
- Time lags and indirect influence—the impact of NGO advocacy may not be immediate. Campaigns can plant seeds of change, raise awareness, and shift societal discourse in ways that translate into policy decisions months or even years later as the case demonstrated by Fox and Brown (1998: 490) in their assessment of NGO influence on World Bank policy changes. Moreover, some NGOs strategically choose behind-the-scenes lobbying or technical support rather than high-profile campaigns (Allan and Hadden 2017: 612), making their contribution difficult to quantify.
- Geopolitical and economic factors—broader developments outside the direct control of NGOs—often play a significant role in policy shifts as Beringer, Maier and Thiel (2019: 198) demonstrated in the European Union policy development landscape. Changes in government leadership, economic shocks, or international pressure can accelerate or derail reforms regardless of ongoing campaigns.
- Lack of documentation by NGOs—NGOs often have their own internal standards of documenting their work, which cannot be generalised with other organisations in the wider civil society. In the interest of reporting to their donors and other stakeholders, NGOs often document their work in ways which create a narrative of “their” influence and the pathways through which they contributed to the overall process (Gen and Wright 2013: 32). Given that these are processes by NGOs that have a reporting mandate to donors and stakeholders, these cannot be fully relied on as purely objective.

Overall, attributing community-level impacts to specific NGO campaigns at the national level remains a significant challenge within the scholarship and practice of advocacy. The complex nature of policymaking, indirect modes of NGO influence, and broader external factors create

a web of causality that is difficult to untangle. Connecting advocacy and campaigning victories at the national level to positive community impacts further exacerbates this challenge.

4.6.1.2 Ineffective implementation gap

Even when national advocacy and campaigning are successful in influencing policy, the challenged] remains in the implementation of such policies. These gains cannot be felt by communities without implementation. Bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, and poor implementation mechanisms create a chasm between policy intent and on-the-ground impact (Abdullahi and Othman 2020: 25; Park 2021: 30). Zimbabwe's constitution, adopted in 2013 after years of NGOs campaigning, provides a compelling example of this disconnect. Hailed as progressive, the constitution enshrined critical socioeconomic rights, including access to education, healthcare, water, and food (Chigwata 2016: 79). However, implementation has been sluggish. For example, despite the Constitution mandating the progressive realisation of the right to education, resource allocation remains inadequate, resulting in overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortages, and poor-quality education, especially in rural areas (Chigwata 2016: 82). This demonstrates that legal frameworks alone are insufficient; robust implementation mechanisms are essential for rights to become a lived reality for communities.

4.6.1.3 Contextual variations across communities

Campaigning NGOs are celebrated for macro interventions reaching more people in different communities (Hickey and Mitlin 2004: 1307; Seddiky, Giggins and Gajendran 2022). However, macro advocacy campaigns, while striving for broad societal impact, sometimes miss the inherent diversity of needs and priorities across different communities (Seibicke 2017: 125). One of the most significant limitations in directly linking nationwide campaigns to positive community impacts lies in the potential for policy solutions designed for one context to be ineffective or even harmful in another (Chollete and Harrison 2021: 213; Mukherjee, Coban and Bali 2021: 255). Here is an example of a national campaign that focused on land reform in Zimbabwe in the mid-1990s. When the government later allowed for the “chaotic” fast-track land reform, the outcomes of land reform have had vastly different implications for commercial farming areas versus smallholder subsistence communities as well as between older people and youths (Scoones, Mavedzenge and Murimbarimba 2019: 117). National-level campaigning can thus produce negative and positive impacts in different communities, making it difficult to assess if, in aggregate, the campaigning NGOs are doing more harm than good.

4.6.1.4 Differing power structures at the national and local levels

Moderating factors of national-level campaigning include the existing power dynamics within communities; these can severely limit the intended benefits in local communities. Local power structures, involving traditional leaders, influential elites, and vested interests, often hijack the

implementation process, diverting resources and undermining the positive impacts of national advocacy efforts as demonstrated by government agricultural input distributions (Matamanda, Chirisa and Rammile 2021: 450). The government of Zimbabwe has been providing rural community households with agricultural inputs for the past years (Simpson *et al.* 2018); however, the distribution of such inputs has been controlled by local leadership, leading to politicised and unjust distributions (Simpson *et al.* 2018). Understanding that local traditional leaders in Zimbabwe wield significant influence over land allocation, community natural resource management, and the distribution of benefits from development projects (Kurebwa 2020) create a situation where even progressive national policies become subject to local patronage networks, enriching those with existing power and connections while leaving the marginalised behind. Thus, national-level campaigning can be considered redundant if not accompanied by specific community interventions. Building on-the-ground relationships necessary to challenge local power asymmetries and ensure equitable resource distribution requires sustained engagement, which may not always be feasible within the scope of a national campaign and the limited resources that campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe often have (Hlatywayo and Mangongera 2020; USAID 2021).

4.6.1.5 Lack of sustained local support after advocacy wins

Securing policy wins through national campaigns is a vital step, but it often falls short of ensuring long-term sustainability and positive impacts on community livelihoods. Achieving sustainable livelihoods requires ongoing support, capacity development, and continuous engagement to solidify and expand upon the gains achieved through advocacy (Sharifinia 2021; Kaponda and Chiwaridzo 2024). However, national campaigning NGOs face challenges in maintaining this sustained engagement, posing a significant limitation to the long-term transformative potential of their advocacy work (Yanacopulos 2015; McDonough and Rodríguez 2020). This is mainly because NGO interventions initiated by national campaigns are often project-based, with funding tied to specific objectives and timeframes (McDonough and Rodríguez 2020: 8). The conclusion of a successful campaign may coincide with the end of funding, which forces NGOs to withdraw from active community engagement. This leaves communities lacking the ongoing support and resources to address emergent challenges or capitalise on the opportunities opened by policy changes. Sustainable livelihoods require that communities possess the skills, knowledge, and organisational structures to translate policy benefits into tangible improvements (Scoones 2015: 83). This often necessitates ongoing training, mentorship, and infrastructure development, which require resources and long-term commitment from NGOs. An assessment at a particular time may find positive results in communities; however, these results can easily fizzle out as time goes.

4.6.2 Theoretical scenarios of linking national advocacy to local impacts

The challenge of linking national advocacy campaigns to tangible improvements in communities has pushed campaigning NGOs, including those in Zimbabwe, as well as scholars, to proactively seek solutions. Their efforts centre on addressing key obstacles through interventions to overcome attribution challenges, confront ineffective policy implementation, navigate the inherent contextual variations across communities, challenge entrenched local power imbalances, and ensure the long-term sustainability of advocacy victories. These attempts to address some of the key limiting factors of linking macro advocacy work and local community impact reflect on a commitment by campaigning NGOs to evidence-based practice, sustained engagement, and transformative change that advances the attainment of sustainable livelihoods.

4.6.2.1 Attribution challenges

There are plausible efforts to address the attribution challenge in NGO advocacy work, reflecting a growing emphasis on evidence-based approaches (Frankenberger *et al.* 2014: 28; Hayman 2016: 9). To move beyond simplistic narratives of direct influence, various methodologies are being explored and implemented by both researchers and NGOs (Naeve *et al.* 2017; van Wessel 2018). Process tracing has emerged as a valuable tool for carefully documenting the pathways of advocacy campaigns (Naeve *et al.* 2017: 33). Process tracing involves systematically recording NGO strategies, interactions with stakeholders, and shifts in the policy landscape. This allows NGOs to create a more nuanced narrative of their potential contributions. Furthermore, combining quantitative and qualitative research techniques is recognised as essential for strengthening attribution claims (Naeve *et al.* 2017: 40). Quantitative analysis can track shifts in policy indicators and public opinion, while qualitative methods, like interviews and focus groups, capture the nuanced processes of policy change and community perceptions of NGO influence (Frankenberger *et al.* 2014: 21). Studies like those conducted by the Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU), a research-based campaigning NGO in Zimbabwe, highlight the potential of mixed methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interactions between advocacy efforts and policy outcomes (Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU) 2016).

Additionally, a focus on intermediate outcomes is proving valuable in demonstrating progress and building a stronger case for NGO impact (Glass 2017: 52). Rather than solely relying on major policy shifts, which can have long lead times or multiple contributing factors, NGOs are increasingly documenting smaller, incremental changes (Glass 2017: 52). These could include increased public awareness of an issue, shifts in policy discourse, or the formation of strategic alliances between policymakers and marginalised groups. By tracing these intermediate outcomes, NGOs can create a more robust narrative of their contributions to an evolving

advocacy landscape, even in the absence of immediate, transformative policy victories. These approaches contribute to the highlighting of the link between the work of campaigning NGOs and policy or practice changes over time.

4.6.2.2 Ineffective Implementation

Bridging the gap between policy pronouncements and tangible on-the-ground results requires a multi-pronged approach that tackles the challenges of ineffective implementation. One crucial strategy being employed by Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs involves ensuring community participation throughout the policy lifecycle (Masuku and Macheka 2021: 10). Research by Karuti (2015) emphasises that successful development interventions involve communities, not just as beneficiaries, but also as active participants in decision-making and implementation processes. Including community voices from the outset fosters a sense of ownership over policies, which can increase local buy-in and commitment to successful implementation (Albury-Crandall 2018: 19). Furthermore, campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe have been complementing national advocacy efforts with localised initiatives specifically focused on implementation (Magezi 2017; Gumbo 2020b). This approach, often referred to as “bottom-up advocacy,” empowers communities to hold government actors accountable for delivering on policy promises (Dauvergne 2023). Organisations like the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) exemplify this approach by providing legal aid and training to communities to navigate bureaucratic hurdles and advocate for their rights at the local level (Hanzi 2015; Izugbara 2021).

4.6.2.3 Addressing contextual variations

Recognising that there are inherent differences in needs and priorities across communities is crucial for maximising the impact of national advocacy campaigns. To avoid the pitfalls of one-size-fits-all approaches, campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe and researchers across the world emphasise the importance of extensive community needs assessments prior to launching initiatives (Tsigas, Hofisi and Mago 2016; Elias *et al.* 2017). In-depth consultations with community members and local stakeholders are necessary because they reveal unique challenges and potential unintended consequences of proposed policies, ensuring that interventions align with specific local realities (Eikelenboom and Long 2023). Moreover, adaptable strategies are vital for navigating contextual variations (Charleston, Gajewska-De Mattos and Chapman 2018). This adaptive approach allows for adjustments based on local needs, cultural sensitivities, and resource availability. Finally, advocating for decentralised decision-making structures is seen as a long-term solution to addressing disparities arising from contextual variations (Pandeya 2015; Ibrahim 2017). In Zimbabwe, campaigning NGOs have been vocal in advocating for devolution to open space for targeted campaigning and problem-solving in communities (Nyikadzino and Vyas-Doorgapersad 2022: 7). This approach

aims to bring decision-making closer to the people most affected, potentially enhancing the local adaptation of national policies and ensuring better alignment with community priorities.

4.6.2.4 Addressing local power imbalances

This chapter discusses how existing power imbalances within communities can significantly hinder national advocacy efforts by NGOs. To overcome these challenges, campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe attempt to adopt multifaceted approaches that empower communities, fosters accountability, and strengthens their collective voice (Mbanje 2020: 267). One crucial strategy involves building community empowerment through rights awareness training, leadership development, and fostering local advocacy skills (Manyuchi 2012: 14). Equipping community members with knowledge about their rights enhances their ability to challenge local power structures and hold authorities accountable for policy implementation. Organisations like the Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA) play a vital role in this area by providing legal literacy workshops and training community paralegals to support local advocacy efforts (Andreassen and Crawford 2013). Furthermore, establishing safe mechanisms for communities to monitor and report abuses of power perpetrated by local elites is essential (Maguchu and Maja 2023). This can involve setting up anonymous reporting hotlines, supporting community media initiatives, and creating spaces for open dialogue. Transparency International Zimbabwe (TI-Z) exemplifies this approach through their work in establishing community anti-corruption committees and providing training on how to identify and report corruption (Maguchu and Maja 2023).

4.6.2.5 Ensuring long-term impact

Securing policy wins through national advocacy campaigns is a crucial first step, but long-term sustainability and lasting positive impacts on community livelihoods require further action. Literature demonstrates that campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe have been attempting to promote the long-term viability of advocacy gains and empower communities to achieve sustainable livelihoods (Mudege and Kwangwari 2013; Muchadenyika 2017). One key approach is the implementation of “phasing-out strategies” during the planning and execution of campaigns (Rwamugira 2022). This involves creating a gradual withdrawal plan that prioritises knowledge transfer and community ownership over long-term dependence on NGO support (Rwamugira 2022: 4). Phasing-out strategies can involve empowering local champions within communities, establishing clear timelines for NGO withdrawal, and creating mechanisms for peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing. Furthermore, exploring long-term funding models beyond project-based grants is essential for fostering sustainability. This could involve convincing donors to adopt the model promoted by the Dutch Foreign Affairs Ministry, which provides core funding for local campaigning organisations so that they can be continuously engaged in campaigns without rigid programming and reporting frameworks

(Chimwaradze 2018). Additionally, NGOs can explore innovative approaches like social enterprises or supporting local revenue generation initiatives within communities as recommended by Luke and Chu (2013). These strategies can help communities generate financial resources that sustain their efforts beyond the lifespan of traditional NGO support.

Addressing the challenges that hinder the linkage of national advocacy and local impact is an ongoing process for Zimbabwe's campaigning NGOs and scholars. The theoretical and practical scenarios presented in this section offer promising strategies to overcome attribution complexities, ineffective implementation, contextual variations, local power imbalances, and lack of sustainability. By combining meticulous documentation, mixed-methods research, community participation, adaptable approaches, and an unwavering focus on building local capacity, academics and campaigning NGOs across the world and in Zimbabwe are laying a strong foundation for evidence-based advocacy that strives for genuine community empowerment. Empowering communities with the skills, knowledge, and organisational structures necessary to manage their own development trajectory (Narayan, 2000) goes a long way towards ensuring long-term sustainability. By building local capacity, NGOs are not simply helping communities but fostering self-reliance and long-term transformation. As NGOs continue to refine their strategies in the face of Zimbabwe's complex operating environment, ongoing documentation and analysis of their efforts will provide critical insights for maximising their impact and ultimately contributing to sustainable livelihoods for Zimbabwe's citizens in different local communities.

4.7 Success case of Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs

Campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe, despite facing a restrictive operating environment, have secured notable victories in their pursuit of sustainable development and improved livelihoods for the nation's citizens. These success stories demonstrate the impact of relentless advocacy, strategic alliances, and deep community mobilisation. The primary case is the signing of Zimbabwe's new constitution in 2023. Other success cases include the signing and ratification of the African Charter on Democracy Elections and Governance (ACDEG) by ActionAid Zimbabwe and the campaign for the establishment of the Zimbabwe Independent Complaints Commission (ZICC) by Heal Zimbabwe Trust. These campaigns and their successes demonstrate the power, influence, and abilities of campaigning NGOs to advocate for policy changes.

4.7.1 Campaign for a new constitution by NCA and partners

Zimbabwe's journey towards a new constitution was a decades-long process rooted in the desire for more democratic governance. Several sections of book d titled *The Implementation*

of Modern African Constitutions: Challenges and Prospects, edited by Charles Manga Fomba, covered well the dynamics around the calls by campaigning organisations and the subsequent gains made when the new constitution was signed in 2013. The Lancaster House Agreement (1979), which brought in an independent Zimbabwe's first constitution, left a legacy of concentrated executive power and unjust power dynamics. This led to calls for a constitution that enshrined fundamental rights, checked executive overreach, and genuinely reflected the aspirations of the Zimbabwean people (Hickey and Mitlin 2004: 1307). Campaigning NGOs became crucial actors in amplifying this desire for change from the late 1990s. In 1997, the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) was formed by a consortium of NGOs under the umbrella term of 'civil society' with the aim of spearheading a people-driven constitutional reform process to address the country's political, social, and economic challenges. The government responded to the NCA's formation by establishing a Constitutional Commission, but the draft constitution the commission produced was rejected by the citizens after a successful no-vote campaign led by the NCA and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) an opposition political party (Chigwata 2016: 79).

Several attempts to institute a 'home grown' constitution failed; however, organisations like the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, and various women's and youth movements remained committed to push for reform. The NCA mobilised public support through demonstrations and educational campaigns. Legal expertise was provided by networks like the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum. Women's groups fought to ensure the new constitution enshrined gender equality, while youth movements demanded a voice in shaping their future (Chigwata 2016: 80). These diverse civil society actors formed a powerful force advocating for a constitution that served the interests of ordinary Zimbabweans. However political opportunity structured (POS) opened in 2009, under the auspices of the Government of National Unity (GNU) (Makonese 2016). Following the disputed 2008 harmonised elections, ZANU-PF and the MDC entered into a peace agreement known as the Global Political Agreement (GPA). Under the GPA, the three major political parties agreed to share power under a GNU.

Article VI of the GPA provided for a review of the Lancaster House Constitution to allow Zimbabweans "to make a constitution by themselves and for themselves" (Chigwata 2016). The constitutional review was led by the Constitution Parliamentary Select Committee (COPAC), which was composed of members of the three major political parties and a traditional chief. Even though the NCA boycotted the processes due to disagreements after the first draft of the constitution was severely modified, other organisations remained engaged on the basis that there were still key gains in the draft constitution, specifically the Bill of Rights, which demonstrated itself to be progressive (National Legislative Bodies / National Authorities

2009). Women's rights organisations were particularly interested because the draft Constitution contained several changes regarding the rights of women. It contained more provisions than in the previous constitution to protect women's rights, and in many instances, this was the first time that specific issues affecting women had been considered and then included in Zimbabwe's supreme law (Chigwata 2016: 82).

Despite the challenges experienced with pushback from the ruling Zimbabwe African Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and state repression, sustained advocacy involving local and regional networks that lasted for over a decade ultimately bore fruit (Makonese 2016: 159). A 2013 referendum secured public approval for a new constitution. This document included significant advancements: a comprehensive Bill of Rights, limitations on presidential powers, the creation of independent commissions to uphold human rights and media freedom, and a framework for devolving some decision-making powers to local communities (Chigwata 2016). Civil society, led by campaigning NGOs, had played an indispensable role in achieving this victory. Campaigning organisations have been active since the late 1990s when constitutional reform was mooted. Several civic groups and coalitions were involved in the constitution-making process, which culminated in the adoption of the 2013 Constitution. The Civil Society Monitoring Mechanism (CSMM) was one such consortium formed to monitor the implementation of the work of the GNU, including the constitution review process (Makonese 2016: 162).

When the term of the GNU ended in 2013, the CSMM continued independently to monitor the Constitution's implementation (Chigwata 2016). Along with many other civic groups, the CSMM facilitates debates, discussions, and rural outreach programs to do with the implementation. In addition, civil society has provided resources to government institutions to improve their capacity to implement the new constitution. Some civic groups (and political parties) have also been visible in constitutional litigation, especially around the enforcement of fundamental human rights and freedoms (Chigwata 2016). For instance, Veritas Zimbabwe secured a Constitutional Court judgement in which marriage under 18 years of age was declared unconstitutional (Mavedzenge 2021). Thus, civic groups are playing an important role in the implementation of the constitution. Their biggest challenge, besides limited resources, is that they are considered hostile by the government, which limits the extent to which they can meaningfully engage with it.

(Chigwata 2016) demonstrated agreement with Makonese (2016) that campaigning organisations in Zimbabwe have played a critical role in seeking to ensure compliance with and the implementation of the new Constitution. This was done so in a variety of areas, including the promotion of gender equality and women's rights. Organisations leading the campaigns for a new constitution used three main strategies in this regard: advocacy, litigation,

and research. Individual organisations often employ these strategies together or collaborate with other organisations to enhance their effectiveness. Organisations such as the Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU) also undertake research to inform advocacy efforts and litigation strategies before and after the signing of a new constitution. Individual citizens have also played their part, especially in litigation to ensure that the Constitution is implemented (Chigwata (2016)).

Zimbabwe's 2013 constitution is a testament to the power and tireless work of campaigning NGOs. In principle, the new constitution established a constitutional environment that enabled the attainment of sustainable livelihoods. For this reason, it should be considered an achievement for campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe. While a progressive constitution is a major step forward, its impact on sustainable livelihoods depends on other crucial factors, most notably the sincere implementation of its provisions. Since 2013 NGOs have been focusing on ensuring that all laws are fully aligned to the constitution and the constitution is fully implemented, and its rights provisions are translated into real benefits for marginalised communities (Chigwata 2016; Makonese 2016). Economic inequality, land tenure issues, and entrenched power dynamics are also ongoing barriers to livelihoods that NGOs are still working on. Therefore, in addition to its importance, a rights-based constitution requires deeper structural reforms.

4.7.2 ACDEG signing and ratification campaign by ActionAid Zimbabwe and partners

ActionAid Zimbabwe, as part of its regional networks of other ActionAid country programs, embarked on a drive for the Zimbabwean government to sign and ratify the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) (Machemedze 2023: 46). The ACDEG, adopted in 2007 by the African Union (AU), sets standards for good governance, respect for human rights, the rule of law, and the holding of transparent and credible elections across the African continent (Sithole 2018: 67).

The Zimbabwean campaign, led by ActionAid Zimbabwe in collaboration with local partners such as the Election Resource Centre, Zimbabwe Election Support Network, Zimbabwe Peace Project, ZimRights, VERITAS, Zimbabwe Association for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation, and the Development Practitioners Network (AAZ 2019a), began in 2018, shortly after a disputed election that resulted in electoral violence and the deaths of six people (Sithole 2020: 136).

ActionAid Zimbabwe and partners used the following advocacy and campaigning repertoires to advance the campaign:

- Public awareness campaigns: ActionAid Zimbabwe launched campaigns to raise community awareness about the ACDEG and its importance in promoting good

governance and human rights. This has involved public education initiatives, media outreach, and the dissemination of materials outlining the key provisions of the Charter (AAZ 2022b).

- Direct lobbying: ActionAid also engaged in direct lobbying efforts with the relevant government ministries, including the Ministry of Legal and Parliamentary Affairs as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Development (AAZ 2019a, 2022b). Lobbying efforts were also conducted with law makers from selected parliamentary portfolio committees, which had a direct link with the signing and ratification of the ACDEG (AAZ 2022b).
- Capacity building: ActionAid Zimbabwe invested in building the capacity of local civil society organisations and community groups to amplify the call for the signing and ratification of ACDEG (AAZ 2022b). The organisation also trained law makers to bring the issue to parliament, and they trained journalists to amplify the campaign's calls in public and private media (Mkudu 2019). This capacity-building drive involved training workshops on the basic principles of the charter and key arguments why its signing and ratification could improve people's lives (Mkudu 2019; AAZ 2022b).
- Coalition building: the campaign was premised on regional partnerships with other ActionAid country programs across Africa but also with a network of local campaigning NGOs (AAZ 2019a). The campaign also collaborated with activists, human rights defenders, legal bodies, and social movements, thereby broadening the coalition, intensifying pressure on the government, and raising public visibility of the issue (AAZ 2022b).

On 21 March 2018, the government signed the charter, and after continuous engagement it ratified the charter on 06 April 2022 (African Union 2023). The signing and ratification of the charter was a significant win for campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe as it provides them with an additional tool to hold the government to a certain standard in terms of good governance, respect for human rights, the rule of law, and the holding of transparent and credible elections. Like many legal and juridical framings, their implementation is what makes the difference at the local level. The win on ACDEG has suffered some of the challenges that have been highlighted in this chapter concerning the limited spasm between such a policy win and results in communities. The 2023 elections, which happened after the signing, were disputed and there are no notable governance improvements as the same old governance challenges in Zimbabwe persist (SADC 2023; Ray and Walsh 2024).

4.7.3 Campaign for the Independent Complaints Commission by Heal Zimbabwe Trust

Heal Zimbabwe Trust (HZN), a prominent campaigning human rights organisation, has played a critical role in advocating for the establishment of the Zimbabwe Independent Complaints

Commission (ZICC)—a crucial step towards ensuring accountability within the security sector (HJT 2021b). Zimbabwe's 2013 Constitution, itself a product of relentless campaigning by NGOs, as demonstrated in this chapter, enshrines a commitment to democratic reforms and upholding human rights. Section 210 of the Constitution explicitly mandates the establishment of an “effective and independent mechanism for receiving and investigating complaints from members of the public about misconduct on the part of members of the security services” (HJT 2021b; Rusinga 2021: 210). However, the implementation of this provision faced significant delays (Human Rights Watch 2022). The government's inaction left civilians vulnerable to widely reported human rights abuses by security forces with limited recourse for seeking justice (Ndawana 2020; Tom and Chekera 2022; Ndawana and Njanje 2024).

HJT has employed two main advocacy and campaigning tactics to press for the establishment of the ZICC. Recognising the entrenched political obstacles hindering implementation of this constitutional mandate, HJT has adopted the following approaches to increase pressure on the government:

- Strategic litigation has emerged as a central pillar of HJT's campaign. By filing court applications challenging the government's inaction on the ZICC, HJT has strategically used the legal system to uphold constitutional principles and demand accountability (Nemukuyu 2016). In 2020 the Constitutional Court issued an order in favour of HJT campaigners compelling the government to gazette a bill for the ZICC by the 9th of November 2020 (HJT 2021a). This approach leverages existing legal frameworks as a tool for advocacy, highlighting the importance of the rule of law even within highly politicised contexts.
- Alongside legal action, HJT has extensively engaged in public awareness-raising campaigns. Through workshops, community dialogues, and media engagement, HJT has aimed to educate citizens about their rights regarding oversight of the security sector and the purpose of the ZICC (HJT 2021b). This emphasis on grassroots education builds public support for the ZICC and underscores the importance of public awareness as a precursor to broader societal change.

The campaign led by HJT and its partners was successful, as the government gradually started to work on instituting the Independent Complaints Commission through the promulgation of the enforcing act in 2021 (Mthombeni *et al.* 2023: 101) and the appointment of the commissioners in 2024 (Madzimure 2024). The win by HJT, especially the court case victories, also created precedents that will be useful in future advocacy efforts. However, like any national advocacy win, challenges established in this chapter also apply in this campaign for the ZICC. The true impact of such a commission can only be ascertained if the commission works independently, the government takes on the commission's recommendations, and HJT

and communities continue to sustain their engagements on the subject. The commission promises to strengthen citizens' rights, which is a fundamental enabling factor for the attainment of decent lives and sustainable livelihoods.

Campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe, while operating within a restrictive environment, have demonstrated resilience and effectiveness in securing policy victories that advance human rights, democratic governance, and the potential for sustainable livelihoods for marginalised communities. The adoption of Zimbabwe's progressive 2013 Constitution, the ratification of the ACDEG, and the push for the establishment of the Zimbabwe Independent Complaints Commission are all examples of advocacy successes. These victories underscore the importance of diverse advocacy strategies, including public awareness campaigns, strategic litigation, coalition-building, and relentless pressure on power systems. However, translating or ascertaining the link between legislative or policy wins into tangible improvements in people's daily lives remains a complex struggle. Deep-rooted power imbalances, the limited implementation of progressive policies, the need for structural reforms, and the potential for government resistance to genuine accountability continue to hinder the full realisation of sustainable livelihoods. The work of Zimbabwean NGOs should, however, be ongoing to sustain gains at the national level and in communities. However, their successes, as documented in this section, provide a foundation for continued efforts to build a more just and equitable society where decent lives and sustainable livelihoods can be attained.

4.8 Criticisms of campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe

Campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe, while widely recognised for their commitments to development and social justice, are not without their critics. Some of the most persistent criticisms revolve around their urban programming bias, which raises questions about how effectively they can serve diverse rural communities. Additionally, concerns have been raised about a lack of internal democracy and accountability within some NGO structures. Scholars such as (Chigwata 2016), Helliker (2012), and Rich-Dorman (2001) highlight these critiques, suggesting that some NGOs may unintentionally mirror the problematic power dynamics they seek to challenge. Understanding these criticisms is essential for a balanced assessment of the role and effectiveness of Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs in enabling the attainments of sustainable livelihoods in communities.

4.8.1 Urban-centric programming

Chigwata (2016) argued extensively that campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe under the auspices of 'civil society' are seen as confined to urban centres. This seems to be an extension of the colonial dynamics where organised civil society was confined to urban centres (Helliker (2012:

5). This characterisation was advanced to show that the political orientation of urban-based campaigning organisations is inherently serving the interest of the ‘elite’ that drives it. This poses a question: can their work feed into the wider communities, including rural communities? In conceptualising ‘civil society’ (Helliker 2012), noted that in academic literature there are two positions that see the Zimbabwean discourse with a civil/un-civil distinction, with civil society being in urban spaces (championed by urban-based NGOs) and un-civil society in rural spaces where the ruling ZANU-PF party dominates. This criticism is valid given that the offices of almost all national-level campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe are located in urban centres—an issue highlighted by communities in an assessment by one of the key donors of NGOs in Zimbabwe (Helliker (2012: 9).

4.8.2 Lack of internal democratic systems

USAID (2021) citing several sources, also highlighted the absence of internal democratic practices within campaigning organisations. An ethnography of urban-based civic NGOs in Zimbabwe (notably human rights organisations) from the late 1990s shows that their internal processes are often characterised by unconstitutional (and uncivil) procedures (Rich-Dorman 2001; Mhlanga 2008). (Rich-Dorman 2001) quoted Chigwata (2016), a human rights activist’s writing of 2008, where he said that Zimbabwean “civil society is showing double standards” and that it “has internalised the image of the ruling party, its tactics and general guidelines, and is therefore fearful of freedom of any meaningful change” Mhlanga (2008: 2). These criticisms take away from the credibility of campaigning organisations in Zimbabwe, where a melodramatic portrayal of good and bad has been established with NGOs occupying the positive end.

4.8.3 Poor corporate governance

Another criticism comes from the traditional donor of many campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). In an assessment of its partners (Helliker 2012: 7), noted that there is the challenge of “corporate incest,” a situation where one individual can sit on several CSO boards while some directors of the same CSOs are on the board of the same individual in several Zimbabwean organisations. To give a clear picture, USAID (2021) presented the reasons that respondents in its assessment have identified. The first is connected to the repressive nature of affairs in Zimbabwe, where a perception that human rights advocacy work poses high security risks has emerged. It is possible that state security agents can infiltrate campaigning NGOs if “unknown” people join the boards of organisations. In that case, most organisations prefer appointing known activists to their boards, and, in the end, those people can be found on several boards. Another related reason was that there are fewer well-trained and competent individuals among activists who can be appointed to boards, so they are invited to join several boards within the same sector.

On the other hand, there is also a perception that corporate incest is a direct result of nepotism. USAID (2021) quoted a participant in its assessment saying, “in some organisations, board members are not chosen based on their competency but based on personal relationships and alliances”. This characterisation demonstrates poor corporate governance in Zimbabwean-based campaigning NGOs, which demonstrate accountability gaps that can have a direct effect on the outcomes of their work.

4.9 Challenges faced by campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe

While campaigning, NGOs in Zimbabwe play a crucial role in advancing sustainable development; they operate within a complex environment fraught with political, social, and economic challenges. These challenges echo some of the issues faced by NGOs globally and within the African region, while also reflecting Zimbabwe's unique circumstances. From a restrictive political landscape to limited resources and targeted campaigns of mistrust, campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe navigate through a minefield of obstacles in their pursuit of a more just and sustainable future for the country. Understanding these specific challenges is crucial, as they directly impact the ability of NGOs to translate their advocacy work into meaningful improvements in the lives and livelihoods of Zimbabwe's most marginalised communities.

4.9.1 Political repression

Zimbabwe's history of political repression poses a significant challenge for campaigning NGOs advocating for different issues that contribute to sustainable development in the country. USAID (2021), in an analysis of the involvement of campaigning organisations in the policy process, cited Chikoto-Schultz and Uzochukwu (2016b), who observed that even though the fundamental rights to and freedom of association are guaranteed by Zimbabwe's constitution, these same rights are also “obstructed by prohibitions against unregistered groups, complex registration procedures, vague grounds for denial, re-registration requirements, and barriers for international organisations”. Such hostile regulations have consequentially reshaped the population ecology of campaigning organisations, whereby controversial organisations cease to exist, rebrand, or switch to less sensitive issues (Elone 2013: 3). The civic environment is continuously constrained with new restrictive laws like amendments to the Private Voluntary Organisations Act (Dupuy, Ron and Prakash 2015), as well as through surveillance, and outright intimidation (Kabonga, Zvokumba and Musara 2022; Dendere and Taodzera 2023). This shrinking civic space inhibits NGOs from building grassroots support, engaging in effective advocacy campaigns, and holding those in power accountable. Repression also undermines their ability to tackle politically sensitive but crucial issues like land reform,

corruption, or human rights abuses, all of which have direct implications for sustainable livelihoods.

Furthermore, political repression in Zimbabwe is increasingly taking another form; the government is creating shadowy NGOs known in the NGO discourse as government organised non-governmental organisations (GONGOs). For example, Zimbabwe's 2023 election was dominated by the operations of one such GONGO, the Forever Associates Zimbabwe (FAZ) (Munoriyarwa 2021: 20; Dendere and Taodzera 2023: 143). The Zimbabwean government has a history of employing tactics to control or co-opt civil society, undermining the transformative potential of NGOs (Nantulya 2023; The Carter Centre 2024: 43). The creation of government-sponsored NGOs (GONGOs) masquerading as genuine civil society often confuses the public, dilutes authentic voices of dissent, and competes for resources. Additionally, repressive laws and tactics of intimidation create a chilling effect, discouraging NGOs from taking bold stances on critical issues (Muneri 2016; Dendere and Taodzera 2023: 145). This calculated strategy weakens NGOs as potential catalysts for change and promoters of sustainable livelihoods for marginalised communities (Kabonga, Zvokuomba and Musara 2022).

4.9.2 Lack of funding

In an assessment of its own projects, which were implemented by Zimbabwean NGOs, (Muneri 2016) indicated that economic and financial sustainability remains the major challenge in terms of sustaining organisational capacity, given the organisations' high dependency on aid. USAID (2021: 44) added that lack of adequate funding in the sector drives competition among CSOs. This challenge becomes even more difficult in shrinking spaces for CSOs' participation and non-enabling and problematic legal frameworks that regulate the sector. In the case of Zimbabwe, "the fact that an important number of CSOs do not have core funding or direct access to funding (i.e., registered as a trust) but must access them through other organisations undermines the capacity of CSOs to become more sustainable and resilient" (USAID (2021). This might also be affecting the effectiveness of aid due to the high transaction costs of transferring funds through many organisations most of which are intermediary international NGOs (USAID (2021). This characterisation paints a picture of how, even with the drive and strategies to improve livelihoods, campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe remain constrained.

Linked to the above challenge, (USAID 2021) noted that there is competition over resources, particularly donor money, among campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe. This competition leads to implementation fragmentation and outright hostility among individual organisations, considering that NGOs in Zimbabwe are more effective when working as coalitions. In most cases, donors release funding calls for proposals, which are then implemented by individual

organisations. This leads organisations to hold on to what they consider brilliant ideas or intervention strategies, withholding important information for fear that if divulged, other organisations could take it and use it in their own funding proposals. NGOs in positioning themselves for funding end up de-campaigning others; disgruntled employees often go out to create their own organisations. This has the net effect of delaying programs from expanding quickly (Zambara (2018: 72). This challenge comes across as a criticism too of a sector whose main priority should be the community's livelihoods rather than their own individual survival.

While existing literature sheds light on campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe; distinct gaps remain, including the intricate link between their efforts and the attainment of sustainable livelihoods within the country's unique context—a gap this research contributes to filling. In the forthcoming chapter, this research outlines how the three NGOs subject to this study are effectively utilising or failing to utilise the 2013 constitution to drive on-the-ground improvements, their strategies for balancing advocacy and service delivery, tactics to navigate political restrictions, and prioritising community perspectives to understand how power dynamics impact effectiveness. By addressing these research gaps, this research provides campaigning NGOs, policymakers, and communities with the insights needed to bolster collaborative efforts aimed at securing sustainable livelihoods for the people of Zimbabwe.

4.10 Conclusion

The literature explored in this chapter reveals the complex landscape in which Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs operate. These organisations are vital for advancing human rights, promoting democratic values, and working towards sustainable livelihoods for the country's communities, both urban and rural. However, their work unfolds within a highly restrictive environment, characterised by political tensions, economic fragility, and entrenched power dynamics. Several key challenges emerge from the literature; first is the limited attribution frameworks; making it difficult to demonstrate a direct causal link between national advocacy efforts and community-level impacts. Furthermore, even when progressive policies are enacted, implementation is often ineffective due to factors like bureaucratic inefficiencies and corruption. Contextual variations between communities necessitate adaptable approaches, while deep-seated power imbalances can prevent advocacy wins from reaching marginalised groups. These challenges, coupled with funding limitations, threaten the long-term sustainability of positive change initiated by NGO interventions.

Despite these challenges, Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs exhibit remarkable resilience and strategic innovation. The literature highlights several promising approaches that they employ to maximise their impact. To counter attribution difficulties, NGOs are increasingly focused on meticulous process tracing, mixed-methods research, and tracking intermediate outcomes that demonstrate gradual progress. They are moving away from top-down models,

emphasising community participation and 'bottom-up' advocacy at all stages of policy development and implementation. To address the contextual variations across communities, NGOs are prioritising extensive needs assessments and building flexibility into their campaign designs. They are directly challenging power imbalances by focusing on community empowerment through rights awareness training, leadership development, and establishing mechanisms for monitoring and reporting abuses of power. Additionally, to foster sustainability, NGOs are exploring phasing-out strategies, diversifying funding models, and social enterprise initiatives.

Zimbabwean NGOs employ these strategic approaches as illuminated by compelling case studies within the literature. The tireless work of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) and other civil society actors played a crucial role in advocating for the enactment of the 2013 Constitution—a progressive charter that guarantees fundamental rights and imposes democratic limitations on power. The signing and ratification of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance was the result of sustained pressure by ActionAid Zimbabwe and partners. While these victories are significant, translating legal frameworks into lived realities hinges on effective implementation, which remains an ongoing struggle. Additionally, Heal Zimbabwe Trust's advocacy and litigation efforts have been instrumental in advocating for the establishment of the Zimbabwe Independent Complaints Commission, offering a potential avenue for seeking redress against abuses by security forces.

While there is a growing body of work examining campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe, this discussion highlights a crucial research gap: While literature often examines victories at the national-level or focuses on individual case studies of community interventions, research explicitly connecting the dots between national advocacy efforts and tangible impacts within local communities is lacking. This gap hampers the ability of NGOs to fully demonstrate their transformative potential and hinders the analysis of how to effectively bridge national policy goals and local realities. This research, focusing on establishing this connection, provides vital insights for both improving the practice of advocacy and maximising the potential of NGOs to campaign for sustainable livelihoods.

The pursuit of sustainable development demands a vibrant civil society where campaigning NGOs can play their crucial roles as advocates, watchdogs, and partners for marginalised communities. This chapter has highlighted the challenges they face, the hard-won nature of their successes, and the very real limitations they must navigate. Despite these obstacles, their work remains indispensable in the global struggle for a more just and sustainable future. The following chapter will present the research methodology for this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology employed in this study. It outlines the philosophical underpinnings, research design, data collection and analysis methods, ethical considerations, and strategies employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. The chapter provides a comprehensive, transparent account of the research process, enabling readers to assess the rigour and credibility of the study. The chapter begins by elucidating the ontological and epistemological stance adopted by the researcher. By articulating these philosophical foundations, the chapter establishes the conceptual framework that guides the research design and methodology. Following the philosophical discussion, the chapter details the research design, which is a qualitative multiple-case study approach. This design is deemed suitable for the study as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the complex and context-specific nature of the relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods. The chapter justifies the choice of this design by highlighting its strengths in capturing the nuances and intricacies of the phenomenon under investigation. The chapter then proceeds to describe the population and sampling techniques employed in the study. The rationale behind the selection of the sample is explained, emphasising the importance of adequate information, diversity and representativeness.

Data collection methods are subsequently outlined, with a focus on semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The chapter includes a detailed description of the interview and focus group discussion guides, which were used to explore the link between NGOs' work and sustainable livelihoods using themes derived from the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) and framing from the Political Opportunities Theory (PPT). The data recording and transcription processes are then discussed, ensuring transparency and rigour in data management. The chapter then delves into the data analysis process, which employs a thematic analysis approach. This approach involves identifying, coding, and analysing patterns of meaning (themes) that emerge from the data. The steps involved in thematic analysis are described, from initial familiarisation with the data to the final reporting of findings. The use of *NVivo* software to facilitate data analysis is also mentioned, highlighting the systematic and rigorous nature of the process.

To address potential biases and limitations, the chapter acknowledged the delimitations of the study. These delimitations include the focus on campaigning NGOs rather than service delivery NGOs, the selection of specific NGOs and geographical areas, and the use of particular data collection and analysis methods. By acknowledging these delimitations, the chapter promotes transparency and encourages readers to interpret the findings within the

scope of the study. Ethical considerations are given paramount importance in the chapter. The study adheres to ethical standards set by the Durban University of Technology (DUT) and receives clearance from the DUT Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC). The chapter details the measures taken to protect participants' rights and well-being, including informed consent, confidentiality, and data security. The researcher's reflexivity and the strategies employed to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings are also discussed, further enhancing the ethical rigour of the study.

Overall, the chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the research methodology employed in this study. By articulating the philosophical foundations, research design, data collection and analysis methods, ethical considerations, and strategies to ensure trustworthiness and credibility, the chapter establishes a solid methodological framework for investigating the nexus between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. The transparent and detailed account of the research process was done to enable readers to critically evaluate the study's findings and their implications for policy and practice.

5.2 Research paradigm

Ontology and epistemology are two fundamental concepts in research that deal with the nature of reality and knowledge, respectively. Ontology is concerned with the nature of being, existence, or reality, and the basic categories of being and their relations (Ponterotto 2005: 129; Guarino, Oberle and Staab 2009: 1). It asks questions such as, "What is the nature of reality?" and "What is the relationship between the mind and the world?" Epistemology, on the other hand, is concerned with the nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope, and general basis (Ponterotto 2005: 129). It asks questions such as, "What is knowledge?" and "How do we know what we know?" It is widely acknowledged that in the context of social science research, ontology and epistemology are important because they shape the way researchers approach their studies (Moon and Blackman 2014: 1168; Al-Ababneh 2020: 77). Hence, the researcher's ontological and epistemological stance influences the research questions they ask, the methods they use, and the way they interpret their findings (Al-Ababneh 2020: 77).

There are three main ontological stances: realism, social constructivism and critical realism. Realism posits that social phenomena, like poverty or crime, have an objective existence independent of our individual or collective understanding of them (Archer 1995: 142). Social constructionism, on the other hand, argues that reality is not pre-existing but is actively constructed through social interactions, language, and shared cultural meanings (Crotty 1998: 42; Phillips 2023: 174). Thus, social "facts" are subjective and can vary across different societies and historical periods. Critical realism offers a middle ground, acknowledging that while there are real social structures and mechanisms at play, our ability to understand and

perceive them is always influenced by our own social position, experiences, and biases (Kontos and Poland 2009: 2; O'Mahoney and Marks 2014: 68).

There are mainly five epistemological stances in social science: positivism, interpretivism, post-positivism, pragmatism and critical theory. Positivism advocates for a scientific approach, emphasising observation, measurement, and the search for generalisable laws of social behaviour (Burr and Dick 2017: 223). Interpretivism, in contrast, focuses on understanding the subjective meanings and experiences of individuals through qualitative methods like interviews and observations (Schwandt 1994: 223; Ormston *et al.* 2014: 24). Post-positivism acknowledges the inherent limitations of objectivity, recognising that researcher bias can influence findings and that knowledge is always provisional (Shrestha and Sharma 2024: 31). Pragmatism prioritises the practical applications of research, emphasising methods that address real-world problems and have tangible impacts (Kelly and Cordeiro 2020: 2). Critical theory goes further, advocating for research that not only understands but also challenges existing power structures and inequalities while recognising that knowledge production is inherently political and should be used to promote social justice (Devetak 2013: 162).

5.2.1 Ontological stance of the study

The ontological stance adopted in this study is informed by critical realism, which acknowledges the existence of a complex reality comprising both objective structures and socially constructed meanings (Kontos and Poland 2009: 2; O'Mahoney and Marks 2014: 68). While acknowledging that there is no single, objective truth accessible to direct observation, critical realism posits the existence of underlying structures and mechanisms that shape our social world, including the relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. This study acknowledges that individuals and groups actively construct their understandings and interpretations of these structures and mechanisms based on their experiences, values, and beliefs. Therefore, multiple perspectives and interpretations of the relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe are not only possible but also expected.

The researcher acknowledges that his own perspective is situated within this complex reality and is inevitably influenced by his own social context and standpoint. While striving for objectivity, the researcher also recognised the importance of reflexivity—acknowledging his own biases and assumptions and actively engaging with diverse perspective—to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. By adopting a critical realist ontology, this study was designed to move beyond simple relativism, recognising the existence of objective structures while also valuing the diversity of human experiences and interpretations. This approach

allows for a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe.

5.2.2 Epistemological stance of the study

The epistemological stance adopted in this study is that of interpretivism, which posits that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and interpretation (Schwandt 1994: 223; Crotty 1998: 48; Ormston *et al.* 2014: 24). In the context of researching the relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe, this means that understanding the experiences and perspectives of individuals and communities was considered paramount. Interpretivism, as outlined by scholars like Crotty (1998: 48) and Ormston *et al.* (2014: 24), emphasises that knowledge is not merely a collection of objective facts but rather a product of human interaction and meaning making. It recognises that individuals and groups interpret their experiences based on their unique cultural and social contexts, shaped by their understanding of the world around them.

In this study, the researcher adopts an interpretive approach to delve into the meanings that people attach to their experiences with campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. This involves actively listening to their stories, seeking to understand their perspectives, and interpreting their actions within their specific cultural and social context. The researcher recognises that their own interpretations are not objective or neutral but are inevitably shaped by their own experiences, values, and beliefs. Therefore, reflexivity was considered a crucial aspect of this research, with the researcher acknowledging their own positionality and potential biases and actively seeking diverse perspectives to enrich their understanding of the complex relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe.

This study adopted an interpretive epistemology, which was designed to extend beyond a superficial understanding of the facts and figures and instead seek to uncover the deeper meanings, motivations, and experiences that shape the relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. This approach allowed for a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the complex social dynamics at play, ultimately contributing to more effective and sustainable interventions in this field of study.

5.2.3 Implications for research design and methods

The critical realist ontology and interpretive epistemology adopted in this study had several implications for the research design and methods. First, the critical realist ontology, recognises the existence of complex underlying structures and mechanisms alongside socially constructed meanings; this necessitated a multifaceted research approach. This study employed semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and desktop research to gather

data from diverse perspectives. Semi-structured interviews allowed for an in-depth exploration of individual experiences and interpretations; focus group discussions captured shared meanings and understandings that emerged through social interaction and desktop research synthesised these understandings. By combining these methods, the study was designed to uncover both the underlying structures and the diverse interpretations that shape the relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe.

Second, interpretive epistemology, emphasises the importance of understanding the meanings and motivations behind people's actions, which requires qualitative methods for data analysis. This study utilised thematic analysis to identify and interpret patterns of meaning in the qualitative data gathered through interviews and focus groups. This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of the underlying values, beliefs, and experiences that shape individuals' and communities' interactions with campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods.

Finally, the synthesis of critical realism and interpretivism in this study shaped the presentation of the findings. Acknowledging that findings are not objective facts but rather interpretations influenced by both the researcher's perspective and the complexities of the social context, the study prioritised transparency. The researcher explicitly addressed their own potential biases and assumptions, encouraging readers to actively engage with the findings and explore alternative interpretations. This approach allowed the researcher to present the research findings in a way that was both nuanced and contextualised, contributing to a richer understanding of the relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe.

By explicitly outlining the implications of critical realist ontology and interpretive epistemology, this study was designed to enhance the rigour and validity of its research design and methods, ultimately contributing to a more meaningful and impactful understanding of the complex social phenomena under investigation.

5.3 Research approach and design

Research design refers to the overall strategy that researchers choose to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way, thereby, ensuring that the research problem is effectively addressed (Kothari 2004: 31). It encompasses the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data, outlining the procedures for conducting the study. Research designs can be broadly categorised as quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods (Tran 2016: 3). Quantitative research designs involve the collection and analysis of numerical data to answer research questions or test hypotheses (Harwell 2011: 149). These designs are often employed to identify patterns, make predictions, and generalise findings to

larger populations. Qualitative research designs, on the other hand, focus on non-numerical data, such as text, images, or observations, to gain an in-depth understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations (Harwell 2011: 148). Mixed methods research designs combine elements of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, leveraging the strengths of each to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Harwell 2011: 151). The choice of research design depends on the nature of the research question, the available resources, and the desired outcomes of the study (Yin 2009: 8).

A qualitative research approach was employed in this study. Qualitative research is particularly well-suited for exploring complex phenomena within their natural settings, seeking to understand the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to their experiences (Harwell 2011: 148; Merriam and Tisdell 2015: 28). It is characterised by its flexibility, allowing researchers to adapt their methods as the study progresses and new insights emerge (Merriam and Tisdell 2015: 189). Qualitative research often involves the use of multiple data collection methods, such as interviews, focus groups, and observations, to gather rich and nuanced data (Yin 2009: 120; Harwell 2011: 148). The data analysis process in qualitative research involves identifying patterns, themes, and relationships within the data to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Fossey *et al.* 2002: 721; Braun and Clarke 2006: 4).

The qualitative research approach was deemed appropriate for this study due to several factors. First, the research questions focused on understanding the experiences, perspectives, and motivations of individuals and groups involved in campaigning NGOs and their efforts to promote sustainable livelihoods. This required a nuanced and in-depth exploration of the social processes, relationships, and contextual factors that influence the work of these organisations. Second, the study sought to capture the diversity of experiences and perspectives within the campaigning NGO sector in Zimbabwe. This necessitated a flexible research design that could accommodate the varied contexts and approaches of different organisations. Finally, the study aimed to generate insights that could inform policy and practice in the field of sustainable development and sustainable livelihoods. Qualitative research, with its emphasis on understanding the lived experiences of individuals and communities (Harwell 2011: 148; Merriam and Tisdell 2015: 28), was deemed well-suited to achieve this goal.

Within the qualitative research paradigm, a multiple-case study design was adopted. A case study is an in-depth investigation of a particular individual, group, or event (Yin 2009: 14; Merriam and Tisdell 2015: 38). In a multiple-case study design, several cases are selected and studied to identify patterns and themes across different contexts (Gustafsson 2017: 3). This design allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under

investigation, as it enables researchers to compare and contrast different cases and to identify factors that may be unique to specific contexts. The multiple-case study design was chosen for this study because it allowed for a detailed examination of the work of three different campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe. Each NGO was treated as a separate case, and data was collected from multiple sources within the organisation, including staff members, campaigners, and target beneficiaries in communities. This design enabled the researcher to identify both commonalities and differences across the three cases, providing a more nuanced understanding of the factors that contribute to the success or failure of campaigning NGOs in promoting sustainable livelihoods. The multiple-case study design also enhanced the credibility and transferability of the findings, as it demonstrated that the observed patterns and themes were not unique to a single organisation or context.

5.4 Population and sampling

The identification of the population and the selection of an appropriate sample are crucial steps in any research study (Kothari 2004: 55). The population refers to the entire group of individuals, objects, or events that the researcher is interested in studying (Kothari 2004: 14). However, due to practical constraints, it is often not feasible to include the entire population in a study; therefore, researchers typically select a sample, which is a subset of the population that is representative of the whole (Kothari 2004: 55; Onwuegbuzie and Collins 2007: 281). The goal of sampling is to obtain a sample that accurately reflects the characteristics and diversity of the population, allowing the researcher to draw meaningful conclusions about the population based on the findings from the sample (Kothari 2004: 55).

Sampling in this study was informed by Patton (2002: 262), who advises that there are no stringent rules in sampling for qualitative studies; the logic and power are in selecting information-rich cases from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry. Similarly, as Morris (2006: 12) writes, “the underlying rationale” in qualitative sampling “depends on the type of research, the purpose of the research, the questions being asked and the resources available”. The three organisations, ZIMCODD, ZELA and AAZ, which were selected, were thus deemed adequate due to the breadth of their work, which encompasses most of the work done by other campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe. Communities that were selected were also deemed adequate because they represented a cross-section of the communities in Zimbabwe which are largely divided between urban and rural.

5.4.1 Population and sampling for key informant interviews

The population for this study's interviews encompassed all staff members and campaigners of three selected national-level campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe—ZIMCODD, ZELA, and AAZ. These organisations were chosen as a representative sample of the broader landscape of such NGOs in the country, estimated to number between fifteen and thirty. The target population was narrowed to staff members directly involved in advocacy and campaigning activities within these three organisations as well as campaigners actively engaged in advocacy and campaigning activities with the three organisations. These individuals were considered the most knowledgeable about their organisations' advocacy strategies and experiences with advocacy work.

Purposive sampling was employed, selecting three staff members and six campaigners from each organisation for a total of 24 interview participants. This approach was chosen due to the expectation that these individuals possess the most relevant and comprehensive information for the study's objectives. The three organisations operate nationally, covering the entire country with a special focus on the most vulnerable districts, further justifying their selection as a representative sample. **Table 5.1** outlines the total population, target population and the selected sample for interviews within each organisation.

Table 5.1: Population and samples from ZIMCODD, ZELA and AAZ

Category	Population	Target population	Sample
ZIMCODD staff members	28	22	3
ZELA Staff Members	32	24	3
AAZ Staff Members	48	27	3
ZIMCODD Campaigners	100	48	6
ZELA Campaigners	80	36	6
AAZ Campaigners	138	40	6
Total	426	197	27

Source: Self-generated by researcher

5.4.2 Population and sampling for focus groups

The focus groups encompassed ordinary citizens who constitute the target audience of the three selected organisations (ZIMCODD, ZELA, and AAZ). This broad group includes individuals from diverse backgrounds and demographics across Zimbabwe who are the intended beneficiaries of these NGOs' advocacy efforts. The target population was further refined to those ordinary citizens in six districts where the three NGOs directly implement their

work to ensure relevant discussions. This selection criterion ensured that focus group participants possessed some level of awareness or experience with the work of ZIMCODD, ZELA, or AAZ.

Focus group discussions were conducted in six districts across two provinces—Harare and Matabeleland North—to capture a cross-section of perspectives from both urban and rural settings. The selected districts were Chitungwiza, Epworth, Harare Central, and Harare Rural in Harare Province, and Nkayi and Binga in Matabeleland North Province. A purposive sampling strategy was employed, initially targeting 30 individuals per district, resulting in a total sample of 180 participants. The primary objective of this approach was to achieve data saturation, the point at which new data no longer yield new themes or insights (Braun and Clarke 2021).

While the initial sample size was predetermined for logistical purposes, the data collection process confirmed that thematic saturation was consistently achieved across all six sites with this number of participants. This approach was not intended for statistical generalization but to ensure a rich and diverse dataset from each distinct geographic and socioeconomic context. This sampling strategy successfully captured a wide range of perspectives and insights, enhancing the study's overall understanding of the community-level impact and reach of campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe. For context, the total population of Zimbabwe, according to the 2022 census, is 15,178,979, from which this purposive sample was drawn. Table 5.2 provides a breakdown of the target populations within these districts and the samples drawn for the focus group discussions.

Table 5.2: Population and samples from Epworth, Chitungwiza, Harare central, Harare Rural, Nkayi and Binga districts

District	Target population	Sample
Chitungwiza District	371,244	30
Epworth District	206,365	30
Harare Urban District	1,491,740	30
Harare Rural District	357,860	30
Binga District	159,982	30
Nkayi District	112,471	30
Total	2,699,662	180

Source: Adapted from (ZIMSTAT 2022)

5.4.3 Sampling techniques

A sampling technique is a process of selecting a subset of a population to represent the entire population (Sharma 2017; Haute 2021: 749). Samples can be either probability samples or non-probability samples. With probability samples, each element has a known probability of being included in the sample, but the non-probability samples do not demand the researcher to determine this probability (Kothari 2004: 12). Non-probability sampling techniques, such as purposive sampling, are often used in qualitative research to ensure that the researcher can reach a diverse group of participants who have different experiences and perspectives (Creswell and Clark 2007: 148). The non-probability sampling technique can also be purposive (deliberately choosing individuals based on specific criteria relevant to the research question, such as expertise or experience), or convenience (selects participants based on their accessibility and willingness to participate), quota sampling (aiming to achieve a representative sample by setting quotas for specific characteristics), expert sampling (focusing on gathering information from individuals with specialised knowledge or expertise in a particular field), or maximum variation sampling (seeking to capture the diversity of a population by intentionally selecting participants with varying characteristics and experiences).

5.4.3.1 Sampling technique for interviews

This study utilised a purposive sampling technique for the interview component of the study. Participants were selected based on their anticipated contribution to the research objectives, as recommended by (Staller 2021: 900). Following authorisation from the respective organisations, the researcher intentionally sought interviews with members of the management team within the organisations' program departments, as well as project personnel directly involved in implementing activities and campaigns. These individuals were expected to provide in-depth insights into the work of their organisations, from conceptualising activities to their perceived impacts. Additionally, each organisation was asked to identify highly active campaigners based on their participation frequency in organisational activities. These campaigners were anticipated to offer relevant information about the role of NGOs in achieving sustainable livelihoods.

5.4.3.2 Sampling technique for focus group discussions

The research adopted a purposive sampling technique for the focus group discussions, prioritising the inclusion of diverse perspectives from individuals directly exposed to the NGOs' work in the target districts. To achieve this, a deliberate decision was made to engage local community leaders to assist in identifying potential participants. This approach was chosen over relying on the NGOs themselves to prevent any potential bias or influence on the opinions of community members. By collaborating with local leaders, the research team ensured that a

broader range of individuals, representing various demographics and experiences, were included in the focus groups. This community-centred approach created an environment of trust and openness, allowing participants to freely share honest feedback regarding their experiences and perceptions of the NGOs' impact. The focus group discussions delved into the effectiveness and relevance of the NGOs' digital advocacy efforts, as well as their overall impact on the community. The insights gathered from these diverse voices provided a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of individuals directly affected by the NGOs' work, thus enriching the research findings.

5.5 Data collection methods

Data collection for this study was a multifaceted process, employing both primary and secondary sources to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. The primary data collection methods included semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, while secondary data was gathered through a review of relevant literature, including academic publications, government reports, and NGO documents.

5.5.1 Primary data collection

The rationale for using primary data collection was to obtain firsthand, in-depth insights into the complex relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. While secondary data provides a valuable overview of the topic, it often lacks the nuanced understanding of local contexts and the specific experiences of those directly involved in or affected by NGO campaigns. Primary data collection allowed for a more targeted and contextually relevant exploration of the research questions, capturing the voices and perspectives of key stakeholders, including NGO staff, campaigners, and community members.

5.5.1.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with staff members and campaigners from the three selected NGOs: ZIMCDD, ZELA, and AAZ. The semi-structured format was used because it allowed for a degree of flexibility (Kallio *et al.* 2016: 5; Ruslin *et al.* 2022: 22), enabling the interviewer to probe deeper into emerging topics while ensuring that key themes were consistently addressed across all interviews. Interviews served as a crucial tool for gathering in-depth insights into organisations' activities, strategies, challenges, and perceived impacts on sustainable livelihoods. The interview process began with obtaining access to the study sites and participants. This involved contacting the NGOs and community leaders to introduce the research project, obtain permission to conduct the study, and identify potential

participants. Once potential participants were identified, the research project was explained to them. Thereafter their informed consent was obtained before proceeding with the interviews. Interviews were scheduled at times and locations convenient for the participants, respecting their preferences and ensuring a comfortable environment for open and honest discussions. An interview guide was developed based on a review of relevant literature and the research objectives. The guide included open-ended questions that explored the link between the NGOs' work and sustainable livelihoods, drawing on themes from the SLF. The SLF provided a holistic framework for understanding the various factors that contribute to sustainable livelihoods, such as human, social, natural, physical, and financial capital. During the interviews, the researcher used probing questions to encourage participants to elaborate on their responses and provide detailed accounts of their experiences. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent, ensuring an accurate record of their responses. Following each interview, the recordings were transcribed verbatim using *Flixier* transcribing software, facilitating subsequent data analysis.

5.5.1.2 Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions were conducted across six districts with ordinary citizens who were the primary beneficiaries of the three NGOs' campaigns. These discussions were designed to capture the perspectives and experiences of community members regarding the impact of the NGOs' work on their livelihoods. The focus group format, as recommended by Palmer *et al.* (2010: 99), encourages participants to interact with each other, share their views, and build upon each other's ideas, thereby generating a rich and dynamic dataset. Similar to the interview process, the focus group discussions began with obtaining access to the study sites and participants. Community leaders and gatekeepers were instrumental in identifying potential participants and facilitating the scheduling of the discussions. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the discussions commenced.

The focus group discussions were guided by a semi-structured moderator's guide, which was less structured than the interview guide to allow for more open-ended and exploratory conversations. The guide included questions that probed participants' understanding of sustainable livelihoods, their perceptions of the NGOs' work, and the perceived impact of the campaigns on their lives. The moderator encouraged active participation from all members of the group, ensuring that diverse perspectives were represented and that the discussions remained focused on the research questions. As with the interviews, the focus group discussions were audio-recorded with the participants' consent and later transcribed verbatim using *Flixier* transcription software. The transcripts served as the primary data source for subsequent analysis.

5.5.1.3 Data recording and transcription

The audio recordings of both the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and completeness. The transcription process involved converting the spoken words into written text, capturing not only the content of the discussions but also the nuances of language, tone, and emphasis. This meticulous approach to transcription ensured that the data accurately reflected the participants' voices and perspectives. The transcriptions were then carefully checked and edited for accuracy and completeness. Any inconsistencies or ambiguities were resolved by referring back to the original audio recordings. The final transcripts were stored in a secure cloud storage service, ensuring data security and confidentiality.

5.5.2 Secondary data collection

In addition to the primary data collected through interviews and focus group discussions, secondary data was gathered through a comprehensive review of relevant literature. This included academic publications, government reports, and NGO documents related to campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. The secondary data provided a broader context for the study, informing the research questions, data collection methods, and analysis. It also served as a point of comparison for the primary data, allowing the researcher to identify patterns, trends, and discrepancies between the existing literature and the findings from the field.

5.6 Research tools

The research tools utilised in this study were a semi-structured interview guide and a focus group discussion moderator's guide. The semi-structured interview guide was designed for one-on-one interviews with NGO staff and campaigners, while the less structured focus group discussion moderator's guide was used for group discussions with ordinary citizens who were the target beneficiaries of the NGOs' work. Both guides consisted of open-ended questions that explored the link between the NGOs' work and sustainable livelihoods, utilising themes derived from SLF. The SLF served as a valuable tool for understanding this link, because it provided a holistic framework for analysing the factors that contribute to sustainable livelihoods. The SLF encompasses five key assets or capitals: human, social, natural, physical, and financial. By incorporating these themes into the interview and focus group discussion guides, the study was aimed at assessing the impact of the NGOs' work on each of these capitals and, consequently, on the overall sustainability of livelihoods in the communities they served.

The semi-structured nature of the interview guide allowed for flexibility and depth in data collection, enabling the interviewer to probe further into emerging topics and capture the nuances of participants' experiences and perspectives. Similarly, the focus group discussion moderator's guide provided a framework for facilitating open and dynamic conversations among participants, encouraging them to share their views, experiences, and insights related to the NGOs' work and its impact on their livelihoods.

The development of the interview and discussion guides was informed by a comprehensive review of relevant literature on NGOs and sustainable livelihoods, as well as the research objectives and questions. The guides were structured into three main sections:

- Probing questions about the participants' background.
- Questions regarding the activities and impacts of NGOs on livelihoods.
- Questions addressing the challenges and opportunities for NGOs in promoting sustainable livelihoods, and recommendations from participants.

The research tools were designed in English, one of the official languages in Zimbabwe and widely spoken by the target population. Given the high literacy rate in Zimbabwe (96%) (Mhuru 2023: 145), it was presumed that the participants would have a good command of the English language and would be able to understand and respond to the questions effectively. However, during the data collection process, some participants demonstrated lack of understanding of the questions which were then translated into their native language.

5.6.1 Administration of research tools

The administration of research tools followed a semi-structured approach, allowing for flexibility while maintaining a consistent focus on the research objectives. This approach entailed using predetermined questions to guide the interviews and focus group discussions while also allowing the researcher to explore emerging topics in greater depth. The semi-structured format facilitated the collection of rich and detailed data from participants, ensuring that the study captured the nuances and complexities of the relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods. Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted at various locations that were convenient and comfortable for the participants, such as their homes, workplaces, and community centres. The researcher prioritised creating a quiet and private environment for the data collection sessions, minimising distractions and interruptions to encourage open and honest communication.

Participants received a letter outlining the purpose, procedures, and expected outcomes of the study prior to each data collection session. The letter also outlined the potential risks and benefits of participation, as well as the participants' rights, including the right to withdraw from the study at any time, decline to answer any questions, and request a copy of the final report.

The letter of information was written in English, a language understood by all participants. In cases where participants had difficulty understanding, these were translated for the participant. Participants were also asked to sign an informed consent form, confirming that they had read and understood the letter of information and agreed to participate voluntarily. The form emphasised that their data would be treated confidentially and anonymously, and that they could contact the researcher or the Durban University Ethics Committee with any questions or concerns.

The interviews and focus group discussions typically lasted approximately 30 minutes each, although the duration varied depending on the number of participants and the depth of their responses. With the participants' permission, the sessions were audio-recorded to ensure an accurate record of the discussions. The researcher also took notes during the sessions to capture key points and observations. The recorded data was then transcribed verbatim using *Flixier* transcription software, which facilitated subsequent analysis.

5.7 Data analysis

Data analysis is a critical phase in the research process, involving the systematic organisation, interpretation, and synthesis of collected data to derive meaningful insights and answer research questions (Khan, Usman and Moinuddin 2024: 142). In qualitative research, data analysis is an iterative and interpretive process that requires the researcher to engage deeply with the data, identify patterns and themes, and develop a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Various approaches to qualitative data analysis exist, each with its own strengths and limitations. These include thematic analysis, discourse analysis, content analysis, narrative analysis, and grounded theory (Braun and Clarke 2006: 4; Cernasev and Axon 2023).

In this study, thematic analysis was employed as the primary method for analysing the qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Thematic analysis is a widely used and well-established approach in qualitative research, known for its flexibility and adaptability to diverse research questions and data types (Cernasev and Axon 2023: 3). It involves identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data, providing a rich and comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives.

The thematic analysis process in this study followed the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006: 77), which includes:

- Familiarisation with the data: the researcher immersed themselves in the data by reading and re-reading the interview and focus group transcripts multiple times. This

step aimed to gain a holistic understanding of the data, identify initial patterns and ideas, and develop a sense of the overall narrative.

- Generating initial codes: the researcher systematically coded the data, assigning labels or codes to relevant segments of text. Codes represented the key concepts, ideas, or experiences expressed by the participants. This process involved both inductive and deductive coding, with codes emerging from the data itself as well as being derived from the research questions and theoretical framework.
- Searching for themes: the researcher then examined the codes to identify potential themes, which are broader patterns of meaning that capture the essence of the participants' experiences and perspectives. Themes were developed by grouping together related codes and identifying the underlying concepts or ideas that connected them.
- Reviewing themes: the researcher critically reviewed the identified themes, ensuring that they accurately reflected the data and were internally coherent and distinct from each other. This involved refining the themes, merging similar ones, and discarding irrelevant or unsupported themes.
- Defining and naming themes: the researcher then defined and named each theme, providing a clear and concise description of its meaning and significance. This step involved developing a thematic map that visually represented the relationships between the themes and their sub-themes.
- Producing the report: the final step involved writing up the findings, weaving together the themes and sub-themes into a coherent narrative that answered the research questions. The report included rich excerpts from the data to illustrate the themes and provide evidence for the interpretations.

NVivo software was utilised to facilitate the data analysis process. *NVivo* is qualitative data analysis software that enables researchers to organise, code and analyse large volumes of textual data efficiently. The software's features, such as coding queries, visualisations, and memoing, assisted in identifying patterns, exploring relationships between themes, and developing a comprehensive understanding of the data.

Thematic analysis, guided by the (Braun and Clarke 2006) framework and facilitated by *NVivo* software, ensured a rigorous and systematic approach to data analysis. This approach allowed for a deep exploration of the data, resulting in rich and nuanced findings that shed light on the complex relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe.

5.8 Challenges and lessons

Conducting this research presented a unique set of challenges, primarily stemming from the socio-political context of Zimbabwe and the sensitive nature of the research topic. Acquiring approvals from some NGOs proved to be a challenge, which necessitated the replacement of one of the NGOs initially proposed as a case study. Accessing participants and gaining their trust proved to be a significant hurdle. The initial reluctance of some NGO staff and community members to participate in the study necessitated a patient and persistent approach, building rapport through informal conversations and assurances of confidentiality. Additionally, the prevailing political climate with an increasingly constrained civic space in Zimbabwe after the 2023 general elections has created an environment of apprehension and mistrust (CIVICUS 2024b), making some participants hesitant to share their experiences openly. To mitigate this, the researcher emphasised the voluntary nature of participation and assured the participants that their identities would be protected.

Another challenge arose from the logistical complexities of coordinating interviews and focus group discussions across multiple locations. Scheduling conflicts, transportation difficulties, and unexpected events occasionally disrupted the data collection process. To address this, the researcher adopted a flexible approach, rescheduling appointments when necessary and utilising alternative communication channels, such as phone interviews or online platforms, when in-person meetings were not feasible.

The data analysis process also presented challenges, particularly in managing and interpreting the large volume of qualitative data generated by the interviews and focus group discussions. Thematic analysis, while a powerful tool for identifying patterns and themes, required meticulous attention to detail and a rigorous approach to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. While the *NVivo* software facilitated the organisation and coding of the data, the interpretive process still demanded careful consideration of the nuances and complexities inherent in the data.

Despite these challenges, the research process yielded valuable lessons and insights. The importance of building trust and rapport with participants, particularly in sensitive research contexts, cannot be overstated. Investing time in establishing relationships and creating a safe space for open dialogue proved crucial in eliciting rich and meaningful data. Additionally, the value of flexibility and adaptability in research design became evident, as unforeseen circumstances necessitated adjustments to the data collection schedule and methods.

The experience of conducting this research also highlighted the importance of utilising appropriate tools and technologies to manage and analyse qualitative data. *Flixier* was instrumental in reducing transcription time, and *NVivo* software proved to be an invaluable

asset, streamlining the coding process and facilitating the identification of themes and patterns. However, the researcher's interpretive skills remained essential in making sense of the data and drawing meaningful conclusions.

Several recommendations can be made for future research in this area based on the lessons learnt from this study. First, researchers should invest time and effort in building trust and rapport with participants, particularly in contexts where there may be apprehension or mistrust. Second, researchers should be prepared to adapt their research design and methods in response to unforeseen challenges or circumstances. Third, researchers should utilise appropriate tools and technologies to manage and analyse qualitative data but should also recognise the importance of their own interpretive skills in making sense of the data. Finally, future research could explore the relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in other countries or regions, providing a comparative perspective and enriching our understanding of this complex and dynamic phenomenon.

5.9 Delimitations of the study

Delimitations are the boundaries consciously chosen by the researcher to narrow the scope of a study (Jha 2023: 59). Thus, delimitations are not weaknesses but rather choices made to focus the research and make it more manageable. This study were established several delimitations to ensure a focused and in-depth investigation of the relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. Firstly, the study focused exclusively on campaigning NGOs, which are organisations primarily engaged in advocacy and policy-influencing activities. This deliberate exclusion of service delivery NGOs, which focus on providing direct assistance to communities, allowed for a more targeted analysis of the specific role that campaigning NGOs play in promoting sustainable livelihoods. By narrowing the scope to this particular type of NGO, the study was able to delve deeper into the unique strategies, challenges, and impacts associated with their work.

Secondly, the study was geographically delimited to Zimbabwe. While the findings may offer insights relevant to other contexts, the specific socio-political and economic conditions in Zimbabwe shaped the operations and outcomes of the NGOs under investigation. This delimitation allowed for a more contextually grounded analysis, which recognised the unique challenges and opportunities faced by campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe. Thirdly, the study focused on three specific campaigning NGOs: ZIMCDD, ZELA, and AAZ. These organisations were selected based on their prominence and influence in the Zimbabwean NGO sector, as well as their diverse thematic focus areas, which included economic governance, environmental justice, and various rights-based themes. By examining these

three organisations in detail, the study was able to capture a range of perspectives and approaches to campaigning for sustainable livelihoods.

Fourthly, the primary research component of the study was delimited to two data collection methods: semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. While other methods, such as observation or surveys, could have been employed, the chosen methods were deemed most appropriate for eliciting in-depth qualitative data on the experiences, perspectives, and motivations of the participants. This delimitation allowed for a more focused and manageable data collection process, ensuring the quality and depth of the data obtained. Fifthly, the secondary research component of the study relied on a literature review rather than other methods such as content analysis or data mining. The literature review provided a comprehensive overview of existing knowledge and theoretical frameworks relevant to the research topic, informing the research design, data collection, and analysis. While other methods could have been employed to analyse secondary data, a literature review was considered sufficient for the purposes of this study.

Finally, the study was theoretically delimited to the SLF and the PPT. The SLF provided a holistic lens for understanding the multifaceted nature of sustainable livelihoods and the various factors that contribute to them. While other theoretical frameworks, such as political economy analysis or the human development approach, could have been utilised, the SLF was chosen because of its comprehensive and multidimensional approach to understanding livelihoods. The PPT provided a politicised lens for the repertoires adopted by campaigning NGOs; whereas other political theories may have contributed, the PPT was deemed sufficient due to its ability to holistically map the approaches of NGOs and conditions that enable success or constrain them.

While these delimitations are necessary for the feasibility and focus of the study, they inevitably limit the generalisability of the findings. The insights gained from this study may not be directly applicable to other types of NGOs, other countries, or other theoretical frameworks. However, the findings still offer valuable contributions to the understanding of the role of campaigning NGOs in promoting sustainable livelihoods, particularly in the context of Zimbabwe. They also provide a foundation for future research that can build upon these findings and explore the topic in different contexts and from different theoretical perspectives.

5.10 Research limitations

Inherent in any research endeavour are limitations that can influence the outcomes and generalisability of the findings. This study, while providing valuable insights into the nexus between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe, was not without its constraints. Acknowledging these limitations is crucial for contextualising the findings and

understanding their implications for future research and practice. A primary limitation of this study was its geographical scope, confined to Zimbabwe. The in-depth focus on a single country allowed for a nuanced understanding of the specific context, but it also limited the generalisability of the findings to other countries or regions. The socio-political and economic landscape of Zimbabwe is unique, and the dynamics between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods may differ significantly in other contexts. Therefore, caution should be exercised when extrapolating the findings to other settings.

Furthermore, the study focused exclusively on campaigning NGOs, excluding other types of NGOs, such as service delivery NGOs, that also play a role in promoting sustainable livelihoods. This delimitation was necessary to maintain a focused research scope, but it also meant that the study did not capture the full spectrum of NGO activities and their potential impact on livelihoods. Future research could expand the scope to include different types of NGOs, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the NGO landscape and its contribution to sustainable development.

Resource constraints also posed a limitation to the study. The researcher faced challenges in securing adequate funding for travel and other research-related expenses. This necessitated the use of alternative data collection methods, such as video calls, for some interviews, which may have affected the depth and richness of the data obtained. Additionally, the limited time frame for the study constrained the extent to which the researcher could engage with participants and explore emerging themes in greater detail.

Another limitation was the potential for bias in data collection and analysis. Despite efforts to ensure objectivity and impartiality, the researcher's own background as a civil society activist, experiences with the NGOs being studied, and preconceived notions may have influenced the research process. This could have manifested in the selection of participants, the formulation of interview questions, or the interpretation of the data. To mitigate this, the researcher employed reflexivity, critically examining their own biases and assumptions throughout the research process. However, the potential for bias remains an inherent limitation of qualitative research.

Moreover, the study relied on self-reported data from participants, which may be subject to social desirability bias or recall bias. Participants may have presented themselves or their organisations in a more favourable light, or they may have misremembered or omitted certain details. To address this, the researcher triangulated data from multiple sources—interviews, focus group discussions, and secondary data—to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the complex relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. The findings highlight

the importance of context-specific approaches, the need for collaboration and partnership, and the challenges and opportunities faced by campaigning NGOs in their efforts to promote sustainable development. By acknowledging the limitations of the study, the researcher encourages future research to build upon these findings, address the identified gaps, and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the role of NGOs in promoting sustainable livelihoods.

5.11 Ethical considerations - beyond consent and anonymity

Ethical considerations are paramount in any research involving humans (McGregor 2023: 4). In this study, a comprehensive approach to ethics was adopted, going beyond the standard procedures of informed consent and anonymity to ensure the protection of participants' rights, well-being, and dignity. The study adhered to the ethical standards set by the Durban University of Technology (DUT) and received clearance from the DUT Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC) before commencement.

5.11.1 Informed consent and voluntary participation

Informed consent is a cornerstone of ethical research, ensuring that participants are fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their rights as participants (McGregor 2023: 8). In this study, informed consent was obtained through a two-step process. First, participants received a detailed information sheet outlining the study's objectives, methodology, and anticipated outcomes. This sheet also clarified the voluntary nature of participation, emphasising that participants were free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Second, participants were asked to sign a written consent form, acknowledging their understanding of the study and their willingness to participate. The information sheet and consent form were written in clear and accessible language, ensuring that participants could make informed decisions about their involvement.

5.11.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

Protecting the confidentiality and anonymity of participants was a top priority in this study. To achieve this, all data collected during interviews and focus group discussions were anonymised. Participants were assigned pseudonyms, and any identifying information was removed from transcripts and field notes. Data were stored securely in password-protected files and on encrypted cloud storage, accessible only to the researcher and supervisors. Furthermore, the study adhered to strict data retention policies, with all data scheduled for deletion after five years to further safeguard participant confidentiality.

5.11.3 Minimising harm and ensuring well-being

The study was designed to minimise any potential harm to participants. Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in private and confidential settings, ensuring that participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences and perspectives openly. The researcher was trained in active listening and empathetic communication, creating a safe space for participants to express their views without fear of judgement or reprisal. Additionally, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence, empowering them to make decisions about their participation based on their comfort level.

5.11.4 Reflexivity and researcher bias

Recognising the potential for researcher bias, reflexivity was integrated into the research process. Reflexivity involves the researcher critically examining their own assumptions, values, and experiences, and how these might influence the research process and interpretation of data (Ide and Beddoe 2024: 725). The researcher maintained a reflective journal throughout the study, documenting their thoughts, feelings, and observations. This practice helped to identify and mitigate potential biases, ensuring that the findings were grounded in the data rather than the researcher's preconceived notions.

5.11.5 Trustworthiness and rigour

In qualitative research, trustworthiness refers to the degree to which the findings of a study are credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable (Amankwaa 2016). In this study, several strategies were employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings.

5.11.5.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the confidence that the research findings accurately reflect the reality of the participants' experiences and perspectives (Cypress 2017: 254). To enhance credibility, the researcher employed triangulation, a method that involves using multiple data sources to corroborate findings. In this study, data were collected from various actors, including NGO staff, campaigners, and community members, providing a multifaceted view of the phenomenon under investigation. Additionally, member checking was conducted, whereby preliminary findings were shared with participants to verify their accuracy and ensure that the researcher's interpretations aligned with their lived experiences. This iterative process of feedback and refinement strengthened the credibility of the findings.

5.11.5.2 Transferability

In research, transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied to other contexts or settings (Weise *et al.* 2020: 764). While qualitative research does not aim for

statistical generalisability, it strives for theoretical generalisability (Polit and Beck 2010: 1451), which means that the findings can be transferred to other contexts if the conditions are similar. To enhance transferability, the researcher provided a detailed description of the research context, including the socio-political and economic environment of Zimbabwe, the characteristics of the participating NGOs, and the demographics of the participants. This detailed contextualisation allows readers to assess the applicability of the findings to their own situations.

5.11.5.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency and stability of the research findings over time and across researchers (Thyer 2009: 422). To enhance dependability, the researcher maintained a detailed audit trail, documenting the research process, decisions made, and any modifications to the methodology. This audit trail serves as a transparent record of the research journey, allowing others to trace the steps taken and assess the dependability of the findings. Additionally, the researcher was working under the guidance of experienced researchers and also engaged in peer debriefing, discussing the research process and findings with colleagues to gain feedback and identify potential biases or inconsistencies.

5.11.5.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings are supported by the data and are not merely a product of the researcher's biases or assumptions (Kallio *et al.* 2016: 29). To enhance confirmability, the researcher employed a systematic and transparent data analysis process, using NVivo software to code and categorise the data. The coding process was iterative and involved multiple rounds of review and refinement to ensure consistency and accuracy. Furthermore, the researcher provided rich excerpts from the data to illustrate the themes and sub-themes, allowing readers to assess the link between the findings and the supporting primary data.

5.12 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a comprehensive overview of the research methodology employed in this study, which sought to understand the nexus between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. A qualitative research design was adopted, utilising a multiple-case study approach to examine three prominent campaigning NGOs in the country. The study's philosophical foundations were rooted in relativism and interpretivism, acknowledging the multiple realities and interpretations inherent in social phenomena.

The research employed a purposive sampling strategy to select participants who could offer rich insights into the research questions. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews

with NGO staff and campaigners, as well as focus group discussions with ordinary citizens who were the target beneficiaries of the NGOs' work. The SLF served as a guiding framework for data collection and analysis, enabling a holistic assessment of the impact of NGO activities on various dimensions of livelihoods.

The data analysis process involved thematic analysis, a rigorous and systematic approach to identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data. The use of *NVivo* software facilitated the organisation and analysis of the data, ensuring a thorough and comprehensive examination of the findings. Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and measures were taken to ensure confidentiality, anonymity, and the protection of participants' well-being. The researcher also engaged in reflexivity, acknowledging and mitigating potential biases in the research process.

The study's limitations, including its geographical scope, focus on campaigning NGOs, and resource constraints, were acknowledged. However, the findings offer valuable insights into the complex relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. The study highlights the importance of context-specific approaches, collaboration and partnership, and the need to address the diverse challenges faced by communities in their pursuit of sustainable livelihoods.

The research contributes to the broader body of knowledge on the role of NGOs in development, particularly in the context of campaigning and advocacy for sustainable livelihoods. The findings have implications for policy and practice, informing the strategies of NGOs, government agencies, and other stakeholders involved in promoting sustainable development in Zimbabwe. By shedding light on the successes, challenges, and lessons learned from the work of campaigning NGOs, this study contributes to more effective and impactful interventions aimed at improving the livelihoods of communities in Zimbabwe and beyond.

This chapter has outlined the methodological journey of this research, from its philosophical foundations to the data collection and analysis process. The rigorous and ethical approach adopted in this study ensures the trustworthiness and validity of the findings, contributing to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods. The next chapter is the first to present the findings of the study; it focuses on the specific development challenges that campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe seek to address and the obstacles they face in doing so. This contextual foundation was deemed to be essential in the interpretation of the results presented in the subsequent chapters, as it highlights the unique challenges and opportunities that NGOs face in their efforts to promote sustainable livelihoods within a complex operational environment.

CHAPTER SIX: LIVELIHOOD ISSUES TARGETED BY CAMPAIGNING NGOS IN ZIMBABWE

6.1 Introduction

To fully grasp the nexus between the work of campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe and the attainment of sustainable livelihoods, the initial undertaking is the analysis of the livelihood issues that the campaigning NGOs are working on. Livelihood issues are understood as an array of factors that have an implication on people's ability to access necessities of life directly or indirectly (Franks *et al.* 2004: 19; De Haan 2012: 352). These issues can stem from a variety of sources, be they social, economic, political or environmental. This chapter outlines the key livelihood issues tackled by ActionAid Zimbabwe (AAZ), the ZELA, and the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD), based on interviews with their staff and campaigners, as well as the three organisations' internal documents. The chapter explored the multifaceted nature of these livelihood issues, their underlying causes, and the intricate interplay of social, economic, and political factors that perpetuate them.

The chapter further examines the programmatic hurdles that the campaigning NGOs encounter in their advocacy efforts, highlighting the complexities of operating within a restrictive and volatile environment. These include limited financial resources, the need to balance advocacy with service delivery, the difficulties of adapting to a dynamic socio-political context and the challenges of ensuring sustainability and long-term impact, particularly in a restrictive political environment where NGOs face government distrust, misinformation campaigns, coordination challenges and contextual variations across different communities. This chapter underscores the fact that NGOs' operational challenges in and of themselves are livelihood issues by grounding the analysis of the livelihood issues being worked on in the wider operational context.

This chapter draws upon data gathered from key informants within the organisations and campaigners working with the three organisations, supplemented by insights from their strategic plans and periodic reports. Recognising the diverse needs of different populations, the chapter examines how these issues vary between urban and rural communities. The analysis further explored the specific components of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) (vulnerability context, livelihood resources, institutions, policies, and processes; livelihood strategies; and sustainable livelihood outcomes), which each work strand feeds into. This was done while also emphasising the broader context in which the three organisations operate and the challenges, they face in pursuing sustainable livelihoods for communities. This nuanced, theoretical and contextually grounded analysis sets the stage for subsequent chapters that delve deeper into the specific strategies, approaches, and impacts of these

NGOs. Ultimately, the chapter contributes to a richer understanding of the complex relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe, offering valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and development scholars.

6.2 Key livelihood issues campaigning NGOs are working on

This section analyses the key livelihood issues campaigning NGOs are working on as identified by key informants from AAZ, ZELA and ZIMCodd, as well as through analysis of the organisations' internal documents. These issues range from economic and social to political and environmental issues. The section explores the multifaceted and interconnected nature of these issues, highlighting their underlying causes and their relationship with the five SLF components (Chambers and Conway 1992; Scoones 1998). Recognising the diverse needs of different populations, the analysis further examines how these issues vary between urban and rural communities.

6.2.1 Economic injustice

The three organisations demonstrated that they work to ensure economic justice, which they see from a dual perspective of fiscal justice and trade justice. According to their interpretation, fiscal justice refers to the desire for a fair and equitable distribution of resources and opportunities within a society, which encapsulates efforts to ensure that public resources are managed transparently and accounted for and that economic policies prioritise the needs of the poor and marginalised both in urban and rural communities. The pursuit of fiscal justice and sound economic governance forms a critical thrust in the work of AAZ, ZELA, ZIMCodd and their fellow civil society partners across the country. Documentation in their strategic plans demonstrates the understanding that a just and transparent economic system is fundamental for fostering sustainable livelihoods and equitable development in Zimbabwe (ZELA 2020b; ZIMCodd 2023; AAZ 2024c).

Informants from the three organisations interpreted poverty and weak livelihoods as products of poor public resources management. One male informant from AAZ, who has a strong background in natural resources governance, expressed this saying:

Zimbabwe is not poor; its people are. But this is not because they do not want to work hard; their government does not know how to utilise public resources with probity. Poor prioritisation, resources leakages due to poor policies and sometimes out of outright corruption are all contributors to our sorry situation. We set ourselves to deal with that because we see it as the easiest way to address the problem.

This finding, which was shared among the three campaigning NGOs, informs the work in campaigning for the government to prioritise the poor and vulnerable in its budgeting

processes, advocacy plugging illicit financial flows and other internal resource leakages and the wide array of their anti-corruption work.

The three NGOs in their economic justice work also invest in advocating for trade justice. The common interpretation of trade justice is the call for changes in the rules and practices of international trade to promote fairness and equity, particularly for developing countries and marginalised communities within them. Reading from their strategic plans, a clear leftist tone can be noted, AAZ, in its new implementation framework, advocates for “feminist alternatives to neoliberalism”, a call that turns the global trade architecture on its head (ActionAid International 2024: 12). The other two organisations do not go as far; however, they also work on trade justice, actively supporting sustainable livelihoods for small-scale farmers by advocating for policies that enhance their participation in local and international markets (ZELA 2020b: 21; ZIMCDD 2023: 4). ZELA and ZIMCDD work to remove trade barriers that disproportionately affect smallholder farmers and promote access to resources and technologies that increase their productivity and resilience. A ZELA informant defined their commitment as to “work with communities to push back against corporate takeover, accompanying small-scale farmers, especially women and youth, to confront unfair agricultural trade policies and practices”.

These three NGOs champion economic justice by directly supporting smallholder farmers at the local level, advocating for policy changes at the national level, and leveraging networks and coalitions to influence policy at regional and international levels. The organisations push for just trade policies and agreements that prioritise the needs of developing countries and challenge the dominance of powerful nations in global trade negotiations. The informants gave examples where their respective organisations scrutinise Zimbabwe’s bilateral trade agreements, such as those with the Chinese government in the mining sector. This was also backed up by records of some of their documented analyses of such bilateral agreements (Mutondoro 2020; ZIMCDD 2021). The three organisations also monitor the country’s trade negotiators on various platforms, including at the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and SADC Trade Protocol, as noted in the interviews. The organisations do so to “highlight unfair trade arrangements and to advocate for fair trade rules that promote sustainable development and protect the interests of vulnerable communities”, according to one ZIMCDD informant.

This work on economic justice, encompassing both fiscal and trade justice, directly feeds into several components of the SLF. First, this work is aimed at addressing the vulnerability context by seeking to mitigate the risks and shocks associated with unfair economic policies and practices, such as volatile commodity prices, exploitative trade agreements, and corruption, which disproportionately impact the livelihoods of vulnerable communities (Makombe,

Kufakurinani and Chimhete 2023). Second, it is aimed at strengthening livelihood resources by advocating for policies that enhance access to markets, credit, and technology for smallholder farmers, thus improving their productivity and income-generating potential. This potentially enhances the community's financial capital, physical capital and social capital. Third, it influences institutions, policies, and processes by actively engaging with government and international bodies to promote just and transparent economic governance, advocating for equitable resource distribution, and challenging harmful trade practices. This engagement aims to create an enabling environment for sustainable livelihoods. The organisations' focus on empowering smallholder farmers and promoting their participation in trade strengthens livelihood strategies by fostering diversification and enhancing market access. Finally, as the informants have shared, by promoting economic justice and fair trade, the organisations aim to contribute to achieving sustainable livelihood outcomes, such as increased income, reduced poverty, improved food security, and greater resilience for vulnerable communities.

6.2.2 Exploitation and mismanagement in the mining sector

Zimbabwe's rich mineral endowment has the potential to drive economic growth and improve livelihoods, yet the extractive sector presents a complex web of challenges that include government-private sector collusion, environmental degradation and resource leakages (Saunders 2017; Gukurume and Tombindo 2023; Sithole 2024). The three campaigning NGOs studied here play a role in advocating for transparency and accountability in the mining and extractive sector, ensuring that mining activities benefit communities and do not exacerbate environmental degradation. ZELA, with its core focus on environmental justice, actively promotes transparency and accountability in the mining sector (Mathende and Nhapi 2017; ZELA 2020b: 14; Manduna 2023). The organisation conducts extensive research and advocacy, demanding that mining contracts and revenue flows be disclosed to the public. This approach empowers communities with information, enabling them to hold both the government and mining companies accountable for irresponsible resource management. In different partnership models, the three organisations have been working together to amplify the voices of communities affected by mining, ensuring that their concerns are heard and addressed in policy decisions.

The findings highlight the interconnectedness of the issues addressed by the three campaigning NGOs. From an economic justice point of view, ZELA and ZIMCodd's work on tax evasion and illegal money flows has mostly concentrated on the mining and extractive sectors of the economy. The two organisations, which have occasional partnerships with AAZ advocate for stricter tax laws, stronger enforcement mechanisms, and greater transparency in revenue collection and distribution. By curbing illicit financial flows, the campaigning NGOs studied aim “(to) ensure that mining revenues are retained within Zimbabwe and contribute to

national development and improved livelihoods”, according to a ZIMCODD informant. When the ZIMCODD informant was further asked about the linkage between economic justice work and their work in mining and extractives, it was reported that:

We strongly advocate for domestic resources mobilisation, and the extractive sector is one of the key sectors; ... we would like to get the best out of the sector. They (ZELA) make strong arguments about fairness in communities, and we do much in making sure that we get the resources out of the sector in the first place. It is a collaborative process.

Evidently it is ZELA that has a more direct work thrust on the mining and extractive sector as widely documented since its founding in 2000 (Murombo 2012: 581; Mungure 2014; Kusena 2020), albeit working in a strategic partnership with AAZ and complementarily with ZIMCODD as noted from the interviews. Within this sector, ZELA champions the protection of environmental, social, and cultural rights in mining. They work to ensure that mining activities adhere to strict environmental regulations, minimise their impact on local ecosystems, and respect the cultural heritage of communities affected by mining (ZELA 2020b). ZELA also advocates for community participation in environmental impact assessments and the development of community development agreements that ensure mining benefits are equitably shared. The latter has been a key work thrust since 2010, when the concept of community share ownership schemes (CSOSs) was given leeway by the government through the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act of 2007 and Statutory Instrument 21 of 2010 (Warikandwa and Osode 2017: 34). ZELA has since been actively promoting CSOSs as a mechanism for ensuring that mining benefits local communities. The organisation has been advocating for the establishment and effective implementation of CSOSs, ensuring that communities have a direct stake in mining operations and receive a fair share of the profits. ZELA also works to empower communities to participate in the management and oversight of CSOSs, ensuring that these schemes contribute to sustainable livelihoods and local development.

Overall, data from the interviews read together with internal documents within the three organisations showed that they do not just work directly in communities confronting mining companies; they have a strong work thrust on legal and policy reform in mining. AAZ, ZELA and ZIMCODD engage in advocacy for legal and policy reforms within the mining sector, such as advocacy for a relocation framework for communities moved by mining projects, as elaborated by the AAZ informant who is involved in the drafting of such a framework. ZELA, in partnership with AAZ, focuses on strengthening environmental regulations, promoting responsible investment practices, and ensuring that mining laws align with international standards for environmental protection and human rights (Tsabora 2021). ZIMCODD

advocates for fiscal reforms that enhance transparency in revenue collection and distribution, combats illicit financial flows, and promotes community participation in mining governance (ZIMCodd 2023). The common belief expressed by the informants and the youth campaigners they work with is that a well-regulated, well-managed mining and extractive sector has the potential to improve the livelihoods of communities through direct and fair employment, CSOs and a well-resourced government that invests in public services such as energy and transportation.

The organisations' interventions in the mining sector have implications for SLF. By advocating for transparency and accountability in mining operations, they address the vulnerability context of communities by mitigating the risks of exploitation, environmental degradation, and resource depletion (Saunders 2017; Gukurume and Tombindo 2023; Sithole 2024). Their efforts to ensure equitable sharing of mining benefits through mechanisms like community share ownership schemes (CSOs) directly enhance livelihood resources by providing communities with a stake in mining operations and a share of the profits. This aids the community's financial capital, and with the networks that are built, it also strengthens social capital. By actively engaging in legal and policy reform, they influence institutions, policies, and processes to promote responsible mining practices, environmental protection, and community participation in mining governance. This creates an enabling environment for sustainable livelihoods in mining communities. The promotion of CSOs and advocacy for fair employment in the mining sector is aimed at strengthening livelihood strategies by diversifying income sources and creating opportunities for local employment. Finally, these interventions contribute to achieving sustainable livelihood outcomes by promoting economic growth, improving community well-being, and ensuring the long-term environmental sustainability of mining operations. This multifaceted approach demonstrates the NGOs' recognition of the interconnectedness of different SLF components in achieving sustainable and equitable development within the extractive sector.

6.2.3 Land and natural resources mismanagement

Access to land and natural resources is fundamental to the livelihoods of many Zimbabweans, particularly in rural communities (Chirau, Nkambule and Mupambwa 2014: 5; Macheka, Maharaj and Nzima 2021: 2). However, historical injustices (Chipuriro and Mkodzongi 2022: 208), ongoing disputes (Sango and Malik 2023: 5), and unsustainable practices (Bhanye *et al.* 2023: 1) have created a complex set of challenges that threaten both livelihoods and environmental sustainability. The three campaigning NGOs' work here is centred on advocating for equitable access to land and resources, promoting responsible land use practices, and protecting Zimbabwe's rich natural heritage. ZELA, with its focus on land rights, actively addresses the issue of land tenure insecurity and forced evictions. They provide legal

assistance to communities facing eviction, challenge illegal land grabs, and advocate for stronger land tenure rights that protect vulnerable communities from displacement, as documented in their reports, as well as in academic and popular press (Chidarara 2020; Manduna 2023). ZELA also works to raise awareness of land rights and empower communities to defend their land from illegal encroachment. One ZELA informant defined this work as being “the community’s friend and ally, in the face of corporate and state greedy and inconsiderateness”.

Furthermore, ZELA actively addresses the issue of water resource management and pollution, recognising the vital importance of clean water for both livelihoods and ecosystems (Musemwa 2018; Soyapi 2020). There are communities to monitor water quality, challenge polluting industries, and advocate for sustainable water resource management practices that ensure equitable access to clean water for all communities. Explaining this work, a ZELA informant said, “we have noted that industries do not care about communities; ... they just pollute, most water sources are affected, and it is the communities who cannot afford to drill boreholes, who end up suffering”. Adding to that work ZELA, also works to raise awareness of water conservation and empower communities to protect their local water sources, especially in the face of polluting mining companies.

This work is connected to another work stream on forest management and conservation. The three organisations, even though some not as explicit as ZELA, recognise the crucial role of forests in supporting livelihoods, protecting biodiversity, and mitigating climate change. They explicitly and implicitly advocate for sustainable forest management practices, community participation in forest conservation, and the protection of forests from illegal logging and deforestation. The organisations work to raise awareness of the importance of forests and empower communities to manage their local forest resources sustainably. This extends to involve work on wildlife conservation and in addressing human-wildlife conflict. ZELA and AAZ’s implementing partner in Binga, Basilwizi Trust, addresses the challenge of balancing wildlife conservation with the needs of communities living alongside wildlife areas as expressed by young campaigners in Binga who are working with the three organisations. One young campaigner further added that based on her experience working with the three organisations, “they advocate for policies that promote both conservation and community development, support initiatives that mitigate human-wildlife conflict, and promote sustainable tourism that benefits local communities”.

The work of these NGOs on land and natural resource mismanagement significantly intersects with various components of the SLF. By addressing land tenure insecurity and forced evictions, they directly tackle a key aspect of the vulnerability context for rural communities. Secure land tenure is a fundamental basis for livelihood security (Gono 2020: 156; Senda *et al.* 2022: 1),

and by advocating for stronger land rights and providing legal assistance, the NGOs help reduce the risk of displacement and dispossession. Their work on promoting responsible land use practices, sustainable water resource management, and forest conservation contributes to the preservation of critical livelihood resources, specifically natural capital. By protecting these resources from degradation and ensuring equitable access, they support the long-term sustainability of livelihoods that depend on them. The NGOs' advocacy for community participation in natural resource management influences institutions, policies, and processes by pushing for greater inclusion and local ownership in decision-making. This empowers communities to manage their resources sustainably and protect their interests. By raising awareness and providing training on sustainable practices, they aim to strengthen livelihood strategies through the promotion of diversification and encouraging environmentally sound approaches to resource utilisation. Ultimately, these interventions have the potential to contribute to sustainable livelihood outcomes by enhancing resilience to environmental shocks, promoting food security, and improving the overall well-being of communities dependent on land and natural resources.

6.2.4 Irresponsible business practices by corporations

As understood from the mining and extractive sector, irresponsible business practices are a livelihood issue, as one of the informants from ZELA put it:

It is always about the government, the private sector and the people. Businesses in connivance with the state often abuse people's rights and diminish their prospects of building their own stable livelihoods. If we can deal with the government and investors relationship, we can effectively improve people's lives. Because it is always a matter of government policies and investors practices that hinder people's ability to build their own livelihoods.

The promotion of responsible investment and business practices is thus a critical area of focus for the campaigning NGOs studied, as they strive to ensure that economic activities contribute to sustainable development and improve livelihoods without causing harm to communities or the environment. ZELA and ZIMCodd actively promote responsible investment practices in the natural resource sector, advocating for businesses to respect human rights, environmental standards, and labour laws (ZELA 2020b: 20; ZIMCodd 2023: 20). In several instances, informants noted their engagements with both domestic and international businesses, promoting adherence to international standards such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights, and the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Mineral Supply Chains. ZIMCodd and ZELA, in partnership with AAZ on various projects, also work to empower communities to negotiate fair terms with investors and demand accountability for any social or environmental harms

caused by business operations such as in Bikita district as documented in various of their joint works (AAZ and ZELA 2020; PWYP-ZIM 2020; AAZ 2024b). The three organisations' workstreams, according to their strategic plans and their staff, include monitoring investment trends and providing recommendations to the government on how to attract responsible investments that benefit the country and its citizens (ZELA 2020b: 20). They advocate for transparent and accountable investment policies, ensuring that investment agreements are in line with national interests and sustainable development goals (ZIMCODD 2023: 20). The organisations in "rare forms of collaboration with the state", according to a ZELA informant, also work to strengthen the capacity of government institutions to negotiate fair deals with investors and monitor their compliance with environmental and social standards. Furthermore, they engage in public awareness campaigns, highlighting the importance of responsible investment and advocating for stricter regulations and enforcement mechanisms to hold businesses accountable for their social and environmental impacts (ActionAid International 2024: 13).

The NGOs' focus on combating irresponsible business practices by corporations is deeply intertwined with the basic components of the SLF. As Carr (2023: 7) and Morse and McNamara (2013: 31) noted, there is a positive correlation between better labour practices and sustainable livelihoods; Lin, Zengrang and Wuxue (2022) highlighted there is a link between environmental protection and sustainable livelihoods; and Siloko (2024: 417) demonstrated human rights are a core feature to attain sustainable livelihoods. The three organisations' work challenging exploitative labour practices, environmental damage, and human rights abuses, directly addresses the vulnerability context created by irresponsible business operations. This work is aimed at protecting communities from the negative impacts of such practices, safeguarding their livelihoods and well-being. Advocating for responsible investment and adherence to international standards is aimed at ensuring that business activities contribute to, rather than detract from, livelihood resources, as noted from the study. This includes promoting fair compensation, safe working conditions, and environmental protection, issues which Lin, Zengrang and Wuxue (2022); Carr (2023); Siloko (2024) noted to be crucial for sustainable livelihoods.

The NGOs' efforts to empower communities to negotiate with investors and demand accountability influence institutions, policies, and processes by strengthening community voice and promoting greater corporate responsibility. The aim is to create a more equitable playing field by ensuring that business activities are aligned with community needs and environmental sustainability. By working to improve investment policies and strengthen government capacity to monitor corporate compliance, they further contribute to creating an enabling environment for responsible business practices. These actions, in turn, support the

development of sustainable livelihood strategies by promoting economic activities that are both socially and environmentally responsible, as noted from the interviews. This focus on responsible business practices is based on what AAZ informant noted as “the recognition that the private sector has a key effect in sustainable development and the need for businesses to operate in a manner that respects human rights, protects the environment, and benefits communities”.

6.2.5 Poor public services delivery

The common understanding among the three campaigning NGOs studied is that the quality of local governance and the effective delivery of basic services are crucial determinants of the well-being and livelihoods of communities. In Zimbabwe, where service delivery is often hampered by resource constraints (Gwiza and Jarbandhan 2022; Marumahoko 2023), capacity challenges (Gwiza 2021), and limited accountability (Maibeki *et al.* 2021), campaigning NGOs are playing a role in advocating for improved service delivery, promoting transparency and accountability in local governance, and empowering communities to demand their rights to essential services. The three organisations studied here actively monitor the delivery of basic services, such as healthcare, water, sanitation, and waste management in both rural and urban areas. They advocate for equitable access to these essential services, particularly for marginalised communities, and they work to hold local authorities accountable for ensuring adequate service provision. The three organisations also engage in community mobilisation and awareness-raising campaigns, empowering residents to demand their rights to basic services and participate in local governance processes. An informant from ZIMCodd emphasised that “communities need to be at the forefront of demanding improved service delivery. We work to amplify their voices and ensure that local authorities are responsive to their needs”.

Furthermore, the work of specifically ZIMCodd and AAZ advocates for democratic local governance reforms that enhance transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in decision-making processes. They push for greater decentralisation of power in the name of “devolution”, empowering local authorities to respond to the specific needs of their communities as have other campaigning NGOs since 2013 (Nyikadzino and Vyas-Doorgapersad 2022: 7). “We campaign for devolution because it enables us to conduct targeted campaigns so that our interventions are specific for one community” said one campaigner working with ZIMCodd. The two organisations also work together to strengthen the capacity of local government institutions to deliver services effectively and engage with citizens in a transparent and accountable manner. This is specifically possible due to “the relationships that local councils have built with us” (NGOs). Concurrently, the organisations promote social accountability mechanisms by empowering communities to monitor service

delivery, demand accountability from local authorities, and participate in shaping local development priorities. In justifying their work on improving the quality of public services, all three key informants from ZIMCODD, in almost uniform way, highlighted that if they did not do that, all their macro- and socio-economic work influencing fiscal and monetary policies would not yield any tangible results.

The NGOs' engagement with poor public service delivery in Zimbabwe has clear connections to the SLF components. Understanding that public services from water to sanitation play a crucial role in the attainment of sustainable livelihoods as documented by Sturge *et al.* (2017), the work by the three NGOs, monitoring service delivery and advocating for equitable access to essential services, addresses a crucial aspect of the vulnerability context for communities. Lack of access to these basic services creates vulnerability to health risks and undermines livelihoods (Sturge *et al.* 2017: 53). Their efforts to promote transparency and accountability in local governance are aimed at strengthening institutions, policies, and processes that are essential for effective service delivery. This includes advocating for reforms that enhance citizen participation and empower local authorities to respond to community needs, as noted from the interviews. By engaging in community mobilisation and awareness-raising campaigns, the three organisations aim to empower citizens to demand their rights and participate in local governance processes, strengthening livelihood strategies by fostering collective action and civic engagement. As Babajanian (2015) noted, this active participation of citizens in local governance enables communities to influence service delivery and hold authorities accountable. The focus on strengthening the capacity of local government institutions to deliver services effectively contributes to the sustainable provision of essential livelihood resources. Improved service delivery enhances community well-being, supports economic activities, and contributes to a healthier environment. Ultimately, these interventions promote sustainable livelihood outcomes by improving access to essential services, enhancing community participation in local governance, and fostering greater accountability and responsiveness from service providers. The work on good governance and effective service delivery demonstrates the common (among the three NGOs) understanding that strong institutions and responsive public services are crucial for sustainable development and improved livelihoods in communities, both rural and urban.

6.2.6 The escalating climate crisis

Participants in this study demonstrated a near-unanimous understanding that the escalating impacts of climate change pose a significant threat to livelihoods and sustainable development in Zimbabwe. The three campaigning NGOs under study recognise the urgency of addressing climate change, which they consistently refer to as “the climate crisis” and advocate for policies and practices that promote adaptation, mitigation, and a just transition to a low-carbon

economy. To them this is a matter of justice, not just moral necessity, as one young campaigner working with ActionAid put it, “we do it knowing that we are not the ones who benefitted from the death of the planet; hence we do it (advocacy) to ensure that those who benefitted come to compensate those being affected. It is a matter of correcting their wrongs; in other words, it is a matter of justice”.

The three organisations make a clear case for climate financing as part of their calls for climate justice, especially from the Global North. The call is premised on the financing commitment made by developed countries in Cancun in 2009 to provide “new and additional” financing for climate action to a tune of 100 billion dollars (Kinley *et al.* 2021: 593). This commitment was further reaffirmed in Paris in 2015; however, studies show that there were never “new and additional” finances as countries divert current development funding towards climate financing or outright fund the drivers of climate change (Mitchell, Ritchie and Tahmasebi 2021: 1). AAZ, as part of the ActionAid Federation, is running a global climate justice campaign dubbed #FundOurFuture. The campaign is not just targeting governments but also banks and insurers who continue to fund and insure the fossil fuel industry and industrial agriculture, the two main drivers of the climate crisis. Based on their 2023 report, *How The Finance Flows: The banks fuelling the climate crisis*, ActionAid International (2023) found that there is more money in the Global South being channelled towards “causes of the climate crisis” than towards “climate actions and solutions such as agroecology”. AAZ uses these findings as the basis of their work, calling for “systems change for climate justice” (AAZ 2024c: 13).

All the three organisations make a case for climate financing; however, ZELA and ZIMCodd’s efforts are more localised, focusing on the strengthening of local systems, domestic finance mobilisation towards mitigation and adaptation. They monitor the fiscal implications of climate financing and advocate for climate loss and damage finance mechanisms in Zimbabwe and global climate negotiations. ZIMCodd also promotes transparency in climate-related investments and advocates for community participation in climate action planning and implementation. The two organisations also work on supporting community-based adaptation initiatives that enhance the resilience of vulnerable communities to the impacts of climate change. They promote climate-smart agriculture, water conservation techniques, and disaster risk reduction strategies. At a structural level, the three organisations advocate for policies that promote climate change adaptation and mitigation, including the adoption of renewable energy technologies, sustainable land management practices, and the protection of forests as their strategic plans show (ZELA 2020b; ZIMCodd 2023; AAZ 2024c).

This work on the escalating climate crisis aligns with the SLF in several ways. First, by recognising climate change as a significant threat to livelihoods, they acknowledge its impact on the vulnerability context. Climate change exacerbates existing vulnerabilities by increasing

the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, affecting agricultural production, and disrupting water resources (Kumalo 2022; Toromade *et al.* 2024). Their advocacy for climate-smart agriculture, water conservation, and disaster risk reduction strengthens livelihood strategies by promoting practices that enhance resilience and adaptive capacity. Second, their focus on promoting renewable energy, sustainable land management, and forest protection contributes to the preservation of livelihood resources that are essential for community well-being and economic activities. By advocating for climate change adaptation and mitigation policies, they influence institutions, policies, and processes to create an enabling environment for sustainable development in the face of climate change. Third, their emphasis on climate justice and calls for climate financing address the need for equitable distribution of resources and support for vulnerable communities. This includes pushing for greater investment in adaptation and mitigation measures, as well as advocating for climate loss and damage finance mechanisms. By promoting community participation in climate action planning and implementation, they strengthen local ownership and ensure that climate interventions are aligned with community needs and priorities. This potentially contributes to the development of sustainable livelihood strategies that are responsive to the challenges posed by climate change. Ultimately, their work aims to achieve sustainable livelihood outcomes by enhancing community resilience, promoting climate-smart practices, and advocating for just and equitable climate policies.

6.2.7 Humanitarian crises

The climate crisis is exacerbating the frequency and intensity of disasters (Dembedza *et al.* 2023: 2), with each disaster lives and livelihoods are severely affected. The sustainability of livelihoods is premised on the ability of individuals, households and communities to cope and recover from hazards, which include climate-induced hazards (Scoones 1998). According to the interviews and records of their work, the three NGOs studied here indicate a clear recognition of the importance of effective humanitarian response and resilience-building efforts to mitigate the impact of crises and support communities in recovering and rebuilding their lives. Connected to other workstreams which participants in this study team “resilience building”, the humanitarian work by the three NGOs is systematic not merely charitable as is often the case with regular development NGOs. AAZ refers to this as “humanitarian systems change” (ActionAid International 2024: 9).

On strength, AAZ is a more engaged player in humanitarian work; however, it often works with partners, including ZELA and ZIMCDD. Before hazards strike, AAZ focuses its work on building community resilience, because according to one AAZ informant responsible for the organisation’s humanitarian response, “strong and cohesive communities are better equipped to withstand and recover from shocks”. They support community-led initiatives that strengthen

social cohesion, promote economic empowerment, and enhance access to essential services. AAZ also works to build capacity for community-based organisations to lead and manage disaster preparedness and response efforts. This preparedness includes policy frameworks such as disaster risk reduction (DRR) laws and humanitarian response standard operational procedures. AAZ has been working with the state and partners on strategies that aim to reduce the vulnerability of communities to disasters and build their resilience to shocks. Additionally, as the AAZ informant reported they, “work with communities to identify potential hazards, develop early warning systems, and implement risk reduction measures”.

Furthermore, AAZ, with its focus on women's rights and humanitarian response, actively promotes women's leadership and meaningful participation in emergency preparedness and response initiatives. According to another informant from AAZ, this is because “women possess unique knowledge and skills that are essential for effective disaster response and recovery because in most communities we work in, women play a protective role for their families and the community”. AAZ works to empower women to lead and participate in community-based disaster preparedness initiatives, ensuring that their voices and priorities are at the forefront of humanitarian action. All in all, all three organisations contribute to better humanitarian responses through advocacy for effective and accountable humanitarian aid that reaches those most in need. All the informants from the three organisations indicated that their work, monitoring humanitarian aid flows and advocating for transparency and accountability in aid distribution, contributes to ensuring that aid reaches marginalised and vulnerable.

The three campaigning NGOs' work on humanitarian crises fits well within the SLF's key components. By recognising the increased frequency and intensity of disasters, particularly those induced by climate change (Dembedza *et al.* 2023: 2), the NGOs acknowledge the significant impact on the vulnerability context of communities. Disasters often cause loss of life, damage to property, and disrupt livelihoods, creating a need for effective humanitarian response and resilience-building efforts (Sen, Nalla and Ranjit 2022). The three NGOs' work focuses on community-led initiatives that strengthen social cohesion, promote economic empowerment, and enhance access to essential services, contributing to building livelihood resources that are essential for coping with and recovering from shocks. Their support for community-based organisations to lead and manage disaster preparedness and response efforts, strengthens livelihood strategies, fostering self-reliance and local ownership when responding to crises.

The emphasis on disaster preparedness, including the development of early warning systems and risk reduction measures, is done to mitigate the impact of disasters on livelihood resources and vulnerability context. This is through their work with communities to identify potential hazards and implement risk reduction strategies; this reduces the potential for loss

of life, damage to property, and disruption of livelihoods. Furthermore, the promotion of women's leadership and participation in humanitarian response recognises the important role that women play in disaster recovery and resilience-building, as argued for by (McNamara, Clissold and Westoby 2021). By empowering women to lead and participate in community-based disaster preparedness initiatives, they strengthen livelihood strategies and ensure that humanitarian action is inclusive and responsive to the needs of all community members. Finally, their advocacy for effective and accountable humanitarian aid contributes to ensuring that assistance reaches those most in need, thus contributing towards the attainment of sustainable livelihood outcomes in the aftermath of disasters. By monitoring humanitarian aid flows and advocating for transparency and accountability in aid distribution, the three organisations contribute to ensuring that aid is used effectively to support recovery and rebuilding efforts.

6.2.8 The subjugation of women in social, economic and political spaces

The empowerment of women and the promotion of gender equality are central to the work of AAZ, ZELA and ZIMCDD. From the 12 interviews with NGO staff and 18 interviews with campaigners working with the three NGOs under study, it was noted that the organisations recognise that gender inequality is a significant barrier to sustainable development in general and the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in particular. This recognition informed their work to challenge patriarchal norms, discriminatory practices, and systemic injustices that perpetuate gender disparities. Connected to their work in advancing the delivery of public services, the three NGOs studied here call for gender-transformative public services. Informants from AAZ articulated the transformation of their work from just a call for public services to new calls for gender-transformative public services. A female manager who led AAZ's work on women's rights for five years, explained this transformation as:

The conversation used to be around service delivery, then we noted that services may be available but not serving women effectively; hence, we joined the call for follows GPRS (gender responsive public services), highlighting the plight of women in public transport use, for example. We have since then noted that without transformation, both practical and systematic, public services continue to serve women worse than men and all those with intersectionalities, which disadvantage them; it is a matter of power dynamics and access. We then move to call for GTPS (gender-transformative public services), going to the structural roots of the problem.

The ZIMCDD informant concurred, highlighting that their work, "... on fiscal justice, (also) promotes transformation of public services delivery by advocating for equitable budget allocations that prioritise the needs of women and girls". The three NGOs collaborate to ensure that tax policies do not disproportionately burden women and that public resources are used

to address gender inequalities. The common reason for this gendered focus was that women have a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work (Dutta 2022); hence, investments in public services lessen the amount of work, thus improving outcomes for over half the population (Elson 2017).

The feminist political thinking is evident across all other work streams in the three NGOs. The organisations advocate for redistributive climate and humanitarian finance mechanisms that prioritise the needs of women and girls who are often disproportionately affected by climate change and humanitarian crises (ActionAid International 2024: 13). They work to ensure that climate finance reaches women and girls, supporting their adaptation efforts and building their resilience to climate shocks. AAZ specifically advocates for gender-sensitive humanitarian response programs that address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls in crisis situations (AAZ 2024c; ActionAid International 2024). In most of their work streams, the three NGOs promote women's leadership and empowerment, supporting women's participation in decision-making at all levels. They provide training and mentorship opportunities for women leaders; advocate for women's political participation; and support women-led organisations and social movements (AAZ 2024c; ActionAid International 2024).

The three NGOs' focus on empowering women and promoting gender equality is strongly linked to several components of the SLF. The three NGOs' work, which challenges patriarchal norms and discriminatory practices is designed to address a crucial aspect of the vulnerability context faced by women in Zimbabwe. Gender inequality limits women's access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power, hindering their ability to attain sustainable livelihoods (Njuki *et al.* 2023: 165). Additionally, as noted from the interviews, advocacy for gender-transformative public services is aimed at ensuring that institutions, policies, and processes are responsive to the specific needs and priorities of women and girls. This includes advocating for equitable budget allocations, gender-sensitive service delivery, and the elimination of discriminatory practices that perpetuate gender disparities.

By promoting women's leadership and empowerment, the three organisations' work is aimed at contributing to the strengthening of livelihood strategies through the enabling of women to participate in decision-making at all levels. This includes providing training and mentorship opportunities, advocating for women's political participation, and supporting women-led organisations and social movements, as noted by the three organisations' work. The focus on gender-sensitive climate and humanitarian finance mechanisms recognises the disproportionate impact of climate change and humanitarian crises on women and girls (Dutta 2022). By advocating for redistributive finance mechanisms that prioritise their needs, the work of the studied NGOs contributes to building livelihood resources and enhancing resilience. Furthermore, their work to ensure that climate finance reaches women and girls, supporting

their adaptation efforts and building their resilience to climate shocks, directly contributes to strengthening livelihood strategies and reducing their vulnerability to climate change impacts. This holistic approach to gender equality, according to an AAZ informant, “recognises that empowering women is not only a matter of justice but also essential for achieving sustainable development across all aspects of society”.

6.2.9 Weak food systems

The agricultural sector is the backbone of Zimbabwe's economy, providing livelihoods for most of the population and contributing significantly to food security (Matandare 2017). However, the sector faces numerous challenges, including climate change impacts, land tenure insecurity, limited access to markets, and unsustainable farming practices (Mazarura *et al.* 2019). The interviews and records within the organisation's archives demonstrate an understanding of the importance of promoting sustainable agriculture and food systems that support livelihoods, enhance food security, and protect the environment. AAZ, through its focus on economic justice and climate justice, actively supports small-scale farmers, particularly women, in building sustainable livelihoods. They promote agroecological farming practices, facilitate access to markets, and advocate for policies that support smallholder farmers. AAZ also works to strengthen the resilience of small-scale farmers to climate change impacts through promoting climate-smart agriculture and advocating for access to climate finance. ZIMCodd, through its work on trade justice, also supports sustainable livelihoods for small-scale farmers by advocating for just trade policies and agreements that protect the interests of smallholder farmers (ZIMCodd 2023: 8). They also work to enhance transparency in agricultural supply chains and promote access to markets for smallholder farmers.

A peculiar theme that emerged is that all three NGOs subscribe to the concept of “food sovereignty”, which they defined as the ability of communities to control their own food systems with no state or corporate intervention. This thinking leads them to “advocate for policies that empower communities to control their own food systems and prioritise local food production”, according to a youth campaigner working with both AAZ and ZIMCodd. The three organisations work to enhance food security by supporting small-scale farmers, promoting agroecological practices, and advocating for policies that protect local food systems from the negative impacts of globalisation and trade liberalisation. Of particular interest is the reforming of the country's Seeds Act [Chapter 19:13], which only authorises registered companies to distribute seeds, effectively banning traditional practices of seeds passing (Van Dycke *et al.* 2024: 5). According to one campaigner, “the law has led to the monopolisation of the sector with consequences ranging from above-market prices for seeds and the flooding of hybrid seeds, which require more inputs such as synthetic fertilisers”. More than half of the eighteen interviewed campaigners from all three studied NGOs expressed this sentiment.

Through various projects, AAZ and ZIMCDD work to improve access to markets for smallholder farmers, facilitating market linkages and promoting fair trade practices. They also advocate for policies that support small-scale farmers in accessing markets, such as reducing transportation costs, improving infrastructure, and providing access to market information. Participants in this study agreed that their respective organisations work on strengthening food systems with the intention of ensuring sustainable livelihoods in communities.

Campaigning NGOs aim to address several SLF components through their work. By recognising the challenges facing the agricultural sector, including climate change impacts, land tenure insecurity, and limited access to markets, they acknowledge the vulnerability context within which farmers operate (Mazarura *et al.* 2019). These challenges influence agricultural production, food security, and the livelihoods of those dependent on agriculture, especially in rural areas (Holden and Ghebru 2016; Mazarura *et al.* 2019). The NGOs' support for small-scale farmers, particularly women, through the promotion of agroecological farming practices, facilitation of access to markets, and advocacy for supportive policies, contributes to building livelihood resources and strengthening livelihood strategies. Agroecology promotes sustainable farming practices that enhance soil health, conserve water, and reduce reliance on external inputs, thereby improving productivity and resilience (Yadav *et al.* 2021: 323). The emphasis on food sovereignty, with its focus on community control over food systems and local food production, further strengthens livelihood strategies by promoting self-reliance and reducing dependence on external food sources (Sampson *et al.* 2021: 1). This approach is aimed at empowering communities to make decisions about their food systems and prioritise local needs and priorities.

Additionally, by advocating for policies that protect local food systems from the negative impacts of globalisation and trade liberalisation, institutions, policies, and processes are influenced to create an enabling environment for sustainable agriculture and food security. This includes advocating for fair trade practices, reducing trade barriers, and supporting smallholder farmers in accessing markets. Their efforts to improve access to markets for smallholder farmers, facilitating market linkages and promoting fair trade practices, directly enhance livelihood resources by enabling farmers to sell their products at fair prices and access wider markets. This contributes to increased income, improved food security, and enhanced livelihoods. Overall, the NGOs' work on strengthening food systems contributes to achieving sustainable livelihood outcomes by promoting sustainable agriculture, enhancing food security, and empowering communities to control their own food systems. This integrated approach is aimed at addressing the challenges faced by the agricultural sector while promoting resilient and sustainable livelihoods for those dependent on it.

6.2.10 Youth exclusion in development processes

While youth empowerment and participation are not explicitly listed as standalone thematic areas in the three organisations' strategic plans, the work of AAZ, ZELA, and ZIMCODOD implicitly contributes to youth empowerment and involvement in various ways, as noted from the interviews conducted. ZIMCODOD, through its focus on movement building and advocacy, actively engages youth in their campaigns and advocacy initiatives, some of whom were interviewed for this study. The organisation recognises the importance of youth participation in shaping policies that affect their future and works to create platforms where their voices can be heard (ZIMCODOD 2023: 7). ZIMCODOD also provides training and capacity-building opportunities for young people to enhance their advocacy skills and engage effectively in decision-making processes. AAZ, through its youth-focused Global Platforms Programme, invests in youth capacity building and accompaniment, helping youths with long-term support in different areas of their work, which include economic justice, climate justice, women's rights and humanitarian action. ZELA, through its focus on environmental justice, also engages youth in environmental advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns. ZELA demonstrably recognises the importance of youth participation in environmental protection and sustainable development and works to empower young people to become environmental stewards and advocates (ZELA 2020b: 23).

A more emergent thrust was noted from ZIMCODOD, which had direct economic empowerment initiatives for youth in rural communities. This peculiarity was more pronounced because it is somewhat disconnected from the regular advocacy work that ZIMCODOD usually does. Other players, AAZ and ZELA, work to address youth exclusion in economic spaces primarily through "software" programming calling for more economic opportunities for youth by advocating for policies that support youth employment and entrepreneurship. The three organisations also work to enhance youth access to education and skills development opportunities that can improve their livelihoods and economic prospects, according to the majority of campaigners working with them.

AAZ, ZELA and ZIMCODOD's work discussed in this section, while not explicitly focused on youth empowerment, implicitly contributes to addressing youth exclusion and promoting their participation in development processes, aligning with SLF components in several ways. First, by recognising the importance of youth participation in shaping policies and creating platforms for their voices to be heard, the NGOs acknowledge the need to address the vulnerability context of youth who are often excluded from decision-making processes in Zimbabwe (Musarurwa 2018; Macheke and Masuku 2019). This exclusion often limits their ability to influence policies that affect their lives and livelihoods (Macheke and Masuku 2019: 8). Second, the provision of training and capacity-building opportunities for young people is aimed

at enhancing their skills and knowledge, contributing to their human capital as a key livelihood resource. This is designed to empower them to engage effectively in advocacy, decision-making, and development initiatives. Third, engaging youth in environmental advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns is aimed at strengthening their livelihood strategies by promoting environmental stewardship and sustainable practices. This is aimed at fostering their participation in environmental protection and sustainable development, which are crucial for long-term livelihood security (Morse and McNamara 2013: 25). Fourth, ZIMCodd's direct economic empowerment initiatives for youth in rural communities are designed to contribute to building their livelihood resources by providing opportunities for income generation and skills development (ZIMCodd 2023: 7). This, according to the informants, includes supporting youth-led enterprises and promoting entrepreneurship. Finally, advocating for policies that support youth employment and entrepreneurship, as well as enhancing youth access to education and skills development, influences institutions, policies, and processes to create an enabling environment for youth economic empowerment. This contributes to improving their livelihood resources and opportunities for sustainable livelihoods (Ngene, Pinet and Maclay 2021). Overall, while youth empowerment may not be a standalone thematic area, the NGOs' work is aimed at contributing to the addressing of youth exclusion and promotion of their participation in development processes. This effectively contributes to achieving sustainable livelihood outcomes for youth by enhancing their skills, knowledge, and opportunities for economic empowerment and meaningful engagement in development initiatives.

6.3 Programmatic issues being addressed by campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe

Campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe are grappling with a complex web of programmatic challenges that hinder their efforts to address critical livelihood issues. These challenges, ranging from financial constraints and attribution limitations to advocacy hurdles and a volatile socio-economic environment, form a significant category of livelihood issues in and of themselves, as communities heavily rely on these NGOs. Despite these obstacles, the NGOs are working to address this distinct set of livelihoods issues, employing diverse interventions to overcome these hurdles and strive towards achieving sustainable livelihoods in communities. This section explores this category of livelihood issues and the NGOs' interventions, examining their contributions to the five components of the SLF.

6.3.1 Limited financial resources and funding constraints

A significant challenge encountered by all three NGOs is the constraint of limited financial resources and securing sustainable long-term funding, a problem common in the Zimbabwe NGO sector (USAID 2021: 44). USAID (2021: 44) further noted that this challenge is multifaceted, stemming from the economic climate in Zimbabwe, donor fatigue, and

competition within the NGO sector. In this, NGOs have no option but to be creative and address this challenge, which could threaten their work to attain sustainable livelihoods in communities. A female informant from ZIMCodd highlighted the difficulties they face in mobilising adequate financial resources to support their advocacy initiatives, stating that “funding is always a challenge, we rely heavily on donor funding, which can be unpredictable and often comes with restrictions that can limit our flexibility and impact”. This sentiment was echoed by participants from ZELA and AAZ, who emphasised the competitive nature of the NGO sector and the challenges of securing funding for core organisational costs and long-term sustainability. The limited financial resources have several implications for the NGOs' work. It severely restricts their ability to implement programs, hire and retain qualified staff, and conduct impactful advocacy campaigns. The lack of funding also undermines their long-term sustainability and limits their ability to adapt to changing circumstances or pursue new opportunities.

The campaigning NGOs studied here are actively working to address this challenge by diversifying their funding sources, strengthening local fundraising capacity, building strong relationships with donors, and engaging in innovative fundraising initiatives. These interventions were not further elaborated on by participants, who in most cases avoided probing questions on the specifics of the interventions. The informants from the three organisations also emphasise the importance of financial prudence, transparency, and accountability in managing their limited resources, as expressed by a senior manager at ZELA, who explained that “knowing that we are working in a resource-constrained environment is the positive; we then do the right thing, which includes making every cent count to make sure the organisation remains a going concern”. Responding to a question of some legitimate shortcomings that have been blamed for poor fundraising opportunities for NGOs, such as lack of internal democratic practices (Chigwata 2016) and poor corporate governance (USAID 2021), a manager at ZIMCodd said, “sometimes, the best we can do is to take in these recommendations and put in place robust systems to address observed challenges”. By instituting these measures, the NGOs aim to fundraise more and expand their work to support communities in all five components of the SLF: the vulnerability context, livelihood resources, institutions, policies and processes, and livelihood strategies to sustainable livelihood outcomes.

6.3.2 Difficulties in claiming advocacy outcomes

A common theme with NGO staff interviewed was their inability to convincingly claim outcomes and impacts of their programming; this is a widespread challenge in all advocacy and campaigning NGOs (Gen and Wright 2013: 9). This limits their fundraising capacity, leading to the challenges above. One informant from AAZ, who is involved in institutional fundraising,

highlighted this difficulty, stating that “it is challenging to measure the direct impact of our advocacy work. We can track policy changes or shifts in public discourse, but how these translate into tangible improvements in people's lives is not always easy to quantify”. Participants from ZELA and ZIMCODO, echoed this sentiment, emphasising the complexity of evaluating advocacy and campaigning programs, particularly in the long term.

This challenge arises from several factors highlighted by staff from the three NGOs, which include:

- i) Attribution: It is difficult to isolate the specific impact of advocacy work from other factors that influence social change, such as government policies, economic conditions, and the work of other NGOs (Gen and Wright 2013: 25; Weible 2023: 72). One informant said, “we can say we did it, but underneath everyone would be wondering, did we really contribute to the change or someone else did, or is it mere coincidence?”
- ii) Time Lag: The impact of advocacy work is not often immediately apparent, as changes in policy or public attitudes take time to manifest in tangible improvements in people's lives. This implies that the implementation of projects or campaigns may conclude without yielding the desired outcomes. The AAZ fundraising informant further complained that “our reporting will be miserable, but years later changes are realised, yet the donors who gave us funds would have already given up on us due to disappointment without results at the end point of the project.”
- iii) Data Collection: Gathering reliable data on the impact of advocacy work has been noted as a challenge, particularly when dealing with sensitive socio-economic issues or working in restrictive environments. In Zimbabwe there are areas that are inaccessible, as one NGO staff member said, “we cannot collect data there (a rural community); it has been declared a ‘no-go area’ long back by the ruling party.
- iv) Evaluation Frameworks: There is a lack of standardised evaluation frameworks specifically designed for advocacy and campaigning programs, making it difficult to compare and assess the effectiveness of different approaches. An informant from ZELA complained that “each donor comes with their own evaluation frameworks; some do not even measure what we are looking at; even when they do, they cannot be harmonised with other projects that we do, and we have like a number of projects.”

The difficulties NGOs face in claiming advocacy outcomes hinder their ability to effectively build and demonstrate progress across various SLF components. The inability to convincingly showcase the impact of their advocacy work, particularly in the long term, limits their ability to secure funding and resources, which in turn restricts their capacity to implement programs and build all five target SLF components. The studied NGOs are working to address these

challenges, introducing various interventions as noted from the interviews. First, the three NGOs have been creating internal monitoring and evaluation frameworks specifically designed for advocacy and campaigning programs. This includes identifying clear indicators of success, collecting data from multiple sources, and using both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods even if it is not a specified donor requirement. Second, the studied NGOs have been engaging in participatory evaluation approaches, increasingly involving communities and other stakeholders in the evaluation process, recognising the importance of incorporating their perspectives and experiences into the assessment of program effectiveness. Thirdly, even though the interviewees did not provide specifics, they indicated that they were using technology to enhance monitoring and evaluation, crunching large amounts of online data to assess if their campaigns are gaining traction and reaching the right audiences.

6.3.3 Difficulties in balancing advocacy with service delivery

A key challenge highlighted, particularly by AAZ and ZELA informants, is balancing advocacy work with the demand for service delivery. This tension arises from communities' immediate needs often overshadowing the long-term, systemic focus of advocacy. One informant from AAZ who has worked in rural communities for years noted that, "... communities value tangible support. Sometimes, our advocacy goals are misunderstood as we are seen as having resources, yet we do not want to provide direct services". One ZELA informant added that "we can't campaign with hungry people, people would be expecting something to alleviate their immediate needs". This challenge manifests in several ways. First, urgent community needs for food aid, school fees, or healthcare compete with resources dedicated to advocacy campaigns. Second, communities sometimes view NGOs solely as service providers, which can lead to disappointment or misaligned expectations regarding advocacy outcomes hampering the advancement of social capital (a key resource) as it affects trust and collaboration between the NGOs and communities. Lastly, overemphasis on service delivery strains NGO resources, undermining the long-term sustainability of advocacy efforts. Subsequent chapters will demonstrate how this challenge intersects with other challenges to create a compounding challenge that affects the intended outcomes.

Data from the interviews has shown that the three NGOs employ various approaches to manage this contradiction. First, AAZ and ZELA conduct workshops and dialogues explaining the value of advocacy and its connection to long-term, sustainable change. Notably, they also highlighted that communities did not well receive these trainings. Second, they conduct integrated programming. ZIMCDD, which did not highlight difficulties in balancing advocacy with service delivery as a major challenge, noted that they often integrate advocacy goals within service delivery projects, demonstrating the link between immediate needs and

systemic change. Finally, the AAZ informants noted that they utilise collaboration and referral systems in situations where they are unable to provide direct services. The NGOs build referral networks with service-orientated NGOs, ensuring communities receive necessary support while maintaining focus on advocacy.

6.3.4 Unstable socio-economic environment

One informant from AAZ described sustainable livelihoods as, "... a moving target that is difficult to shoot." Campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe face a dynamic socio-political environment that demands adaptability and resilience. Participants from all three NGOs emphasised the challenges of navigating shifting political landscapes, economic volatility and evolving social dynamics. A ZIMCODD representative stated that, "the operating environment in Zimbabwe is constantly changing. We need to be agile and adaptable to remain relevant and effective". This challenge manifests in policy uncertainty, economic volatility and evolving social norms. Frequent changes in government policies and priorities often disrupt ongoing campaigns (Vambe 2023). "Some changes are made by the state to deliberately curtail the campaigns and NGOs programming", as expressed by a campaigner working with ZELA and AAZ. The campaigner added that these changes may be at national level or local community level and "they are often not formal regulations but ad hoc policy pronouncements for which non-compliance can stifle relations and endanger future programming". Zimbabwe's economic instability, characterised by high inflation and currency fluctuations, also impact funding streams, program costs and the needs of communities. On the other hand, evolving social norms and values, particularly regarding issues such as gender equality, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and intersex (LGBTQI) rights and environmental protection, necessitate that NGOs adapt their messaging and approaches to remain relevant and to avoid unintended confrontations. This rapidly changing socio-economic environment in Zimbabwe poses challenges to the NGOs' efforts to contribute to any of the five components of the SLF.

However, the interview data demonstrated that the three NGOs have been investing in regular contextual analyses to understand the evolving socio-political landscape and identify emerging trends and challenges. Adding to the quote on sustainable livelihoods as a moving target, the informant added that "we have to be moving with the bow and arrow alongside at a fast pace, dodging obstacles and remaining steadfast". The three NGOs have also been building strategic partnerships with other civil society organisations, government agencies, and international organisations to leverage resources, share knowledge, and adapt collectively to changing contexts. This allowed the NGOs to deploy the most strategic partner for each task as one informant noted, "we cannot be there with our branded cars and get out in peace; we have a partner who works there and still produces the intended results. (If)

relations between the local authorities and that partner changes, we task another partner, ours is a commitment to the community, so we adapt and change as we go". Finally, NGOs have fostered a culture of learning and innovation, encouraging staff to adapt to new approaches and technologies that enhance their effectiveness in dynamic environments.

6.3.5 Limited guarantee for interventions sustainability

Ensuring the long-term sustainability and impact of programs and advocacy initiatives is a critical challenge for NGOs, particularly in volatile environments like Zimbabwe. Achieving sustainable livelihoods requires ongoing support, capacity development, and continuous engagement to solidify and expand upon the gains achieved through advocacy (Sharifinia 2021; Kaponda and Chiwaridzo 2024). An informant from ZELA expressed this concern, stating that, "we often secure short-term wins, but ensuring these translate into lasting change requires ongoing effort and community ownership". Because NGO funding is often project-based, this hinders long-term planning and sustained community engagement. This is a common challenge across campaigning NGOs in general (Yanacopulos 2015; McDonough and Rodríguez 2020: 8). Additionally, external shocks and policy changes often derail even the most well-intentioned initiatives. One informant shared that when one of their donor countries elected a rightist government, their long-term funding was reduced, significantly affecting their plans for the remaining two years of their project. This limited guarantee for intervention sustainability poses a serious challenge to the NGOs' efforts in contributing to all the components of the SFL, specifically if NGOs cannot foster long-term relationships. This has implications on their desire to build social capital, a needed resource.

The NGOs have adopted a multi-pronged approach to address the challenge of limited guarantees for intervention sustainability. Firstly, they invest in building the capacity of local organisations and social movements, empowering them to continue their work even after external support ends. This strategy was highlighted by an AAZ informant who emphasised the importance of creating self-sustaining local initiatives. Secondly, the NGOs focus on internal organisational reforms, including strengthening their own capacity, improving financial management, and developing adaptive leadership to navigate uncertainties. Thirdly, they prioritise participatory approaches, ensuring that communities lead and shape initiatives that affect their lives. This emphasis on community ownership was highlighted as key in fostering long-term sustainability. Finally, the NGOs support community-led income generation and resource access initiatives, reducing reliance on external funding. This approach aligns with recommendations from Luke and Chu (2013), who advocate for exploring innovative approaches like social enterprises and local revenue generation to enhance community self-reliance and sustain development efforts beyond traditional NGO support.

6.3.6 Political repression and shrinking civic space

In Zimbabwe, the government's crackdown on dissent and its attempts to control civil society pose a significant threat to the work of campaigning NGOs (CIVICUS 2024b). This includes restrictive legislation, surveillance, and harassment of NGO staff and activists. An informant from one of the NGOs shared that they “face constant surveillance, harassment, and even threats of closure. But remain committed to our mission because we believe that every Zimbabwean deserves a voice and a chance to build a better life for themselves and their families”. This sentiment was echoed by campaigners working with ZIMCDD and AAZ, who highlighted the challenges of operating in a restrictive environment where freedom of expression and assembly are often curtailed. The government's attempts to control civil society manifest in several ways. First, the government has enacted laws that restrict the operations of NGOs, such as the Criminal Law Codification and Reform Act Amendment of 2023 and implemented stringent registration requirements and reporting obligations, most of which are outside the existing legislative frameworks. According to the informants interviewed these laws and pronouncements have been used to stifle dissent and curtail their activities. Second, surveillance, harassment, and intimidation of campaigning NGO staff and campaigners create a climate of fear and self-censorship, limiting their ability to operate freely and effectively, as noted by Dendere and Taodzera (2023). Lastly, these NGOs have, in instances, been seen as critical of the government, and they have been facing threats of deregistration or closure (Elone 2013: 3; Kabonga and Zvokuomba 2021). All this has a chilling effect on advocacy efforts, resulting in NGOs reluctance to speak out on sensitive issues for fear of reprisal.

Political repression and shrinking civic space significantly impede the NGOs' capacity to contribute to any of the SLF components, specifically restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly, coupled with surveillance and harassment, limiting organisations' capacity to work effectively. However, to navigate these challenges, the NGOs have adopted various interventions, including first challenging restrictive legislation through legal channels and advocating for the protection of freedom of expression and assembly, which is an ongoing endeavour by almost all campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe (Chikoto-Schultz and Uzochukwu 2016b; Mavhiki 2016; Mlambo, Zubane and Mlambo 2020). Second, the NGOs studied here have adopted strategic communication approaches to disseminate their messages and advocate for change while minimising the risk of reprisals. Third, NGOs have built coalitions with other civil society organisations to amplify their collective voice and advocate for a more enabling environment for civil society. Finally, NGOs engage in international advocacy efforts to raise awareness of the challenges they face and pressure the government to respect human rights and freedom of expression.

6.3.7 Government distrust and misinformation

The portrayal of NGOs as agents of foreign influence, coupled with attempts to discredit their work, undermines public trust and support for their initiatives, as this study's interviews with key informants have revealed. This effectively breaks down the social capital networks that the NGOs have worked to build, and to a broader extent without the community's trust and buy-in, NGO intervention in any of the needed SLF components becomes weak. NGOs devised various interventions which include first, guaranteeing transparency and accountability to counter misinformation and build public legitimacy. The three NGOs noted that they prioritise transparency in their operations and finances, publishing annual reports and financial statements that are readily accessible to the public. As highlighted by one AAZ informant, they "also emphasise accountability to the communities (they) serve, regularly communicating (their) activities and impacts and seeking feedback from community members through (their) standard PRRPs (Participatory Review and Reflection Processes)".

Second, they conduct community engagements. The three organisations have actively engaged with communities, building relationships based on trust and mutual understanding. They conduct community outreach programs, organise public forums, and participate in local events to connect with people and address their concerns directly, as one ZELA representative noted, "we create a relationship with communities not based on projects and campaigns but on mutual learning even outside projects". Third, the organisations studied here are using strategic communication to counter misinformation and disseminate accurate information about their work. This includes developing targeted media campaigns, utilising social media platforms, and engaging with journalists to amplify their messages and counter negative narratives. An NGO informant noted that "we invest in communications to dispel misinformation; we do this to make sure that our intentions are not defined by the state".

6.3.8 Coordination challenges

A lack of coordination and collaboration among NGOs often leads to duplication of efforts and missed opportunities for collective action, as noted in a USAID (2021) assessment of the Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs landscape. One participant from ZIMCODD highlighted this challenge, stating that, "... sometimes, different NGOs end up working on the same issues without proper coordination. This often led to a waste of resources and a lack of unified strategy". This sentiment was echoed by participants from ZELA and AAZ, who emphasised the need for greater coordination and collaboration within the NGO sector. This lack of collaboration is a product of the widespread competition for funding as NGOs become reluctant to share information or collaborate with each other and have differing approaches to addressing social issues. Furthermore, coordination challenges among NGOs hinder their ability to effectively contribute to the five key components of the SLF, especially to influence

institutions, policies, and processes, for no institution takes them seriously when they have contradicting and disjointed demands.

To address these challenges, the three NGOs have been trying out various interventions. First, they participate in networks and platforms that facilitate information sharing and coordination among civil society organisations. These platforms include coalitions, which have been the character of Zimbabwe's campaigning platforms since the early 2000s (Ncube 2010: 182; Moyo 2024a: 15). Second, they have been collaborating on joint advocacy initiatives, pooling their resources and expertise to amplify their collective voice and advocate for shared goals, as evidenced by existing formal partnerships between AAZ and ZELA on several projects in the extractive sector. And finally, at least one informant from all three NGOs indicated intentions to develop shared platforms and tools that facilitate communication and coordination among civil society organisations.

6.3.9 Contextual variations across communities

National-level campaigns often miss the mark when it comes to addressing the diverse needs of different communities (Seibicke 2017: 125). As Hickey and Mitlin (2004) pointed out at a time when campaigning by NGOs started to gain traction, these campaigns tended to focus on macro interventions, overlooking the micro-level realities on the ground. This often leads to policies that are ineffective or even harmful in certain contexts (Chollete and Harrison 2021: 213; Mukherjee, Coban and Bali 2021: 225). This disconnect is keenly felt in Zimbabwe, where the rural-urban divide poses a significant challenge for NGOs. One informant emphasised this, stating, "the needs of rural communities are often vastly different from those in urban areas. What works in Harare might not work in Nkayi. Land issues in urban areas are completely different from rural areas, then how can we universally program?". This challenge has been highlighted by Chigwata (2016), noting that Zimbabwean NGOs are urban-centric, echoing the colonial legacy that confined civil society to urban centres (Helliker 2012). This urban bias raises concerns about whether these organisations truly serve the interests of a wider population, including those in rural areas. A campaigner from a rural community working with AAZ shared, "we are active in the civil society but even us sometimes we feel forgotten. It is like the NGOs only care about what's happening in the cities".

Beyond the rural-urban divide, other contextual variations further complicate the work of NGOs. Educational disparities also hinder the effective implementation of programs again in rural areas. An informant from AAZ working in the organisation's rural programming explained, "low literacy levels make it difficult to disseminate information. How can you explain climate justice in Shona? How can you talk about austerity in Shona? It is not easy". Similarly, the digital divide limits access to information and communication technologies, hampering community engagement and development efforts. "Many communities lack internet access,

making it challenging to use digital tools for empowerment and advocacy,” noted another AAZ informant. Physical accessibility also presents a significant hurdle. Poor infrastructure and limited transportation options impede access to remote communities. “Reaching marginalised communities in areas like Binga is a constant struggle. Bad roads prove to be a major issue; some wards cannot even be accessed by public transport,” lamented a youth campaigner working with AAZ in Binga.

To overcome these challenges, NGOs studied indicated that they are starting to prioritise community needs assessments and adopt flexible strategies. “Before launching any initiative, we spend time in the community, listening to their concerns and understanding their priorities,” shared a program officer from ZIMCDD. Adaptability is key, as cultural sensitivities and resource availability vary greatly between communities. Decentralised decision-making structures, such as those advocated for by Nyikadzino and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2022), have been implemented by all the studied NGOs. They argued that this is to empower communities to shape their own development and ensure that their interventions are aligned with local priorities.

6.4 Analysis of NGO focus on SLF components

In analysing the extent to which the three NGOs address the five components of the SLF, it is evident that their work spans across all components, albeit with varying degrees of emphasis.

- i) **Vulnerability Context:** The studied campaigning NGOs consistently address the vulnerability context of communities by recognising and responding to various threats and challenges. This includes advocating for policies and practices that mitigate risks associated with economic injustice, irresponsible mining, land and natural resource mismanagement, irresponsible business practices, poor public service delivery, climate change, humanitarian crises, gender inequality, weak food systems, and youth exclusion. By addressing these issues, the NGOs aim to reduce vulnerability and build resilience to shocks and stresses.
- ii) **Livelihood Resources:** The NGOs' work on promoting economic justice, responsible mining practices, sustainable agriculture, gender equality, and youth empowerment all aim to enhance the access of communities to various livelihood resources. This includes advocating for policies that enhance access to markets, credit, and technology for smallholder farmers; promoting responsible investment and adherence to international standards; strengthening food systems; and providing training and capacity-building opportunities for young people.

- iii) **Institutions, Policies, and Processes:** A significant portion of the NGOs' efforts is directed towards influencing institutions, policies, and processes. This is evident in their advocacy work on mining sector reforms, public service delivery, climate change policies, gender equality, and youth inclusion. They actively engage with government and international bodies to promote just and transparent economic governance, advocate for equitable resource distribution, and challenge harmful practices.
- iv) **Livelihood Strategies:** The NGOs work to strengthen the livelihood strategies adopted by communities through various means. This includes promoting community participation in natural resource management, supporting women's empowerment initiatives, advocating for policies that support youth employment and entrepreneurship, and promoting agroecological farming practices. They also focus on building capacity of local organisations and communities to manage their own development initiatives.
- v) **Sustainable Livelihoods Outcomes:** While the NGOs' ultimate goal is to contribute to achieving sustainable livelihood outcomes, their work primarily focuses on addressing the underlying causes of poverty and vulnerability. This includes advocating for social, economic, and environmental justice, promoting responsible practices, and empowering communities to participate in decision-making processes. The direct impact on sustainable livelihood outcomes, such as increased income, reduced poverty, and improved food security, is often secondary, aimed to be addressed indirectly through their advocacy and empowerment efforts.

Based on the analysis in this chapter, the NGOs' work appears to be most heavily focused on influencing institutions, policies, and processes, followed by addressing the vulnerability context and strengthening livelihood strategies. This can be understood given that the studied organisations are primarily advocacy and campaigning organisations; addressing the vulnerability context is the basis of most of their work to build communities' resilience. The focus on livelihood resources and sustainable livelihoods outcomes is present but less pronounced compared to the other three components. This is so because of the limited service-delivery component in their work and limited long-term funding, which reduces their ability to sustain livelihood outcomes. Compared with the ideal division of focus as depicted in **Figure 6.1**, the focus on livelihood issues is evidently skewed, and implications of such skewness will be discussed in chapter eight, which looks into the impact of campaigning NGOs programming on sustainable livelihoods in communities.

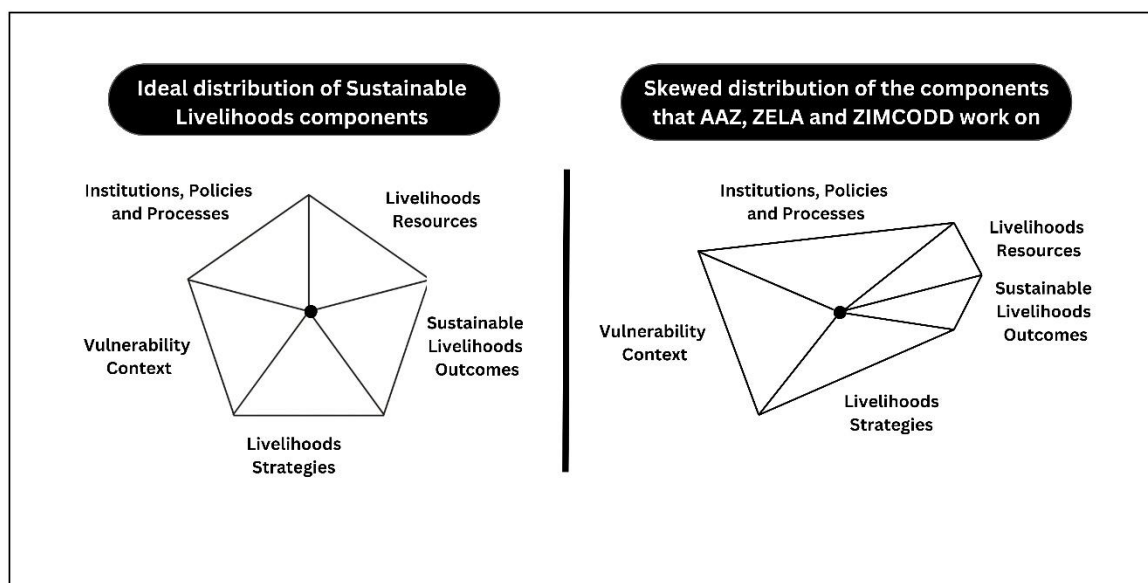


Figure 6.1: The skewed distribution of SLF components worked on by AAZ, ZELA and ZIMCODD

Source: Author Generated

This visualisation is based on a qualitative assessment of the NGOs' work as described in this chapter and is not a precise quantitative measurement. It simply indicates the relative emphasis placed on each SLF component. The connecting lines inside the pentagon represent the interconnectedness of the five components of the SLF. These components are mutually reinforcing; addressing one component can have positive spillover effects on others. The NGOs' work, while placing greater emphasis on certain components, implicitly influences other components as well.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has laid the foundation for this research's findings by providing a thorough examination of the major livelihood issues that campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe are addressing. The chapter has illuminated the complex character of these issues and the intricate interplay of social, economic, and political factors that perpetuate them, drawing on rich qualitative data acquired through interviews and a thorough literature assessment of the three organisations' archives. It has also shed light on the programmatic obstacles that these NGOs face as they negotiate a complicated and sometimes restricted operational environment.

The research reveals that campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe are dealing with a wide range of livelihood issues, including economic justice, environmental sustainability, social development, and governance. They are actively involved in promoting fiscal justice,

responsible investment and commercial practices, confronting structural gender disparities and empowering communities to demand their rights to essential services. The three organisations' work overlaps, extends to one another, and is occasionally consistent, despite their diverse programmatic orientations. Their work is profoundly established in the ideals of human rights, which became a recurring theme in all the issues the three NGOs are working on. This is consistent with the general civil society/campaigning NGO discourse in Zimbabwe, which is human-rights centric (Muneri 2016). AAZ even has a distinct implementation framework based on the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) which is mainstreamed across all their programs (Archer 2017).

The chapter further emphasised the programmatic obstacles that these NGOs face in their pursuit of sustainable livelihoods. Limited financial resources, the struggle to balance advocacy with service delivery, and the ever-changing socio-political context all provide significant challenges to their efficacy and sustainability. Furthermore, they must deal with a restrictive political climate marked by government distrust, disinformation efforts, and attempts to stringently regulate civil society. Despite these obstacles, the campaigning NGOs demonstrate resilience and resolve, adopting various measures to address these programmatic issues, which are in themselves livelihood issues considering the organisations' work in communities. These include diversifying financial resources, investing in capacity and movement building, engaging in strategic communication, and forming strong alliances with other civil society organisations. The three NGOs also show a strong commitment to community engagement, ensuring that their advocacy activities are rooted in the needs and priorities of the people they serve.

Additionally, the chapter has analysed the extent to which the studied NGOs contribute to each of the five components of the SLF. While these organisations demonstrate a strong focus on influencing institutions, policies, and processes, along with addressing vulnerability contexts and strengthening livelihood strategies, their engagement with livelihood resources and sustainable livelihood outcomes remains crucial, albeit less pronounced. It is important to recognise that the study's NGOs' work on influencing the enabling environment and addressing vulnerabilities inherently contributes to the long-term enhancement of livelihood resources and sustainable outcomes. By working towards creating a supportive policy environment and reduce external shocks, these organisations indirectly foster the conditions necessary for improved livelihoods and sustainable development.

The subsequent chapters will explore deeper into the specific strategies, approaches, and impacts of these NGOs' work, providing a more nuanced understanding of their contributions to sustainable livelihoods. This analysis will further illuminate the complex interplay between

the five components of the SLF and highlight the multifaceted ways in which these organisations work to promote sustainable livelihoods for communities.

CHAPTER SEVEN: STRATEGIES OF CAMPAIGNING NGOS IN PURSUIT OF SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS IN ZIMBABWE

7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the strategies employed by campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe in their pursuit of sustainable livelihoods. It focuses on “how”—the specific tactics and approaches NGOs use to navigate the complex socio-political and economic landscape of Zimbabwe and contribute to the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in communities. The chapter is grounded in two theoretical frameworks, the Political Process Theory (PPT) and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF). The PPT helps in the understanding of how NGOs identify and leverage political opportunities, mobilise resources, frame their messages, and use different repertoires to influence policy and practice change. The SLF guides the analysis of the extent to which these interventions target various livelihood components and contributes to the attainment of sustainable livelihoods and the broader goal of sustainable development.

Understanding the strategies of NGOs in Zimbabwe is crucial for this study for several reasons. First, it provides insights into how these organisations work to address the multifaceted challenges to sustainable livelihoods in a context characterised by political and economic instability, as explored in the previous chapter. Second, it lays the groundwork for an assessment of the effectiveness of different advocacy and campaigning approaches, contributing to a better understanding of “what works” in promoting sustainable livelihoods. Lastly, by analysing the strategies and tactics of NGOs, this study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge on the role of campaigning NGOs in advocating for socio-economic change and empowering communities to achieve their livelihood goals.

The chapter begins by exploring how NGOs understand and navigate the Political Opportunity Structure (POS) in Zimbabwe. It then analyses the mobilisation structures of NGOs, including their internal organisational resources and external networks. The chapter further examines the framing strategies NGOs employ to shape public discourse and influence different audiences. Finally, the chapter explores the diverse repertoires of contention used by NGOs, ranging from protests and lobbying to litigation and community mobilisation.

7.2 Campaigning NGOs navigating the Political Opportunity Structure (POS)

The studied campaigning NGOs and the wider civil society in Zimbabwe operate within a complex and dynamic political landscape characterised by both restrictions and opportunities (CIVICUS 2024b). As observed by King (2015: 896), the ability of NGOs to successfully promote sustainable livelihoods and the broader sustainable development agenda depends

on how well they understand and navigate the POS, which, in this case, is repressed with limited opportunities, as shown by the (CIVICUS 2024b). Grounded in the PPT, this section examines how NGOs identify and leverage political opportunities for advocacy and campaigning towards the attainment of sustainable livelihoods.

7.2.1 Conceptualising POS in Zimbabwe

NGOs are not the ones who promulgate policies or implement them; they advocate and count on the government and other players to enact and implement (Candid Learning 2019; King 2023: 46). For them to influence the policy process, they need free and open POS. POS refers to the openings or windows of opportunity that arise within the political landscape, creating an environment that is more or less conducive to advocacy efforts and social change (Bracey 2016: 14; Gardbaum 2020). These opportunities emerge in various forms, such as shifts in public opinion, changes in government leadership, the emergence of social movements, or new policy debates (Meyer 2004: 125). The concept of POS is central to understanding the effectiveness of NGOs and a broader civil society because it highlights the importance of timing, framing, and resource mobilisation in shaping the outcomes of advocacy and campaigning efforts.

In abstract, the Zimbabwean POS is characterised by first, a shrinking civic space where the government's historic hostility towards criticism and dissent often leads it to respond with repression and intimidation (Mpani 2021: 22). Second, the government limits access to information where to information, which hinders NGOs from effectively engaging in policy debates and monitoring government actions (Ruhanya and Gumbo 2024: 172). Without adequate information, it is inherently difficult to assess the impact of policies, identify gaps, and propose evidence-based alternatives. For example, the government's failure to disclose disaggregated revenue statistics from the mining sector limits the ability of NGOs to advocate for greater transparency and accountability in natural resource governance (Tanda and Genc 2024: 1). Third, weak and corrupt institutions impose put red tape for campaigning NGOs to effectively engage with them. One NGO participant noted that "we can't work with them (government institutions) well, (because) they ask for money, and we cannot do that because of our (their) donor policies". The ability of NGOs to successfully promote sustainable livelihoods and the broader sustainable development agenda is thus dependent on how well they understand and navigate this environment. The studied NGOs were noted to have been employing various strategies to identify and leverage political opportunities for advocacy, campaigning and influencing policy as documented below.

7.2.2 Strategies for leveraging opportunities

The studied campaigning NGOs and the wider civil society in Zimbabwe employ various strategies to identify and leverage political opportunities for advocacy. These strategies are crucial for navigating the complex political landscape and maximising their impact on policy and practice changes. Some of the key strategies include constant monitoring of the policy environment, building and maintaining strong relationships with policymakers, building and maintaining policy alternatives, and forging resourceful coalitions and alliances.

7.2.2.1 Constant monitoring of the policy environment

AAZ, ZELA and ZIMCodd keep a close watch on the ever-changing policy environment in the country. This involves staying abreast of new legislation, policy debates, and public discussions relevant to their advocacy goals, which range from economic justice and climate to women's rights and humanitarian work. The NGOs, according to their staffers, consider this important because it enables them to quickly identify emerging opportunities and frame their advocacy messages accordingly. For example, debates around the PVO Bill since 2021 (Bandauko and Arku 2024: 16; Moyo 2024b: 189) provided an opportunity for the NGOs to advocate for a more inclusive and enabling legal framework for civil society operations, which led to the delay in the signing of the bill into law, according to the interviewed informants. One of the NGO staff members highlighted the importance of staying informed, stating, "we have a dedicated team that monitors the policy environment and keeps us updated on any new developments. This allows us to be proactive and respond quickly to any emerging opportunities or threats". This is not just on policies; general awareness of the political, social and economic environment was seen to be a valuable strategy of the studied campaigning NGOs. An informant from ZELA who considers herself a policy analyst, echoed an AAZ informant, who described livelihood issues as "moving targets" hinting that "the social, political and economic environment in Zimbabwe is very dynamic. We need to be aware of the shifting political landscape and adjust our strategies accordingly".

Commenting on the PVO bill debated in Zimbabwe around 2021, some campaigners working with the three organisations raised concerns. The bill was proposed to align with the Financial Action Taskforce on anti-money laundering and countering terrorism financing (FATF) recommendations to streamline its legislative frameworks to curb possible money laundering and the financing of terrorism (Midzi *et al.* 2022). The NGOs failed to come up with a model legislation or engage the government effectively because they were not "monitoring the developments, as they always do; they blinked", according to one youth activist/campaigner. This reflection, as far as it shows a moment when the campaigning NGOs failed to "monitor it" demonstrated that the NGOs are known for this tactic of paying attention, monitoring, and seizing on political opportunities as they arise. The constant monitoring of the policy

environment is thus a valuable strategy employed by the studied NGOs in their quest to recognise POS and adjust accordingly as opportunities arise or as constraints emerge as observed by Ho (2015) in Taiwan and Gordon (2019) in India.

7.2.2.2 Building and maintaining strong relationships with policymakers

The impression that this study got from the interviews with informants from the three NGOs is that the three organisations understand the value of building relationships with government officials and policymakers as a strategy to push for issues they see as contributors to the attainment of sustainable livelihoods. One informant said this “opens doors for direct engagement and influences policy processes”. These engagements take various forms, with the more primary ones participating in government-invited spaces such as policy discussions, providing expert testimony during legislative hearings, or submitting policy briefs to relevant government departments and parliamentary committees. At a secondary level, this involves “inviting government institutions and law makers or local government practitioners to the NGOs’ spaces for us (NGOs) to engage with them”, according to a female informant who has been organising several dialogue platforms with parliament.

Additionally, it was noted that organisations also encourage their staff to cultivate person-to-person connections with “policymakers”. The term was used loosely by participants in this study to mean government bureaucrats, law makers (parliamentarians), executive government officials (ministers) and local governments officials. “That is the most effective strategy to influence policies, practices and processes, ...”, one female informant declared. Half a dozen additional informants from all three organisations mentioned a few person-to-person connections they have with policymakers at different levels of government. Some highlighted the role of bureaucrats advocating for policies they prefer or being influenced by campaigning NGOs due to personal connections. This is not new; Yeatman (2020) documented what she called “policy activists”, bureaucrats who direct government policies towards positive ends even when the larger government architecture is not supportive. Some informants mentioned their direct influence on parliamentarians and elected local government officials. One campaigner who works with AAZ said, “I talk to him, so all I asked was for him to table the issue in council; the motion was adopted, just like that”. A senior manager in one of the organisations paraded contacts of different parliamentarians whom the manager has direct contact with, demonstrating close person-to-person connections. This tier of relationship building with policymakers demonstrates that the strategy straddles the formal and informal work boundaries for the campaigning NGO practitioners and the policymakers they interact with.

7.2.2.3 Building and maintaining policy alternatives

In connection to the strategy of constantly monitoring the policy environment, NGOs also invest in developing and maintaining policy alternatives to the status quo even though they do not have a practical way of forwarding such policies for enactment in the current POS dynamics. As Milton Friedman (1962) famously said:

Only a crisis—actual or perceived—produces real change. When that crisis occurs, ‘the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around.’ That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes the politically inevitable.

The campaigning NGOs understood that real change happens at critical junctures as Acemoglu and Robinson (2021: 61) observed, but for such real change to happen as Friedman (1962: 12) advises, there should be some “ideas lying around”—well-researched, readily available policy alternatives that can be swiftly tabled and possibly implemented. One female campaigner working with AAZ gave Cyclone Idai, a tropical cyclone that took lives and upended livelihoods in eastern Zimbabwe, as an example. “When the disaster struck the government was unprepared; we had a number of disaster response policy proposals and strategies at the local level; we suggested them, and they were taken on board”, she said. More examples were given by different informants on how, in crises, the government is responsive (opens POS); hence, the NGOs and their partners use the times of crisis to push for needed policy reforms based on the shadow policies they had developed and sometimes keep updating for years.

This acknowledgement and ability of NGOs to develop and propose such policy alternatives significantly enhances their credibility and influence as Macarchuk (2018: 10) observed. By presenting concrete alternatives, NGOs demonstrate their expertise and commitment to finding solutions rather than simply criticising existing policies—the criticisms that had made the relationship between the government and campaigning NGOs fraught with confrontations for decades. For example, ZIMCodd has developed alternative debt management strategies that promote sustainable development and economic justice. (ZIMCodd 2022b). A ZIMCodd informant explained, “we do not just want to point fingers. We want to offer solutions. Our research has led to the development of alternative debt management frameworks that prioritise social spending and sustainable development. We present these to the government and advocate for their adoption”. This proactive approach positions ZIMCodd as a valuable partner in policymaking, rather than just a critic. Similarly, ZELA, working with AAZ, ZIMCodd and partners, developed a relocation framework for people displaced by development projects or investments, a framework they have been advocating for since 2019 (AAZ 2019b). A ZELA staff member explained:

We took it seriously, that is why we developed the policy (with our partners). It is adoption and implementation is work for another day. What we did is to bring the idea to the table, draft what is needed and use that for advocacy. I am sure at some point, be it because of a crisis or change of government, these are the frameworks which will be easily considered and adopted.

The strategy of developing, advocating and keeping well-prepared policy alternatives by the studied NGOs positions them as key players in shaping government policies aimed at addressing livelihood issues.

7.2.2.4 Forging resourceful coalitions and alliances

“We cannot do everything, let alone in this context”. One informant stated this as a basic understanding in the Zimbabwean campaigning NGOs discourse. This expression was further noted from different participants who highlighted building and maintaining coalitions as a smart and necessary strategy for them to navigate the Zimbabwean POS. Despite the structural differences among the three organisations studied, they are all networked locally and internationally. ZELA and ZIMCodd are membership-based organisations that comprise individuals and other organisations that share their vision and contribute to their advocacy efforts. This broadens their base of support and allows them to draw on diverse expertise and resources. As one ZIMCodd member explained, “being part of ZIMCodd gives us a platform to connect with other young people and organisations working on similar issues. We can share information, coordinate our advocacy efforts, and be loud”.

AAZ, while not membership-based, is an affiliate of the ActionAid International Federation, which gives it access to external technical and financial resources. In addition, the organisation is part of several local coalitions and networks focused on various thematic areas, such as the Education Coalition of Zimbabwe (ECOZI) and the National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO) among other coalitions. This “allows us (AAZ) to collaborate with other organisations on specific campaigns and initiatives, leveraging different strengths within the networks, ... because when we want to do anything, there is always someone better positioned to push for it, access the government, or be in a better position to influence”. That is how an AAZ informant answered a question on the thinking behind the building and maintenance of coalitions. Another AAZ informant involved in coalition work noted, “that is why we also work through partners; it allows us to achieve more than we could alone, to reach communities like Binga, Nyayi, Mbire, Chipinge, Nyanga and Chimanimani, ... which we could not possibly reach alone”. In addition, another AAZ informant said, “when we speak, the government or even co-operatives know, it will not just be us but a network of organisations; it also gives us a stronger voice”.

Talking to NGO informants, it was easy to see how they consider the campaigners they work with, most of whom are alumni of their different capacity development initiatives, as part of the building of a network of activists. The NGOs pride themselves on their presence across the country and a mobilised constituency willing to contribute to their campaigns. ActionAid with its Activista youth network and ZIMCodd with its Social and Economic Justice Activists (SEJA) network have a nationwide campaigning reach. This strategy, according to a ZIMCodd informant, allows the organisation to be able to influence things like national budget consultations because “these youths will be dotted around the country, and when consultations are done, the uniform message will be coming from all corners of the country”. In addition, a young person working with AAZ said these networks “not only enhance (our) advocacy capacity of NGOs but also contribute to building a stronger and more resilient civil society in Zimbabwe in the face of a shrinking civic space”. These notations suggest that the strategy of building expansive coalitions and networks aims counteract a restrictive POS.

7.3 Framing of livelihood issues by campaigning NGOs

Joachim (2003) long made a case that recognising and exploiting the openings in POS is reliant on the packaging of information by the social movements and other influencing entities, like NGOs. This packaging is mainly done through framing. Framing involves strategically shaping narratives, and here campaigning NGOs have specific ways in which they frame livelihood issues to resonate with different audiences at a given time to increase chances of achieving their specified advocacy goals (Crow and Lawlor 2016: 472). This section delves into framing, a key strategy in the portfolio of the studied campaigning NGOs. It also explores the various framing tactics they employ, highlighting their importance in mobilising support and influencing policy and practice changes.

7.3.1 Conceptualising framing by campaigning NGOs

Framing, in the context of NGO advocacy, is the careful construction of messages to influence how an issue is perceived and understood by different audiences (Bracey 2016: 14; Zeng, Dai and Javed 2019: 747). It involves strategically highlighting certain aspects of an issue while downplaying others, with the intention of shaping public discourse and ultimately influencing policy decisions (Nisbet 2009: 3). Hervieux and Voltan (2018: 279) added that this process is not merely about grabbing attention but also about defining the problem, attributing responsibility, and proposing solutions. As Mendelsohn *et al.* (2024) explained, framing involves diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational elements. It is about constructing a narrative that not only identifies a problem but also offers a path towards a solution.

In the Zimbabwean context, where the political and media landscape is restrictive (Ruhanya 2022; Matsilele and Ruhanya 2024), one informant who supervises the communications department of his organisation, asserts that strategic framing “is crucial to effectively communicate (our) NGOs’ messages and advocate for sustainable livelihoods”. NGOs operate within a complex web of competing narratives and power dynamics (Gnes and Vermeulen 2019). The government often controls the dominant narrative through state-owned media, often accusing NGOs of being Western countries conduits, seeking regime change, and generally up to no good (Ruhanya 2022; Matsilele and Ruhanya 2024). This puts a challenge on NGOs strategically to frame their messages to push back against dominant narratives and carve out their own narratives that resonate with diverse audiences, challenge the status quo, and advocate for alternative policies and practices, according to the informants interviewed. This requires a “nuanced understanding of the socio-political context, cultural sensitivities, and the communication styles of different stakeholders...” according to one ZELA informant.

Framing is further complicated by the complex and sometimes science dense nature of issues like economic justice or climate change that the studied NGOs work on (Leydens 2015; Canon, Boyle and Hepworth 2022). These issues often involve intricate technical details, long-term implications that are difficult to grasp immediately, and competing interests that may require careful navigation (Canon, Boyle and Hepworth 2022). To be effective, the studied campaigning NGOs have been working to strike a balance between simplifying complex information for broader public understanding and maintaining accuracy and nuance to avoid misrepresenting the issues. A ZIMCodd informant highlighted the need for specific tactics to ensure this balance by “adopting different tactics such as audience-specific framing, translating the information for each stakeholder in the language, level of complexity and tone they understand”. Effectively, the informants agree that framing complex issues requires careful consideration of the target audience, the strategic use of compelling narratives and storytelling, and a balanced approach that combines evidence-based arguments with emotional appeals, as explored below.

7.3.2 Framing tactics by campaigning NGOs

The study found that AAZ, ZELA and ZIMCodd employ a variety of framing tactics, demonstrating a nuanced understanding of how to connect with diverse audiences and advance their specified advocacy goals. With partners ranging from funding partners (donors), strategic partners (such as government and the private sector), implementation partners (such as fellow CSOs, CBOs and SMs), and communities, the message they resonate with is different. The studied NGOs tailor their messages to resonate with each stakeholder, and that means different packaging of information. They do this based on the values, concerns, and

communication styles of the target audience and time. This involves different types of framing, such as values-based framing, audience-specific framing, issue framing, and personalisation.

7.3.2.1 Values-based framing

Values-based framing is a powerful strategy that connects livelihood issues to deeply resonant values, making advocacy messages more compelling and persuasive (Love, Sekhon and Salinas 2022). Delina (2018: 34) added that this approach taps into fundamental beliefs about human rights, social justice, and environmental protection, creating a moral imperative for action. For example, AAZ frames poverty as a human rights issue emanating from different power dynamics in society which leads to others violating the majority's rights to water, education and healthcare, among others (Archer 2017: 312), thereby establishing a legal and ethical obligation for the government to ensure that poverty's underlying causes are addressed. Similarly, ZELA consistently highlights the unfair impact of environmental degradation on marginalised groups, emphasising how pollution and climate change disproportionately affect poor and minority communities. This social justice framing underscores the inequities inherent in livelihood challenges and calls for a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities (Chidarara 2020). ZIMCodd makes claims from economic justice perspective based on the constitutional fact that the authority to govern is derived from the people (Government of Zimbabwe 2018), making the government's work for communities a constitutional matter, which a revered value.

The values-based framing is more pronounced in the macro climate justice discourse, where the three studied NGOs connect local climate induced challenges, including cyclones, droughts and heatwaves to a global system, which fuels the climate crisis. These framings position livelihood issues within a global capitalistic context, highlighting how people in the Global North who value human life are contributing to its loss due to the climate crisis in the Global South. As a young campaigner working with ActionAid on climate justice who was quoted in the previous chapter said, " ... we are not the ones who benefitted from the death of the planet; hence, we do it (advocacy) to ensure that those who benefitted come to compensate those being affected. It is a matter of correcting their wrongs; in other words, it is a matter of justice". This quote illustrates how values-based framing can create a powerful sense of moral obligation for "justice" and inspire action for a more just and sustainable future; no wonder why young people in the Global North are over-championing conversations on the climate crisis even though they are not suffering much of the consequences at the moment (Stanes and Klocker 2016).

7.3.2.2 Audience-specific framing

Audience-specific framing involves tailoring messages to resonate with the specific concerns, and communication styles of different audiences. This targeted approach recognises that what

works for one group may not work for another, and that effective communication requires understanding and adapting to the nuances of different audiences (Moser 2010: 39; Reynolds *et al.* 2023: 16). The three studied NGOs when engaging with communities, they use local narratives, concerns, and language to foster a sense of connection and trust. An informant from ZIMCDD emphasised that “most people [make] the mistake of bringing stories that people do not resonate with, we embed issues within local stories, local experiences and local language; that is how we get the message across to communities”. A youth campaigner working with AAZ echoed the same saying:

We highlight the direct impact of an issue on people's daily lives and emphasising community-led solutions, ... issues climate justice can only understand when packaged that way, we need to highlight the problem in a way they understand but also giving them hope by highlighting that they can do something about it.

When communicating with the media, NGOs craft messages that are newsworthy and attention-grabbing, often highlighting conflict, human interest stories, or offering clear and concise policy recommendations. This was highlighted by the ZELA informant, who said, “the media does not just cover everything; they like attention-grabbing stories. ... For our work to be covered by the media, we highlight shouting stories that they are interested in”. This approach helps the campaigning NGOs messages and narrative reach a wider audience through a win-win dynamic with the media. As Tallack (2020: 13) noted, media coverage enhances fundraising opportunities for the NGOs, which makes media-specific framing a potential donor-specific framing, “killing two birds with one stone”. according to an AAZ informant.

When targeting policymakers, NGOs present evidence-based arguments and policy recommendations and align their messages with national development goals. ‘We quote the NDS1 (National Development Strategy 1 - 2020-2025) and other government strategies and policies when engaging them (the government); we know they like it. By doing so they feel that we are indeed complimenting their work”. This is how one informant put it. This approach aims to influence policy change by demonstrating the issue's relevance to government priorities and offering concrete solutions. “When talking to donors, it's impact, impact, impact, we talk about the good we are doing, donors want that ... it works well for fundraising and continued support”. One informant emphasised, “this packaging of narratives is deliberate and produces results”. Another informant responding to the question, whether the audience-specific framing is lying or is a misrepresentation of information said, “it is all about highlighting what that audience wants; we do not lie; we present what we think produces better results at that particular moment”.

7.3.2.3 Issue-based framing

The studied NGOs demonstrated that they do issue-based framing as a tactic for their advocacy and campaigning work. Issue-based framing focuses on how the problem itself is defined and presented to different audiences (Wang, Zhou and Kinneer 2024: 42). It involves strategically constructing a narrative that not only identifies the issue but also guides the audience towards understanding the causes and potential solutions (Ash and Schmierbach 2013: 38). This strategy, according to Mendelsohn *et al.* (2024: 31), is where the three key components of diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing are more pronounced. Diagnostic framing involves identifying the issue and attributing blame or responsibility in a somewhat melodramatic way. One informant said, “people like to blame someone for their problems; we package it in a way which shows them who is to blame for their challenges”. A ZELA informant, in an answer to a different question disconnected to tactics, said:

We frame an issue such as of a polluted river as a livelihood and a public health crisis, caused by negligent industrial practices and poor government systems or enforcement of existing laws, thereby shifting the focus towards corporate and state accountability.

Prognostic framing offers solutions and strategies for change (Mendelsohn *et al.* 2024: 31). “We do not stop at just highlighting the problem; we propose solutions. This is more of a call to action. [If] there is something that can be done then someone has to do; not doing it will become a problem”. Furthermore, the NGOs use motivational framing to show a sense of urgency (Mendelsohn *et al.* 2024: 32). One example of this was once again from ZELA, where the informant noted that,

We always highlight the immediate health risks, no one cares when the health challenges are happening 10 years from now, ... it enables people to feel that the proposed solutions need to be implemented just now, it motivates communities to act, be it through writing petitions or something else.

The issue-based framing works as a catalyst for other strategies and interventions to ensure policy or practice changes towards the attainment of sustainable livelihoods.

7.3.2.4 Personalisation

The campaigning NGOs studied also used personalisation as a framing tactic, as understood from the interviews and confirmed during the community focus group discussions. Personalisation, both positive and negative, is a powerful framing strategy that connects audiences on an emotional level by showcasing the human impact of an issue (Gena *et al.* 2019). The power of personalisation is in its appeal to emotions, as one informant with a media background said, “... statistics are good, highlighting the abstract concepts of injustice, democracy, human rights ... is good; however, people do not pay attention much to that, people

want real life stories, real life experiences". In explaining which people, she was referring to. The informant added:

This applies to funding partners mostly, but even communities where these issues are happening. For the government, it is more about exposing them to how people are experiencing challenges. It (personalisation framing) works like magic; it boasts funding appeals, pushes the government to act, and connects communities together due to their common experiences.

This tactic was notable in AAZ's May-June 2024 newsletter among many of its publications, where stories about the organisation's work in Binga, Hwedza and Harare are packaged to highlight selected individuals and households' experiences, both negative and positive (AAZ 2024d). Stories of relocations induced by government projects or mining companies were also documented and communicated the same way at the 13th Zimbabwe Alternative Mining Indaba (ZAMI) by the three organisations, based on their direct work with communities in Bikita. By giving a face to the problem, personalisation humanises the issue and fosters a sense of connection between the audience and those affected. Storytelling is a key tool in this tactic, as it allows NGOs to trigger emotions such as empathy, compassion, and a sense of urgency (Talgorn and Ullerup 2023; Morgan 2024). This not only helps the audience relate to the individuals in the stories but also fosters a sense of shared humanity and responsibility.

This tactic has had a fair share of criticisms in the 20th century when charities and development NGOs were using stories of poverty to fundraise; this has been seen to be over-sensationalising poverty in a dehumanising way, leading to the dreaded "poverty porn" characterisation (OBrien 2011; Beresford 2016). The AAZ personnel demonstrated by showing the organisation's longstanding branding guidelines, which moderate their personalisation narrative setting so that it does not fall into the "poverty porn category" by emphasising the concept of "together" (ActionAid International 2007). Community participants brought a more nuanced take on the personalisation tactic by campaigning for NGOs. In an area in which NGO informants should have prided themselves, focus group discussion participants in Binga and Nkayi highlighted that the stories collected by the NGOs are often about resilience and community agency, not just poverty and suffering. One participant in a focus group in Binga highlighted how her story of managing to send her children to school due to better agricultural practices was collected and disseminated, showing community agency. "It was empowering ...", the participant admitted. From this study, it can be noted that this tactic provides a platform for marginalised voices to be amplified, and it empowers individuals and communities who are often excluded from decision-making processes.

7.4 Mobilisation structures

Mobilisation structures are the internal and external resources that NGOs leverage to achieve their advocacy goals and promote sustainable livelihoods (McCarthy and Zald 1977). This definition encompasses not only financial resources but also human capital, networks, and alliances (Ertan-Yenigun 2013: 23). These structures are essential for NGOs to operate effectively and achieve their goals, especially in restrictive contexts like Zimbabwe, where access to resources and freedom of association are limited (Chari 2023; CIVICUS 2024b). This section analyses how campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe mobilise and maintain these structures, highlighting the strategies they employ and the challenges they face. This discussion includes an examination of how they secure and manage funding, develop and retain committed staff, and build strong networks and coalitions to amplify their impact. The section also explores the influence of resource availability and management on the overall effectiveness of NGO advocacy efforts.

7.4.1 Conceptualising mobilisation structures

Mobilisation structures, in the context of NGO advocacy, refer to the organised systems and processes through which NGOs acquire and utilise resources to achieve their objectives and ultimately contribute to sustainable livelihoods (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Stokke 2023: 124). These structures encompass both internal resources, such as funding, staff expertise, organisational capacity, and knowledge management systems, as well as external resources, such as networks, coalitions, and partnerships with other organisations, social movements, or community groups (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Ertan-Yenigun 2013: 23). In the Zimbabwean context, where NGOs often operate with limited resources (Muneri 2016; USAID 2021: 44), in a volatile socio-economic environment (Siambombe 2023: 199) and face restrictions on their activities (Madziyauswa 2024: 63), effective mobilisation structures are crucial for achieving their advocacy goals and promoting sustainable livelihoods. These structures enable NGOs to navigate a challenging environment, amplify their impact, and sustain their efforts over the long term. More and better internal and external resources are an enabler for the NGOs to advocate for policy and practice changes, empower communities, and contribute to the broader goal of sustainable development.

7.4.2 Campaigning NGOs' mobilisation strategies

This study found that AAZ, ZELA and ZIMCDD employ a diverse range of strategies to mobilise and maintain the resources necessary for their advocacy work. These strategies are often adapted to the specific needs and challenges of the operating context, requiring a combination of internal organisational capacity and external relationship building. Internally, the three NGOs focus on strengthening their financial management skills, diversifying funding

sources, and investing in human resources through capacity building and performance management. Externally, they engage and empower youth campaigners and actively engage in building and nurturing coalitions and networks, recognising the power of collective action and shared resources. These strategies are crucial not only for securing and maintaining financial and human resources but also for ensuring the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of their advocacy efforts.

7.4.2.1 Mobilising and maintaining funding structures

The studied NGOs adopted a multifaceted approach to mobilising and maintaining funding structures. They diversify their funding sources by relying on a mix of individual donations, grants, corporate sponsorships, membership fees, and social enterprises, according to the informants interviewed for this study, and as the AAZ annual report shows (AAZ 2024a). This strategy helps to reduce their reliance on any single source of funding and ensures greater financial stability. The three NGOs also prioritise donor cultivation: building strong relationships with existing donors through regular communication, transparent impact reporting, and personalised engagement. In demonstrating the value placed on donor cultivation and relationship building, one informant indicated that they “agreed as an institution that fundraising is a responsibility of everyone in the organisation, and fundraising is a daily process, talking to potential donors, maintaining good relations, and always marketing the work we do”. This approach, as Tallack (2020: 13) noted in other instances, fosters trust and encourages continued support from donors who share their vision and values even in hard times.

Furthermore, NGOs invest significant effort in grant writing, developing compelling proposals to secure funding from foundations, governments, and other grant-making individuals and institutions. During the study, scheduling and rescheduling of interviews with informants was mainly due to some of them developing proposals in response to different funders’ calls for proposals. One informant interviewed after several postponements, elaborated on how they invest time in proposal development: “it takes effort to develop a compelling proposal in this competitive environment; we invest time and energy to fully articulate the organisation's mission, strategies, and expected impact, demonstrating the value and potential return on investment for potential donors”. Transparency and accountability are also central to the resource mobilisation strategies of the studied NGOs in Zimbabwe. They maintain clear financial records and reporting practices to build trust with donors and demonstrate responsible stewardship of resources. This commitment to transparency not only strengthens relationships with existing donors but also enhances the NGO's credibility and reputation, making them more attractive to potential funders. The work to mobilise and maintain financial

resources is notably central to the NGOs, as it guarantees their continued work to advance sustainable development and help communities build stable livelihoods in all their variations.

7.4.2.2 Investing in human capital for campaigning

AAZ, ZELA and ZIMCodd demonstrated a strong commitment to investing in their human resources, showing a recognition that a skilled and motivated workforce is essential for achieving their advocacy goals and promoting sustainable livelihoods. This investment takes various forms, including capacity building, performance management, and creating a safe and inclusive work environment. Capacity-building initiatives focus on continuous development for both staff and leadership. This includes training on technical skills, advocacy strategies, financial management, and monitoring and evaluation. The studied NGOs also foster a culture of learning and knowledge sharing within the organisation, encouraging staff to develop their expertise and stay informed about current trends in sustainable development. One informant who is a manager in one of the organisations cemented this understanding, saying, “we cannot do much without our people; these are dedicated people who opted for this work despite its challenges. We invest in them to get the resources they need to do [the] best of their work”.

The three NGOs also have performance management systems that are implemented to provide regular feedback and evaluation, ensuring that staff are meeting performance goals and contributing effectively to their respective organisations’ missions. This not only helps to improve individual performance but also creates a supportive and motivating work environment that values individual contributions and promotes professional growth, according to the three managers interviewed from each organisation. Recognising the importance of creating a safe and inclusive workplace, the studied NGOs have robust policies and procedures to protect their staff. Such policies include those to prevent and address sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse (SHEA), among others. AAZ has a “feminist leadership principles” meant to create such a good working environment (CBE *et al.* 2020: 14). The ten principles include self-care and caring for others, inclusion, sharing power and responsible and transparent use of power, among others (ActionAid International 2020b). “This is our bible for creating a good working environment”, said the manager at AAZ.

7.4.2.3 Engaging and empowering youth campaigners

In addition to investing in their internal staff, the studied NGOs recognise the importance of engaging and empowering external youth campaigners so that they can become a resource for their campaigning work. The three NGOs provide spaces for young people to build skills, connect them to larger networks to gain exposure and experience; as well as support them with subgrants to conduct localised activities. These interventions are coupled with creating safe spaces for them to organise and connect with each other. One young campaigner who utilises these spaces shared that she “was able to gain experience in advocacy and

community mobilisation [and it] helped me to secure a job in the development sector and now is using those skills to make a difference in my community”.

In addition to such direct exposure and experience building, they also provide training and capacity-building opportunities for young people to enhance their advocacy skills and engage effectively in decision-making processes. As an NGO staff member explained, "our work relies on the wide network of young people we have cultivated over the years through capacity building. We believe that young people have the drive to push campaigning work forward". All eighteen campaigners working with the studied NGOs have indicated that they have attended at least three capacity-building trainings facilitated by one of the organisations; some of them have received capacitation from the three organisations in different capacities. “We are part of the same network, so sometimes we get to be in trainings organised by any of them,” said one campaigner working on climate justice -related livelihood issues.

“Sometimes we get some money to push for our initiatives; these are not big monies, but they get the job done.” That was what one campaigner indicated, answering a question about how the organisation he is working with supports him in campaigning. The three organisations, with AAZ being the most engaged, subgrant some money to young campaigners to conduct localised and focused activities. This approach, according to an AAZ informant, “empowers young people to take the lead in addressing social issues and provides them with valuable experience in project management and implementation”. Another informant elaborated that “it also boosts their confidence in dealing with different stakeholders; this investment makes them ambitious and yearn to get also into elected offices”. Additionally, due to the physical and digital spaces that the three organisations have created, they also provide the young campaigners with safe spaces to organise and plan out campaigns and other activities. Such protection is particularly important in restrictive contexts where these young people often face harassment and persecution for their work. “We find the hub a safe space to talk and plan out our activities; we call it a ‘liberated territory’; it is safe, ...” That is how a young campaigner described his understanding of the spaces created by the NGO he works with. All this work for the campaigning NGOs is about creating an informed and capable network (human resources) that contributes to their work towards the attainment of policy outcomes that build into the attainment of sustainable livelihoods.

7.4.2.4 Coalitions and networks building

Collaboration through coalitions and networks is a vital resource for the campaigning NGOs studied. This collaborative strategy allows them to amplify their influence, share responsibilities, and maximise their impact on sustainable livelihoods. By joining forces with other NGOs, civil society organisations, community-based organisations, and social movements, these NGOs pool resources, leverage diverse expertise, and present a united

front in their advocacy work. An informant from one of the NGOs emphasised the importance of coalitions and networks, stating, “we do recognise that we cannot achieve our goals alone. Collaboration is essential for us to amplify our impact and create lasting results; there are many things that we cannot effectively do as NGOs”. By collaborating, NGOs gain access to more resources than they would by working alone. Another informant, the NGOs have access to more resources than they could working alone. Another informant highlighted the benefits of joint advocacy, stating that “by working together in coalitions, we share responsibilities, leverage each other's strengths, ... enhancing our effectiveness”. This collaborative approach is particularly crucial in the restrictive Zimbabwean context. By forming alliances and working together, NGOs minimise the effect of these challenges on their work.

Most importantly, the study noted that the studied NGOs are outsourcing the riskier work to social movements, which are collectives of people, with organised efforts to bring about or resist social, political, economic, or cultural change (Nardini *et al.* 2021: 4). Social movements often operate outside of established institutions, which gives them room to employ various contentious repertoires, which NGOs cannot (Chaudhry 2022: 554). Their grassroots nature, their focus on collective action, and their ability to mobilise large numbers of people to challenge the status quo place them in a better position to exert pressure on the government and other social players (Nardini *et al.* 2021: 4). The studied NGOs recognise this unique potential of these groups to mobilise communities and advocate for transformation, which leads them to actively seek partnerships with them, providing them with platforms for engagement and amplifying their voices in decision-making processes, as one informant highlighted:

They often lack proper structures to seek out funding for themselves; they are often spontaneous and not properly structured, and they often use unconventional approaches to advocacy and campaigning, but they are often more effective in addressing injustices than traditional NGOs and established structures. What we then do is to capitalise on these features without controlling them or arm-twisting them into doing things our own way. ... It's a gamble that we must take.

Literature acknowledges that social movements are more effective (Meyer 2007; Tarrow 2022), hence the support that the NGOs provide in terms of capacity building, solidarity networks, and connecting them to resources both financial and technical as well, as co-opting them to address beyond their conceptualisation is deemed necessary to advance policy and practice changes towards the attainment of sustainable livelihoods.

7.5 Repertoires of contention

The studied campaigning NGOs employ a diverse range of tactics and strategies, often referred to as repertoires of contention (Tilly 2010), to achieve their advocacy goals and promote sustainable livelihoods. These repertoires encompass a wide spectrum of actions, from advocacy and lobbying to legal challenges and community mobilisation. This diversity reflects the multifaceted nature of the challenges to sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe, which require NGOs to be adaptable and strategic in their approaches. The choice of specific tactics is influenced by a variety of factors, including the political context (POS), the nature of the issue being addressed, the target audience, and the resources available to the NGO, as discussed above (Tilly 2010: 179; Wada, Koo and Aoki 2024: 13). The repertoires of contention employed by AAZ, ZELA and ZIMCODD involve a dual-facing approach. On the one hand, they engage in public advocacy to raise awareness, mobilise support, and generate pressure on decision-makers. On the other hand, they engage in direct action, such as lobbying, litigation, or negotiation. This dual-facing approach allows NGOs to leverage different tactics to achieve their advocacy goals and promote sustainable livelihoods.

Understanding these repertoires is crucial for comprehending how NGOs navigate the complex socio-political landscape of Zimbabwe, mobilise resources, and engage with different stakeholders to influence policy and practice changes in pursuit of sustainable livelihoods. This section explores the diverse tactics used by NGOs, examining the factors that influence their choice of strategies and highlighting the dynamic and evolving nature of these repertoires in response to the challenges and opportunities presented by the Zimbabwean context.

7.5.1 Conceptualising repertoires

The concept of repertoires of contention refers to the dynamic and evolving set of tactics and strategies that social movements and advocacy groups, including NGOs, employ to advance their claims and pursue social change (Tilly 2010). These repertoires are not static or fixed; they adapt and change over time in response to various factors, including the political context, available resources, and the specific issue being addressed (Tilly 2010: 179; Wada, Koo and Aoki 2024: 13). In the context of sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe, NGOs utilise these repertoires to challenge policies and practices that perpetuate poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation as outlined in the coming sections. They also use them to empower communities, promote participatory decision-making, and advocate for alternative development pathways that prioritise social and environmental justice.

The selection of specific tactics within an NGO's repertoire of contention is influenced by a variety of factors. The political context plays a significant role. In periods of heightened repression, as has been the case in Zimbabwe since 2018, NGOs opt for less confrontational

strategies, such as lobbying or litigation, to avoid direct confrontation with the state. Conversely, in more open political contexts, which in Zimbabwe can only be referred to in historical terms (Muchadenyika 2018), they utilise protests and demonstrations to raise awareness and mobilise public support, as Tilly (2010: 179) observed. The availability of resources, including funding, staff expertise, and external resources as discussed above, also shapes the choice of tactics (Tilly 2010: 179; Wada, Koo and Aoki 2024: 13). Resource-intensive tactics, such as litigation or large-scale public campaigns, are only feasible for well-resourced campaigning NGOs (Young 2019: 15). The target audience is another important consideration. When targeting government officials, NGOs opt for policy briefs and direct engagement, while when targeting the broader public, protests and media campaigns are considered more effective, as noted from the interviews with the informants. Finally, the nature of the issue itself influences the choice of tactics. Environmental issues, for example, may lend themselves to protests and community mobilisation, while human rights abuses require litigation or international advocacy.

Notably, there is often a cyclical pattern to the use of different tactics, with periods of heightened mobilisation and confrontation followed by periods of relative dormancy or a shift towards less confrontational strategies (Tarrow 2022: 197). This cyclical nature highlights the dynamic interplay between NGOs and the state, as well as the need for NGOs to adapt their strategies to the ever-changing political landscape. The following section will explore the dynamics of the different repertoires that the AAZ, ZELA and ZIMCodd use in their advocacy and campaigning.

7.5.2 Dynamic tactics for advocacy and campaigning

The studied NGOs utilise a diverse range of tactics in their work to address a pool of livelihood issues they are working on. This tactical diversity is, according to the informants, essential for navigating the complex and dynamic socio-political landscape of Zimbabwe. Their tactics encompass a broad spectrum of actions, including litigation to apply pressure, direct engagement with policymakers through lobbying and advocacy, grassroots mobilisation to empower communities, research and knowledge production to inform policy debates, and the development of alternative models for service delivery and development. This diverse toolkit allows AAZ, ZELA and ZIMCodd to tailor their strategies to the specific needs and challenges of the communities they serve, the nature of the issues they address, and the political opportunities available to them at a given time. By strategically deploying these tactics, the three organisations contribute to creating an enabling environment for sustainable livelihoods in communities—urban and rural.

7.5.2.1 Protests and demonstrations

While NGO staff members did not frequently mention protests and demonstrations as a primary tactic, they did refer to state-compliant and sometimes collaborative marches on international commemorative days. However, the youth and campaigners they work with on the other hand provided a different perspective. Where the NGOs' staff spoke of symbolic marches with government ministries or departments, the youth campaigners spoke of more confrontational protests and demonstrations they had participated in. The campaigners attributed their participation in these protests and demonstrations to the capacity building and exposure they got from the different campaigning NGOs, including the ones studied here.

NGOs cannot be seen demonstrating in this context; I understand them; they create, however, an environment where us who work with them can protest. An example is those awareness trainings, which made it clear that if we do nothing, we are in trouble They agitate us to do something about the problems we see. If we then end up mobilising our constituency to protests, I still think there is a link with their work.

Informants from three organisations did not contest this characterisation. One informant working with young people said, "in and around 2018 we saw a number of our branded t-shirts on protests; it made us look bad, but we always knew that these young people would reach a point of engaging in demonstrations".

According to the youth campaigner working with the studied NGOs, protests and demonstrations serve to raise awareness of critical issues and put pressure on duty bearers. This is in alignment with available literature, which concurs that public actions amplify community voices and demand government action on issues such as economic inequality, human rights abuses, or environmental degradation (Meyer 2007; Gillion 2020). However, the shrinking civic space in Zimbabwe has led to a decline in confrontational protests over the years, particularly those directly challenging the government (Hlatywayo and Mangongera 2020). Instead, NGOs and the communities they work with have shifted towards marches and demonstrations focused on less contentious issues, such as climate change and women's rights. These actions are often done in collaboration with the state rather than in direct confrontation, which, according to one informant, is an opportunity to "build relations" with the government for future policy influencing. All in all, these diverse forms of protests and demonstrations in symbolic marches reflect the adaptation of the NGOs to the restrictive political environment.

7.5.2.2 Lobbying and advocacy

Direct engagement with policymakers and government officials is a key tactic used by NGOs in Zimbabwe (Chikoto-Schultz and Uzochukwu 2016a: 137; Karanda and Toledano 2020:

914). This engagement, according to the organisations informants and youth campaigners they work with, takes various forms, including participating in policy discussions, submitting policy briefs, and providing expert testimony during legislative hearings. NGOs leverage their expertise and community connections to influence decision-makers and advocate for policies that address the needs of marginalised communities. As one informant from ZELA noted, “lobbying and advocacy is crucial. ... We often engage with government officials, parliamentarians, and other decision-makers to make a case for policies that promote environmental justice and sustainable natural resource governance, among other issues”. Another informant from ZIMCodd highlighted the role of communities in this lobbying and advocacy process, “we work with communities to empower them to engage with decision-makers and advocate for their own needs. This includes providing training on advocacy skills, facilitating community dialogues with policymakers, and supporting communities to submit petitions and policy recommendations”.

NGOs also leverage their expertise and research findings to inform policy debates and advocate for evidence-based policymaking. As an informant from AAZ explained, “we conduct research and analysis on various livelihood issues, such as economic justice, climate change, and women's rights. We use these findings to advocate for policy changes that address the root causes of poverty and inequality”. Some of the advocacy-intended researchers include one titled “Zimbabwe's Debt Distress and its Implications on Gender Responsive Public Service Delivery” done by AAZ (2020), the “Assessment of the Effectiveness of Transparency Mechanisms in the Mining Sector in Zimbabwe” done for ZELA by Mlambo and Chinyanga (2021), and the “Gaps and Challenges in Education and Health Service Delivery” done by ZIMCodd (2022a). Additionally, the informants highlighted personalised lobbying using person-to-person connections they have with policymakers, as discussed in previous sections. Overall, lobbying in all its forms and advocacy in its variations were considered crucial tactics by both NGO staffers and campaigners in their work to promote sustainable livelihoods.

7.5.2.3 Public interest litigation

In addition to public demonstrations, lobbying, and advocacy, NGOs in Zimbabwe utilise litigation as a key tactic to challenge government actions or corporate practices that violate human rights or environmental laws (Hondora 2018). Hondora (2018) noted that strategic lawsuits serve to set legal precedents, protect vulnerable communities, and hold powerful actors accountable both at international and local levels. One NGO staff member highlighted their public interest litigation work, saying, “we have used litigation to challenge government actions that violate the rights of communities, such as forced evictions, illegal mining, and restrictions on freedom of expression”. Another informant from ZELA explained how their organisation “filed lawsuits against mining companies that grab community lands, destroy the

environment, and violate the rights of communities”. The informant added that “litigation is a crucial tool for us to ensure that environmental laws are enforced and that communities have access to justice”. Campaigners who worked with the NGOs also emphasised the role of litigation in promoting social justice. As one campaigner explained, “we use the NGO’s technical support to file [a] case wherever we feel that our rights or those of the wider community are violated”.

Examples of such public interest litigations include the case where ZELA successfully challenged the Chitungwiza municipality to upgrade its water treatment plants and sewer systems, arguing that it violated the constitutional right to a healthy environment (ZELA 2020a). Another case was brought by ZIMCodd, and it secured a High Court order for the country’s Minister of Finance and Economic Development to come up with a debt contraction law that compels the treasury to seek parliamentary approval before issuing guarantees and contracting public debt (Kachiko 2023). Furthermore, a youth campaigner working with AAZ, who is among those interviewed for this study, filed a high court case against two government departments for public resources mismanagement (NewZimbabwe 2024). Overall, litigation is a targeted tactic used by the studied campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe to promote positive outcomes that contribute to the attainment of sustainable livelihoods.

7.5.2.4 Community mobilisation

Recognising that sustainable change requires grassroots support (Provence 2023), the studied NGOs invest in community mobilisation efforts. This includes organising community dialogues, facilitating leadership trainings, and supporting the formation and sustenance of community-based organisations and broader social movements. These efforts empower communities to advocate for their own needs and participate in decision-making processes. As one informant from AAZ explained:

Community mobilisation is at the heart of our work. We believe that sustainable change cannot be achieved without the active participation of communities. We pride ourselves on working as partners and in solidarity with communities facing injustices. We do not come to communities to lecture them; we work with them to identify their own needs, develop their own solutions, and advocate for relevant changes they desire.

Another informant from ZELA highlighted the importance of capacity building in community mobilisation, “we provide training and support to community-based organisations to strengthen their capacity to engage in advocacy and development initiatives. This includes training on leadership skills, organisational development, and project management”. Campaigners working with the NGOs further emphasised the role of community mobilisation in their advocacy and campaigning work. As one campaigner explained, “we work with communities to mobilise them to demand their rights and challenge injustice at home, in their

communities and at national level. This includes organising community meetings, facilitating collective petition submissions, and supporting communities to engage with the media”.

Here are some specific examples of how the three NGOs have used community mobilisation to promote sustainable livelihoods. First, AAZ’s partners have been supporting young people in Binga to organise and advocate for proper relocations due to the Gwayi-Shangani Dam being constructed (AAZ 2024e). They help them to connect with the government and make a case for their rights to be respected and have their livelihood needs be considered in the relocation drive (AAZ 2024a). Second, ZELA is building the technical capacity of community monitors to gather service delivery information, report on human rights violations, and track service delivery in local authorities (ZELA 2024). Third, ZIMCodd, as part of its community mobilisation efforts, produces community guides, such as the “Community Guide for Participation in Natural Resources Governance”, which is available in different translations (ZIMCodd 2017). Overall, the three NGOs use community mobilisation as a tactic to advocate for reforms that promote sustainable livelihoods.

7.5.2.5 Research and knowledge production

AAZ, ZELA and ZIMCodd recognise the critical role of research and knowledge production in their efforts to promote sustainable livelihoods. They conduct research, analyse data, and disseminate findings to inform their advocacy efforts, shape public discourse, and empower communities to participate in decision-making processes. Research often focuses on documenting livelihood challenges, exposing human rights abuses, and analysing the impacts of government policies. As one informant from ZELA explained

Research is crucial for us to understand the issues we work on and to develop effective advocacy strategies. We conduct research on a variety of topics, such as mining, climate change, and land rights. We use our research findings to inform our advocacy campaigns, lobby, and educate the public.

Another informant from ZIMCodd highlighted the importance of disseminating research findings, “We produce a variety of knowledge products, such as policy briefs, research reports, and infographics. We share these products with policymakers, the media, and the public to raise awareness of the issues we work on and for advocacy. I think the sharing part is so important because most of these things often end up in cupboards gathering dust”.

This research and knowledge production take various forms, including, first, documenting livelihood challenges in communities. The NGOs conduct research to understand the specific challenges faced by communities in accessing and sustaining their livelihoods. Such research includes the one on women’s experiences with gender-based violence (GBV) done by AAZ (2023) and the “Community Land Rights and Mining Induced Displacements in Zimbabwe”

research done by ZELA (2023), highlighting challenges experienced by women during displacements. Second, they expose human rights abuses. The NGOs understood livelihood issues from a human rights perspective. This directs them to document and expose human rights abuses, including violations of civil and political rights, as well as their economic, social, and cultural rights in communities. This documentation is then used to advocate for justice and accountability, and to pressure the government to uphold its human rights obligations.

The three NGOs also invest in analysing the impact of government policies. The organisation analyses the impact of government policies on sustainable livelihoods and identifies policies that perpetuate poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. This analysis is used to advocate for specific policy changes and to promote alternative development pathways that prioritise social and environmental justice. Analyses of the country's fiscal and monetary policies are examples (ZELA 2020c; ZIMCodd 2024). Overall, research and knowledge production are crucial tactics used by NGOs in Zimbabwe to promote sustainable livelihoods. By conducting research, analysing data, and disseminating findings, NGOs inform policy debates, advocate for change, and empower communities to participate in decision-making processes.

7.5.2.6 Developing alternative development models

The ongoing conversation around service delivery and campaigning, a subject of contention in the campaigning NGO discourse, is also central to the work of the studied NGOs (Archer 2017: 10). The informants from the three organisations recognise the divide between community expectations for “hardware programming” (direct service delivery) and the NGOs' focus on “software programming” (advocacy and campaigning). In response, the studied NGOs highlighted that they do engage in some form of hardware programming, providing tangible services to communities. However, this is not done to meet all community needs, but rather to serve as a model for the community to use as they demand improved service delivery from their duty bearers. This approach allows NGOs to demonstrate practical solutions and advocate for their wider adoption by the government or other stakeholders.

An example of this is AAZ's implementation of projects demonstrating transformative service delivery in the water sector. By constructing solarised boreholes and establishing community-managed water systems in Nyazura, Chaendambuya and Binga, AAZ showcases the viability of community-led solutions and advocates for greater investment in community-level infrastructure. The argument given by an AAZ informant is that

We believe that any water source should not be laborious. Understanding the patriarchal nature of our society, the burden to fetch water is placed on women, considering that we do boreholes, not the bush pumps, which require energy to pump;

we do solarise them to reduce the workload, and this is a model we want the duty bearers to replicate.

A ZIMCodd informant added, “we believe that it's important to not only advocate for policy changes and even new policies or for the government to do ABC, but also to demonstrate practical solutions. By developing and demonstrating alternative models, we can show what is possible and inspire others to take action”. This approach was recommended further by Gandawa (2020: 10), who, in the face of the water crisis in western parts of Zimbabwe, recommended that the government adopt the working models being implemented by NGOs in the water sector in Matabeleland provinces. Developing alternative models is a crucial tactic used by NGOs in Zimbabwe to promote sustainable livelihoods. By demonstrating practical solutions and advocating for their wider adoption, NGOs make a practical case to influence service delivery modalities by the government by showing them the “how” of attaining sustainable livelihoods.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a comprehensive analysis of the tactics and strategies employed by NGOs in Zimbabwe to address the multifaceted challenges to sustainable livelihoods. By drawing on the PPT and integrating insights from the SLF, this study explored how NGOs navigate political opportunities, mobilise resources, frame livelihood issues, and engage in diverse repertoires of contention to influence policies and steer both the government and the wider society towards more sustainable livelihoods enabling ends.

The key findings of this chapter include, firstly, the studied NGOs demonstrate a keen understanding of the political opportunity structure (POS) and employ various strategies to identify and leverage political opportunities for advocacy. They constantly monitor the policy environment, build relationships with policymakers, and strategically frame their messages to resonate with different audiences. However, they also face challenges due to the country's restrictive POS, including shrinking civic space, limited access to information, and weak institutions. Secondly, the NGOs employ a variety of framing strategies to shape public discourse and mobilise support for their advocacy efforts. They connect livelihood issues to deeply resonant values, tailor their messages to specific audiences, and utilise storytelling and personalisation to humanise complex issues and evoke emotions.

Thirdly, the three NGOs rely on diverse mobilisation structures to secure and manage resources for their advocacy work. They diversify their funding sources, invest in capacity building for staff and external campaigners, and actively engage in building and nurturing coalitions and networks. Fourth, they utilise a diverse range of tactics, including marches and protests, lobbying, litigation, community mobilisation, research, and developing alternative

development models. The choice of specific tactics is influenced by various factors, including the political context, resource availability, target audience, and the nature of the issue being addressed.

These findings have several implications for achieving sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. First, as Fouilhoux (2004), Nikkhah and Redzuan (2010) and Buijs *et al.* (2024) noted in different circumstances campaigning NGOs play a crucial role in advocating for policy changes that promote sustainable livelihoods and empower communities to participate in decision-making processes. The ability of the studied NGOs to navigate the POS, frame issues strategically, and mobilise diverse actors is crucial for influencing public discourse and policy outcomes. Second, the diversity of tactics employed by NGOs highlights their adaptability and resilience in navigating a complex and dynamic environment. They demonstrate a capacity to adapt their strategies in response to changing political opportunities and challenges. Third, strengthening internal organisational capacity, working with external campaigners and building strong networks are essential for sustaining advocacy efforts and achieving long-term impact. NGOs that invest in their staff, diversify their funding sources, and build strong partnerships are better equipped to navigate challenges and achieve their advocacy goals.

The findings of this chapter lay the groundwork for the subsequent chapter, which focuses on the impact of NGO interventions on sustainable livelihoods. By understanding the strategies and tactics employed by NGOs, we can better assess their effectiveness in promoting social changes and contributing to the well-being of communities in Zimbabwe. The next chapter will examine the nexus of all this NGOs' work and the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in communities both urban and rural. The chapter will explore deeper the specific outcomes of NGO interventions, examining their impact or lack thereof on various livelihood assets and exploring the pathways through which they contribute to sustainable development.

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE INFLUENCE OF CAMPAIGNING NGOS' WORK ON COMMUNITIES' ATTAINMENT OF SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

8.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the complex relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe, moving beyond stated intentions and rhetoric to analyse the actual impact of these organisations in communities. Acknowledging the maxim of Meadows (2008: 14) that “purposes are deduced from behaviour, not from rhetoric, or stated goals” and the assertion by Shivji (2006: 23) that one should “analyse the objective effect of (NGOs’) actions regardless of stated goals, rhetoric or intentions,” this chapter adopts a critical lens to assess the influence of campaigning NGOs on the communities they aim to serve. Judged solely on their purpose, intentions and actions, campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe appear to be significant contributors to social transformation, revolutionising livelihoods through their advocacy and direct interventions. However, a nuanced, community-focused analysis reveals a more intricate and, at times, contradictory reality.

Building upon the findings in chapter six, which outlined the diverse livelihood challenges addressed by AAZ, ZELA, and ZIMCodd, and their strategies detailed in chapter seven, this chapter presents a comprehensive examination of the nexus between the work of these campaigning NGOs and the livelihood outcomes experienced by communities. It investigates both the intended and unintended consequences of their interventions, recognising both process outcomes and tangible impacts on lives in urban and rural communities. Guided by the principle of “first do no harm” (VENRO 2018), the analysis explores both positive and negative effects, acknowledging the potential for NGO interventions to inadvertently exacerbate existing vulnerabilities or create new ones.

Employing the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) as its theoretical lens (Scoones 1998; Natarajan *et al.* 2022), the chapter investigates the multifaceted influence of campaigning NGOs on communities' livelihoods. It examines how their direct interactions, advocacy efforts, and policy interventions affect various dimensions of the SLF, composed of the vulnerability context, livelihood strategies, access to and control over assets, and ultimately, the sustainability of livelihood outcomes. The analysis is grounded in empirical data drawn from 27 key informant interviews with NGO staff and campaigners, complemented by focus group discussions with community members across six districts: Harare Central, Harare Rural, Epworth, Chitungwiza, Binga, and Nkayi. These primary data sources are further enriched by a synthesis of relevant academic literature and reports on the work of campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe.

This chapter specifically addresses the third objective of the study: to understand the influence or effects of campaigning NGOs' work on communities' attainment of sustainable livelihoods. It does so by answering five key research questions: (i) What effect do campaigning NGOs have on the vulnerability context of urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe? (ii) What effect do campaigning NGOs have on policies, institutions, and processes to enhance sustainable livelihoods in urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe? (iii) What effect do campaigning NGOs have on urban and rural communities' livelihood strategies in Zimbabwe? (iv) What effect do NGOs have on urban and rural communities' livelihood assets in Zimbabwe? and (v) What effect do NGOs have on the sustenance of livelihood outcomes in urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe?

The chapter unfolds in three main sections. First, it analyses interview data from NGO staff and campaigners to understand their self-perceived impact in urban and rural communities (Section 8.2). This is followed by an analysis of community perspectives, gathered through focus group discussions, offering a grounded view of how NGO interventions influence various aspects of livelihoods in their respective communities (Section 8.3). Section 8.4 then synthesised these two perspectives, examining the nuanced and often complex connections between NGO activities and the attainment of sustainable livelihoods. Each of these sections examines the five key aspects outlined above: NGOs' influence on communities' vulnerability context, their impact on policies, institutions, and processes, their contribution to livelihood strategies, their influence on livelihood assets (human, social, natural, physical, and financial), and their role in the maintenance and sustenance of livelihood outcomes.

By juxtaposing the perspectives of NGOs and communities, and grounding the analysis in the SLF, this chapter provides a critical assessment of the impact of campaigning NGOs on sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. The chapter concludes by setting the stage for chapter nine, which will discuss the findings in greater depth, offering a set of recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of campaigning NGOs in fostering sustainable livelihoods and outlining a model framework for their programming in the Zimbabwean context.

8.2 Campaigning NGOs' perspectives on their role in fostering sustainable livelihoods

This section presents the perspectives of campaigning NGOs, specifically AAZ, ZELA, and ZIMCDD, regarding their contributions to sustainable livelihoods in communities across Zimbabwe. Building upon the preceding analyses of the livelihood challenges these organisations address and the strategies they employ, this section examines how these NGOs perceive their impact on the ground, as articulated by their staff and the campaigners they work with. The analysis is framed around the five core research questions that inform the study's third objective, which aims to examine the impact of campaigning NGOs' work on the

attainment of sustainable livelihoods in communities. These questions explore the effects of NGO interventions across various dimensions of the SLF, which are:

- (i) the vulnerability context,
- (ii) policies, institutions, and processes,
- (iii) communities' livelihood strategies,
- (iv) communities' livelihood assets, and
- (v) the sustenance of livelihood outcomes.

Through an in-depth analysis of interview data from 27 NGO staff and campaigners, this section examines the NGOs' self-perceived contributions in shaping vulnerability contexts, influencing policy landscapes, empowering communities to diversify livelihood strategies, building diverse asset portfolios, and ultimately, striving to sustain livelihood outcomes. The following subsections will explore each of these dimensions in detail, highlighting the NGOs' overarching theories of change and their perceived impact on the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in both urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe.

8.2.1 Campaigning NGOs' role in addressing livelihoods vulnerabilities

This section presents findings related to the research question: "What effect do campaigning NGOs have on the vulnerability context of urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe?" This is the first question under the study's third objective, which examines the impact of campaigning NGOs' work on the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in communities. The base question used in the interviews was a modified version of the research question, specifically asking, "What effect do AAZ/ZELA/ZIMCodd have on the vulnerability context of communities, both urban and rural?" This question was posed to all nine NGO staffers and 18 campaigners affiliated with AAZ, ZELA, and ZIMCodd, with follow-up questions for nuance and clarity. Analysis of the 27 interviews revealed five common themes regarding the NGOs' effects on communities' vulnerability context:

- Holistic understanding of vulnerability—a recurring observation across all 27 interviews was that the NGOs' have a comprehensive understanding of the vulnerability contexts of the communities. This encompasses the intricate interplay of social, economic, political, and environmental factors that contribute to the precariousness of both urban and rural communities.
- Awareness raising—all 27 interviewees mentioned the NGOs' role in raising community awareness regarding their "context". Awareness and comprehension of this context was being regarded as crucial for preparedness and resilience building for both natural and human-induced shocks and stresses.

- Disaster preparedness and response—a majority of the interviewees (23 out of 27) highlighted their respective NGOs' efforts to influence government policy and bolster community-level disaster preparedness. This theme was particularly salient in discussions concerning responses after disasters such as Cyclone Idai in 2019.
- Economic literacy and advocacy—over 18 interviews, primarily those with AAZ and ZIMCodd staff and campaigners, underscored the NGOs' work in promoting economic literacy within communities. This empowerment was seen as an enabler of communities to comprehend and navigate economic shocks and advocate for necessary changes.
- Direct livelihoods support—beyond awareness-raising and advocacy, over a dozen interviews indicated that NGOs also engage in direct livelihood support projects. These projects aim to equip communities with essential coping skills and foster resilience.

These themes are exemplified by the following representative quotes from some of the interviews. An AAZ informant who works on the NGO's humanitarian program responding to the base question said:

We contributed in many ways, and this starts with our understanding that they (people's livelihoods) are affected by many things: power relations with traditional leaders in their communities, traditional practices, religion, the changing climate, policy inconsistencies in the economy, and migration trends of young people leaving rural areas to urban areas, some going to the diaspora—everything. ... we look at it considering everything within their 'context'. And in that we have worked to make sure the government puts structures for disaster preparedness and response after the 2019 cyclone Idai, ... we now have an *ad hoc* (localised Disaster Risk Management) framework in response to our advocacy. (We) see this as a starting point, making sure that the communities are more resilient and are able to respond to disasters if they occur.

A ZELA informant responding to the base question said:

Our investments have been mainly in awareness raising. We make sure that communities understand their 'context', we take this to be essential because we believe that preparedness is key, and information is the cornerstone of preparedness, and in that we have conscientised communities to a point of saturation. That makes us feel confident of our interventions in improving the situation for communities in the face of a volatile environment driven in part by climate change but also irresponsible business players such as mining companies.

The ZIMCodd informant, also responding to the base question, said:

Our main impact is in making sure that communities understand the state of the economy—the dynamics leading to it. This is helpful in terms of impending economic crises; it helps people prepare and sometimes avoid the crises. Our work [also] helps communities to self-organise and advocate for corrective measures in crises. So, we do have [a] direct impact in communities that way.

These responses to the base question and further details from the probing questions illustrate that AAZ, ZELA, and ZIMCodd acknowledge the complex interplay between individual agency and structural constraints in shaping livelihoods. This aligns with the assertion by Rakodi (2014) that community assets, aspirations, and strategies are significantly influenced by the broader socio-economic and environmental context they exist in. While this context is often termed the “vulnerability context” (Ashley and Carney 1999: 47; Shinbrot *et al.* 2019: 1) or the “livelihoods context” (Natarajan *et al.* 2022: 11), the informants in this study favoured the more encompassing term “context”. This broader conceptualisation includes not only material resources, but also demographic shifts, technological access, political influence, economic forces, climatic variability, conflict, and cultural norms as demonstrated by the AAZ informant quoted above.

The deduced themes and quotes demonstrate that the NGOs perceive their role as facilitating community understanding of this multifaceted context and fostering preparedness for shocks and stresses. This explains the emphasis on awareness-raising initiatives across the three NGOs. Furthermore, they engage in direct livelihood projects, exemplified by AAZ's initiatives in Binga, Nkayi, and Harare, which focus on equipping communities with coping skills (AAZ 2024a). This dual approach is complemented by macro-level advocacy for robust disaster preparedness and response structures and systems. The informants' responses to the primary question thus show that NGOs primarily assess their impact based on these three factors: increased awareness of contextual vulnerabilities, the development of coping skills, and the establishment of preparedness and response structures such as the localised DRM structures referred to by the quoted AAZ informant. They believe their contributions to these three factors enhance the capacity of communities to effectively anticipate and respond to shocks and stresses, thereby reducing their vulnerability.

8.2.2 Campaigning NGOs' influence on policies, structures, and processes

This section presents the findings in relation to the study question: “What effect do campaigning NGOs have on policies, institutions, and processes to enhance sustainable livelihoods in urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe?” This is the second question on the third objective of the study, which examines the impact of campaigning NGOs' work on the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in communities. The second interview question was a modified version of the research question, specifically asking, “What effect do

AAZ/ZELA/ZIMCodd have on policies, institutions, and processes to enhance sustainable livelihoods in urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe?” Examining the 27 responses to this second interview question, the following themes emerged:

- Agenda setting and public discourse—over a dozen respondents emphasised the significant role their respective NGOs play in bringing critical issues to the forefront of public and governmental attention. They expressed a belief that raising awareness and generating dialogue exert a regulatory effect and can shift social norms. Six interviewees linked this agenda-setting role to the emphasis their organisations place on raising awareness in communities, as discussed in the previous section.
- Formal policy and legal changes—over half of the respondents (14) cited the enactment of laws and formalisation of processes as significant achievements resulting from their advocacy efforts. This included contributions to drafting legislation such as the Mines and Minerals Amendment Bill, advocacy for the enactment of the Zimbabwe Independent Complaints Commission Act, and campaigning for different aspects of the Criminal Laws Amendment (Protection of Children and Young Persons) Act.
- Operationalisation and implementation of laws and policies—eighteen interviewees highlighted the actual implementation of advocated policies and processes as markers of success. While acknowledging implementation challenges, they cited instances of government compliance with court orders and the operationalisation of proportional representative seats for women and youth as evidence of their influence.
- Multi-layered impact—a common thread across all 27 interviews was the recognition of the multi-layered impact of campaigning NGOs. The perceived impact ranged from raising awareness to enacting and operationalising laws and policies. Interviewees celebrated the significance of each level of impact in shaping the policy landscape and fostering sustainable livelihoods.
- Perceived effectiveness—all respondents underscored the perceived impact of their work within communities. They reported witnessing issues gaining prominence, laws being enacted, and, in some instances, policies being implemented.

These themes are explicit in the four representational responses below from informants from the three organisations. A campaigner working with AAZ who also has working connections with ZIMCodd responded to the second interview question saying:

The main effect is the way we actually put the things on the agenda. We look at existing policies and processes and see the existing gaps; ... we highlight them until they become an issue. In most cases we then see the government springing into action,

and sometimes we see people or other institutions changing behaviours. That is the case with the Disaster Risk Management (DRM) bill that we have been working on for years. No one was talking about it until we did. After a few years, the government has shown that it is now their priority to pass a disaster management bill. ... There are many areas to be honest; some issues end up being passed into law or operationalised as a matter of public policy. Then there is the deterrent effect in issues such as corruption; knowing that there are people watching out there makes certain things just not happen the way they would. ... It does something; ..., if something is talked about, it keeps people in check. That is the effect that we have on policies and process[es], which improves people's lives.

In her response, one ZELA informant highlighted policy gains, noting that:

We contribute to policy changes even though sometimes there are issues with implementation due to corruption and other things. We have been struggling for years for the government to come up with a sound mining and minerals legislation. The bill was finally gazetted in 2023, and we were strategically positioned to contribute to its drafting due to our expertise. We know that once we have a law in place, that is a win. We all know that a law has a longer life after enactment; our work will then just be to make sure that it is being enforced.

A young campaigner working with ZIMCodd responded to the base question, saying:

For me, the impact of our work in policy is self-evident; look at the women and youth quotas [in parliament]; these are products of years of campaigning work. We may disagree on the specifics of the implementation, but what we can agree on is that the government is implementing our policy proposals, and it is working. This has an effect on representation; now we know that if policies made by parliament fail women or young people, it is because of other reasons, not representation. It is work in progress (though) we then work on capacitating those in the structures to be effective. ... but the bottom line is that the government is implementing some of our longstanding policy recommendations, and this has an effect on communities and their ability to improve their livelihoods.

An AAZ informant who has lengthy experience working on the NGO's governance projects provided a lengthy response to the question:

Our impact is varied; it has levels starting with [a] basic understanding of the problem, ... by both communities and policymakers. When we have communities advocating for policies or practice changes, we see that as impact again, [and] then when there are conversations on making it policy, that is another level. I can give an example of the

DRM bill; it started as a conversation on the fringes, then communities were mobilised to speak up, parliament got interested, and later the central government made it a priority. As I speak, we are working with the government to finalise the DRM bill. We celebrate wins at different scales. ... Yes, when the bill becomes law and is enforced, we then call that the ultimate win, but all these are wins. I can give you many examples, including our work on the ACDEG (African Charter for Democracy Elections and Governance). We started the conversation as a talk of ratification of the charter; after that, it became a conversation of adherence to the principles, especially chapter nine on governance, focusing on anti-corruption and other things. Looked at it this way, this is the significant role we (campaigning NGOs) play in shaping the policy landscape and fostering a policy environment that enables sustainable livelihoods.

These findings indicate that the significant effort exerted by these campaigning NGOs in influencing policies, structures, and processes as depicted in **Figure 6.1 which shows an oversized focus on policy work** is perceived as yielding tangible results. This impact is multifaceted, with influence stated at various levels, from agenda-setting and public discourse to formal policy changes and operationalisation in line with an observation by Nan (2018) that influencing policies, processes and practices happen at different levels. Overall, as one informant quoted above aptly summarises, these NGOs see themselves as playing a “significant role ... in shaping the policy landscape and fostering a policy environment that enables sustainable livelihoods” in communities across Zimbabwe.

8.2.3 Campaigning NGOs influencing livelihood strategies

This section provides results in relation to the research question, “What effect do campaigning NGOs have on urban and rural communities’ livelihood strategies in Zimbabwe?” This is the third research question under the study's third objective, which examines the impact of campaigning NGOs' work on the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in communities. A modified version of the research question served as the third interview question, specifically asking, “What effect do AAZ/ZELA/ZIMCodd have on urban and rural communities’ livelihood strategies in Zimbabwe?” This question was complemented by a number of follow-up questions posed to elicit greater clarity and specificity. Analysis of the interview data revealed four key themes:

- Empowerment through information and resources—the primary theme that emerged from all 27 interviews is the NGOs' focus is on empowering communities. This empowerment involves providing communities with the information and resources necessary to make informed decisions about their livelihoods. Training programs, workshops, and community dialogues are key channels used by the NGOs to attain this objective.

- Diversification of livelihood strategies—the second theme, evident in over 25 responses, highlights the NGOs' emphasis on promoting the diversification of livelihood strategies. This is particularly important in areas most affected by climate change, as diversification reduces over-reliance on any single income source, such as small-scale subsistence farming. Interviewees noted the adoption of diverse livelihood strategies, including informal businesses in Harare and other diversified options in Binga and Nkayi. However, the NGOs did not consistently provide specific details to directly link their interventions to these observed changes in livelihood strategies.
- Community-specific approaches—over a dozen informants emphasised that NGOs prioritise supporting livelihood strategies relevant to each specific community. This approach avoids imposing standardised solutions and instead focuses on improving existing practices in terms of productivity and sustainability.
- Knowledge-based impact —nearly all interviewees (25) emphasised their impact on livelihood strategies through the development of a knowledge base within communities. This knowledge equips communities to choose more sustainable livelihood options.

The following quotes are representative of the general findings in relation to the research question. A youth campaigner working with ZELA responded to the third interview question saying:

Our main impact is based on our information dissemination, especially connected to the climate crisis and environmental degradation. This information is then used to promote diversification of how people earn a living, and the primary focus is rural communities, which tend to rely on rain-fed agriculture. We work with communities to ensure that they understand and act in ways that reduce the risk of their livelihoods being affected. In our partnership with AAZ, for example, we have been promoting the gemstones' value chain, especially for women in the industry, and from that work we can tell that women are more empowered due to this new strengthened livelihood option. At another scale, issues such as the Community Share Ownership Trusts we contribute by making sure that communities benefit the most from the operations in their areas, in that we open up new livelihood options for them. That is the contribution that we give here.

An AAZ informant responded to the base question saying:

Our influence on their strategies is often closely tied to each community's priorities. We do not impose methods for diversifying people's livelihoods; instead, we support their existing practices and work to enhance them in terms of productivity and sustainability.

An example is our work in Binga, where we support the strengthening of the fishers of Zambezi to access licenses to operate, and we support non-timber forestry value addition and community gardens in other communities. This work provides essential sustenance for people and ensures that they are not affected by the volatility in rainfall patterns due to climate change. In our work in urban areas such as Harare we support those in the informal economy to improve their skills and also to operate in a safe environment.

A ZIMCodd informant referred to their youth empowerment initiatives, responding to the third interview question saying:

We recently strengthened our youth empowerment capacity-building initiatives, which strengthen youth's skills for them to have better livelihood options. Even though it is still on a small scale, we are investing in the marketable livelihood skills of young people in both urban and rural communities. The real impact of that can only be seen over the years as young people's incomes grow and their livelihoods are strengthened; however, at the moment I can say we are confident of the trajectory to date.

The data suggests that AAZ, ZELA, and ZIMCodd perceive their influence on livelihood strategies as operating primarily through a knowledge-based approach. This finding resonates with Wellard *et al.* (2013: 21) point that knowledge dissemination is a key element of community empowerment in livelihood decision-making. By prioritising community-specific approaches and fostering the diversification of livelihood options, particularly as a response to climate change, these organisations view their interventions as contributing to the resilience of vulnerable populations in both urban and rural communities. These perspectives all align with the established principles of the SLF (Chambers and Conway 1992; Scoones 1998; Natarajan *et al.* 2022).

8.2.4 The Influence of campaigning NGOs on livelihood assets

This section provides an analysis of the influence of the three campaigning NGOs on livelihood assets within both urban and rural communities, addressing the research question: "What effect do campaigning NGOs have on urban and rural communities' livelihood assets in Zimbabwe?" This question falls under the study's third objective, which examines the impact of campaigning NGOs' work on the attainment of sustainable livelihoods. The modified version of the research question was posed to all 27 interviewees as the fourth interview question, specifically asking, "What effect do AAZ/ZELA/ZIMCodd have on urban and rural communities' livelihood assets in Zimbabwe?" Follow-up questions to the main questions were employed to gain deeper insights. Thematic analysis of the responses revealed the following key themes regarding the influence of NGOs on various forms of capital/assets:

- Building diverse asset portfolios—the interviews widely show that the campaigning NGOs demonstrate a commitment to building diverse forms of assets within the communities they serve. This approach acknowledges the interconnectedness of various livelihood components, as highlighted in all 27 interviews, underscoring the complex relationship between different assets essential for sustainable livelihoods.
- Human capital development—a consistent theme across all 27 interviews was the emphasis on human capital development facilitated by the collaborative working modalities adopted by the campaigning NGOs. The interviews have shown that these organisations contribute to human capital development by enhancing the capacities of campaigners, community-based organisations (CBOs), and social movements. Furthermore, at least 20 informants cited advocacy for improved healthcare, education, and adequate financing of other social services as another key mechanism that advances the human capital of communities. This dual approach not only enhances individual capabilities but also promotes systemic improvements in social service provision, making communities more educated and healthier.
- Social and political capital—all 27 interviews, even those not explicitly identifying it as social capital development, indicated that campaigning NGOs strengthen communities through co-campaigning initiatives. Over a dozen informants highlighted that this collaborative approach fosters social connectedness and political engagement. This strengthens community bonds and increase civic participation, which in the long term, is essential for the communities to attain sustainable livelihoods.
- Physical capital—while acknowledging the indirect nature of their influence, the majority of the informants noted that NGOs contribute to the development of physical capital. By advocating for prudent financial management, campaigning against illicit financial flows, and promoting state accountability in reducing corruption, NGOs contribute to the creation of fiscal space for government investment in infrastructure such as transportation, shelter, water, energy, and communications. Informants from ZIMCodd emphasised this particular contribution.
- Financial capital—this theme emerged prominently in responses from informants affiliated with AAZ and ZIMCodd. The responses highlight the NGOs' role in enhancing financial capital through experimental livelihood projects and the provision of financial literacy and livelihood skills training, especially for young people.
- Natural capital—all nine informants from ZELA emphasised their contributions to the improvement of natural capital. Their work involves collaborating with communities to enhance environmental preservation through awareness-raising, promoting

commitment to environmental protection, and holding companies accountable for environmental damage.

The following quotes from informants illustrate the themes highlighted above. An AAZ informant stated their contribution in the following terms:

Our resilience-building work contributes to the building of various assets for communities. We are still rooted in our legacy development work in our Local Rights Programs (LRPs), where we work to build community resilience through direct support to communities. We have supported the drilling and solarisation of boreholes in communities with water scarcity among other things. In Harare we have livelihoods projects that are led by young people, helping them to develop marketable skills in an increasingly difficult economy. On a larger scale we have legacy projects such as the ZAGP (Zimbabwe Agricultural Growth Programme) and ZRBF (Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund), which have been key livelihoods projects strengthening value chains for different livestock products. These projects not only enhance human capital by developing skills but also contribute to financial and physical capital by investing in infrastructure, which in turn benefits communities. There are many pieces of our work that also build social capital in all its forms. Whenever we group people together, we know we have built a new network of people. This even applies to our young people who do advocacy; they are connected in a network that works as a resource for their livelihoods. ... “in that we believe we contribute to the building of needed livelihood assets for women and young people we work with, in both rural and urban communities”. ... “all this feeds into our campaigning and public engagement work because we also work with the government demonstrating to them how community-led projects are to be implemented, and I feel like it is in the purview of campaigning and policy influencing”.

A ZELA informant emphasised community connections and the value they bring, saying:

Our work is based in communities, in that alone our impact is on how we capacitate communities to find their own agency. By design of our work, we ensure environmental protection to preserve the natural environment, which communities rely on. We understand that no development can be sustainable without the protection of our natural environment. We have made gains in protecting the environment in some instances (for example through joint monitoring and response committees with the Environmental Management Agency); however, it is an ongoing battle because the gains of this year may be threatened by different players next year. All in all, our work with communities strengthens them and helps us stand tall against the bigger

corporations affecting our environment, in that we are building assets for strengthened communities.

A ZIMCodd informant summarised their contributions, noting that:

We work with communities building their capacities to self-represent; we work together for state accountability, adequate financing of social services such as healthcare, which also builds better human capital, especially for the young people. Look at issues such as road and other infrastructure, without our campaigns for transparency and accountability, these could not have been financed. So, there is a layer of our contributions that is often not clear ... but we do contribute to the development of common assets such as infrastructure.

The findings demonstrate that campaigning NGO staff and campaigners possess a nuanced understanding of the interconnectedness of livelihood components, as articulated by Natarajan *et al.* (2022: 11). Their contributions often highlight strong links between their activities and the enhancement of community assets. Central to their efforts is a “desire to build diverse forms of assets,” as one informant articulated. Their specific contributions to each of the five forms of capital (human, social and political, physical, financial, and natural) are multifaceted.

Regarding human capital, informants assert that their investments in communities, including capacity building for campaigner networks, CBOs, and social movements, effectively build human resources through collaborative campaigning. Their advocacy for improved healthcare and education, alongside efforts to ensure adequate financing of social services, further contributes to human capital development. This underscores the dual impact of campaigning NGOs enhancing individual capabilities while simultaneously advocating for systemic improvements in social service provision.

Concerning social and political capital, co-campaigning with communities was frequently cited as a significant contributor. Informants reported increased social connectedness and political engagement within communities as a result of these collaborative efforts. Considering social capital as encompassing shared norms, values, beliefs, trust, networks, social relations, and institutions that facilitate cooperation and collective action for mutual benefit (Bhandari and Yasunobu 2009: 480), co-campaigning with NGOs is thus effective in strengthening community bonds and fostering political/civic participation.

Informants also articulated their contribution to the development of physical capital. While acknowledging the less direct nature of these contributions, they firmly believe that their macro-level programming contributes to the development of physical capital essential for livelihoods. A ZIMCodd informant passionately argued that their advocacy for prudent

financial management, campaigns against illicit financial flows, and efforts to hold the state accountable for reducing corruption “create fiscal space for government investment in physical capital”. Other informants, particularly those working with AAZ, cited examples such as campaigning for electricity upgrades at the Kariba power station (Muchenjekwa 2018) and road repairs linked to anti-corruption campaigns targeting road administrators (Makwanise and Masunda 2022: 62) as evidence of their contribution to improved infrastructure.

Articulating their contribution to the advancement of financial capital proved challenging for informants. Some from AAZ mentioned experimental livelihood projects in various locations, such as Harare and Binga. This is supported by AAZ documentation highlighting legacy livelihood projects like the Zimbabwe Agricultural Productivity and Growth Programme (ZAPG), implemented in collaboration with the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ), which enhanced financial capital by strengthening goat and pork value chains for rural smallholder farmers (AAZ 2019c). However, the nexus between these projects and the NGO's campaigning work remains somewhat ambiguous. An AAZ informant attempted to bridge this gap by stating, “we worked with the government, demonstrating to them how community-led projects are to be implemented, and I feel like it is in the purview of campaigning and policy influencing”. AAZ informants also cited the organisation's livelihood projects in Harare, which provide financial literacy and other livelihood skills training to young people, as contributing to financial capital development.

Among the three NGOs, ZELA demonstrates a clear focus on natural capital, primarily in rural areas. ZELA informants and campaigners perceive their impact through heightened community awareness and commitment to environmental protection and holding companies accountable for environmental damage. This work was seen as directly contributing to the enhancement of natural capital. Overall, campaigning NGOs express a strong belief in their positive impact on the assets/capitals that communities rely on for their livelihoods. They recognise the interconnectedness of these assets and highlight the diverse ways their work contributes to their development.

8.2.5 Campaigning NGOS and the sustenance of livelihood outcomes

This section addresses the research question: “What effect do NGOs have on the sustenance of livelihood outcomes in urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe?” This constitutes the fifth and final research question under the study's third objective, which aims to understand the impact of campaigning NGOs' work on the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in communities. The research question was slightly modified to address each NGO specifically, asking, “What effect do AAZ/ZELA/ZIMCDD have on the sustenance of livelihood outcomes in communities, both urban and rural?” This fifth question of the interview was posed in all 27

interviews, accompanied by probing follow-up questions for clarity. Thematic analysis of the 27 responses yielded the following themes:

- Collaborative approach—this approach was a prevalent theme across all responses of the campaigning NGOs' work. It was characterised as a partnership with communities rather than a top-down approach to development. The informants reiterated the importance of empowering communities to sustain their own development even after the NGOs' disengagement.
- Policy-based programming —a second common theme, directly referenced by 23 informants and indirectly by the remaining four, was the role of policy changes advocated by NGOs in ensuring sustainable outcomes beyond the campaigning NGOs' interventions. Informants expressed the belief that influencing policies related to debt management, financial accountability, and legislation creates lasting benefits that persist even after they disengage from a particular issue or community.
- Skills and capacity building—the third prominent theme was the focus on building the skills and capacities of communities to ensure they can continue to thrive without ongoing external support. Informants referred to training they conducted on various subjects, ranging from agroecology and climate advocacy to community leadership.

The following quotes from a representative sample of informants illustrate these themes. An AAZ informant responding to the fifth interview question stated:

Our impact, or in other words, our legacy in communities, are the things that we leave behind, and these are not just the physical infrastructure; I am talking about the skills. When we promote agroecology (for example), the communities now have the skills; it does not go away because we are no longer there. When we capacitate communities to question decisions by local authorities, they do not suddenly forget because we are no longer there. We are building community resilience and capacity to sustain their own livelihoods; that is the most effective way to do that, and, in that front, we are doing well.

A ZELA informant responded to the same question, saying:

We work with communities, and ... we are building their capacity to be effective in sustaining their own livelihoods. In addition, when policies are implemented, they go a long way even if we change priorities or if we cease to exist. So, by design, our work is for sustainability of the gains that we score along the way. We are confident that when we leave most spaces we are in, will remain as productive or even better.

A ZIMCodd informant captured the same understanding, noting that:

Working with communities makes sure that they are drivers of their own development; we are not there as drivers but collaborators, so even in our absence the capacities they have will sustain them. ... We do work to change policies, to ensure sustainable debt management, to enhance financial management and to set up systems of accountability. This work makes things more sustainable. If a piece of legislation is put in place, it becomes a gift that continues to give even if we are not there.

According to NGO staff members and campaigners, their respective campaigning NGOs play a crucial role in sustaining livelihood outcomes. The informants emphasised their collaborative approach, working in partnership with communities to ensure sustainability. They also highlighted the importance of policy-based programming in producing sustainable outcomes, which has been the longstanding foundational argument for focusing on advocacy and campaigning in the first place (Chapman and Fisher 2000; Mitlin, Hickey and Bebbington 2007). However, these arguments, when considered collectively, appear somewhat defensive, potentially justifying disengagement rather than actively promoting continuous sustenance. The overarching observation is that campaigning NGOs do not perceive their role as requiring continuous presence at the community level but rather as initiating interventions that should ideally self-sustain.

8.3 Community perceptions of campaigning NGOs' impact on sustainable livelihoods

This section examines community perceptions of the impact of campaigning NGOs on the attainment of sustainable livelihoods, providing a critical counterpoint to the NGOs' self-perceived roles explored in Section 8.2. Understanding these perceptions is essential for a holistic assessment of the effectiveness of NGO interventions and their contributions to livelihood improvements. Drawing primarily on focus group discussions conducted with community members across six diverse districts in Zimbabwe—Harare Central, Harare Rural, Epworth, Chitungwiza, Binga, and Nkayi—this section analyses community perspectives through the lens of the five core research questions that underpin the study's third objective. These questions delve into the perceived effects of NGO interventions on: (i) the vulnerability context of communities, both urban and rural; (ii) policies, institutions, and processes that have an effect on sustainable livelihoods; (iii) communities' livelihood strategies in urban and rural settings; (iv) the diverse livelihood assets of communities; and (v) the sustenance of livelihood outcomes over time. While communities generally acknowledge some positive impacts, particularly among those in close proximity to NGO activities, the findings reveal a more complex and nuanced picture. The perceived impact varies considerably depending on the specific area of intervention, the degree of direct engagement with NGOs, and the extent to which NGO interventions align with community-specific needs and priorities. Moreover, a

recurring theme emerges regarding the perceived disconnect between NGO interventions and the long-term sustainability of livelihood improvements. The following subsections will explore these community perceptions in detail, providing a grounded perspective on the multifaceted relationship between campaigning NGOs and the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods in diverse Zimbabwean communities.

8.3.1 Community perceptions of campaigning NGOs' effect on livelihood vulnerabilities

This section presents findings from community members in response to the research question: "What effect do campaigning NGOs have on the vulnerability context of urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe?" This question falls under the study's third objective, which seeks to establish the effect of campaigning NGOs on the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in communities. The question, "What effect do campaigning NGOs have on your livelihood vulnerabilities?" initiated the discussion. Additional follow-up questions were posed to gain deeper insights. While diverse themes emerged from different locations, a synthesis of discussions with community members in Harare Central, Harare Rural, Epworth, Chitungwiza, Binga, and Nkayi districts revealed the following overarching themes:

- Instrumental role in addressing vulnerabilities—focus group discussions indicated that communities perceive campaigning NGOs as instrumental in helping them recognise and address their vulnerability context. Building community resilience, which enables them to mitigate risks and adapt to threatening situations and hazards is considered essential.
- Enhanced awareness and understanding—focus group discussions revealed that NGOs are credited with raising awareness of various shocks and stresses that threaten livelihoods, such as economic instability, natural disasters, and social conflicts. Across all locations, participants demonstrated a nuanced understanding of these vulnerabilities, recognising the link between local challenges and broader issues, like climate change. For instance, rural communities now understand the connection between droughts and climate change, attributing it largely to human activity. In urban areas, NGOs have been credited with providing information that improves community understanding of economic challenges, policy volatility, and health risks such as cholera outbreaks. This improved understanding was attributed to access to reading materials and workshops provided by campaigning NGOs.
- Proactive community preparedness—the discussions also showed that the information and awareness gained by communities are being translated into proactive preparedness for disasters and economic downturns. A significant number of

responses indicated that community members feel better equipped to face these challenges due to the information and skills acquired through NGO interventions.

- Connection to NGO engagement—the discussions revealed that communities, especially members who have engaged with campaigning NGOs, generally connect their enhanced resilience and preparedness to their interaction with these organisations. However, individuals with limited contact with NGOs showed a lower appreciation for the role of NGOs in improving their understanding of their context in a way that reduces their vulnerability.

The following location-specific quotations from the group discussions, substantiate these themes. In Harare's central district, residents highlighted their newfound preparedness for recurrent cholera outbreaks. A middle-aged woman stated:

Not focusing on one NGO specifically, I can say we are less vulnerable now because we know what is going on. Before, we were caught off guard... But the awareness campaigns [and] the hygiene trainings from NGOs, they made a difference. Every cholera or typhoid outbreak used to be devastating, as they come in and teach us how to improve on hygiene; this has been good for us. We know what to do now, how to protect our families.

Another young woman added:

There is also advocacy they do for improvement of healthcare services in places like Tariro clinic (a local clinic in Harare); they try to make sure that the clinics are also prepared for the disasters. In this I think they have been helpful in making sure that the challenges we often face here are not as bad as they could [be].

These quotes underscore the tangible impact of NGO interventions in transforming knowledge into action, particularly in enhancing preparedness for health-related shocks.

In Harare Rural adjacent to the capital, economic hardship was a central concern. An elderly woman reflected that:

The NGOs have helped us understand that it is not just bad luck; there are policies that do not support our livelihoods. They have shown us that we can still make it through diversification, and we have been able to adapt, using new farming methods, for example, to adapt to the challenges. The challenge, however, they have not really addressed is the encroachment of land by land barons who are threatening our livelihoods. We know they have worked around corruption, but that has not changed. They also try to make sure that we are prepared if these things happen to us; on that I think they help reduce our vulnerability.

The group demonstrated an understanding of the shocks they are vulnerable to and discussed various coping mechanisms, including building social support networks.

In Epworth, the conversation focused on economic resilience. A young woman commented on the impact of campaigning NGOs, saying:

Their strength is in the capacity they give us; they make sure that communities understand their challenges well. My understanding of the economy has really improved. I used to think these things were beyond us, but through the materials from ZIMCDD and workshops by other NGOs, I see how it all connects. We are learning to navigate these challenges, to find ways to make ends meet even when things are tough. ... This mainly applies to the economy; often times people do not know what is going on, but through these workshops we end up understanding our context, which informs our decision-making. For example, in the times of shortages when you have information, you can stock up for the supplies before things run out.

Another participant in Epworth added that:

The main impact for me is the way they make everything simple. It is about accessibility; often times when the government provides information even about the weather, it is complicated and only accessible to a few people. These NGOs come and maintain that community contact, ensuring that we are understanding. When problems arrive, we do not really say we were not aware. We might lack the full capacity to respond, but we know, and often times we prepare for these things.

These statements highlight the perceived impact of NGOs in enhancing understanding of the socio-economic context, leading to improved preparedness.

One participant in Chitungwiza noted the strengthening of community voices:

There are a lot of issues we face in Chitungwiza, issues to do with water shortages and price increases, but we have been taught by these organisations about our rights. We know we should speak out, and we are not afraid to do so. It takes time, but our voices are now being heard both by the council and the government. This, I think, has been the main contribution of the NGOs in Chitungwiza in terms of reducing our vulnerabilities.

However, another participant at the same discussion in Chitungwiza rebuffed this, stating:

This may be true for those who attend NGO workshops, which is not everyone. Most people are busy on their markets; they are not as engaged with NGOs, so they do not know all this. I think that is a problem there with what communities need and it not reaching everyone as expected; it is difficult.

These contrasting views highlight that awareness and understanding are not widespread and are mainly connected to proximity to NGO activities.

In Binga, the focus shifted to the interplay between climate change and livelihoods. A middle-aged male participant stated that:

The droughts are more frequent now, but we're not just sitting back. The NGOs have shown us how to adapt, to plant drought-resistant crops to conserve water. We are learning to live with the changing climate, and I think they did well on that. But at a small scale, they also train people on how to do climate-smart agriculture, giving us the skills that are needed to actually cope as droughts continue to come.

This view was echoed by others, with one adding:

They make us feel that we are not alone. It is a matter of knowing that there are people supporting you in this volatile climate situation. They make us understand, yes, but they also work as our advocates, talking about the struggles that we face here. That is really something we celebrate as their success in this difficult context. As we end up understanding their work after Cyclone Idai, [it] has led to the establishment of new structures to respond to disaster. These are helpful in responding to emergencies here. All these together are the good things we have seen from the NGOs in helping us to be more resilient.

This exemplifies the crucial role NGOs play in providing information and working with communities to cope in a difficult context.

Finally, in Nkayi, one participant eloquently captured the common substance of the discussion on the broader perspective that NGOs are fostering:

They did well in making us understand climatic trends; for example, it made us understand that it is not just us facing these problems. Communities across the country are struggling. What we have learnt is that we need to see the bigger picture, to understand the patterns, like these droughts. They're connected to climate change, which is caused by things happening far beyond Nkayi. We can't solve it alone, but we can adapt, we can prepare, and that's what we're doing.

Evidently, the discussions have shown that communities generally perceive campaigning NGOs as instrumental in helping them recognise and address their vulnerability contexts. This is essential, as Pfefferbaum, Van Horn and Pfefferbaum (2017: 107) note that heightened awareness fosters community resilience, enabling them to mitigate risks and adapt to threatening situations and hazards. Participants in focus group discussions demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the various shocks and stresses that threaten their livelihoods, including economic instability, natural disasters, and social conflicts.

The quote from the Nkayi participant exemplifies the depth of understanding demonstrated by rural community members regarding their vulnerability context. Similarly, urban focus groups exhibited a nuanced understanding of economic challenges and policy volatility and recognised their potential impact on livelihoods. Participants in Harare’s central district also highlighted how they are now better prepared for recurrent cholera outbreaks (Mucheche 2024: 1), due to the awareness they received from NGOs’ programming in their communities. This enhanced awareness has been evidently translated into proactive community preparedness for impending disasters, including disease outbreaks and economic downturns. Participants in all study areas reported feeling better equipped to face these challenges due to the information and skills gained through various NGO interventions. In addition, participants acknowledged interventions that brought new response structures, such as the establishment of localised DRM structures, with one participant highlighting that “these (localised DRM structures) are helpful in responding to emergencies”. Notably, a number of participants who had limited contact with NGOs indicated low appreciation of the work of NGOs in improving their understanding of their context for them to be better prepared for different shocks and stresses.

8.3.2 Community perceptions of NGOs’ effect on policies, structures, and processes

This section presents findings from focus group discussions with community members in the study’s six districts regarding the research question: “What effect do campaigning NGOs have on policies, institutions, and processes to enhance sustainable livelihoods in urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe?” This question is the second component of the study’s third objective, which sought to understand the effect of campaigning NGOs on the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in communities. The focus group discussions on this research question were initiated with the question, “What effect do NGOs have on policies, institutions, and processes to advance your attainment of sustainable livelihoods?” The discussions across all six study districts yielded varied responses, which are categorised into the following themes:

- Limited awareness of macro-level influence—the discussions revealed that community members generally do not readily perceive the impact of campaigning NGOs on macro-level policies. Many participants initially struggled to identify specific policies that had improved their lives due to NGO advocacy. Some community members, especially in Binga, dismissed macro-level policy influence as “just talk”. In Harare, no direct link was initially established between campaigning NGOs and the policies they had influenced.
- Disconnect between advocacy and daily experiences—the discussions established that participants find it challenging to connect the macro-level policy advocacy work of

campaigning NGOs to their daily experiences. A participant in Harare Central noted that government rhetoric makes it difficult to “join the dots” between government actions and NGO influence.

- Recognition of specific policy impacts upon probing—while initial responses indicated a lack of awareness, further probing led communities to acknowledge positive effects from some policies that were advocated for by campaigning NGOs. Examples include the institution of devolution, which increased community empowerment and allowed residents to voice priorities to local officials. Other positive outcomes recognised through further probing include the establishment of DRM structures and the advancement of women's rights.

The following quotes from the six districts illustrate these themes. In Harare participants struggled to respond to the question. One male participant said:

It is hard to say exactly which policies the NGOs have changed. The government always claims they're doing everything, so it is difficult to join the dots; you can't really tell who's influencing what. But things have improved in some areas, like with the councillors being more accessible now. Sometimes issues that the NGOs work on with us end up being reflected in national and local budgets. In that sense. I think they are influencing. but it cannot just be that specific.

In a similar vein, participants in Harare Rural coalesced around one sentiment from an elderly participant who said:

I have not seen them (NGOs) changing any policies; maybe they talk to the big people in Harare, but we do not see the changes here. What we know is that life is getting harder each day. ... Yes, we know that we work with them on many issues but the best they can do is to support us directly so that we can see the results. Policies take time, and for now I cannot even think of one that I can say they influenced, and it changed our lives here.

The outlook was more positive in Epworth, with the first response, which other participants agreed to, stating that:

The NGOs have done a lot about issues such as gender equality. They encouraged us (women) to participate, and the government has been responsive, putting frameworks in place to promote women's participation. We see some changes, like more women speaking up in meetings, but it's a slow process. It's hard to know how much is because of the NGOs and how much is just things changing generally.

Chitungwiza participants opened up after some probing, one participant shared that:

Devolution, yes, that has made a difference. We can talk to our councillors more easily now, ... tell them what we need. I think the NGOs pushed for that, so that's a good thing.

The thing is that devolution often comes with very little funds, but the concept that the NGOs pushed for is good; there is really need for communities to be involved in directing development in their local communities, so in that I am really happy they do that. It has a contribution to our lives in many different ways.

The most negative expressions were in Binga, with one participant saying:

All that talk about policies, it is just talk; it doesn't reach us here. NGOs come and talk, but nothing changes much. We still have the same problems. Maybe they're doing something, but we don't see it.

After further probing and elaboration of the question on policies at the local level, not just national, another participant acknowledged some changes, saying:

If it is like that (policy changes at the local level) I can say that their talk about disaster committees was responded to, and it is good. In that they have been promoting that we talk to our local leaders about the local by-laws, we have been doing that, and some issues are being addressed.

The general tone in Nkayi demonstrated a low appreciation of policy or process changes that have improved their lives. An elderly man provided one key response.

I can't really name any specific policy that's changed because of an NGO. We still face many challenges. But I think they (NGOs) are trying to help, especially with things like training us on new farming methods and in advocacy, I think that involves policy, maybe.

The influence of campaigning NGOs on policies, structures, and processes was not readily apparent in the focus group discussions. Community members in Binga were particularly critical of macro-level policy influence, dismissing it as “just talk”. In Nkayi, participants struggled to identify any specific policies attributed to NGO advocacy that had enhanced their lives. Similarly, in different parts of Harare, failed to establish a clear link between the work of campaigning NGOs and the policies they had influenced. However, upon further probing about specific policies, communities acknowledged the positive effects of some policies advocated for by campaigning NGOs. The institution of devolution (Chakunda 2023; Moyo and Motsi 2023), for instance, while it was not spontaneously mentioned, it was recognised for its impact on community empowerment and their ability to influence local officials. Participants appreciated the increased access to local councillors and the opportunity to voice their priorities. Further probing also revealed community recognition of the establishment of DRM structures and the advancement of women's rights as positive outcomes linked to NGO advocacy.

This study noted that communities find it challenging to connect the macro-level policy advocacy work of campaigning NGOs to their daily experiences. A participant in Harare Central attributed this disconnect to government rhetoric, stating, “(t)he government always claims they're doing everything, so it is difficult to join the dots; you can't really tell who's influencing what.” This observation aligns with the finding of van Wessel, Ho and Tamas (2021: 30) that those influenced by campaigning and advocacy efforts are often reluctant to acknowledge external influence.

8.3.3 Community perspectives of Campaigning NGOs' effect on livelihood strategies

This section examines community perceptions regarding the effect of campaigning NGOs on livelihood strategies. It addresses the research question: “What effect do campaigning NGOs have on urban and rural communities' livelihood strategies in Zimbabwe?” This is the third research question under the third study objective, which sought to examine the effect of campaigning NGOs on the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in communities. The discussions on this research question were started with the question, “What effect do campaigning NGOs have on your livelihood strategies?” An analysis of responses and discussions from focus group discussions in six districts yielded the following themes:

- Diversification of livelihood strategies—responses, particularly in Binga and Nkayi, indicated that communities have expanded their livelihood strategies beyond subsistence farming, engaging in activities like fishing, beekeeping, and value addition of natural products. This shift was attributed to NGOs raising awareness about the risks of relying on a single livelihood strategy.
- Awareness and empowerment—the responses and discussions highlighted that NGOs have raised community awareness about the vulnerability associated with dependence on a single livelihood strategy. This awareness, combined with direct support from NGOs, has empowered communities to explore alternative livelihood options.
- Direct support for new livelihood strategies—the discussions revealed that NGOs not only raise awareness but also provide direct support for implementing new livelihood strategies. This support includes helping communities identify viable options and providing resources for trying new methods.
- Support for the informal economy—in Harare, the discussions highlighted the understanding that NGOs support the informal economy by advocating for protective policies, providing resources, and offering training.
- Partnership—the discussions also indicated that communities view campaigning NGOs as essential partners in influencing and supporting their livelihood strategies.

This partnership is characterised by raising awareness, building capacity, and providing direct support.

- Enhanced community resilience and adaptability—the discussions demonstrated that the support from NGOs helps communities enhance their resilience and adapt to economic and environmental challenges.

The following quotes from different locations illustrate these themes. In Harare Central, a female participant, responding to the third question of the discussion, said:

Their main contribution is in supporting how we earn a living in Harare. Most people here have some form of informal business they do. The economy is not doing well, and even if someone is formally employed, they are bound to do some form of informal business. The NGOs have been allies for a long time. They fight for us to have decent space to sell our things and sometimes give us training on how to manage our money better. It's not everything we would have wanted, but it helps.

Responses in Harare Rural supported the idea that NGOs have helped communities diversify their livelihood strategies, as captured in this response from one male participant:

We used to rely on farming only, but it is not enough anymore. ... The problem is climate change, but also the land here is being encroached as the city expands; this affects our traditional ways of getting food and a living. Some NGOs have come and started teaching people about poultry, gardening, and other projects, which have helped some of us to earn more money. It is still a struggle, but we have more options now; you find a person doing one or two things, which gives them some money and food.

The issue of informal business also dominated the discussions in Epworth, as one participant put it:

Here in Epworth, many of us are vendors. The NGOs help us understand our rights and sometimes give us small loans to grow our businesses (not necessarily the NGOs subject to this study). They also try to help us when the local council wants to chase us away. They are our voice, and we have a good relationship with a number of them (NGOs) that is good because even if we manage to sell a day, that is money earned, and it helps our lives.

In Chitungwiza, however, generalised issues were raised. These link to several identified themes, as exemplified by one participant who said:

Life is tough, and relying on one thing is risky. The NGOs have shown us that we can try other things, like vending, cross-border trading, and even urban farming. It is not much, but it adds to what we get from our jobs. Sometimes they provide training on different livelihood skills, knowing now that almost every household has some of business at their yard like keeping chickens for meat and eggs. ... In running battles

with local authorities, it is the NGOs that stand with us to say, 'look—where can these people earn a living? It helps us knowing they are there to provide a voice to the ways in which we try to live in these tough times.

Discussions in Binga showed how NGOs support the livelihood strategies that communities engage in; this was captured well by one female participant who said:

We used to depend on farming and livestock, but the droughts have been bad. As the people of the Zambezi, we also have a strong history of fishing, so as the droughts become consistent, we have been investing in fishing more and more. And because of regulations and restrictions, as well as competition from commercial fisheries, the NGOs have been supporting us to claim our space and protect our livelihoods here.

The discussions in Nkayi also focused on the diversification of livelihood strategies, as one participant put it:

Simple engagement with any NGO here will leave you understanding that we cannot just rely on rain-fed farming anymore. The NGOs have been helping us with new skills in areas like beekeeping, teaching us how to make honey and other products to sell. It is a helpful thing because we can't always count on the rains.

Another participant in the same discussion noted that:

NGOs help us identify what works better; ... they [also] support us in trying out new ways to earn a living, and that explains the community gardens that have been set up around here. These gardens have been really helpful since after we get enough to feed ourselves, we sell some and send our children to school. This is better than waiting for the rains, which can take years without inadequate amounts.

The focus group discussions in the six districts revealed that communities recognise the influence of NGOs on their livelihood strategies. In Binga and Nkayi, communities reported that NGOs have supported them in diversifying their livelihood strategies beyond subsistence farming. In Binga, over half of the participants came from households expanding their fishing capabilities to mitigate the effects of declining agricultural output. In Nkayi, participants reported exploring off-farm initiatives such as beekeeping and value addition of natural products. These shifts in livelihood strategies are attributed to increased awareness about the vulnerability of relying on a single livelihood strategy, a realisation fostered through engagement with NGOs. This awareness, coupled with direct support from NGOs operating in their communities, has empowered communities to explore alternative livelihood options. In Harare, the support for the informal economy was a recurring theme, with communities acknowledging the role of NGOs in “supporting” livelihood strategies relevant to their context. This support includes advocating for policies that protect informal workers and providing

access to resources and training, as documented by Karanda and Toledano (2020: 912) in a generalised study of the role of NGOs in influencing enterprise policy in Zimbabwe.

8.3.4 Community perspectives of campaigning NGOs' effect on livelihood assets

This section presents the findings from focus group discussions with community members in six districts regarding their perceptions of NGO influence on their livelihood assets. The section addresses the research question: "What effect do NGOs have on urban and rural communities' livelihood assets in Zimbabwe?" This question is the fourth component of the third study objective, aiming to examine the effect of campaigning NGOs on the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in communities. The research question was modified to "What effect do NGOs have on your livelihood assets, such as human capital, natural capital, financial capital, social capital, and physical capital?" and used as the base question for this section during the focus group discussions. The following themes emerged from the discussions:

- Direct engagement with NGOs leads to perceived improvements in livelihood assets—the discussions revealed that communities with direct interaction with NGOs report a strong connection between the NGOs' activities and the enhancement of various forms of capital. This is largely attributed to livelihood projects undertaken by the NGOs, including model-building and legacy development projects.
- Capacity enhancement through collaboration—the discussions also indicated that those who work closely with NGOs report significant capacity enhancement through collaborative campaigns, learning from the NGOs' expertise.
- Positive effects on financial capital—participants in model livelihood projects reported positive impacts on their financial capital connected to the gained livelihood strategies highlighted in the previous section. For example, young people in Harare Central demonstrated the impact of NGOs on their skills, livelihood strategies, and income. Additionally, Internal Savings and Lending Schemes (ISALS) in Binga were recognised for their transformative impact.
- Increased social and political capital—the discussions showed that communities have built social and political capital across the board, feeling empowered to participate in civic activities and be connected to a wider network due to the work of NGOs, which helps them build assets for their livelihoods.
- Lack of impact for those without direct connections—the discussions also highlighted that individuals and communities without direct interaction with NGOs reported a lack of impact on their skills and financial outcomes, even within the same focus groups. This sentiment was widely shared among those not directly engaged with NGO activities across all study locations.

- Government-led developments acknowledged by those not working with NGOs—for shared common assets, such as natural and physical capital, the discussions have shown that those who do not work closely with NGOs acknowledge government-led developments as factors improving their livelihoods, not NGO advocacy and campaigning.

The following quotes illustrate the themes deduced from the discussions. In Harare Central, a female participant responded to the fourth question of the discussion, saying:

The impact for me is personal; I cannot share for others. Since I started working with AAZ, my life has changed. I have learnt new skills in tailoring; it is helping me build my business and support my family. I have since stopped some of the things that I have doing to earn a living which were not safe, I now have a stable income, it has been transformational, because with a little more money I can have other things, money is the most important.

Other participants shared similar stories, demonstrating the perceived effect of their engagements with various NGOs on their lives. There was a clear distinction in Harare Rural, between those working closely with NGOs and those who did not. The following quotations demonstrate this difference. The first participant said:

The impact for me is the skills that we get from working with them; when you are well-read and informed, that has ripple effects on income and other things. This is mainly because we campaign with them learning from their expertise; it improves our capacity and for that I celebrate that working with these NGOs has exposed us to information and access to resources and ...

The participant was interrupted by another participant, who said:

Those who are involved in the NGO projects ... they are doing better. They have more knowledge, as they say, and they make more money. We see them, but we haven't been part of those projects, so we haven't seen much change for ourselves. It is mostly those in the projects who are doing well. They have received training and are earning more. So, people should not speak for everyone; it is different.

On the other hand, discussions in Epworth focused on the networks that NGOs build for them, as one female community leader who was part of the discussion, noted:

We are better off with the NGOs because they build a community around us. They are connected and working with them gives us access to their networks, which in turn is good for us because with [the] right connections we access better resources. Training opportunities for young people, for example, even if they are not directly provided by the

NGOs, they tend to have partners with a focus on capacity development. We have seen so many young people from here accessing trainings which transform their lives.

In Chitungwiza, the discourse was mainly on generic human and social capital, with one participant summing it up by saying:

I have learned a lot from working with the NGO on their campaigns. I know more about my rights, and I feel more confident speaking up. We are working together, and they also learn from us; it has helped me understand how we can influence those in power, and I think that is the same for many people here. These skills give [us] power, and I think power is necessary for us to have better livelihoods in the long run.

Discussions in Binga centred on financial capital and physical capital, with financial capital issues common among participants who were part of various livelihood projects implemented by AAZ. One woman noted:

The ISALs (Internal Savings and Lending Schemes) have been a lifesaver. Before they provided the initial support training us, we had no way to save and build this community we have, and it was hard to get loans since banks want collateral and a lot of paperwork. Now, we have a safe place to keep our money, and we can borrow to feed into our small business in our communities. The NGOs have helped us set this up, and it is changing our lives.

After some probing, participants also credited the NGOs for their advocacy work with communities in ensuring the government builds common assets. Another female participant in Binga shared the following observations:

The advocacy by NGOs also helps build the road that we were talking about (Binga-Karoi Road). They did so with us, yes There may seem to be no connection, but there is a strong connection when you look closely.

A male participant who had less connection with the NGOs objected to that:

These are government projects; we do not need to put NGOs in everything The problem is that NGOs talk about these things but at the end of the day, the government has these plans already. The road is same as the dam (Gwayi-Shangani Dam), which is being constructed in Binga [and] have been planned for long back.

Participants who had links with the NGOs insisted that the campaigning work is what tipped the scales for the government to finally act, while those who work less ties to NGOs insisted it was the government championing the projects. The group was split in half on the subject.

Participants with ties to NGOs asserted that their campaigning efforts were the catalyst for the government's eventual action, while those with less ties to NGOs, maintained that the government was the one spearheading the projects. The group was split in half on this subject.

Similar sentiments were shared in Nkayi, with one participant who had not been working closely with the NGOs responding to the initial question for this section, saying:

We haven't seen much impact from the NGOs on our livelihoods, to be honest. Maybe those who work directly with them on the gardens have, but for most of us, things haven't changed much. We see the developments the government is making with roads, but not much from the NGOs.

This sentiment contrasted with those who have worked with the NGOs, who were in direct opposition, and the group was again split in half on the subject with another participant noting that:

But we have to look closely (name), you also benefit from the gardens that others have. You earn money from somewhere else, but you have access to fresh food closely, it saves you time to go to town to get these things. We need to be more appreciative; everyone benefits in one way or another.

Collectively, the focus group discussions revealed a distinct pattern in the perceived impact of campaigning NGOs on livelihood assets, contingent upon the degree of direct engagement. Communities directly involved with these organisations reported a strong correlation between NGO activities and the enhancement of various forms of capital. This perceived impact is largely attributed to livelihood projects, including model-building initiatives and legacy development projects, particularly those undertaken by AAZ, an organisation with a history rooted in development (AAZ 2022a). Conversely, a notable disparity emerged between these groups and those with limited or no direct interaction with NGOs. Participants who collaborated closely with NGOs, such as the individual involved in a Harare Rural social movement who stated, “the impact for me is the skills that we get from working with them ...”. However, individuals and communities lacking such engagement did not perceive similar benefits. Regarding shared assets like natural and physical capital, a similar divergence was observed. Those closely aligned with NGOs often attributed improvements to the combined efforts of NGO advocacy and community action, while those without direct NGO involvement typically credited government-led initiatives, without acknowledging a role for NGO influence.

8.3.5 Community perspectives of campaigning NGOs’ effect on the sustenance of livelihood outcomes

This section utilises focus group discussions from six districts to address the research question: “What effect do NGOs have on the sustenance of livelihood outcomes in urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe?” This is the fifth and final question contributing to the third study objective, which seeks to examine the impact of campaigning NGOs on the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in communities. The discussions were initiated with the modified

question: “What effect do NGOs have on the sustenance of livelihood outcomes in your community?” Thematic analysis of the discussion data revealed the following key themes:

- Disconnect between NGO work and long-term sustainability—the discussions in all study locations revealed that communities perceive a gap between the work of campaigning NGOs and the ability of these NGOs to help communities sustain their livelihoods over time. This issue applies to both independently developed livelihoods and those that NGOs support directly. The communities suggest that NGOs do not provide the necessary long-term framework to ensure the full sustainability of these livelihoods.
- NGOs perceived as temporary actors—discussions in all study locations highlighted that NGOs are often viewed as short-term players who “touch and leave communities,” meaning that they start projects and then depart when funding or priorities shift. This lack of consistent, long-term support is a major concern for the communities, even when the NGOs have been active in an area for a long time. The sources note that this is coupled with the problem of NGOs shifting focus from one area to another, for example, from economic development to climate change, without seeing the outcomes for each.

The following quotes from the discussions reflect these themes. In Harare Central, the discussions revolved around the need for more tangible, long-term support from NGOs, with less emphasis on campaigning work, which was perceived as inherently short-term. One middle-aged man stated that:

The NGOs come, they train us, they give us some resources, and then they leave. It is like they plant a seed but then don't water it. We need them to stay with us, to help us grow, not just for a short time. So, on that I can say they are not here to really support long term to make sure that the livelihoods they build are sustainable.

Similar sentiments were shared in the Harare Rural discussion, with one female participant saying:

The NGOs have good intentions, but they don't understand that building a livelihood takes time. They come with projects, but when the project ends, we're often left on our own. There's no follow-up, no long-term plan. They say they train us, but the problem is that things change, even the government changes, and we need up-to-date information. This, in some cases, actually harms the relations we have with authorities because when the NGOs leave, we are exposed, and it then seems as if we were just doing as the NGOs wanted not, as we wanted.

At the same discussion, another male participant added that:

They insist on advocacy, and that is good, but the leadership does not understand; they see [it] as if we are fighting them. So, since we live here, it makes our relations with the leadership hard, and over time it has a net negative outcome for us. I wish they understand that. ... If they [NGOs] stay that means that they continue to do the talking, not us, because relations with leaders matter here.

In Epworth, the discussion on this question was dominated by the inadequacy of the support, with one woman noting that:

We appreciate the help, but it is like a drop. They [NGOs] teach us skills, but then the market changes, or we face other challenges, and they're not there to help us adapt. If it were for me, they would increase their contact time with communities and stay to see us through on our initiatives.

In Chitungwiza the same sentiment was prevalent, albeit with an emphasis on campaign work, as highlighted by this woman:

The NGOs operate with their own work plans and interest; we have a struggle of water in Chitungwiza, but when that is not aligning with their priorities, they do not engage the subject. ... Yes, they sometimes do support, but that support is not constant and sustainable. Even, when we do make gains, they need to be sustained. If we end up having water in Chitungwiza, that would be very helpful for our livelihoods, but we can really sustain the momentum alone; we need the NGOs to provide long-term support in campaigning and ensuring that the government responds, given that government response often times takes ages.

In Binga, the summation of the discussion came from a young man who has worked with AAZ for some time in the area; he said:

They do good, we do not lie, but they go away and sometimes [are] not to be heard from again, or at times when they come back, they do come back with a different subject. For example, they may talk about economic development; next, its climate then humanitarian [issues], they shift and do not hold on and see the outcomes for each; they touch and go, and that affects us.

The expressions in the discussions were similar in Nkayi, as stated by one participant in agreement with the group:

The gardens were a good idea, but when the borehole broke, there was no one to help us fix it. The NGOs were gone, not out of the community but no longer engaged on that. We need them to be here for the long haul, not just for a short project and move on to another.

The focus group discussions revealed a consistent gap between the work of campaigning NGOs and the sustenance of sustainable livelihood outcomes. This disconnect applies to both independently developed livelihoods and those supported by the respective campaigning NGOs through advocacy or direct livelihood projects and model development. Communities indicated that NGOs do not provide a sustainable framework to fully sustain their livelihoods. Concerns were raised, particularly in rural communities, about NGOs “touching and leaving communities” as projects end or priorities change. This sentiment reflects a perception of NGOs as temporary players who do not provide long-term support for sustaining livelihood outcomes, even if they directly program in the area for a long time. This perception was echoed in Nkayi, where participants cited examples of gardening projects becoming unsustainable due to a lack of support for maintaining infrastructure, such as boreholes.

8.4 Synthesis of findings: the nexus between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods

This section synthesised the findings from the preceding analyses of both NGO perspectives (Section 8.2) and community perceptions (Section 8.3) to illuminate the complex nexus between campaigning NGOs and the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. It provides a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted relationship between these organisations and the communities they aim to serve, drawing upon a rich dataset comprised of interviews with NGO staff and campaigners and focus group discussions with community members across six diverse districts. By juxtaposing these perspectives, the analysis revisits the five core research questions that frame the study's third objective, examining the impact of campaigning NGOs on: (i) the vulnerability context of communities; (ii) policies, institutions, and processes; (iii) livelihood strategies; (iv) livelihood assets; and (v) the sustenance of livelihood outcomes. Each of these dimensions, explored in detail in sections 8.4.1 through 8.4.5, contributes to a holistic assessment of the contributions, limitations, and overall impact of campaigning NGOs in fostering sustainable livelihoods in communities. This synthesis acknowledges both the positive contributions and the inherent challenges of NGO interventions, highlighting areas of convergence and divergence between NGO intentions and community experiences. Ultimately, this section aims to provide a comprehensive and critical understanding of the intricate dynamics at play, paving the way for a more informed and effective approach to campaigning NGO programming in the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe.

8.4.1 The nexus between NGO interventions and community resilience

This section synthesises the perspectives of NGO staff and community members to analyse the nexus between the interventions of campaigning NGOs and the enhancement of

sustainable livelihoods. It directly addresses the research question, “What effect do campaigning NGOs have on the vulnerability context of urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe?” within the broader context of the study's third objective: to examine the impact of campaigning NGOs' work on the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in communities. The findings reveal a strong convergence in the perceived impact of NGOs, highlighting their role in fostering resilience by enhancing community understanding of their “context” and facilitating proactive adaptation to shocks and stresses.

A central theme emerging from both NGO staff and community perspectives is the critical role of awareness-raising in mitigating vulnerability. NGO staff, as exemplified by a ZELA informant, emphasise the importance of ensuring that “communities understand their ‘context’,” viewing this understanding as “essential because we believe that preparedness is key, and information is the cornerstone of preparedness”. This perspective aligns with academic literature that underscores the significance of informed preparedness in building community resilience (Pfefferbaum, Van Horn and Pfefferbaum 2017). Similarly, community members across diverse locales echoed this sentiment. A participant from Epworth highlighted the transformative impact of this awareness, stating, “My understanding of the economy has really improved. I used to think these things were beyond us, but through the materials from ZIMCDD and workshops by other NGOs, I see how it all connects”. This demonstrates that the NGOs' efforts are perceived as effectively bridging the gap between complex socio-economic dynamics and community-level understanding.

Furthermore, the synthesis reveals that NGOs contribute to resilience through a multifaceted approach that combines awareness-raising with direct support and advocacy. NGO staff highlighted their efforts in influencing policy and establishing structures for disaster preparedness and response, as indicated by an AAZ informant who noted, “(We) see this as a starting point, making sure that the communities are more resilient and are able to respond to disasters if they occur”. This macro-level advocacy is complemented by direct community engagement aimed at enhancing coping capacities. A participant from Binga underscored this dual approach, stating,

The NGOs have shown us how to adapt, to plant drought-resistant crops, to conserve water. We are learning to live with the changing climate But at a small scale they also train people on how to do climate smart agriculture giving us the skills that are needed to actually come as droughts continue to come.

This exemplifies how NGOs not only facilitate understanding of the broader context, such as climate change, but also provide tangible skills and resources for adaptation.

The proactive measures taken by communities in response to enhanced awareness further illustrate the nexus between NGO interventions and community action.

In Harare Central, for instance, a middle-aged woman described the impact of NGO interventions on cholera preparedness: “Every cholera or typhoid outbreak used to be devastating, as they come in and teach us how to improve on hygiene, this has been good for us. We know what to do now, how to protect our families”. This demonstrates a direct link between NGO-led awareness campaigns and tangible improvements in community preparedness, highlighting the transformative potential of informed action. Similarly, an older woman in Harare Rural stated, “The NGOs have helped us understand that it is not just bad luck; there are policies which do not support our livelihoods. They have shown us that we can still make it through diversification, and we have been able to adapt, using new farming methods, for example, to adapt to the challenges”.

However, the synthesis also acknowledges limitations and challenges in the NGO-community dynamic. A participant from Chitungwiza pointed out the uneven reach of NGO interventions, noting, “This may be true for those who attend NGO workshops, which is not everyone ... I think that is a problem there with what communities need and it not reaching everyone as expected; it is difficult”. This highlights the need for NGOs to continually assess and adapt their engagement strategies to ensure inclusivity and equitable access to information and resources.

All in all, the findings demonstrate a clear nexus between the work of campaigning NGOs and the enhancement of community resilience, as shown in **Figure 8.1**.

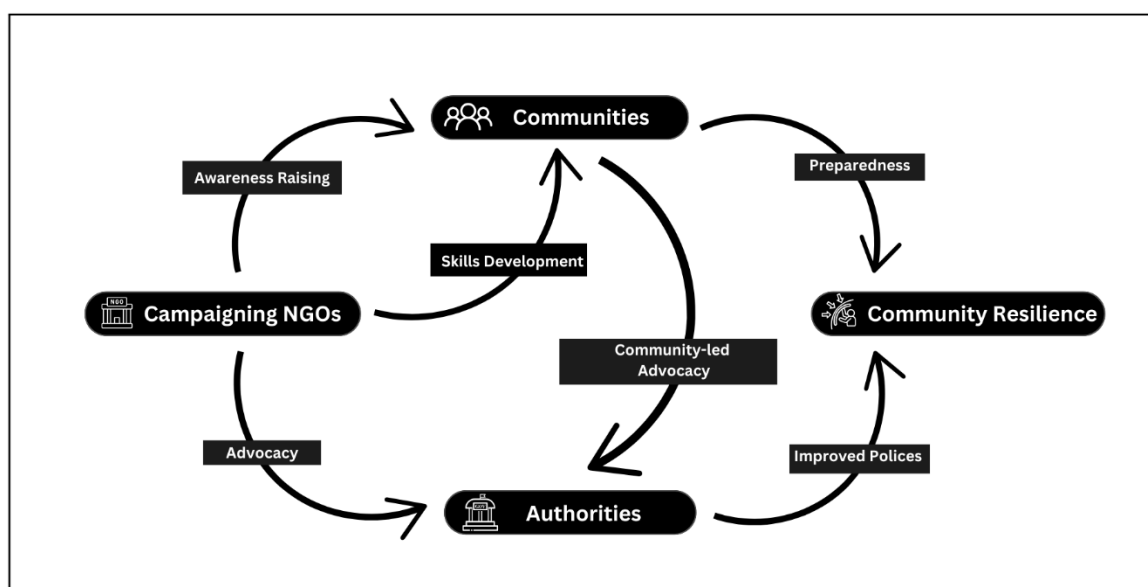


Figure 8.1: The nexus between campaigning NGOs and communities' vulnerability context

Source: Author generated

Figure 8.1 visualises the link between the work of campaigning NGOs and the achievement of resilient communities in the existing context. The figure shows that by fostering a comprehensive understanding of the vulnerability context through awareness raising, promoting proactive preparedness through skills development, and engaging in both direct support and advocacy, NGOs play a crucial role in empowering communities to navigate and adapt to shocks and stresses. This aligns with the assertion by Rakodi (2014) that community assets, aspirations, and strategies are significantly influenced by the broader socio-economic and environmental context they exist in. While challenges remain in ensuring equitable access and impact, the evidence strongly suggests that NGOs are perceived as valuable partners in the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods, bridging the gap between awareness, understanding, and adaptive action. The establishment of localised DRM structures, as mentioned by an AAZ informant and echoed by a community participant, exemplifies the tangible outcomes of this partnership, providing a safety net that enhances community resilience in the face of a more challenging social, economic and environmental context (Macheka, Maharaj and Nzima 2021; Mhlanga and Ndhlovu 2021; Nhapi 2022).

8.4.2 The nexus between NGOs policy advocacy and community experiences

This section synthesises the perspectives of NGO staff and community members to analyse the nexus between the advocacy work of campaigning NGOs and their impact on policies, structures, and processes that contribute to sustainable livelihoods. It addresses the research question, “What effect do campaigning NGOs have on policies, institutions, and processes to enhance sustainable livelihoods in urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe?” This falls under the study's third objective, which examines the impact of campaigning NGOs' work on the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in communities. The findings reveal a complex interplay between advocacy efforts and perceived impact, with a notable divergence between the perspectives of NGO staff and the communities they aim to serve.

NGO staff and campaigners consistently stressed their role in agenda-setting and influencing public discourse. A campaigner working with AAZ articulated this perspective, stating that, “The main effect is the way we actually put the things on the agenda... we highlight them until they become an issue. In most cases we then see the government springing into action ...”. This reflects a belief in the power of advocacy to elevate issues to the forefront of public and governmental attention, ultimately leading to policy changes or shifts in social norms. This view aligns with academic understandings of agenda-setting theory, which posits that the media and advocacy organisations can influence the public's perception of issue salience (Buyanza-Mwidima 2024; Stevens and Willems 2025). Furthermore, an AAZ informant highlighted the multi-layered nature of their impact, stating, “our impact is varied; it has levels starting with [a] basic understanding of the problem ... by both communities and policymakers.

When we have communities advocating for policies or practice changes, we see that as impact again, [and] then when there are conversations on making it policy, that is another level”.

In terms of formal policy and legal changes, NGO staff cited concrete examples of their contributions to legislative processes. A ZELA informant highlighted their role in shaping mining legislation, noting, “We have been struggling for years for the government to come up with a sound mining and minerals legislation. The bill was finally gazetted in 2023, and we were strategically positioned to contribute to its drafting due to our expertise”. This demonstrates a direct link between expert advocacy and tangible policy outcomes. Similarly, a young campaigner working with ZIMCDD pointed to the implementation of women and youth’s quotas in parliament as a direct result of their advocacy, saying, “For me the impact of our work in policy is self-evident, look at the women and youth quotas [in parliament]; these are products of years of campaigning work”.

However, a significant disconnect emerges between these perspectives and the perceptions of community members. Focus group discussions revealed a general lack of awareness regarding the macro-level influence of NGOs on policies. A participant from Harare Rural expressed this disconnect, stating, “I have not seen them [NGOs] changing any policies; maybe they talk to the big people in Harare, but we do not see the changes here”. This sentiment was echoed across various study sites, with many participants struggling to identify specific policies influenced by NGO advocacy that had directly improved their lives. This aligns with the observation of van Wessel, Ho and Tamas (2021) that those influenced by campaigning and advocacy efforts are often reluctant to acknowledge external influence or simply may not be aware of the complex causal chains linking advocacy to policy outcomes.

Despite this disconnect, further probing revealed a latent recognition of positive policy impacts among community members. In Epworth, for instance, participants acknowledged the role of NGOs in promoting gender equality, with one stating, “The NGOs have done a lot about issues such as gender equality; they encouraged us (women) to participate, and the government has been responsive, putting frameworks in place to promote women’s participation”. Similarly, a participant in Chitungwiza, after initial difficulty, identified devolution as a positive policy change influenced by NGOs: “Devolution, yes, that has made a difference. We can talk to our councillors more easily now [and] tell them what we need. I think the NGOs pushed for that, so that’s a good thing”. In Binga, participants eventually acknowledged the value of localised DRM structures, stating, “if it is like that (policy changes at local level) I can say that their talk about disaster committees was responded to, and it is good”.

This suggests that while communities may not readily connect the dots between NGO advocacy and macro-level policy changes, they do experience and appreciate the tangible benefits of specific policies that align with their needs and priorities. This highlights the

importance of effectively communicating the impact of advocacy work to communities, potentially through participatory methods that bridge the gap between policy-level interventions and tangible improvements in people's lives.

Overall, the findings reveal a complex nexus between the advocacy efforts of campaigning NGOs and their impact on policies, structures, and processes that foster sustainable livelihoods, as depicted in **Figure 8.2**.

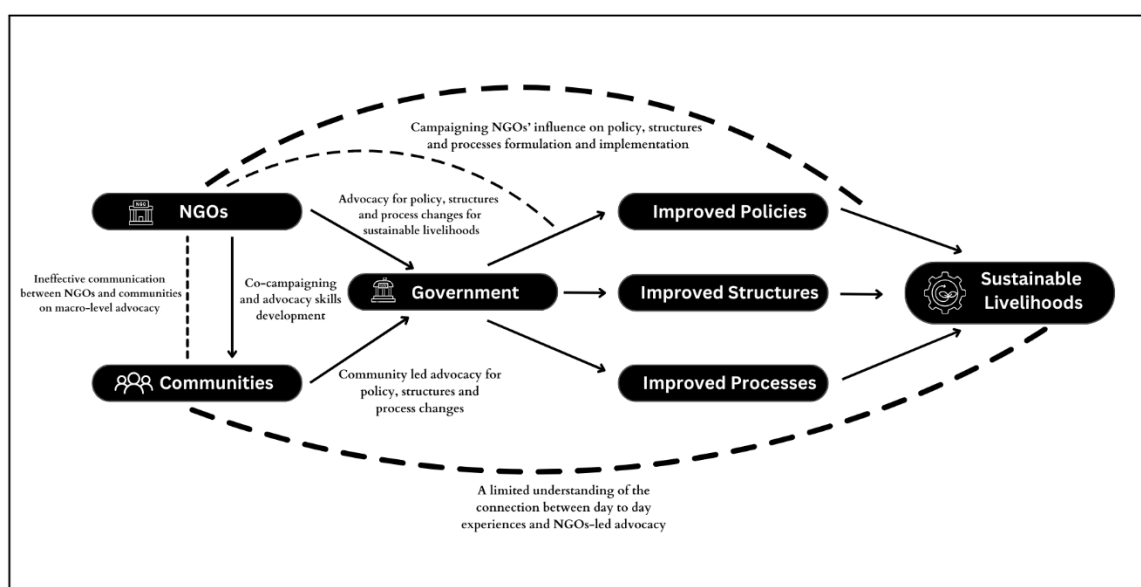


Figure 8.2: The nexus between NGOs policy advocacy and community experiences

Source: Author generated

Figure 8.2 shows the intricate policy work of NGOs and its intended outcomes, as well as the communities' understanding and experiences. It is notable that while NGO staff and campaigners emphasise their role in agenda-setting, policy formulation, and implementation, community members often struggle to perceive the direct link between this macro-level work and their daily experiences. This divergence is expected, as Zlotowitz and Burton (2022: 10) noted, communities understanding of policy work and its impact is always low; however, that does not imply lack of impact. As we noted from the focus group discussions, a deeper exploration reveals that communities do recognise and value the positive outcomes of specific policies advocated for by NGOs, even if they do not spontaneously attribute these changes to NGO influence. This underscores the multifaceted nature of impact, which encompasses both visible, direct effects and less tangible, indirect influences on the policy landscape. It also highlights the need for NGOs to bridge the communication gap, ensuring that communities understand and appreciate the full spectrum of their advocacy work and its contribution to advancing sustainable livelihoods.

8.4.3 The nexus between campaigning NGOs and communities' livelihood strategies

This section synthesises the perspectives of NGO staff and community members to analyse the nexus between the interventions of campaigning NGOs and their impact on livelihood strategies in both urban and rural contexts. It addresses the research question, “What effect do campaigning NGOs have on urban and rural communities' livelihood strategies in Zimbabwe?” This question falls under the study's third objective, which examines the impact of campaigning NGOs' work on the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in communities. The findings reveal a strong convergence in perceived impact, highlighting the role of NGOs in empowering communities through information and resources, fostering diversification of livelihood strategies, and providing tailored support that enhances resilience and adaptability.

A central theme emerging from both NGO staff and community perspectives is the empowerment of communities through the provision of information and resources. An AAZ informant articulated this, stating, “Our impact on their strategies is often tied to each community's priorities; we do not impose ways people diversify their livelihoods; we support what they do and work to make it better in terms of productivity and sustainability”. This reflects a commitment to participatory approaches that prioritise community agencies and build upon existing knowledge and practices. This approach aligns with the principles of empowerment as described by Dushkova and Ivlieva (2024), which emphasise enhancing the capacity of individuals and communities to make choices and transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Similarly, a youth campaigner working with ZELA emphasised the importance of information dissemination related to climate change and environmental degradation, stating that “this information is then used to promote diversification of how people earn a living, and the primary focus is rural communities, which tend to rely on rain-fed agriculture”.

The promotion of livelihood diversification emerges as a key strategy employed by NGOs, particularly in response to the challenges posed by climate change and economic instability. Over 25 NGO interviewees highlighted their emphasis on diversification, recognising its importance in reducing vulnerability and enhancing resilience. This aligns with the findings of Achiba (2018) and Hossain (2024), who argue that diversification is a crucial risk management strategy for households, enabling them to cope with shocks and stresses. Community members echoed this emphasis on diversification. A participant from Harare Rural noted, “We used to rely on farming only, but it is not enough anymore ... Some NGOs have come and started teaching people about poultry, gardening, and other projects, which have helped some of us to earn more money”. In Nkayi, a participant similarly stated, “Simple engagement with any NGO here will leave you understanding that we cannot just rely on rain-fed farming anymore. The NGOs have been helping us with new skills in areas like beekeeping [and] teaching us how to make honey and other products to sell”.

Furthermore, the synthesis reveals that NGOs adopt community-specific approaches to supporting livelihood strategies. This tailoring of interventions to local contexts ensures relevance and effectiveness. An AAZ informant emphasised this point, noting, “An example is our work in Binga, where we support the strengthening of the fishers of Zambezi to access licenses to operate; we support non-timber forestry value addition and community gardens in other communities”. This resonates with the arguments of Mwongera *et al.* (2017), who, in the context of climate responses, advocated for participatory rural appraisal (PRA) methodologies that prioritise local knowledge and context-specific solutions in development interventions.

In urban areas, particularly in Harare and Epworth, the focus shifts towards supporting the informal economy. A female participant from Harare Central highlighted this, stating, “Their main contribution is in support of how we earn a living in Harare. Most people here have some form of informal business they do ... The NGOs have been allies for a long time”. This support takes various forms, including advocacy for protective policies, provision of resources, and training, as documented by Karanda and Toledano (2020) in some communities in Zimbabwe. A participant from Epworth added, “Here in Epworth, many of us are vendors. The NGOs help us understand our rights and sometimes give us small loans to grow our businesses They are our voice”.

The nexus between NGO interventions and community action is evident in the proactive steps taken by communities to diversify their livelihoods and enhance their resilience. The discussions demonstrated that the support from NGOs helps communities enhance their resilience and adapt to economic and environmental challenges. This is exemplified by the statement from a participant in Binga, “We used to depend on farming and livestock, but the droughts have been bad... the NGOs have been supporting us to claim our space and protect our livelihoods here”. However, it is important to acknowledge that while NGOs play a significant role, they are not the sole actors influencing livelihood strategies. As noted by a ZIMCodd informant, the long-term impact of their youth empowerment initiatives can only be assessed over time, indicating the complex interplay of factors that shape livelihood outcomes. “The real impact of that can only be seen over the years as young people’s incomes grow and their livelihoods are strengthened; however, at the moment what I can say is that we are confident of the trajectory to date”. These interplays of influence on livelihood strategies are visualised in **Figure 8.3**.

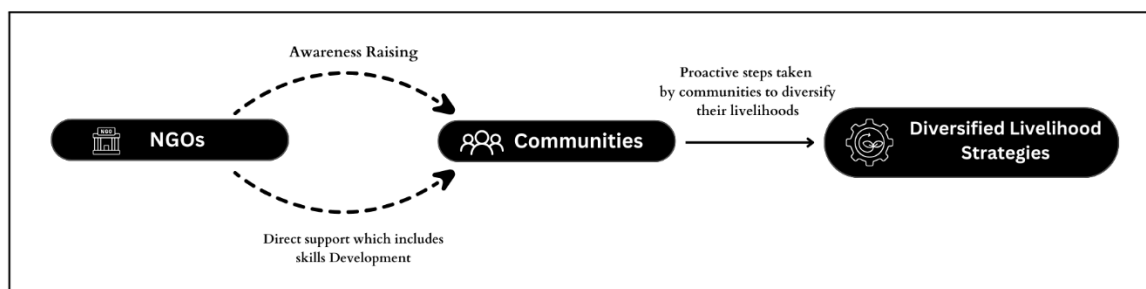


Figure 8.3: The interplay of campaigning NGOs’ work and the communities’ livelihood strategies

Source: Author generated

Figure 8.3 visualises the findings, which demonstrate a clear nexus between the work of campaigning NGOs and the enhancement of community resilience through diversified and strengthened livelihood strategies. By empowering communities with information and resources, promoting diversification, and providing tailored support, NGOs play a crucial role in enabling communities to adapt to challenges and improve their well-being. This aligns with the broader literature on sustainable livelihoods, which emphasises the importance of building assets, capabilities, and resilience in the face of shocks and stresses (Scoones 2013; Hynes *et al.* 2020; Scoones 2024). The evidence strongly suggests that NGOs are perceived as valuable partners in the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods, effectively bridging the gap between awareness, empowerment, and adaptive action in both rural and urban contexts.

8.4.4 The nexus between campaigning NGOs and communities’ livelihood assets

This section presents a synthesis of the perspectives of NGO staff and community members to analyse the nexus between the interventions of campaigning NGOs and their impacts on livelihood assets in both urban and rural contexts. It addresses the research question, “What effect do NGOs have on urban and rural communities’ livelihood assets in Zimbabwe?” This question falls under the study’s third objective, which examines the impact of campaigning NGOs’ work on the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in communities. The findings reveal a complex relationship between NGO engagement and perceived impact, with a clear distinction emerging between those who work closely with NGOs and those who do not.

NGO staff and campaigners consistently emphasised their commitment to building diverse asset portfolios within communities. An AAZ informant articulated this, stating, “Our resilience-building work contributes to the building of various assets for communities... We have supported the drilling and solarisation of boreholes in communities with water scarcity, among other things”. This reflects a holistic understanding of livelihoods, recognising the

interconnectedness of various forms of capital—human, social, physical, financial, and natural—a complete constellation as per the SFL (Scoones 1998; Natarajan *et al.* 2022). This multifaceted approach to asset building was further emphasised by a ZIMCODD informant who stated, “We work with communities building their capacities to self-represent, we work together for state accountability, [and for] adequate financing of social service such as healthcare, which also builds into better human capital, especially for the young people”.

A key finding emerging from community perspectives is that direct engagement with NGOs leads to perceived improvements in livelihood assets. This is particularly evident among participants involved in livelihood projects. A female participant from Harare Central, involved in a livelihood skills development project, exemplified this, stating, “The impact is personal; I cannot share for others. Since, I started working with AAZ, my life has changed. I've learnt new skills in tailoring; it is helping me build my business and support my family”. This demonstrates the tangible impact of NGO interventions on individual human capital (skills) and financial capital (income). Similarly, in Binga, participants involved in Internal Savings and Lending Schemes (ISALS) reported significant improvements in their financial capital. One woman noted, “The ISALS (Internal Savings and Lending Schemes) have been a lifesaver ... Now, we have a safe place to keep our money, and we can borrow to feed into our small business in our communities”. This aligns with the findings of Celestin and Vanitha (2016: 107), who emphasise the role of microfinance in enhancing financial capital and empowering marginalised communities.

Furthermore, those who work closely with NGOs reported significant capacity enhancement and empowerment through collaborative campaigns. A participant from Chitungwiza expressed this, stating, “I have learnt a lot from working with the NGO on their campaigns. I know more about my rights, and I feel more confident speaking up”. This highlights the impact of NGO engagement on social and political capital, fostering civic participation and a sense of agency, which are crucial components of sustainable livelihoods (Bebbington 1999; Carmen *et al.* 2022). In the same essence, a community leader in Epworth shared that “working with them (NGOs) gives us access to their networks, which in turn is good for us because with [the] right connections we access better resources”.

However, a striking disparity emerged between those directly engaged with NGOs and those who were not. Participants without direct connections reported a lack of impact on their skills and financial outcomes, even within the same focus groups. In Harare Rural, this contrast was particularly stark. One participant stated, “Those who are involved in the NGO projects, they are doing better ... but we haven't been part of those projects, so we haven't seen much change for ourselves”. This sentiment was echoed in Nkayi, where a participant noted, “We haven't seen much impact from the NGOs on our livelihoods, to be honest. Maybe those who

work directly with them on the gardens have, but for most of us, things haven't changed much". This highlights a limitation in the reach and impact of NGO interventions, suggesting that the benefits are not evenly distributed between and within communities.

The attribution of improvements in shared community assets also revealed differing perspectives. While those working closely with NGOs often linked improvements in physical and natural capital to NGO advocacy, those not directly engaged tended to credit government initiatives. In Binga, this difference led to a debate, with one participant asserting that road improvements were a result of NGO advocacy, while another countered, "these are government projects; we do not need to put NGOs in everything". This highlights the complexities of attributing causality in development interventions and the potential for differing interpretations based on proximity to and engagement with NGOs, aligning with the assertion of van Wessel, Ho and Tamas (2021) regarding the reluctance to acknowledge external influence. These dynamics are shown in **Figure 8.4**.

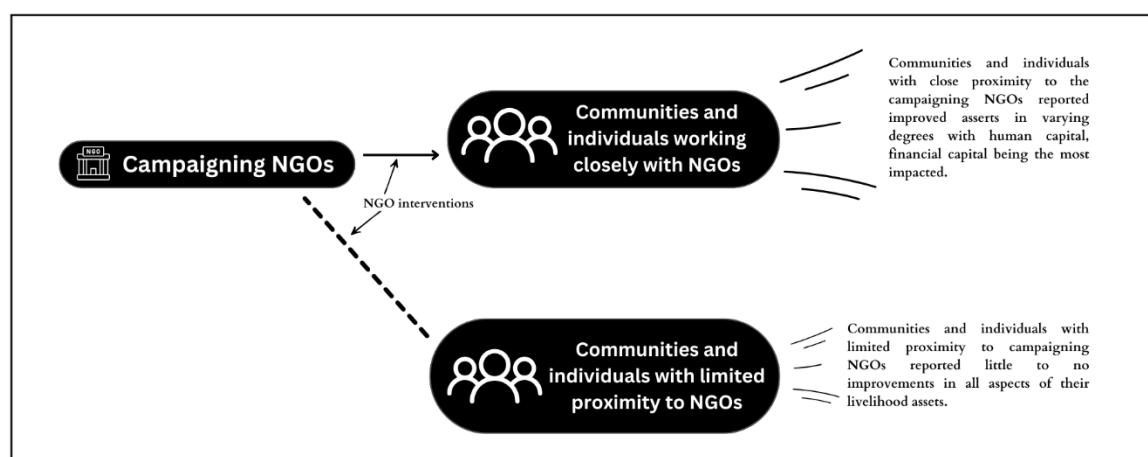


Figure 8.4: Campaigning NGOs interventions and the attainment of livelihood assets

Source: Author generated

As demonstrated on **Figure 8.4**, the findings reveal a clear nexus between the work of campaigning NGOs and the attainment of livelihood assets in varying degrees. It further showed that proximity to and engagement with campaigning NGOs increases the perceived impact on livelihood assets. While those directly involved in NGO projects and campaigns report significant improvements in various forms of capital, those not directly engaged perceive little to no impact. This underscores the importance of direct participation in realising the benefits of NGO interventions and suggests a need for NGOs to consider strategies for broader community engagement to ensure a more equitable distribution of benefits. The differing perspectives on the attribution of improvements in shared assets highlight the

complexities of assessing impact in multi-actor development contexts. Ultimately, the evidence suggests that while NGOs play a significant role in enhancing livelihood assets, their impact is most pronounced among those with whom they have direct and sustained engagement.

8.4.5 The nexus of sustainability: NGO influence on livelihood outcomes

This section presents a synthesis the perspectives of NGO staff and community members to analyse the nexus between the interventions of campaigning NGOs and their impact on the sustenance of livelihood outcomes in both urban and rural contexts. It addresses the research question, “What effect do NGOs have on the sustenance of livelihood outcomes in urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe?” This question falls under the study's third objective, which examines the impact of campaigning NGOs' work on the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in communities. The findings reveal a tension between the NGOs' emphasis on collaborative approaches, policy advocacy, and capacity building, and the communities' perception of NGOs as transient actors that do not adequately ensure the long-term sustainability of livelihood outcomes.

NGO staff and campaigners consistently emphasise their collaborative approach to development, working in partnership with communities to foster sustainable outcomes. An AAZ informant articulated this perspective, stating, “When we capacitate communities to question decisions by local authorities, they do not suddenly forget because we are no longer there. We are building community resilience and capacity to sustain their own livelihoods; that is the most effective way to do that, and on that front, we are doing well”. This reflects a belief in the importance of empowering communities to drive their own development, aligning with the principles of participatory development, which emphasise local ownership and agency (Chambers and Pettit 2013; Zhang, Yu and Tian 2024). A ZELA informant echoed this sentiment, noting, “We work with communities ... we are building their capacity to be effective in sustaining their own livelihoods”.

Furthermore, NGO staff highlighted the role of policy-based programming in creating lasting impacts that extend beyond the duration of specific projects or their presence in a particular community. A ZIMCodd informant captured this view, stating, “we do work to change policies, to ensure sustainable debt management, to enhance financial management and to set up systems of accountability. This work makes things more sustainable. If a piece of legislation is put in place, it becomes a gift that continues to give even if we disengage from the subject”. This perspective aligns with the understanding that policy changes can have far-reaching and enduring effects on the enabling environment for sustainable livelihoods (Celata and Coletti 2019; Ahmadzai, Tutundjian and Elouafi 2021; Shawoo *et al.* 2023), a primary argument that has brought more NGOs and policy work in the first place (Chapman and Fisher 2000).

However, a significant disconnect emerges between these perspectives and the experiences and perceptions of community members. Focus group discussions across all study locations revealed a consistent concern that NGOs do not adequately ensure the long-term sustainability of livelihood outcomes. A middle-aged man from Harare Central expressed this concern, stating, “The NGOs come, they train us, they give us some resources, and then they leave. It’s like they plant a seed but then don’t water it. We need them to stay with us, to help us grow, not just for a short time”. This sentiment was echoed by a female participant in Harare Rural, who noted, “The NGOs have good intentions, but they don’t understand that building a livelihood takes time. They come with projects, but when the project ends, we’re often left on our own”.

This perception of NGOs as transient actors was prevalent across all study sites. An elderly woman in Epworth expressed this view, stating, “We appreciate the help, but it’s like a drop. They (NGOs) teach us skills, but then the market changes, or we face other challenges, and they’re not there to help us adapt”. In Binga, a young man summarised the community’s frustration, saying, “They do good; we do not lie, but they go away and sometimes not to be heard from again, or at times when they come back, they do come back with a different subject ... they touch and go, and that affects us”. This aligns with critiques of project-based development approaches, which often lack mechanisms for long-term engagement and support (Brass *et al.* 2018; McDonough and Rodríguez 2020). A participant in Chitungwiza raised concern over NGOs’ inconsistent support stating, “yes, they sometimes do support, but that support is not constant and sustainable. Even when we do make gains, they need to be sustained”.

The findings suggest a fundamental difference in perspective regarding the role of NGOs in sustaining livelihood outcomes. While NGO staff emphasise collaboration, capacity building, and policy advocacy as important to sustainability, community members perceive a gap between these efforts and the long-term support needed to ensure lasting improvements in their livelihoods. This tension brings back questions about the effectiveness of professionalised campaigning work as a modality to deliver sustainable change (Fisher 2006; Mitlin, Hickey and Bebbington 2007; Lewis, Kanji and Themudo 2020). **Figure 8.5** shows this tension between NGOs intentions and community expectations.



Figure 8.5: Campaigning NGOs intentions and community expectations in livelihood sustainability

Source: Author generated

Overall, the study findings have shown that the nexus between NGO interventions and the sustenance of livelihood outcomes is complex and multifaceted. While NGOs strive to foster sustainable development through collaborative approaches, capacity building, and policy advocacy, communities often perceive them as temporary actors that do not provide the consistent, long-term support needed to ensure lasting improvements in their livelihoods. This highlights the need for NGOs to critically examine their engagement models and consider more sustained and holistic approaches that address the evolving needs and challenges faced by communities over time. It also underscores the importance of ongoing dialogue and feedback mechanisms to bridge the gap between NGO perspectives and community experiences, ensuring that development interventions are truly responsive to local needs and contribute to genuinely sustainable outcomes.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter has undertaken a comprehensive examination of the relationship between campaigning NGOs and the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. Employing the SLF) as a theoretical lens, the analysis has been guided by five core research questions. These questions explored the impact of NGO interventions on: (i) community vulnerability contexts, (ii) policies, institutions, and processes, (iii) livelihood strategies, (iv) livelihood assets, and (v) the sustenance of livelihood outcomes. Drawing on rich empirical data—including interviews with 27 NGO staff and campaigners from AAZ, ZELA, and ZIMCodd, alongside focus group discussions with community members across six diverse districts (Harare Central, Harare Rural, Epworth, Chitungwiza, Binga, and Nkayi)—the findings reveal

a complex and multifaceted picture. While campaigning NGOs make undeniable contributions to communities; their impact is also marked by inherent limitations and challenges.

The study revealed that campaigning NGOs play a significant role in addressing livelihood vulnerabilities. They achieve this primarily by raising community awareness of the multifaceted shocks and stresses that threaten their well-being, as highlighted by community members in Epworth who reported an improved understanding of economic dynamics due to NGO interventions. This heightened awareness, coupled with capacity-building initiatives, translates into proactive community preparedness for impending disasters, disease outbreaks (as seen in Harare Central's improved response to cholera), and economic downturns. Participants across all study areas reported feeling better equipped to anticipate and respond to these challenges due to the information, skills, and resources gained through various NGO interventions. These findings align with the core tenets of the SLF, which emphasises reducing vulnerability and enhancing resilience as cornerstones of sustainable livelihoods (Scoones 1998; Natarajan *et al.* 2022). The emphasis on a holistic understanding of vulnerabilities, as voiced by an AAZ informant, reflects a sophisticated approach that recognises the interplay of social, economic, political, and environmental factors.

However, the chapter also identified a critical disconnect between NGO perceptions and community experiences regarding the impact of macro-level advocacy on policies, institutions, and processes. While NGO staff and campaigners, such as the ZELA informant who highlighted their contribution to mining legislation, perceive their work as influential in shaping policy landscapes and fostering an enabling environment. This influence was not readily apparent in community focus group discussions. Community members often struggled to connect the dots between NGO advocacy efforts and tangible policy changes that directly affected their lives, a finding that resonates with observations by van Wessel, Ho and Tamas (2021) about the difficulty in recognising external influence on policy. This disjuncture highlights a significant challenge in communicating the impact of advocacy work and underscores the need for NGOs to strengthen the link between their macro-level interventions and the lived realities of communities. It raises questions about the effectiveness of advocacy strategies in achieving demonstrable and attributable policy outcomes, particularly in complex political and institutional contexts, as discussed by Mitlin, Hickey and Bebbington (2007) and Lewis, Kanji and Themudo (2020). The example of devolution, acknowledged by a Chitungwiza participant as a positive policy change influenced by NGOs after initial probing, demonstrates that a latent recognition exists and could be further enhanced.

Furthermore, the study explored the influence of campaigning NGOs on livelihood strategies, revealing that NGOs actively support and promote diversification. They encourage communities to engage in a variety of activities—such as fishing in Binga and beekeeping in

Nkayi—to reduce reliance on single, vulnerable income sources. This approach resonates with communities, who reported adopting more diverse livelihood strategies and exploring alternative options, particularly in response to climate change and economic instability. This aligns with the work of Achiba (2018) and Hossain (2024), who emphasise diversification as a crucial risk management strategy for enhancing resilience. In urban areas, NGOs support the informal economy by advocating for protective policies and providing resources and training, as exemplified by the experiences of vendors in Epworth.

Examining the impact on livelihood assets, the study found that NGOs contribute to the enhancement of various forms of capital—human, social, physical, and natural. Their work directly strengthens community capacity through training, awareness-raising, and the facilitation of collective action, as illustrated by a Chitungwiza participant who reported feeling more confident in exercising their rights due to NGO campaigns. Advocacy efforts also contribute to improvements in shared community assets, like infrastructure and natural resources. However, the impact on financial capital is less pronounced and more challenging to attribute directly to NGO interventions with the exception of a few cases in model or legacy development projects. A key finding is that the livelihood assets, including financial capital, of those working closely with NGOs, such as participants in AAZ's livelihood projects in Harare Central and Binga – were significantly improved compared to those without such direct engagement. This disparity, highlighted by the contrasting views within the Harare Rural focus group, underscores the limitations in the reach and impact of NGO interventions, suggesting that benefits are not equitably distributed.

Finally, the chapter investigated the crucial role of campaigning NGOs in sustaining livelihood outcomes. While NGOs express a commitment to fostering sustainability through capacity building, policy advocacy, and collaborative approaches, the study revealed a critical disconnect between these intentions and community expectations. NGO interventions are often perceived as temporary, bound to specific project cycles, creating a gap in providing the consistent, long-term support communities need and expect to sustain livelihood improvements. This perception of NGOs as transient actors, who “touch and leave” communities without ensuring lasting change, was prevalent across all study sites, echoing critiques of project-based development approaches that often lack mechanisms for sustained engagement and support (Brass *et al.* 2018; McDonough and Rodríguez 2020). The poignant metaphor of NGOs planting a seed but not watering it, used by a participant in Harare Central, encapsulates the community's yearning for sustained support.

In conclusion, the relationship between campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe is complex, characterised by both significant contributions and inherent limitations. NGOs play a vital role in raising awareness, influencing policies, supporting livelihood

diversification, and enhancing community capacity. However, their impact is often constrained by challenges in communicating the outcomes of advocacy, disparities in access to benefits, and most critically, the challenge of ensuring the long-term sustainability of interventions. The findings underscore the need for a more nuanced and integrated approach that acknowledges these complexities and strengthens the link between macro-level advocacy and the lived experiences of communities.

Building upon these insights, chapter nine will discuss the implications of these findings and propose a set of concrete recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of campaigning NGOs in fostering sustainable livelihoods and present a model framework for effective campaigning NGO programming. These recommendations, together with the model framework, will advocate for a paradigm shift towards a more holistic and integrated approach, grounded in the principles of community-led development, sustained engagement, and a nuanced understanding of the diverse livelihood strategies employed by Zimbabweans. This new model will move beyond the limitations of traditional project-based interventions, fostering genuine empowerment and long-term resilience within communities. It will aim to bridge the identified gaps between advocacy and tangible impact, between NGO interventions and community expectations. This necessitates a shift towards longer-term partnerships, greater community ownership, and a more integrated approach that combines advocacy with direct, tangible support that is responsive to evolving community needs. Ultimately, achieving sustainable livelihoods requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders—NGOs, communities, government, and policymakers—working together in a spirit of genuine partnership and mutual accountability. This research contributes to this goal by providing a critical and evidence-based analysis of the current landscape.

CHAPTER NINE – DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter presents the synthesis of the key findings of this study, offering a critical reflection on the role of campaigning NGOs in fostering sustainable livelihoods within the complex socio-political and economic landscape of Zimbabwe. Drawing upon the qualitative data generated through document analysis, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions, presented in chapters six, seven and eight, this chapter moves beyond a mere summary of results to engage in a deeper discussion of the “why” and “how” underpinning the observed patterns and relationships. It explores the intricate interplay between NGO strategies, community experiences, and the broader structural context, examining both the successes and limitations of the campaigning NGO model in contributing to meaningful and lasting improvements in the lives of Zimbabweans.

The chapter is structured as follows. Section 9.2 delves into a thematic discussion of the core findings, analysing the multifaceted livelihood challenges faced by communities, the diverse strategies employed by NGOs to navigate the contested political terrain, and the complexities of community-level impact. It critically examines the concepts of empowerment, resilience, and sustainability within the Zimbabwean context, drawing upon relevant theoretical frameworks, including the SLF, to illuminate the dynamics at play. It also highlights the inherent power imbalances between the state and civil society actors and the challenges of attribution and sustainability that emerged from the research. Section 9.3 presents a synthesis of the study’s findings and insights into conclusive statements consolidating the research’s conclusions. Section 9.4 builds upon the discussion of the results and the study’s conclusions to propose a refined SLF, specifically tailored for campaigning NGOs operating in Zimbabwe (CNGO-SLF). This new model integrates the insights gleaned from this study with existing literature, offering a more nuanced and contextually relevant tool for understanding and addressing the complexities of livelihood development in volatile environments. It moves beyond the traditional five capitals to incorporate considerations of relational power, the politics of influence and access, and the dynamic nature of livelihoods. Section 9.5 presents general recommendations formulated from the study’s findings for the different stakeholders involved before the study is concluded in Section 9.6, which includes a few recommendations on some areas for potential future research.

By situating the findings within Zimbabwe’s unique historical, political, and economic context, this chapter contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the role of campaigning NGOs in promoting sustainable livelihoods in challenging environments. It seeks to inform both

scholarly debates and practical interventions, offering insights that can enhance the effectiveness and impact of civil society organisations striving to foster social justice, equitable access to resources, and community resilience in Zimbabwe and beyond. The chapter ultimately argues that while campaigning NGOs play a vital role, their success is contingent upon a more holistic, long-term, and context-specific approach that bridges the gap between advocacy and tangible change, fostering genuine community ownership and empowerment.

9.2 Discussion of findings

This study, through its analysis in the preceding three chapters, has illuminated the intricate relationship between campaigning NGOs and the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. The three chapters addressed the research aim of examining the role of campaigning NGOs in promoting sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe through an analysis of their programmatic missions, activities and campaigns, and the effects of the three campaigning NGOs: ZIMCDD, ZELA, and AAZ. The study objectives were to:

- (i) Identify the key livelihood issues and challenges that campaigning NGOs address in urban and rural areas of Zimbabwe.
- (ii) Evaluate the development approaches used by campaigning NGOs in relation to the in urban and rural areas of Zimbabwe.
- (iii) Examine the impact of the work of campaigning NGOs in influencing the vulnerabilities, policies, structures and processes, livelihood assets, strategies, and livelihood outcomes of urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe.
- (iv) Provide recommendations for improving campaigning NGOs' work to enhance the sustainability and resilience of urban and rural communities' livelihoods in Zimbabwe; and
- (v) Develop a context-specific model for the strengthening of urban and rural livelihoods by campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe.

By employing a qualitative approach that encompasses document analysis, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions, the research has provided a nuanced understanding of how these organisations operate within a complex socio-political landscape, their strategies, and their perceived and experienced impacts on communities. This section is a discussion of the core findings presented in chapters six, seven and eight, offering critical reflections that examine the underlying factors driving these results. The section explored the “why” and “how” behind the findings, contextualising them within Zimbabwe's unique political economy and exploring the strengths and limitations of the campaigning NGO model in fostering genuine and lasting livelihood improvements.

9.2.1 The livelihoods landscape—a multifaceted challenge

Chapter six laid bare the complex web of livelihood challenges confronting Zimbabwean communities, revealing a convergence among the three NGOs that were studied—AAZ, ZELA and ZIMCODD—in their identification of key issues. These issues ranged from economic injustices, such as unfair trade practices and fiscal mismanagement, to environmental concerns like resource exploitation and climate change, and social challenges including gender inequality and youth exclusion. The interconnectedness of these challenges, as highlighted by the NGOs' holistic understanding of community vulnerability, underscores the need for multifaceted interventions that address the root causes of livelihood insecurity.

Zimbabwe's political economy provides a crucial backdrop for understanding these challenges. The country's history of economic mismanagement, characterised by hyperinflation, currency instability, and high levels of unemployment, has created a precarious environment for livelihoods (Siambombe 2023). This has been coupled with a contested political space marked by instances of political violence and repression, which has been on the increase since the 2017 military coup (Helliker and Chikozho Mazarire 2021; Ncube, Nyambi and Mangena 2021; Bushu and Kufakurinani 2024). The legacy of colonialism and the subsequent land reform program, while intended to redress historical injustices, have further complicated land tenure and resource access, particularly in rural areas (Chigumira *et al.* 2019; Scoones, Mavedzenge and Murimbarimba 2019; Batisai and Chipato 2022). Moreover, the shrinking civic space, evidenced by restrictive legislation and government crackdowns on dissent, has created a climate of fear and self-censorship, further constraining the ability of communities to advocate for their rights and interests (Dendere and Taodzera 2023; CIVICUS 2024b). These political and economic factors intersect with social and environmental issues, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and creating new ones. For example, climate change impacts, such as more frequent droughts and extreme weather events, disproportionately affect rural communities reliant on rain-fed agriculture, while economic hardships drive rural-urban migration, straining urban infrastructure and services (Mwadzingeri, Mugandani and Mafongoya 2021; Chakauya *et al.* 2023). This complex interplay of factors creates a challenging environment for sustainable livelihoods, requiring interventions that address both immediate needs and systemic issues. In this, campaigning NGOs have positioned themselves as key actors, working to mitigate the negative impacts of these challenges and foster more resilient and equitable livelihood outcomes.

9.2.2 NGO strategies in a contested terrain and the political opportunity structures

Chapter seven probed the strategies employed by campaigning NGOs to navigate Zimbabwe's complex political opportunity structure (POS). The findings revealed a sophisticated understanding of POS among these organisations, as they strategically

leveraged opportunities for advocacy while mitigating the risks associated with a restrictive environment. The Zimbabwean context is characterised by a contradictory mix of constraints and openings for civil society action (Masunungure 2014; Raftopoulos, Kanyenze and Sithole 2020). On the one hand, the government's history of repression, evidenced by the enactment of restrictive laws like the Criminal Law Codification and Reform Amendment Act of 2023 and the proposed Private Voluntary Organisations (PVO) Amendment Bill, limits the space for dissent and collective action (Moyo 2024b; Oxford Analytica 2024). On the other hand, the existence of formal democratic institutions, such as parliament and the judiciary, coupled with international pressure for reform (Makone and Lambrechts 2021: 13), creates avenues for engagement and advocacy, however limited.

The study found that NGOs adeptly employed tactics such as constant monitoring of the policy environment, building relationships with policymakers, and forging resourceful coalitions and alliances, consistent with the strategies outlined by scholars of social movements and advocacy (Meyer 2004, 2007; Tarrow 2022). The monitoring of the policy and legislative environment has seen the studied NGOs, and the wider civil society score a number of notable successes. In 2023, the civil society in Zimbabwe contributed to the delaying of the signing of the Private Voluntary Organisation (PVO) Bill into law when they made submissions to the parliament of Zimbabwe, among other platforms, highlighting how some provisions of the bill were unconstitutional (Moyo 2024b). In 2022 they challenged (albeit unsuccessfully) provisions of the amended Criminal Law Code that criminalise citizens for vaguely defined acts of “wilfully damaging the interests of Zimbabwe” (Mwonzora 2023). Furthermore, the NGOs have been strategically developing and maintaining well-researched policy alternatives on hand, ready to deploy them during moments of crisis or political transition, as noted by interviewees from the studied NGOs and as Friedman (1962) suggested in his work *Capitalism and Freedom*. This proactive approach positions them as valuable partners in policymaking, offering concrete solutions to pressing development challenges.

Framing, as a key strategy employed by campaigning NGOs, played a crucial role in shaping public discourse and mobilising support for NGO advocacy efforts as theoretically advanced by Joachim (2003), Bracey (2016) and Zeng, Dai and Javed (2019). The NGOs demonstrated a nuanced understanding of audience-specific framing, tailoring their messages to resonate with different stakeholders, including communities, media, policymakers, and funding partners. Values-based framing, connecting livelihood issues to human rights, social justice, and environmental protection, proved particularly effective in galvanising support and creating a moral imperative for action as advanced by Delina (2018) and Love, Sekhon and Salinas (2022). The use of personalisation, highlighting the human impact of policy decisions through compelling stories, further enhanced the emotional resonance of their advocacy, as noted by

Gena *et al.* (2019). These framing strategies were crucial for navigating the restrictive media landscape, where state-controlled outlets often dominate the narrative and portray NGOs in a negative light (Matsilele and Ruhanya 2024; Ruhanya and Gumbo 2024).

However, the study also revealed the limitations of these strategies in the face of a dominant state apparatus and a deeply entrenched political culture of control. The government's attempts to discredit NGOs as agents of foreign interests, coupled with surveillance and harassment of activists, created a chilling effect on advocacy efforts, as noted by staff from the studied NGOs and as reported by Dendere and Taodzera (2023). This highlights the inherent power imbalances between the state and civil society actors in Zimbabwe, where the state often resorts to coercive measures to maintain its grip on power (Mpani 2021; Ngoshi 2021).

9.2.3 The dual-facing repertoires of contention—advocacy and direct action

The diverse repertoires of contention (Tilly 2010), employed by campaigning NGOs, as outlined in Chapter seven, reflect the multifaceted nature of their work and the need to adapt to the specific challenges and opportunities in the Zimbabwean context. The findings demonstrated a dual-facing approach, with NGOs engaging in both public advocacy—aimed at raising awareness, mobilising support, and generating pressure on decision-makers—and direct action, such as lobbying, litigation, negotiation and sometimes direct support to communities.

Public demonstrations, while less frequent due to the shrinking civic space (Hlatywayo and Mangongera 2020), remained a tool for raising awareness and amplifying community voices on issues perceived as less politically sensitive by the government, such as climate change. In addition, the findings showed that the campaigning NGOs are not just influencing from the outside; they are building internal capacity of communities to protest against issues affecting them. This aligns with the broader shift towards less confrontational tactics in restrictive environments, as NGOs seek to balance visibility with risk mitigation (Tilly 2010). Lobbying and advocacy, on the other hand, allowed NGOs to leverage their expertise and research findings to directly engage with policymakers and influence the content of legislation and policies. The success of ZELA in contributing to the Mines and Minerals Amendment Bill, as mentioned by one of their staff members, exemplifies the potential impact of this strategy. Litigation, particularly public interest litigation, emerged as a powerful tool for challenging government actions and corporate practices that violate human rights or environmental laws (Hondora 2018). The case brought by a youth campaigner working with AAZ against two government departments for public resources mismanagement (NewZimbabwe 2024) highlights the use of litigation to demand accountability and protect community interests.

Community mobilisation played a crucial role in grounding these advocacy efforts with local realities and empowering communities to participate in decision-making processes. The emphasis on building social capital through co-campaigning and supporting community-based organisations, as highlighted by informants from all three NGOs, reflects a recognition of the importance of collective action in achieving sustainable livelihoods (Bebbington 1999; Carmen *et al.* 2022). This approach aligns with the principles of participatory development, which emphasise local ownership and agency in driving development processes (Chambers and Pettit 2013; Zhang, Yu and Tian 2024). The creation of alternative development models, such as AAZ's solar-powered boreholes and community-managed water systems, further demonstrated the NGOs' commitment to showcasing practical solutions and advocating for their wider adoption. However, the reliance on external funding for these projects raises questions about their long-term sustainability, a point that will be further discussed in subsequent sections.

9.2.4. NGOs, empowerment, and the complexities of community livelihood support

The preceding chapters have highlighted the multifaceted roles of campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe's development landscape. Chapter eight presented a critical analysis of the nexus between NGO interventions and community experiences, revealing both areas of convergence and divergence. A key area of convergence lies in the shared recognition of the importance of awareness-raising in fostering resilience. Both NGO staff and community members emphasised the crucial role of information dissemination in enabling proactive adaptation to shock and stresses. This aligns with the SLF emphasis on reducing vulnerability as a cornerstone of sustainable livelihoods (Scoones 1998; Natarajan *et al.* 2022).

NGOs have demonstrably contributed to raising awareness about the multifaceted nature of vulnerability, equipping communities with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate shocks and stresses. As articulated by community members in Epworth, Binga, and Nkayi, this enhanced understanding encompasses economic dynamics, climate change impacts, and social vulnerabilities. This awareness-raising is not merely theoretical; it translates into tangible action. For instance, improved cholera preparedness in Harare Central and the adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices in Binga, as shared by community members, demonstrate the transformative potential of combining awareness-raising with tangible support for adaptation. This resonates with the assertion by Rakodi (2014) that community assets, aspirations, and strategies are significantly influenced by the broader socio-economic and environmental context, and that informed action is crucial for building resilience. The adage in disaster risk reduction discourse that “all disasters are man-made” further underscores this point (Friedman and Thompson 2003: 251; Wijesekara 2023: 97). Hazards

may be inevitable, but their transformation into disasters is often a consequence of human choices related to preparedness and response, which are informed by awareness.

Campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe have actively contributed to raising awareness of these contexts and influencing the government to set up decentralised disaster risk management (DRM) structures. This work is recognised as necessary within the communities, as well as by frameworks like the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, which Zimbabwe subscribes to (Asian Disaster Reduction Center 2015). The ability of NGOs to align their work with the government's publicly stated intentions, particularly in areas like disaster risk reduction, had allowed them to operate more openly and even collaborate with government entities. This, in turn, enhances their reach and accessibility to communities, effectively increasing the impact of their programming. The work of campaigning NGOs to ensure understanding and preparedness in this vulnerability context is therefore necessary and generally effective in contributing to the attainment of sustainable livelihoods in communities.

However, the study also reveals the limitations of awareness-raising as an isolated strategy. Awareness is crucial, but it must be coupled with tangible support that addresses the structural constraints embedded within Zimbabwe's political economy. This is where the complexities of NGO interventions become more apparent. As established in chapter eight, campaigning NGOs actively engage in influencing policies, structures, and processes, aiming to create an enabling environment for sustainable livelihoods. Their efforts have yielded notable policy gains in areas such as women's rights, disaster preparedness, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and youth participation, as acknowledged by Madziyauswa (2024) in a generalised study of the role of civil society organisations in shaping livelihoods under Zimbabwe's hybrid political system. However, the effectiveness of these efforts in changing the on-the-ground experiences of people in local communities is often constrained by widely reported institutional weaknesses and corruption within the government (Moyo 2014; Maunganidze 2016; Mantzaris and Saruchera 2024).

Inconsistent implementation often hampers the catalogue of policy gains. For example, the women's quota in parliament, while a significant achievement, it has been criticised as tokenistic rather than a genuine empowerment intervention (Bhatasara and Chiweshe 2021; Nare 2022). This demonstrates that even when progressive policies are enacted, their implementation is hindered by bureaucratic inefficiencies, patronage networks, and a lack of accountability, all common features of the Zimbabwean political economy (Muchadenyika 2017; Chilunjika *et al.* 2022). The gap between existing policies and community experiences is well-documented in Zimbabwe (Chigudu 2015; Chitongo, Chikunya and Marango 2020). Consequently, NGOs campaigning for policy changes, the institution of new structures, and

the establishment of new process frameworks often lack the 'last mile' intervention—ensuring the financing and implementation of such policies and structures. As found in this study, even the aforementioned DRM structures are suffering from poor resourcing.

As established in chapter six (and visually represented in **Figure 6.1**), campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe devote most of their efforts to influencing policy, structures, and processes. However, the impact of these efforts is limited if implementation is undermined. The nexus between the work of campaigning NGOs in this sector and the attainment of sustainable livelihoods is thus heavily moderated by factors beyond the NGOs' direct control, namely, political will and implementation capacity. This necessitates an additional layer of work for NGOs, requiring them to invest time and energy in ensuring policy implementation. However, their project-based funding modalities often do not allow for the decades of engagement on a single subject that might be required, especially when interventions must be spread across diverse and often geographically dispersed communities (Hossain 2016; Bradley 2017). This highlights a critical tension between the long-term commitment required for sustainable development and the short-term project cycles that often characterise NGO funding.

In terms of livelihood strategies, the study found that NGOs have played a role in promoting diversification and supporting alternative income-generating activities. In the Zimbabwean context, marked by economic instability and climate change impacts (Matsa and Matsa 2021; Mhlanga and Ndhlovu 2021; Tirivangasi *et al.* 2023), diversification is not just a recommendation but a necessity. NGOs have supported the expansion of livelihood options beyond subsistence farming in rural areas, encouraging activities like fishing in Binga and beekeeping in Nkayi, as reported by community members. This aligns with the arguments of Achiba (2018) and Hossain (2024), who emphasise diversification as a crucial risk management strategy for households in uncertainty contexts. In urban settings, NGOs have provided support to the informal economy through advocacy for protective policies, training, and resources. A participant from Harare Central highlighted the importance of the informal economy as a crucial source of income, a sentiment that resonates with the work of Karanda and Toledano (2020), who documented the role of NGOs in influencing enterprise policy and supporting informal sector development in Zimbabwe.

However, the study also identified limitations in the scope of NGO engagement with livelihood strategies. There is a notable lack of focus on prevalent livelihood activities such as migration, gold panning, sex work, and house renting, despite their significance in Zimbabwe's contemporary political economy, as documented by Helliker, Chiweshe and Bhatasara (2018). This disengagement restricts the potential impact of NGO interventions, as these livelihood strategies, while often risky or marginalised, are crucial for many Zimbabweans. NGO involvement could potentially contribute to making these activities safer and more sustainable.

For instance, gold panners often resort to dangerous mining methods that contribute to environmental degradation (Chakuya *et al.* 2023), and they frequently clash with government authorities (Mwatwara, Mujere and Mkodzongi 2022; Nkomo 2022). NGO engagement in such contexts could promote safer practices and advocate for policies that protect both livelihoods and the environment. The reasons for this limited engagement could be manifold, ranging from the perceived controversial nature of these activities to potential donor restrictions or a lack of organisational expertise. However, addressing these livelihood strategies is crucial for a holistic approach to sustainable development.

Furthermore, the study observed that in a political economy where irregular and informal alternative economic activities are prevalent, the operational modalities of NGOs, such as conducting workshops and meetings, can inadvertently detract from livelihood activities. This is not to say that these activities are not valuable, but rather that their timing and format need reconsideration. The opportunity cost of attending NGO activities is often high, especially when it takes people away from vending in urban areas or requires long travel distances in rural settings. While NGOs promote diversification and informed decision-making, their limited engagement with certain livelihood strategies and the time constraints imposed by their programming modalities can inadvertently hinder the effectiveness of their interventions. This highlights the need for a more nuanced approach that recognises the diverse and complex nature of livelihood strategies in Zimbabwe's political economy and minimises the opportunity costs associated with participation in NGO activities. Alternative program delivery models, such as mobile technology or community radio, could be explored to disseminate information more flexibly. Additionally, NGOs could investigate mechanisms to compensate participants for lost time or work more closely with communities to schedule activities in a way that minimises disruptions to livelihoods. Finally, building stronger partnerships with local governments and exploring community-based monitoring initiatives could enhance the 'last mile' implementation of policies.

9.2.5. NGOs, livelihood assets, and the nuances of community impact

The analysis of NGO impact on livelihood assets, guided by the SLF's five forms of capital (human, social, physical, financial, and natural), reveals a complex and, at times, contradictory picture. As chapter eight demonstrated, while NGO staff and campaigners articulated a commitment to building diverse asset portfolios within communities, the perceived impact varied considerably depending on the type of asset, the degree of direct engagement with NGOs, and the specific context. This section delves deeper into these nuances, exploring the "why" behind the uneven impacts and attribution challenges, while situating the findings within the broader socio-political landscape of Zimbabwe.

In terms of human capital, the study found that NGOs have made significant contributions through capacity-building initiatives, training programs, and advocacy for improved social services. The collaborative campaigning model, often involving co-campaigning with communities—as highlighted by an AAZ informant—has been particularly effective in enhancing the skills and knowledge of community members. This, in turn, empowers them to participate more effectively in decision-making processes and advocate for their rights. This aligns with the SLF's emphasis on human capital as a key determinant of livelihood success (Scoones 1998; Natarajan *et al.* 2022). However, a critical disparity emerged—those directly involved in NGO projects and campaigns reported significantly greater gains in skills, knowledge, and confidence compared to those without such engagement. This was exemplified in the Harare Rural focus group, where a clear distinction was made between those who had benefitted from NGO trainings and those who had not. This underscores a limitation of project-based interventions, which often fail to reach the broader population, suggesting a need for more inclusive approaches that ensure equitable access to capacity-building opportunities. This raises questions about the scalability of such interventions and the potential for creating 'insider-outsider' dynamics within communities.

The impact on social and political capital was also evident, particularly among those actively involved in co-campaigning with NGOs. Participants reported increased social connectedness, enhanced civic participation, and a greater sense of empowerment to engage with authorities and demand accountability. As a Chitungwiza participant noted, working with NGOs provided valuable knowledge about rights and fostered confidence in speaking out—a sentiment echoed by many who had collaborated closely with these organisations. These findings resonate with the work of Bebbington (1999) and Carmen *et al.* (2022), who highlight the importance of social capital in fostering collective action and enabling communities to negotiate with external actors. However, the challenge of attribution emerged when considering improvements in shared community assets, such as physical infrastructure and natural resources. While those closely aligned with NGOs often attributed such improvements to their advocacy efforts, those not directly engaged tended to credit government initiatives. This highlights the difficulty in disentangling the impact of NGO interventions from broader development processes, particularly in contexts where multiple actors are involved. The observation of van Wessel, Ho and Tamas (2021) regarding the reluctance to acknowledge external influence, especially concerning government-led projects, provides a useful lens for understanding this dynamic.

Assessing the impact on financial capital proved the most challenging. While some informants from AAZ and ZIMCodd cited examples of livelihood projects and financial literacy training contributing to improved incomes, the link between these interventions and the NGOs'

campaigning work remained somewhat tenuous. Furthermore, the benefits of these projects were often limited to a small number of direct participants, raising concerns about their scalability and overall impact. The case of Internal Savings and Lending Schemes (ISALS) in Binga, while transformative for those involved, also illustrated the limitations of relying on small-scale, project-based interventions to address systemic issues of financial exclusion. This suggests that while NGOs can play a role in enhancing financial capital at the micro-level, their impact is often constrained by broader structural factors, such as limited access to formal financial institutions and the precarious nature of the informal economy. Addressing these systemic challenges requires a more integrated approach that combines direct support with advocacy for policy changes that promote financial inclusion and equitable access to resources.

The study's findings further revealed that campaigning NGOs contribute to the enhancement of livelihood assets by working directly with communities and advocating for policies and programs that improve access to essential services, promote skills development, and enhance community capacity. Their work demonstrably impacts various forms of capital, with human, social, and political capital showing the most consistent gains. The impact on natural and physical capital was acknowledged, though attribution remained a challenge. However, the impact on financial capital was less pronounced and more difficult to directly link to NGO interventions, with the exception of a few cases involving model or legacy development projects. This raises a crucial point about the blurring of lines between campaigning NGOs and service delivery NGOs. While the former traditionally focus on advocacy and influencing policy, the findings suggest that direct interventions, particularly those that build tangible assets and provide immediate benefits, can significantly enhance their perceived impact and credibility within communities. This begs for a more integrated approach, combining advocacy with targeted service delivery to create a more holistic and effective strategy for enhancing livelihood assets.

However, the study also highlights a crucial caveat—benefiting knowingly versus unknowingly. Even when communities do not directly attribute improvements in their various assets, including financial capital, to the work of NGOs, this does not negate the existence of such a connection. Many interventions enjoyed by communities, while not explicitly linked to specific NGO activities, are often the result of broader, macro-level campaigning and advocacy efforts. For instance, the women's quota in parliament, a significant process outcome, benefits women across communities, even if they do not directly attribute it to NGO advocacy. These macro-level interventions, even if they do not fully achieve their desired impact in the short term, contribute to creating an enabling environment for the enhancement of livelihood assets and

the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods. They lay the groundwork for future progress, even if the connection is not immediately apparent to all beneficiaries.

Furthermore, the study identified a disconnect between community perceptions and NGO self-perception. Communities often view NGOs primarily as service providers, while NGOs see themselves as catalysts for community engagement and government accountability. This mismatch is further complicated by the inherent duality in the role of many NGOs, which often engage in some form of service delivery despite their primary focus on advocacy and campaigning, as noted in chapter seven. This can lead to confusion and a sense of inadequacy among communities, who at times perceive a lack of commitment from NGOs to address their immediate challenges, even when resources are available. This tension is exemplified by Scott (1985) observation that rural communities are often less interested in changing the larger structures of the state and more concerned with navigating existing systems to their advantage. This suggests that advocacy and campaigning efforts, often driven by the priorities of middle-class and intellectual NGO staff, may not always align with the immediate priorities and coping strategies of the communities they aim to serve.

Overall, the impact of campaigning NGOs on livelihood assets is multifaceted and uneven. While they have demonstrably contributed to enhancing human, social, and, to a lesser extent, natural and physical capital, their impact on financial capital remains more limited and challenging to attribute. The findings underscore the need for a more holistic and integrated approach that acknowledges the interconnectedness of different forms of capital, recognises structural barriers to equitable resource access, and bridges the gap between community expectations and NGO self-perception. By effectively communicating their role as catalysts for change, balancing advocacy with targeted service delivery, and adopting a more nuanced understanding of community priorities, campaigning NGOs can enhance their impact on livelihood assets and contribute more efficiently to the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. Moving forward, it is crucial for NGOs to engage in ongoing reflection and dialogue with communities to ensure that their interventions are truly responsive to local needs and contribute to long-term, sustainable change.

9.2.6. The sustainability challenge and the need for long-term engagement

Perhaps the most significant finding of this study lies in the critical disconnect between NGO perspectives and community experiences regarding the sustenance of livelihood outcomes. As documented in chapter eight, while NGO staff and campaigners emphasised their commitment to sustainability through collaborative approaches, capacity building, and policy advocacy, community members consistently expressed concerns about the transient nature of NGO interventions and their failure to ensure lasting improvements in their livelihoods. This disjuncture highlights a fundamental tension within the campaigning NGO model, particularly

in the context of project-based funding, shifting donor priorities, and the complex realities of the Zimbabwean political economy.

The perception of NGOs as temporary actors, who “touch and leave” communities without providing long-term support was prevalent across all study sites, from the urban centres of Harare and Epworth to the rural districts of Binga and Nkayi. This view underscores the limitations of project cycles that often lack mechanisms for sustained engagement and follow-up. The metaphor of NGOs “planting a seed but not watering it,” poignantly used by a participant in Harare Central, captures the community's frustration with interventions that raise expectations but fail to provide the ongoing support needed to nurture and sustain livelihood improvements. This aligns with broader critiques of project-based development approaches, which have been criticised for their lack of long-term vision and their tendency to create dependency rather than genuine empowerment (Banks, Hulme and Edwards 2015; Brass *et al.* 2018). Communities, while appreciating the initial support, are left grappling with the challenge of maintaining momentum and building upon the gains achieved during the project's lifespan.

Furthermore, the study revealed concerns about the shifting priorities of NGOs, with organisations often moving from one issue to another without ensuring the sustainability of outcomes from previous interventions. As highlighted by focus group discussions, this was particularly evident in rural areas, where communities felt that NGOs did not adequately address the long-term challenges of maintaining infrastructure, such as boreholes in Nkayi, or adapting to evolving market conditions. This highlights the need for NGOs to adopt a more holistic and integrated approach to livelihood support, one that anticipates future challenges and builds in mechanisms for ongoing adaptation and learning. The emphasis on policy advocacy as a means of ensuring sustainability, while important, also raises questions about the effectiveness of this strategy in the absence of strong state institutions and a genuine commitment to implementation. The Zimbabwean context, characterised by weak governance, corruption, and a lack of accountability, presents significant challenges to achieving policy goals. As noted by a participant in Harare Rural, the departure of NGOs often led to a deterioration in relations with local authorities, undermining the sustainability of advocacy gains. This suggests that advocacy efforts, while crucial, need to be complemented by strategies that strengthen local governance structures and empower communities to hold authorities accountable over the long term.

This study found that campaigning NGOs intend to contribute to sustaining livelihood outcomes by advocating for lasting policies and programs that strengthen community capacity and promote social justice. They promote empowerment and participation, recognising them as crucial components of sustainable livelihoods. However, the study also revealed a critical

disconnect between NGO intentions and community expectations regarding the sustenance of livelihood outcomes. NGO interventions often remain bound to specific project cycles, creating a gap in providing the long-term support communities need and expect to sustain these outcomes. This discrepancy inadvertently undermines community ownership and resilience, as the NGOs' focus and priorities shift over time, leaving communities to navigate complex challenges with limited support.

This misalignment stems from a fundamental mismatch in understanding the roles of NGOs within communities. NGO staff and campaigners emphasise that they are not meant to be permanently attached to communities, they advocate for policy, structures, and process changes as permanent solutions. They often view their role as catalysts for change, empowering communities to take ownership of their development and advocate for their own needs. However, as the study has established, these changes on paper often do not translate into improved lives and livelihoods in communities due to weak implementation by the state (Maunganidze 2016). Conversely, communities expect long-term engagement and support from NGOs, viewing them as partners in their ongoing development journey. This expectation is shaped by the reality that many NGOs, despite their campaigning focus, often engage in some form of service delivery, creating a perception of them as providers of tangible assistance. The community's view is based on the misaligned view of NGOs as service providers; however, considering the implementation gap noted, this long-term engagement becomes paramount, albeit not at the community level but at the national level. This divergence in expectations highlights a critical challenge for campaigning NGOs. While their intentions to foster self-reliance and community ownership are commendable, the lack of sustained engagement can inadvertently undermine these very goals. Without ongoing support and collaboration, communities struggle to maintain the gains achieved through initial NGO interventions, leading to fragile livelihood outcomes over time.

The findings underscore the need for a paradigm shift in the way campaigning NGOs operate in Zimbabwe. While advocacy for policy change remains crucial, it must be coupled with a long-term commitment to supporting communities in navigating the complexities of implementation and sustaining the gains achieved. This requires a move beyond project-based approaches towards more sustained engagement models such as the one presented in Section 9.4 that prioritise ongoing capacity building, institutional strengthening, and the fostering of genuine community ownership. This model involves supporting the development of community-led monitoring mechanisms to track policy implementation and hold authorities accountable in a more systematised manner. This will be coupled with the campaigning NGOs being more transparent about their roles and limitations, managing community expectations while working to bridge the gap between advocacy and tangible, long-lasting change.

9.3 Conclusions

As the discussion of the findings has demonstrated, this study has embarked on a lengthy task of unravelling the intricate relationship between campaigning NGOs and the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. Having presented the core findings related to livelihood issues campaigning NGOs work on, their campaigning strategies, and their perceived impacts; having examined community perceptions of NGO impact in urban and rural communities; and having discussed the implications of these findings within the Zimbabwean context, it is imperative to synthesise these insights into conclusive statements. These conclusions encapsulate the essence of the research, offering a critical assessment of the role, impact, and limitations of campaigning NGOs within Zimbabwe's complex socio-political landscape.

9.3.1 Addressing the multifaceted livelihood challenges

The study unequivocally demonstrates that campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe, exemplified by AAZ, ZELA, and ZIMCDD, are not peripheral actors but pivotal agents in addressing the multifaceted livelihood challenges confronting communities. Their interventions span a broad spectrum, encompassing economic injustices, environmental concerns, social inequalities, and governance issues. These findings confirm that the livelihood landscape in Zimbabwe is fraught with challenges, deeply intertwined with the nation's political economy, historical legacies, and environmental vulnerabilities. Campaigning NGOs, through their advocacy, research, and community engagement, have positioned themselves as key actors in mitigating these challenges and fostering more resilient and equitable livelihood outcomes in communities. Their holistic understanding of vulnerability, encompassing social, economic, political, and environmental dimensions, reflects a sophisticated approach that goes beyond simplistic, single-issue interventions.

9.3.2 Navigating a contested political terrain

The research has revealed the sophisticated strategies employed by campaigning NGOs to navigate Zimbabwe's complex and often restrictive political opportunity structure (POS). These organisations have adeptly leveraged opportunities for advocacy while mitigating risks, demonstrating a nuanced understanding of the contradictory mix of constraints and openings in the Zimbabwean context. Their strategies, including constant monitoring of the policy environment, building relationships with policymakers, forging resourceful coalitions, and employing strategic framing, have yielded notable successes in influencing public discourse and contributing to policy reforms. However, the study also exposes the limitations of these strategies in the face of a dominant state apparatus and a deeply entrenched political culture of control. The findings underscore the inherent power imbalances between the state and civil society actors, highlighting the challenges NGOs face in navigating a shrinking civic space.

and pushing for transformative socio-economic change. This reinforces the need for NGOs to continuously adapt their strategies, build broader alliances, and explore innovative approaches to advocacy within restrictive environments.

9.3.3 Dual repertoires of contention

The study highlights the “dual-facing repertoires of contention” employed by campaigning NGOs, encompassing both public advocacy and direct action. This strategic duality reflects the multifaceted nature of their work and the need to adapt to the specific challenges and opportunities presented by the Zimbabwean context. While public demonstrations have become less frequent due to increased state restrictions, NGOs continue to employ a range of tactics, including lobbying, litigation, community mobilisation, and the development of alternative developmental models. This adaptability is crucial for maintaining relevance and effectiveness in a dynamic and often unpredictable environment. The findings demonstrate that NGOs are not only influencing policy from the outside but also building the internal capacity of communities to engage in advocacy and demand accountability. This dual approach, while effective, necessitates a delicate balance between challenging the status quo and maintaining operational space within a restrictive political context.

9.3.4 Empowerment and resilience as the tangible impacts of NGO interventions

The research provides compelling evidence of the positive impact of campaigning NGOs on community resilience and empowerment. Through awareness-raising initiatives, capacity-building programs, and direct livelihood support, these organisations have demonstrably enhanced communities' ability to anticipate, withstand, and adapt to shocks and stresses. The emphasis on information dissemination, particularly regarding economic dynamics, climate change impacts, and social vulnerabilities, has empowered communities to make more informed decisions and adopt proactive coping mechanisms. This aligns with the core principles of the SLF, which emphasise the importance of reducing vulnerabilities and building resilience as cornerstones of sustainable development. However, the study also cautions against overstating the impact of awareness-raising in isolation. The findings underscore the need to couple information dissemination with tangible support that addresses structural constraints and empowers communities to act upon their newfound knowledge.

9.3.5 Livelihood strategies—fostering diversification and adaptation

The study reveals that campaigning NGOs have played a significant role in promoting livelihood diversification, particularly in rural communities facing the impacts of climate change and economic instability. By supporting alternative income-generating activities, such as fishing in Binga, beekeeping in Nkayi, and advocating for policies that protect the informal economy in urban areas, these organisations have contributed to expanding livelihood options

and enhancing community resilience. The emphasis on diversification aligns with existing development literature, which recognises it as a crucial risk management strategy. However, the research also identified limitations in the scope of NGO engagement with livelihood strategies. The notable lack of focus on prevalent activities like migration, informal mining, and sex work underscores the need for a more holistic approach that acknowledges the diverse and often complex livelihood realities in Zimbabwe. This requires a willingness to engage with sensitive and sometimes controversial issues, coupled with a commitment to promoting safer and more sustainable practices within these informal sectors.

9.3.6. Uneven impacts on livelihood assets and impact attribution challenges

The findings highlight the complex and often uneven impact of NGO interventions on livelihood assets. While human, social, and political capital generally showed positive gains, particularly among those directly engaged in NGO activities, the impact on financial capital was less pronounced and more difficult to attribute solely to NGO interventions. This underscores the limitations of project-based approaches and the need for more systemic interventions that address structural barriers to resource access. The challenges of attribution, particularly regarding improvements in shared community assets like infrastructure and natural resources, further complicate the assessment of NGO impact. The study reveals a tendency for communities not directly engaged with NGOs to credit government initiatives for such improvements, highlighting the need for NGOs to better communicate their contributions and to collaborate more effectively with government agencies where possible. The findings highlight that even when communities do not directly attribute improvements in their various assets, including financial capital, to the work of NGOs, this does not negate the existence of such a connection. The finding that many interventions enjoyed by communities, while not explicitly linked to specific NGO activities, are often the result of broader, macro-level campaigning and advocacy efforts, needs to be embraced more by the campaigning NGOs.

9.3.7. The challenge of sustaining livelihood outcomes

Perhaps the most critical finding of this study lies in the persistent disconnect between NGO interventions and the long-term sustenance of livelihood outcomes. While campaigning NGOs articulate a commitment to sustainability through capacity building, policy advocacy, and collaborative approaches, community members consistently express concerns about the transient nature of these interventions. The perception of NGOs as temporary actors, operating within the confines of project cycles, highlights a fundamental tension within the campaigning NGO model. This raises critical questions about the effectiveness of advocacy efforts in the absence of sustained engagement and the need for a paradigm shift towards more holistic, long-term, and community-driven approaches to development. The findings underscore the limitations of project-based funding models and the need for more flexible,

long-term funding mechanisms that support ongoing capacity building, institutional strengthening, and the fostering of genuine community ownership.

9.3.8 A call to action to development actors

The findings of this research serve as a call to action, urging a renewed commitment to transformative change, grounded in the lived realities of communities and driven by a shared vision of a more just and sustainable future. The onus is now on development actors—campaigning NGOs, communities, the government and funding partners—to embrace this challenge and work collectively towards its realisation, ensuring that the gains achieved through advocacy and community action are sustained over the long term, leaving no one behind. The recommendations put forth in the subsequent section flow directly from these conclusions, offering a roadmap for campaigning NGOs, communities, the government, and funding partners of campaigning NGOs to enhance their collaboration and effectiveness. The proposed CNGO-SLF presented in the coming section provides a practical tool for navigating the complexities of the Zimbabwean context and designing interventions that are both context-specific and aligned with the broader goals of sustainable development. The onus is now on all stakeholders to embrace a more integrated, holistic, and community-centred approach, fostering an environment where sustainable livelihoods are not just an aspiration but a lived reality for all Zimbabweans. This study, therefore, serves not as a final verdict but as a catalyst for critical reflection, continued dialogue, and ultimately, transformative action towards a more just and sustainable future for Zimbabwe.

9.4 A Sustainable livelihoods framework for campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe

This study has established that the SLF as we traditionally know it cannot be utile for campaigning NGOs in volatile socio-economic contexts. Before presenting the general recommendations for this study, this section proposes a novel SLF specifically designed for campaigning NGOs operating within Zimbabwe's intricate socio-economic, political, and environmental context. The model campaigning NGOs Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (CNGO-SLF) builds upon the foundational principles of the traditional SLF (Chambers and Conway 1992) and its revisions (Natarajan *et al.* 2022), however, it differs from both by addressing inherent limitations that have become apparent when applied to complex, dynamic environments. While the conventional SLF offers a valuable lens for understanding the multifaceted nature of livelihoods through its five capitals, it has been critiqued for its depoliticization of poverty (Li 2007: 13), gender blindness (Bhattacharya and Ferguson 2017: 28), overemphasis on individualism (Bebbington 1999), Eurocentric bias (Morse and McNamara 2013; Natarajan *et al.* 2022), and oversimplification of lived realities (Shen, Hughey and Simmons 2008). Furthermore, recent research on livelihoods in Zimbabwe reveals a

complex interplay of factors, including the impacts of globalisation (Shonhe and Tsitsidzashe 2021), climate change (Mwadzingeni, Mugandani and Mafongoya 2021), patronage-based politics and economic instability (Bushu and Kufakurinani 2024), the crucial role of social networks (Dafuleya, Tregenna and Patel 2021), and the increasing importance of livelihood diversification (Nyathi and Ndlovu 2022), all of which necessitate a more nuanced approach. This section will, on the basis of the findings of this research and drawing on insights from recent literature, put forward a more contextually relevant SLF model, specifically designed to enhance the effectiveness of campaigning NGOs in fostering sustainable livelihoods within Zimbabwe's unique and evolving landscape.

The campaigning NGOs Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (CNGO-SLF)

A. Key components of the framework

The CNGO-SLF, as depicted in **Figure 9.1**, comprises six interconnected components, which are the livelihood context, livelihood-environment dynamics, assets (capitals), politics of power, influence and access, livelihood pathways and fluid-livelihoods considerations.

1. Livelihood context

This component, analogous to the “vulnerability context” in the Scoones (1998: 4) model and the “livelihood context and landscape” in the Natarajan *et al.* (2022: 12) model, provides a comprehensive understanding of the external environment that shapes livelihood challenges and opportunities. It goes beyond a narrow focus on vulnerability to include a broader analysis of the historical, social, economic, political, and environmental factors at play. In the Zimbabwean context, this includes analysing the legacies of colonialism, land reforms, economic policies, governance structures, power relations, social inequalities, and the impacts of climate change and globalisation. For campaigning NGOs, understanding this context is crucial for identifying systemic issues and developing advocacy strategies.

2. Livelihood-environment dynamics

This component, complementary to the livelihood environment dynamics broadly addressed in the livelihood context section, emphasises the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between livelihoods and the environment. It examines how environmental changes, including climate change, natural resource degradation, and environmental hazards, impact livelihood activities and how, in turn, livelihood strategies affect the environment. This component draws on the principles of environmental sustainability, recognising that long-term livelihood security depends on the health and resilience of ecosystems. It is particularly relevant in Zimbabwe, where dependence on natural resources is high (Macheke, Maharaj and Nzima 2021; Marambanyika *et al.* 2021) and environmental challenges are significant (Magidi and Hlungwani 2023).

3. Assets (capitals)

This component is central to the framework and builds upon the traditional five capitals (human, social, natural, physical, and financial) (Chambers and Conway 1992; Scoones 1998), but expands the definition to incorporate relational power.

- Human Capital—this encompasses education, skills, health, and knowledge that enable individuals to pursue different livelihood strategies.
- Social Capital—this refers to the social networks, relationships of trust, norms of reciprocity, and group memberships that facilitate cooperation and collective action.
- Natural Capital—this includes the natural resources (land, water, forests, biodiversity) that are essential for many livelihood activities.
- Physical Capital—this consists of the basic infrastructure, tools, and equipment necessary for production and livelihoods.
- Financial Capital—this represents the financial resources, including savings, credit, remittances, and access to financial services, that individuals and households can use to invest in their livelihoods.
- Relational Power—this acknowledges that access to and control over the other capitals are often mediated by power relations based on gender, class, ethnicity, and other social identities (Hickey and Du Toit 2013). It also acknowledges the ability of individuals and communities to participate in decision-making processes and influence policies that affect their livelihoods. For campaigning NGOs, understanding and challenging unequal power relations is central to their work.

4. Politics of power, influence and access

This component, inspired by the “institutions, structures and processes” element in the Scoones (1998: 4) model and the “politics of influence and access” in the Natarajan *et al.* (2022: 12) model, is expanded and given greater prominence in this model. It explicitly focuses on the political processes, power dynamics, and governance structures that shape access to resources, opportunities, and services. This includes analysing formal and informal institutions, policies and legislation, as well as the distribution of power at the local, national, and international levels. For campaigning NGOs, this component is essential to identifying entry points for advocacy from local to international levels, challenging discriminatory policies, and promoting inclusive governance.

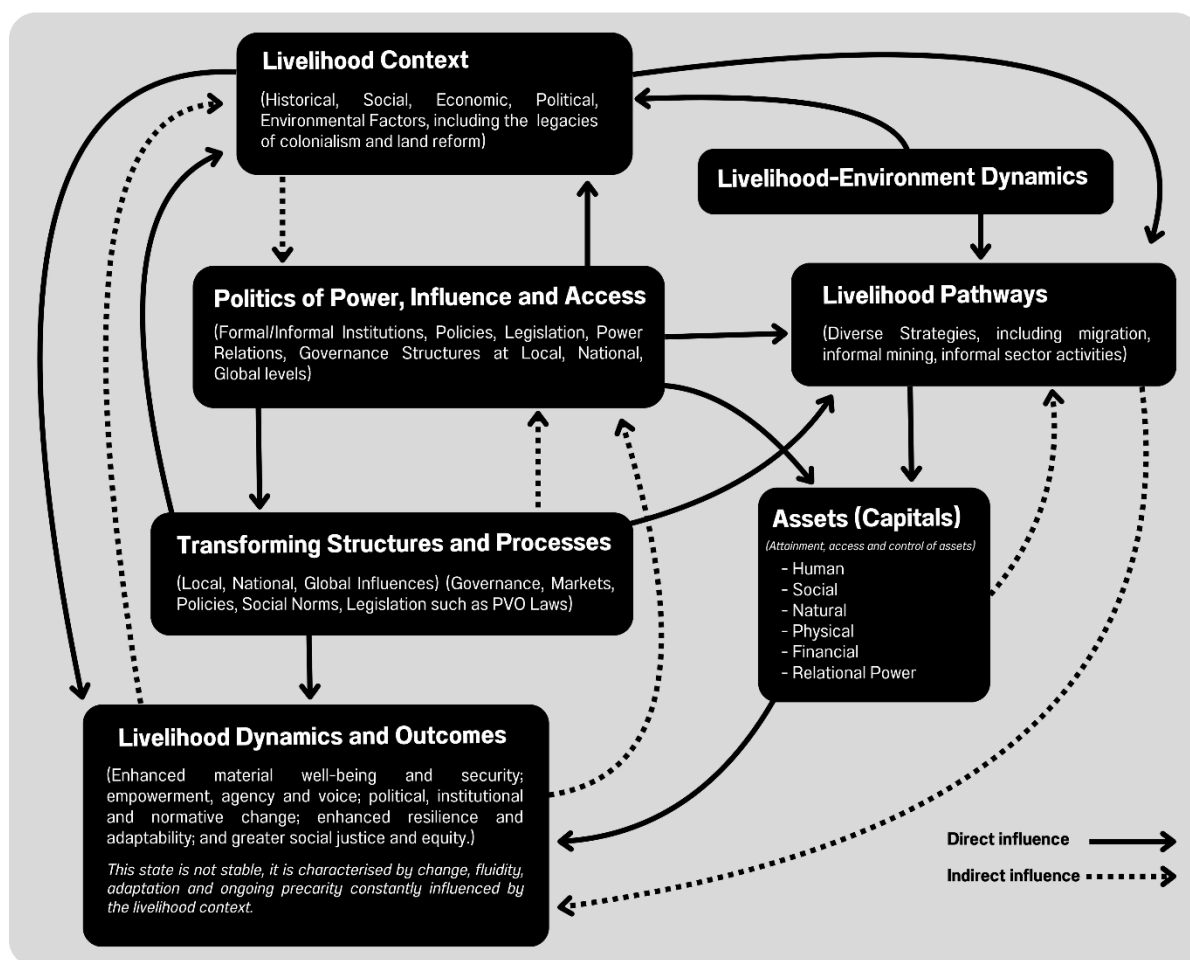
5. Livelihood pathways

This component examines the diverse strategies that individuals, households, and communities employ to make a living. It recognises that livelihoods are often complex and diversified, involving a combination of activities across different sectors (Ellis 2000). This

component analyses the factors that influence livelihood choices, including asset endowments, market access, cultural norms, risk perceptions, and external shocks and stresses. For campaigning NGOs, understanding these pathways is essential for designing interventions that support existing livelihood strategies and promote diversification and resilience. This section is adapted from Natarajan *et al.* (2022: 12) and modelled from the 'livelihood strategies' section of the UNDP (2017) framework, as well as other SLF depictions from the 1990s (Chambers and Conway 1992; Scoones 1998).

6. Fluid livelihoods considerations

This component, not explicitly present in the old models, acknowledges the dynamic and constantly evolving nature of livelihoods. It recognises that livelihoods are not static but are continuously adapting to changing circumstances, including economic shifts, environmental changes, policy reforms, and social transformations. This component emphasises the importance of monitoring and evaluation to track livelihood changes, assess the impact of interventions, and adapt strategies accordingly. For campaigning NGOs, understanding the fluidity of livelihoods is crucial for ensuring the long-term sustainability of their interventions and promoting adaptive capacity within communities.



B. Figure 9.1: A Sustainable Livelihoods Framework for campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe

Source: Author Generated

Figure 9.1 visually represents the CNGO-SLF as a dynamic and interconnected system. The diagram illustrates how the six key components - livelihood context, livelihood-environment dynamics, assets (capitals), politics of power, influence and access, livelihood pathways, and fluid livelihoods - interact to shape sustainable livelihood outcomes in Zimbabwe. At the apex, the livelihood context encompasses the historical, social, economic, political, and environmental factors that create both opportunities and constraints for livelihoods. This includes the enduring legacies of colonialism and land reform, which continue to influence land tenure, resource access, and power relations. The livelihood-environment dynamics component, to the left, underscores the reciprocal relationship between livelihoods and the environment, highlighting how environmental changes impact livelihood activities and vice versa. The politics of power, influence, and access component, central to the framework, signifies the critical role of formal and informal institutions, policies, legislation, and governance structures in mediating access to resources and shaping livelihood opportunities. This component acknowledges that power relations, operating at local, national, and global

levels, are not static but are constantly negotiated and contested. The assets (capitals) component, positioned on the left, recognises the five traditional capitals—human, social, natural, physical, and financial - while also incorporating *relational power* as a crucial element. This acknowledges that access to and control over these capitals are often determined by power dynamics based on gender, class, ethnicity, and other social identities.

On the right, livelihood pathways represent the diverse strategies individuals and communities employ to make a living, including often-overlooked activities such as migration, informal mining, and informal sector activities. These pathways are influenced by the interplay of the livelihood context, available assets, and the prevailing political economy. Fluid livelihoods, positioned on the right, emphasises the dynamic, adaptive, and ever-evolving nature of livelihoods in response to internal and external pressures. The base of the diagram features the transforming structures and processes, representing the underlying structures and processes operating at local, national, and global scales, such as governance, markets, policies, social norms, and specific legislation like the Criminal Law Codification and Reform Amendment Act of 2023. These structures and processes exert a profound influence on all other components of the framework, creating the conditions that enable or constrain the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods. The arrows in the diagram depict direct influences, while the dashed lines represent feedback loops and more indirect relationships, illustrating the complex and iterative nature of these interactions. For instance, the livelihood context directly shapes the politics of power, influence, and access, which, in turn, influences the available livelihood pathways and the state of fluid livelihoods. The assets held by individuals and communities are both influenced by and contribute to the livelihood-environment dynamics and the Politics of power, influence, and access. Similarly, transforming structures and processes has a direct bearing on the overall livelihood context and also shapes the lived realities of communities, as captured in the fluid livelihoods component.

C. How the framework informs campaigning NGOs

This Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (CNGO-SLF) provides a comprehensive and adaptable tool for campaigning NGOs operating in Zimbabwe, enabling them to move beyond simplistic interventions towards a more holistic and transformative approach. It facilitates this by allowing NGOs to do the following:

1. Analyse the root causes of poverty and vulnerability

The framework encourages a deep examination of the livelihood context. This involves understanding how historical injustices, such as the dispossession of land from Black Zimbabweans during the colonial era, continue to affect livelihood opportunities today. For example, the legacy of the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, which allocated the most fertile land to white settlers, still impacts land distribution today due to the precedence it set but also

because it takes time to correct such injustices (Makanyisa, Chemhuru and Masitera 2012; Scoones *et al.* 2020). Campaigning NGOs can use this analysis to advocate for more equitable land redistribution and tenure security for marginalised communities, addressing historical injustices as well as new ones.

By examining the politics of power, influence and access, campaigning NGOs can identify how governance structures and power imbalances perpetuate poverty. For instance, they can analyse how patronage and clientelism in the allocation of agricultural inputs, such as seeds and fertilisers under government programs like the Command Agriculture scheme, often exclude vulnerable groups, particularly women-headed households, which make up 54% of the population in rural areas but often lack access to these vital resources (ZIMSTAT 2022). This analysis can inform advocacy efforts for more transparent and accountable resource allocation mechanisms. Furthermore, the framework's emphasis on assets (capitals) allows NGOs to understand how a lack of access to key resources hinders livelihood development. In this, they can analyse the impact of limited access to financial capital on smallholder farmers, particularly women, who often lack collateral to access formal credit. Armed with this information, NGOs can campaign for policies that promote financial inclusion that take the community's informed nuances into consideration.

2. Identify entry points for advocacy and campaigning

The politics of power, influence and access component provides a roadmap for identifying specific policies, institutions, and power dynamics that need to be challenged. NGOs can analyse how existing laws and regulations, such as those related to land tenure, water rights, or market access disproportionately affect marginalised groups. For instance, they can campaign for the reform of laws that criminalise informal sector activities, that provide livelihoods for an estimated 94.5% of Zimbabweans (Chitiyo *et al.* 2019: 14), recognising that these activities are often survival strategies in the face of limited formal employment opportunities.

By understanding the livelihood context, NGOs can identify systemic issues that require advocacy at national and international levels. For example, they can campaign for policies that address the impacts of climate change on agriculture, the harmful cultural practices that render segments of the population vulnerable, and the general economic policies that are designed without considering the poor. Additionally, the framework's emphasis on relational power within the assets (capitals) component highlights the importance of addressing power imbalances in advocacy efforts. NGOs can work to amplify the voices of marginalised groups, such as women, youth, and people with disabilities, in policy-making processes. For example, they can support the formation of advocacy networks and coalitions that can effectively lobby for policy changes that promote gender equality and social inclusion.

3. Design and implement contextually appropriate interventions

Understanding livelihood pathways is crucial for designing interventions that build on existing strategies and promote diversification. NGOs can use the framework to analyse factors that influence livelihood choices, such as market access, skills, and cultural norms. For example, they can support the development of value chains for drought-resistant crops like small grains, which are grown by only a few smallholder farmers despite their suitability to Zimbabwe's climate (Phiri *et al.* 2019). This information can contribute to improving food security. On the other hand, the livelihood-environment dynamics component helps NGOs design interventions that promote sustainable resource management. For instance, they can support the adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices, such as conservation agriculture, which has been shown to increase yields while also improving soil health and water conservation (Kichamu-Wachira *et al.* 2021; Hussain *et al.* 2024). This could significantly help the majority of Zimbabweans living in rural areas who are dependent on rain-fed agriculture (ZIMSTAT 2022). Additionally, by recognising the importance of fluid livelihoods, NGOs can design interventions that are flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances.

4. Monitor and evaluate the impact of interventions

The framework provides a robust basis for tracking changes in various dimensions of livelihoods, including assets, livelihood strategies, and well-being outcomes. NGOs can use the different components of the framework to develop indicators and monitor progress towards achieving specific goals. This emphasis is useful in a country like Zimbabwe, where poverty levels remain high (Mhlanga 2021; Freeman and David 2022). The fluid livelihoods component emphasises the need for ongoing monitoring and evaluation to assess the long-term sustainability of interventions and adapt strategies as needed. For example, NGOs can track changes in income levels, food security, and asset ownership over time to assess the impact of their interventions on household resilience. The framework's holistic approach also allows NGOs to assess not only the economic impacts of their interventions but also their social and environmental impacts. For instance, they can monitor changes in social capital, such as increased trust and cooperation within communities, as well as changes in environmental indicators, such as soil fertility and water availability.

5. Promote participatory and empowering approaches

The emphasis on relational power and the politics of power, influence and access encourages NGOs to work collaboratively with communities, building their capacity for collective action and self-advocacy. NGOs can support existing social and community-based organisations (CBOs), helping them to develop the skills and knowledge needed to engage in policy dialogue and advocate for their rights. For example, they can facilitate training in leadership, advocacy, and resource mobilisation for CBO members. The framework promotes a people-centred

approach to development, recognising that communities are experts in their own lives and livelihoods. NGOs can use participatory methods, such as community mapping and participatory rural appraisal (PRA), to ensure that interventions are designed and implemented in a way that reflects local needs and priorities. By amplifying the voices of marginalised groups and supporting their participation in decision-making processes, NGOs can contribute to creating a more inclusive and equitable society. The framework recognises that sustainable livelihoods are not just about economic well-being but also about social justice, empowerment, and human dignity. This is essential in a country like Zimbabwe, where marginalised groups, such as women, youth, and people with disabilities, often face significant barriers to participation in political and economic life (Masuku and Macheka 2021; Chitapi 2023; Sisimayi, Muzorewa and Muperi 2024).

9.5 Recommendations

The findings of this study underscore the complex relationship between campaigning NGOs and the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. While these organisations have made significant contributions, critical challenges remain, particularly regarding the disconnect between advocacy and tangible community experiences, the uneven distribution of benefits, and the need for more sustained engagement. To address these challenges and enhance the effectiveness of future endeavours, recommendations are here proposed for campaigning NGOs, communities, government policymakers, and NGO funding partners.

9.5.1 Recommendations for campaigning NGOs operating in Zimbabwe

Campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe should focus on the following key areas to enhance their impact on communities' attainment of sustainable livelihoods:

1. Strengthening the nexus between advocacy and tangible community benefits

- Develop explicit theories of change—campaigning NGOs should develop comprehensive theories of change for their policy advocacy initiatives. These theories of change should articulate clear pathways linking advocacy efforts to concrete improvements in community livelihoods, identifying key stakeholders, outlining specific activities, and defining measurable indicators of success at both policy and community levels. For example, when advocating for improved DRM, NGOs should not only aim for policy changes but also establish intermediate outcomes, such as the formation, training, resourcing, and effective functioning of localised DRM committees.
- Enhance communication and feedback—campaigning NGOs must invest in effective communication strategies that ensure communities understand the

purpose and potential impact of advocacy work (Mendelsohn *et al.* 2024; Tung, Lan and Tan 2024: 1039). This includes using local languages, participatory methods, and regular feedback mechanisms to gauge community perceptions and adjust strategies accordingly (Love, Sekhon and Salinas 2022).

- Integrate advocacy with targeted service delivery—campaigning NGOs should strategically integrate advocacy goals within service delivery projects to demonstrate the practical value of advocacy and build stronger community relationships (Archer 2017). This might involve developing and showcasing model projects that highlight the tangible benefits of policy changes.

2. Fostering sustained engagement and long-term support

- Move beyond project-based approaches—campaigning NGOs should advocate for and adopt longer-term engagement models that extend beyond typical project cycles, as suggested by Mitlin, Hickey and Bebbington (2007) and (Lewis, Kanji and Themudo 2020). This could involve establishing a consistent presence in communities, even at a reduced intensity, after a project's formal end, as well as developing exit strategies collaboratively with communities from the outset. These strategies should prioritise building local capacity, strengthening community ownership, and establishing mechanisms for ongoing support and monitoring (Archer 2017).
- Invest in local institutional strengthening—campaigning NGOs should focus on building the capacity of community-based organisations, community social movements, community self-help groups and local government structures, equipping them with the skills and resources to continue supporting livelihood improvements independently (Dushkova and Ivlieva 2024).

3. Enhancing inclusivity and addressing power dynamics

- Promote equitable access to benefits—campaigning NGOs should ensure that the benefits of their interventions are equitably distributed, with targeted outreach to marginalised groups (Archer 2017). Employing participatory methodologies that prioritise the voices of the most vulnerable and ongoing monitoring to identify and address disparities are crucial steps (Chambers and Pettit 2013).
- Address power imbalances—campaigning NGOs must actively work to address power imbalances inherent in NGO-community relationships. This includes promoting community leadership, ensuring informed consent in all activities, and creating mechanisms for communities to hold NGOs (Dushkova and Ivlieva 2024).

Fostering genuine partnerships based on mutual respect, shared decision-making, and long-term collaboration is essential.

- Challenge hidden power—campaigning NGOs need to be deliberate in challenging hidden or invisible power structures that hinder sustainable livelihoods, such as those arising from patriarchal values, traditional cultural beliefs, or the influence of large corporations and international financial institutions (Archer 2017). This requires a deeper understanding of how different types of power operate in each context and developing strategies to address them effectively.

4. Embracing a holistic and context-specific approach

- Address a broader range of livelihood strategies—campaigning NGOs should expand their focus to include livelihood strategies often overlooked, such as migration, informal mining, sex work, and other informal sector activities (Helliker, Chiweshe and Bhatasara 2018). This necessitates conducting research to understand these strategies, developing targeted interventions to enhance their safety and sustainability, and advocating for protective policies.
- Tailor interventions to local contexts—campaigning NGOs must tailor their interventions to the specific needs and priorities of different communities, avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach (Hickey and Mitlin 2004). This requires ongoing context analysis, flexible program designs, and a willingness to adapt strategies based on community feedback.
- Minimise opportunity costs—campaigning NGOs should be mindful of the opportunity costs associated with participation in their activities and strive to minimise disruptions to livelihoods. Exploring alternative program delivery models, such as mobile technology or community radio, and working closely with communities to schedule activities in a way that minimises disruption are essential steps. Providing compensation for lost time or travel costs may be necessary in some cases to ensure that the most vulnerable are not excluded from participation; however, this should be done with caution for it not to produce negative outcomes (Jalali 2013: 55).
- Balance service delivery with campaigning and advocacy work—while engaging in service delivery to address basic needs, NGOs should ensure they are working in a rights-based way that maintains campaigning and advocacy outcomes as targets of the intervention (Archer 2017; ActionAid International 2020a: 44). This involves deepening awareness of rights and the role of duty bearers; creating consciousness among people about power dynamics; building trust with local

communities; strengthening people's communication and negotiation skills, mobilising people to hold the government accountable; empowering women, challenging the gender division of labour; and involving children and young people in community life (ActionAid International 2020a: 44).

5. Navigating the donor discourse

- Promote long-term funding and flexibility—campaigning NGOs should engage with their funding partners to advocate for long-term, flexible funding that supports core organisational capacity and allows for adaptive programming (van Wessel and Hilhorst 2015; Chimwaradze 2018). This includes challenging the dominant donor paradigm that often focuses on simplistic narratives, short-term quick wins, and payment by results, which can be in tension with the complexity of long-term change processes.
- Develop alternative metrics for measuring change—campaigning NGOs should work to articulate and measure the value of shifting power relations through a rights-based approach, even though this is hard to prove in the absence of better ways to understand and measure complex change processes (Archer 2017). This might involve developing new indicators and methodologies that capture the nuances of social and political transformations, such as those advocated for by the narrative assessment methodology (van Wessel 2018; van Wessel, Ho and Tamas 2021).

6. Engaging with governments and defending public services

- Move beyond a monolithic view of government—campaigning NGOs/government discourse has been dominated by tension and suspicions where the NGOs see the government as the main reason for slow progress (Masunungure 2014; Oosterom 2019). However, this study recommends that campaigning NGOs develop a more nuanced understanding of the power dynamics within governments, recognising that they are often spaces where power is contested in complex ways (Archer 2017; ActionAid International 2020a). This involves identifying and engaging with different actors and forces within governments at various levels (local, district, national) to determine when and how to collaborate or challenge specific institutions, structures, or individuals. This is mainly informed by the understanding that within governments there are often “policy activists” or “insider activists” who work the system towards the ends that the NGOs are campaigning for without public pronouncements of such intentions (Dugdale 2020; Yeatman 2020).

- Strengthen government capacity—campaigning NGOs should use a rights-based campaigning discourse to describe how to use government structures and programs and strengthen government capacity and institutions at different levels to advance alternatives and achieve change. This might involve providing technical assistance, training, and support to government officials to enhance their ability to implement progressive policies and deliver quality public services. Establishing such relationships may take time, but it is necessary that demand-side work with communities be supplemented with supply-side work making duty bearers understand and be synchronised with community demands.
- Defend equitable and accountable public services—the primary way of attaining strengthened livelihoods remains the provision of quality public services (Olemako, Munishi and Kadigi 2012). Campaigning NGOs should continue to defend equitable and accountable public services that build the commons (e.g., physical capital), challenge privatisation and advocate for progressive taxation to finance essential services (Elson 2017; ActionAid International 2024). This work is integral to rights-based advocacy and crucial to the redistribution of power.

7. Promoting continuous learning and adaptation

- Foster a culture of reflection—campaigning NGOs should foster a culture of continuous learning, reflection, and adaptation, regularly assessing their strategies, engaging in critical self-evaluation, and adjusting their approaches based on emerging evidence and community feedback (Fowler 2013; Archer 2017).
- Document and communicate change—campaigning NGOs need to improve their ability to document and communicate the complexities of change processes, moving beyond simplistic narratives and formulaic reporting (van Wessel 2018). This involves developing new models for capturing and sharing stories of change that reflect the nuances of power dynamics and the long-term nature of sustainable development, not just the basic and simplistic service delivery stories of individuals.

8. Addressing internal power dynamics

- Reflect on internal power structures—campaigning NGOs should continually reflect on and transform their own power structures, including reviewing staffing and partner profiles, decision-making and resource allocation processes, and being aware of dominant identities (e.g., ethnic, gender) within the organisation. This is crucial for ensuring that their internal practices align with the principles of empowerment and social justice they promote externally. Often times

organisations' internal structures and positionalities of their components have an "invisible power" dynamic where staff, consultants and partners impose implicit and subconscious biases on communities, leading to exclusionary interventions (Ahonen *et al.* 2014). This is specifically paramount given that the majority of professionalised campaigning NGO staff and partners often belong to the university-educated middle-class population, who by far and large are not representative of the population they work with (Shivji 2006).

9. Programming in precarious situations

- Develop context-specific strategies. This study has recommended that campaigning NGOs consider and program around the livelihood strategies that communities are engaged in (e.g., gold panning, sex work, informal settlements), no matter the precariousness of such livelihood strategies, legal or not. Here it further recommends that when programming in such contexts, campaigning NGOs should develop tailored strategies that address the specific risks and vulnerabilities associated with these contexts (Helliker, Chiweshe and Bhatasara 2018). This should involve harm reduction approaches, advocacy for policy reforms (for possible formalisation or legalisation, where feasible), and working with communities to enhance safety and security while respecting their agency and livelihood choices.

These recommendations, grounded in the study's findings and existing literature, provide a roadmap for campaigning NGOs to enhance their effectiveness in promoting sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. By adopting these strategies, NGOs can move beyond short-term interventions and contribute to more transformative and lasting change in the lives of the communities they serve.

9.5.2 Recommendations for communities

Communities play a pivotal role in fostering sustainable livelihoods, and their active participation is essential for the success of any development intervention. This study's findings, particularly the expressed need for more sustained engagement and the disconnect between NGO advocacy and tangible community experiences, underscore the importance of community agency and ownership. Communities in Zimbabwe are encouraged to adopt the following recommendations to enhance their resilience and achieve sustainable livelihoods:

1. Actively engage in advocacy and demand accountability

- Participate in consultations and feedback mechanisms—communities should view themselves as active partners in development, not passive recipients. This involves actively participating in consultations, feedback sessions, and evaluations organised

by the government, be they local or national. This ensures that community voices, needs, and priorities are heard and integrated into government intervention designs and implementation, enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of such interventions. This aligns with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), particularly Target 16.6 (Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels) and Target 16.7 (Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels) (United Nations 2015). This also applies to consultations and feedback mechanisms by campaigning NGOs. By engaging in dialogue with NGOs, communities can also monitor the effectiveness of advocacy efforts and provide input on adjustments that can improve outcomes. Together with accountable NGOs in solidarity, communities can effectively shape the trajectory of development both driven by the government and other development partners.

- Demand transparency and accountability—communities should demand transparency and accountability from both NGOs and the government regarding project goals, budgets, implementation strategies, and impact. This includes requesting clear information about how resources are allocated and used, how decisions are made, and how success is measured. Holding NGOs accountable to their commitments strengthens their legitimacy and effectiveness (Kaba 2021: 958), and holding the government to account ensures that “government programs are implemented to [the] appropriate extent and quality” (Mills and Thindwa 2022: 32). This aligns with SDG 16, particularly Target 16.6 (Develop effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels) and Target 16.10 (Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms). This aligns with SDG 17, which emphasises the role of partnerships in advancing sustainable development, specifically Target 17.17 (civil society partnerships) (United Nations 2015).
- Advocate for sustained engagement—communities should articulate their need for long-term support that extends beyond project cycles, advocating for sustained engagement from NGOs. This includes pushing for partnerships that build local capacity, strengthen community-based organisations and community social movements, and ensure ongoing access to resources and information. As the findings of this study have shown, communities perceive a gap in the long-term support provided by NGOs. Articulating this need can encourage a shift towards more sustainable engagement models.

2. Strengthening local organisations and collective action

- Form and support social movements and community-based organisations (CBOs) — this study strongly recommends that communities proactively form, support, and

participate in social movements and CBOs. These groups serve as vital platforms for collective action, enabling communities to articulate their needs, advocate for their rights, and implement community-led development initiatives. As noted by Deveau (2018: 698) in “Poor-Led Social Movements and Global Justice” social movements play a critical role in challenging structural inequalities and promoting social justice. They provide a powerful voice for marginalised groups, enabling them to collectively address issues such as land rights, access to resources, and social service provision. Furthermore, research by Nardini *et al.* (2021) highlights that social movements often employ diverse and innovative tactics, ranging from protests and demonstrations to advocacy and lobbying, making them effective agents of change. In Zimbabwe, such movements are particularly important given the often-restrictive political environment and the need for alternative channels for expressing community concerns. The success of social movements in advocating for policy changes, such as the women and youth quotas in parliament, as cited by participants, underscores their potential impact. By strengthening and participating in these movements, communities can enhance their bargaining power, promote accountability, and drive sustainable change from the ground up.

- Engage in collective action—communities should actively participate in collective action initiatives, such as peaceful protests, petitions, and advocacy campaigns, as demonstrated by the success of social movements in Zimbabwe since the turn of the millennium (Masunungure 2014; Hlatywayo and Mangongera 2020). This helps to amplify their voices, exert pressure on decision-makers, and demand accountability for policy implementation. As Tilly (2010) argues, collective action is a powerful tool for social change, and community participation is essential for holding both NGOs and the government accountable, as noted by Dushkova and Ivlieva (2024).
- Build networks and coalitions—communities should actively build and participate in networks and coalitions with other community groups, fostering solidarity and collective action. This allows for the sharing of resources, knowledge, and best practices, creating a stronger, more unified voice for advocacy. Joint advocacy efforts can be more effective in influencing policy and attracting attention to community needs.

3. Promoting livelihood diversification and resilience

- Explore and adopt diverse livelihood strategies—communities should actively explore and adopt a variety of livelihood strategies to reduce reliance on single income sources, particularly in the face of economic instability and climate change. This includes engaging in alternative income-generating activities beyond traditional agriculture, such as informal trading, small-scale enterprises, and value addition to

local resources. The study's findings, in line with the work of Achiba (2018) and Hossain (2024), highlight the importance of diversification as a risk management strategy. Diversification not only enhances resilience to external shocks, such as drought, as is increasingly the case in Zimbabwe (Mhlanga and Ndhlovu 2021), but also opens up new opportunities for income generation and improved livelihoods. The work of Habib, Ariyawardana and Aziz (2023) further supports this recommendation, noting that livelihood diversification is an essential strategy for managing economic and environmental shocks and reducing poverty in developing countries.

- Adopt climate-smart practices—given Zimbabwe's vulnerability to climate change, communities should prioritise the adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices, as promoted by NGOs and other development actors. This includes water conservation techniques, drought-resistant crops, and sustainable land management practices. Such practices enhance resilience to climate shocks, improve agricultural productivity, and contribute to long-term food security, aligning with SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), particularly Target 2.4 (ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production), and SDG 13 on climate action (United Nations 2015).
- Invest in education and skills development—communities should prioritise education and skills development, particularly for youth, to enhance human capital and improve long-term livelihood prospects. This includes seeking out training opportunities provided by NGOs, government agencies, and other sources, focusing on skills relevant to the local economy and emerging sectors. This aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education), particularly Target 4.4 (substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship) (United Nations 2015).
- Foster a culture of savings and investment—communities should cultivate a culture of savings and investment, utilising mechanisms such as internal savings and lending schemes (ISALS) to build financial capital and support local enterprises. This can provide a safety net during times of hardship and enable communities to invest in productive assets and livelihood diversification (Chineka and Mtetwa 2021; Mburu 2023).

4. Embracing sustainable lifestyles and environmental stewardship

- Adopt sustainable consumption and production patterns—communities should actively embrace the concept of “sustainable lifestyles,” as advocated by Morse and McNamara (2013: 155). This involves making conscious choices about consumption patterns, resource usage, and waste management to minimise environmental impacts

and promote long-term sustainability. This aligns with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), particularly Target 12.2 (achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources) (United Nations 2015).

- Promote environmental stewardship—communities should actively engage in environmental protection and conservation efforts, recognising the interconnectedness between livelihoods and the natural environment. This includes participating in reforestation initiatives, protecting water sources, and advocating against harmful practices like illegal mining and deforestation. This aligns with SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land) (United Nations 2015).

By adopting these recommendations, communities in Zimbabwe can play a more active role in shaping their own development trajectories, enhancing their resilience, and achieving sustainable livelihoods. These actions, while demanding, are essential for fostering self-reliance, reducing dependence on external aid, and creating a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

9.5.3 Recommendations for the government of Zimbabwe

The government of Zimbabwe plays a pivotal role in creating an enabling environment for the attainment of sustainable livelihoods within communities across the country. To foster such an environment, the government should take the following actions, aligned with its own aspirations in its foundational 2020-2025 development blueprint, the Zimbabwe National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1), and the 2015-2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

1. Strengthen policy implementation and accountability

- Prioritise effective implementation—the government should prioritise the effective and timely implementation of existing policies related to sustainable livelihoods, as outlined in the NDS1. This includes policies on land tenure security (NDS 1 2021: 19), natural resource management (NDS 1 2021: 210), agricultural development (NDS 1 2021: 30), social protection (NDS 1 2021: 196), and climate change adaptation (NDS 1 2021: 209). This aligns with SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 15 (Life on Land) among other SDGs (United Nations 2015).
- Address implementation barriers—the government must proactively address the issues of corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and lack of political will that hinder policy implementation. Strengthening anti-corruption mechanisms, streamlining bureaucratic processes, and fostering a culture of accountability within government institutions are crucial steps in ensuring that interventions produce intended results. This aligns with

SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), particularly Target 16.5 (Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms) and Target 16.6 (Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels) (United Nations 2015).

- Enhance monitoring and evaluation—the government should strengthen its monitoring and evaluation systems to track progress on policy implementation, identify bottlenecks, and ensure that policies are achieving their intended outcomes (NDS 1 2021: 229). This includes collecting disaggregated data on livelihood indicators, conducting regular impact assessments, and establishing mechanisms for citizen feedback and participation in the evaluation process.

2. Invest in infrastructure and services

- Improve infrastructure—the government should prioritise investments in infrastructure, including roads, water systems, energy, and communication networks, as outlined in the (NDS 1 2021: 210). This will improve market access for farmers, reduce transportation costs, enhance access to information and technology, and stimulate economic activity. Improved road networks, for instance, can significantly reduce post-harvest losses and enable farmers to sell their produce at more competitive prices. This aligns with SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), particularly Target 9.1 (Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all) (United Nations 2015).
- Ensure equitable access to essential services—the government should ensure equitable access to quality healthcare and education in both urban and rural areas (NDS 1 2021: 162). This includes investing in healthcare infrastructure, training and deploying healthcare workers to underserved areas, and addressing disparities in access to essential medicines and medical supplies. In the education sector, the government should focus on improving school infrastructure, providing adequate learning materials, and addressing teacher shortages, particularly in rural areas. This aligns with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education) (United Nations 2015).

3. Support a vibrant and independent civil society

- Repeal or amend restrictive legislation—the government should repeal or amend restrictive legislation that hinders the work of civil society organisations, such as the Private Voluntary Organisations (PVO) Amendment Bill and the restrictive provisions in the Criminal Law Code, including those related to “undermining state authority”

(Madziyauswa 2024). This will create a more enabling environment for NGOs to operate and contribute to national development. This aligns with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), particularly Target 16.10 (Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements) (United Nations 2015).

- Foster constructive collaboration with NGOs—the government should foster a constructive and collaborative relationship with NGOs, recognising them as valuable partners in development. This involves creating spaces for meaningful dialogue, engaging with NGO research and recommendations, and incorporating their expertise into policy-making processes (NDS 1 2021: 201). This aligns with SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), particularly Target 17.17 (Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships) (United Nations 2015).
- Protect the civic space—the government should uphold its constitutional obligations to protect the civic space, ensuring that citizens and civil society organisations can exercise their rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly without fear of harassment or reprisal (Government of Zimbabwe 2018; NDS 1 2021: 223). This includes refraining from using excessive force against peaceful protesters, releasing arbitrarily detained activists, and investigating and prosecuting perpetrators of human rights abuses. This aligns with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), particularly Target 16.1 (Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere) and Target 16.10 (Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms) (United Nations 2015).

4. Address structural barriers to sustainable livelihoods

- Promote economic diversification and job creation—the government should implement policies that promote economic diversification, moving away from an overreliance on primary commodity exports towards a more diversified and resilient economic structure (NDS 1 2021: 58). This includes supporting the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly in value-added industries, and creating decent jobs, especially for youth and marginalised groups. This aligns with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), particularly Target 8.3 (Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalisation and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services) and Target 8.5 (achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men,

including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value) (United Nations 2015).

- Invest in climate change adaptation and mitigation—the government should prioritise investments in climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, particularly in the agricultural sector, as outlined in the (NDS 1 2021: 209). This includes promoting climate-smart agricultural practices, investing in irrigation infrastructure, supporting the development of drought-resistant crops, and strengthening early warning systems for extreme weather events. This aligns with SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), particularly Target 2.4 (By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality), and SDG 13 (Climate Action) (United Nations 2015).
- Reform land tenure and natural resource management—the government should implement comprehensive land tenure reforms to address historical injustices, enhance tenure security for smallholder farmers, and promote equitable access to land and natural resources (NDS1, p. 61). This includes strengthening community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) approaches and ensuring that local communities benefit from the exploitation of natural resources in their areas. This aligns with SDG 1 (No Poverty), particularly Target 1.4 (By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance) (United Nations 2015).

The Government of Zimbabwe must leverage the NDS1 and the SDGs to create an enabling environment for sustainable livelihoods. By prioritising policy implementation, addressing structural barriers, and collaborating with civil society, the government can unlock Zimbabwe's potential. Implementing these recommendations is a fundamental commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of all Zimbabweans. The path to sustainable livelihoods requires concerted effort, empowering communities, and placing the needs of the vulnerable at the forefront as the government often say “leaving no one and no place behind” echoing the SDGs mantra of “leaving no one behind” (Zinyama, Kuwa and Manyera 2023: 12). By embracing these actions, Zimbabwe can achieve its vision of prosperity as outlined in the NDS1 and fulfil its SDG commitments.

9.5.4 Recommendations for campaigning NGOs' funding partners

Funding partners supporting campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe have a crucial role to play in fostering an enabling environment for sustainable livelihoods. Their funding priorities, engagement strategies, and support modalities can significantly influence the effectiveness and impact of NGO interventions. To enhance the contributions of campaigning NGOs to sustainable livelihoods, funding partners of NGOs should consider the following recommendations:

1. Promote long-term and flexible funding mechanisms

- Prioritise core funding—funding partners of NGOs should prioritise providing core, flexible funding to NGOs, as opposed to solely project-based funding (Chimwaradze 2018; Banks and Bukenya 2022). Core funding allows NGOs to strengthen their institutional capacity, invest in staff development, and maintain a consistent presence in communities, fostering long-term sustainability. It also enables them to adapt to changing circumstances and pursue emerging opportunities more effectively.
- Support adaptive programming—funding partners of NGOs should support adaptive programming models that allow NGOs to adjust their strategies and activities in response to evolving contexts and community needs. This requires a shift away from rigid log-frames and a greater emphasis on learning, flexibility, and responsiveness. Funding partners of NGOs should encourage NGOs to regularly assess their progress, document lessons learned, and make necessary adjustments to their interventions, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.
- Fund research, monitoring, and evaluation—funding partners of NGOs should allocate resources for rigorous research, monitoring, and evaluation to generate evidence on the effectiveness of different interventions and inform program design (Naeve *et al.* 2017; van Wessel and Ho 2018). This includes supporting the development of robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks that capture both quantitative and qualitative data on program impact, with a focus on long-term outcomes and sustainability.
- Support advocacy efforts—funding partners of NGOs should recognise the critical role of advocacy in promoting sustainable livelihoods (Green 2016; Lazuka-Nicoulaud *et al.* 2022) and allocate resources to support NGOs' advocacy efforts. This includes funding for policy research, capacity building for advocacy, coalition building among civil society organisations, and working with less formal organisations such as localised social movements.

2. Foster collaboration and coordination

- Promote collaboration among NGOs—funding partners of NGOs should actively promote collaboration and coordination among NGOs working in similar thematic areas or geographic locations. This could involve funding joint projects, supporting the development of NGO networks and platforms, and facilitating regular information sharing and learning exchanges.
- Encourage partnerships with local organisations—funding partners of NGOs should encourage partnerships between international NGOs and local organisations, prioritising the strengthening of local capacity and the promotion of community ownership, effectively accelerating the grand bargain agenda (van Brabant and Patel 2017; Lie 2022). This could involve providing direct funding to local organisations, supporting mentoring and twinning arrangements between international and local NGOs, and promoting the use of participatory approaches that empower local communities.
- Facilitate dialogue with the government—funding partners of NGOs should facilitate constructive dialogue between NGOs and the government, creating spaces for engagement and collaboration on issues of mutual concern. This could involve supporting multi-stakeholder platforms, funding joint initiatives between NGOs and government agencies, and promoting a more enabling environment for civil society. This aligns with SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), particularly Target 17.17 (Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships) (United Nations 2015).

3. Invest in capacity building and institutional strengthening

- Support leadership development—funding partners of NGOs should support leadership development programs for NGO staff and community leaders, with a particular focus on fostering adaptive leadership skills (Sanyal 2006; Ishengoma 2016). This could involve providing training on strategic planning, financial management, advocacy, and monitoring and evaluation.
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems—funding partners of NGOs should invest in strengthening the monitoring and evaluation systems of NGOs, ensuring that they can capture both quantitative and qualitative data on program impact, with a focus on long-term outcomes and sustainability (Glass 2017). This includes promoting the use of participatory evaluation methods that involve communities in

assessing program effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement (van Wessel, Ho and Tamas 2021; Dushkova and Ivlieva 2024)

- Promote learning and knowledge sharing—funding partners of NGOs should create opportunities for learning and knowledge sharing among NGOs, researchers, and policymakers (Appe and Schnable 2021). This could involve supporting communities of practice, funding research on effective development interventions, and disseminating best practices and lessons learned through publications, workshops, and online platforms.

By adopting these recommendations, funding partners of NGOs can play a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of campaigning NGOs' work in Zimbabwe. This requires a shift towards more flexible, long-term, and collaborative funding models that prioritise local ownership, capacity building, and learning. By working together with NGOs and the government, funding partners of NGOs can contribute to creating a more enabling environment for sustainable livelihoods and supporting the achievement of the sustainable development in Zimbabwe.

9.6 Conclusion

This study has examined the intricate relationship between campaigning NGOs and the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe, revealing a complex interplay of successes, challenges, and inherent tensions. Through a qualitative lens, encompassing document analysis, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions, the research has illuminated how these organisations navigate Zimbabwe's volatile political and economic landscape, employing diverse strategies to advocate for policy changes and empower communities. The findings underscore the multifaceted nature of livelihood challenges in Zimbabwe, shaped by a confluence of historical legacies, economic instability, climate change impacts, and a contested political environment. Campaigning NGOs have positioned themselves as key actors within this landscape, striving to address the root causes of poverty and vulnerability while navigating a shrinking civic space.

The study found that campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe have adopted sophisticated strategies, including policy monitoring, strategic relationship building, coalition formation, and issue framing, to influence policy and public discourse. They have achieved notable successes in raising awareness, contributing to policy reforms, and empowering communities to participate in decision-making processes, particularly in areas such as gender equality, disaster risk management, and environmental protection. Through their repertoires of contention, which encompass both public advocacy and direct action, these organisations have sought to amplify

marginalised voices and challenge systemic injustices. However, the research also exposed the limitations of these strategies in the face of a dominant state apparatus, a deeply entrenched culture of political control, and pervasive institutional weaknesses.

A critical finding lies in the disjuncture between the intentions of campaigning NGOs and the lived experiences of communities regarding the sustainability of livelihood outcomes. While NGOs emphasise their role as catalysts for change by advocating for policy reforms and building community capacity, communities often perceive them as temporary actors, expressing concerns about the short-term nature of interventions and the lack of sustained support. This highlights a fundamental tension within the campaigning NGO model, particularly in the context of project-based funding, shifting donor priorities, and the challenging realities of the Zimbabwean political economy. The study revealed that project-based funding models often fall short of fostering genuine empowerment, true community ownership, and long-term change at a community level. The emphasis on advocacy, while crucial, must be complemented by a commitment to long-term engagement, capacity building, and the strengthening of local governance structures to ensure the sustainability of livelihood improvements.

Furthermore, the research highlighted the nuanced and often uneven impact of NGO interventions on livelihood assets. While human, social, and political capital generally showed positive gains, particularly among those directly engaged in NGO activities, the impact on financial capital was less pronounced and more difficult to attribute solely to NGO interventions, except for some cases where NGOs engaged in a model or legacy of direct service delivery. The study also exposed the challenges of attribution, particularly regarding improvements in shared community assets, where community members often credited government initiatives even when NGO advocacy played a significant role. This underscores the need for a more holistic and integrated approach that acknowledges the interconnectedness of different forms of capital, addresses structural barriers to resource access, and bridges the gap between community expectations and NGO self-perception. In addition, it brings to the fore the fact that, even when communities do not directly attribute improvements in their various assets, including financial capital, to the work of NGOs, this does not negate the existence of such a connection. The finding that many interventions enjoyed by communities, while not explicitly linked to specific NGO activities, are often the result of broader, macro-level campaigning and advocacy efforts, needs to be embraced more by the campaigning NGOs.

The CNGO-SLF presented in this study offers a valuable tool for navigating these complexities. By emphasising the interconnectedness of the livelihood context, livelihood-environment dynamics, assets, the politics of power, influence and access, livelihood

pathways, and the fluidity of livelihoods, the framework provides a roadmap for campaigning NGOs to design and implement more effective, context-specific, and sustainable interventions. It encourages a deeper understanding of the root causes of poverty, the identification of strategic entry points for advocacy, and the adoption of participatory and empowering approaches that prioritise community ownership and agency. The framework's emphasis on the politics of power, influence and access, relational power, and fluid livelihoods is particularly relevant in the Zimbabwean context, where power imbalances, historical injustices, and a constantly evolving socio-economic landscape shape livelihood opportunities.

In conclusion, this study argues that while campaigning NGOs have made significant contributions to the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe, their effectiveness is contingent upon a more nuanced understanding of the local context, a greater emphasis on long-term engagement, and a stronger commitment to bridging the gap between advocacy and tangible community-level change. It also brings to the fore the fact that the impact and effectiveness of campaigning NGOs are very much moderated by external factors, such as obtaining political will for policy implementation. By embracing a more holistic, integrated, and context-specific approach, as embodied in the CNGO-SLF, these organisations can enhance their impact, foster genuine community empowerment, and contribute more effectively to the realisation of sustainable livelihoods for all Zimbabweans. The onus is on campaigning NGOs, communities, the government, and other stakeholders to work collaboratively, fostering a more enabling environment for sustainable development, addressing structural inequalities, and ensuring that the gains achieved through advocacy and community action are sustained over the long term.

This study opens several avenues for future research. Firstly, longitudinal studies tracking the long-term impacts of campaigning NGO interventions on livelihood outcomes, particularly focusing on the sustainability of gains after project completion, would provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of different engagement models. Such studies could employ mixed methods approaches, combining quantitative data on livelihood indicators with qualitative data on community perceptions and experiences. Secondly, comparative studies examining the effectiveness of different advocacy strategies in diverse political contexts within the Southern African region could shed light on the factors that contribute to successful policy change and inform best practices for campaigning NGOs. Thirdly, an in-depth exploration of the role of relational power in shaping livelihood opportunities, including a specific focus on gender dynamics, intergenerational issues, and other social identities, would enhance the understanding of power imbalances and inform more targeted interventions. This can include studies focusing on specific marginalised groups, such as people with disabilities, ethnic

minorities, or migrant workers, to gain a deeper understanding of their unique challenges and opportunities. Fourthly, given the significance of the informal economy in Zimbabwe, further research into how campaigning NGOs can effectively engage with and support informal livelihood strategies, including often-overlooked activities such as migration, informal mining, and sex work, is crucial. This research should pay particular attention to the ethical considerations involved in engaging with these often marginalised and sometimes illegal activities. Finally, investigating the potential of technology, particularly mobile and digital platforms, to enhance the reach and effectiveness of campaigning NGOs in areas such as advocacy, community mobilisation, and information dissemination, would be beneficial in a rapidly changing communication landscape. This could also include exploring how technology can be used to strengthen community feedback mechanisms and enhance NGO accountability.

By pursuing these research directions, scholars and practitioners can further refine the CNGO-SLF, deepen the understanding of the complex interplay between advocacy, empowerment, and sustainable livelihoods, and contribute to more effective and impactful interventions in Zimbabwe and beyond. This will contribute to building a more robust evidence base for campaigning NGOs, informing their strategies, and enhancing their ability to contribute to transformative change.

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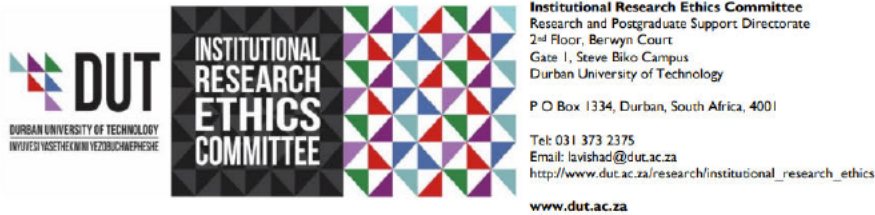
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Zinyama, T., Kuwa, O. and Manyera, A. 2023. Re-Imagining Devolution for Recapitalisation of Local Authorities in Zimbabwe: The Quest for a Better Life. *Journal of Public Administration and Development Alternatives (JPADA)*, 8 (2): 1-17.

Zlotowitz, S. and Burton, M. H. 2022. Community psychology and political economy. In: *The Routledge International Handbook of Community Psychology*. Routledge, 46-59.

APPENDICES

ANNEXURE A – IREC CLEARANCE LETTER



30 July 2024

Mr A Sibanda
3285 Tynwald North
Harare
Zimbabwe

Dear Mr Sibanda

The Nexus Between Campaigning NGOs and Sustainable Livelihoods in Zimbabwe
Ethical Clearance number IREC 034/24

The DUT-Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letters.

Please note that FULL APPROVAL is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the DUT-IREC according to the DUT-IREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's).

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the DUT-IREC as outlined in the DUT-IREC SOP's.

It is compulsory for a student or researcher to apply for recertification on an annual basis. The failure to do so will result in withdrawal of ethics clearance. It is the responsibility of the researcher and the supervisor to apply for recertification.

Please note that you are required to submit a Notification of Completion of Study form together with an abstract to the DUT-IREC office on completion of your study.

Yours Sincerely

Prof J K Adam
Chairperson: DUT-IREC

ANNEXURE B – GATEKEEPERS LETTERS



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT AND CABINET

Harare Metropolitan Province
109 Rotten Row
Investment House
Harare, Zimbabwe
Tel : +263 242 762 988

ALL RESPONSES SHOULD BE
TO THE ATTENTION OF THE
PERMANENT SECRETARY

Ref :
15 May 2024

Faculty of Management Sciences(Public Management- Public Administration)
Durban University Technology

Attention: Abel Sibanda

RE: CLEARANCE TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN HARARE METROPOLITAN PROVINCE.

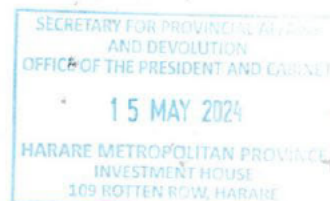
The above subject matter.

Permission is hereby granted to conduct focus group discussions to assess the link between campaigning NGOs work and attainment of sustainable livelihoods in Epworth, Chitungwiza, Harare Central and Harare rural. Please note that all research findings should only be used for academic purposes. As such you are encouraged to submit your findings to this office.

For entrance in the above mentioned district be guided by the responsible Local Authority.

Be guided accordingly.

Kind Regards



Mr. I. Mungure
Acting Secretary for Provincial Affairs and Devolution
HARARE METROPOLITAN PROVINCE

MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC WORKS

All correspondences to be addressed to:

The Director
Local Government
Services
Tel: (0292)67261/3
Fax: (0292)883790



Local Government Services
Matabeleland North Province
P.O. Box 1496
5th Floor Block G
Mhlahlandlela Government
Complex
BULAWAYO

04 June 2024

The District Development Coordinator
Ministry of Local Government & Public Works
Local Government Services
BINGA

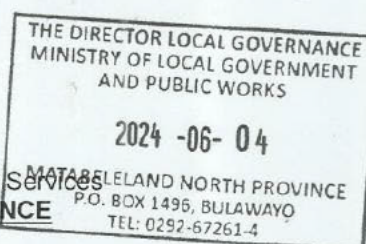
**REQUEST FOR RESEARCH FACILITATION FOR DOCTORAL THESIS ON NGOS
& SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS IN NKAYI**

This letter serves as a request for your assistance in facilitating Abel Sibanda's research in your district. Abel is a student from Durban University of Technology who is pursuing a doctoral thesis focused on the nexus between campaigning/advocacy-based NGOs and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe. His research aims to explore how campaigning/advocacy-based NGOs in Zimbabwe contribute to sustainable livelihoods, particularly in developing areas like Binga. He is interested in understanding the challenges and opportunities faced by these NGOs in their work, as well as the impact that their activities have on the local communities they serve. Your guidance would provide valuable support to ensure that the research is conducted in a responsible and ethical manner.

Your expertise, guidance, and support are pivotal in ensuring that Mr. Sibanda's research is carried out responsibly, ethically, and effectively.

N. Dube

FOR: A/Director Local Government Services
MATABELELAND NORTH PROVINCE



LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES: MATABELELAND NORTH PROVINCE

MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC WORKS

All correspondences to be addressed to:

The Director
Local Government
Services
Tel: (0292)672611/3
Fax: (0292)883790



Local Government Services
Matabeleland North Province
P.O. Box 1496
5th Floor Block G
Mhlahlandlela Government
Complex
BULAWAYO

04 June 2024

The District Development Coordinator
Ministry of Local Government & Public Works
Local Government Services
NKAYI

REQUEST FOR RESEARCH FACILITATION FOR DOCTORAL THESIS ON NGOS & SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS IN NKAYI

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Your expertise, guidance, and support are pivotal in ensuring that Mr. Sibanda's research is carried out responsibly, ethically, and effectively.

N. Dube

FOR: A/Director Local Government Services
MATABELELAND NORTH PROVINCE



FW: Research Authorization Request

John Maketo <john@zimcodd.co.zw>

Mon 7/15/2024 10:49 AM

To: Abel Sibanda <Abel.Sibanda@actionaid.org>

Cc: Mucha Midzi <mucha@zimcodd.co.zw>; Taurai Nigel Mafundikwa <taurai@zimcodd.co.zw>; Janet Zhou <janet@zimcodd.co.zw>

3 attachments (1 MB)

ZIMCodd Request Letter.pdf; A Sibanda Institutional Research Ethics Committee Provisional Approval.pdf; A Sibanda Final Proposal [Nexus] [Campaigning NGOs] [Sustainable Livelihoods].pdf;

Dear Abel

Thank you for selecting ZIMCodd as one of your possible case studies in your research.

As a learning organization, your request is herewith approved on condition that you will be faithful to share with us your study findings and recommendations to support our internal review processes and learning.

For further assistance I am referring you to the copied portfolio Leads and specialists in the areas of interest – Campaigns and Livelihoods.

Kind regards,

JOHN P. MAKETOProgrammes Manager/
Chief of Party
SIYA Programme

+263 772 331 881

john@zimcodd.co.zw

<http://www.zimcodd.org/>49 Pendennis Rd, Mt Pleasant
Harare[@zimcodd1](#) [@zimcodd](#) [@zimcodd1](#)

From: Abel Sibanda <Abel.Sibanda@actionaid.org>

Sent: Tuesday, June 11, 2024 3:58 PM

To: Janet Zhou <janet@zimcodd.co.zw>

No. 26 B SEKE Road

Hatfield, Harare

Tel: 573601/573602

Website: www.zela.org

**Zimbabwe Environmental
Law Association (ZELA)**



"Using the law to protect and conserve the environment"

11 June 2024

Abel Sibanda

26 Divine Road,

Harare, Zimbabwe.

Dear Mr., Sibanda,

RE: Permission to Conduct Research - The Nexus Between Campaigning NGOs and Sustainable Livelihoods in Zimbabwe

We are writing in response to your letter dated 15 April 2024, requesting permission to conduct some parts of your research for your Doctoral thesis at the Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA).

We are pleased to grant you permission to interview three of our staff members and five young people we work with. We believe that your research topic is important and relevant to our work, and we are happy to contribute to the academic discourse on this subject.

We understand that your research will also involve focus group discussions with community members in Harare and Matabeleland North provinces. We trust that you will conduct your research in a respectful and ethical manner, and we are confident that your findings will be valuable to both the academic community and the broader public.

We have reviewed your research proposal, data collection tools, consent forms, and the approval letter from the Durban University of Technology's Institutional Research Ethics Committee. We are satisfied that your research meets our ethical standards and are willing to cooperate with you to the best of our ability.

We wish you all the best in your research endeavours and look forward to hearing about your findings. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions or requests.

Sincerely,

Shamiso Mtisi,

Deputy Director,

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

* TUMAI MUROMBO MUTUSO DHLWAYO * MAKANATSA MAKONESE * INNOCENT HODZONGEI* NAOME CHIMBETETE*

ActionAid Zimbabwe
Country Programme
26 Divine Road
Milton Park
Harare
Zimbabwe

Phone +263(0)242-788122/5
+263772164448/9
Email Info.Zimbabwe@actionaid.org
www.actionaid.org/zimbabwe

act:onaid

19 July 2024

Dear Abel Sibanda.

Re: Permission to Conduct Research - The Nexus Between Campaigning NGOs and Sustainable Livelihoods in Zimbabwe at ActionAid Zimbabwe.

This letter is in response to your request to conduct parts of your doctoral research, *"The Nexus Between Campaigning NGOs and Sustainable Livelihoods in Zimbabwe,"* with ActionAid Zimbabwe. Your research request has been approved.

We understand that you would like to interview three of our staff members and five young activists we work with. We are happy to facilitate these interviews and will work with you to schedule them at a convenient time.

We have reviewed your research proposal, data collection tools, consent forms, and the approval letter from the Durban University of Technology's Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC). We are satisfied with the ethical considerations and methodological framing of your study.

We look forward to receiving the final report of the study, which we hope will contribute to the body of knowledge on campaigning NGOs and sustainable livelihoods.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or require further assistance. We wish you all the best with your research.

Sincerely,

Country Director - ActionAid Zimbabwe

Country Director - ActionAid Zimbabwe



Incorporated in The Hague,
The Netherlands
Registration number 27264198

Incorporated in South Africa
under section 21A
of the Companies Act 1973
Registration number 2004/007117/10

ANNEXURE C – TURNITIN SUMMARY REPORT

Abel Sibanda - The Nexus Between Campaigning NGOs and Sustainable Livelihoods Full Thesis.docx

ORIGINALITY REPORT

8%

SIMILARITY INDEX

6%

INTERNET SOURCES

7%

PUBLICATIONS

2%

STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1

www.pulp.up.ac.za

Internet Source

1%

2

Augustine Edobor Arimoro. "Human Rights and Standard of Living in Sub-Saharan Africa - Challenges and Prospects", Routledge, 2025

Publication

<1%

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link.springer.com

Internet Source

<1%

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pdf.usaid.gov

Internet Source

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5

Marco Tavanti. "Developing Sustainability in Organizations", Springer Science and Business Media LLC, 2023

Publication

<1%

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ebin.pub

Internet Source

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7

Ferguson, Connor Lynn. "The Influence of Faculty Mentorship on Graduate Student Development Through the Lens of Self-Efficacy", West Virginia University, 2024

Publication

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"International Encyclopedia of Civil Society", Springer Science and Business Media LLC, 2010

Publication

<1%

9

academic.oup.com

ANNEXURE D – EDITOR CERTIFICATE

Sury Bisetty Academic Editing Services

CIPC No. 2021/360666/07



My editing adds tremendous value to your document, but I am only human. Although I rigorously check and recheck my work, it is impossible to guarantee 100% perfection.

To whom it may concern

I edited the thesis titled **The Nexus Between Campaigning NGOs and Sustainable Livelihoods in Zimbabwe** by **ABEL SIBANDA** submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Management Sciences (Public Administration-Public Management) in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology

Signed:

Date: 18 March 2025

Professional Language and Technical Editor

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CONTACT DETAILS

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Cell no: 0844932878

Tel.: 031 7622 766

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CERTIFICATION:

BA. PG. UHDE (English Majors)
MLA – Academic Editing & Proofreading
ELSEVIER – Editor's guide to reviewing
Editing Mastery: How to Edit to Perfection
Complete writing, editing master class.
PEGSA: Critical Reading [etc.]

Disclaimer: I provided language and technical editing as per discussion with the client. The content and structure of the thesis were not amended in any way. The edited work described here may not be identical to that submitted. The author, at his/her sole discretion, has the prerogative to accept, delete, or change amendments/suggestions made by the editor before submission.

ANNEXURE E - LETTER OF INFORMATION [INTERVIEWS]



LETTER OF INFORMATION [INTERVIEWS]

Title of the Research Study: The Nexus Between Campaigning NGOs and Sustainable Livelihoods in Zimbabwe.

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: - Abel Sibanda - PhD Candidate.

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s: Prof N Dorasamy – Professor / Dr W Muchabaiwa - D.Phil. Sociology.

Introduction

Warm greetings to you, It's a pleasure connecting with you, I am a PhD candidate at the Durban University of Technology pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Public Management focusing on Public Administration.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research.

Research is a systematic search or enquiry for generalised new knowledge and in this study, it is the search of knowledge concerning the work of campaigning NGOs in communities and the impact they have on the attainment of sustainable livelihoods. Sustainable livelihoods refer to a way of life which gives people the things that you need from asserts, social connections to strategies for a living, all this in a way which does not damage the environment and strong enough not to be disturbed by disasters of shocks.

If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you to answer a series of questions about your involvement with campaigning NGOs (ZIMCOD/ZELA/AAZ). The interview will take approximately 30 minutes. I will also come back once to conduct a second interview which will be 10 minutes long to check if what we talked about during the first time is still as is. This research will involve other people ranging from staff at ZIMCodd, ZELA and AAZ, campaigners working with ZIMCodd, ZELA and AAZ as well as community members in the respective NGOs' target communities.

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study

This study is an examination of the link between the work of three campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe and the attainment of sustainable livelihoods. The study will use the sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF) as an analytical tool.

People who are eligible to participate in this study will be people who have been involved with campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe. You are eligible to participate if you meet the following criteria:

- You are 18 years of age or older.

- You have been involved (worked for, researched on or worked) with campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe.
- You are willing to share your experiences with me.

Risks or Discomforts

There are no anticipated risks or discomfort however every effort will be made to conduct interviews at safe places of your choosing and most convenient times for you.

Withdraw from the Study or Termination

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The research may be terminated, or you can be withdrawn from the study when:

You decide to withdraw from the study.

You are unable to continue participating in the study due to illness, injury, or other reasons.

The researcher determines that it is in your best interest to withdraw from the study.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, you can do so by contacting the researcher at 22384564@dut4life.ac.za. You will not be penalised for withdrawing from the study.

If the researcher determines that it is in your best interest to withdraw from the study, they will discuss this with you and explain the reasons for their decision. You will have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss your options.

If you are withdrawn from the study, you will still be able access study results once they are published.

Benefits

There are no personal benefits to participating in this study. However, your participation may help to improve our understanding of the role of campaigning NGOs in sustainable livelihoods which aids the government and campaigning NGOs to improve the work they do to improve communities.

Remuneration

There will be no remunerations for your participation, however airtime and data costs for online interviews and phone interviews will be provided.

Costs of the Study

You are not going to cover any cost of the study.

Confidentiality

Your participation in this study is confidential. I will not use your name or any other identifying information in any of my publications or presentations. I will also keep all your data confidential and will only share it with my academic supervisors and faculty bodies at DUT if you give me permission.

Results

Once the research is completed, I will publish the results in a peer reviewed journal. I will make every effort to disseminate study results to people who participated in this research. A consolidation of journal articles will be published as a PhD thesis by the Durban University of

Technology. Whenever need arise results of this study may be presented on academic conferences.

Research-related Injury

Due to the nature of the study, no research-related injuries are anticipated.

Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings

Digital data of the research will be kept in a password protected cloud storage and will be deleted after five years. All hard copies with data for this study will be stored in a locked house cabinet and the copies will be shredded as a way of disposal five years.

Persons to contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries: Please contact the researcher at +263779628584, my supervisor +27722678704 or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Postgraduate Support on 031 373 2577 or researchdirector@dut.ac.za.

ANNEXURE F - LETTER OF INFORMATION [FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS]



LETTER OF INFORMATION [FGDS]

Title of the Research Study: The Nexus Between Campaigning NGOs and Sustainable Livelihoods in Zimbabwe.

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: - Abel Sibanda - PhD Candidate.

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s: Prof N Dorasamy – Professor / Dr W Muchabaiwa - D.Phil. Sociology.

Introduction

Warm greetings to you, It's a pleasure connecting with you, I am a PhD candidate at the Durban University of Technology pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Public Management focusing on Public Administration.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research.

Research is a systematic search or enquiry for generalized new knowledge and in this study, it is the search of knowledge concerning the work of campaigning NGOs in communities and the impact they have on the attainment of sustainable livelihoods. Sustainable livelihoods refer to a way of life which gives people the things that you need from asserts, social connections to strategies for a living, all this in a way which does not damage the environment and strong enough not to be disturbed by disasters of shocks.

If all of you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you to answer a series of questions in a discussion format about your experiences and perceptions of your livelihoods in connection with the work of the three campaigning NGOs (ZIMCOD/ZELA/AAZ). Discussions will take approximately 45 minutes. I will also come back once to conduct a second discussion which will be 10 minutes long to check if what we talked about during the first time will still be the same. This research will involve other people ranging from staff at ZIMCDD, ZELA and AAZ, campaigners working with ZIMCDD, ZELA and AAZ as well as community members in other five districts of the study.

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study

This study is an examination of the link between the work of three campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe and the attainment of sustainable livelihoods. The study will use the sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF) as an analytical tool.

People who are eligible to participate in this study will be people who have been involved with campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe. You are eligible to participate if you meet the following criteria:

- You are 18 years of age or older.

- You have been involved (worked for, researched on or worked) with campaigning NGOs in Zimbabwe.
- You are willing to share your experiences with me.

Risks or Discomforts

There are no anticipated risks or discomfort however every effort will be made to conduct interviews at safe places of your choosing and most convenient times for you.

Withdraw from the Study or Termination

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The research may be terminated, or you can be withdrawn from the study when:

You decide to withdraw from the study.

You are unable to continue participating in the study due to illness, injury, or other reasons.

The researcher determines that it is in your best interest to withdraw from the study.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, you can do so by contacting the researcher at 22384564@dut4life.ac.za. You will not be penalised for withdrawing from the study.

If the researcher determines that it is in your best interest to withdraw from the study, they will discuss this with you and explain the reasons for their decision. You will have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss your options.

If you are withdrawn from the study, you will still be able access study results once they are published.

Benefits

There are no personal benefits to participating in this study. However, your participation may help to improve our understanding of the role of campaigning NGOs in sustainable livelihoods which aids the government and campaigning NGOs to improve the work they do to improve communities.

Remuneration

There will be no remunerations for your participation, however airtime and data costs for online interviews and phone interviews will be provided.

Costs of the Study

You are not going to cover any cost of the study.

Confidentiality

Your participation in this study is confidential. I will not use your name or any other identifying information in any of my publications or presentations. I will also keep all your data confidential and will only share it with my academic supervisors and faculty bodies at DUT if you give me permission.

Results

Once the research is completed, I will publish the results in a peer reviewed journal. I will make every effort to disseminate study results to people who participated in this research. A consolidation of journal articles will be published as a PhD thesis by the Durban University of

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ANNEXURE G – LETTER OF CONSENT



CONSENT FORM

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, , about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: _____,
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Participant Thumbprint	Date	Time	Signature/Right-

I, herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study

_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Researcher	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Witness (If applicable)	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)	Date	Signature

ANNEXURE H – INTERVIEW GUIDES

NGOS STAFF AND CAMPAIGNERS INTERVIEW GUIDES

INTRODUCTIONS

- Greetings and the reading of the letter of information.
- Signing of consent forms.

(I)

OBJECTIVE

- To identify key livelihoods issues and challenges that campaigning NGOs address in urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the key livelihoods issues and challenges that campaigning NGOs address in urban communities in Zimbabwe?
- What are the key livelihoods issues and challenges that campaigning NGOs address in rural communities in Zimbabwe?
- How do these issues and challenges vary between urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe?
- What are the factors that contribute to these issues and challenges?

GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR NGO STAFF:

- What are the key livelihoods issues and challenges that your organization addresses in urban communities in Zimbabwe?
- What are the key livelihoods issues and challenges that your organization addresses in rural communities in Zimbabwe?
- What are the factors that contribute to these issues and challenges?
- How does your organization work to address these issues and challenges?
- What are the successes and challenges that your organization has experienced in addressing these issues and challenges?
- What are the recommendations that you have for other organizations that are working to address these issues and challenges?

GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR CAMPAIGNERS:

- What are the key livelihoods issues and challenges that the organization that you are campaigning for address in urban communities in Zimbabwe?
- What are the key livelihoods issues and challenges that the organization that you are campaigning for address in rural communities in Zimbabwe?
- What are the factors that contribute to these issues and challenges?
- How effective is your campaigning in addressing these issues and challenges?
What are the recommendations that you have for campaigners and campaigning NGOs that are working to address these issues and challenges?

(II)

OBJECTIVE

- To evaluate the development approaches and concepts used by campaigning NGOs in relation to the sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF) in urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the different development approaches and concepts used by campaigning NGOs in urban communities?
- What are the different development approaches and concepts used by campaigning NGOs in rural communities?
- How do these approaches and concepts relate to the sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF)?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches and concepts?

GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR NGO STAFF:

- What are the different development approaches and concepts that your organization uses to address development issues and challenges in your constituency?
- There is a development concept called sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF), have you used it in framing your campaigns? If yes, in what ways, and if not, can you elaborate?
- How do the approaches and concepts that you have been using relate to the sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF)? [Researcher to explain all concepts of the SLF]
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of approaches and concepts that you have been using in your campaigning?
- How have these approaches and concepts been effective in achieving your organization's goals?
- What challenges have you faced in implementing these approaches and concepts?
- What advice would you give to other NGOs that are considering using these approaches and concepts?

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CAMPAIGNERS:

- What are the different development approaches and concepts that have been used by ZIMCDD/ZELA/AAZ to address development issues and challenges in urban communities?
- What are the different development approaches and concepts that have been used by ZIMCDD/ZELA/AAZ to address development issues and challenges in rural communities?
- How do these approaches and concepts relate to the sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF) *(for easy comprehension, the researcher will outline each element of SLF)*?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches and concepts?
- What are the factors that have influenced the use of these approaches and concepts by the organization?
- What are the implications of these approaches and concepts for the sustainable livelihoods and development of their target communities?
- The different contexts in which these approaches and concepts have been used?
- Which are the different stakeholders who have been involved in the use of these approaches and concepts?

- What are the outcomes that have been achieved through the use of these approaches and concepts?

(III)

OBJECTIVE

- To examine how campaigning NGOs' work influences the livelihood assets, strategies, outcomes, and vulnerabilities of communities in urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How does campaigning NGOs' work influence the livelihood assets (human, social, natural, physical, and financial) of urban communities?
- How does campaigning NGOs' work influence the livelihood assets (human, social, natural, physical, and financial) of rural communities?
- How does campaigning NGOs' work influence the livelihood strategies (diversification, intensification, migration, etc.) of urban and rural communities?
- How does campaigning NGOs' work influence the livelihood outcomes (income, well-being, food security, etc.) of urban and rural communities?
- How does campaigning NGOs' work address livelihood vulnerabilities (shocks, trends, seasonality, etc.) of urban and rural communities?

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR NGO STAFF:

- How does your organization's campaigning work aim to influence: 1) livelihood assets, 2) strategies, 3) outcomes, and 4) vulnerabilities of urban communities in Zimbabwe?
- How does your organization's campaigning work aim to influence: 1) livelihood assets, 2) strategies, 3) outcomes, and 4) vulnerabilities of rural communities in Zimbabwe?
- What specific activities does your organization undertake to achieve: 1) improved livelihood assets, 2) enhanced strategies, 3) better outcomes, and 4) reduced vulnerabilities of urban communities in Zimbabwe?
- What specific activities does your organization undertake to achieve: 1) improved livelihood assets, 2) enhanced strategies, 3) better outcomes, and 4) reduced vulnerabilities of rural communities in Zimbabwe?
- What connection do these activities have with the intended outcomes?
- What advice would you give to other NGOs that are working to influence 1) livelihood assets, 2) strategies, 3) outcomes, and 4) vulnerabilities of urban communities in Zimbabwe?
- What advice would you give to other NGOs that are working to influence 1) livelihood assets, 2) strategies, 3) outcomes, and 4) vulnerabilities of rural communities in Zimbabwe?

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR CAMPAIGNERS:

- What is the evidence that ZIMCDD/ZELA/AAZ's work can influence the livelihood assets, strategies, outcomes, and vulnerabilities of urban communities?
- What is the evidence that ZIMCDD/ZELA/AAZ's work can influence the livelihood assets, strategies, outcomes, and vulnerabilities of rural communities?
- What are the challenges that you have experienced in trying to influence these factors?

- What advice would you give to campaigners that are working to improve the livelihoods of urban communities?
- What advice would you give to campaigners that are working to improve the livelihoods of rural communities?

ANNEXURE I – FDG MODERATOR’S GUIDES

COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS MODERATOR’S GUIDE

INTRODUCTIONS

- Greetings and the reading of the letter of information.
- Signing of consent forms.

(I)

OBJECTIVE

- To identify the key livelihoods issues and challenges that campaigning NGOs address in urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the key livelihoods issues and challenges that campaigning NGOs address in urban communities in Zimbabwe?
- What are the key livelihoods issues and challenges that campaigning NGOs address in rural communities in Zimbabwe?
- How do these issues and challenges vary between urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe?
- What are the factors that contribute to these issues and challenges?

KEY LIVELIHOODS ISSUES AND CHALLENGES:

- Ask participants to share their insights on the key livelihoods issues and challenges in their communities.
- Probe for specific examples of these issues and challenges.
- Ask participants to identify the factors that contribute to these issues and challenges.

DISCUSSION

- Facilitate a discussion on the key findings from the focus group discussion.
- Identify any areas of consensus or disagreement among participants.
- Explore the implications of the findings for campaigning NGOs in participants' communities.

(II)

OBJECTIVE

- To evaluate the development approaches and concepts used by campaigning NGOs in relation to the sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF) in urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the different development approaches and concepts used by campaigning NGOs in urban communities?
- What are the different development approaches and concepts used by campaigning NGOs in rural communities?
- How do these approaches and concepts relate to the sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF)?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches and concepts?

APPROACHES AND CONCEPTS USED BY ZIMCADD/ZELA/AAZ:

- Ask participants how do campaigning organizations reach out to their community?
- Probe for specific examples.
- Ask participants to discuss how the different development approaches and concepts relate to the improvement of their livelihoods.
- Ask participants to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the different development approaches and concepts campaigning NGOs use in their engagement with communities.
- Probe for their insights into the factors that contribute to the success or failure of these approaches and concepts.

DISCUSSION

- Facilitate a discussion on the key findings from the focus group discussion.
- Identify any areas of consensus or disagreement among participants.

(III)

OBJECTIVE

- To examine how campaigning NGOs' work influences the livelihood assets, strategies, outcomes, and vulnerabilities of communities in urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How does campaigning NGOs' work influence the livelihood assets (human, social, natural, physical, and financial) of urban communities?
- How does campaigning NGOs' work influence the livelihood assets (human, social, natural, physical, and financial) of rural communities?
- How does campaigning NGOs' work influence the livelihood strategies (diversification, intensification, migration, etc.) of urban and rural communities?
- How does campaigning NGOs' work influence the livelihood outcomes (income, well-being, food security, etc.) of urban and rural communities?
- How does campaigning NGOs' work address livelihood vulnerabilities (shocks, trends, seasonality, etc.) of urban and rural communities?

THE LINKAGE BETWEEN APPROACHES AND FOUR COMPONENTS OF SLF

- Ask participants to discuss how campaigning NGOs have influenced the livelihood assets of their communities.
- What specific activities or programs have had the most impact?
- How have these activities or programs helped to build or strengthen human, social, natural, physical, and financial assets?
- Ask participants to discuss how campaigning NGOs have influenced the livelihood strategies of communities.
- What specific activities or programs have helped communities to diversify their livelihoods, intensify their production, or migrate to new areas?
- How have these activities or programs helped to improve income, well-being, and food security?
- Ask participants to discuss how campaigning NGOs have addressed the livelihood vulnerabilities of communities.

- What specific activities or programs have helped communities to cope with shocks, trends, and seasonality?
- How have these activities or programs helped to reduce vulnerability and increase resilience?

DISCUSSION

- Discuss each component of the SLF.

CONCLUSION:

- Thank participants for their time and insights.
- Summarize the key findings from the focus group discussion.
- Answer any questions that participants may have.

MODERATOR NOTES

- Be neutral and objective in your questioning.
- Encourage all participants to participate in the discussion.
- Probe for clarification and elaboration when necessary.
- Summarize the key points that were discussed at the end of the focus group.
- Create a safe and comfortable environment for participants to share their insights.
- Be flexible and be willing to go off-script if necessary.

END||