

## **FINAL REPORT OF FOOD FOR ALL ORGANIZATION**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The board assessment report reviews the vision and mission of the FOOD FOR ALL and how its internal and external environment is facilitating or hindering the achievement of these objectives. A threat, opportunity, weakness and strength (TOWS) analysis tool was done to see how the organization is using the blend of the four critical areas to their advantage. The report equally shows how the organization is performing in the nine critical areas of board effectiveness through a survey that was carried out. The underlining causes of the problem was unearthed and recommendations for the attention of the board given.

### **2. BACKGROUND ON THE ORGANIZATION AND BOARD**

Food for All is a coalition based organization with over 50 food pantries membership and has been in existence for 31 years. The vision of the coalition is “A dynamic network of well stocked food pantries nourishing hungry neighbours”. The coalition exist to “address hunger through food pantries operated by member organization” To fulfil its vision and mission, the coalition provides funding to support the operation of its members, volunteer services, and support to staff of the coalition organizations.

The objectives of the organization are in line with its vision and mission and can be summarised as

- Support services to coalition members
- Documentation for fund raising,
- Networking within and outside coalition and
- Community awareness on issues of hunger.

To become a member of the coalition, you must meet the following criteria

- Be a registered non- profit organization
- Have the capacity to serve an agreed minimum amount of food on monthly and annual basis.
- Observe sanitary regulation,
- Submit monthly statistics of operations
- Demonstrate readiness and ability to attend monthly meetings of the coalition and
- Provide organizational support when required.

Because it is a coalition of different organizations, it has a team of people from different organizations with varied work culture, ethics and style of administration. This can be seen as both an asset and a possible source of conflict if not managed well.

The organization operates the mix board type with seventeen board members three of which are from the affiliated members. Their work is basically structured on five standing committees that have responsibilities equivalent to the functional and management line of administration found in many organizations. The CEO is therefore given the responsibilities of operationalising the organizational policy to achieve its set objectives. In view of the fact that the mix board type can be confusing, it is important for CEO and the board to strategize and improve upon communication across board that will allow people to raise critical issues on gaps and overlaps in the discharge of duties. This will enrich the organizational communication systems that will allow for clear delineation of duties and responsibilities between the board and management.

(Gill, 2005) in identifying various types of governance of boards, identifies three types namely the working board, governance only board and the mixed model board. In analysing the mode of operations of each type and at what stage in the organizational development that a particular type is appropriate, underscored the fact that the various modes all have their advantages and disadvantages. In reference to the mix model type, he emphasised the need for open communication as a sure way of overcoming the challenges of the mix model type. Hence the need for the coalition to have a communication strategy that will address communication issues within and outside the coalition.

Like all other organizations, the coalition is not without challenges and threats. Aside these challenges, there are equally abundance opportunities to exploit to minimise its threats. To appreciate the real situation of the organization, it is important to identify its threats, opportunities weaknesses and strengths (TOWS).

#### ***Threats of the organizations***

One major external threat the coalition needs to conscious solve is the threat of cultural clash. This is because the coalition is a pool of people from different member's organizations with different values and management style of administration. This different cultural and value merge can be a source of conflict if it is not managed well.

#### ***Opportunities of the organization***

The organization had the opportunity of presenting a formidable coalition for fundraising. When a coalition is well constituted with defined structures, issues of accountability, openness and transparency are always strong. As the general public and funders are increasingly expressing concern on issues of mismanagement of their funds by some non-profit organization, the coalitions can build a case on how their internal strength can be a conduit to minimising

these malpractices. This is one good opportunity for the organization to capitalise to advance its objectives and woo the confidence of funders.

### ***Weaknesses of the organization***

There is lack of clarity on issues of communication on how the board will be involved in strategic and operational issues especially on the issues of developing the organizational policy. I personally thought that policy direction should be handled by the board while the manager operationalises the policy into strategies for achievement of the organizational goals. If this is not handle well it will create a blur pictures on the role of the CEO and the sense of direction of the organization. There is also the need to reflect on the essence of the coalition and develop a governance system that will serve the individual and collective interest of member and the coalition. Leadership of the board could be rotational among coalition members.

### ***Strength of the organization***

One of their strengths is working as coalition. This gives the coalition the advantages of ensuring proper accountability in the pursuance of their objectives. This strength can be used as a basis to raise funding for their activities.

## **3. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR BOARD EFFECTIVENESS**

Non- profit governance is the process of providing strategic leadership and direction to a management of non-profit organization. The Governance process entails the following.

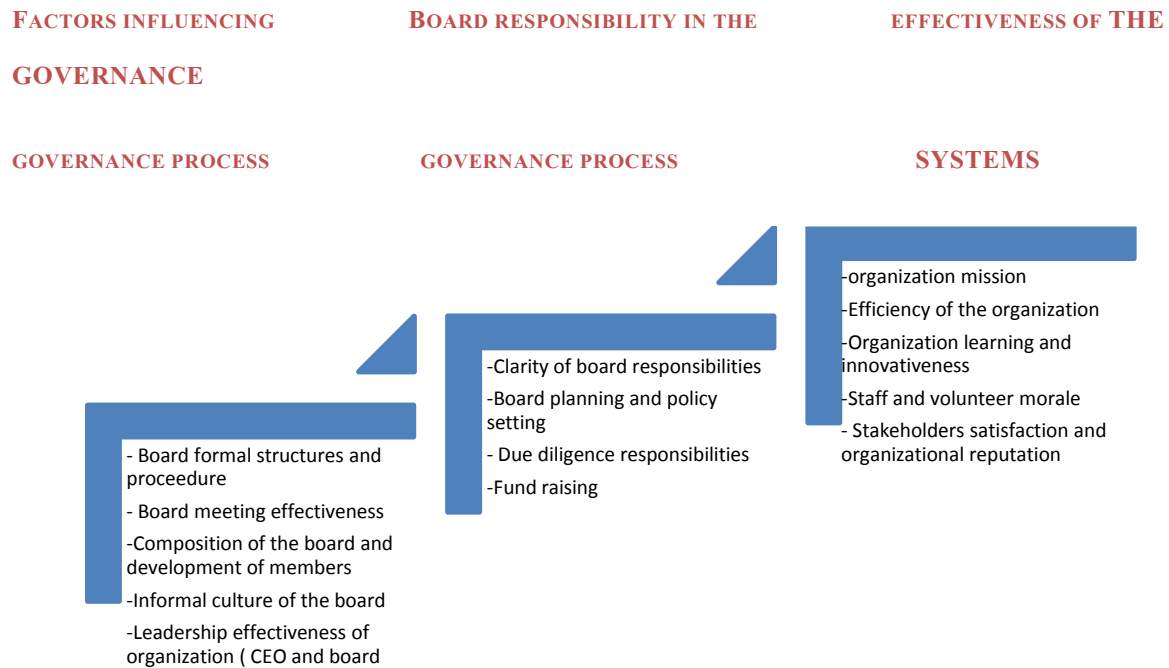
- Providing guide post for the strategic direction of the organization
- Ensuring that policy and strategy decisions are in line with the mission and vision of the organizations
- Overseeing and monitoring organizational performance, and
- Ensuring overall accountability.

A more authoritative definition by *Gill (2005)* sees governance as” ***the exercise of authority, direction and control of an organization in order to ensure that its purpose is achieved***”

How can we assess the effectiveness of governance systems of Non- profit organizations? *Murray and Harrison (2012)* identify nine dimensions of governance effectiveness classified under three broad dimensions (a) Board responsibility in the Governance Process, (b) Factors that influence the Governance process and (c) effectiveness of these processes. The effectiveness of the process should ensure the achievement of the mission of the organization, sound financial situation, creation of efficient and innovative culture and having a high morale workforce that work

to achieve stakeholder's satisfaction and the reputation of the organization. If the board governance systems do not contribute to achieving these outcomes, then a deep reflection and action by board and management is necessary.

The following graphical presentation classified the various criteria in order of how they influence one another.



The assessment of the board was based on the nine critical areas of board effectiveness as stated below

1. Board formal structures and procedure
2. Board meeting effectiveness
3. Composition of the board and development of members
4. Informal culture of the board
5. Leadership effectiveness of organization
6. Clarity of board responsibilities
7. Board planning and policy setting
8. Due diligence responsibilities
9. Fund raising

The performance of the board on the nine critical areas is based on these descriptive values (a) very serious, (b) moderately serious and (c) few serious problems to describe the extend or magnitude of the problem.

*Areas of board effectiveness with very serious problems*

- Fund raising
- Board composition and development

*Areas of board effectiveness with moderately serious problems*

- Clarity of board responsibilities
- Board planning and policy setting
- Performance Assessment
- Board formal structures and procedure
- Informal culture of the board

*Areas of board effectiveness with few serious problems*

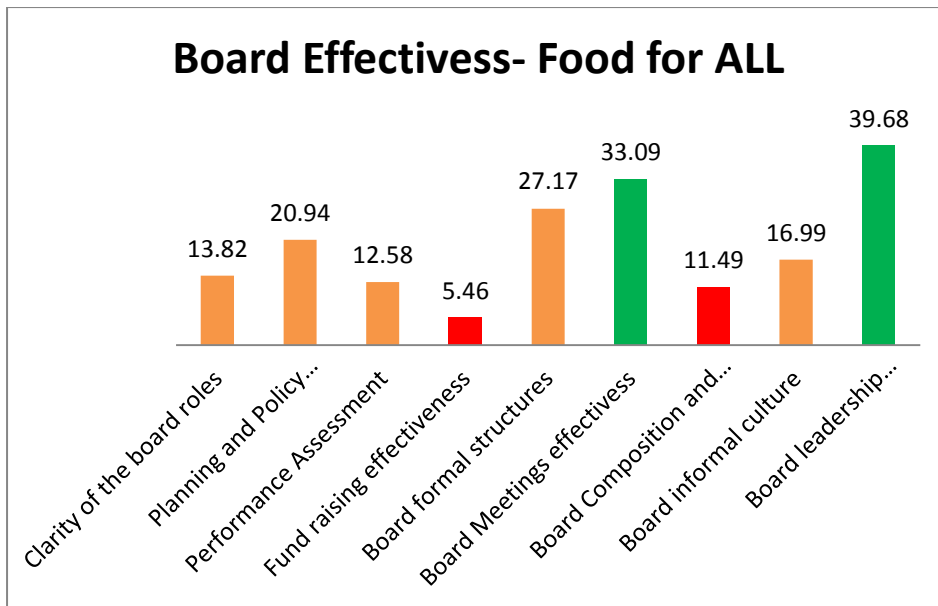
- Board meeting effectiveness
- Leadership effectiveness of organization

#### **4. ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS**

The number of completed questionnaires received was 22. This translates into a response rate of 75% based on the total number of people asked to complete the questionnaire. This means that the results is a true representative of population to warrant valid generalization of the results and how the group feels.

Overall total Score for the Board Performance Self-Assessment Questionnaire (BPSAQ) is calculated by adding together the scores for all items and dividing them by the number of respondents. This provides an average total score. In general, the higher the total average score, the greater the probability that the board is carrying out its governance function well. The Average Total Score for the board is 181.74 (of 272 Total Score). This means that the board of Food for All is a moderately effective board. The board may need to make some changes and undergo further development.

Figure 1 Board Assessment results



The analysis of the survey results shows that the board has serious problems and scored low on fundraising and issues on the Board composition and development with a score of 5.4% and 11.49% respectively. The board however performed well on organising effective Board meetings (33.09%) and also has a strong, effective and supportive leadership (39.68%) that provides strategic direction to the organization. The assessment results also shows a board that has moderate problems on clarity of board roles (13.82%) , planning and policy (20.94%), performance assessment (12.58%) , board formal structures (27.17%), and board informal culture(16.99%). The areas where the board has moderate problems are equally critical and the board needs to constantly reflect on these areas to avoid any slippage into critical problem areas. The analysis is graphically presented in figure 1 above.

## 5. DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the figure above, one can see that the board for FOOD FOR ALL needs to improve upon its fundraising role. There are many factors that accounted for this situation. The prominent ones are unclear roles of the board in the areas of fund raising. Even when they are aware of their fund raising roles, a lot of the board members do not have the practical and professional knowledge and background in fund raising. Another grey area is the differing expectations of the role in fundraising and those of the CEO and his or her professional fundraising staff. In situation where new board members are recruited, orientation and training of new board members does not cover board's role in fundraising. There is a lack of a clear overall fundraising policy /strategy for the organization and a clear structure indicating who is responsible for what, in implementing the fundraising plan. The fundraising policy/strategy should not only include guidelines on whether or not board members are expected to give, but also when and how much. In addition, expectations for “getting” or soliciting donations from others should also be

included. Lastly, the policy/strategy could include guidelines on how much time board members are expected to invest in governance work and organizational work. Once the policy/strategy is developed, it should be distributed to all current board members and given to every newly elected board member. Once the policy/strategy is in place, responsibility for its operationalization is given to a fund raising committee. This means that FOOD FOR ALL board should have a fundraising committee made of some board members. The committee could source for outside expertise to help in fundraising. In all these issues, critical leadership is necessary to give strategic direction in fundraising. The board aside approving the strategy are required to develop an effective system of monitoring fundraising activities by tracking the results, reviewing reports and given strategic advice in that regard. The leverage that FOOD FOR ALL has is the advantage of having a strong leadership culture that could be marshalled to galvanise the issues of fundraising. At this material moment, the board strategic and Generative role of asking critical questions is necessary in order to improve upon its governance system.

The second area of low performance is board composition and development. The factors that accounted for the board poor performance are culture of the board that is influence by unspoken share attitude, not having a mix of membership from varied background, limitless term of office for board members, lack of self - assessment of its work and being blind to the need for change.

The board need to ensure that they also get the right mix of people from varied professional background with due cognizance of diversity of members. The board as it is now is more homogeneous with members drawn from similar social and cultural background. Hence the board credibility in being representative of the interest of the masses is in doubts.

***“It is generally agreed that boards should represent the diversity of the people that they serve but research has established that many boards do not achieve this representation” (Bradshaw, Fredette & Sukornyk, 2009)***

To be representative, the board should recruitment people from diverse background but mindful of the need to have right people who are committed to the mission of the organization and have the right attitude for serving in the board. Again Freditte & Bradshaw 2011 noted ***“Given careful selection of the individual nominees, placement in the “right” role (also known as functional inclusion), and an adequate board development program, a diverse board can be much more effective than a homogeneous one”***

***Mentorship of new board members by old members will help provide a comfortable start up for the new members as part of their learning. This will also help integrate new board members into the board (Gill, p. 97). Mentors will also be able to answer any questions new members have regarding board procedures or expectations (Gill, p.97).***

Aside providing orientation for new board members, it is also essential that there is continuing education and development for members who are already serving on the board. Ongoing development and education can include learning more information about their organization and its changing environment. *To learn what areas or topics board members would like more training on, distribute an annual questionnaire to board members and choose governance topics that are important to the board at the time (Murray and Harrison, p.45).*

Ongoing development and training will ensure that board members are comfortable and capable in dealing with new and complex issues.

Continuous self - assessment of board members through formally or informally system of data collection could help the board improve upon its performance.

The board however exhibited two source of strength for the organization (i.e. effective board leadership and decision making processes in board meetings. The board can tap these strengths and use them as leverage in providing strategic direction for the organization.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The board self-assessment report identifies board strengths and areas for improvement. A fundraising strategy, new board member orientation and new member mentoring will help new board members understand their duties, time commitment and fundraising expectations. Continuous of old members on emerging change issues in the industry is equally critical.

To justify their acclaimed position of representing the concern of the poor and disadvantage in society, the board should take serious issues of diversity and inclusiveness in the recruitment of the board members but mindful of getting the right people with the right attitude to work. Altogether, these recommendations will help the board even more effective.

## **REFERENCE:**

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