

FACTORS INFLUENCING LOCAL PHILANTHROPY IN ST MARTIN CSA AND L'ARCHE KENYA

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Publication Date: February 2026

ABSTRACT

Purpose of Study: To examine factors influencing local philanthropy in St. Martin CSA and L'Arche Kenya.

Problem Statement: St Martin CSA and L'Arche Kenya have successfully engaged local communities in delivering development and social support services. This is supported by the African communal values and the spirit of collective action. The two organizations are currently experiencing donor and volunteer fatigue, threatening the sustainability of local philanthropy, necessitating a study on the decline of the giving tendency.

Methodology: The study adopted the exploratory qualitative research design since localized studies on the research subject were limited. Data was collected through focus group discussions involving market traders, business owners, volunteers, religious group members, community mobilization staff, and self-help groups that support the two organizations either individually or collectively. Purposive selection of respondents ensured homogeneity, relevance, and in-depth sharing of lived experiences. Data collected was summarized and organized in thematic areas and presented in text form to answer the research question.

Result: Religious beliefs, cultural values, donors' individualized exposure to the two organizations, intangible rewards, trust, and effective communication shaped philanthropists' behavior. In addition, the decision to give, including the amount, timing, and frequency were spontaneous and socially influenced.

Recommendation: The two organizations should strategically pursue donor confidence and retention by sharing success stories and showcasing the impact of completed and ongoing projects. They should also focus on maintaining the goodwill and the confidence of the local community by ensuring transparency and donor appreciation, as well as exploring innovative strategies of attracting and engaging the younger generation, for continuity.

Keywords: Local *Philanthropy*, *St Martin CSA*, *L'Arche Kenya*, *Repeated Giving*,

INTRODUCTION

St. Martin Catholic Social Apostolate (St Martin CSA) is a grassroots organization registered as a trust with the main aim of strengthening community capacities to care for and empower vulnerable people and marginalized groups by unlocking community capabilities and shifting perspectives about the poor and vulnerable people. They envision a just society in which communities uphold dignity and respect the voices of vulnerable and marginalized people. L'Arche Kenya is a faith-based, non-profit organization founded by St Martin CSA in 2003 to respond to the needs of Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. The organization is part of the global L'Arche movement and has gained independence from St Martin CSA. The core mandate of L'Arche Kenya is to promote the dignity, inclusion, and the general well-being of Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities by fostering inclusive communities where people with and without disabilities live, work, and grow together. The organization also offers disability rehabilitation services and other interventions in its target area. The organization focuses on enhancing social, cultural, economic, and spiritual inclusion for Persons with Disabilities and it also offers psychosocial support and advocates for the rights and plight of persons with disabilities. L'Arche

St Martin and L'Arche Kenya rely heavily on local philanthropists to fill resource gaps and foster meaningful participation of the local communities in development. The two organizations work with volunteers who play the pivotal role of connecting the community to the two organizations. Financially, local donors significantly support the two organizations' initiatives. Despite the key role played by local philanthropists, the two organizations face donor and volunteer fatigue. This happens against a background of strong local community support and goodwill. In addition, the motivating factors sustaining the local community's support for St Martin CSA and L'Arche Kenya projects remain largely unknown. This study, therefore, sought to identify motivating factors for sustained giving with a view to proposing strategies that would reinforce long-term community commitment and ensure that philanthropy remains a flourishing expression of shared identity and humanity.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In Kenya Philanthropy has its roots in cultural and religious traditions that emphasize collective responsibility and mutual aid. This is manifested in practices such as *Ubuntu* and *Harambee movement* (Mugumbate and Chereni, 2020). St Martin CSA and L'Arche Kenya practice these values through a community-based development model that promotes local resource mobilization. Their approach, guided by the motto "*Only Through Community*," integrates religious and traditional values in giving with modern accountability to nurture solidarity and restore human dignity, and general wellbeing for the vulnerable and marginalized groups of people in their target areas (Kalekye et al., 2019). Despite strong local goodwill and a history of communal generosity, both organizations are currently experiencing donor and volunteer fatigue, threatening the sustainability of support received from the local community. This highlights a gap between the ideal of resilient and sustained local philanthropy and the reality of declining support. The specific drivers of repeated giving to the two organizations remain largely unknown, limiting efforts to enhance sustainability.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the influence of cultural, psychological, social, and religious factors in sustaining local support for St Martin CSA and L'Arche Kenya.
2. To assess how organizational factors influence sustained giving.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do cultural, social, psychological, and religious factors shape local philanthropy in St Martin and L'Ache Kenya, target areas?
2. In which ways do organizational practices influence the continuity of donor and volunteer engagement?

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, philanthropy is the desire and actions intended to promote the welfare of others, usually expressed through initiatives that improve the quality of life for the underprivileged. Philanthropy is typically manifested through in-kind and monetary donations, voluntary work, or community service. While it is often associated with material giving, philanthropy also encompasses organized, strategic efforts to address the root causes of social challenges through advocacy, empowerment, and systemic reform (Kalekye et al, 2019). Ahmad and Khadse (2022) argued that philanthropy influences lasting social change. In Kenya, philanthropy is not a recent phenomenon; it is deeply rooted in the social, cultural, and religious values of the people. Generally, philanthropic practices reflect a synthesis of indigenous African values, Christian and Islamic charitable teachings, and community-based mechanisms of mutual support. These societal values emphasize interconnectedness, generalized reciprocity, and collective responsibility, all of which contribute to a distinctive African model of giving (Mugambi, 2020).

One of the most profound philosophical frameworks informing African philanthropy is *Ubuntu*, a concept found across Sub-Saharan Africa. Ubuntu, often summarized by the phrase "I am because you are," postulates that personhood is not individual but relational (Mbiti, 1977). According to Eze (2025), a person becomes fully human only in the context of others. Compassion, generosity, and community interdependence are not merely virtues but the essence of human identity. In many African societies, acts of philanthropy, such as sharing food, providing shelter, or supporting orphans, were not optional but moral responsibilities deeply rooted in this worldview (Mugumbate and Chereni, 2020). These practices functioned as both social safety nets and survival strategies, ensuring community resilience in times of crisis.

According to Christianity, philanthropy is founded on the conviction that generosity is both a divine responsibility and an expression of God's unconditional love for humanity. Christians understand giving not merely as an act of charity but as a sacred duty that aligns believers with God's concern for the poor (Fawenu, 2022). This tenet goes beyond an individual's generosity to a theology of social justice. In this perspective, Christians view all resources as gifts entrusted to them by God, and therefore, they are compelled to redistribute them for the common good and challenge the unjust distribution of resources (Sele and Wanjiku, 2024). Islamic philanthropy is inseparable from faith. It encompasses obligatory and voluntary contributions for the generalized good. *Zakah*, is a compulsory contribution in the Islamic faith; it institutionalizes redistributive justice by ensuring the material welfare of the needy. *Sadaqah*, on the other hand, is voluntary and it encourages continuous acts of kindness that deepen spiritual purification (Hughes and Siddiqui, 2024). Both Islamic and Christian philanthropy have contributed significantly to human development and alleviating the suffering of the less privileged in Kenya and beyond.

The spirit of philanthropy was institutionalized in Kenya in the post-independence period through the Harambee movement. The term *Harambee*, a Kiswahili word meaning "let us all pull together," became both a national motto and a practical tool for grassroots development. Under Harambee, communities voluntarily came together to raise funds and labor for public goods, including building schools, health centers, churches, and water projects (Chieni, 2001).

These efforts were characterized by a community-driven approach to development, addressing the most pressing community needs through collective action. Since independence, Harambee has contributed immensely to the social and economic development of Kenyans. According to Munyao (2024), approximately 70% of Kenyan adults had participated in a community fundraising event in the past five years, a testament to the enduring relevance of mutual giving in the Kenyan society.

In this context, philanthropy in Kenya should not be seen merely as the transfer of resources from the wealthy to the poor, but as a deeply moral, relational, and culturally enshrined practice. It is an affirmation of shared humanity and a commitment to collective growth, rooted in the culture of the traditional African society. During the colonial period and after independence, the traditional African society's value of giving was blended with Christian, Islamic, and other world religious values, cementing local philanthropy.

St Martin CSA and L'Arche Kenya use a blended community-based approach in implementing their social and community development projects. The two organizations' approach to development is summarized by their motto, "*only through community.*" This motto is inspired by the African traditional society philosophy of Ubuntu, "*I am because we are,*" and religious convictions that every person is inherently valuable. The motto tends to emphasize community led change process founded on the principles of local ownership. Resources donated to the two organizations to support their work in the form of monetary, in-kind, or volunteer time flow from community members, who include, among others, micro and small traders like market traders, retailers, and supermarket and wholesale traders, faith-based groups, former beneficiaries, and professionals who believe in their work. Both organizations fuse traditional and religious mutual-aid practices with modern accountability measures, outcome tracking, and impact reporting to ensure transparency and sustainability as proposed by Kalekye et al. (2019).

The reciprocal benefits of this approach benefit the receiver (St Martin and L'Ache Kenya), projects' beneficiaries, and the donors. For example, community volunteers gain knowledge and skills, social recognition, and a renewed sense of purpose as they support their peers and fellow community members in their healing process (Eze, 2025). Likewise, individual beneficiaries, their families, and the target community in general experience transformed attitudes, heal from their past negative experiences, gain enriched community life, and tangible benefits that alleviate individual sufferings, strengthen social bonds, and create capacity within the community to drive their growth and development needs (Ahmad and Khadse, 2022). Local donors, on the other hand, receive self-satisfaction (referred to by St Martin Approach as the joy of giving) and spiritual fulfillment, since giving is not viewed as a one-way transaction but as participation in a collective journey toward humanity that triggers a multiplicity of social transactions that in the long run contribute to a generalized good (Mugumbate and Chereni, 2020). The complex network of social transactions and relationships, and the personalized accrued benefits to all stakeholders, is generally referred to by the St Martin Approach as solidarity creation. The desired end of solidarity creation according to the approach is restoration of social justice, human dignity, and fulfilling community life that supports healing, recovery, and improved quality of life to the marginalized groups of people supported by the two organizations.

Despite the benefits of local philanthropy to St Martin CSA, L'Ache Kenya, and all stakeholders, the two organizations face donor and volunteer fatigue. This happens against a background of a strong local community support and goodwill accorded to the two organizations. In addition, the motivating factors sustaining the local community's support for St Martin CSA and L'Ache Kenya projects remain largely unknown. This study, therefore, sought to identify motivating factors for sustained giving with a view to proposing strategies

that would reinforce long-term community commitment and ensure that philanthropy remains a flourishing expression of shared identity and humanity.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed an exploratory research design to assess the largely undocumented motivational factors sustaining volunteer and material support to St Martin CSA and L'Arche Kenya. The research was conducted within the organizations' target areas in parts of Baringo, Laikipia, and Nyandarua Counties, focusing on individuals and groups of people who contributed resources or time to the two organizations' initiatives. Primary data was gathered through focus group discussions (FGDs). Respondents included market traders, micro and small business owners, community volunteers, religious organization members, community mobilization staff, and interest group members, who were purposively selected to ensure homogeneity and in-depth sharing of lived experiences. FGDs explored participants' experiences, beliefs, and perceptions regarding sustained giving. Qualitative data collected was transcribed, summarized, and analyzed thematically to identify recurrent patterns and insights. Ethical considerations, including voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for human dignity, were upheld. Findings of the study informed the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Reasons for Donating to St Martin CSA and L'Arche Kenya

Responses given on the reasons why respondents gave to St Martin were categorized into three thematic areas. These included religious values, cultural values, and personal experiences. Respondents agreed that their giving was rooted in faith. A respondent observed that "*giving is a command from the Bible*". Another respondent described giving as part of fulfilling tithing, while another respondent noted that "*true generosity comes from the heart... and brings blessing. When you give, you never lack.*" These responses agreed with Mati's (2020) assertion that in Kenya, religious belief is a powerful driver of charity, where donors are driven by everyday moral and ethical compulsions drawn from religious beliefs. Christian teachings identify charity as a duty of every Christian, and giving attracts blessings and God's favor. Studies show that religiosity predicts giving, and church attendance is a strong positive predictor of charitable donations (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011).

Respondents observed that it was part of their culture to give to people in need. They viewed volunteering and giving as acts of helping their brothers and sisters in need or neighbors that reflected a social tie between the donors and the recipients, although in most cases they didn't share blood relations. This agreed with Ochido (2013), who opined that Harambee movement in Kenya is based on the values of mutual assistance, joint effort, and community responsibility, an observation that resonated with TrustAfrica (2023) observation that African philanthropy is grounded in solidarity, reciprocity, and a communal ethic, supporting one respondent's views that giving is a social obligation for all members of his community.

Respondents also expressed personal experiences where they received support from others; two respondents attributed their achievements in life to the people who supported them earlier in their lives. A respondent reported that "*always someone needs my help,*" while another respondent noted that "*we had our own hard times and therefore we want to make it easier for someone else in need.*" These statements suggest a personal connection to the beneficiaries' struggles. These findings point out that personal experiences with an issue strongly predict charitable giving, as noted by Brown and Ferris (2007). Findings of this study align with Perkins (2023) argument that philanthropy in resource-deprived communities is mainly driven by lived experiences and a desire to reduce others' suffering.

First Encounter with St Martin CSA and L'Arche Kenya

All responses given during FDGs attributed respondents' initial involvement with St Martin or L'Arche Kenya's initiatives to direct contact with the organizations. The responses included *"after visiting the organization, receiving services or experiencing the two organizations' staff offering support services, community mobilization activities including awareness raising activities in churches, roadshows, participating in mental health fundraising activity or market awareness, and encounter with Fr. Gabrielle (founder of St Martin CSA)"*, suggesting that the respondent had personal and experiential contact. These activities involved storytelling and opportunities for the participants to contribute and/or get a deeper understanding of the two organizations. Others witnessed changes in the lives and conditions of people close or known to them following St Martin's or L'Arche Kenya's interventions. Philanthropy literature postulates that exposure to services offered by charitable organizations through awareness creation activities, witnessing transformation in the lives of beneficiaries, or participating in their project activities reduces psychological distance between potential supporters and the organization. This aligned with L'Arche Kenya's philosophy of *"come and see"* that targets to recruit volunteers by giving them an opportunity to experience life in their homes for people with intellectual disabilities. Potential volunteers live and work with People with Intellectual Disability for a period of time before they are given an opportunity to serve as volunteers. Findings of this study agree with Bhati (2020), the observation that individuals are more likely to volunteer or give donations to a charitable organization after getting a better understanding of the organization, experiencing changes in beneficiaries, or participating in providing support. This suggests that personalized experiences serve as channels of recruiting and motivators for repeated support to St Martin and L'Ache Kenya.

Gains from Giving

Respondents gave a wide range (21) of responses that revolved around psychological, social, and spiritual growth. Respondents explained that they experienced psychological satisfaction after giving. They noted that they felt happy, satisfied, and a sense of fulfillment when they gave. This aligns with the philosophy of *"the joy of giving"* expressed as an outcome of giving by the St Martin Approach. Post (2025) observed that prosocial acts yield positive emotions for the helper, agreeing with Dunn *et al.'s* (2008) observation that volunteers and philanthropists report an increased sense of purpose, self-fulfillment, happiness, and self-accomplishment as they continue giving. Giving is a social obligation rooted in the culture of the people living in the two organizations' target area. Respondents observed that supporting others reinforced interconnectedness between people and social ties. A respondent reported that *"I have a duty to care for the less fortunate in my community,"* another respondent opined that she must help others since she was helped earlier in her life, and by so doing, she asserted that *"... I fulfill my obligation and calling, you also make others feel loved and part of the community."* Another respondent observed that *"I no longer feel guilty when referring a needy person to St Martin ... they should get the help I received. Their lives should be changed as it happened to me, and together we make a better society where everyone's needs are met, and their dignity remains intact."*

These responses suggest that philanthropy to respondents was both a cultural value and a social responsibility that places the duty of care for the less fortunate on the able members of society. This concurs with the philosophy of *Ubuntu* (I am because we are), which enables individuals and society to thrive through individual and collective contributions to the generalized good. The combined efforts of all players involved alleviate individual and collective suffering. Similar values are advanced by the Harambee movement, where individuals contribute their own resources to meet communal needs, as observed by Mugambi (2020). Respondents also

linked giving to spiritual rewards. Consistently, beneficiaries used phrases like “*to be or to receive blessings, God’s favor, and God’s protection in their endeavors.*” A respondent reported that “*I benefit a lot from giving, I receive God’s blessing and favor, which I have witnessed in the achievements of my children and business.*” Repeatedly, respondents noted that “*I experience blessings upon my life,*” “*I believe that God opens doors for me out of giving, and He also protects my family from evils.*”

In addition, different respondents observed that they benefited from giving by receiving goods on credit, or experiencing a financial breakthrough, or attributed their successes and achievements to God’s blessings since they frequently give to the poor. These suggest an expectation of tangible benefits through spiritual reciprocation or social capital created by giving. Moreover, one respondent said she gained “*a new perception of people in need, especially people with mental illness,*” indicating personal growth and attitude change. Volunteering and charitable work often expose helpers to others’ struggles, which can increase their understanding of reality in their social and cultural environment. These findings reflected the local community’s views on the benefit of giving. They align with existing literature, especially on philanthropy in the African context, where giving is deeply rooted in cultural and religious values.

Values behind Giving to St Martin and L’Arche Kenya Initiatives

Respondents attributed their giving to the two organizations to Christian and cultural values, and the need to preserve human dignity. Respondents viewed their engagement in charity as a service to God and humanity, or a demonstration of faith through action. Bekkers and Wiepking (2011) postulated that the level of an individual’s religious beliefs shapes and determines the frequency and reasons behind giving. A respondent reported that “*as Christians it is good for us to give, since the Bible tells us so.*” Another respondent explained that “*when we give, we become tools through which God responds to the cries of His people who are suffering. It is precious to be part of God’s work.*” Another respondent noted that “*it is part of our African culture to give and support the less fortunate.*” This aligns with the Harambee and Ubuntu’s principles of mutuality and generalized reciprocity (Mbiti, 1970). The cultural values, therefore, influence community mobilization and the giving of both material and nonmaterial goods as observed by TrustAfrica (2022). Although respondents mainly attributed their giving to religious and cultural values, four of them included restoring human dignity and the desire to serve humanity as a reason to engage in philanthropy. To them, giving is therefore a moral duty, agreeing with Ahmad and Khadse's (2022) proposition that human dignity and life preservation are key values and motivators to giving, especially in a faith-based organization’s context.

Decision Making on How Much and How Often to Give

Respondents' decisions on how much to give and how frequently they give were mainly spontaneous. This was determined by their ability and the situation at hand. Individuals give when they are asked to, when they are moved by a situation, or give what they can (Karlan and List, 2007). A respondent's observation that “*Charity is not taught at school but learnt at home*” indicates that family and cultural values model generosity, since shared values with a family or cultural context influence an individual's philanthropic behavior, suggesting that philanthropy can also be intergenerational as proposed by Bekkers (2005).

Social Expectations Related to Giving

Two participants noted that giving is associated with good people: “*We believe that a person who gives is good.*” This agrees with Mbiti’s (1970) view that African culture encourages mutual assistance and social responsibility, making generosity an indicator of a good person according to the society’s definition of good. Respondents also asserted that giving is linked to creating new networks of friendships and social connections. It also strengthens the existing social networks in the community. This agrees with Brown and Ferris (2007) observation that giving reinforces social bonds and trust, and gains social capital, which is described by the St Martin Approach as creating solidarity within the targeted communities. In addition, the approach proposes that giving results to the joy of service, as noted three times in this session and several times in previous sessions. Joy of service, in return gives donors and volunteers a sense of satisfaction and improve their social well-being, as reported by one of the respondents “... *by giving and volunteering, I create new friend who are helpful in my life, I also feel like I am an important member of my community and people recognize and respect me for what I offer through voluntary services.*” These findings indicate that giving is a social good driven by the cultural and religious values of mutuality and generalized reciprocity. It reinforces bonding within the society, and through networks of relationships, society creates social safety nets for its vulnerable members. Further, individuals who take part in philanthropy gain satisfaction, fulfillment, a sense of self-worth, and social approval.

Influence of Family, Peers, and Friends on Giving

A respondent repeated his earlier remarks that generosity and giving are not learnt in school but rather in families; in his words, “*giving is encouraged or discouraged by the family and community members, children learn to be generous from their families and community*”. Another respondent observed that “*children and youths will continue the culture of giving if only they learn from their parents and elders that giving will never make anyone poor, but rather, it enriches the quality of their lives and those of others. It also enables them to meet their religious obligation of serving humanity.*” These findings suggest that the family and the immediate community play an important role in shaping philanthropy, both currently and in the future, through the process of socialization. Philanthropy literature supports the argument that family modelling plays an integral role in shaping philanthropy among African households (LeBaron et al., 2019). Therefore, family members, peers, and the immediate community serve as multipliers or discouragers of philanthropy. Collective giving, that is, at church, groups, or associations, tends to encourage individuals to give and maintain the behavior as noted by one respondent, who said that “*when you ask people in a church or a group to give, you plant the seed of giving to all participants, including those who normally don’t give.*” A respondent observed that “*competing needs within a household discourage giving, however for me I give even when I do not have. One time I had only two thousand left in my pocket, I chose to give the money to a children's home God provided for my family in a big way.*” Individual and family needs, as well as the prevailing social and economic situation, inform giving. Findings of this study suggest that giving is informed by a myriad of factors that include socialization, individual choices, and influence from the family, friends, and peers.

Organizational factors

Respondents identified trust, long-term credibility, and proper treatment of beneficiaries, donors, and volunteers as factors that inform their support for St Martin CSA and L’Arche Kenya. According to Sargeant and Lee (2004), trust is a key predictor of donor loyalty. The two organizations were reported to be accountable and transparent in their operations. They also vet beneficiaries, and therefore, the donors felt that their resources were used on the right people and for the right purpose. This agrees with Sargeant and Lee’s (2004) assertion that the

level of accountability and transparency significantly influences donors' retention. Additionally, respondents reported that the two organizations have consistently offered their services to the local community without discrimination and have produced positive outcomes for a long time. Donors often associate longevity with competence, moral integrity, and high-impact programming, explaining why some organizations retain donors for a long time while others do not (Awio et al., 2011). Findings of this study suggest that the two organizations have earned themselves a reputation of trust, accountability, credibility, and transparency, which translates to continued support from local philanthropists.

Communication

Respondents reported that the two organizations reach them through multiple communication channels. These included scheduled face-to-face meetings, awareness sessions in churches and markets, roadshows and other campaigns, invitations, information, and appreciation letters, committee meetings, social media, and receiving receipts after donation. A respondent noted that *"their communication channels, content of the messages given, and recognition of our little support keep us going."* Findings of this study indicate that the communication channels and message framing have a direct influence on the donor's behavior. They keep them informed and involved, and hence influence their giving to the two organizations positively. Communication done by St Martin CSA and L'Arche Kenya meets the functions of communication in fundraising as proposed by Merchant et al (2010), who observed that communication in fundraising should seek to attain awareness, that is, giving information about the proposed project to the intended audience. In this context, this is attained through church and market outreaches and roadshows. The second aspect of communication is retention, which St Martin CSA and L'Arche Kenya attain through receipts, thank-you letters, committee meetings, and reporting. The former attracts new donors, while the latter converts them into repeat givers.

Social Benefits of Philanthropy

Responses given indicated that respondents view philanthropy as a form of social investment. A respondent noted that *"by being involved in the fundraising committee I have created beneficial social connections,"* another respondent reported that *"I have created friends through St. Martin CSA."* Philanthropy also improves social standing and social prestige for the givers, as well as a feeling of self-accomplishment and fulfilment. A respondent said, *"... people value and listen to me because of my giving."* Another respondent reported that *"after supporting someone in need, you feel happy and useful ..."* Similarly, another respondent noted that *"donating gives you a feeling good effect, a kind of special feeling deep inside your heart."* Findings of this study conform to existing literature on philanthropy. Brown and Ferris (2007) opined that giving has both individualized and social returns. These include psychological satisfaction and the "feel good effect" as well as social recognition, networks, and influence, which might be mobilized in future social exchange for personal or mutual benefit.

Challenges Faced by Supporters

Respondents reported that they face ridicule from their peers, family, and members of their society, and at times they face resistance and lack of support from their own family members, beneficiaries they serve, as well as the families of beneficiaries. A respondent reported that *"at times it is difficult to be a volunteer. Members of the community view us as lost and misguided people who prioritize the needs of others at the expense of our own lives ..."* another respondent observed that *"people close to me like my wife at times find it strange that I give out family resources whereas we do not have enough to meet all our needs."* Time constraints, competing interests and needs, lack of commitment by some staff members and volunteers, and hard economic times were also mentioned as some of the challenges faced by respondents. Existing

literature on philanthropy highlights social sanctions such as disapproval and ridicule, financial constraints, and feeling unappreciated as some of the drawbacks to continued giving (Shuria, 2014). Respondents observed a discrepancy between the geographical space receiving services offered by the two organizations and the geographical space mobilized for resources. A respondent explained that “*in my opinion I do not think it is right to mobilize resources in areas where St Martin CSA does not offer services ...*” Regarding this, philanthropy literature suggests open communication on geographical scope and selection criteria to maintain trust and mitigate perceptions of inequity (Okinda, 2013). Other respondents cited communication breakdown, competing interests, and the continuous nature of community life.

Discussions

Religious values and convictions were identified as a major motivating factor for giving. Respondents to the FDG repeatedly referred to the Biblical teachings as one of the reasons behind their giving. They viewed helping the vulnerable as a divine duty and as a way of putting their faith into practice. Respondents consistently reported that they have a duty to care for the less fortunate, and it is in giving that they share the love of God with His people. Another frequently repeated response was “*faith without action is dead.*” Responses also expressed religious belief related to giving; some of the most repeated included “*blessings come through giving*” and “*the Bible commands us to care for the poor.*” This ties generosity to faith, where giving is viewed as a “service to God”. According to Bekkers and Wiepking (2011), religiosity is a strong predictor of charitable giving. Findings of this study, therefore, suggest that people who give to St Martin CSA and L’Arche Kenya, identify with the religious values of giving. This perspective is shaped by religious teaching and the need to practice their faith. Other respondents described giving as producing joy, inner peace, spiritual fulfillment, and a sense of being blessed and important in society. Statements such as “*God rewards those who give*” and “*it gives me joy to help*” were recurrent themes. Dunn, Akin, and Norton (2008) established that prosocial spending increases personal happiness. This “feeling good” effect of giving sustains philanthropic tendencies.

The local culture, which subscribes to the principles of Ubuntu and Harambee movement, is another important factor influencing giving among the local community. Respondents to the study described helping others as “*how we were raised,*” while other respondents viewed giving as a product of the socialization process at the family and community level. This explained why they viewed learning generosity as a lesson learnt from and reinforced by encouragement from parents, relatives, and community elders. They also highlighted the influence of peers, church groups, and self-help groups, where giving becomes a shared value, creating a social expectation around it among peers and members of such groups. This suggests that the local communal norms tend to favor solidarity and interdependence. This explained why people who give are valued, agreeing with the Mbithi (1977) assertion that “I am because we are.” The shared social value tied with giving reinforced respondents’ support for St Martin CSA and L’Arche Kenya to some extent. This explained why some respondents reported social rewards, such as increased respect, reputation, and expanded networks, as effects of giving.

Respondents widely reported that their first encounter with St Martin or L’Arche was through direct personal exposure. This included visiting a program, observing staff working, hearing a testimony, knowing someone who received help, or participating in awareness activities in a church or marketplace. These interactions reduced social distance, which, according to Bekkers and Wiepking (2011), increases generosity. They argued that awareness and empathy are triggered by witnessing need directly and, as a result, activate prosocial behavior through which St Martin and L’Arche receive support from the local community.

According to Karlan and List's (2007) level of giving is influenced by factors such as the context, timing, and emotional stimuli. This agreed with responses given, where participants reported that the amount and frequency of giving is largely spontaneous, dependent on financial ability and emotional response. Further, this is influenced by the local community's perception of the level of trust in the receiving organization. Respondents described St Martin CSA and L'Arche Kenya as credible organizations that had operated in the research area for a long time, consistently delivering services to the less fortunate without discrimination and with love. They noted that St Martin and L'Arche Kenya staff and volunteers are trustworthy, and donations given are channeled to the right people and purpose. Sargeant and Lee (2004) found that trust is a strong factor in donor's retention, suggesting that decision to continue supporting St Martin CSA and L'Arche Kenya by some people over long period of time or repeated donation is pegged on their perceptions on how trustworthy the two organizations are, as well as their financial ability and how emotionally appealing are the requests of support given by the two organizations.

In a nutshell, FGD responses indicate that St Martin CSA and L'Arche Kenya have cultivated institutional goodwill, which is a key intangible asset that enhances donor retention and community trust. Further, they have succeeded in appealing and creating the need and urgency for the local people to support vulnerable groups of people in their communities. The approach to development used by the two organizations supports inclusivity and widespread community participation, which has become an anchor to their interventions. It also aligns with the religious and cultural values of the local community. The two organizations were described as credible, consistent, humane, and safe for the people in need, hence creating trust among the local community. The factors motivated the participants to give and sustained giving, hence explaining why 78% of respondents had been repeatedly giving to the two organizations for more than five years.

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions were derived from the findings and discussions of this study; Religious and cultural values significantly influence donor motivations. Respondents perceived giving as both a religious calling and a cultural responsibility, rooted in biblical teachings and the principles of the Ubuntu and Harambee movements. These values and beliefs form a moral foundation that compels individuals to give consistently and support community welfare initiatives. Despite this, it is worth noting that religious and cultural values have less influence on the younger generation.

Personal exposure to St Martin CSA and L'Arche Kenya significantly influences donor commitment. Direct encounters, such as volunteers' experiences and testimonies from beneficiaries, help donors understand the real impact of their contributions. This reduces emotional distance, enhances empathy, and increases sustained involvement.

Donors receive important intangible benefits through giving, including spiritual fulfillment, emotional satisfaction, and social recognition. These psychological rewards reinforce their identity as compassionate and responsible community members, playing a vital role in shaping long-term giving patterns.

Trust and organizational credibility remain central to donor retention. The organization's long-standing presence, consistent service delivery, and transparency in financial management have created a strong foundation of trust. Donors believe their contributions are used responsibly, which encourages recurring support.

Communication practices greatly influence donor engagement. Timely thank-you messages, updates on project progress, social media communication, and transparency reports help donors feel appreciated and informed. Clear communication fosters strong relationships and enhances donor loyalty.

Giving behavior is often spontaneous and driven by emotional triggers, group influence, and perceived urgency. Collective settings such as churches and community gatherings are especially effective in motivating individuals to contribute.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthen transparency through structured and timely reporting of the impact achieved from the resources contributed by local donors. This may also include change stories and simple data visualizations to enhance trust and donor satisfaction.
2. The two organizations explore new strategies that would promote philanthropy among the young generation in Kenya and Africa in general. This is because traditional religious and cultural influences are less significant for this group; approaches such as storytelling, lived experiencing, and peer-based giving can be part of these strategies. Strategies employed should be emotionally appealing, resonate with their needs, and align with their values.
3. Enhance donor appreciation through personalized communication. Sending thank-you letters and acknowledgment messages to ensure donors feel valued.
4. Institutionalize experiential donor engagement by organizing regular open days and interaction sessions with beneficiaries to strengthen donor confidence, trust, and emotional connection.
5. Strengthen partnerships with religious leaders and community organizations. These networks are influential in shaping public perceptions and can serve as effective platforms for mobilizing resources and encouraging giving.
6. Improve monitoring and learning systems by tracking donor retention rates, engagement levels, and feedback. Regularly evaluating donor experiences will help identify gaps and strengthen donor management strategies.
7. Communicate transparently when mobilizing resources outside service areas. Explaining the rationale behind such efforts and forming partnerships with local institutions will prevent misunderstandings and reinforce fairness.

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