

A Practical Handbook for
**FINANCIAL
MANAGEMENT**

FOR COMMUNITY BASED
AND SMALL WOMEN'S RIGHTS
ORGANISATIONS IN AFRICA



AFRICAN WOMEN'S
DEVELOPMENT FUND

Credits

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Published by African Women's Development Fund in 2011

Revised version published by African Women's Development Fund in 2017

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Produced with support from the African Capacity Building Foundation.



THE AFRICAN CAPACITY BUILDING FOUNDATION | FONDATION POUR LE RENFORCEMENT DES CAPACITES EN AFRIQUE



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A note about the design

The patterns in this publication were hand-drawn and designed to be abstract representations of the handbook's key themes.

Foreword

The African Women's Development Fund was founded out of the need for African women to take greater leadership around the resources allocated to advancing rights and development on the African continent. In almost two decades of our existence as a fund we aim to provide the 'best quality' possible in resourcing of African women's organisations, paying attention both to the important work that they do to advance equality and justice, but also to address the needs that these organisations have for support in adapting and managing the stresses created by political and economic crises and emergencies, along with growing their organisations in scale and impact.

AWDF stakeholders are formal and informal advisors that span different networks of African women rights activists and organisations extending to almost every country on the African continent. Some of these networks include the [**African Feminist Forum**](#) and the [**African Women Leaders Network on Reproductive Health and Family Planning**](#), both events have been hosted by AWDF for several years. Under the [**Leading from the South grantmaking initiative \(2017-2020\)**](#), AWDF will also fund women's rights organisations in selected countries in the Middle East.

AWDF provides grants in the following thematic areas:

- [**Body and Health Rights**](#)
- [**Economic Security and Justice**](#)
- [**Leadership Participation and Peace**](#)

AWDF established the Capacity Building Unit in order to provide more holistic support for our grantee organisations. Through capacity building programming we make targeted investments in African women's organisations to allow them to reflect, scale up and build efficient systems as well as growing inspiring and accountable organisational

cultures. As Hope Chigudu, feminist organisational development expert and long-time technical consultant to AWDF would put it - we invest to help nurture organisations with a soul¹. This kind of core investment can be hard to find - particularly for smaller African women's organisations - as much of the funding available for women's rights focuses on project-based investments.

At AWDF we believe that in order to achieve impacts towards our collective mission of advancing our women's rights we also need to dedicate resources to help build the capacity of changemaker organisations.

As a donor, AWDF aims to support best practice financial management both internally and also amongst our grantees. We acknowledge that financial management is an area that many smaller and community based organisations needs support with, particularly when balancing smaller and project specific budgets, which make it difficult to cost professional support around finances. We encourage general finance management literacy among our grantees as well as providing specific training for finance staff to strengthen internal systems and sustain good financial management practice.

This guide was originally developed by AWDF staff, then updated by AWDF's Finance Manager Gertrude Bibi Annoh Quarshie based on the emerging needs of grantees. This third update includes further information and research on financial risk management and procurement.

We hope that this document will continue to be useful for women's rights organisations.

We welcome feedback on how you are using it!

Jessica Horn
Director of Programmes, AWDF

¹ Chigudu, H. and Chigudu, R., 2015. [**Strategies for Building an Organisation with a Soul**](#). African Institute for Integrated Responses to Violence Against Women and HIV/AIDS (AIR).

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This handbook provides tools to support NGOs - especially small women's organisations in Africa - in developing general financial management techniques to ensure the long term survival of their programmes and institutions.

Financial management is often de-prioritised with little effort placed on recruiting qualified personnel to manage finances. This often leads to poor financial planning, unsustainable organisational growth, lack of credibility and ineffective monitoring systems.

This guide will enable all managers and staff in appreciating the importance of:

- **Develop financial management systems and procedures;**
- **Understand the impact of these systems on the overall performance of your organisation;**
- **Enable non financial managers to locate their role in financial management and internal controls;**
- **Improve organisational transparency and accountability mechanisms;**
- **Build basic strategies for long term financial sustainability.**

Acronyms/Glossary

Abbreviations/Acronyms

AWDF	African Women's Development Fund
NGOs	Non Governmental Organisations
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning



Glossary

Accountability: The legal duty, placed on an individual, group or organisation, to explain how funds, equipment or authority given by a third/ external party has been used.

Accounting software: A computer application that records and processes accounting transactions within functional modules such as accounts payable, accounts receivable, payroll, and trial balance.

Assets: Assets are what your organization has, what is owed to you, what you have invested in, and what you have deposited with others.

Audit trail: A system that traces the detailed transactions relating to any item in an accounting record.

Authorisation and Approval Controls: Activities that mitigate the risk of inappropriate transactions and serve as fraud deterrents and enforce segregation of duties.

Budget: A plan of activities expressed in monetary terms

Cash Flow: Is the difference between the amount of actual cash coming in to an organisation such as grants and the amount of actual cash going out of an organisation in the form of expenses, such as salaries.

Cash Flow Budget: A form of budgeting that requires organisations to project revenue and expenditures on a month-by-month basis throughout each fiscal year.

Cash Management: A broad term that refers to the collection, concentration, flow and disbursement of cash. It encompasses a company's level of liquidity, its management of cash balance, and its short-term investment strategies.

Control Environment: The atmosphere in which people conduct their activities and carry out their control responsibilities.

Control Consciousness: The control environment is the control consciousness of an organization, representing the various measures taken by management to protect the assets of the organisation. See also Control Environment.



Control Activities: Procedures to ensure that an organisation's responses to risks are carried out.

Cost Recovery: The act of recouping the costs of any given expense.

Creditor's Payment Schedule: Timeline by which payments are made to a contractor or creditor. Once a pattern of payment is established, it is then possible to estimate the cost each month. The estimated figures for payment will be used in the cash budget to help determine any shortfall in the cash position before the shortfall happens.

Custodianship: Safekeeping of financial resources.

Diversification: Securing funds from as wide a base as possible – the local business community, the general public, and not just external institutional donors.

Donor Funding: When a business or organisation is financed by outside sources.

Double Accounting: This occurs when more than one donor being charged for the same expenses.

Double Entry System: A system of bookkeeping where every entry to an account requires a corresponding to a different account, typically a debit and credit entry.

Economies of Scale: A proportionate saving in costs gained by an increased level of production.

External Audit: An independent examination of an organisation's financial statements.

Filing: Storing information for future reference.

Financial Management: Actions taken to ensure the financial health of an organisation, including but not limited to: planning, organising, controlling and monitoring the financial resources of an organisation.

Fraud: A deliberate, improper action which leads to financial loss to the organisation.

Funding Mix: A continuum of different sources that enables it to generate a steady income over time.

Imprest: A sum of money that is set aside to cover small, regular expenses. This sum is replenished when it is used.

Incremental Budgeting: Normally shows a percentage increase on the former budgeted or actual figures.

Integrity: The ability of an organisation to be honest, uphold moral principles and act in alignment with stated beliefs and community agreements. Integrity builds the reliability, honesty and dependability of an organisation.

Internal Controls: Methods to ensure the integrity of financial and accounting information and meet operational and sustainability target goals.

Management Controls: Measures to evaluate various management resources such as human resources, financial resources, etc.

Management Estimates: Predictions which occur when an organisation must make assumptions about matters that are "highly uncertain."

Monthly Variance Analysis: Looks after-the-fact at what caused a difference between budgeted spending and actual spending.

Negative Cash Flow: When the amount of outflowing cash is higher than incoming cash within a given time period.

NGOs: International Non-Governmental Organisations; A non-profit citizens' group organized and working towards societal impact on a local, national or international level.



Non-deficit financing: Occurs when sufficient funding is secured to cover all activities towards meeting an organisation's objectives and sustainable growth.

Order: The consistency of financial systems over time. Order provides data and space for comparisons, analysis, and transparency.

Overhead: Refers to expenses not related to direct labor, direct materials and/or third party expenses billed directly to clients

Petty Cash: A set amount of cash fund available at any point in time for cash payments. As payments are made from this fund, it has to be topped up or replenished because that fund has to be available.

Per Diem: A specific amount of money an organization gives an employee per day to cover living expenses when traveling for work.

Personnel Controls: Methods or activities to help staff and employees be motivated.

Positive Cash Flow: When inflowing cash is higher than the cash outflow within a given time period

Procurement: The process by which an organisation acquires goods and services or commissions work to be done on its behalf by an external supplier.

Pro-forma invoice: A preliminary bill of sale sent to buyers in advance of a delivery of goods, which typically includes a description of the purchased items and the cost along with other important information.

Reserves: Funds or materials set aside or saved for future use

Restricted Funding: Grants or donated funds that can only be used for a specific purpose.

Reward policies: The benefits that are accrued to staff who work for the organisation.

Risk Assessment: An evaluation of the potential risks in a projected activity.

Sale by Tender: A fixed, or tangible, asset is marketed for sale with or without a guide price and there is a deadline for all offers.

Self-financing: When a business or organisation finances itself without receiving funds from outside sources.

Standard documentation: Maintaining financial records that can be understood by any accountant/ financial specialist from anywhere in the world.

Strategic Plans: An organisation's method of defining its direction and comprehensive plan on how to achieve stated goals and objectives. This includes decisions on the allocation of resources in support of these aims.

Transparency: Openness of organisational processes in order to remain visible and trustworthy to those within and outside of operations.

Un-presented Cheques: Those issued by the organisation but are yet to be presented by the recipient.

Unrestricted Funding: Grants or donated funds that an organisation can use for any purpose.

Zero Based Budgeting (ZBB): Divides the year into periods (quarters, months, etc.) and creates a new budget for every period.



Introduction

Why Financial Management?

In practical terms, financial management is about taking action to look after the financial health of your organisation.

Financial management is a continuous process of planning, organising, controlling and monitoring the financial resources of an organisation to achieve desired objectives, impact and outcomes.

Financial management is not just about keeping accounting records. It is a critical part of programme management and must not be seen as a separate activity left to specialist staff or only the finance officers.

Financial management is vital in both commercial and not-for-profit entities. The ultimate goal for an NGO is to meet a social justice objective, not a corporate one, but the fundamentals of financial management are no different to those organisations or entities driving a profit through sales, irrespective of the organisation's structure or political and social purpose.

Financial management is important because it will:

- **Assist in the effective and efficient use of resources** to achieve stated objectives and fulfil commitment to stakeholders;
- **Help with accountability** within an organisation;
- **Build respect and confidence** of funding agencies, partners and beneficiaries;
- **Develop your competitive advantage** over other organisations;
- **Prepare for long term sustainability and growth.**

7 Principles of Financial Management

There are seven key principles to financial management. You may find it easier to remember these principles by thinking of the **A.C.T.I.O.N.S** you need to take:

PRINCIPLE	DEFINITION
Accountability	The legal duty, placed on an individual, group or organisation, to explain how funds, equipment or authority given by a third/external party has been used.
Custodianship	Safekeeping of financial resources within organisation
Transparency	Openness of organisational processes in order to remain visible and trustworthy to those within and outside of operations.
Integrity	Builds upon the reliability, consistency, honesty and dependability of an organisation and those working within it.
Order	Represents the consistency of financial systems over time. Order allows data and space for comparisons, analysis, and transparency.
Non-deficit financing	Ensuring sufficient funding is available to cover all activities and therefore meet organisational objectives and sustainable growth.
Standard documentation	Maintaining regular financial records that can be understood by any accountant/financial specialist from anywhere in the world.



Strategic Challenges

The key strategic financial management challenges fall into two main categories;

1. **How to finance the organisation's mission now** and continue to fund visions and strategy for the future.
2. **How to survive threats** to the organisation and move with shifting landscapes and periods of financial drought.

How to Finance Now and in the Future

You will need to make choices about which programmes to pursue along with the sort of financial management required to run the programme successfully and sustainably.

Decisions will have to be made on a number of issues, including:

Getting The Appropriate “Funding Mix”

- Think about different sources of income that could be generated.

- Define the balance between donor funding versus self-financing and restricted versus unrestricted income.



Reflection

It is important to achieve diversified funding in order to weather the storm if donors pull funding, funding dries up in specific issue based pots, or the organisation develops new needs that are not covered by donor/project specific funds.

Financing Overheads and Replacing Fixed Assets

- Cover overheads and assets in finance requests made to all donors.
- Leave a percentage of project/donor funds set aside to cover overheads.



Reflection

This is often a source of conflict with donors as they usually want to only fund programmes - not organisations themselves - so they are usually reluctant to fund overheads. However, know that you can negotiate for a percentage of the grant to support overhead expenses.

Applying For Unrestricted Income

- Gives greater flexibility and is essential for good financial planning.
- Make a financial plan that outlines all the income sources and the activities that are to be funded from restricted and unrestricted funds.
- Build bigger unrestricted fund income



Reflection

Unrestricted funding will allow your organisation to give additional support to activities that are underfunded since it is flexible. This is helpful when responding to a shift in political/social landscape and emerging needs for the communities you are in service too.

Charge For Services

- Note that this can be a sensitive funding mechanism, especially when an organisation works with poor or disadvantaged communities.
- Can be means through which organisations can raise funds internally and redirect funds from those who have to those who do not.



Reflection

An organisation that offers training may charge other large organisations that can afford to pay for the training and then use these fees to support underprivileged organisations in attending the training programme or developing their own leadership and training programmes.

Making The Best Use Of Available Resources

- Note that this can be a sensitive funding mechanism, especially when an organisation works with poor or disadvantaged communities.
- Can be means through which organisations can raise funds internally and redirect funds from those who have to those who do not.



Financial Leadership and Sustainability

A financial leader is the person responsible for the overall direction of the organisation, which in most cases is the Executive Director.

They ensure that:

- The financial health of the organisation is a top priority.
- Financial information is shared with staff.
- They work with the finance manager to design meaningful reports for both staff and board.
- The board of directors discusses financial issues at every board meeting
- Finance staff, board and consultants are available to give regular, necessary financial guidance to the organisation.
- Qualified and competent accounting staff are hired as programme staff.
- A standard for accountability and transparency around money and expenditure within the organisation is established.

As a financial leader, the Executive Director should be able to name core programmes and activities and the estimated expenditure of each without consulting the financial statements or budget. It is the responsibility of all financial leaders to be accountable by letting

fundors and stakeholders understand how financial resources have been used within the organisation.

Financial Sustainability

Financial sustainability means long term financial survival and security. Organisations that are financially sustainable are characterised by:

Diversified Funding Base

All organisations need a financing strategy that identifies several sources of income. reliance on one or two donors for income makes an organisation vulnerable to external shocks. Diversification means securing funds from a wide a base as possible – the local business community, the general public, and not just external institutional donors.

Unrestricted Funds

Funds that are received from donors for specific purposes are known as “restricted funds.” An organisation is legally obliged to use these funds for the reason specified by the donor. In contrast, unrestricted funds can be used for anything that helps the organisation achieve its mission. The more unrestricted funds, the more freedom of action.

Financial Reserves

Reserves represent financial resources that an organisation holds back to meet unexpected events in the future. They are sometimes kept in a special

reserves bank account and are shown separately on the annual financial statements. Building up reserves has a number of obvious advantages for NGO's. It reduces dependence on donors, and helps during cash flow shortages to withstand financial shocks.

Strong Stakeholder Relationship

The more you can build up and manage relationships with donors, the stronger a position you are in. The key to financial sustainability is to develop your relationship with a focus on the future as well as an eye for meeting current needs. This means building the confidence of donors over time. So, it's important to avoid taking funds for projects you cannot deliver just because the money is available. This will damage your relationship with your donor and reduce the chances of getting funds that are really needed.

Organisational Sustainability

Organisational sustainability is more than just the availability of funding. Sustainability revolves around resources, impact and organisational regeneration. This means that it is just not enough to have availability of resources. An NGO must make an impact on its environment and be able to adapt and learn from it.

Surviving Threats

All organisations operate in an environment which they have little or no control over. Threats can cause loss of resources, such as fraud, the abuse of

equipment by staff (internal), withdrawal of a major donor grant or rapid inflation (external). Whilst many of the threats are unpredictable and can appear without warning, there is the need to plan and prepared for things that could go wrong and negatively impact organisation's financial resources.

The following possible strategies can help minimise the impact of threats:

- **Build Reserves**
Reserves or savings can act as a safety net when expected inflows have been unduly delayed, removed or institutional expenses still need to be paid for. Set a trigger amount, which can act as a warning when your organisation reach a specific low amount in your account. 20% of your organisational/operational budget is recommended. When the warning is triggered, have a funding strategy ready to find funds to restock
- **Build and maintain good relationship with stakeholders**
Having long term supportive stakeholders, especially trusted donors makes an NGO less vulnerable and susceptible to a whole range of shocks across shifting landscapes.
- **Integrate sound financial management into programme management**
Good financial management practice throughout the organisation will guard against potential threats, allow for long term visioning and offer credibility with all stakeholders.

Responding to Challenges

Every organisation is subject to different environmental influences and has different opportunities available. The way an organisation can respond to challenges is often due to the skills, tools and resources they have at an organisational level.

CASE STUDY: Resources And Skills To Manage Challenges

The below case study shares with you some key documents, resources, tools and skills that may be able to help your organisation manage any challenges faced.

Key Challenge	Key Document	Practical tools and skills needed
1. How to Finance now and in the Future		
Deciding on the appropriate funding mix	<u>Financing Strategy</u>	Resource audit <u>Ratio analysis - Donor dependency and survival ratio</u>
Charging for services	<u>Pricing or cost recovery policy</u>	<u>Consolidated services budget;</u> <u>Contribution analysis</u>
Financing <u>overheads</u>	<u>Overheads</u> ² and <u>apportionment policy</u>	Contribution analysis; Fund raising skills
Applying unrestricted income	<u>Unrestricted income policy</u> ³ Donor terms and conditions <u>Project/ Master budget</u>	Consolidated service budget; <u>Funding grid</u>
Replacing capital items that depreciate over time	Replacement and disposal policy <u>Fundraising strategy</u>	Planning skills; <u>Fundraising or marketing skills</u>
Maximising available resources	<u>Strategic planning document</u> <u>Procurement policy</u> ⁴ Budgeting policy	<u>Strategic Planning;</u> <u>Cost effectiveness analysis</u>

² Additional information and resources on overhead costs can be found in the Additional Readings section of this document.

³ This resource also provides comprehensive summaries on a variety of topics related to financing.

⁴ Also see Additional Readings for a sample policy guideline.

Key Challenge	Key Document	Practical tools and skills needed
2. Surviving Threats		
Identifying and preparing for external shocks	<u>Contingency plans</u> <u>Insurance policy</u>	<u>Risk assessment</u> ⁵ ; <u>Strategic Analysis</u> ; <u>Scenarios Planning</u>
Building and preserving reserves	<u>Reserves and Contingencies policy</u>	Fund raising and communication skills
Building and maintaining good relationships	<u>Communications policy</u> Fundraising Strategy	Communication skills; Negotiation skills; Fund raising skills
Integrating financial management into programme management	<u>Delegated authority and accountability policy</u> <u>Job Description</u> <u>Training policy</u>	<u>Change management skills</u>

⁵Also see Additional Readings for a guide on carrying out a Risk Assessment.

Building Blocks of Financial Management

There is no model finance system to suit all organisations as with any system, the best models are tailored to the unique needs and landscape. This is particularly so for the African continent as there is great variety between countries in terms of conventions and systems around financial management. Financial markets can also be prone to instability and sudden changes - for example in the context of high inflation, dollarisation and situations of prolonged armed conflict, political instability/new governance and international trade sanctions.

There are some basic building blocks, which can be put in place to achieve good financial management practice in your organisation.

These include:

- Internal Controls
- Accounting Records
- Financial Planning or Budgeting
- Financial Monitoring

Internal Controls

Internal controls are measures or processes used by an organisation to ensure its quality and effectiveness in operations, financial reporting, and compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

Internal controls⁶ are crucial and consist of all the measures undertaken by the organisation to;

- **Protect resources** against waste, fraud, and inefficiency;
- **Ensure accuracy and reliability** in accounting and operating data;
- **Secure compliance** with the policies of the organisation; and
- **Evaluate performance** levels in the organisation.

Internal controls are simply good business mechanisms and practice for organisations.

Everyone within an organisation has a role to play in ensuring internal controls. But roles vary depending on the level of responsibility and hierarchy present in an organisation.

Creating internal audit roles examines the adequacy and efficacy of organisational internal controls and can make valuable recommendations on areas for improvement. Internal auditing should be independent and objective in doing so the effectiveness of the internal controls are

enhanced through the reviews performed and recommendations made by Internal Auditing.

Why Internal Controls Are Necessary...

Internal controls ensure that:

- **Complete and accurate accounting** records are kept;
- **Assets** of the organisation are **safeguarded**;
- **Errors and fraud are prevented** and can be detected;
- **Statutory and relevant regulatory requirements are adhered to**; and
- **Staff adhere to all financial policies** and procedures.

Elements of Internal Control

Internal control systems operate at different levels of efficiency. Determining whether a particular internal control system is effective should be drawn from results from assessments containing five components:

- Control Environment,
- Risk Assessment,
- Control Activities,
- Information and Communication,
- Monitoring Mechanisms.

⁶ The University of California's '[Understanding Internal Controls](#)' provides a comprehensive guide on risk and control, although from a higher education perspective (See Additional Resources below).

Examples of Internal Control

- **Segregation of duties and clear parameters** on who does what within an organisation;
- **Restricted access to assets** e.g. petty cash held on site;
- **Authorisation and approval controls**, which serve as fraud deterrents and enforce segregation of duties;
- **Management controls**, or measures to evaluate various management resources such as human resources, financial resources;
- **Supervision and periodic review** and reconciliation of accounts
- **Regular checking for accuracy** and accounting;
- **Personnel controls**, otherwise known as - methods to help staff and employees be/stay motivated.

Reflection: Weaknesses in Internal Controls

The following are some common weaknesses that exist with internal controls:

- Opening of bank accounts without relevant organisational approval;
- Exceeding cash advance limit;
- Regular (weekly/monthly) cash counts not done;
- Assets identification not done;
- Backup of all electronic documents not maintained off-site;
- Use of wrong exchange rates;
- Vehicle logbook not properly completed;
- Misuse of office vehicle for private purposes;
- Bank reconciliation statements not reviewed;
- Money given to individuals not accounted for in time;
- Invoices not attached to payment vouchers;
- Purchasing procedures not followed;
- Withholding taxes;
- Fixed assets register not maintained;
- Petty cash limits not set.

This is why it is recommended that you build and maintain a 'control environment' within your organisation that can resist and survive changes outside of your organisation.

Managing fraud risk

All organisations face the potential for fraud from both internal and external sources. It is thus important to develop a policy and procedures to manage fraud risk and also ensure that all staff are aware of what to do to prevent fraud, and also in case they suspect or encounter fraud, or if they receive whistleblowing information about alleged fraud. It is also important to ensure that when fraud is reported internally it is dealt with according to the policy as this will also help build confidence in the system and encourage staff to report suspected fraud in future.

“

Fraud is defined as: a deliberate, improper action which leads to financial loss to the organisation. This includes theft of goods or property; falsifying expenses claims; and falsification (or destruction) of records to conceal an improper action.”

”



Fraud Policy should cover:

- how you will respond to allegations of fraud,
- how you expect to deter fraud,
- how you will respond to different types of fraud,
- how allegations can be reported (including “whistle-blowing”), and
- how allegations will be investigated.

Keeping Risks Low

DO:

- R** Report the fraud to a senior member of staff or Board member
- I** Investigate all incidents to gather facts and evidence
- S** Secure the assets and records
- K** Keep calm!
- S** Swiftly act

DON'T:

- L** Look the other way (this could suggest you are involved)
- O** Overlook the impact of fraud on staff morale and credibility
- W** Withhold information to protect others

Source: Abridged from Mango, [Top Ten Tips on Dealing with Fraud](#)



What is a Control Environment?

The control environment represents the various measures taken by management to protect the assets of the organisation.

A control environment sets the tone at the head of the organisation by influencing control consciousness of staff. It's the foundation of all other components of internal control by providing discipline and structure.

Control environment factors include the integrity, ethical values and competence of staff; management's philosophy and operating style; the way management assigns authority and responsibility, organises and develops its people, and the attention and direction provided by the board of directors.

1. Management's Philosophy, Values and Approach

Management's philosophy can define what the organisation believes in and stands for.

Their philosophy and practices influence the way things are done in the organisation and ultimately defines the organisation's control environment.

The culture of an organisation is based on factors that management demonstrates including:

- Integrity and ethical values
- Existence and implementation of code of conduct
- Values and goals embodied in leadership practice
- Leadership messaging and actions aligned with 'best practice' organisational culture.
- Management's attitude towards intervention or overriding established controls

If management demonstrates its commitment to values that are just and fair, they will create a control environment that will upkeep the interests of the organisation as a whole and build healthy organisational culture.

2. Participation and Relationships in Governance

Governance is the way an organisation is managed, directed and controlled.

It is the relationship among everyone in the organisation including the Chief Executive Officer, management, and employees, as they determine the direction and performance of the organisation.

For governance to be effective in an organisation, the Board of Directors must:

- **Include a variety of people:** particularly African women and people from other marginalised communities;
- **Remain independent from the management** of the organisation;
- **Possess relevant knowledge, skills and experience;**
- **Hold regular scheduled meetings;**
- **Review relevant information** such as financial statements, audit reports, programme reports and actions taken to address recommendations from reporting;
- **Take steps to encourage a fair and dynamic “management culture”;** and,
- **Address management’s adherence to the code of conduct.**

The relationships built within an organisation determine the outlook and performance of the organisation.

3. Effectiveness of Operations

The survival of an organisation depends on the effectiveness of its operations and the achievement of its objectives. This influences how resources are utilised efficiently and sustainably.

To achieve such effectiveness, the management of the organisation should also be effective in carrying out their activities. This will ultimately enhance the control environment in the organisation.


The following are critical to ensuring effectiveness:

- Management should be committed to competence;
- Formal job descriptions reflecting one’s experience and knowledge required;
- An analysis of competencies should be performed for specific tasks;
- An appropriate organisational structure should exist;
- Responsibility should be matched with authority; and,
- Human resource policies and procedures should be developed, made available and clear to all staff.

To achieve such effectiveness, the key members of the management of the organisation should also be effective in carrying out their activities. This will ultimately enhance the control environment in the organisation.

4. Realistic Strategic Plans

Strategic plans are comprehensive plans for accomplishment in relation to stated goals and objectives.



An organisation is run on the strategic plan developed by all staff during a strategic planning sessions.

Strategic plans must be:

- Realistic and based on strategy;
- Based on valid assumptions;
- Prepared by individuals with relevant levels of competence ; and,
- Contain budgets detailed enough to allow review against performance

A strong strategic plan should cover multiple years, include targets for expected accomplishments and propose specific performance measures to evaluate progress.

5. Reliability of Management's Estimates

Management estimates happen when an organisation must make assumptions about matters that are “highly uncertain.”

Estimates are very important and should be made strategically, so management should;

- **Set up a methodology** based on current and reliable data
- **Supervise the development of estimates** and align those estimates to objectives and ‘pledges’

- **Seek input annually** from people with knowledge to help with making realistic estimates and meeting pledges.

In summary, the internal control system of an organisation determines the organisational behaviour and financial success. Lapses in controls more often than not lead to various forms of fraud and financial mismanagement and loss.



Accounting Records

Personnel, or accounting staff are required to ensure proper books of accounts and accounting records.

The essence of personnel management is to ensure that the organisation at all levels:

- **Attracts and retains the staff** with the right mix of skills to maximize the impact of organisation's activities and achievement all its objectives.
- **Ensures staff needs are met** and addressed
- **Creates continuity of organisational activities** (avoiding disruptions)
- **Instils proper procedures** for recruitment of staff
- **Produces well documented job descriptions** and specifications
- **Creates a balanced working culture** by avoiding over and under staffing
- **Makes available a transparent salary scale** and progression structure.

Reward Policies

Reward policies represent the benefits that are accrued to staff who work for the organisation.

Salaries

- Depending on the organisation's systems, salaries may be paid any time after the 15th of the month.
- Net salaries (gross salaries minus taxes and statutory deductions) should be paid by bank transfer or cheque.
- Salaries paid in cash must be handed directly to the employee, counted and signed for at the time of payment.
- Employees must be given pay slips showing salary calculations.
- Records must be maintained for sick and holiday leave.

Loans and advances to staff

Management may authorise a loan or advance of up to 2 months' salary, paid within 12 months.

It is important that employees must have worked for the organisation for a period of time specified within the organisation's statutes to qualify for a loan. Such loans must relate to development, emergencies, hardship, rent advance, medical treatment, etc. The loan repayment must be deducted from the employee's salary at a pre-agreed upon payment schedule.

Per diem

This should be available to staff who travel for work outside of the office.

It must conform to the travel policies of the organisation. This can be given in cash - which must be signed off and receipts given - or, as an addition to employees' monthly salary.

Gratuity accounts

These are payments are made out of a fund set aside for employees who leave the organisation.

Infrastructure

The infrastructure of the financial management system is based on a basic underlying framework including accounting records, policies and procedures.

Reflection: Keeping Accounting Records

The minimum accounting records required by an organisation include:

Books of account	Purpose
Receipts and payments cash book	Record funds received, interest earned, funds transferred and expenditure incurred.
Bank statements	Reconcile cash book balances and bank balances
Cheque disbursement register	Record information on cheques issued. Such information should include cheque number, date, amount and supplier
General ledger	Record a summary of the transactions in the cash book
Fixed assets register	Record the relevant details of fixed assets acquired
Source documents	Forms the basis of entries in the cashbook as well as a basis for payments. They can include cheque stubs, payment vouchers, invoices, receipts, bills, correspondence on transfer of funds, amongst others financial records.
Budget aligned work plans	Give direction on the activities to be carried out and how much to spend.
Chart of Accounts	Organise all accounting and reporting processes. Will contain all organisation's accounts.



Filing and Storage of Documents

Filing means storing information for future reference.

This will ensure a system built where information can be quickly located for audits, reports and future donor funding applications.

Purpose of filing:

- Ensure ease of reference
- Allow easy access to information
- Provide an audit trail
- Comply with legal requirements
- Facilitate preparation of financial statements and reports

Good practice on filing:

- Dedicate time daily/weekly for filing
- File sequentially (Numerical, Alphabetical, by Subject Matter)
- Label files accurately
- Maintain a register or logbook of all files

Accounting Software

Accounting software is a computer application that records and processes accounting transactions within functional modules such as accounts payable, accounts receivable, payroll, and trial balance.


Accounting software can give you a snapshot of your financial position in seconds, not to mention saving valuable time and money by promoting efficiency in your programmes.

Accounting software may be developed in-house, purchased from a third party, or a combination of the two by adding local modifications to existing software.

There are different accounting packages in the market such as **Pastel**, **Sage 300c** (formerly known as ACCPAC), **Sun Systems**, **Embrace**, and **SAP Business One**⁷.

Gaining knowledge and training in accounting software will develop a culture of practice in your organisation that categorises expenses, writes cheques, tracks inventory, collects receipt and payments on every individual project leading to valuable information collected that can help you determine how best to budget for projects, and

⁷ The majority of larger African ERP's are currently based in South Africa. Research shows that there is a **scarce, but promising market** and potential for African Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) business management software.



predict future funding needs, so as to ensure full adaptability and recovery in times of shock or organisational crisis.

Accounting software gives more credibility to accounting records and reports and it is important that every growing organisation invests in an accounting package, especially to align with future projections and growth needs.



Cash Management

Cash management refers to the collection, concentration, flow and disbursement of cash.

It encompasses a company's ability to convert assets to cash (level of liquidity), management of cash balance, and short-term investment strategies.

Cash flow is the difference between the amount of actual cash coming into an organisation, such as grants, and the amount of actual cash going out of an organisation in the form of expenses, such as salaries.

In some ways, managing cash flow is the most important job of an organisation's programme management. (You can find more detailed information on cash flow in the budget section of this handbook). If at any time an organisation fails to pay an obligation when it is due because of the lack of cash, the organisation becomes insolvent. Insolvency is the primary reason firms go bankrupt.

Reflection

The objectives of cash management are to ensure that:

- **Cash resources are properly safeguarded;**
- **Cash is used effectively** and exclusively for the intended purpose (not for personal use);
- **Receipts are safeguarded, recorded and banked;** and,
- **Payments are authorised and accurately recorded.**

Control Procedures for Cash

- Have procedures for receiving cash
- Keep small amounts of cash on hand - accounted for by designated staff authorised to operate and distribute cash.
- Organisational funds are not mixed with personal money

Cash Book

A cash book is used to record receipts and payments made through the bank or through petty cash. Transactions in a cash book must be recorded promptly so that the balance in the safe or bank can be determined at any time. Inputs to the cash book must be made using a **double entry system** – where every entry has a debit and credit.



CASE STUDY: Sample Cash Book

DEBIT

CREDIT

Date	Particulars	Ledger Folio	Amount	Date	Particulars	Ledger Folio	Amount

Date: In this column Year, Month and Date of transactions are recorded in chronological order.

Particulars: In this column, the name of the account which the transaction occurred is recorded. Account pertaining to the receipts of cash is recorded on the debit side (DR) and those pertaining to cash payments (CR) on the credit side.

Ledger Folio (L.F): In this column, it records the page number of the ledger book on which relevant account is prepared.

Amount: This column records the amount received on the debit side and cash paid on the credit side.



Bank Reconciliation Statement

The purpose of a bank reconciliation statement is to confirm the cash book balance with the bank statement.

Bank reconciliations are done monthly to compare the transactions in the cashbook with the bank statement and resolve any discrepancies between the two.

The following stages are required:

- Compare cash book with bank statement
- Correct all clerical errors in the cash book
- Record all differences
- Adjust timing differences

Common problems associated with bank reconciliation statements:

- Statements not reviewed
- Statements signed without a detailed review
- Currency exchange differences not factored

Sometimes the cash book and bank balance do not reconcile. This is mainly due to:

Timing Differences

- **Un-presented Cheques:** Cheques issued by the organisation but are yet to be presented by the recipient.

- **Un-credited Cheques:** Deposited cheques, which are yet to be credited to the organisation's account by the bank.
- **Errors by Bank:** Wrong entries made into the organisation's account by the bank.

Informational Differences

These can happen when transactions effected at the bank do not correspond with entries in the cash book, which can be caused by:

- Bank charges
- Interest earned
- Standing orders
- Dishonored 'bounced' cheques



Errors and Omissions By Bank Or Organisation

These can happen through omission in the cash book or in the bank statement. It is important to note that errors may or may not cause the ledger to be imbalanced. (Also, errors and omissions are different from fraud, which is an intentional mis-managing of accounts.) These include:

- Forgetting to enter a cash transaction or losing receipts
- Incorrectly calculated transaction
- Double entries
- Reversal of entries
- Error in original entry
- Incorrectly entering information into system due to legibility



Reflection: Minimum Cash Control Requirements

- All payments must be approved
 - The use of cash must be kept to a minimum (cheques are more secure)
 - Payments from the petty cash account need to be backed by invoices, receipts or any other evidence of payment.
 - Bank reconciliation must be done every month
 - Bank signatories: with a minimum requirement of two signatures per cheque
- 
- 

Assets: Property and Equipment

Assets are intellectual or property rights or future economic benefits controlled by an organisation.

Property and equipment are any tangible (or fixed) or intangible possessions obtained by an organisation to provide a service to the business, and not to resell.

The management has the responsibility to safeguard, maintain and modernise all the assets purchased by the organisation.

Reflection: How to make sure your assets are properly valued:

- Evaluation of suppliers should be conducted regularly;
- Obtain appropriate authorisation for all purchases; including pro-forma invoices (preliminary bill of sale prior to the delivery of the asset) above a certain amount determined by management;
- Attach all relevant documents relating to a transaction and payment vouchers e.g. invoice and approved order forms;
- Only make payments against original invoices;
- Mark paid invoices clearly marked with "PAID"
- File all invoices, relevant documents and bills of sale

Assets Policy

There are two commonly used methods depending on the type of accounting undertaken in your organisation:

Full Write-off - In Year of Purchase

The full cost of the asset is written off to the income statement, which means the cost of the asset is not capitalised. When assets are capitalised, it means that the cost of the assets - such as computers - is written off usually up to five years, based on the estimated useful-life of the assets.

Annual Depreciation of Assets

Where the cost of the asset is not written-off in the year of purchase, the value of the asset is written down annually - up to 5 years - either in equal instalments or on a reducing balance.

Assets Register

A fixed assets register should be used to keep track of fixed, or tangible, assets. The register should contain the following:

- **Date of Purchase**
- **Description of Assets** - including make, model and serial number
- **Cost**
- **Rate of Depreciation** and period
- **Location** kept/stored

Every year, fixed assets should be physically checked against the register. Fixed assets that are not in working condition should be written off.

Disposal of Property and Equipment

Every now and then assets are disposed of by organisations for various reasons

To make sure the process is consistent and transparent, the following guidelines are useful;

- **Management should approve the disposal** of fixed assets;
- **Transparency on proceeds made** from disposals;
- **Independent valuation** of assets for disposal;
- **Tendering of assets** that are being offered to others,
- **Update asset register** post disposal.

Management of Company Vehicles

A logbook to track vehicle movement must be completed for every trip. Necessary details include may include such details as destination for distance related expense and purpose of the trip for ensuring the purpose is aligned with organisational goals

All vehicles must be insured with a third party insurance policy cover. Only authorised staff (with a valid driver's licence) should be permitted to drive the company's vehicles. Office vehicles must not be used for private purposes except staff whose contracts permit that fuel costs can be reimbursed.

Procurement

This is defined simply as the process by which an organisation acquires goods and services or commissions work to be done on its behalf by an external supplier.

Significance of Procurement

- Procurement accounts for a significant proportion (50-70%) of every project or organisation's budget
- It is about stewardship, transparency and accountability,
- It is about spending public funds donor money/ tax-payers money
- It impacts on the credibility of the organisation and its ability to achieve its mission.
- The success of the procurement process has consequences on the ultimate beneficiaries of the purchased goods, works and services.

Procedures or Guidelines

Regardless of the size of an organisation, there is the need for a documented policy on procurement to ensure that purchases are done and contracts are awarded on an objective, fair, consistent and transparent basis. A formal policy also ensures that;

- Procurements are made on a practical, open and freely competitive basis
- The organisation obtains the best value for money on all its procurements of goods and services. (economy + efficiency = VFM Economy does not

necessarily mean the cheapest price)

- Procured goods and services are delivered in the correct quantity and quality and in a timely manner

Reflection:

The documented procurement process should outline;

- Code of conduct for staff involved in the process
- Guiding principles such as transparency integrity or accountability, conflict of Interest, non-discrimination, environmental and social impact assessment etc
- Process for acquisition of various items; goods, works and services
- Procurement methods and threshold for each procurement method
- Roles and responsibilities of personnel responsible for procurement; board management and other staff
- Where applicable the donor requirements as outlined in the grant document
- Clear steps for each procurement method from initiation to completion

Methods

Procurement methods are defined simply as the procedures used by the procuring organisation or entity to acquire goods, services and works.

These methods can be competitive or noncompetitive.

1. Competitive Method of Procurement

For the competitive method all procurement transactions are conducted in a manner to provide, to the maximum extent practical, open and free competition. Competitive methods also promotes transparency, economy and efficiency, and limit conflict of interest. Examples are

- International Competitive Bidding (ICB) or National competitive Bidding (NCB).
- Request for Proposal
- Two Stage Tendering
- Request for Quotations (International, National).

2. Non-competitive method of procurement

In non-competitive procurement, the organisation either selects one company to provide the good or service or invites certain suppliers to bid. The process is not open to every supplier. Example is

- Single Source procurement
- Restricted Tendering
- Restricted Request for Proposal
- Restricted Request for Quotation.

Each procurement method has its advantages and disadvantages. For instance single source procurement can be useful if there is only one company that provides that good or service. Generally it is better to weigh the pros and cons of each and decide which method best helps your organisation meet its objectives on a case-by-case basis if necessary. In the end, the type of procurement method selected is highly relative to the organisation size and the type of goods or services being acquired. The threshold for each procurement method should be clearly outlined in the policy.



Reflection: Basic Steps in Procurement

- Specify goods and services to be purchased and when as part of the annual planning process
- Develop an annual procurement plan – what, why cost, when, who
- Prior to actually procuring the items or services check budget for availability of funding
- Check for donor requirements for compliance
- Prepare purchase requisition
- Authorise purchase requisition
- Obtain Quotations
- Select Supplier
- Issue purchase order
- Receive Goods from Supplier
- Receive and check supplier invoice
- Prepare and Authorise payment
- Pay Supplier
- Enter payment details in accounting system
- File all the documentation for all the processes for easy reference.

Why Procurement Matters

In the absence of a documented process on procurement the organisation may risk the following;

- The wrong items are purchased;
- The correct items are purchased but at a price that is higher than necessary (either through error or through improper dealings with vendors);
- Items of inferior quality are purchased;
- Purchases are made without sufficient budgeted funds and or authorisation;
- Purchases are not in compliance with donor regulations or terms of the grant agreements.
- There may also be financial loss, corruption or mismanagement which may attract sanctions from the donor.



Planning and Budgeting

A **budget** is a plan of activities expressed in monetary terms

Budget Techniques

There are two commonly used techniques:

1. **Incremental** – Normally shows a percentage increase on the former budgeted or actual figures
1. **Zero Based Budgeting (ZBB)** – Divides the year into periods (quarters, months, etc.) and creates a new budget for every period. Each period's budget starts at zero, and expenses are added based upon what is needed for that particular period, regardless of whether there is an increase or decrease from the previous period.

Budgets normally stem from long term strategic plans and will be effective when they:

- **Receive and spend specific amounts** of resources
- **Lists specific costs** categorised
- **Plan for short and long periods of time**
- **Embed monitoring mechanisms** that inform process
- **Develop Inclusive and sustainable** budgeting practices

Reflection:

Building a budget requires answering the following questions...

- What are the objectives of the project?
- What activities will be involved in the project?
- What resources will be needed to perform these activities?
- What will these resources needs be and what is the associated cost?
- Where will the funds for the project come from?
- Does there need to be a balance between goals and resources available?
- Who needs to feed in and approve the plan?
- What resources - other than financial/ economic - can you raise to support projects?

Budgetary Control

Once the questions above to ensure an effective system of budgetary control - you must:

- Make sure that your organisation's programme is guided towards its objectives.
- Compare actual expenses to budgets.
- Consider any differences in the responsibility of individuals who can either exercise control actions, or revise the original budget, or seek additional funding/fundraising.
- Create proper procedures for collecting information
- Use relevant evidence to support figures in the budgets.
- Encourage staff to take ownership of budget figures, to promote budget control at the individual level.

Cash Flow Budgeting

A cash flow budget is important to predict when gaps are likely to occur, for instance, when projected payments will most likely exceed cash on hand (negative cash flow).

A cash flow budget also shows periods when idle cash will be available for investments (positive cash flow).

To build a cash flow budget, identify who is responsible for:

- Projecting, developing and updating monthly cash flow reports for each program and the organisation as a whole.
- Receiving cash flow projections and reports on a regular basis.
- Taking corrective action to deal with cash flow problems.
- Approving and implementing corrective action based on reporting.

Options available for managing cash flow include:

- Asking donors to pay in advance - being transparent on reasons why this advance is needed and why it will help meet overall goals.
- Negotiating for special payment terms with key suppliers
- Pushing debtors to pay on time
- Prioritising major payments
- Banking cash receipts daily
- Using overdraft facilities

CASE STUDY: Cash Flow Budget

Cash flow budgets project and describe the schedule, time of transaction, nature, amount of revenue and expenditure month by month. Preparing a cash flow projection serves as an early-warning device to keep cash reserves from becoming too low. This table can support your organisation in tracking and predicting cash flow.

	Annual Budget	Month					
		January	February	March	April	May	June
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Income							
Opening cash balance							
Grants							
Other income							
Total							
Expenditure							
Payroll							
Rent							
Electricity							
Telephone							
Program costs							
Total							
Surplus/(deficit)							
Closing cash balance							

Where cash resources are limited, it is important to have a well defined creditor's payment schedule, or a time-table by which payments are made to a creditor or grantor, and take action when there are early warnings of potential financial difficulty.



Reporting & Monitoring

Financial reporting and monitoring is necessary for all organisations receiving funds from donors. To monitor the organisation's financial affairs, financial reports are needed.

There are people who need financial reports: project staff, managers, finance staff, board of trustees, donors, project beneficiaries and the general public.

Financial reporting should be timely, complete, and accurate.

Financial reporting can be monthly or quarterly depending on requirements from the donor or grantor.

Reflection:

Reporting contains a whole range of activities including:

- Detailed notes within the budget
- Cash flow schedule (daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly)
- Petty cash flow schedules
- Monthly variance analysis, which looks after-the-fact at what caused a difference between budgeted spending and actual spending.
- Bank reconciliation statements
- Monthly management accounts
- Donor reports
- Annual financial statements
- Cash flow budgeting

Donor Reporting

Donors usually release funds to an organisation only when they are certain about the financial health of the institution. This is why donor reports are critical to every organisation.

The report should include the project budget compared with the actual project expenses, accompanied by a narrative report. We recommend you also read the 'Techniques for Resource Mobilisation' paper in this series.

When an organisation has several donors it is important to set up an accounting systems so that the data required by the donor agency can be easily accessed and shaped depending on donor requirements.

When putting together reports for donors make sure that;

- Reporting deadlines are met
- Extension request are made ahead of time
- Figures are accurate and verifiable, and supported with documentation
- Transparency in under-expenditure or over-expenditure
- Significant variances are explained with evidence
- Problems are shared with donors

CASE STUDY: Building A Financing Grid

A financing grid is an essential monitoring tool - especially when an organisation has more than one donor. It allocates expenses made by the organisation to the various donors financing the organisation. Using a finance grid will ensure there is no 'Double Accounting', where more than one donor is being charged for the same expenses, which is illegal and will have negative impacts on future funding requests.

- a. Create a table on a spreadsheet.
- b. Consolidate the master budget for the entire organisation
- c. Enter all the sources of income, matching the donor budgets in the grant agreements against the organisation budget.
- d. Enter other unrestricted sources of income in another column. Ideally, use unrestricted income for budget categories that are difficult to get donor funding for.
- e. When all income sources are entered, the subtotal figures are subtracted from the total budget figures. A positive figure indicates under-funding, while a negative figure indicates over funding.

Funding Sources							
Budget Category	Consolidated Budget	Donor 1	Donor 2	Donor 3	Unrestricted Fees or Sales	Subtotal	Balance Under/(over)
Training							
Travel							
Personnel							
Admin							
TOTAL							

Monitoring - External Audits

An external audit is a legal requirement that should be carried out annually under the leadership of management.

The purpose of an external audit is to give an independent opinion on the financial statements prepared by management. These can be used to monitor the organisations risk and growth areas.

An audit results in a report which gives an ‘audit opinion’ about whether the financial statements give a ‘true and fair’ view of the organisation’s finances and operations for the period in review.

- **‘True’:** the transaction did take place and that an asset exists.
- **‘Fair’:** the transaction is fairly valued and the assets and liabilities are fairly stated.

Auditors will often provide a ‘Management Letter,’ which is separate to the audit report. The letter highlights weaknesses and makes recommendations for improvement. Managers have an opportunity to respond to the findings and outline the actions they will take.

Reflection:

If the auditors do not agree that the accounts give a true and fair view, they will provide a “Qualified” opinion:

Auditor Opinion	Comment
Unqualified	The accounts give a true and fair view.
Qualified: Subject to	The accounts are okay, apart from specific issues that need to be addressed e.g. an incorrect accounting policy or specific unsupported expenditure.
Qualified : Disagreement	There are so many errors that the accounts do not give a true and fair view.
Qualified: Disclaimer	The auditors are unable to give an opinion because the records are poor and incomplete.



Conclusion

Financial Management for organisations is challenging because of the multiple stakeholders' data and reporting is needed for, confusion about what financial objectives to pursue and limited staff knowledge, training and a lack of financial skills and access to technological resources.

This financial management guide provides your organisation with examples on how to shape and build healthy financial management practices; in terms of the need to accurately budget to finance and sustain the organisation's operations the following needs to also be considered:

- **Naming hidden costs** currently absorbed by organisation
- **Finding ways to keep costs down**, and to absorb a level of cost fluctuations by other means
- **The value placed on the quality of management**, administration and service operation
- **The extent to which the organisation is prepared to compromise** to reduce costs and find alternative resource mobilisation techniques
- **Acknowledging that economies of scale do exist** and need to be assessed for each situation in light of real circumstances.

This handbook provides basic building blocks to enable good financial management practices for small women's organisations in Africa. We hope that it is a useful tool for you, whether you are using it to get information on specific topics, put in place a new financial management system or revamp your existing system. We also recommend combining this handbook with the tools in the other handbooks in this series - '[A Practical Handbook on Proposal and Report Writing for Community Based and Small Women's Rights Organisations in Africa](#)' and '[A Practical Handbook on Techniques for Resource Mobilisation for Community Based and Small Women's Rights Organisations in Africa](#)' - to ensure healthy financial management practices that will make your organisation stronger and more sustainable.



Reflection:

In any organisation, management of finance is the most important, because it is integral to achieving the strategic objectives. The financial viability and sustainability of a non-profit organisation is not necessarily related to its size, but it is related to:

- The capacity of the organisation to cost its activities adequately and to source or negotiate an adequate financing plan
- The extent to which reserves are managed and monitored over time
- The finance and resource management capacity and skills of the organisation

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