

## **TOWARDS A COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE STRATEGY IN SERVICE DELIVERY IN SOUTH AFRICA**

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*Abstract: Civil Society Organizations including Faith-based Organizations, are known to have contributed enormous resources and efforts in helping to deliver social services and improve governance in different societies. Consequently, there have been calls for some form of collaboration and or partnership between the state and CSOs, in different contexts. In some instances, the understanding of the real meaning of partnership between state and CSOs and whether this is acceptable to the two parties has not been sufficiently explored. The question is could we envisage a partnership model which can guarantee collaboration between state and CSOs towards improving service delivery and development? This qualitative empirical study utilized data from semi-structured interviews to interrogate the issue of collaboration between government and some selected FBOs, aiming at assessing how government and FBO collaborative efforts can be realized towards improving service delivery and development in the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa.*

*Keywords: Civil society organizations, Faith-based organizations, Service delivery, Development, Partnership, Collaborative governance.*

### **Introduction**

Latest scholarship (Bradley, Mahmoud & Arlati, 2022; Douglas et al., 2020; Bianchi, 2021) on development approaches has underscored the importance of participatory development and collaborative governance approaches towards any development agenda. In this, there is apparent support for the participation of individuals, families, civil society groups, states, and the private sector in the effort to realize a clean environment, a just society, and the alleviation of poverty in society (Onwuegbuchulam, 2018). It is further noted that the complementary efforts of different stakeholders (especially non-state actors, including CSOs) can assist in building energy and synergy for actualizing the lofty development agenda needed in different contexts. It is affirmed that a collaborative governance approach could be a mechanism towards a better provision of public goods as both the state and private sector enter a form of agreement in which the private sector is coopted to provide certain services to the public. Collaborative governance here designates any type of cooperation between the state/government agents (public sector) and the private sector (Bradley, Mahmoud & Arlati, 2022; Douglas et al., 2020; Bianchi, 2021). In this, the importance of other private stakeholders in a collaborative relationship with the state/government is emphasized. Centrally, it has been recognized that years of widespread action for social justice, strengthened by the rise of civil society movements and the proliferation of information, have established the platform for the humanization of development interventions. Hence, the increasing role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the public sphere is gradually being recognized in the discourse on the

development of state, and CSO's contribution in governance and service delivery is difficult to ignore (Onwuegbuchulam & Mtshali, 2022).

Assessing the role that CSOs can play in the public sphere has become necessary in the face of failures of the state/government conceived as controller of state resources and apparent sole role player in service delivery and governance. CSOs (for example Faith-based Organizations – FBOs) are known to have contributed enormous resources and efforts in helping to deliver social services to the wider society (Clarke & Ware, 2015; Onwuegbuchulam, 2021). However, in some cases CSO effort in improving public administration and governance is seen as adversarial, since in doing this, CSOs are seen as usurping the role of the state. Also, in some instances, the understanding of the real meaning of partnership between government and CSOs and whether this is acceptable to the two parties has not been sufficiently explored. The question then is could we envisage a partnership model which can guarantee collaboration between state and CSOs towards improving service delivery and development of society? Focusing on this main question, the current study interrogates possible collaborative partnerships between the state and some chosen FBOs in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa (KZN). The KZN province of South Africa was one of the Homelands during the defunct Apartheid regime and now ranks the second largest in population size among the 9 provinces in the country according to the latest statistics (Stats SA, 2012). The province was selected for this study considering the need for service delivery and development interventions necessary to improve the levels of multidimensional poverty and underdevelopment in that province (Onwuegbuchulam, 2018). Against this backdrop, the central objective (linked to the stated main question) is to assess how government and FBO collaborative efforts can be understood and realized towards improving service delivery and development in the KZN province.

## **Literature Perspectives**

### *Collaborative Governance*

This study seeks to contribute to the discourse on collaborative governance approach to development. The governance concept is notably at the centre of the debate between state and non-state entities regarding the administration of society. According to Bradley, Mahmoud and Arlati (2022), governance is understood as involving decision-making that concerns the administration of society but includes a negotiation process which seeks the participation of all stakeholders including that of civil society organisations towards formulation and implementation of development policies. This definition goes to the centre of the collaborative governance framework which reflects the efforts to get all stakeholders in society involved in achieving different government and governance projects for the betterment of society at large. It is about finding a common front through which an effective governance strategy could be realised towards resolving societal problems. Hence, Douglas et al. (2020) define collaborative governance as a process of group decision-making that seeks to create a common ground for cooperative problem-solving and value generation. It is built on interactions between two or more actors that are more or less institutionalized. The collaborative governance approach has been placed in the field of public administration which has seen scholars (Osborne, Radnor & Nasi, 2013; Bianchi, 2021) advocating for increased attention on ways to implement governance mechanisms towards solving some difficult problems in public service delivery. As such, collaborative

governance refers to ‘multi-actor collaboration, usually led by a public sector organization aimed at building consensus among stakeholders on a formal set of policies designed and implemented to generate public value’ (Bianchi, Nasi & Rivenbark, 2021, p. 1582). In this, the notion of collaborative governance denotes a cooperative strategy in which the government allies with other stakeholders in society, in policy/decision-making, administration and delivery of public goods. This strategy of governance is seen as emerging, replacing the antagonistic modes of policy-making and execution. The view is that when government and private stakeholders agree to work together in policy making and implementation, cost is reduced and there is an expansion of democratic participation in public management (Ansell & Gash, 2018).

Notably, Ansell and Gash’s (2018) definition confines collaborative governance to formal government-initiated measures to include nongovernmental stakeholders in public administration affairs. Emerson, Nabatchi and Balogh (2011, p. 2) are however of the view that collaborative governance is the procedure of making and managing public policy which constructively engages people across borders including public agents, government echelons, private and civic domains, towards accomplishing a difficult public project. Remarkably, unlike Ansell and Gash’s (2018) definition Emerson, Nabatchi and Balogh’s (2011) definition of collaborative governance does not limit it to formal engagement by government and nongovernmental stakeholders. It includes multi-partner governance with collaborations between the public and the private sectors, civil society groups and the community at large, in addition to joined-up government arrangements such as public-private and private-social partnerships and co-management administrations. Consequently, the current study leans towards Emerson, Nabatchi and Balogh’s (2011) definition of collaborative governance. The definition is broader and will be relevant in the analysis and assessment of partnerships between selected government departments and FBOs operating within the study’s context. This study intends to interrogate to what extent there is both formal and informal collaborative arrangement between these two stakeholders in the development efforts within the context.

### *Faith-Based Organizations*

Faith-based organizations have become prominent in the political and development discourse on the role of religion and faith in the public sphere (Costa, 2015; Okolo, Abalogu & Oziezi, 2020; Khafagy, 2020). Doubts exist vis-à-vis the usage of the “faith-based” concept and its actual meaning, with some scholars regarding the concept as sounding sterile (Dionne, 1999). Consequently, there is no widely acceptable definition of the FBO concept – ‘the definition of FBO itself is problematic. There is no clear definition of what it means to be a faith-based organization and therefore the term confuses and divides’ (Österinen, 2016, p. 15). However, there is a relative agreement that FBOs are organisations associated with religion and faith bodies (Khafagy, 2020). Together with this understanding, FBOs are viewed as having one or more of the features: mission statement that explicitly refers to religious ethos; funding from religious foundations; and/or structures of governance in which appointment of members of the board and staff is grounded on religious principles or association and/or policymaking procedures grounded on religious ethos (Österinen, 2016; Khafagy, 2020). FBOs are sometimes linked to charitable organisations and humanitarian missions inspired by certain spiritualities and whose works are motivated by a particular religious belief system (Okolo, Abalogu &

Oziezi, 2020; Khafagy, 2020). As such, the professed spirituality or faith system originates from the religion which the FBO is associated with, since FBOs partake in the inspirations and spiritual creeds of the humanitarian efforts of different religions, and as such they have religious foundations (Österinen, 2016; Okolo, Abalogu & Oziezi, 2020; Khafagy, 2020). According to Bielefeld and Cleveland (2013), a study conducted with some religious volunteer workers engaged in humanitarian projects revealed that the main inspiration for the participants is the need to respond to God through helping others. Reeves (2010) also avows that the religious orientation, together with the faith and moral perception of FBOs are conceived by many as making positive impacts on the lives of those who are beneficiaries. FBOs as such are understood as being administered by people who have staunch religious and moral convictions and who are open to sharing their values towards addressing the fundamental causes of societal problems. Moreover, FBOs have become relevant as agents in society's development through their efforts to increase people's moral values, address causes of poverty in society, and generally get involved in society's affairs (Koehrsen & Heuser, 2020; Österinen, 2016; Okolo, Abalogu & Oziezi, 2020; Khafagy, 2020; Haynes, 2020). The preceding views agree with the conceptualisation of FBOs as a formal organisation whose character and mission are intentionally taken from the teachings of one or more religions or spiritual mores and which functions on a voluntary, autonomous, and altruistic basis towards promoting and realizing cooperatively expressed thoughts regarding the public good at national and global levels (Koehrsen & Heuser, 2020; Haynes, 2020; Khafagy, 2020; etc.). The current study leans towards this definition as depicting the type of FBOs selected for this research.

Summarily this section has sought to present views in literature on the main concepts which guide the current study. This study seeks to build on these conceptualisations and to specifically interrogate the nexus between these two concepts as explored in this section. From the foregoing, it can be noted that emerging from the Collaborative Governance discourse is the apparent issue of confrontation and/or adversarial relationship between public (government) and private stakeholders in the administration of public affairs. Extant studies generally take it for granted that the two are important in the improvement of public administration and realising service delivery as needed in society's varied arenas of development. The explored literature portends a view which sees the government and private sector not as adversaries but as collaborators in improving public administration and realizing serviced delivery and development efforts in society. The question for the current study is: to what extent does collaboration feature in government and FBO relationships within the chosen context? Put in another way, is the view of cordial partnership between government and private stakeholders in public administration still sustainable, especially when the private partner involves FBOs? Notably, interrogating this angle is important considering that FBOs' (aligned to religion/faith) role in public affairs is limited according to some modernization theorists' view that modernization and secularization go in *pari passu*. In this, there is an understanding of the apparent diminished role of faith/religion and its affiliates in the affairs of modernizing societies (Onwuegbuchulam, 2019).

### **Methodology**

The study is qualitative based relevant as a method appropriate for the study of variables not subject to quantitative methods (Tenny, Brannan & Brannan, 2022). Notably, a

qualitative study involves a strategy in which researchers interpret what they perceive, hear and comprehend; in this, the researchers' interpretation is not detached from their contexts, pasts and previous understandings (Creswell, 2009; Eyisi, 2016). Against this backdrop, the qualitative approach was adopted for this study.

The study area as already presented in the introduction section is the KZN province of South Africa, however, most of the respondents reside in the uMgungundlovu/Msunduzi Municipality of the Province. The study adopted the purposive sampling method which is relevant as a sampling approach dependent on the decision of the researcher in choosing the components (including individuals and organisations) to be studied (Sharma, 2017). Sampling in this study involved the selection of two FBOs within the study's context. The selected FBOs are the Islamic faith-based Gift of the Givers (GiG) and the Christian faith-based Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action (PACSA). GiG was founded in Pietermaritzburg South Africa in 1992 by Imtiaz Sooliman, a South African medical doctor, who felt a spiritual vocation to assist humanity (Desai, 2010; Morton, 2014; Onwuegbuchulam & Mtshali, 2022). The organisation since its founding has made numerous contributions to social development and humanitarian relief in KZN, South Africa, and around the world (Morton, 2014; Onwuegbuchulam & Mtshali, 2022). Similarly, Peter Kerchhoff founded PACSA in 1979 with the intention of "drawing white Christians into the struggle against apartheid" (Levine, 2002, p. 3). For over 30 years, the organization has worked in the uMgungundlovu District to promote human rights, social justice, social development, and poverty alleviation (Onwuegbuchulam & Mtshali, 2022). The organisations were firstly selected considering that they met the parameters of FBOs as conceptualised in the literature section - the mission and identity of both GiG and PACSA could summarily be understood from the preferred conceptualization of FBOs. Secondly, the FBOs were selected considering the pervasiveness of their agency in service delivery and development projects in the chosen context of this study. The KZN government Department of Social Development (KZN DSD) was also purposefully selected as it deals with non-governmental actors who operate in the area of development within the KZN Province. Lastly, the researcher selected some participants from different communities in the province who were beneficiaries of service delivery and development projects from the selected FBOs. In total 30 respondents were sought for this study, however, 28 responded they included: 15 beneficiaries of community development projects run by both PACSA and GiG; 10 key informers, 5 of each of the chosen FBOs; and 2 participants from KZN DSD.

Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection which is a data generation approach combining both closed and open-ended questions (Adams, 2015). The questions were based on the central question of this study which is: could we envisage a partnership model which can guarantee collaboration between state and CSOs (in this case the selected FBOs) towards improving service delivery and development in the chosen context of the study? The questions were also guided by the main objective of ascertaining how government and FBO collaborative efforts can be understood and realized towards improving service delivery and development in the KZN province of South Africa.

Data collected from semi-structured interviews were analysed using a thematic analysis method suitable for assessing people's perceptions and construction of phenomena within their milieu (Clarke & Braun, 2013). The method was also relevant as it helps in the identification, analysis and reporting of themes in generated data (Braun & Clarke, 2006;

Dawadi, 2020). Using the thematic approach, the researcher sought to address and interpret several aspects of the research. The tactic was to interpret and discuss points from generated data and connect participants' perceptions to conclusions in available studies and the conceptual frameworks towards addressing the study's main questions.

Trustworthiness is an issue that needs to be considered in this study. Trustworthiness focuses on ascertaining the degree of confidence in a study's data quality and the quality of data interpretation (Stahl & King, 2020). Ensuring trustworthiness is important, especially for a qualitative study such as this, which is open to bias. Consequently, to guarantee trustworthiness, the researcher utilized the triangulation approach which aims at increasing confidence in findings by confirming conclusions utilizing two or more autonomous measures (Heale & Forbes, 2017). The effort was to compare perceptions from interview data with data in extant literature to corroborate and/or refute before making conclusions. Furthermore, as regards ethics, gatekeepers' letters from the selected organizations and government departments were sought and obtained by the researcher. Also, informed consent letters were given to respondents and community beneficiaries, which explained the purpose of the study. Respondents were kindly requested to participate with a promise of anonymity in the reporting of data. Consequently, data reporting was done using aliases to shield the identity of the respondents. A further aspect that concerns ethics in this study

## **Findings And Discussions**

### *Government and FBOs: Question of Partnership*

In this section, there is a presentation and analysis of data from interview questions that sought to ascertain the possibility of a partnership between the selected FBOs and the KZN provincial government. Notably, the inquiry became relevant considering some views in literature (Ansell & Gash, 2018; Costa, 2015; Okolo, Abalogu & Oziezi, 2020; Khafagy, 2020) alluding to the reality that possible collaboration between government and FBOs could be important towards assisting government to address some of the issues with developmental intervention in society. As such, the presented findings in this section looked at the roles that FBOs perform in assisting the government in service delivery and development in the KZN context.

### *Government's view on Partnership with FBOs*

Concerning the question of a probable partnership between the KZN government and the selected FBOs replies from participants in government DSD offices indicate that the state is conscious of the importance of non-state actors like FBOs in the government's effort to provide services and development interventions to the people. According to the responses, based on this awareness, the government has endeavoured to formalize the registration of different CBOs and NGOs including FBOs, aiming at capacitating these organizations and utilizing their expertise to realize the government's effort at delivering services and development projects in the study's context. Also, from the responses, it can be garnered that the state department has existing formal partnerships with some FBOs with both international and local statuses. These FBOs and faith-based networks are viewed by the participants as having the resources to contribute to the government's development projects, and their ability to be closer to the communities is an advantage that the government also sought to capitalize on;

[Our] component called nonprofit institutions, aim at capacity building of nonprofit institutions. That unit ensures the registration of FBOs, and any other NGO. It is a custodian of any organization registered as a nonprofit organization (Mfana, KZN DSD). We've worked with FBOs that are not only based here in South Africa. Some FBOs or churches have a lot of power and financial muscle in contributing to poverty eradication. They have the expertise and all we need to assist communities (Mfana, KZN DSD). We must ensure that there is social cohesion in the community. And we feel that FBOs, because they are designated in communities, if they are provided with resources to run advocacy, awareness, and capacity building...it actually supports the government (Mbali, KZN DSD).

Conclusively, responses indicate that the government is conscious of the importance of engaging in collaboration/partnership with non-state organizations like FBOs, towards improving service delivery and development in the province. However, responses to further questions under this theme, reveal that despite the government's awareness of the pervasive efforts of GiG and PACSA in the area of service delivery in KZN, there are no existing formal partnerships between the government and the selected FBOs. This understandably could be interpreted as meaning that the government within the chosen context, despite acknowledging the positive role the FBOs can play in collaborative governance, still operate within the liberal democratic ethos, which looks at the practical role that religion and faith-based networks (including FBOs) can play in society's development with scepticism (Onwuegbuchulam, 2019; Okolo, Abalogu & Oziezi, 2020).

#### *FBOs and Probable Collaborative Partnership with Government*

Replies to questions about possible collaborative partnerships between the government and the selected FBOs affirm that there are indeed no formal collaborative partnership agreements between the selected FBOs and the government within the context of the study. However, FBO participants were of the perception that there have been some unofficial collaborative instances in which the government assists the FBOs (logistically and administratively) to access and help communities in the KZN province experiencing service delivery issues and disasters;

GiG is not affiliated to the government. Our funding is solely from other donors. We have done projects in which one would think government is part of...but this project was done solely by us (Aaisha, GiG). We have good relationship with government, but we do not have a partnership as such with them. They get involved especially when it is an international project in which we have to liaise with government of other governments (Nqobile, GiG).

Responses also indicate that the FBOs are open to possible collaborative partnerships with government agents in service delivery and development efforts in the study's context. However, according to the participants, the probable collaborative partnership should be genuine and not a strategy by the state to use the FBOs for their political agenda. Furthermore, for the participants, a probable partnership should involve the government providing financial sponsorship and the FBOs having the role of providing logistics and using their competent structures to ensure service delivery and development interventions reach the communities;

If there is a kind of partnership, the role we would expect from the government is to help with funding. Delivering aids requires money, we have to buy the goods and deliver to the people. So, their role to provide finance will be appreciated (Aaisha, GiG).

Additionally, responses reveal participants' perceptions that probable collaborative partnership would assist in addressing some notable issues that have hampered government service delivery plans. Participants are mostly optimistic that the involvement of FBOs in a kind of collaborative governance strategy will result in a sustainable service delivery and development of the communities;

Our role is to help to create a better sustainable strategy that goes beyond that of government. Our role in this is justified, it is geared towards helping people to realize their dignity in the community. So definitely our role is a good role and we are working hard in realizing this (Aadam, GiG). On the part of PACSA, respondents' views also indicate that there exists no official collaborative partnership arrangement between the organisation and government within the KZN province. However, according to the participants from the FBO, there is some level of cooperation and dialogue with government offices like the DSD when it comes to some issues pertaining to service delivery in some communities;

We do not have a policy as regards partnership with the state, it all depends on the situation and the work we do in a particular time determines how we approach the state in that situation (Stephanie, PACSA).

We work with government in certain areas in which we offer to assist government to make informed policies on the issues of poverty alleviation and service delivery (Dlomo, PACSA).

We interact, in some places...in some places it is like don't look at me, I don't look at you kind of thing... (Marceline, PACSA).

The participants from PACSA are also of the perception that collaborative partnership with government agents is possible and can be helpful to the communities, but dependent on the real meaning of such collaborative effort and what it involves. The participants envisage that in such a collaborative partnership, the FBO could use its strength of being closer to the communities to assist the government in service delivery and realising development projects;

[According to] our position in PACSA, it depends on the strategy; people are asking me do you want to collaborate with politicians? My answer has always been: It depends on "what" (Trevor, PACSA).

Government should work with organizations like PACSA who are closer to the people and ask them what exactly is happening with the people down there. They should consult with PACSA who have done research with the people on the ground and who understands the problem (Thokozani, PACSA).

The perceptions of FBO participants in this section reveal implicit and explicit confirmation of the views of government agents that there exists no formal collaboration between the provincial government agents and the chosen FBOs. It can be however garnered from the responses that the participants agree that there is something meaningful to be gained in any possible collaborative plan towards the delivery of services to the communities within the context. The perceptions of participants on this theme corroborate views in literature (Bradley, Mahmoud & Arlati, 2022; Bianchi, Nasi & Rivenbark 2021; Ansell & Gash, 2018; Emerson, Nabatchi & Balogh, 2011) on collaborative governance. In this, it is understood that both the government and the private sector (in this case FBOs)



understood their different roles in any form of collaboration. They understand they have different crucial roles to play in improving service delivery and governance to the people through a proper collaborative partnership strategy. However, it can also be garnered from the responses that the FBOs bear a negative presentiment with regards to the real motive behind a probable government's call for partnership with NGOs and FBOs.

*FBOs Premonition Regarding Probable Partnership with Government*

Views expressed by FBO participants show that FBO agents are cautious about the real motive behind probable collaboration with state agents in any service delivery and development project. The overall feeling of the participants shows that they are sceptical regarding the real motivation for such a collaborative partnership plan. From their responses, it could be inferred that they are wary of becoming a part of the government's political agenda achieved through using NGOs and FBOs as "rubber stamps". The responses indicate that the FBOs are unwilling to become partners with the government if such is geared towards achieving a politically motivated agenda;

Politically we are not affiliated, and if we partner with government people will think that now we are partisan. We want to be independent...without being encumbered by political interference even from donors. We do not want partnership that will allow government to tell us what to do and calling the shots and that is very important (Aadam, GiG).

What we avoid is being an extension of the government. You know that government and politicians are quite clever. They can use you to say even PACSA is supporting this, only to find that this is not the case. So as PACSA we say, where the government is doing well we say so...and when they are not doing well we say no (Dlomo, PACSA).

Participants also question prevalent views in available literature (Bianchi, Nasi & Rivenbark 2021; Ansell & Gash, 2018; Emerson, Nabatchi & Balogh, 2011) regarding the real importance of probable collaboration between government and private sectors. For some of the respondents it is important to interrogate the real meaning of such proposed partnership and to find out the usefulness and need for any proposed collaboration;

Partnership for the sake of partnership, I think is a waste of good money and time. We don't enter into partnership just to be partners for the sake of it. Partnership means you can actually, shift basic thinking and approaches of doing things...The whole question of partnership has to be based on a strategic value to that partnership... (Trevor, PACSA).

In partnership two people or organization come together, 50-50 percent or 40-60 percent; whatever arrangement you reach. This is partnership. Government should be able to look at the organizations in the province and see which organization works. They should consider these organization and give them a budget to help them in those important projects...this is proper partnership (Pamir, GiG).

The above perceptions show that the FBO participants are uneasy concerning the issue of collaboration between the organisations and government. The issue as can be garnered from their responses borders on what is the real meaning of partnership for government entering such probable collaborative plan. Further from the responses, it will seem that the participants are open to an understanding of collaboration which sees the FBOs and government standing on equal grounds while negotiating at the table on the issue of service delivery and development projects in the communities within the study's context. Notably, the presentiments expressed here highlight the propensity of government agents and politicians to use CSOs as rubber stamps and not offer them real power to contribute

meaningfully towards service delivery and development of the communities. Consequently, the question of the real meaning and motivation behind any probable plan for collaborative governance could be said to be a genuine one. It is then important that government agents assure FBOs through a well-drafted contract that any proposed plan is geared towards proper collaborative governance.

### **The Community on Partnership between FBOs and Government**

Responses of community participants show diverse perceptions on the topic of probable partnership between FBOs and government agents in the study's context. According to some of the participants, collaboration between the FBOs and government agents will hinder the good work the former is already doing in the communities. They agree with the views already expressed by FBO participants that such a collaborative plan could make the organisations susceptible to political interference and succumbing to partisan politics and compromising their neutrality and integrity;

As I see it the organization is doing well on its own.... They should continue like that as government is not helping...let government come in if they can as the way we see it government is not interested in our well-being (Xolo, Sweetwaters KZN). You know government does not partner...there are individuals in the government who have got their own agendas, and they got certain instructions from certain political party (Sphe, Mkhahhatini KZN). However, there is also a perception that a collaborative governance plan between FBOs and government agents could be beneficial towards realizing proper service delivery in the province. According to this view, a collaborative partnership is needed since the FBOs need funding and other logistical assistance, which the government can provide, to facilitate the work they do in the communities;

Government should work with the organization and provide the basics to kick off the projects in the community. The finer parts they must arrange with the organization in order to help the community (Sam, Northdale KZN). Partnership between government and the organization will be a very good idea...a garden like this will need pumps to get water from the source of water, GiG may not be able to afford this, and it is here that the government funding can play a good role (Aziz, Bombay Heights KZN).

The above responses from community participants help in elucidating the variegated views in literature (Ansell & Gash, 2017; Emerson, Nabatchi & Balogh, 2011; Bianchi, Nasi & Rivenbark 2021) on the issue of collaborative governance between state organs and private organizations like the FBOs. Just as views are divided in the extant literature on the utility of possible partnership and collaboration between state and FBOs, community participants are also divided on the issue. It is easy to understand that the negative premonition of community members against partnership, could stem from their mistrust of government agenda and the numerous failed efforts of government at service delivery in the communities. This premonition could also be linked to the views of FBOs in the previous section concerning the possible negative effect that an effort at partnership and collaboration could yield. However, it is also important to acknowledge the community participants who are of the view that partnership and an understanding of collaboration between government and FBOs can be very productive. Their views agree with the various perspectives in literature (Onwuegbuchulam, 2019; Clarke & Ware, 2015) and from both government and FBOs in previous sections on the importance of partnership. It is then central to probe how to overcome some of these negative premonitions that can constitute

a hiatus to a proper collaborative initiative between the organisations and state agents in the KZN province. This is the focus of the next section.

*How State and FBO Collaborative Initiatives can be realized*

Views expressed by government participants reveal their implicit and explicit understanding of the strengths and utility of FBOs in providing social services and development projects in the communities. According to the government representatives, FBOs do have the capability to play a significant role in addressing issues of social services in the study's context.

We have a belief that one organization might not have the financial muscle, but they will have the ability to change the mindset of an individual, to a positive one. One set of organizations can have a lot of financial support so the government can be very much dependent on that... (Mfana, KZN DSD).

Responses also indicate that the government is conscious of certain CSOs and NGOs in the province who need government financing to effectively deliver social services and development projects they are engaged in the communities. This in the view of the present researcher raises the question of how to determine which organisations have the resources and which have not. It is argued that the response to this question may make the difference between success or failure in any probable FBO and government collaborative initiative in service delivery in the study's context.

From previous responses, it is noted that the FBOs are open to a collaborative initiative with the government which is not intended to exploit the FBOs for political ends. Responses to further questions centring on this point reveal that the organisations are willing to avail their knowhow to assist the state in realizing proper and sustainable social services and development in the communities;

Does a strategic opportunity exist? Now sometimes it does, in which case we would then partner...The role that we see ourselves playing is the role of making available the expertise that we have. We've got research capacity, we've got other kinds of capacities, and we would put that at your disposal (Trevor, from PACSA).

Consequently, it can be posited that to realize an effective collaborative initiative between the state and the FBOs in the study's context, there should be an openness to proper negotiation between the two stakeholders. It can be garnered from the foregoing responses in this presentation that there is indeed much to gain by the stakeholders in a collaborative initiative. It is envisaged that the FBOs can bring their expertise towards ameliorating the weaknesses in government service delivery and development strategies in the communities. Notably, also, the point made by government participants that FBOs have the financial wherewithal to carry out service delivery and development projects is arguable. This may not be the case for most of such organisations working in the public sphere in the study's KZN context. On this, it must be further noted that the FBOs selected in this study depend on private donors for financial assistance. This is not sustainable considering the real issue of donor fatigue (Elongué & VanDyck, 2021; Awadari, 2020), hence financial support from the government could go a long way to assist these FBOs in delivering social services and development projects in the communities.

**Concluding remarks and recommendations**

This study has aimed to contribute to the debate on collaborative governance as a theme in political science and public administration. The question is: could we understand a partnership model which can guarantee collaborative governance towards better public administration—improving service delivery and development of society? Focusing on two purposefully selected FBOs, this study has concerned itself with this question, with the main objective of assessing how state/government and FBO collaborative efforts within the study's chosen context can be understood and realized towards improving service delivery and development. Summarily, findings in this study reveal that FBO's role in providing service delivery and development within the context should not be ignored. There is an affirmation that partnership and collaborative efforts between state agents and the FBOs are desirable towards improving service delivery and development. Nevertheless, answers also indicate that there is no formal collaborative initiative between the government and the selected FBOs in this study. There seems to be some negative premonition with regard to a probable collaborative initiative between the two stakeholders. The FBOs are mainly cautious about being used as rubber stamps for political ends by the government. This presentiment could constitute an obstacle to any proactive collaborative initiative with the government, even though the FBOs do need financial assistance to realise service delivery and development in the KZN province.

The findings in this study have policy implications for the government and FBOs (and by extension other organisations involved in providing social services and development) in the KZN province. It can be inferred that the two stakeholders do have a lot to benefit from any collaborative initiative. However, it is also the finding of this study that the organisations are wary of the government's ulterior political motivation in any probable collaborative partnership initiative, and this is a hurdle that needs to be addressed. It is then the position of this study that for a proper collaborative initiative to be realized, there should be a proper dialogue between the government and the organisations. Consequently, it is recommended that any probable collaborative initiative should be anchored on getting the two stakeholders to change any suspicious perceptions among them, with a willingness on the part of the organisations to show good faith towards state agents and vice versa. A probable solution should focus on proper collaborative governance, this should be thoroughly conceptualized and planned with a clear delineation of the different roles for the two stakeholders. It is granted that politicking has become a central practice among public officers, which may result in the exploitation of CSOs and certainly FBOs by government agents towards their political whims. However, it is the view of the present researcher that this should not impede FBOs' acceptance of the state's gesture towards collaboration in the provision of social services and development in the KZN context. It is envisaged that a well-prepared collaborative governance contract will go a long way to help obviate any future politically motivated aberration in a collaboration between the two parties. Establishing an official channel of engagement between the two parties will also ensure that the route to mutual dialogue towards addressing concerns in such an initiative is always open. Finally, sociopolitical phenomena are ever-changing and cannot be assumed to be static. The circumstances in the socio-political environment of the study's backdrop may have changed by the time this report is published or a reader examines it, rendering the results, arguments, and recommendations somewhat archaic. Hence it is recommended that future research be conducted to update this study and investigate the

current government state of collaborative governance between government and FBOs in the study's context.

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