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Working with the Elite: the Intersection of Social Work and Corporate Foundations- the Case of Zuellig Family Foundation, Philippines

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Abstract

Social Work draws from various disciplines and is perceived to be the direct opposite of corporate work. However, the profession recognizes the benefits of working with elite members of society to achieve social development, taking into consideration available resources and skills that they offer. While Corporate Social Responsibility typically takes the form of volunteer-driven dole-outs, it has begun to transition into community empowerment. The study examined the operations of the Zuellig Family Foundation to (a) describe the developmental principles applied by the corporate foundation in its programs, (b) determine the intersection of its operations with the Empowerment Theory and Developmental Perspective, and (c) discuss the role and contribution of social work in corporate-led programs. Despite the different and oftentimes conflicting intentions of social work and corporate work, corporate foundations significantly contribute to social change and development, by empowering communities that suffer from inequities. The findings of the study indicate that social work professionals and other humanities professions must explore partnerships with corporate-led foundations to ensure that social development goals are achieved.

Keywords: *Social Work profession, Corporate Social Responsibility, Developmental Perspective, Local Health System, philanthropic partnership*

Introduction

Social work is a globally recognized profession that draws from various disciplines to advocate and uphold human rights and social justice. In the Philippines, Social Work is primarily concerned with organized social service activity by promoting the good of the individual and society through improvements in economic and social conditions (R.A. No. 4373, 1965).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a business model that demands that companies hold themselves accountable to their stakeholders and the public economically, socially, and environmentally. Philanthropic foundations have also been created by private companies to operationalize their commitment to CSR practices and goals. Private companies and individuals, like the Zuellig family, have created separate legal entities that are focused on deepening their CSR activities.

The Social Work profession emphasizes empowering people and communities to achieve sustainable development. The Empowerment Theory recognizes that oppression is the cause of disempowerment that must be addressed by working with marginalized groups (Empowerment Theory in Social Work, 2021). In addition, the Developmental Perspective is especially relevant in a poor

country like the Philippines, where social development and economic development can be met at the same time (Midgley and Livermore, 1997).

It is not uncommon for social workers in corporate settings to experience some conflict between their professional values and the goals of companies. The study defines the intersection of corporate foundations – operated through the resources of members of the economic elite - and the Social Work profession. It further discusses the important role of Social Work in influencing corporations to promote genuine development that empowers the poor and marginalized.

The research defines the intersection of Social Work and corporate or business-led foundations using Zuellig Family Foundation as a case study through its Local Health System program. The Social Work practice model, *Working With the Elite* (2022), offers opportunities for partnerships with corporate-led foundations or philanthropic foundations. It is recognized that private companies have an obligation to the welfare of the society they operate in. Corporate foundations are aligned with the CSR practices of existing corporations and usually serve as the philanthropic vehicle for such companies.

The Zuellig Family Foundation (ZFF) is a non-government organization (NGO) established in 1997 by the Zuellig Group, a privately-owned business entity focusing on healthcare and pharmaceuticals, agricultural equipment, and industrial supplies, among others. As an autonomous organization from the Zuellig Group, the operations of ZFF are rooted in the history of the Zuellig family business in healthcare, by providing training programs for local health leaders to improve leadership and governance. The overall goal is to improve the health conditions of Filipinos.

The global pandemic has “drastically transformed the social condition...and bared the vulnerabilities of individuals and households in the Philippines,” (Peñalba, 2021). It exposed the glaring inequities in the Philippine healthcare system. As a profession that centers on social justice, addressing inequities in social and health services is an important concern for Social Work. On the other hand, private corporations and members of the elite play an essential role in providing resources and expertise to improve the country’s healthcare system. This study focuses on ZFF’s Local Health System (LHS) program in determining the intersection between the corporate foundation and Social Work, using qualitative data collection and analysis. Using the lens of Empowerment Theory and Development Approach, the study highlights the importance of working with private companies and corporate foundations like ZFF in addressing social and economic inequities.

The researchers have chosen to describe the intersection of Social Work and Corporate Foundations through a case study on the ZFF, specifically:

1. To describe the development principles and values applied by the Zuellig Family Foundation in the implementation of its Local Health System program;
2. To examine the intersection of ZFF operations with the values and principles ascribed in the empowerment theory and developmental perspectives as practiced by the Social Work profession;
3. To discuss the role of Social Work in corporate social responsibility and other corporate-led programs.

Hough (2015) wrote that social workers are moving to corporate as the public also begins to pay attention to how businesses contribute to society and the lives of their employees. As companies require communication and human connection for success, professional social workers who have been trained for this would be actively sought out. The values and skills included in the global statement of the profession’s ethical principles are transferable to various areas of practice and specializations. Social workers work with a diverse population and are involved in nearly every aspect of the community (St John, 2022).

This could include fields such as administrative and policy work which involve policies that support community members and environmental social workers engage with environmental issues. There are occupational social workers or corporate social workers who help businesses improve the functionality of the workplace and foster a positive environment (Birt, 2021).

Lee-Mendoza (2022) defined the elite in the community as professionals who form a well-informed group, politicians, established leaders, and the rich. These people have ideas and activities that could enrich Social Work, have power over legislative acts that have great effects on social welfare, are greatly involved in policy-making and program implementation, and/or can provide financial support for Social Work agencies.

There is a lack of resources in the Philippines for nonprofit social welfare but a large gap in human needs that must be met. *Working with the elite* emphasizes the lack of experience of both the elite and social workers in performing their roles in the partnership. It is the social worker's responsibility to apply problem-solving skills in this situation for the elite to have a continuing involvement in the program by encouraging them to take ownership of their responsibilities.

Long (2018) also wrote that cross-sector partnerships can be effective tools for change in the community. Although Social Work and business are often considered diametrically opposed, several aspects of these fields intersect, especially in the case of using business principles to successfully run a nonprofit organization. Social workers generally consider that businesses have different motivations and ideologies for social change, making many reluctant to partner with them as there might be a difference in expectations for project and program outcomes. Many social workers also consider the potential of power imbalances that could lead to a loss of identity or veering away from the organization's goals as businesses hold power over possible resources and could use it as leverage. However, social workers are not the only ones who benefit from partnerships with businesses:

...legitimacy, credibility, and even power within stakeholder networks are important benefits that social workers should be leveraging from partnerships with businesses. In exchange, businesses may encounter a variety of benefits as well. (Long, 2018, p. 208).

Businesses must put effort into ensuring community health as it would also allow businesses to thrive as they would find more economic opportunities that their competitors will miss (Kramer and Pfitzer, 2016).

Greatly influenced by the events in Russia in 1917 where a parliamentary government was dominated by the interests of capitalists and the Russian aristocracy, Gantt called for public service from corporations and attacked the profit systems as big businesses might be sacrificing service for profit;

...business system had a foundation in service, and as far as the community is concerned has no reason for existence except the service it can render... the business system must accept its social responsibility and devote itself primarily to service, or the community will ultimately make the attempt to take it over in order to operate it in its own interest. (Gantt, 1919)

An intersection between Gantt's theory and the principles of the Social Work profession could be found as the IFSW declared in 2018 that social workers must challenge unjust policies and practices that are oppressive, unfair, and harmful. This allows social workers to step into roles in the corporate setting without compromising their professional values.

The Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) - Center for Citizenship (2014) described CSR (equivalently labeled as "Corporate Citizenship) as a business principle that states that the profitability of said business can be accomplished through simultaneously developing the communities it is a part of and contributing to the betterment of the natural environment as well as humanity's quality of life (para. 2). With all these definitions established, CSR appears to represent the point where profit and welfare meet. In the Philippines, multiple researchers have dubbed CSR as "good economics," not to be looked at as a hindrance to a successful business but rather a necessary step for both productivity and competitive advantage (Georgescu, 2016; Luna, 2016; Renouard, 2016; Stobierski, 2021). Defined as the relationship between a corporation and the community it and its stakeholders operate in, CSR asserts that:

Companies are no longer regarded, and for that matter tolerated, as an institution isolated in a cocoon whose main existence revolves around the notion of profit-making. (Luna, 2016, p. 256)

...if a company wants to be identified as a responsible brand it is necessary to create a three-way synergy or brand, CSR, and foundation that maximizes the advantages and minimizes the disadvantages. (Monfort & Villagra, 2016, p. 768-769)

Philanthropic foundations are created by their parent companies because of said company's commitment to CSR practices and goals. This means that several elite companies and individuals, like the Zuellig family, have created separate legal entities that are focused on deepening their CSR activities.

Several existing international corporate foundations were created by "big companies" and "big names." This includes the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation which proliferated in its activities because of the founders' exposure to different forms of inequalities across the world (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2023). Since 2000, this foundation has spent over 53.8 billion USD on their programs and projects, and they include agricultural development, financial services for the poor, polio, and water sanitation and hygiene in their program strategies (Michael Wiegand, 2023).

In the Philippines, the League of Corporate Foundations (LCF) was formed in 1991 to champion programs and efforts to address social challenges (Rappler, 2016).

LCF is organized into committees, representing the major areas of social development that the entire membership is involved in. These divisions include Arts and Culture, Education, Enterprise Development, Environment, and Health. (Rappler, 2016)

These corporate foundations all have varying projects and programs with their own change models and activities, but their common characteristic is that they all lead the business sector's interest in CSR, corporate governance, and commitment to nation-building (Rappler, 2016).

The Zuellig Family Foundation acts as the “philanthropic vehicle” of the Zuellig family to contribute to the Philippines’ nation-building. (Camber Pilipinas Inc., 2022). In 1997, the Zuellig family established the Pharmaceutical Health and Family Foundation which addressed the health needs of communities within the vicinity of Zuellig’s Interphil Laboratories Inc. In 2001, this broadened to consolidating certain social responsibility programs of the Zuellig companies and was renamed to Zuellig Foundation. Seven years later, it was finally renamed to Zuellig Family Foundation as a means to emphasize its autonomy from the Zuellig group of companies. ZFF can be considered an elite-supported organization because the funds that fueled its startup and its activities and programs come from the inheritance of the Zuellig family.

ZFF is autonomous from the Zuellig Group with its separate mission of enabling local health systems to achieve better health outcomes for all Filipinos and utilizes systemic approaches to fulfill this. As the Philippine Council for NGO certification stated, “ZFF has gone beyond conventional grant-making and performs an active institutional role in the social development and progress of the Philippines” (2023). The Zuellig group’s establishment of ZFF as a means to consolidate CSR activities may be a bit unheard of, but it is not uncommon with several businesses in the past few years:

Over the last decade, numerous companies have sought to cultivate a coherent responsible brand by creating corporate foundations that work in tandem with the parent company (Montfort & Villagra, 2016, p.3).

ZFF aims to achieve the goals of trained local health leaders through the “Bridging Leadership” (BL) competencies and thus a strengthened local health system that is resilient, sustainable, community-driven, and responsive (ZFF, 2022). It envisions the achievement of better health outcomes for all Filipinos, and it does this through different frameworks and programs. Its main health change model, however, is presented in the image below:

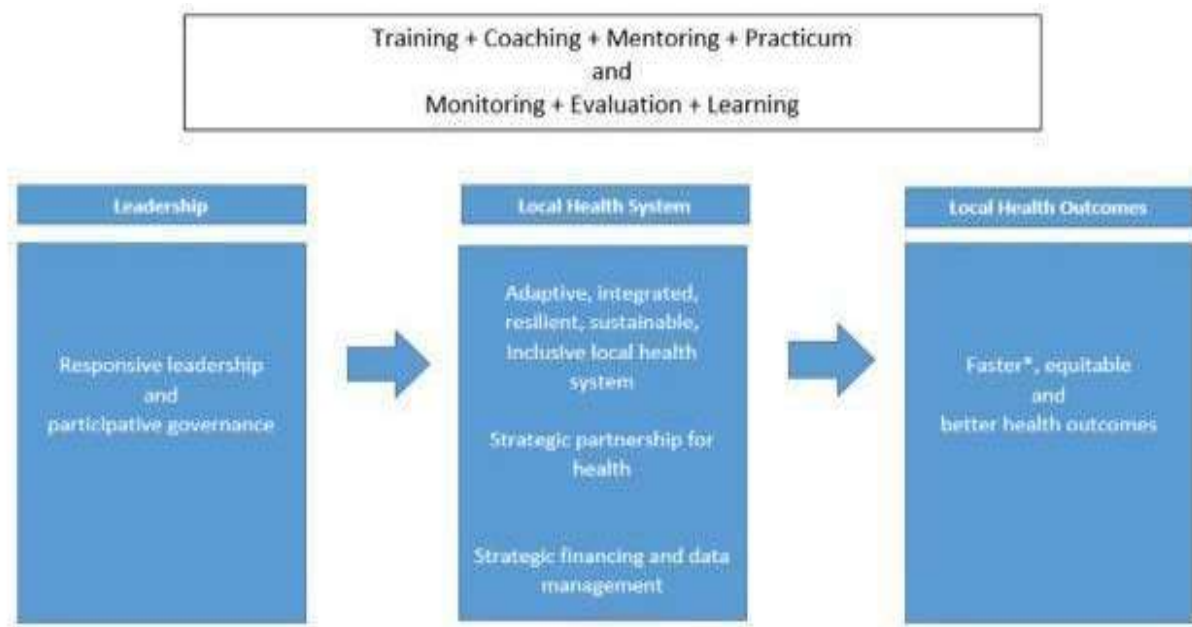


Image 1. ZFF health change model

This model contains three main components: training, practicum, and coaching. The main stakeholders of this model are local leaders, including mayors and municipal health officers. Participants undergo “transformative training” to appreciate and empower their role’s significance in the development of healthcare systems, especially in impoverished communities. The training module also follows the BL Framework of ZFF wherein coaches will come to the different communities to boost the

efforts of local leaders and work with them in further assessing and improving their complex health systems.

This type of training and business approach can be considered “unusual” as it separates from usual corporate business models centered on pure profit-building and revenue-expanding. ZFF’s “systemic approach” to the healthcare systems of poor Philippine communities is more reminiscent of the Empowerment Approach of Social Work as it focuses on helping communities improve independently and utilize existing resources within the community to improve their situation.

The emphasis of ZFF on reciprocal relationships by conducting responsive leadership, effective health services, and community participation is in line with a type of “competence promotion” that strays “away from the stigmatizing notion of deficit reduction” (SAU, 2023).

ZFF has four categories of programs, Nutrition, Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health program, the Institute for Health Leadership, and the Local Health System program. This study focused on the Local Health System program, given the current state of the country’s Primary Health Care (PHC) System. This particular set of programs is geared towards capacity-building and improving the responsiveness of governors, mayors, local health officers, and regional health directors in matters of local health care. The three objectives of ZFF’s Local Health System are, (1) Developing BL Products which were developed by AIM-Migrant Center for Bridging Societal Divides and include online courses and other training modules, (2) Conducting training activities, and (3) Ensuring the quality of training programs.

The implementation of AHA/UHC is aimed at achieving the health system goals of better health outcomes, sustained health financing, and responsive health system by ensuring that all Filipinos, particularly the disadvantaged/ marginalized, have equitable access to affordable health care. (Cuenca, 2020, p.22)

The 17th section of the 1991 Local Government Code (LGC) changed how government health services are delivered at the local level: it is no longer the national government through the Department of Health (DOH) that acts as the sole provider but rather, decision-making and resource allocation responsibilities were devolved to LGUs (Cuenca, 2020). In 2010, the DOH released an administrative order on the UHC agenda for all Filipinos, which established a health system that is preferential to disenfranchised communities (Department of Health, 2010). UHC entails financial risk protection for Filipinos, improved public hospitals through sustainable health budgets, and strengthened leadership at the local level

Dr. Manuel Dayrit, former Secretary of Health and current trustee of ZFF, brought up that as a response to the devolution of the public health care to the LGUs, local governance, and local leadership must be improved and designed based on the objective of UHC (ZFF Annual Report, 2021). ZFF tackles health inequity at the community level by adapting to the mandated devolution of health services and working towards UHC.

ZFF partner-towns have been cited and commended for their health programs. In the province of Capiz, no death among mothers or infants has been recorded since 2009 while cases of malnutrition and infectious diseases have been plummeting as well (ZFF, 2022). The Galing Pook Awards, Outstanding Local Governance Programs, and the DOH have commended several partner-towns of ZFF for their work in “leading and managing health innovations” (ZFF, 2022). This type of systemic approach to PHC has proven to be effective and sustainable throughout the years.

The theoretical framework provides the basis on which theories will be used to study the acquired data and finish the case study on the CSR activities of ZFF. The following theories will be the foundation of this study.

Thelma Lee Mendoza’s (2022) “Working With The Elite” in *Social Welfare and Social Work* Describes the elite as “professionals who constitute a well-informed group whose ideas and activities can improve or enrich agency work” (p.409). This utilizes the material and human resources and knowledge bases of the group of professionals in the country. The six principles that guide a social worker in working with the elite are the following:

1. Need and resource determination and matching – the agency’s need and appropriate resources.
2. Clarity of purpose or objective – alignment of objectives of the program in which the elite are involved with the agency itself.
3. Involvement in program/project planning and implementation – the elite should have genuine participation and involvement in going through the motions of planning and implementing the agency’s projects and programs.
4. Unitary accountability – the social worker and the elite share accountability for the project/program; any changes with the implementation should be consulted with the elite.
5. The social worker should treat the elite with respect and recognize their contribution to the agency – this is to provide the elite with a sense of fulfillment in their participation.

6. Professionalism in dealing with the elite – this is to hold the social worker accountable with professional attributes like dedication, honesty, and competence. This also includes a collaborative attitude of the social worker with the elite.

Individuals need guidance that enables them to be independent long-term. An intervention’s role under this theory is to help people self-actualize and control. VCU (2021) indicated that under the empowerment theory, social workers may be able to study the following dimensions of empowerment:

1. Self-efficacy of Community - Its core value is “self-actualization” through removing power blocks—problems that make an individual unable to meet his or her goals. It may also be about developing skills relevant to the betterment of their community.
2. Critical Consciousness - the ability to have a deep understanding and comprehension of an individual’s environment. This involves providing education to understand one’s own social, economic, and political roles.
3. Tool Development and Utilization - the ability of the social worker to create or use meaningful tools or programs to intervene with problems. For example, utilizing therapy to remove “internal” power blocks, or political advocacy by creating an interest group to engage with changing policies.

To limit the dimensions of theory to be used, the researchers will mainly utilize the self-efficacy of the community dimension. While ZFF is an NGO, it remains affiliated with the Zuellig Group, making it a social business that aims for sustainable impacts toward stakeholders. This theory will provide the opportunity to give a proper analysis: “Has ZFF fostered any beneficiary/ies to be independent, after the results of their CSR programs?”, and to study how the beneficiaries benefit from the programs in the long run.

Midgley and Livermore (1997) stated that social policies revolve around the idea that institutions have a responsibility to meet some needs of citizens they affect, along with the understanding that interventions have to meet the economic dimensions of welfare or individuals. For example, the Developmental Perspective assesses whether or not a person is capable of being independent after the development of personal skills and resources, and this independence will allow an individual to raise their own status related to welfare or adjustment to the environment. Midgley and Livermore (1997) also explained that human capital is an important concept under this theory, wherein an individual’s current skill set or background (e.g., educational attainment) is still an investment towards welfare. The study utilized the Developmental Perspective in assessing the LHS.

The framework to be discussed will show the relationship between the variables of the study.



Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Figure 1 shows how the “Social Work perspectives” are informed by the principles of the Social Work profession, specifically the “Working with the Elite” model. The LHS program of ZFF is a corporate-led foundation that is informed by the principles of CSR. It is also indicated how the Empowerment Theory and Development Approach serve as the intersection between both the Social Work perspectives and the LHS program of ZFF.

Methodology

Research Design

The study was conducted through qualitative methods, by conducting online and recorded semi-structured interviews, as well as document reviews of literature of the LHS program. It focused solely on the LHS program because of its timeliness with current events. The economic and social repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the complexities of the health system of the country, and so this particular program served as the most relevant area of study.

Research Methods and Instruments

This research utilized two instruments in gathering its data; these and their corresponding manner of assessment can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Research instruments and corresponding manner of assessment

| Instrument | Manner of Assessment |
|---|----------------------|
| 1. Semi-structured Interview (SSI) with Key Informants | Qualitative |
| 2. Document Review - Review of available and requested electronic documents | Qualitative |

Instrument Manner of Assessment

- | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Semi-structured Interview (SSI) with Key Informants | Qualitative | |
| 2. Document Review - Review of available and requested electronic documents | | Qualitative |

Semi-structured Interviews (SSIs) were conducted with key informants. Adams (2015) noted how SSIs are appropriate for one or more participants who can be classified into at least one of the following groups:

1. Program recipients - referring to the clients or beneficiaries of a nonprofit program;
2. Interested parties - referring to suppliers or contributors (or even outsiders who can be considered as “collateral”) of the said nonprofit program;
3. Administration - referring to those in upper management, whether they’re paid for their services or not, of said nonprofit program

There were a total of four (4) interviews, but only three of these were treated with thematic analysis, while the remaining interview was incorporated in the data analysis of the study to give depth to the results of the other interviews and documents reviewed.

Document Review

The researchers reviewed reports and documents from ZFF, all of which are pertinent to understanding the project management and development process of the LHS program. The recurring key phrases and themes that were identified were treated as supplements to the data obtained from the conducted interviews.

Results and Discussion

Presented in this section are the findings gathered from key informant interviews and a review of relevant documents to the LHS program of ZFF. Discussions are also provided to give a comprehensive explanation of themes that were produced in response to the objectives set in this study.

Intersection of Social Work and Corporate Foundations

Upon analysis of the data from the interviews generated there were initially 31 codes generated. These were then cut down into 9 codes and finally sorted into 5 categories (themes) with corresponding subthemes that encompass the development principles and values applied by ZFF in the implementation of its LHS program and the Empowerment Theory and Developmental Perspectives as practiced by the Social Work profession. The results of this analysis were then used to discuss the role of Social Work in corporate social responsibility and other corporate-led programs.

Such themes are tabulated below:

Table 2. Generated themes and subthemes from conducted interviews

| Themes | Subthemes |
|--|---|
| ZFF'S clarity of purpose and advocacy | (a) Clinical practice as a prerequisite to embarking on advocacy-led work (b) Advocacy plays a critical role in choosing to work in ZFF LHS |
| Successes experienced by ZFF in their projects: contributing to community health | (a) Transforming local health systems (b) Partnering with local health leaders and community members |
| Results-based change model | (a) Project creation (b) Meaningful participation and empowerment in implementation (c) Capturing personal transformation through project monitoring and evaluation |
| Meaningful stakeholder engagement | (a) Aligning project operations with ZFF vision and mission (b) Building capacity through partnerships (c) Promoting equity by building local leadership |
| Overcoming challenges through strategic solutions | (a) Strengthening commitment to achieve goals (b) Navigating through the jungle-like government system (c) Incorporating the social determinants of health in the LHS |

THEME 1: ZFF's Clarity of Purpose and Advocacy

The first category derived from the analysis of the interviews of key stakeholders and related documents is the relevance of the personal advocacy and professional experiences of key informants in choosing to work in the LHS program of ZFF. Throughout this theme, the principle of "Clarity of purpose or objective" under TLM's Working With the Elite and VCU's Social Work Empowerment Theory dimension of "Critical Consciousness" is evident. Given the length of stay and commitment of the interview participants, it can also be deduced that Monfort & Villagra (2016)'s identified corporate foundation advantage of "Improving a company's image and reputation and retaining talent" is also evident.

"There is a preference for training others and working with the community and public health and the government."

(Dr. Chung, LHS Portfolio Director)

There were then two subthemes identified: "Clinical practice as a prerequisite to embarking on advocacy-led work" and "Advocacy plays a critical role in choosing to work in ZFF LHS." Public health, for all three participants, was the field that they expressed they felt had added value given its personal and community service-oriented nature. Also, all of the participants have worked with ZFF, not necessarily in LHS alone, for over five years and have expressed their contentment with their work in the company and desire to stay, mostly fueled by the satisfaction of their personal advocacies for public health.

This subtheme and the participants' claims are supported by the Revised Health Change Model of ZFF, M&E Framework, Stakeholder Assessment, and Results Management where community engagement and perception of projects is a requirement in its development.

THEME 2: Successes experienced by ZFF in their projects: Contributing to Community Health

The second category covers the project development and management of previous projects of ZFF and how it contributed to the beneficiary communities and the formation of the LHS program. Under this theme, TLM's "Need and resource determination and matching" principle, VCU's Social Empowerment Theory's "Tool Development and Utilization" dimension, and Midgley and Livermore (1997)'s "Economic development and well-being" are Social Work principles that are reflected in each subtheme. Meanwhile, the ability to "Create financial independence and create lasting commitments to the social programs they were created for" as a corporate foundation advantage described by Monfort & Villagra (2016) is potent under this theme.

There were then two subthemes identified: "Transforming Local Health Systems" and "Partnering with Local Health Leaders and Community Members." As explained by Dr. Comia, an LHS Program Manager and the second interview participant, a reorganization took place which created the LHS program and in turn, several projects such as PLGP 4, BARMM health, MISP, and RDLP were listed under this. Dr. Chung corroborates this and deepens the explanation by informing the researchers that PLGP is already in its fourth cycle, and the third cycle was what transformed into the overall LHS program.

Transforming Local Health Systems

The LHS program is the overarching umbrella that covers programs of ZFF including BL and P/MLGP. As explained by Dr. Comia, an LHS Program Manager and the second interview participant, a reorganization took place which created the LHS program and in turn, several projects such as PLGP 4, BARMM health, MISP, and RDLP were listed under this.

There are other ZFF projects present in other regions. As expressed by all of the participants: "There is also a scale-up project with DOH handling CAR, Region I, Region II, Region 4-A and Region 8." (Dr. Chung, LHS Portfolio Director)

"During Cycle 2, I was assigned to Davao and Carragua, then region 5 was added later on." (Dr. Comia, LHS Program Manager)

"...past member from 2015 to 2018 as the Regional Account Officer for Cordillera and Cagayan Valley region for a year, and then for two years as the Provincial Account Officer of Agusan del Sur." (Dr. Momville, PHO II of Agusan del Sur)

Partnering with Local Health Leaders and Community Members

"The sandwich approach used by ZFF is top to bottom and bottom-up; ensures that both are moving at the same time as one-way approaches are no longer effective." (Dr. Chung, LHS Portfolio Director)

The "sandwich approach" was mentioned and alluded to multiple times by the interview participants. While not explicitly mentioned in any of the official documents from ZFF, this was still implied by their M&E frameworks, results management, stakeholder assessment, and even the health change model that they use.

In the Results Management Guidelines of ZFF, the sandwich approach is also reflected as the listed indicators all rely on the project implementers, the training beneficiaries, as well as community-level stakeholders. For a project to be deemed as "successful," it has to be considerably "best practice" wherein its effectiveness, feasibility, sustainability, and transferability are all rated highly by all stakeholders involved.

THEME 3: Results-based Change Model

The third category includes the creation, implementation, as well as monitoring, and evaluation of the LHS program based on information derived from key informant interviews and relevant documents. Under this theme, the social work theory components and corporate foundation advantages of "THEME 2: Successes experienced by ZFF in their projects" are also evident.

There were then three subthemes identified: "Project Creation," "Meaningful Participation and Empowerment in Implementation," and "Capturing Personal Transformation through Project Monitoring and Evaluation."

The results framework shows the results-driven nature of the project development of ZFF, and it depicts that while the organization follows traditional project cycles, it is also a requirement that throughout the entire process, its mission, vision, and objectives remain reflected and consistent. This further establishes that the Health Change Model serves as the guide for all steps taken in the project development of ZFF, including that of LHS.

Project Creation

“In ZFF’s theory of change, the results framework, project runway, and project design all align with the health change model.”

(Dr. Chung, LHS Portfolio Director)

For this subtheme, mostly the official ZFF documents, particularly the 2019-2022 Results Management Guidelines, were used in corroborating the statements of the interview participants and giving depth to the project development process of ZFF.

Meaningful Participation and Empowerment in Implementation

As expressed by the Portfolio Director of LHS, the program “focused on the improvement of the health system of municipalities, provinces, and regions.” This is corroborated by the official document, Bayang Malusog PLDP PHTeams M1 of ZFF as it describes the World Health Organization’s (WHO) six building blocks of the local health systems: Service Delivery, Medicines and Technologies, Health Information System, Health Human Resources, Governance, and Financing.

“UHC is for the poor, and the marginalized are the priority for primary healthcare. This is one of the focus projects of LHS because the improvement of the system will benefit the poor, especially the improved indicators. Health is complex, so there’s a system that explains its inequity. Addressing the building blocks of health will help improve the access to the needs of the poor” (Dr. Chung, LHS Portfolio Director)

“When the Universal Healthcare Act was signed into law in February 2019, we were the program that was focused on UHC implementation to trailblaze in our prototype provinces. Then, the pandemic came, and we had doubled work - we recast the program so that it became relevant to the provinces. Since our program implementation is medium-term, cycle 4 is the scale-up of UHC implementation in the provinces.” (Dr. Comia, LHS Program Manager)

Capturing Personal Transformation through Project Monitoring and Evaluation

Within the M&E manual, and as briefly mentioned by the participants, it could be noted that the M&E Framework of ZFF relies on baseline studies (this was briefly mentioned by Dr. Comia), endline studies, case documentation, and evaluation studies were all coupled with continuous stakeholder engagement and assessment. Case documentation is similar to the conducted interviews since it takes into account the “personal transformation” (“Leadership Transformation”) of the leader as it considers their ownership of enhanced competencies as well as their personal journeys throughout the program’s project/s. This takes on a highly empowering approach to both the project implementers and the local health leaders who are recipients of the program’s training designs.

THEME 4: Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement

The fourth category includes the roles of relevant stakeholders in the LHS program and contextualizes their functions in the program to the Empowerment Theory and Developmental Perspectives of Social Work. The Social Work principles that were most evident in this theme include TLM’s “Unitary accountability” principle and VCU’s “Self-efficacy of community” dimension. Monfort & Villagra’s (2016) corporate foundation’s advantage of “Facilitate thorough stakeholder engagement and management” could be noted in this theme. There were then three subthemes identified: “Aligning Project Operations with ZFF Vision and Mission,” “Building Capacity through Partnerships,” and “Promoting Equity by Building Local Leadership.”

Aligning Project Operations with ZFF Vision and Mission

Dr. Chung expressed that she has multiple roles as a director, including strategic management. This entails:

“...working with principals, senior leaders in the foundation, work on aligning board members to ZFF’s mission and vision, and goals...handles and helps project managers from previous projects...work together with program managers to improve the health system, leader competencies from provinces and regions...work on partnerships outside of DOH.” (Dr. Chung, LHS Portfolio Director)

“As program manager, you hold the leaders accountable. We do all the training, coaching, and practicum, so that the improvement of the health system is quick. There are frameworks, but you have to be immersed with the leaders. Your presence should be valued by your leaders.” (Dr. Comia, LHS Program Manager)

Building Capacity through Partnerships

ZFF is working towards UHC, as emphasized by the participants and briefly corroborated by the documents that were reviewed. Much effort is necessary to achieve UHC, and this requires partnerships with different existing agencies. All interview participants have expressed that they have partnered with DOH, DILG, POPCOM, PhilHealth, pertinent LGUs, and other private partners to sustain their projects and collectively work towards the goal of UHC.

In the Operationalizing the Revised Health Change Model of ZFF, the second part of the Health Change Model is about expanding partnerships for learning and development which requires multiple capacity and capability-building activities.

“Another role is to work on partnerships outside of DOH, such as private partners who invest in the foundation’s programs..” (Dr. Chung, LHS Portfolio Director)

Promoting Equity by Building Local Leadership

The beneficiaries of the LHS program of ZFF are the local health leaders, and their part is critical in terms of cooperation and commitment. Beneficiaries receive training through the BL framework that values training, coaching, mentoring, practicum, and monitoring, as well as evaluation and learning. Although this is outside the scope of this study, Dr. Momville briefly mentioned this framework and how its goal is to improve the competencies of local health leaders.

“The concept and value of equity are consistently highlighted during training, especially as many Filipinos are poor. Concerning effective leadership, it can be seen that no province, municipality, or barangay could propel itself if the leadership and governance are not effective. These are not just politicians but include the bureaucrats running the government who are equally important.” (Dr. Momville, PHO II of Agusan Del Sur)

Beyond the local health leaders themselves, it is reflected in the Health Change Model, as well in the responses of the interview participants, that efforts are meant to be felt at the community level, indicating an added role of beneficiaries/local health leaders to foster positive relationships and communication with people from their communities.

“In UHC, even if we engage provincial leaders, we make sure it’s felt at the bottom through engaging municipalities and the barangays.” (Dr. Comia, LHS Program Manager)

THEME 5: Overcoming Challenges through Strategic Solutions

The fifth category explores the challenges faced by relevant stakeholders regarding the planning and implementation of the LHS program of ZFF and how these challenges were addressed. This theme contains Midgley and Livermore (1997)’s “Economic development and well-being” principle and Monfort and Villagra (2016)’s “Facilitate thorough stakeholder engagement and management” advantage of corporation foundations.

There were then three subthemes identified: “Strengthening Commitment to Achieve Goals,” “Navigating through the Jungle-Like Government System,” and “Incorporating the Social Determinants of Health in the LHS.”

Strengthening Commitment to Achieve Goals

The entire framework of the LHS program of ZFF is based on enhancing leadership competencies and baselines of local health leaders, and this requires continuous engagements with all relevant stakeholders. The interview participants’ perceived challenges concerning ZFF LHS include the following accounts:

“There is resistance to change. Values must also be deepened. The culture of tearing others down and gossiping is also challenging.” (Dr. Momville, PHO II of Agusan del Sur)

These challenges expressed by the participants are also accounted for and provided solutions for in Operationalizing the Revised Health Change Model. The proposed solutions of ZFF to these are behavior adoption and social marketing strategies.

Navigating through the Jungle-Like Government System

Dr. Momville expressed difficulties in the “jungle-like system of the government especially as there are many laws embedded in every move of the government.”

“Overall, if we muster ourselves and the values we uphold, then there is no fear of being broken down, but there are still many learnings in dealing with difficult people. It is important to be authentic and yet cautious.” (Dr. Momville, PHO II of Agusan del Sur)

Dr. Momville's intrapersonal challenges were solved internally by upholding her own principles and values in carrying out her work as provincial health officer.

“Overall, if we muster ourselves and the values we uphold, then there is no fear of being broken down, but there are still many learnings in dealing with difficult people. It is important to be authentic and yet cautious.” (Dr. Momville, PHO II of Agusan del Sur)

Incorporating the Social determinants of Health in the LHS

The interview participants have expressed the limitations of the LHS program of ZFF in addressing the social determinants of health, but they have expressed the existing efforts of the organization in addressing these nonetheless. Since UHC entails financial risk protection for Filipinos, improved public hospitals through sustainable health budgets, and strengthened leadership at the local level, social determinants such as ensuring health in schools, and workplaces, among other settings have to be considered. The LHS program of ZFF acts as a catalyst for this agenda by taking on the third component (strengthened leadership). This is corroborated in ZFF Manual M&E Manual ver1, under the “Inovation” section, it is emphasized that public health requires trying and testing even methods that haven't been fully exhausted yet. This would encompass social determinants of health.

“The social determinants in UHC are part of the new health sector strategy released by the government. Since they're part of UHC, ZFF incorporated them in the strengthening health promotions of DOH...the rest...can't be addressed due to the lack of funding, but this is an attempt.” (Dr. Chung, LHS Portfolio Director)

The link between social work and corporate social responsibility is a fundamental element in solving social problems because combining information leads to qualitative intervention. (Gotea & Rosculet, 2019, p.134)

The conclusions of the findings for the three research questions on the intersection of social work and corporate social responsibility are based on the analysis of the LHS program of ZFF and the findings derived from examining it under the lens of the Empowerment Theory and Developmental Perspective of the Social Work profession. The conclusions are as stated below:

1. The LHS program of ZFF is a clear example of an elite/corporate foundation that ventures into social development using an Empowerment Approach in its project development and management. Corporate foundations, through the findings of this case study, can be deduced to be effective contributors to social development and social change.
2. The values and principles behind the social work project development process have been observed throughout this case study of the LHS program of ZFF, both the Social Work profession and corporate-led foundations, have the potential to truly empower communities that suffer from various social inequities, like those related to health.
3. There is an opportunity, not a threat, for social workers to leverage the resources that elite foundations like ZFF have. The social worker's role as a mediator of resources in times of crisis is invoked in CSR efforts. To ensure that corporate social responsibility and the activities of corporate-led foundations, like ZFF, are realigned to social justice efforts, Social Work professionals and other humanities professions must explore partnerships with corporate-led foundations and deepen their knowledge bases further. In doing so, the interdisciplinary and adaptive nature of Social Work, and humanities professions at large, can shine and light the path for a truly sustainable and just society.

“All false binaries that create conflict, close people's eyes to alternative perspectives...We need different disciplines, different sets of responsibilities, and different lenses through which we can see the world we all live in. Diversity of thought, of political views, of ideas, of business models, of ways of seeing the world - that is what drives progress and innovation and provides resilience.”

(Joe Zammit-Lucia, *The New Political Capitalism*, p.17)

Conclusion and Suggestions

Conclusion

It is everyone's responsibility, as individuals and groups, to support and help society, thus, social workers actively participate in the decision-making process in the field of corporate practice and CSR. Social Work and CSR are interdependent, "the potential benefits outweighed the presented risks... need for Social Work to be open to partnering with business" (Gotea & Roşculeţ, 2019).

Social workers could benefit corporations as part of the corporate structure as the Social Work profession shares many principles with corporate foundations and CSR practice, thus, this paper supports the idea of further exploration of the relationship between the two disciplines. However, social workers are not the only ones present in the field of Social Sciences who care about social justice, so other professions in humanities can utilize their skills and professional attributes for the betterment of the company and the community.

Suggestions

This study has contributed to the understanding of the intersection between social work principles and values and corporate foundations. As the study progressed, a few areas surfaced as possible areas for future studies. The suggestions are as follows:

4. Although Social Work as a profession draws from various disciplines and is present in many different fields, this study is limited to the private sector participating in the healthcare sector. A study that engages with the private sector and takes part in a different sector may yield more discussions and values that could further enrich the field of corporate social work.
5. There is a need for greater incorporation of working with the elite in the education of social workers. This would equip social workers to better participate in the field of corporate social work and utilize the material and human resources and knowledge bases of the group of professionals available, ensuring the quality of resource mobilization and thus, the social services offered by different agencies in the country.
4. From the achievements of organizations of the elite such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation that focused on development and empowerment after consulting with experts, it could be seen that social workers can step into a similar role when working with similar organizations locally such as ZFF

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