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Assessing Organizational Conditions in Civil Society Organizations: Development and Pilot Feasibility Study of a Social Entrepreneurship Diagnostic Instrument

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Abstract: Civil society organizations (CSOs) are central to addressing social and developmental challenges in small island developing states, yet many operate under resource constraints and donor dependency that threaten their operational continuity and social mission. Frameworks such as the Transformational Theory of Change (TToC) have been proposed to guide organizational strengthening and long-term sectoral transformation, but their practical application depends on instruments capable of generating reliable baseline data on CSO organizational conditions. This paper reports the development and pilot feasibility study of a composite diagnostic instrument that assesses ten organizational domains, including social entrepreneurship practices, management systems, human resource management, networking, marketing, financial practices, accountability, and institutional support. The instrument was administered face-to-face with senior representatives of four heterogeneous CSOs in Trinidad and Tobago. Feasibility indicators show full completion, near-complete item-level response (98.5%), acceptable respondent burden, and interpretable organization-level profiles. Cross-case analysis reveals high reported entrepreneurial behavior and networking alongside weaker conditions in staffing, remuneration, program measurement, and expense coverage. The pilot also identified that program-level investment data required for Social Return on Investment analysis was unavailable, defining a priority for instrument refinement. The study's contribution is methodological: it provides a tested, replicable diagnostic instrument and feasibility evidence to guide its refinement and broader deployment in support of organizational capacity-building in the social sector.

Keywords: civil society organizations; diagnostic instrument; organizational capacity assessment; pilot feasibility study; social entrepreneurship

1. Introduction

Midway to the 2030 Agenda, global progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has slowed, stalled, or reversed, a situation attributed to the socioeconomic aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, civil unrest, climate change, and deteriorating environmental conditions (Minto-Coy et al., 2022; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs & United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2023;

Mohan, 2022). The situation is particularly acute for small island developing states in the Caribbean, which confront high debt, inflation, unemployment, rising poverty and living costs, and climate vulnerability, and which have been described as experiencing among the most severe socioeconomic crises in a century (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC], 2022; United Nations Caribbean, 2021; Bahaw et al., 2026a; 2026b; Sookhai, 2024).

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are central actors in addressing social and developmental challenges, particularly in small island developing states and other developing economy contexts where public institutions and market actors may face resource and coordination constraints (Hinds, 2019). In the Caribbean, CSOs contribute to community development, social welfare, environmental protection, disability support, and poverty alleviation (Byron & Montoute, 2023). Their ability to sustain these contributions depends on their organizational capacity, financial viability, human resource depth, and ability to adapt to changing social and economic conditions (Bahaw et al., 2025; Bahaw, 2023). Prior Caribbean research indicates, however, that many CSOs remain donor-dependent and constrained in staffing, operational capacity, and financial sustainability (Knife et al., 2014; Medine, 2022; Medine & Minto-Coy, 2023b).

Strengthening Caribbean CSOs first requires a reliable picture of where they currently stand across the organizational domains that matter most for sustained operations and social impact (Bahaw et al., 2026b). Without baseline data on practices, systems, and resource conditions at the organizational level, capacity-building interventions lack a principled foundation, and improvement cannot be tracked over time (Hinds, 2019; Hinds, 2024). Frameworks such as the Transformational Theory of Change (TToC) proposed by Medine et al. (2025) have been developed to guide this process conceptually, identifying social entrepreneurship practices, management systems, financial capabilities, accountability, and institutional support as the domains through which organizational strengthening and longer-term transformational change can be pursued (Stephens & Bahaw, 2025). However, like most theoretical frameworks in this domain, the TToC does not include an operationalized measurement instrument. Translating its conceptual domains into a practical, field-administrable diagnostic tool, and establishing that such a tool can feasibly be deployed in real CSO settings, is a necessary precondition for any empirical work the framework might ultimately support (Hinds & Montoute, 2019).

This paper addresses that gap. Its purpose is twofold: (1) to develop a composite diagnostic instrument that assesses the organizational conditions the TToC identifies as relevant to sustained operations and transformational change, across ten domains covering social entrepreneurship practices, management, human resources, networking, marketing, records management, social and financial performance, accountability, and institutional support; and (2) to pilot test the feasibility of administering the instrument with four CSOs in Trinidad and Tobago. The study is explicitly a methodological contribution: it does not test the TToC's propositions, does not measure organizational resilience, and does not support generalization to the wider Caribbean social sector. Its contribution is a tested, documented diagnostic instrument and the feasibility evidence needed to guide its refinement and broader deployment.

The case for publishing a feasibility study of this instrument, rather than proceeding directly to a larger validation study, rests on three grounds. First, the instrument is a composite assembled from multiple source instruments and one newly developed section; its behavior as a combined tool in a real field setting was unknown and needed to be established before any larger deployment (Guclu et al., 2002; Klimas & Wronka-Pośpiech, 2022; Medine, 2016, 2022; Medine & Minto-Coy, 2023a). Second, the target population — Caribbean CSOs — is resource constrained and often volunteer-run; the burden an instrument imposes is a legitimate barrier to adoption, and evidence of acceptable burden at small scale is a prerequisite for scaling (Byron & Montoute, 2023). Third, the pilot revealed a specific, consequential data gap (the unavailability of program-level investment data required for SROI analysis) that would have compromised a larger study had it not been identified first (Bond et al., 2023). Pilot feasibility studies serve this purpose: they protect the integrity of subsequent, larger investigations by surfacing problems while the cost of addressing them remains low (Thabane et al., 2010; Lancaster et al., 2004).

The study is guided by the following primary research question: To what extent is it feasible to administer the TToC-derived diagnostic instrument within civil society organizations, and does the instrument generate interpretable organization-level profiles of organizational conditions? Two subsidiary questions support this aim: (RQ1a) What do feasibility indicators—including participation, completion, administration burden, and data availability—reveal about the instrument's practicality and priorities for refinement? (RQ1b) To what extent do participating CSOs report the organizational conditions and practices the instrument was designed to assess?

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature on social entrepreneurship, CSO sustainability, the Transformational Theory of Change, and the rationale for the instrument's domain structure. Section 3 details the materials and methods. Section 4 reports the results. Section 5 discusses the findings and their implications for refining the instrument. Section 6 concludes.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Civil Society Organizations, Sustainability, and the Need for Diagnostic Assessment

Civil society organizations (CSOs) operate at the intersection of social mission and organizational management (Hinds, 2019). Their continued functioning depends on maintaining adequate staffing, financial resources, program delivery systems, accountability structures, and external relationships, while simultaneously responding to evolving social needs and constrained funding environments (Anheier, 2005; Medine & Minto-Coy, 2023a). Research within the Caribbean context documents that many CSOs operate under persistent donor dependency, weak internal systems, and human resource constraints that collectively limit their capacity to sustain or scale social impact (Knife et al., 2014; Medine, 2022; Medine & Minto-Coy, 2023b). Despite this documented vulnerability, tools for systematically assessing CSO organizational conditions at the organizational level, in a form that can be practically administered, generate actionable profiles, and support comparison across organizations, remain underdeveloped in the Caribbean context (Medine & Minto-Coy, 2023a; 2023b).

Organizational assessment in the nonprofit and social sector has largely been conducted through sector-level surveys, donor-led evaluations, or program-specific monitoring frameworks, each of which captures only part of the picture (Bull, 2007; Paton, 2006). Organizational capacity-building and transformational change require a diagnostic instrument that spans the full range of organizational domains simultaneously: entrepreneurial practice, management style, human resources, networking, marketing, financial capabilities, accountability, and contextual support (Benjamin et al., 2023). This instrument enables an organization to identify its profile of strengths and weaknesses across all domains simultaneously, rather than receiving piecemeal feedback from disconnected evaluations. The 2014 baseline survey of Caribbean NPOs (Medine, 2022) and the 2020 follow-up review (Medine & Minto-Coy, 2023b) demonstrated the feasibility of survey-based assessment in the regional context and generated the source instruments on which the present diagnostic is built, but neither was designed as a single composite administered to individual organizations for diagnostic purposes. The present study addresses this gap.

2.2. Social Entrepreneurship as a Framework for Organizational Strengthening

Increasingly, as reflected in recent international policy discussions, such as the UN Resolution A/77/L.60 of 2023, social entrepreneurship (SE), social enterprises, and multisectoral collaboration are recognized as possible pathways for strengthening social development and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (Moghadam & Shariati, 2026; Mohammadian et al., 2026). SE concepts of innovative actions and the utilization of business principles in exploiting opportunities to address social and environmental challenges effectively (Dees, 2001; Ito, 2017; Medine & Minto-Coy, 2023b; Annisa, 2026) are globally recognized and accepted as drivers of change, environmental and socioeconomic transformation, and sustainable development (Anastasiadis & Mayr, 2008; Naderi et al., 2019). Zahra et al. (2009) characterize social entrepreneurship as discovering, defining, and exploiting opportunities to enhance social wealth, whether by creating new ventures or managing existing organizations in innovative ways. These opportunity-seeking and innovative actions are what distinguish social enterprises from traditional CSOs and are the practices the diagnostic instrument was designed to capture at the organizational level (Kickul & Lyons, 2025).

However, research in the Caribbean context suggests that many NPOs and other CSOs face constraints related to human resources, operational capacity, and financial sustainability, with a substantial proportion remaining dependent on government and private-sector support for operational survival (Knife et al., 2014; Medine & Minto-Coy, 2023a; Sookhai, 2024). The global economic downturn further exacerbated these constraints, with donors' financial limits resulting in funding reductions and leaving many at the crossroads of closure and stretched resources (Caribbean Natural Resources Institute, 2011; Marcet Champagne et al., 2010).

Further, unlike the best practices in institutional support and cross-sectoral collaborative efforts noted in the international context for transitioning traditional social sector organizations to operating as social enterprises (Haarich et al., 2020; OECD & European Union, 2017), such practices are often lacking in the Caribbean (Medine & Minto-Coy, 2023a). For example, although Caribbean governments, as members of the Organization of American States, formally committed to multisectoral collaboration to implement sustainable development policies (General Assembly of the Organization of American States, 2012), regional civil society assessments found that many governments remained hesitant to pursue genuine partnerships with civil society. Similarly, cooperation between businesses and CSOs often takes the form of philanthropic donations that are not necessarily aligned with national development priorities (Surendra & Sookram, 2010). The absence of genuine collaboration with organizations that understand and address societal issues hinders development; fragmented social, economic, and environmental policies, together with the traditional reliance on donations and social assistance programs, are inadequate for realizing the SDG agenda (Utting, 2015; Mohan, 2022).

2.3. The Transformational Theory of Change and its Instrument Requirements

Given the Caribbean's social and economic decline (ECLAC, 2022; Prabha et al., 2025) and the essential role of CSOs in sustainable development and meeting the SDGs, there is a need for developmental or transformational change. Medine et al. (2025) propose a Transformational Theory of Change (TToC) that leverages social entrepreneurship to build organizational capacity across the social sector, which may, in turn, support broader national development. Figure 1 presents the TToC framework.

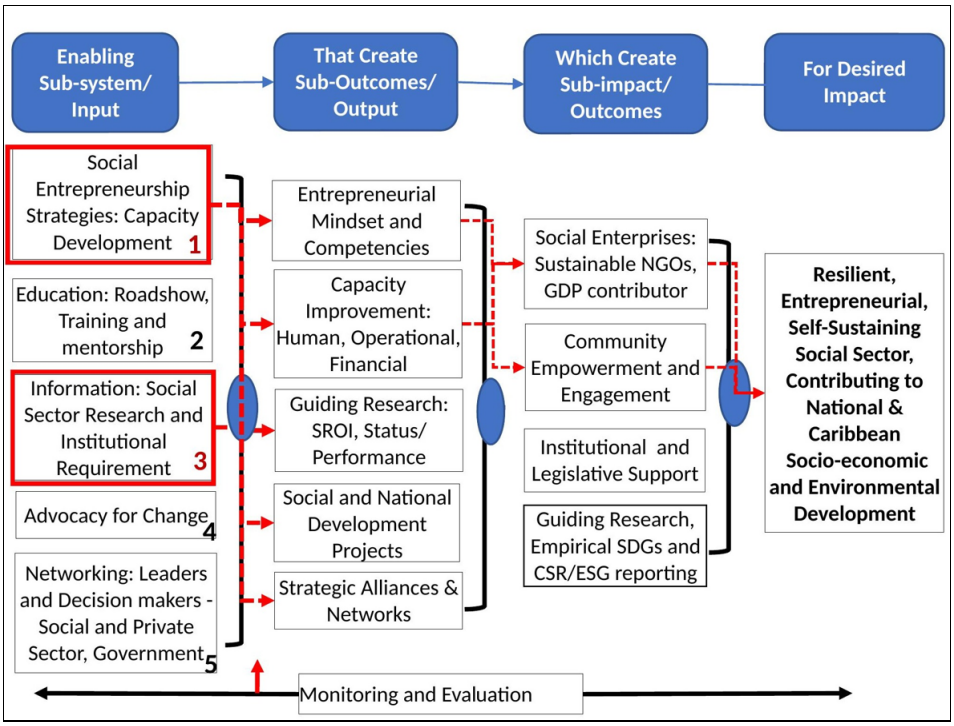


Figure 1. The Transformational Theory of Change (TToC). Source: Medine et al. (2025).

The TToC, consistent with the UN-advocated position for effective transformation and the SDGs, posits that sustainable development and the pursuit of social, economic, and environmental performance imperatives necessitate synchronization and harmony among the government, private, and social sectors (Balutkar & Stepanian, 2025). With academic support through ongoing research and the generation of new knowledge and learning, continuous evidence-based guidance supports sustainable development and SDG imperatives (Sorooshian, 2024). Figure 2 presents the Transformational Change Pathway (TCP), which supports the TToC by specifying a stepwise sequence beginning at the organizational level.

Operationalizing the TCP requires baseline data on the organizational conditions within CSOs across the domains the TToC identifies as relevant to capacity-building and transformational change. Without such data, the TCP has no empirical starting point: organizations and their supporters cannot identify priority areas for intervention, monitor change over time, or determine whether the framework's prescribed actions are being implemented (Fox, 2001). The TToC's practical application therefore depends, as its first operational step, on a diagnostic instrument that can reliably generate this baseline data within the resource constraints typical of Caribbean CSOs and in a form that produces actionable organization-level profiles (Knife et al., 2014; Medine, 2022; Medine & Minto-Coy, 2023b). This paper develops and tests that instrument.

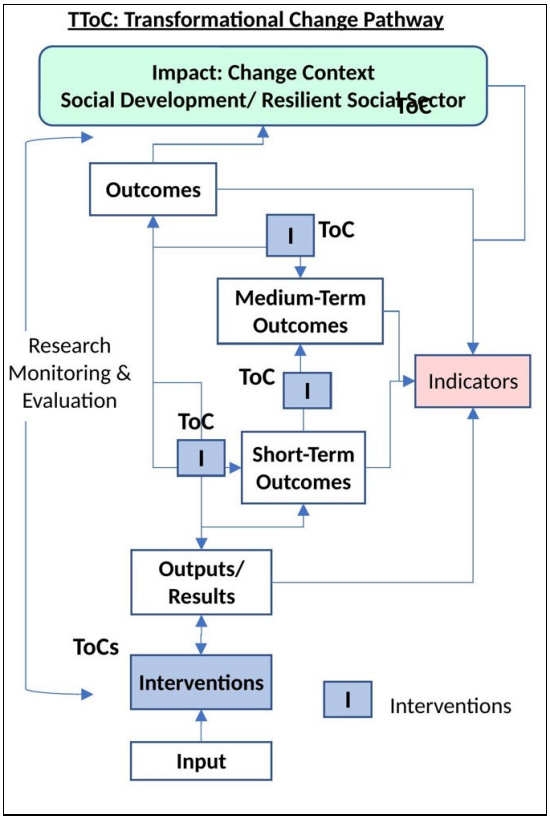


Figure 2. The Transformational Change Pathway (TCP). Source: Medine et al. (2025).

Table 1, which contrasts the TToC with conventional Theory of Change approaches, summarizes the framework's distinguishing features and clarifies why the assessment domains the TToC prescribes differ from those of a conventional program-evaluation instrument. These are conceptual claims of the framework; the present study provides the instrument to begin assessing them, not evidence that they hold.

Table 1. Distinguishing features of the TToC relative to traditional Theory of Change approaches.

Dimension	Traditional Theory of Change	Transformational Theory of Change (TToC)
Primary purpose	Program planning and evaluation	Organizational and sectoral transformation
Focus of change	Individual projects and programs	Organizational capacity and system-level change
Main actors	Program stakeholders	Government, business, social sector, and academia
Organizational capacity emphasis	Limited	Explicit focus on organizational conditions for sustained operations
Social entrepreneurship	Typically, absent	Central mechanism for organizational strengthening
Collaboration	Often program-specific	Multisectoral and co-creative
Performance monitoring	Program outcomes	Organizational, sectoral, and transformational outcomes
Intended outcome	Program effectiveness	Sustained transformational change and sectoral capacity

Source. Authors' synthesis of the cited literature.

2.4. Social Entrepreneurship Strategies and the Instrument's Domain Structure

The instrument's domain structure is derived from the SE strategies the TToC identifies as the primary mechanisms of organizational strengthening. Medine and Minto-Coy (2023a) established, through examination of several business performance excellence models, that consistent strategies for operational sustainability include: (1) leadership with defined strategic intent; (2) customer-oriented products and services; (3) continuous learning and innovation; (4) human resources development and management; (5) process and performance measurement; (6) marketing and communication; and (7) partnerships and external relationships (Fornari & Maszle, 2004; Peters & Waterman, 2006; Uygur & Sumerli, 2013). Because CSOs' social programs do not generate revenue, a financial or revenue-generation strategy is essential to their dual mission of being financially viable while meeting their social mission (Bell et al., 2010). Furthermore, unlike businesses accountable primarily to shareholders (Alter, 2007; Alter & Dawans, 2006; Defourny & Nyssens, 2017), CSOs have a broader accountability scope that includes clients and beneficiaries, donors, and the public (Anheier, 2005; Medine, 2016). Table 2 summarizes these dual-value SE strategies.

Table 2. Dual-value social entrepreneurship strategies.

Mission/Objectives	Driver	SE Strategies
Dual-value approach: financial viability and social impact = operational sustainability	Social mission	Entrepreneurial leadership; innovative programs; financial; human resources; marketing/communication; accountability; networking

Source: Medine and Minto-Coy (2023a).

Driven by their strategic mission, entrepreneurial leadership's innovative programs, supported by human resources, marketing, financial, networking, and accountability strategies, contribute to CSOs' continuous operational sustainability as measured by financial viability and social impact creation (Benjamin et al., 2023; Dees, 2004; Medine & Minto-Coy, 2023a). CSOs' staffing is critical to entrepreneurial opportunity-seeking, organizational strategic management, operational effectiveness, and revenue generation (Bloom & Smith, 2010; Bojica et al., 2018; Cannatelli, 2017). A donor-dependent financial strategy is not viable; for operational sustainability, CSOs invest in mission, mission-related, and non-mission-related or commercial ventures (Brooks, 2008; Dees et al., 2002; Nicholls, 2011). However, most Caribbean CSOs' donor dependency limits adequate leadership and human resources capabilities (Medine, 2022; Medine & Minto-Coy, 2023b), and institutional enabling support in the Caribbean remains embryonic (Bender, 2014; Singh & Mofokeng, 2014).

2.5. Accountability and Performance Measurement

Accountability for CSOs, particularly regarding social value creation and funding, is crucial (Kamilsoy, 2026). CSOs demonstrate legal and fiscal accountability by abiding by the rules of law within which they exist; internal governance and operational accountability by establishing strategic direction, implementing supportive processes, and being transparent in operations and reporting; and public accountability by sharing operational and program performance information with donors, beneficiaries, and the public (Fox, 2001; Rammelt, 2025). Monitoring, measuring, and reporting operational, program, and financial performance are therefore necessary for sustained social and financial performance (Bagnoli & Megali, 2011; Ebrahim & Rangan, 2010; Emerson, 2003; Lee & Battilana, 2013). Performance measurement tools commonly used in the business sector apply to social sector organizations (Bull, 2007; Mulgan, 2010; Stein & Valters, 2012). Notably, reviews of the relevance and applicability of several performance monitoring and measurement methods show that measures with high credibility ratings require considerable time investment and a skilled workforce, which CSOs' resource limitations often preclude, resulting in non-usage (Bull, 2007; Paton, 2006).

2.6. Research Gap

Within the Caribbean context, previous research indicates that many CSOs continue to face operational and financial constraints, particularly those associated with donor dependency, limited staffing, and restricted resource mobilization capacity (Medine & Minto-Coy, 2023b). While prior studies have highlighted the potential value of social entrepreneurship practices for strengthening organizational sustainability (UN Inter-Agency Task Force, 2019; World Economic Forum, 2022; Ketprapakorn & Kantabutra, 2019), there remains a limited understanding of how the organizational conditions relevant to these outcomes can be systematically assessed and incorporated into a broader transformational change process (Weinryb et al., 2026). No existing instrument captures, in a single

administration, the full range of organizational conditions that the TToC identifies as relevant to capacity-building and transformational change, social entrepreneurship practices, operational and financial conditions, accountability, and ecosystem context, in a form usable for individual organization diagnosis and intervention planning (Spitzeck et al., 2013). The 2014 baseline assessment of Caribbean NPOs (Medine, 2022) and the 2020 follow-up review (Medine & Minto-Coy, 2023b) documented persistent donor dependency and weaknesses in SE-associated practices, underscoring the need for an organization-level diagnostic instrument. The present study addresses this gap, guided by the research questions stated in Section 1.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts an exploratory, cross-sectional pilot feasibility design (Bhattacherjee, 2012; Thabane et al., 2010). Its purpose is not to validate the TToC, to establish the psychometric properties of the instrument, or to generate statistically generalizable findings; rather, it is to examine (a) whether a newly assembled composite diagnostic instrument can feasibly be administered within CSOs and (b) whether the data it yields produce interpretable organization-level profiles capable of informing capacity-building and intervention planning. Pilot feasibility studies are appropriate at the early stages of instrument development because they allow assessment of participation, completion, respondent burden, item clarity, and data availability before larger-scale deployment and formal validation (Pearson et al., 2020; Lancaster et al., 2004). Four CSOs operating in Trinidad and Tobago served as the pilot cases. Findings should be interpreted as exploratory and illustrative rather than representative of the wider Caribbean social sector; the study's primary contribution is methodological.

3.2. Instrument Development

The literature review found no data collection tool that captures CSO performance (operational, financial, and social) alongside an environmental scan to inform scaling interventions (Anheier, 2013). This paper therefore builds on the work of Knife et al. (2014), Medine (2022), and Medine and Minto-Coy (2023a), using their previously fielded data collection instruments, with established layout design and bias-control measures, as the foundation for the TToC diagnostic instrument (Bhattacherjee, 2012; Krosnick & Presser, 2010). Guclu et al. (2002) identified ecosystem measurement criteria and stakeholder categories, and Klimas and Wronka-Pośpiech (2022) compared ecosystem criteria, which guided the inclusion of contextual elements. Development proceeded in four steps: (1) mapping the TToC's assessment requirements to candidate domains; (2) selecting and adapting items from the source instruments, with wording adjustments limited to referent consistency ('the organization') and terminology alignment; (3) developing new items for the institutional-support and ecosystem domains where no source items existed; and (4) expert review of the assembled instrument (Section 3.4). The complete instrument is provided as Appendix 1.

3.2.1. The Instrument's Assessment Domains: Rationale and Scope

The instrument's scope requires a clear distinction between what it assesses and what it does not. The instrument assesses reported organizational conditions, practices, systems, resources, and contextual support that the TToC identifies as necessary inputs to organizational strengthening and, through the framework's causal chain, to the kind of adaptive organizational capacity the broader literature links to sustained operations and transformational change. It does not measure organizational resilience, sustainability outcomes, or social impact. These constructs are downstream outcomes of the conditions the instrument captures; assessing them would require longitudinal designs, independent verification of organizational responses to disruption, and measurement approaches beyond the scope of a cross-sectional diagnostic (Barasa et al., 2018) . The instrument's scope, and the scope of the present study, are the conditions, not the outcomes.

Table 3 maps each assessment domain to its rationale within the TToC's organizational-strengthening logic, clarifying each domain's conceptual role and what the instrument does and does not assess.

Table 3. Assessment domains of the diagnostic instrument: rationale and scope.

Assessment domain	Role in organizational strengthening (TToC logic)	What the instrument assesses	What the instrument does NOT assess
Entrepreneurial actions and planning	Core SE practice: generates innovation, opportunity exploitation, and resource mobilization	Reported presence and extent of entrepreneurial behaviors	Actual innovation outcomes or revenue attributable to entrepreneurship

Management and leadership style	Enabling condition: shapes organizational culture and strategic direction	Reported leadership approach and decision-making style	Leadership effectiveness or organizational performance attributable to it
Human resource management and staffing	Capacity input: determines operational execution capacity	Reported staffing levels, training, appraisal, and HR systems	Staff competence, productivity, or retention outcomes
Networking and collaboration	Relational capability: accesses external expertise and resources	Reported extent and nature of external relationships	Quality or outcomes of those relationships
Marketing and communication	Organizational capability: supports visibility, fundraising, and mission reach	Reported marketing practices and communication channels	Marketing effectiveness or audience outcomes
Records management	Enabling infrastructure: precondition for measurement and accountability	Reported presence of financial, program, and organizational records	Record quality, accuracy, or completeness
Social performance monitoring and measurement	Accountability mechanism: links program activities to impact evidence	Reported practices of program review, monitoring, and measurement	Actual social impact or program effectiveness
Financial practices and expense coverage	Viability condition: determines capacity for sustained operations	Reported financial planning, accounting, and expense coverage	Audited financial performance or liquidity
Accountability practices	Governance process: maintains legitimacy and stakeholder trust	Reported compliance with legal, governance, and public accountability requirements	Stakeholder satisfaction or governance quality
Institutional and ecosystem support	Contextual condition: shapes what is possible within the operating environment	Reported access to and quality of external institutional support	Policy changes or ecosystem development outcomes

Note. Authors' synthesis based on Medine et al. (2025) and the literature reviewed in Sections 2.2–2.5. The instrument assesses organizational conditions; outcomes downstream of those conditions (including organizational resilience, sustainability, and social impact) are the subject of future empirical work informed by the TToC.

3.3. Instrument Structure and Measures

The instrument comprises eight sections: 66 six-point Likert-type items organized into 10 practice and perception domains (Sections 4–6), 21 categorical and open-ended items capturing organizational, program, and stakeholder information (Sections 1–3), three open-ended items on performance measurement systems (Section 7), and a financial-capabilities section combining record checklists, a revenue-source matrix, and two documentary record requests (Section 8). Practice and perception items use a six-point response scale anchored 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = agree, and 6 = strongly agree; program impact items use a six-point impact scale anchored 1 = no impact to 6 = desired impact. No items are reverse-coded and no weighting is applied; domain summaries are computed as unweighted arithmetic means excluding not-applicable or omitted items. Administration time in the pilot averaged approximately 90 minutes (range 75–110). Table 4 summarizes the structure, item allocation, and origin of the measures.

Table 4. Structure of the diagnostic instrument: sections, domains, items, formats, and origins.

Section	Domain	Items (n)	Item nos.	Response format	Origin
1–3	Organizational information; social programs and perceived impact; stakeholders	21	—	Categorical/open; 6-point impact scale for programs	Adapted (Medine, 2022)
4	Entrepreneurial actions	5	1–5	6-point Likert	Adapted (Medine, 2022)
4	Management and leadership	9	6–14	6-point Likert	Adapted (Medine, 2022)
4	Human resource management	15	15–29	6-point Likert	Adapted (Medine, 2022)
4	Networking and collaboration	3	30–32	6-point Likert	Adapted (Medine, 2022)
4	Marketing and communication	5	33–37	6-point Likert	Adapted (Medine, 2022)
4	Records management	3	38–40	6-point Likert	Adapted (Medine & Minto-Coy, 2023b)
5	Social program performance; HR performance; financial performance; accountability	19	1–19	6-point Likert	Adapted (Medine, 2016, 2022; Medine & Minto-Coy, 2023a)
6	Institutional and ecosystem support	7	1–7	6-point Likert	Newly developed, informed by Guclu et al. (2002) and Klimas and Wronka-Pośpiech (2022)
7	Performance measurement systems	3	—	Open-ended	Adapted (Medine, 2022)
8	Financial capabilities, revenue sources, and documentary records	Checklists + 2 record requests	—	Checklist/matrix/documentary	Adapted and extended (Medine, 2022)

Note. Authors' summary of the instrument provided in Appendix 1.

3.4. Content and Face Validity

Given the exploratory nature of this study and the limited number of participating organizations, we did not conduct formal psychometric procedures; establishing such evidence requires a substantially larger sample and is a stated priority for future research (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2011). Instead, the study established content and face validity through a structured expert review (Lynn, 1986). A panel of six experts reviewed the assembled instrument: three academics with research expertise in entrepreneurship and nonprofit management, two civil society practitioners with more than ten years of senior leadership experience in Caribbean CSOs, and one measurement and evaluation specialist. The review proceeded in two rounds; panel recommendations led to rewording eleven items, resequencing Section 5, and adding four ecosystem-support items. Because the diagnostic instrument is a composite assembled from several source instruments, reliability evidence reported for those source instruments cannot be transferred to the present instrument (Thompson & Vacha-Haase, 2000). Table 5 reports, for transparency only, the sources of the adapted measures and the coefficients as originally reported.

Table 5. Sources of adapted measures and reliability as reported in the original studies.

Instrument component	Primary source	Original sample and context	α as originally reported	Adaptation status
Entrepreneurial leadership and management practices	Medine (2022)[a]	2014 baseline survey of Caribbean NPOs (N = 148)	0.90 (parent composite)	Items retained; minor wording alignment
Human resource, networking, and marketing practices	Medine (2022)	2014 baseline survey of Caribbean NPOs (N = 148)	0.82 (parent composite)	Items retained; minor wording alignment
Social, financial, and records management performance	Medine (2022); Medine & Minto-Coy (2023b)	2014 baseline (N = 148) and 2020 follow-up (N = 30)	0.80 (parent composite)	Items retained; minor wording alignment
Accountability	Medine (2022)	2014 baseline survey of Caribbean NPOs (N = 148)	0.83	Items retained; minor wording alignment
Ecosystem assessment	Guclu et al. (2002); Klimas and Wronka-Pośpiech (2022)	Not applicable	Not applicable — contextual checklist; no composite scale	Newly constructed from published criteria
TToC components (institutional support)	Developed from the TToC framework (Medine et al., 2025)	Not applicable	Newly developed; reliability not yet established	New items

Note. Coefficients refer exclusively to the original instruments and samples; they do not constitute reliability evidence for the present composite instrument. [a]Medine (2022) reports data collected in 2014 baseline study; as is standard practice, the publication year is cited throughout while the data collection year is referenced where the baseline findings are discussed.

3.5. Sampling and Participants

The pilot study was conducted in Trinidad and Tobago. The study used convenience sampling, with the country's company registry as the sampling frame for identifying registered CSOs (Si Dah et al., 2022; Hindrichs et al., 2016). Existing professional relationships with some organizations facilitated access and are disclosed for transparency. Inclusion criteria: (a) legal registration; (b) more than five years of continuous operation; and (c) availability of a senior representative able to speak to operational, program, and financial matters. Seven organizations were approached; four agreed to participate (57% participation rate), and three declined, citing time constraints. Participating organizations were offered a confidential summary diagnostic profile as a benefit of participation.

One senior representative responded on behalf of each organization. Because a single informant reported for each organization and responses were not independently verified against source documents, all findings are consistently described as respondent-reported organizational conditions rather than objectively demonstrated organizational attributes.

3.6. Data Collection

The instrument was administered face-to-face with the senior representative of each participating CSO, following advance email of the instrument to allow preparation. Face-to-face administration was selected to maximize response completeness and allow clarification of questionnaire items (Buckland-Merrett et al., 2017). We logged start and end times of administration, clarification requests, omitted or not-applicable items, and requested documentary records for each session to support the feasibility analysis reported in Section 4.2. Data were collected between January and April 2023.

3.7. Data Analysis

Three analyses were conducted. First, for RQ1a, feasibility was assessed against a structured set of indicators: recruitment and participation rates, instrument completion, item-level omission, administration time, clarification requests, information respondents could not provide, availability of organizational records, and willingness to undergo repeat administration. Second, for RQ1b, we constructed organizational condition profiles. Given four highly heterogeneous cases, the primary analytical unit is the individual organization; results are presented as a cross-case matrix reporting each organization's score on each assessed condition (Section 4.3), complemented by domain-level summaries computed from all 66 scaled items, with cross-case means (reported to two decimal places) and counts of organizations rating an item 5 or 6 (reported as 'n of 4') provided as descriptive summaries only. Third, results were set against the 2014 baseline (Medine, 2022) and 2020 follow-up (Medine & Minto-Coy, 2023b) figures as descriptive contextual benchmarking only, not as evidence of longitudinal change.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

The research was conducted with approval from the Research Board of the Arthur Lok Jack Global School of Business, The University of the West Indies, which reviewed the study and its participant consent procedures in accordance with the University's research governance requirements. We obtained written organizational permission and individual informed consent before data collection (Buckland-Merrett et al., 2017). Because we collected data face-to-face from identifiable senior representatives of four organizations, participation was confidential rather than anonymous. To mitigate deductive disclosure risk, we identify organizations only by generalized mission area; we withhold names, locations, and program titles; and we report profile characteristics with the organizations' written consent. Each organization received its confidential diagnostic summary following the pilot.

4. Results

4.1. Sample Characteristics

Table 6 profiles the four participating organizations, and Table 7 profiles the responding senior representatives. All participating CSOs were legally registered with bylaws to guide their legal and operational activities; all operate with functional boards and have strategic plans. The organizations differ substantially in size, age, professionalization, staffing model, and mission, ranging from a large, professionally staffed disability-support organization established by an Act of Parliament in 1947 (90 paid staff) to a volunteer-run environmental and animal-protection organization established in 2014 with a single staff-volunteer. This heterogeneity was deliberate for instrument-testing purposes; aggregate summaries should be read with caution, and the case-level profiles in Section 4.3 are the primary results.

Table 6. Sample profile.

Mission area	Year established	Staffing	Social programs
Disabilities support	1947 – Act of Parliament	90 paid staff; 19 volunteers; Board of Directors	Adjustment to blindness; communication skills training; I.T./technical support; provisional aids
Senior citizens support	1936	1 staff; 8 volunteers; 2 specialists (ad hoc)	Residence for seniors: assisted living facility
Young women and family support	2006	4 volunteer staff; 3 volunteers as needed	Counseling; family clinic; youth arm; empowerment sessions
Environment and animal protection	2014	1 volunteer staff; 14 volunteers as needed	Animal welfare; spay/neuter support; welfare education

Note. Authors' compilation based on pilot survey data. Profile characteristics published with organizations' written consent.

Table 7. Respondent characteristics.

Organization (mission area)	Respondent role	Years with organization	Basis of responses
Disabilities support	Executive Director	12	Organizational records supplemented by recollection
Senior citizens support	Administrator/Board member	9	Organizational records supplemented by recollection
Young women and family support	Founder/Director	17	Recollection; partial records
Environment and animal protection	Founder/Coordinator	9	Recollection; partial records

Note. Authors' compilation based on administration logs.

4.2. Instrument Feasibility

Table 8 reports the feasibility indicators addressing RQ1a. Four of seven approached organizations participated; all four completed every structured section; item-level completion across the 66 scaled items was 260 of 264 (98.5%). Administration required 75 to 110 minutes (mean ≈ 90), which respondents described as demanding but acceptable for an annual diagnostic. The single most consequential feasibility finding was that no organization could supply income and expense data disaggregated by social program, precluding SROI computation (Sections 4.5 and 5.2). All four organizations indicated willingness to undergo repeat administration.

Table 8. Feasibility indicators from the pilot administration.

Indicator	Result
Organizations invited	7
Organizations participating (participation rate)	4 (57%)
Organizations declining (reason)	3 (time constraints)
Instrument completion	4 of 4 completed all structured sections
Item-level completion (66 scaled items × 4 organizations)	260 of 264 (98.5%); 4 items not applicable/not recorded
Administration time	75–110 minutes (mean ≈ 90)
Clarification requests per administration	2–6, concentrated in Sections 5 and 8
Items respondents found difficult	Program-level financial disaggregation; distinguishing outcomes from outputs; remuneration comparability
Information respondents could not provide	Income/expense data disaggregated by social program (0 of 4 organizations)
Availability of organizational records	Audited/reviewed financial statements: 3 of 4; program-level records: 2 of 4
Respondent feedback	Instrument comprehensive but lengthy; per-program financial data require advance preparation
Willingness to undergo repeat administration	4 of 4

Note. Authors' calculations based on pilot administration logs.

4.3. Organizational Condition Profiles

Table 9 presents the cross-case matrix of respondent-reported organizational conditions addressing RQ1b. Item scores use the six-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree); cross-case means are reported to two decimal places, and counts accompany percentages throughout (e.g., '3 of 4 (75%)'). The matrix is organized

by the ten assessment domains in Table 3. Each condition is either a single scaled item or the rounded mean of two to four related items from the same domain; the corresponding items are listed in Appendix 1. Table 10 summarizes all ten domains across the 66 scaled items.

Table 9. Respondent-reported organizational conditions: cross-case matrix (scores on a 1–6 scale).

Domain	Condition assessed	Disability support	Young women/family	Senior citizens support	Animal support	Mean	n rating 5–6	% rating 5–6
Entrepreneurship	Entrepreneurial actions and behavior	6	5	6	6	5.75	4 of 4	100%
	Proactiveness and planning	6	5	1	4	4.00	2 of 4	50%
Management style	Autocratic leadership	2	3	2	2	2.25	0 of 4	0%
	Democratic leadership	6	4	5	5	5.00	3 of 4	75%
	Leadership diversity	6	3	6	6	5.25	3 of 4	75%
Human resource management	Hire business staff	6	5	6	6	5.75	4 of 4	100%
	Adequate staffing	3	3	4	1	2.75	0 of 4	0%
	Contracted specialists	1	5	6	4	4.00	2 of 4	50%
	Training – staff	5	4	6	1	4.00	2 of 4	50%
	Training – volunteers	5	5	6	6	5.50	4 of 4	100%
	Staff appraisal system	5	2	6	1	3.50	2 of 4	50%
	Volunteer appraisal system	4	1	6	1	3.00	1 of 4	25%
	HR manual, job descriptions	6	3	6	2	4.25	2 of 4	50%
	Comparable remuneration	5	1	1	n/a[a]	2.33[a]	1 of 3[a]	33%[a]
Networking	Networking	6	5	5	6	5.50	4 of 4	100%
	Internal communication	5	4	6	6	5.25	3 of 4	75%
	External communication	5	4	4	6	4.75	2 of 4	50%
Marketing	Brand awareness	4	3	6	3	4.00	1 of 4	25%
	Advertising	6	4	2	6	4.50	2 of 4	50%
	Online presence	n/r[b]	4	1	6	3.67[b]	1 of 3[b]	33%[b]

Social performance	Monitor programs	5	3	2	2	3.00	1 of 4	25%
	Measure programs	5	4	4	3	4.00	1 of 4	25%
	Create social impact	4	5	6	3	4.50	2 of 4	50%
Financial performance	Cover operating expenses	6	3	1	1	2.75	1 of 4	25%
	Cover program expenses	5	3	3	5	4.00	2 of 4	50%
	Financial planning	5	3	4	6	4.50	2 of 4	50%
	Financial accounting	6	4	6	6	5.50	3 of 4	75%
Accountability	Legal – bylaws	6	5	6	1	4.50	3 of 4	75%
	Legal – HSE	6	3	4	4	4.25	1 of 4	25%
	Public – reports	6	1	6	6	4.75	3 of 4	75%
	Public – external audit	6	1	6	6	4.75	3 of 4	75%
Records keeping	Financial	6	4	6	6	5.50	3 of 4	75%
	Social programs	5	3	6	1	3.75	2 of 4	50%
	Organizational	6	3	6	6	5.25	3 of 4	75%
Institutional and ecosystem support	Legal advice and services available	6	5	6	3	5.00	3 of 4	75%
	Supportive national laws and regulations	5	5	6	2	4.50	3 of 4	75%
	Sector training programs	5	3	6	3	4.25	2 of 4	50%
	Educational institutions supporting the sector	5	4	6	2	4.25	2 of 4	50%
	Access to technical assistance	5	4	4	2	3.75	1 of 4	25%
	Resource centers for sector information	6	4	4	2	4.00	1 of 4	25%
	Financial institutions support CSO operations	n/r[b]	1	1	2	1.33[b]	0 of 3[b]	0%[b]

Note. Authors' calculations based on pilot survey data. [a] Not applicable: no paid staff; n = 3. [b] Response not recorded; n = 3. % rating 5–6 denotes the percentage of the four participating organizations whose respondent reported a score of 5 (agree) or

6 (strongly agree) on that item; for items where n = 3 due to a not-applicable or not-recorded response, the percentage is calculated over three organizations. Given the heterogeneity of the four cases, means are descriptive summaries only; the organization-level columns are the primary results. Conditions are single items or the rounded mean of two to four related items (Appendix 1). Domain-level summaries are reported in Table 10.

Table 10. Domain-level summary of respondent-reported organizational conditions across all 66 scaled items (mean item score on a 1–6 scale).

Domain	Items (n)	Disability support	Young women/family	Senior citizens support	Animal support	Mean
Entrepreneurial actions and planning	5	5.80	4.80	4.80	5.60	5.25
Management and leadership style	9	4.11	3.33	3.78	3.89	3.78
Human resource management and staffing	17	4.47	3.31	5.35	2.27	3.85
Networking and collaboration	3	5.33	4.33	5.00	6.00	5.17
Marketing and communication	5	4.50	3.40	3.20	4.40	3.88
Records management	3	5.67	3.33	6.00	4.33	4.83
Social performance monitoring and measurement	3	5.00	3.33	3.33	2.67	3.58
Financial practices and expense coverage	7	5.57	3.57	4.00	5.00	4.54
Accountability practices	7	5.86	3.00	5.43	4.57	4.71
Institutional and ecosystem support	7	5.33	3.71	4.71	2.29	4.01

Note. Authors' calculations based on pilot survey data. Each value is the unweighted mean of the domain's items for that organization, excluding not-applicable or not-recorded responses (Section 3.3); item allocation follows Table 4, with the two Section 5 human resource performance items included in the human resource management domain. Because no items are reverse-coded, the management and leadership style mean combines autocratic and participative items and indicates response level rather than leadership quality. Means are descriptive summaries only; the organization-level columns are the primary results.

The disabilities support organization provides adjustment-to-blindness training, communication skills development, assistive technology support, and provisional aids to persons with visual impairments — a structured, multi-program operation with a legally defined mandate. Established by an Act of Parliament in 1947 and staffed by 90 paid employees with a formal Board of Directors, this is the only organization in the sample that possesses the structural prerequisites for institutionalized management practice: paid staff make comparable remuneration assessable, sufficient scale makes appraisal systems worthwhile, a long operational history generates

audited financial records, and statutory origins create enforceable accountability obligations. Scores at or near 6 in financial accounting (6), public accountability (6), records management (6), and HR systems (6) are therefore consistent with organizational age, scale, and legal mandate rather than exceptional management performance. The more diagnostically informative findings are the areas where this organization does not score maximally despite its structural advantages: contracted specialists (1) and brand awareness (4) suggest that even well-established organizations with adequate staffing do not automatically develop all SE-associated capabilities. These are genuine capacity observations rather than context artifacts and represent the organization's most actionable development priorities.

The senior citizens support organization operates a single residential assisted-living facility for older adults — a mission that is operationally intensive, regulatory-facing, and narrowly focused on continuous residential care rather than outward community engagement. Established in 1936 and staffed by one employee and eight volunteers, the organization is old and operationally focused but structurally thin. The high scores in financial accounting (6), staff training (6), staff appraisal (6), and organizational records (6) reflect the discipline imposed by managing a residential facility — regulatory requirements for care homes create accountability pressures that general CSOs do not face, which explains strong governance and financial records independently of organizational size. The low scores in proactiveness and planning (1), coverage of operating expenses (1), marketing and advertising (2), and online presence (1) are attributable to a different contextual factor: with a single income-generating program, a near-absence of marketing personnel, and a mission focused on residential care rather than community outreach, these capabilities are structurally underdeveloped, and their absence reflects mission specificity and resource constraint rather than management failure. The diagnostic finding of genuine concern is expense coverage: a residential facility with one paid staff member reporting that revenues do not cover operating expenses (1) indicates a viability risk not explained away by context and remains actionable regardless of organizational characteristics.

The young women and family support organization delivers counseling, family clinic services, youth development, and empowerment programs — a relational, referral-based service model in which community trust and practitioner relationships are the primary delivery mechanism. Established in 2006 and staffed by four volunteers, with additional volunteers as needed, this organization sits mid-range on most conditions, but the pattern of weak scores requires contextual unpacking before it can be interpreted diagnostically. The notably low scores in public accountability — annual reports (1) and external audit (1) — are not attributable to organizational youth or volunteer structure alone: an organization of nearly two decades with a stated commitment to counseling and family support would be expected by funders and beneficiaries to maintain public reporting practices regardless of staffing model. These scores represent genuine accountability gaps rather than context artifacts and are the organization's most consequential diagnostic finding. The weak brand awareness (3) and advertising (4) scores are more plausibly explained by the relational, referral-based nature of counseling services, where outward-facing promotion is not the primary client acquisition mechanism. Similarly, moderate financial accounting (4) and weak financial planning (3) most likely reflect the absence of dedicated financial management personnel rather than organizational indifference to financial discipline — the instrument correctly surfaces these as conditions requiring attention, but the appropriate capacity-building response depends on whether the gap reflects resource constraint or practice choice.

The environment and animal protection organization focuses on animal welfare through spay and neuter support, welfare education, and assistance to lower-income households with companion animals — a community-advocacy mission that is outward-facing, network-dependent, and relies almost entirely on volunteer effort. The youngest organization in the sample, established in 2014 with a single volunteer staff member and fourteen situational volunteers, displays the most extreme profile polarization, and age and structure account for much, though not all, of it. The high scores in entrepreneurial actions (6), networking (6), and online presence (6) reflect capabilities that an energetic founder can build personally and rapidly without organizational infrastructure: social media presence and community networking are individually driven activities for which paid staff and formal systems are not prerequisites. The very low scores in staff appraisal (1), volunteer appraisal (1), bylaws compliance (1), staff training (1), and social program records (1) are almost entirely attributable to organizational size and structure: a single-person volunteer operation has no staff to appraise, no dedicated training budget, and no pressing institutional reason to maintain bylaws documentation at the standard of a statutory body. These low scores are therefore largely context artifacts indicating that this organization has not yet reached the structural threshold at which these practices become applicable, rather than evidence that it manages existing infrastructure poorly. The diagnostically actionable findings are the moderate-to-low scores in program monitoring (2) and coverage of operating expenses (1): program monitoring is within reach of even a small volunteer organization if basic records are kept, and operating expense coverage is a viability concern regardless of organizational size. These are the two areas where development support would be most immediately productive.

Across cases, the recurring pattern is that reported entrepreneurial behaviors and relational activities (entrepreneurial actions 5.75; networking 5.50; volunteer training 5.50) outstrip the formal systems that would consolidate them: adequate staffing (2.75; 0 of 4), comparable remuneration (2.33), volunteer appraisal (3.00), program monitoring (3.00; 1 of 4), and coverage of operating expenses (2.75; 1 of 4). The domain-level summaries in Table 10 show the same pattern: entrepreneurial actions and planning (5.25) and networking and collaboration (5.17) were the highest-rated domains, whereas social performance monitoring and measurement (3.58), human resource management and staffing (3.85), and marketing and communication (3.88) were among the lowest. Reported institutional and ecosystem support varied widely, from 5.33 in the statutory disability support organization to 2.29 in the volunteer-run animal protection organization, and support from financial institutions was rated low by all three organizations that answered the item (mean 1.33). To contextualize these pilot findings, Figures 3 and 4 benchmark the percentage of organizations rating each condition 5–6 against the corresponding percentages reported in the 2014 baseline study (Medine, 2022) and the 2020 follow-up review (Medine & Minto-Coy, 2023b): Figure 3 covers social entrepreneurship management practices, and Figure 4 covers social and financial performance conditions. Because samples, organizations, and procedures differ across the three studies, these comparisons are descriptive rather than longitudinal.

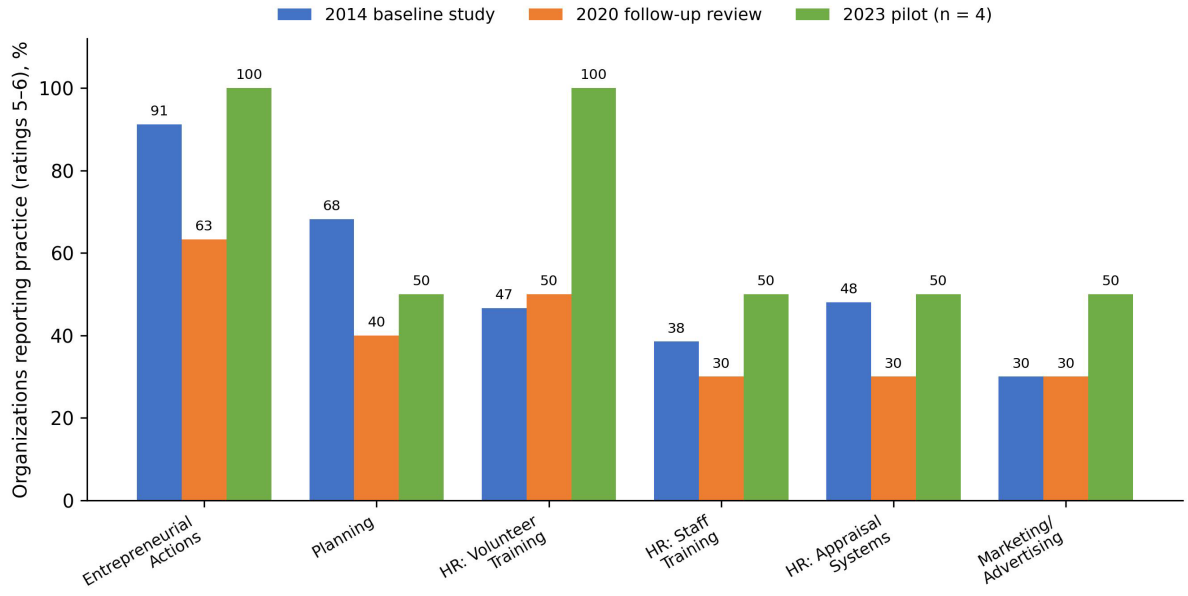


Figure 3. Social entrepreneurship management practices: descriptive benchmarking of the 2014 baseline study, 2020 follow-up review, and 2023 pilot (percentage of organizations reporting the condition at 5–6).

Note. Authors' calculations based on Medine (2022), Medine and Minto-Coy (2023b), and pilot survey data. Samples, organizations, and procedures differ across studies; values are not longitudinally comparable.

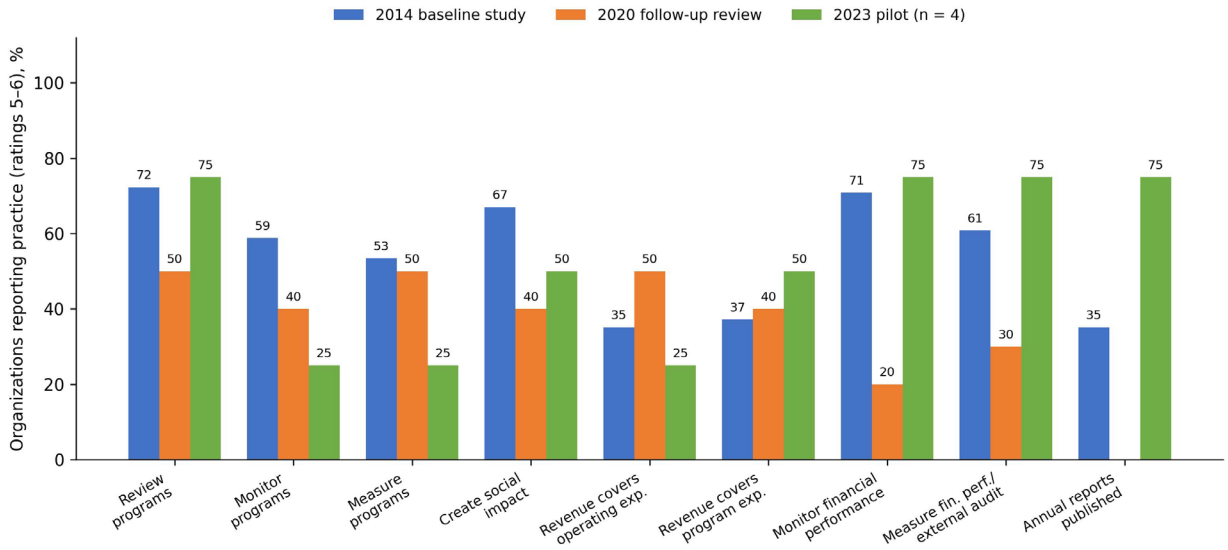


Figure 4. Reported social and financial performance conditions: descriptive benchmarking of the 2014 baseline study, 2020 follow-up review, and 2023 pilot (percentage of organizations reporting the condition at 5–6).

Note. Authors' calculations based on Medine (2022), Medine and Minto-Coy (2023b), and pilot survey data. The 2020 value for annual reports published is unavailable. Samples, organizations, and procedures differ across studies; values are not longitudinally comparable.

4.4. Financial and Revenue Characteristics

Table 11 presents the revenue sources reported by each organization. Each cell indicates whether the organization reported using the revenue source; entries record use of a source, not the proportion of revenue derived from it.

Table 11. Reported revenue sources by organization (✓ = source reported; multiple selections permitted).

Revenue source	Disability support	Young women/family	Senior support	Animal support	Organizations using source
Fundraising events	✓	—	✓	—	2 of 4 (50%)
Mission-related earned income (fees, sales, dues)	✓	—	✓	—	2 of 4 (50%)
Commercial enterprise earnings	—	—	—	✓	1 of 4 (25%)
Rental of assets	✓	—	—	—	1 of 4 (25%)
Government subvention	✓	—	—	—	1 of 4 (25%)
Government grants/donations	—	—	—	—	0 of 4 (0%)
Parent/affiliate grants	✓	—	✓	—	2 of 4 (50%)
Private-sector donors/grants/donations	—	—	—	✓	1 of 4 (25%)
General public giving/charity	—	✓	—	—	1 of 4 (25%)
International grants	—	—	—	—	0 of 4 (0%)
Total distinct sources reported	5	1	3	2	

Note. Authors' calculations based on pilot survey data.

Reported revenue diversification varied across organizations, from five distinct sources in the disability support organization to a single source, general public giving, in the young women and family support organization. No organization reported government grants or international grants, and one organization reported private-sector donations. Respondents answered these items without difficulty, and the resulting profiles can inform discussions of revenue diversification within capacity-building processes.

4.5. Data Limitations Affecting SROI Analysis

Section 8 of the instrument was designed to capture financial and resource utilization information to support SROI calculation. However, the pilot revealed that respondents could not provide income and expense data disaggregated by social program, preventing determination of investment per program and precluding associated returns and financial proxies (Corvo et al., 2022; Fujiwara, 2015; Muyambi et al., 2017). This is a feasibility finding (Table 8) and defines a specific refinement requirement for the instrument, which is analyzed in Section 5.2.

5. Discussion

5.1. What the Profiles Tell Us About the Instrument — and About the Organizations

This section first considers what the pilot findings indicate about the instrument's performance and then what the organizational profiles suggest about the participating CSOs' current conditions. The two questions are distinct: the study's purpose is to evaluate the instrument, and the profiles are evidence of what the instrument produces, not independent evidence about organizational capacity in the Caribbean social sector.

On the instrument: the feasibility indicators establish that the diagnostic can be administered to heterogeneous CSOs within an acceptable time burden, achieves near-complete item-level response, and generates profiles that differentiate meaningfully across cases. These are the properties a diagnostic instrument needs to be useful in a capacity-building setting. The profiles are interpretable — a practitioner or researcher looking at the Table 9 matrix can immediately identify where each organization is reported to be stronger and weaker, and where the most consequential gaps lie. The instrument therefore meets the basic practical requirements for diagnostic use.

For the organizations, the profiles reveal a consistent pattern—high reported entrepreneurial behavior and relational activity coexisting with weak formal systems—that warrants analytical attention (Morrar, 2024). This configuration best fits informal social entrepreneurship without institutionalization (Polańska & Chimiak, 2016). Organizations describe themselves as entrepreneurially active (entrepreneurial actions 5.75; networking 5.50; volunteer training 5.50) yet simultaneously report inadequate staffing (2.75; 0 of 4 rating 5–6), weak comparable remuneration (2.33), poor volunteer appraisal (3.00), limited program monitoring (3.00; 1 of 4), and insufficient coverage of operating expenses (2.75; 1 of 4). The SE practices the TToC identifies as capacity-building mechanisms appear to be enacted through individual effort and relationships rather than through organizational systems that would sustain and scale them (Dees, 2001; Zahra et al., 2009).

Three further patterns are analytically notable. First, profiles suggest dependence on personal leadership rather than institutionalized capability. In the two founder-led organizations, reported strengths match the practices an energetic individual can sustain personally, while reported weaknesses require organizational infrastructure that outlives any individual—a key-person vulnerability well documented in the nonprofit capacity literature (Bloom & Smith, 2010; Cannatelli, 2017). Second, volunteer reliance substitutes for but does not replicate staff capacity: universal high ratings for volunteer training (5.50) against the sample's weakest scores for adequate staffing (2.75) and comparable remuneration (2.33) indicate organizations investing in the workforce they can afford rather than the one their missions require (Huselid, 1995; Yu et al., 2022). Third, networking appears to operate as a capacity substitute — universally strong networking (5.50) alongside weak internal systems is consistent with organizations accessing expertise and resources through relationships rather than building internal capability, a pattern that provides short-term operational flexibility but creates contingent dependency on partners' goodwill (Barasa et al., 2018).

Finally, the profiles surface a gap between perceived and measured impact: respondents rated 'creating social impact' moderately to highly (4.50) while reporting weak program monitoring (3.00) and measurement (4.00; 1 of 4 at 5–6), and Section 4.5 established that no organization could supply the program-level investment data that evidence-based impact attribution requires. Organizations believe they create impact but largely lack the systems that would demonstrate it (Bagnoli & Megali, 2011; Ebrahim & Rangan, 2010). This matters for the instrument's utility: by making the perception–measurement gap visible in a structured profile, the diagnostic creates an opening for conversations about performance measurement investment that informal self-assessment would not generate.

None of the above, however, constitutes evidence about resilience. The organizational conditions described here are inputs to capacity-building processes that, if enacted and sustained, the TToC expects would strengthen organizational operations over time (Doolan et al., 2024). Whether they do so, and whether stronger operations translate into demonstrated absorptive, adaptive, or transformative resilience in the face of disruption, requires longitudinal measurement and a different research design (Vahanvati & Rafliana, 2019). That work is the next stage of the research program; the present paper has provided the instrument with which it can begin.

5.2. Implications for Instrument Refinement

The clearest refinement priority concerns SROI. The pilot demonstrates that the instrument, in its current form, provides a conceptually incomplete basis for SROI analysis. A defensible SROI computation requires, at minimum: (1) stakeholder identification; (2) monetized inputs disaggregated by program; (3) outputs; (4) outcomes with defined indicators; (5) financial proxies for outcome valuation; (6) deadweight adjustment; (7) attribution adjustment; (8) displacement adjustment; (9) duration of benefit; (10) drop-off rate; (11) sensitivity analysis (Corvo et al., 2022; Fujiwara, 2015; Muyambi et al., 2017). The piloted instrument captured items (1) and (3) partially, and elements of (2) in aggregate form, but not program-level disaggregated inputs or the adjustment parameters. Accordingly, SROI is treated as a planned future module of the instrument. Development and field-testing of the additional program-level financial and outcome measures required for this module are priorities for a subsequent administration cycle.

Three further refinement implications follow. First, the comparability caution: cross-study comparison with the 2014 and 2020 figures is useful as descriptive context but cannot be presented as longitudinal trend evidence; establishing genuine trend evidence requires repeated administration to a stable panel of organizations. Second, the reliability caution: coefficients inherited from source instruments (Table 5) say nothing about the composite instrument's behavior; psychometric validation on an adequately powered sample is needed before any scoring beyond item-level description is warranted. Third, burden management: at approximately 90 minutes plus advance record preparation, the instrument approaches the limit of what volunteer-run organizations described as acceptable; future versions should consider a modular design in which a core assessment can be completed independently of the more demanding financial sections.

5.3. The Study's Contribution in the Context of the Research Program

To situate this study's contribution precisely, it is useful to distinguish seven stages of the research program the TToC requires: (1) conceptual framework development; (2) instrument operationalization; (3) feasibility testing; (4) psychometric validation of the instrument; (5) empirical examination of the framework's causal propositions; (6) demonstration of organizational transformation attributable to TToC-guided interventions; and (7) longitudinal evaluation of sectoral change. Medine et al. (2025) accomplished stage 1. The present study accomplishes stages 2 and 3: the instrument exists, it has been administered, and it has been shown to be feasible. Stages 4 through 7 remain to be addressed.

This positioning matters for how the study's findings should be used. The profiles in Table 9 are the instrument's first real-world output; they show that the instrument can generate organization-level data in an interpretable form—they are not, and should not be treated as validated measures of organizational capacity, tests of the TToC's propositions, or predictors of resilience. Their appropriate use is to anchor the next round of instrument development, inform sampling for a larger validation study, and demonstrate to potential partner organizations what a completed diagnostic looks like. That is a meaningful contribution at stage 3 of a multi-stage program.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research

The study's limitations follow from its pilot design and should guide any use of its findings. The four participating organizations were selected through convenience sampling within the researchers' professional networks in Trinidad and Tobago; the findings characterize only these four cases. All data derive from a single senior informant per organization and were not independently verified; social desirability and self-enhancement biases cannot be excluded. The cases are deliberately heterogeneous, which supports instrument testing but means aggregate summaries conceal more than they reveal. The instrument's psychometric properties are unestablished. The benchmarking against 2014 and 2020 results is descriptive only. Feasibility indicators were partly reconstructed from administration notes rather than a standardized log; future administrations should therefore incorporate standardized feasibility tracking. Future research should proceed in sequence: (1) administration to a larger, purposively stratified sample for psychometric evaluation; (2) refinement and field-testing of the SROI

module; (3) repeat administration to a stable panel for genuine longitudinal tracking; and (4) empirical examination of the TToC's organizational-strengthening propositions.

6. Conclusions

This study aimed to develop a composite diagnostic instrument for assessing organizational conditions in civil society organizations and to test whether administering it was feasible in a real field setting. Both objectives were met. The instrument was administered to four heterogeneous CSOs in Trinidad and Tobago with full completion, near-complete item-level responses, and acceptable respondent burden. The resulting organization-level profiles were interpretable and analytically productive, differentiating organizations meaningfully across ten domains and surfacing a consistent pattern of reported entrepreneurial activity without the formal systems that would institutionalize it. The pilot also identified, with specificity, the instrument's most consequential current limitation: the unavailability of program-level investment data for SROI analysis, which defines the priority for the instrument's next revision.

This paper's contribution is methodological. The study provides the operational instrument through which the TToC can begin to be deployed in practice, together with feasibility evidence and a documented refinement agenda. It does not claim to measure resilience, to test the TToC's propositions, or to characterize the Caribbean social sector. Those are the tasks of the research program's subsequent stages, for which this paper provides both the tool and the field-tested starting point. For practitioners and organizational funders, the immediate value is a structured, replicable diagnostic that makes organizational conditions visible and discussable at the level of the individual organization, a necessary first step before capacity-building support can be purposefully directed.

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Data Availability Statement: The data supporting this study are not publicly available because of the confidentiality assurances given to the small number of participating organizations. De-identified summaries are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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Appendix 1

Assessing Organizational Conditions in Civil Society Organizations: Development and Pilot Feasibility Study of a Social Entrepreneurship Diagnostic Instrument

Ambica Medine, Priscilla Bahaw, Indianna Minto-Coy, and Satesh Sookhai. Latin American Business and Sustainability Review (LABSREVIEW).

This file reproduces the complete diagnostic instrument (Sections 1–8) summarized in Table 4 of the article: 21 categorical and open-ended items on organizational information, social programs, and stakeholders (Sections 1–3); 66 six-point Likert-type items in ten practice and perception domains (Sections 4–6); three open-ended items on performance measurement systems (Section 7); and the financial capabilities section (Section 8).

CSO Organizational Conditions Diagnostic Instrument Developed from the Transformational Theory of Change (TToC)

Guiding Principles

Assessing the organizational conditions through which civil society organizations may strengthen operational sustainability and social impact, guided by the Transformational Theory of Change

Dear Respondent,

Thank you for participating in this research. The study aims to understand CSOs' organizational conditions across key operational domains, assess their financial and social performance practices, and generate diagnostic information to support capacity-building and organizational development. All information obtained is treated as strictly confidential. Participation is voluntary and you may decline to answer any question. Note: This instrument assesses reported organizational conditions — practices, systems, resources, and contextual supports. It does not measure organizational resilience, social impact, or sustainability outcomes directly. These are longer-term outcomes that require longitudinal assessment beyond the scope of this diagnostic.

For concerns or queries, please contact Dr. Ambica Medine (contact details withheld for publication).

Section 1: Organizational Information

Name: (Please write) _____

Year Established (Please write, dd/mm/yyyy): _____

Organization Type: Select the category that best describes your organization's primary legal and operational status: Social Enterprise (for-profit or nonprofit) / Community-Based Organization (CBO) / Religious-Based Organization (RBO) / Nonprofit Organization (NPO) / Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) / Subsidiary — Local or International

Legal Structure: (Please tick one) Individual / Partnership / Company / NPO / Not Registered

Focus/Mission Area: Please tick all social problem areas which your organization is actively addressing

Agricultural Development	Community Development	Cultural Development
Youth Development	Literacy- Youth	Disabilities Support
Health care	Gender Equality	Literacy-Adult
Senior Support	Domestic Violence	Child Abuse

Employment Aid Drug Abuse Environment Protection
Other:_____

Mission Statement: (Please write): _____

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