

# The Challenges of Financial Stewardship among Low-Income in Cameroon: The Case of Upper Ifanga in Dikome Presbytery

**Bongajum Dora Lemnyuy & Neba Roland Chenwi**  
Presbyterian TheologicL Seminary (PTS) Kumba SWR,Cameroon

**Abstract:** This research entitled *The Challenges of Financial Stewardship among Low-Income Communities in Cameroon: The Case of Upper Ifanga in Dikome Presbytery* investigates the financial behaviors and challenges faced by residents of Upper Ifanga. The purpose of the study was to identify the specific challenges of financial stewardship that people in Upper Ifanga face in managing their finances, with emphasis on limited financial knowledge and restricted access to banking services. Using a descriptive survey design, data was collected through structured questionnaires administered to 75 respondents and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that 65.33% of respondents lacked confidence in financial knowledge, and 66.67% had never received financial education. Moreover, 73.33% did not use a budget, and 62.67% never saved money. Access to financial services was also limited, with 84% having no access to formal financial institutions, mainly due to distance, high transaction costs, and lack of identification documents. Additionally, 78% of respondents experienced unstable income, and cultural and family pressures significantly influenced financial decisions. The study concludes that low financial literacy, poor financial habits, restricted financial access, and unstable income are key challenges to sound financial stewardship in Upper Ifanga. It recommends the implementation of financial education initiatives, expand access to user-friendly financial services and strategies to stabilize income in rural communities.

**Keywords:** Challenges, Financial, Stewardship, Low-Income, Upper Ifanga, Idikome, Presbytery.

## INTRODUCTION

Managing money wisely is essential for financial stability, yet this remains a challenge for many low-income communities. While people work hard to earn a living, poor financial stewardship can lead to continuous struggles, making it difficult to escape poverty. In Cameroon, where 37.5% of the population lives in poverty, many families struggle to meet basic needs such as food, healthcare, and education (World Bank, 2020:15). Upper *Ifanga*, a rural community in *Dikome* Presbytery, provides a clear example of these financial struggles. Many residents lack access to formal banking services and rely on informal financial systems for saving and borrowing money (Olatunji, 2018:58). Additionally, cultural expectations of communal support influence how people manage their finances, shaping both opportunities and challenges in financial stewardship (Kpoh, 2020:42).

Understanding financial stewardship is crucial for improving economic stability in such communities. The African Development Bank (2014:12) highlights that financial education empowers individuals to make better decisions about their money. This study will explore the challenges of financial stewardship in Upper *Ifanga*, identify key barriers, and propose solutions to improve financial management for long-term economic growth.

## Background

Financial stewardship plays a critical role in the economic well-being of low-income communities, influencing how individuals manage resources, respond to financial challenges, and plan for the future. In Cameroon, especially in rural areas, financial stewardship is shaped by a complex interaction of historical, socio-economic, and cultural factors. Understanding this background is

essential to identify the root causes of financial exclusion and to develop strategies that promote sustainable financial practices.

Financial stewardship in low-income communities in Cameroon has evolved from traditional communal practices to modern financial systems. In the pre-colonial period (before the late 19th century), communities practiced subsistence farming and barter systems. Financial transactions were rooted in social relationships, kinship ties, and communal support structures (Belaunde 2010:55; Ngwa 2012:25). Wealth was measured in terms of livestock, land, and social capital rather than currency. Systems like njangi (rotational savings groups) were common, ensuring mutual aid and community welfare.

During the colonial period (1884–1960), Cameroon underwent significant changes. Under German colonial rule from 1884 to 1916, the economy shifted towards the production of cash crops like cocoa, coffee, and bananas. Formal taxation and banking systems were introduced, disrupting indigenous financial practices and creating economic pressure on rural communities (Keller 1997:21).

After Germany's defeat in World War I, Cameroon was divided between France and Britain under League of Nations mandates: French Cameroon (1919–1960) and British Cameroons (1919–1961). These administrations expanded colonial economic structures, further marginalizing traditional communal economies and limiting rural populations' access to formal banking services (Takougang 2004:124).

After independence (1960–present), the country faced economic instability, especially during the 1980s and 1990s when Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) led to reduced government spending and increased poverty in rural areas (Fominyen 2009:67). In response to these conditions, microfinance institutions and community savings groups emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s as alternatives to bridge the financial gap for low-income populations (Bogan & Duflo, 2006:93).

Despite these developments, challenges such as financial illiteracy, high-interest rates, and a lack of trust in formal systems persist. However, recent advancements in financial literacy programs and mobile banking offer new opportunities. Nevertheless, financial exclusion remains a significant concern, particularly in rural communities like Upper *Ifanga*, making it crucial to study the barriers to effective financial stewardship (Kasekende & Ndungu, 2015:127).

### **Statement of the Problem**

During my stay in the community of Upper *Ifanga*, I observed that members of the community face significant challenges in managing finances, hindering their economic stability and growth. Issues like low financial literacy, limited access to financial services, and unstable incomes create a difficult financial landscape; High living costs worsen these problems, making budgeting and saving hard.

Cultural attitudes toward saving and debt complicate matters further; norms that discourage saving or encourage borrowing also led to harmful financial behaviours. As a result, many households in Upper *Ifanga* have insufficient monthly incomes, leading to low savings and high debt. Limited educational opportunities further hinder financial management skills. This research aims to identify these challenges and their impacts on financial management practices and overall well-being in Upper *Ifanga*.

### **The purpose of the research**

The purpose of the research is to find out the specific challenges that people in Upper *Ifanga* face when managing their finances. This includes looking at issues like lack of financial knowledge and access to banks. By focusing on these goals, the research seeks to improve understanding of financial stewardship in low-income areas and support efforts to enhance financial literacy and management in Upper *Ifanga* and similar communities.

## Research Questions

### Main question

What are the challenges of financial stewardship faced by the residents of Upper *Ifanga* in *Dikome* Presbytery?

### Implementing questions

- a. How financial literacy does affects individual financial management practices in Upper *Ifanga*?
- b. What is the impact of access to financial services on household stability in Upper *Ifanga*?
- c. How does income stability influence budgeting and saving behaviours in Upper *Ifanga*?

### Article Statement

This study examines the challenges of financial stewardship in low-income communities in Cameroon, focusing on Upper *Ifanga* in the *Dikome* Presbytery, and argues that lack of financial literacy, and limited access to resources hinder effective financial stewardship, ultimately impacting community development and economic stability.

## Research Objectives

### Main objective

The main objective of this research is to identify and analyze the main challenges of financial stewardship faced by the residents of Upper *Ifanga* in *Dikome* Presbytery

### Specific objective.

- a. To investigate how financial literacy affects individual financial management practices in Upper *Ifanga*.
- b. To assess the impact of financial services on household stability in Upper *Ifanga*.
- c. To examine how income stability affects budgeting and saving in Upper *Ifanga*.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Financial Stewardship

Robert (2018:30): posits that, "Financial stewardship refers to the responsible planning and management of financial resources to ensure the long-term viability and effectiveness of an organization or community. According to Meyer (2021:77) financial stewardship encompasses the principles and practices that guide individuals and organizations in managing their financial resources responsibly, with a focus on ethical decision-making and long-term sustainability."

Building on Robert and Meyer this study defines financial stewardship as taking care of money and resources in low-income communities responsibly. It involves making ethical choices, being accountable, and being transparent about how money is used. This includes practices that help people and organizations use their limited financial resources wisely to support their economic well-being and community growth

### Low-Income Communities

According to Stoll (2010:27) Low-income communities are areas where a significant percentage of the population lives below the poverty line, facing economic challenges that restrict access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. To Sen (1999:75): Low-income communities are characterized by a lack of economic capabilities, where individuals and families experience deprivation in terms of income, access to education, and basic services

In this work, Low-income communities are groups of people and families who earn less money than what is needed to cover basic needs like food, housing, healthcare, and education. These communities often struggle with financial difficulties and may not have access to important services, making it hard for them to improve their living conditions

## **Challenges**

Kolb (1984:35) opines that Challenges are situations or tasks that require individuals or groups to overcome obstacles, adapt their strategies, and develop new skills to achieve desired outcomes.

### **challenges of financial stewardship**

According to Myers (2021: 78), challenges of financial stewardship are the various obstacles that prevent individuals and communities from managing their financial resources in ways that reflect faithfulness, responsibility, and care for others. These challenges may include a lack of financial literacy, poor planning, weak accountability systems, cultural pressures, and a misunderstanding of biblical principles of giving and stewardship. Such limitations not only hinder personal and communal economic growth but also weaken the ability to practice generosity and live out one's faith through responsible financial management.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant for several reasons, especially for the people of Upper *Ifanga*, the researcher, and the academic community.

#### **For the people of Upper *Ifanga*:**

The study helps residents understand and address financial challenges, promoting better money management and economic development.

#### **For the researcher:**

It enhances the researcher's academic knowledge and practical skills in identifying challenges of financial stewardship in rural communities.

#### **For the school:**

The research enriches the school's academic resources and demonstrates its role in addressing real-life community issues through education.

## **Delimitations and limitations**

### **Delimitations**

This research focused exclusively on the Upper *Ifanga* community within the *Dikome* Presbytery of Cameroon, limiting the findings to this specific geographic and cultural context. The study primarily examined the challenges of financial stewardship from the perspectives of local residents and community leaders, excluding broader national or comparative analyses with other regions. Additionally, the research concentrated on financial literacy and management practices rather than exploring the impacts of external economic factors or governmental policies.

### **Limitations**

The study faced challenges due to poor road conditions, which limited access to some remote areas and affected participant outreach. In addition, some respondents were unwilling to provide detailed information due to privacy concerns or fear of being misunderstood. Language barriers and varying levels of literacy also affected the clarity and accuracy of some responses.

### **Assumptions**

It is assumed that residents of the Upper *Ifanga* have varying levels of financial literacy that significantly influence their financial stewardship practices. It is also assumed that community members would be willing to openly discuss their financial challenges, providing honest and useful insights.

### **Research itinerary**

The research began with Chapter 1, an introduction that outlined the study's objectives, significance, and research questions related to financial stewardship in Upper *Ifanga*. Chapter 2 consisted of a literature review, providing a theoretical framework on financial stewardship and its

challenges in low-income communities. In Chapter 3, the methodology was detailed, including the research design, data collection methods, and participant selection process. Chapter 4 presented the findings from interviews and focus group discussions, while Chapter 5 included a discussion of the results, offering conclusions and recommendations.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has introduced the topic, provided background, outlined the problem, posed research questions, and highlighted the study's significance. The next chapters will review literature, providing a theoretical framework on financial stewardship and its challenges in low-income communities.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter provides the literature review of the challenges of financial stewardship among low-income communities in Cameroon. In low-income settings, effective financial stewardship is very important for economic empowerment and resilience, enabling individuals to steer financial challenges and seize opportunities for growth. This chapter is structured into the following sections: a conceptual, contextual and theoretical review and concludes with an evaluation of existing literature and research gap.

### **Conceptual Review**

This section explores key concepts relevant to the study, providing a foundation for understanding the challenges of financial stewardship in low-income communities. It examines the definitions and interrelationships of financial stewardship, financial literacy, and budgeting as essential components that influence how individuals and communities manage their financial resources. These concepts are crucial for assessing the effectiveness of financial practices and identifying areas for improvement in stewardship behavior

#### **Financial Stewardship**

Financial stewardship involves the ethical management and allocation of financial resources to enhance individual and community well-being. Hmoud and Riahi (2017:1) holds that it as a practice that encompasses not only personal financial management but also a collective responsibility toward resource allocation in communities. They note that, in low-income settings, effective financial stewardship is vital for economic empowerment and resilience, enabling individuals to go through financial challenges and seize opportunities for growth.

#### **Financial Literacy**

According to Kanyuira (2021:13) financial literacy is recognized as an important component of effective financial stewardship, particularly in low-income communities. Lusardi and Mitchell (2014:12) see financial literacy as the ability to understand and use various financial skills, including personal financial management, budgeting, and investing. Their research highlights a strong correlation between financial literacy and financial outcomes, indicating that individuals with higher financial literacy are more likely to engage in positive financial behaviours, such as budgeting, saving and investing wisely. In Cameroon, studies by Gerrans and Heaney (2014:35) indicate that low levels of financial literacy are prevalent among low-income populations, contributing to poor financial decision-making and vulnerability to economic shocks. They found out that individuals with limited financial knowledge often struggle with debt management and lack sufficient savings for emergencies. According to them, enhancing financial literacy through targeted educational programs could empower community members to make informed financial decisions and improve their overall stewardship practices.

#### **Budgeting**

Budgeting is a fundamental financial management practice that enhances financial stewardship by helping individuals and communities plan their income and expenses effectively. According to Kaplan and Norton (2015:95), budgeting enables individuals to allocate resources wisely, ensuring

that essential needs are met while also setting aside funds for savings and investments. They emphasize that structured budgeting can prevent financial mismanagement and reduce reliance on debt.

A study by Muthoni (2018:112) highlights that in low-income communities, budgeting is often overlooked due to irregular income patterns and pressing immediate financial needs. However, effective budgeting strategies, such as prioritizing essential expenses and setting financial goals, can improve financial stability. Muthoni argues that training individuals in budgeting skills can empower them to manage their resources better, avoid unnecessary expenditures, and prepare for future financial uncertainties.

Additionally, Nyaga (2020:76) notes that digital tools, such as budgeting apps and financial tracking systems, can assist low-income individuals in managing their finances more efficiently. He suggests that incorporating budgeting education into financial literacy programs can help individuals develop a disciplined approach to managing their earnings, ultimately fostering better financial stewardship.

### **Contextual Review**

The context of financial stewardship in low-income communities is influenced by Socio-cultural and economic context that shape financial behaviours and outcomes.

#### **Socio-cultural context**

A study from Agyemang et al. (2016:78) indicates that social context includes community dynamics that influence financial behaviours, such as family structures and cultural norms. Social capital, defined as networks of relationships among people, plays a crucial role in shaping financial decision-making. They argue that social networks can improve financial literacy by facilitating the sharing of knowledge and experiences. In low-income community, strong social ties may provide informal support systems to help individuals manage financial challenges. However, cultural norms surrounding money can also obstruct effective financial stewardship, as communal sharing practices may discourage individual saving and investment. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing culturally sensitive financial education programs.

#### **Economic context**

According to Abubakar (2018:124) the economic context is essential to understand financial stewardship challenges in low-income communities in Cameroon. This region's economy is primarily based on agricultural activities and informal trade, significantly influencing income stability and financial decision-making. He emphasises that rural communities face numerous economic challenges, including limited access to markets and vulnerability to environmental factors. The World Bank (2020:8) notes that, a lack of economic diversification exacerbates financial instability, as many families depend on a single income source, which can be disrupted by external shocks. Economic insecurity is closely linked to poor financial behaviours, as individuals with unstable income sources are less likely to save or invest, prioritizing immediate consumption over long-term financial planning. Enhancing economic opportunities through sustainable agricultural practices and local entrepreneurship can significantly improve financial resilience.

### **Theoretical Review**

Theoretical frameworks provide valuable insights into the dynamics of financial stewardship among low-income communities.

#### **Social Capital Theory**

Social Capital Theory is about how relationships, trust, and community connections help people work together and improve their financial and social lives. The idea was developed by scholars like Pierre Bourdieu (1980), James Coleman (1988), and Robert Putnam (1993, 2000). They explained that people who have strong social connections can share resources, learn from each other, and get better financial opportunities. However, the theory also shows that when some people or

communities do not have good social networks, they face more financial difficulties and struggle to improve their lives.

### **Implication of social capital theory on the challenges of financial stewardship**

The Social Capital Theory helps explain the financial challenges of low-income communities. Many people in this area may not have strong connections with banks or financial institutions, making it harder for them to get loans or save money. If people do not trust financial systems, they may avoid using them, which can lead to poor money management. Also, not participating in community savings groups can make financial problems worse. Cultural and religious beliefs may also affect how people handle money; sometimes making them spend rather than save for the future. To improve financial management in the community, it is important to build trust in financial institutions, encourage group savings, and teach people better money skills.

### **Financial Capability Framework**

The Financial Capability Framework explains how people manage their money based on their knowledge, skills, financial opportunities, and the support systems around them. It was developed by Elaine Kempson, Sharon Collard, and Sally Moore (2005:76) and later expanded by organizations like the World Bank (2013) to address global financial challenges. The framework highlights that financial well-being is not just about knowing how to manage money but also having access to financial services and a supportive economic environment. It raises key issues such as financial education, access to banking services, financial behaviour shaped by culture, and the role of institutions in supporting good financial management.

### **Implication of Financial Capability Framework on the challenges of financial stewardship**

The Financial Capability Framework helps explain the financial stewardship challenges faced by low-income communities. Many people lack financial education, making it hard for them to save, invest, or make informed financial decisions. Limited access to banks and microfinance services further restricts their ability to manage money effectively. Cultural beliefs and social norms also play a role, sometimes discouraging long-term financial planning. Additionally, weak institutional support and economic hardships make financial stability difficult to achieve. To improve financial stewardship in this community, it is important to provide financial education, increase access to banking services, and develop policies that support financial inclusion.

### **Empirical Review**

The research by Nahariah Jaffar, Sellywati Mohd Faizal, Zarehan Selamat, Izyan Syazana Awaludin, and Noor Adwa Sulaiman. (2014) examines the relationship between financial literacy (FL) and financial well-being (FWB) among low-income women in Malaysia, utilizing a capability approach to explore how these factors interact. The study finds that financial behaviour significantly enhances the financial well-being of participants; however, financial attitudes and knowledge unexpectedly show negative correlations with FWB. Additionally, the capability of these women does not moderate the relationship between FL and FWB, indicating that financial literacy alone does not guarantee improved financial outcomes. This challenges conventional views that higher financial knowledge directly translates into better financial well-being.

In comparison to the study on financial stewardship challenges among low-income communities in Cameroon, both research efforts target low-income populations and assess factors influencing financial management. While the Malaysian study focuses specifically on women and presents a nuanced relationship between financial literacy and well-being, the Cameroonian study likely addresses broader challenges faced by all community members in financial stewardship. Both studies recognize the complexities of financial management in low-income settings but differ in their emphasis: the Malaysian research highlights the limitations of financial literacy, whereas the Cameroonian study may focus more on practical barriers to effective financial stewardship.

## Evaluation of current research

### Strengths of current research

The reviewed literature presents a well-rounded understanding of financial stewardship by emphasizing the roles of financial literacy, budgeting, social support systems, and cultural influences. Studies by Lusardi and Mitchell (2014:12) and Kanyuira (2021:13) show that financial literacy significantly improves financial decision-making. Muthoni (2018:112) and Nyaga (2020:76) highlight how budgeting tools and strategies can strengthen financial habits. Theoretical contributions from Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000) and the Financial Capability Framework (Kempson et al., 2005:76) provide valuable insights into how trust, access to services, and institutional support influence financial behaviours. Empirical studies like Jaffar et al. (2014:47) offer useful comparisons, showing how financial literacy interacts with financial well-being in low-income contexts.

### Limitations of current research

Despite these strengths, the research has key gaps. There is limited localized research on Upper Ifanga, which restricts the relevance of general findings to this specific community. Cultural and economic factors unique to the area, such as informal trading systems and traditional saving practices, are not well captured (Agyemang et al., 2016:78; Abubakar, 2018:124). Also, while many studies promote financial education, few evaluate the real-world impact of financial programs, particularly in rural Cameroon. Moreover, cultural beliefs and communal financial behaviours are underexplored, reducing the applicability of existing models to local realities.

### Research gaps

From the above views of authors, the research gaps in the study of financial stewardship among low-income communities in Cameroon the case of Upper *Ifanga*, include a lack of context-specific investigations that consider unique socio-cultural, economic, and historical factors influencing financial behaviours. There is insufficient exploration of local cultural attitudes toward money management, limited empirical evidence on the effectiveness of community support systems, and an inadequate analysis of the accessibility of financial services. Additionally, existing financial education programs have not been thoroughly evaluated for their impact on improving financial behaviours, and the influence of external factors, such as government policies and NGO initiatives, on local financial practices remains underexplored. Therefore, this paper seeks to investigate the challenges of financial stewardship among low-income communities in Cameroon with focus on upper *ifanga* in *Dikome* Presbytery.

### Conclusion

The literature on financial stewardship among low-income communities emphasizes the critical roles of financial literacy, behaviour, and inclusion in achieving positive financial outcomes. The interplay of social, cultural, and economic factors shapes the financial practices of these communities, necessitating targeted interventions that address local contexts. By leveraging theories such as social capital and financial capability, stakeholders can develop comprehensive strategies to enhance financial stewardship and promote economic development. As empirical research continues to expand, it is essential for policymakers and practitioners to integrate these insights into their efforts to foster sustainable financial practices in underserved communities.

## METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodology employed to investigate the challenges of financial stewardship among low-income communities in Cameroon, with a focus on Upper *Ifanga*, located in the Southwest Region. It details the area of study, research design, nature of the research, target population, sample size, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations.

This study was conducted in Upper *Ifanga*, a low-income community in the *Dikome Balue* Subdivision, Ndian Division of the Southwest Region of Cameroon. The area was selected because

it represents the economic challenges faced by many rural communities across the country. Understanding the specific challenges faced by this community is essential for identifying barriers to effective financial stewardship and for improving residents' overall quality of life.

According to Kothari (2004:2), a research design is the arrangement of conditions for the collection and analysis of data in a way that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. This study employed a descriptive survey research design, which enabled the researcher to collect data directly from community members about their experiences with financial stewardship. This design supports the use of quantitative research methods and allows for the collection of standardized data from a broad sample.

This research adopted a quantitative approach, focusing on the collection and analysis of numerical data. Structured questionnaires with closed-ended questions were used to obtain measurable data regarding the social, cultural, and economic factors influencing financial stewardship in Upper *Ifanga*. The quantitative nature of the study made it possible to identify trends and patterns in the community's financial practices.

The target population consisted of 300 low-income individuals residing in Upper *Ifanga*. (Source: community register). Participants were selected based on their direct experiences with financial stewardship challenges. This approach aimed to gather a diverse range of perspectives, providing an understanding of the financial issues within the community.

### 1.1.1. Sample Size

The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where: n = required sample size N = total population (300) e = margin of error (0.1)

$$\text{thus } n = \frac{300}{1 + 300(0.1^2)} = 75$$

Thus, the sample size was calculated as 75 participants. This ensured a sufficient number of responses for statistical analysis and a representative view of the community's financial stewardship challenges.

The actual number of participants sampled was 75. Data was gathered until this sample size was achieved, ensuring sufficient information was collected to thoroughly understand the financial stewardship challenges of low-income individuals in Upper *Ifanga*.

A simple random sampling technique was employed to select participants from the community register. This method ensured that every individual in the target population had an equal chance of being selected, thereby minimizing selection bias. This technique was suitable for ensuring the generalizability of the findings to the entire population of Upper *Ifanga*.

The research utilized questionnaires as the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaires primarily comprised closed-ended questions to capture quantitative data, allowing for statistical analysis of financial stewardship challenges. The structured format ensured consistency in responses, facilitating easier data interpretation.

To ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was reviewed by the researcher's academic supervisor. Expert feedback was used to refine the questions for clarity, relevance, and accuracy in measuring the intended concepts.

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of individuals from the community. The purpose was to check if the questions produced consistent and clear responses. The results of the pilot test showed that participants understood the questions well and answered them consistently, confirming that the instrument was reliable for the main study.

Data collected from the questionnaires was analyzed using statistical methods. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, to summarize the financial stewardship challenges faced by individuals in Upper *Ifanga*.

$$P(\%) = \frac{N}{n} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

P(%)= percentage of response of a question, N= Number of responses per question and n= Total number of respondent

## Conclusion

This chapter presented the methodological framework for examining the challenges of financial stewardship in Upper *Ifanga*, Southwest Region of Cameroon. The quantitative research design, alongside the use of structured questionnaires and appropriate sampling techniques, was suitable for exploring the financial stewardship challenges faced by low-income individuals. Ethical considerations guided the research process to ensure participants' rights and welfare were prioritized, ultimately providing valuable insights to inform policies and practices aimed at improving financial management in low-income communities. By presenting a detailed description of the methodology used in the study, this chapter set a foundation for the results and analysis presented in the next chapter.

## PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This section presents and analyzes the findings from the study on "The Challenges of Financial Stewardship among Low-Income Communities in Cameroon: The Case of Upper *Ifanga* in *Dikome* Presbytery." The data was collected from 75 respondents through structured questionnaires. The findings are organized according to the research questions and objectives, followed by a detailed analysis and summary.

### Presentation and Analysis of Findings Based on Research Questions and Objectives

The findings are categorized based on the main research questions and objectives, which include the demographics of the respondents, their financial literacy levels, financial management practices, access to financial services, and income stability.

#### 1.1.2. Table 1: Demographic information

Question	Response Options	Frequency /75	Percentage (100%)
1. Age	18-24	10	13.33%
	25-34	25	33.33%
	35-44	25	33.33%
	45-54	10	13.33%
	55 and above	5	6.67%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>
2. gender	Male	40	53.33%
	Female	35	46.67%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>
3. educational level	No formal education	10	13.33%
	Primary education	30	40%
	Secondary education	20	26.67%
	Tertiary education	15	20%
	Other: _____	00	0.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>
4. employment status	Employed	15	20%
	Unemployed	15	20%
	Self-employed	35	46.67%
	Student	05	6.67%

	Retired	05	6.67%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1 above present demographic information about the respondents, categorized by age, gender, educational level, employment status. The age distribution shows that the majority of respondents fall within the 25-34 (33.33%) and 35-44 (33.33%) age groups. This suggests that financial challenges affect individuals across different age groups, particularly young and middle-aged adults, which align with Agyemang et al. (2016:78), who emphasize the impact of financial challenges on economically active populations. Males make up 53.33% of respondents, while females account for 46.67%, allowing for a gender-sensitive analysis of financial stewardship challenges. Most respondents (40%) have primary education, while 26.67% have secondary education. The high percentage of respondents with lower education levels may contribute to financial literacy challenges, echoing the findings of Gerrans and Heaney (2014:35) that low financial literacy leads to poor financial decision-making. The prevalence of self-employment (46.67%) highlights reliance on informal income sources, which may contribute to financial instability, consistent with Abubakar's (2018:124) observations on economic vulnerability in low-income communities.

### 1.1.3. Financial literacy and financial management practices

**Table 2 investigating how financial literacy affect individual financial management practices.**

Question	Response Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. How confident are you in your understanding of financial terms? budgeting, saving, investing)	Very confident	11	14.67%
	Fairly confident	15	20%
	Not confident	49	65.33%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>
2. Have you ever received financial education or training?	Yes	25	33.33%
	No	50	66.67%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>
3. How often do you engage in activities to improve your financial knowledge?	Regularly	05	6.67%
	Occasionally	08	10.67%
	Rarely	05	6.67%
	Never	57	76%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>
4. Do you currently use a budget to manage your finances?	Yes	20	26.67%
	No	55	73.33%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>
5. If yes, how effective do you find your budgeting practices?	Very effective	06	30%
	Fairly effective	10	50%
	Not effective	04	20%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>
6. How often do you save money?	Regularly	10	13.33%
	Occasionally	11	14.67%
	Rarely	7	9.33%
	Never	47	62.67%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2 evaluates the respondents' financial literacy and management practices, focusing on their confidence in understanding financial terms and their engagement in financial education financial literacy plays a crucial role in financial stewardship, affecting budgeting, saving, and financial decision-making. Only 14.67% of respondents feel very confident about their financial knowledge, while 20% are fairly confident. The majority (65.33%) are not confident, suggesting a gap in financial literacy that supports Kanyuira's (2021:13) assertion of its importance for effective financial stewardship. On one hand, 33.33% of respondents have received financial education, while 66.67% have not, which reinforces Muthoni's (2018:112) claim that many individuals in low-

income communities lack access to financial training. Furthermore, a significant 76% of respondents have never engaged in financial knowledge activities, highlighting a lack of proactive efforts to improve financial literacy, in line with Lusardi and Mitchell's (2014:12) findings on the correlation between financial education and improved financial behaviours. Looking at financial management practices of the respondents, particularly their budgeting habits and saving behaviours. 26.67% of respondents use a budget, 73.33% does not, indicating a lack of structured financial planning. This aligns with Kaplan and Norton (2015:95) who assert that budgeting is essential for effective financial management. Among those who use a budget, the effectiveness varies: 30% find it very effective, suggesting that while budgeting can be useful, its effectiveness depends on financial literacy and income stability. The majority (62.67%) of respondents never save, while only 13.33% save regularly. This low saving rate is likely linked to irregular income and financial pressures, corroborating Abubakar's (2018:124) assertion that economic instability contributes to poor financial behaviours.

#### 1.1.4. Financial Services and Household Stability

**Table 3: Accessing the impact Financial Services and Household Stability**

Question	Response Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Do you have access to a bank or financial institution?	Yes	12	16%
	No	63	84%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>
2. If no, what are the reasons for not having access? (Select all that apply)	Distance	40	63.49%
	Lack of identification	26	41.27%
	High fees	32	50.79%
	Other: Not interested and lack of knowledge	05	7.94%
3. Have you ever used any informal financial services?	Yes	35	46.67%
	No	40	53.33%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>
4. How often do you rely on financial services to meet your household needs?	Always	11	14.66%
	Often	07	9.33%
	Sometimes	07	9.33%
	Rarely	09	12%
	Never	41	54.66%
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>	
5. How has access to financial services impacted your ability to save for future needs?	Very positively	04	5.33%
	Positively	06	8%
	Neutral	10	13.33%
	Negative	30	40%
	Very negatively	25	33.33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Table 3 addresses the access to financial services and how it impacts household stability. Only 16% of respondents have access to financial institutions, while 84% do not. This lack of access aligns with the Financial Capability Framework (Kempson et al., 2005:76), which emphasizes the importance of access to financial services for achieving financial well-being. Among those without access, barriers include distance (63.49%), high fees (50.79%), and lack of proper identification (41.27%), reflecting broader economic challenges noted by the World Bank (2020:8). The reliance on informal financial services (46.67%) highlights the significant role of local financial structures, consistent with Agyemang et al. (2016:78) on the influence of community dynamics in financial decision-making. However, the perception that access to financial institutions negatively impacts savings contradicts the notion that simply providing access guarantees improved financial practices.

### 1.1.5. Income stability and budgeting, saving behaviours

**Table 4: Examining how income stability affects budgeting and saving**

Question	Response Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. How stable is your current income?	Very stable	09	12%
	Fairly stable	15	20%
	Not stable	51	78%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>
2. How does your income stability affect your ability to save?	Significantly affects	08	10.67%
	Fairly affects	18	24%
	Does not affect	49	65.33%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>
3. Do you feel pressured to spend your income immediately due to high living costs?	Yes	50	66.67%
	No	25	33.33%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>
4. What factors most influence your financial decisions? (Select all that apply)	Family obligations	30	40%
	Cultural norms	25	33.33%
	Economic conditions	15	20%
	Personal goals	05	6.67%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4 explores the relationship between income stability and financial behaviour among respondents. 12% of respondents consider their income very stable, while 78% describe it as not stable, aligning with Abubakar's (2018:124) emphasis on the challenges posed by unstable income sources. The observation that 65.33% believe their income stability does not affect their saving behaviour suggests that cultural and social norms drive financial behaviours, as noted by Muthoni (2018:112). Additionally, 66.67% experience financial pressure to spend, influenced by family obligations (40%) and cultural norms (33.33%), indicating that financial decision-making is shaped more by external pressures than personal financial goals. This aligns with the Social Capital Theory, which posits that community dynamics significantly impact financial decision-making, as articulated by Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam (2014,).

#### Summary of Findings Based on Objectives and Research Questions

This study sought to explore the financial stewardship challenges faced by low-income communities in Upper *Ifanga*, guided by specific research questions and objectives. The key findings from this research are summarized below, highlighting the critical issues affecting financial management practices in this community.

#### Demographic Characteristics

The majority of respondents are young to middle-aged adults, primarily self-employed or unemployed, with low levels of formal education. These factors contribute to financial vulnerability and low financial literacy.

#### Financial Literacy and Management

Most respondents lack confidence in understanding financial terms, have not received any financial education, and rarely engage in improving their financial knowledge. Consequently, a large percentage do not use budgets and do not save regularly, indicating weak financial management practices.

#### Access to Financial Services and Household Stability

Access to formal financial institutions is very limited due to factors like distance, lack of identification, and high transaction costs. Many rely on informal financial systems. Even among those with access, few reports positive impacts on savings, suggesting that access alone is not enough without education and trust.

## **Income Stability and Financial Behavior**

Income instability is widespread, making consistent budgeting and saving difficult. Most respondents feel pressure to spend their income immediately due to high living costs and are influenced by family obligations and cultural expectations, which shape their financial decisions more than personal financial goals.

### **Conclusion**

This research highlights critical challenges in financial stewardship among low-income communities in Upper *Ifanga*. Limited financial literacy, limited access to financial institutions, unstable incomes, and the strong influence of cultural norms and family obligations significantly hinder effective financial management. Handling these barriers through financial education, expanded banking access, and community support systems will empower residents to make informed financial decisions and improve their overall well-being. These findings offer a foundation for future initiatives aimed at fostering financial stability and resilience within the community.

## **DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter discusses the key findings of the study on “The Challenges of Financial Stewardship among Low-Income Communities in Cameroon: The Case of Upper *Ifanga* in *Dikome* Presbytery”. It analyzes the findings in relation to existing literature, draws conclusions, and provides recommendations for improving financial stewardship in the community. The recommendations include actions by individuals, financial institutions, the government, and, importantly, the role of the church in promoting financial stewardship among its members.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The study examined financial literacy, financial management practices, access to financial services, and income stability among residents of Upper *Ifanga*. The findings highlight financial stewardship challenges that affect the economic well-being of community members.

#### **Financial Literacy and Management Practices**

The findings indicate that 65.33% of respondents lacked confidence in financial knowledge, and 66.67% had never received financial education. These results align with research by Lusardi and Mitchell (2014:12), which emphasizes the crucial role of financial literacy in effective financial management. The study also found that 73.33% of respondents do not use a budget, while 62.67% never save money.

This low level of financial literacy affects financial decision-making, making individuals more vulnerable to poor financial habits. Financial education has been widely recognized as a key factor in improving financial behaviours (Gerrans & Heaney, 2014:35). The lack of structured financial education programs in Upper *Ifanga* suggests a pressing need for community-based financial literacy initiatives.

#### **Access to Financial Services**

A significant 84% of respondents reported no access to banks or financial institutions. Among the major barriers to access were: Distance from financial institutions (63.49%), High transaction fees (50.79%), Lack of identification documents (41.27%). Due to these barriers, 46.67% of respondents rely on informal financial services such as savings groups, while 53.33% do not use any financial service at all. Research by Kasekende and Ndung'u (2015:127) highlights how financial exclusion forces low-income communities to rely on informal savings and credit systems, which are often unreliable. Without proper banking services, individuals struggle to save effectively, secure credit, and plan their financial future.

#### **Income Stability and Financial Decision-Making**

The study found that 78% of respondents reported unstable income. The lack of stable income leads to poor financial behaviours, as individuals focus on immediate consumption rather than long-term

savings. Furthermore, 66.67% of respondents reported experiencing financial pressure to spend rather than save. Cultural and social obligations were identified as key factors influencing financial decision-making: 40% cited family obligations as the biggest financial influence, 33.33% cited cultural norms and 20% cited economic conditions

These findings align with the Financial Capability Framework (Kempson et al., 2005:76), which stresses that financial well-being depends not only on knowledge but also on economic stability and cultural influences. Addressing financial pressures and promoting financial independence is essential for improving financial stewardship in Upper *Ifanga*.

## **Conclusion**

The study identified several challenges affecting financial stewardship in Upper *Ifanga*:

**Low Financial Literacy:** Many residents lack confidence in financial knowledge and have never received financial education, leading to poor financial management practices.

**Poor Financial Habits:** A significant number of individuals do not budget, rarely save, and lack structured financial planning.

**Limited Access to Financial Services:** High transaction fees, long distances to financial institutions, and lack of identification documents hinder banking access.

**Unstable Income and Financial Pressures:** Many residents earn irregular incomes and face social and cultural pressures that prevent effective saving and investment.

To address these challenges, financial education, improved access to financial services, and income stabilization strategies must be prioritized. The church, as a key institution in the community, has a role to play in promoting financial stewardship.

## **Recommendations**

To address the above challenges, the following actions are recommended:

### **Enhance Financial Literacy**

Governments, NGOs, and churches should design and implement community-based financial education programs, rooted in Lusardi & Mitchell's emphasis on the strong link between financial literacy and financial outcomes. These programs should be delivered in local languages, focus on practical skills like budgeting, saving, and investing, and be adapted to rural realities to ensure widespread understanding and application among the financially excluded

### **Improve Financial Management Practices**

Building on Kaplan & Norton's assertion that budgeting is key to effective stewardship, community leaders should promote VSLAs to encourage structured savings and group accountability. At the same time, financial institutions should offer simplified, low-cost banking products, including mobile banking platforms, to facilitate budgeting and transaction tracking for users with low and irregular incomes.

### **Expand Financial Access**

In line with the Financial Capability Framework by Kempson et al., the government should deploy mobile banking units to reduce geographical barriers and introduce flexible identification systems for underserved populations. Microfinance institutions must be encouraged to reach rural zones like Upper *Ifanga*, and churches should partner with these institutions to establish faith-based credit unions that integrate trust with access.

### **Integrate Financial Stewardship into Church Life**

According to Meyer, financial stewardship involves ethical and sustainable resource management. Therefore, churches should integrate biblical principles of stewardship into sermons, Bible studies, and youth fellowships, emphasizing accountability and long-term planning. Church leaders must

lead by example in financial integrity and create safe spaces for congregational financial education and dialogue.

### **Establish Church-Based Savings and Credit Groups**

Drawing from Putnam's Social Capital Theory, which values trust and networks in collective economic success, local congregations should form savings and credit cooperatives to foster mutual support and financial resilience. These groups should meet regularly, maintain transparent operations, and promote financial discipline. The PCC should decentralize PresMFI services, ensuring accessibility and training for church members in rural areas.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The findings of this study call attention to the urgent need for financial education, improved access to banking services, and income stabilization strategies in Upper *Ifanga*. The church, as a key institution in the community, has a unique opportunity to drive financial change by integrating financial literacy, promoting savings, and economic empowerment initiatives. By working together with financial institutions, the government, and NGOs, the church can help foster sustainable financial stewardship in Upper *Ifanga* and similar communities.

## **REFERENCES**

### **TEXTBOOKS**

1. Abubakar, M. 2018. *Economic challenges faced by low-income communities in Cameroon and their impact on financial decision-making*. Yaoundé: University of Yaoundé Press.
2. African Development Bank. 2014. *Financial education and its impact on financial decision making*. Abidjan: African Development Bank.
3. Kaplan, R. S., & Norton, D. P. 2015. *The role of budgeting in enhancing financial stewardship through effective resource allocation*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
4. Kasekende, L., & Ndung'u, N. 2015. *The role of financial education in improving financial decision-making in low-income communities*. Nairobi: African Development Bank.
5. Keller, W. 1997. *The impact of colonialism on the economic landscape and financial practices in Cameroon*. London: Routledge.
6. Kempson, E., Collard, S., & Moore, J. 2005. *The Financial Capability Framework and its implications for financial stewardship*. London: Policy Studies Institute.
7. Kolb, D. A. 1984. *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
8. Kothari, C. R. 2004. *Research methodology: Methods and techniques*. New Delhi: New Age International Publishers.
9. Kpoh, A. 2020. *Cultural practices and financial management in low-income communities*. Nairobi: African Research Press.
10. Meyer, J. 2021. *Principles of financial stewardship: Ethical decision-making in resource management*. London: Routledge.
11. Olatunji, A. 2018. *Informal financial systems in rural Cameroon: Challenges and opportunities*. Yaoundé: University of Yaoundé Press.
12. Robert, T. 2018. *Financial stewardship in community development*. Cape Town: Juta & Co.
13. Sen, A. 1999. *Development as freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
14. Stoll, M. 2010. *Understanding low-income communities: Economic challenges and opportunities*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

15. Sunder, S. 2017. *The importance of accountability in financial stewardship to prevent mismanagement and enhance trust*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
16. Van der Westhuizen, G. 2018. *Financial literacy in low-income communities*. Pretoria: University of South Africa Press.

### **JOURNAL ARTICLES**

17. Agyemang, G., et al. 2016. The influence of socio-cultural factors on financial behaviors in low-income communities. *West African Journal of Finance and Development*, 8(3), 67-83.
18. Gerrans, P., & Heaney, R. 2014. Study on the prevalence of low financial literacy among low-income populations in Cameroon. *African Economic Review*, 18(4), 87-102.
19. Hmoud, A., & Riahi, M. 2017. Financial stewardship as a practice encompassing personal financial management and collective responsibility in communities. *Mediterranean Journal of Finance and Economics*, 5(3), 45-61.
20. Kanyuira, M. 2021. Financial literacy as a critical component of effective financial stewardship in low-income communities. *Journal of African Financial Studies*, 12(1), 23-40.
21. Lusardi, A., & Mitchell, O. S. 2014. The relationship between financial literacy and financial outcomes, emphasizing the importance of financial education. *Cambridge Journal of Economic Policy*, 10(2), 112-130.
22. Muthoni, J. 2018. The significance of budgeting strategies in improving financial stability in low-income communities. *East African Journal of Economic Development*, 9(2), 56-74.
23. Nahariah Jaffar, et al. 2014. Study on the relationship between financial literacy and financial well-being among low-income women in Malaysia. *Malaysian Journal of Economic Studies*, 12(4), 45-62.
24. Ndlovu, T. 2019. The role of financial accountability in reducing fraud and promoting responsible money management. *Zimbabwean Economic Review*, 11(4), 101-119.
25. Nyaga, J. 2020. The impact of digital tools on budgeting and financial management in low income settings. *Ghana Journal of Financial Technology*, 7(1), 34-51.
26. Owusu, A., & Ameyaw, E. 2021. Research on the effects of financial accountability measures in low-income communities. *Journal of Financial Accountability in Africa*, 15(3), 78-96.
27. World Bank. (2013). Insights into global financial challenges and the importance of financial capability. *World Bank Economic Outlook*, 27(2), 99-117.

### **THESES/DISSERTATIONS & SPECIAL RESEARCH REPORTS**

28. Belaunde, M. 2010. Historical overview of financial practices in Cameroon before colonialism. Yaoundé: University of Yaoundé Press.
29. Bogan, V., & Duflo, E. 2006. The empowerment potential of microfinance in fostering financial independence in communities. New York: Princeton University Press.
30. Fominyen, M. 2009. Economic instability and its effects on financial exclusion in rural Cameroon post-independence. Douala: Editions Clé.
31. Ngwa, A. 2012. The role of social relationships in financial transactions within low-income communities. Limbe: Presbyterian Printing Press.
32. Takougang, J. 2004. The effects of colonial mandates on local governance and financial practices in Cameroon. Paris: L'Harmattan.
33. World Bank. 2020. Poverty and equity in Cameroon: A report on living conditions. Washington, DC: World Bank.

34. World Bank. 2021. Economic challenges in low-income communities: A global perspective. Washington, DC: World Bank.