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**Exploring the Concepts of Partnership and their Implications for  
HIV and AIDS Prevention and Care in Two Ghanaian  
Communities**

**By**

**Jonathan Lomotey**

M. A. Wilfrid Laurier University; B. A. (Hons) University of Ghana

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted to the Lyle S. Hallman Faculty of Social Work  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
Wilfrid Laurier University

**2010**

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## **Abstract**

This study was an exploration of the concepts of partnership in the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities of Ghana and their implications for HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support. Using qualitative data gathering methods, this study sought to discover what is referred to as a partnership, how it is initiated, why it is initiated, the meanings ascribed to it, and its structure and processes in either community. The study further sought to understand how the concepts of partnership in each community could facilitate the development of an effective community-based initiative for HIV and AIDS prevention and care in either community. The study was conducted from a social constructivist perspective using a social ecological framework for understanding factors that influence partnerships in the two communities.

The findings of the study revealed that partnership is conceptualized as a group of individuals or organizations working together to achieve a common purpose, in both communities. The findings also revealed two common underlying principles of the concepts of partnership in the two communities, namely, using collaborative advantage to 1) solve individual and common problems, and 2) for mutual aid. A third underlying principle of partnership: using collaborative advantage for group self-preservation, was found only in the La community.

The study also revealed that partnerships in the two communities are affected by factors operating at three main levels, namely, the individual,

organizational and contextual levels. Partnerships in the two communities are facilitated by personal integrity, good partnership process, shared culture, strong sense of community, and a healthy local economy. Furthermore, partnerships in the two communities are as much about relationships as they are about solving problems. In both communities, people who are working together become “one family”; they take care of each other and provide emotional and material support for each other in time of need.

Three models of partnership were identified in this study, namely, 1) the customary model, 2) the adaptive transactional model, and 3) the culturally dynamic model. The first two were found in both communities but the third was found only in the La community. The customary model of partnership was a purely traditional model of partnership that uses traditional processes; the adaptive transactional model was contemporary and uses formal legal/administrative procedures; and the culturally dynamic model was a blend between the customary and adaptive transactional models of partnership. Consequently, this model of partnership combines La traditional practices with Western meeting procedures. Based on the suggestions of research participants from both communities, the culturally dynamic model of partnership was identified as, potentially, the most suitable form of partnership for a community-based initiative for HIV and AIDS prevention and care in either community.

## **Acknowledgements**

I extend my most sincere gratitude to Lesley Cooper (Ph.D), my supervisor, who took over my advisement at a very crucial time in my studies. Her encouragement, support and guidance have greatly helped to bring this project to a successful completion.

I am extremely grateful to the members of my dissertation committee, Peter Dunn (Ph.D), Ginette Lafreniere (Ph.D), and Colleen Loomis (Ph.D) who helped me along this journey. Their immense support, patience and dedication were very important throughout the duration of the project. Together, they showed me the way and lent me a steady and comforting hand during the most trying times of this journey. I will forever be grateful to them.

I am also grateful to Dr. Eli Teram (Ph.D), my former supervisor, for his help in formulating this study. His guidance and support at the early stages of this project will always be greatly appreciated.

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I sincerely thank all the research participants in this study for sharing their knowledge, experience and insights on the subject of partnerships with me in this study. The information that they provided was very helpful for understanding the concepts of partnership and their implications for HIV and AIDS prevention and care from their perspectives.

Finally, I will like to acknowledge my wife, Mary, and my son, David,  
whose moral support was a great source of strength for me.

I thank all these people and wish them all the best.



## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my parents: Nii Anang Lomotey and Madam Comfort Kooko Abbey. I also dedicate it to Mary, my dear wife, and to my children, David, Laureen and Fredrick, for their love and support throughout this journey.

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
APA	American Psychological Association
CBO	Community-based Organization
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DFID	Department for International Development
HDG	Housing Development Group
HWSHCN	Hamilton-Wentworth Supported Housing Coordination Network
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
LMK	La Mansaamo Kpee (La Town Development Association)
LTC	La Traditional Council
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
OACHA	Ontario Advisory Committee on HIV and AIDS
SPRP	Schizophrenia and Psychosocial Rehabilitation Program
UNAIDS	United Nations AIDS Agency
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization
WWF	World Wildlife Fund
CDC	Centres for Disease Control and Prevention



## CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Partnerships, in a social service and community development context, bring individuals and/or organizations together to work towards a common goal that benefits the partners, a community or society as a whole (Brinkerhoff, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Krogh, 1998; Margenum, 1999; McCann & Gray, 1986; Nelson, Prilleltensky, & MacGillivray, 2001; Strauss, 2002; Wandersman, Valois, Ochs, & de la Cruz, 1996). Individuals and organizations working in partnerships are able to combine their human and material resources and use them more effectively towards addressing the problems of interest (Wandersman et al., 1996; Wolff, 2001a).

Partnerships have been found to promote participation (MacGillivray & Nelson, 1998), reduce duplication of service (Foster-Fishman, Berkowitz, Lounsbury, & Jacobson, 2001), promote empowerment (Nelson et al., 2001; Peterson, Lowe, & Aquilino, 2005; Williams & Lindley, 1996; Wolff, 2001a; Yassi, Fernandez, Fernandez, & Bonet, 2003), and enhance a group's power to attract resources (Murdoch & Abram, 1998; Rog, Boback, Barfon-Villagrana, & Marrone-Bennette, 2004). In fact, to underscore their utility in social service and community development, McCann and Gray (1986) described partnerships as "functional social systems" that bring about numerous positive outcomes for communities.

Owing to their perceived advantages, partnership has come to be viewed as one of the most effective means of community development (Boudreau, 1991; Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Wandersman et al., 1996; Wolff, 2001a).

Consequently, the past two decades have witnessed a growing interest in their use for addressing various community problems (Lomotey, 2002; Packer, Spence & Beare, 2002; Rog et al, 2004; Williams & Lindley, 1996).

The growing enthusiasm about the partnership approach is evidenced by its increasing use by prominent international organizations in community development. Major international private and governmental organizations such as CARE International, the Canada International Development Agency (CIDA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID)<sup>1</sup>, and the United Nations and its agencies, including the United Nations AIDS Agency (UNAIDS), the World Health Organization (WHO), and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) have come to view the partnership model as the answer to the myriad of problems facing humanity (CIDA, 2004; USAID, 2004; United Nations, 2004; UNAIDS, 2004). These organizations have, therefore, continually reaffirmed their commitment to partnerships with local communities in the fight against HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS, 2004).

*Over the past decade, there has been an explosion in partnerships linking the local and the global, which have a deeper impact than any single actor ever could. We in the United Nations have embraced this trend. In recent years, we have worked with non-State actors on a scale that, even a few decades ago, could not have been imagined. (Louise Fréchette, 2005, Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations)*

---

<sup>1</sup>Formerly known as the Overseas Development Agency (ODA)

CIDA, USAID and the various United Nations agencies require organizations applying for funding to implement community development programs to provide lists of partners in their applications. CIDA's guidelines for sustainable growth specifically make partnering with local people an important requirement for such international development projects. CIDA's rationale is that local participation fosters a sense of ownership of projects and this enhances sustainability and outcomes.

It is no accident that the increasing popularity of partnership approaches runs concurrently with the rise of social ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Stokols, 1996). Social ecological theory posits that social problems are caused by a complex interaction between individual, group and contextual factors (Stokols, 1996; Williams & Lindley, 1996). Such problems as disease, poverty, addiction, crime, and environmental degradation are therefore multi-faceted and multi-sectorial in nature; consequently, multiple stakeholder approaches that foster participation and collaborative learning have better chances of succeeding in addressing them. This is perhaps one of the main reasons why community partnerships are emerging in different fields of human service all over the world; notably, in the fields of health, mental health, prevention, community economic development, education, and the environment (Boudreau, 1991; Lomotey, 2002; Packer et al., 2002; Rog et al., 2004; Williams & Lindley, 1996).

Social service agencies, driven by funding requirements, are increasingly teaming up with clients and community groups to plan and deliver valuable services; health ministries and other governmental agencies are partnering with

community groups to provide health services (Boudreau, 1991; Yassi et al., 2003); community groups with common interests, who otherwise compete with each other for resources are increasingly teaming up to enhance human services (Wandersman et al., 1996). A typical example is the Cayo Hueso Community Coalition, a partnership formed to develop and implement an action plan to improve health and quality of life in Cayo Hueso, a suburb of Havana, Cuba (Yassi et al., 2003).

In most African communities, as in many other communities around the world, negotiating the delicate issues of differences in values and beliefs is an important part of community work (Axner, 2009). This need for a good understanding of the culture, traditions and practices of communities within which community development agencies work is illustrated by the challenges experienced by many international agencies that worked in Africa during the peak of the HIV and AIDS pandemic between 1998 and 2003. One major setback for agencies working to help curtail the spread of HIV and AIDS during this period was traditional leaders' opposition to sex education in their communities.

In 2003, the then United Nations Secretary General's Special Envoy to Africa on HIV and AIDS, Steven Lewis<sup>2</sup>, described antagonism by traditional leaders as a major challenge to the struggle against HIV and AIDS in Africa. The result of this antagonism was a perceived lack of cooperation by traditional leaders with agencies trying to help address the HIV and AIDS problem.

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<sup>2</sup> Mr. Steven Lewis was a former UN Secretary General's Special Envoy to Africa and currently a Co-Director of AIDS-free World, an international AIDS advocacy group that is based in the United States.

Campbell, Nair and Maimane (2007) also reported difficulties in involving the traditional ruler of the Entabeni community of South Africa in their community initiative aimed at building HIV and AIDS competence. According to Campbell et al. (2007), they succeeded in involving many sub-chiefs in the community, however, numerous attempts to involve the most senior chief, who was also the most influential among them, ended in futility.

My personal experiences of various community partnerships in Ghana have taught me that African traditional leaders know what it means to partner with others, how to partner with other people, and the benefits of partnering. Meebelo (1973) observed that collaboration has always been part of life in African communities. Members of African traditional society have their own ways of initiating and building partnerships that ensure that the interests of all parties are addressed. Therefore, as I contemplated the reported difficulties that international AIDS organizations were experiencing in their attempts to obtain the cooperation of African traditional leaders, I surmised that it was a problem of lack of inter-cultural understanding about partnering rather than unwillingness on the part of the traditional leaders. I, therefore, reasoned that cooperation between international AIDS organizations and African traditional leaders, would be facilitated by better understanding of the concept of partnership from the perspectives of African communities. Knowledge about what is a partnership, what it means to partner, how partnerships are formed, and how they operate in African communities would be very useful for developing effective community-based initiatives for HIV and AIDS prevention and care in those communities.

Although HIV and AIDS is a world-wide problem, it has reached epidemic proportions in Africa south of the Sahara. Sub-Saharan Africa currently accounts for about 70 percent of HIV infections world-wide. The region has the world's highest HIV prevalence rates. In 2007, the HIV prevalence among adults in sub-Saharan Africa was 5.0 compared to 0.8 for the whole world. In fact, the region with the second highest HIV prevalence among adults was South East Asia with a rate of 0.3.

The impact of HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa has also been the most devastating compared to any other region of the world. AIDS is the leading cause of death in the most affected countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The disease has wiped out entire communities. In others, it has left millions of children orphaned, and devastated family networks that usually supported orphans. The disease has also ravaged the workforce of many countries and further weakened their already fragile national economies.

The spread of HIV and AIDS in Africa has always been of great concern to me as an individual, and as a person of African origin. This concern was borne out of my personal knowledge, experience and understanding of African traditional culture as it relates to gender roles, sexuality and sexual behaviour, and its potential for fueling the spread of the HIV virus.

The cultural construction of gender and gender roles in many traditional African societies often tends to encourage promiscuity (Kristener, 2003; Varga, 1997). In a typical African community, having multiple female sexual partners is viewed as a measure of masculinity (Kristener, 2003; Varga, 1997). To illustrate

this, Varga (1997) pointed it out that *isoka*, a Zulu term for a man with multiple sexual partners, is complimentary rather than derogatory. This is partly due to the fact that polygamous marriage is part of most, if not all, African cultures (Gausset, 2001). Also, various studies have shown that African women lack power in marital relations (Dunkle, Jewkes, Brown & Gray, 2004; Essuom, 2007; Gausset, 2001).

Multiple factors are responsible for African women's lack of power in marital relations (Dunkle et al., 2004; Essuom, 2007; Gausset, 2001). Essuom (2007) observed that male dominance in marital relations is deeply rooted in African culture. Gausset (2001) related the African male's dominance in the negotiation of sex to male dominance in other aspects of social life including the local economy and local politics. Furthermore, Dunkle et al. (2004) partially linked the dominance of African males in marital relations to their immense economic power as traditional providers for their families.

Male dominance is a global issue rather than an African problem. The 2008 Gender Equity Index (Social Watch, 2008) showed that the world is farther away from gender equality than most people would think. According to the report, which was published in Social Watch, more than 50 percent of the world's adult female population lives in countries that have made no progress towards gender equity in recent years. Even among the countries like Sweden, Finland, and Norway, which have made the most progress on gender equality, gender differences still exist in education, economic activity, and participation in decision-making.

Over the years, many governments and international advocacy groups have sought to empower women and promote gender equality. Countries in various regions of the world, especially in North America and Europe, have made some progress in this direction. The most recent example was the signing of the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act into law by President Barak Obama of the United States on January 29, 2009.

Although progress on gender equality has been slow in Africa, there is some indication of progress on that continent. For instance, the report on Gender Equality Index (GEI) named Rwanda, Ghana, Burundi, and Mozambique among the top 15 percent of countries with the highest GEI index in the world. Also, black feminists have identified numerous instances of the power and influence of women of African descent in their communities. The works of such African and black feminist writers and poets as Badejo (2009), Dei (1997), and Evans (1970) have celebrated the strengths of African women. Echoing Evans' (1970) poem which read,

*I am an African woman*

*Tall as a cypress*

*Strong beyond all definition*

*Still defying place and time, and circumstance*

*Assailed, impervious, indestructible*

*Look on me and be renewed.*



Badejo (2009) elucidated that power and femininity are intertwined in African feminism. According to her, African feminism embraces power as much as it embraces such feminine attributes as beauty, serenity, and inner harmony.

The power and influence of African women is most conspicuous in such matrilineal societies as the Akan of Ghana. Among the Akan people, the Queen Mother plays a very dominant role which includes nominating candidates for chieftaincy (Badejo, 2009; Busia, 1968). The power and strength of African women have also been felt in African politics. In Ghana, the Ivory Coast, South Africa, Zimbabwe and some other African countries, women played significant roles in the struggle for independence from colonial rule. Dei (1997) recounted the steadfastness of Feminine Committee of the *Parti Democratique de Cote d'Ivoire* during the struggle for independence. It is, therefore, important to note that although there is male dominance in African culture, African women have the ability to influence their societies (Dei, 1997; Kevane, 2004). This ability can, and must be tapped for community-based initiatives for HIV and AIDS prevention and care.

The current study is based on the logic that the most effective methods in community intervention are ones that are socially inclusive (Foster-Fishman, Berkowitz, Lounsbury, & Jacobson, 2001), and further that understanding community contexts is an important step in developing inclusive community-based initiatives (Whitbeck, 2006). It also comes at a time when major international organizations involved in HIV and AIDS related work seem to have come to the realization that the best approach to the HIV and AIDS pandemic in

Africa is through partnerships with national governments and local communities (see CIDA<sup>3</sup>, 2004; United Nations, 2004; UNAIDS, 2004).

The aim of this research study was therefore two-fold; (1) to understand the concept of partnership from the perspectives of two Ghanaian communities; and (2) to identify ways in which knowledge about the concepts of partnership in the two communities can be utilized for developing partnerships for HIV and AIDS prevention, care, treatment and support.

### **Location of the Study**

The two cases studied in this project were two Ghanaian communities, namely, the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities. Both communities are located in the south-eastern parts of Ghana, a West African country with a total population of about 20 million people. Ghana currently has an HIV infection rate of 1.9 percent (UNAIDS, 2008). There are currently about 350,000 adults and children living with HIV in the country (UNAIDS, 2008). There have also been a total of about 260,000 AIDS related deaths since the outbreak of the disease (UNAIDS, 2007). Although these statistics pale in comparison with the statistics from countries in Eastern and Southern Africa, it clearly requires effective intervention to prevent the situation from deteriorating.

**Rationale for site selection.** I selected the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities for this study because they represent two different cultures in Ghana, namely, Ga-Adangbe and Akan, and therefore provide very good basis for cross-cultural comparison. Ghana has four main cultural groups, namely, the

---

<sup>3</sup> Canadian International Development Agency

Akan, Ewe, Ga-Adangbe, and Northern tribes. Each cultural group is made up of a number of tribes, and tribal sub-groups and allied tribes that are concentrated in certain traditional areas of the country. La is part of the Ga-Adangbe tribe and Nsawam-Adoajiri is part of the Akan tribe. The cultural differences between the two communities are discussed later in this chapter.

The selection of these two groups enabled me to identify commonalities and differences between how partnerships are practiced in the two sub cultures and the meanings associated with them. Figure 1 shows Ghana on the west coast of Africa.

Figure 1: Map Showing Ghana on the West Coast of Africa

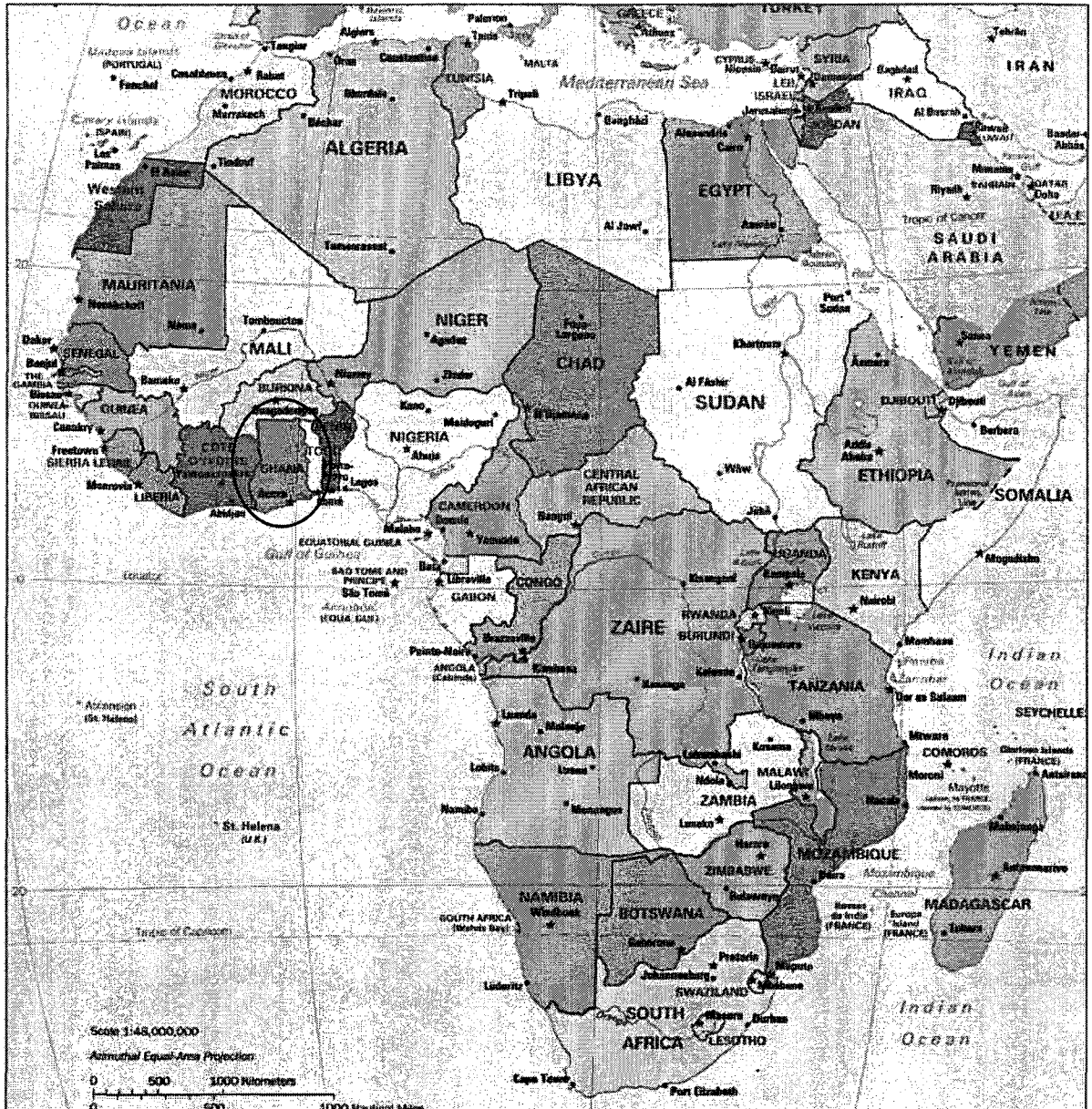


Figure 2 is a map of South-Eastern Ghana where both the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities (marked) are located.

Figure 2: Map of South-Eastern Ghana



**La community.** La is a suburb of Accra, the capital of Ghana. Its population is about 80,000. The indigenes of La, alongside the indigenes of Gamashie, Teshie, Nungua and Tema, are Gas (pronounced with a nasal sound). The Gas are members of the Ga-Adangbe tribes that occupy the south-eastern coastal region of Ghana. The main township of La is concentrated in an area of about four kilometer-square though the actual land area of La is much larger and includes the Cantonments, Wireless, Burma Camp, Airport Residential Area, and Legon. Other lands belonging to La include Achimota, Madina, Amanhia, Oyarifa, Abokobi, and several small villages.

Many residents of the town commute to work in government offices and ministries and industries mainly located in Accra and Tema. There is also a small local industrial area with a few factories on the outskirts of the town where some residents work. Among these are two major hotels; the Labadi Beach and the La Palm Beach Hotels. Other occupations in the La community include small scale trading, commuter transportation, farming and fishing. Fishing used to be a major occupation until a few years ago. Notable institutions located in *La* are the Ghana International Trade Fair Centre, the Kotoka International Airport, Burma Camp (Headquarters of the Ghana Army), and the La Pleasure Beach - a beach resort run by the Ghana Tourist Board.

**Nsawam-Adoajiri community.** The twin townships; Nsawam and Adoajiri have a joint population of about 45,000 people. Nsawam-Adoajiri is part of the South Akuapem District which is one of the 17 districts within the Eastern Region of Ghana. The dominant ethnic group in the South Akuapem District is the Akan with a minority migrant group made up of Ewes, *Gas*, and *Dagombas*.

The main occupation of the people of Nsawam-Adoajiri is farming and trading. The main crops produced by Nsawam and Adoajiri farmers are pineapple, maize and cassava. Besides farming, Nsawam serves as a major trading centre for the surrounding small towns and villages. There are several general merchants operating stores that deal in general goods. There are also a few industries located in or near Nsawam, the most notable of which is the Ghana Cannery Division of the Ghana Industrial Holding Corporation (GIHOC).

**The cultures of the two communities.** There is no agreement among social scientists about what constitutes culture (Fischer, 2009; Hofstede, 2001; Kuper, 1999), however, there is shared understanding that culture is about a people's way of life and the set of values and norms that order their lives (Kuper, 1999; Rossides, 1990). For the purpose of this study, I adopted Rossides' (1990) definition of culture as "the complete set of values and norms that order (or disorder) the lives of society's members" (p. 15). Based on this definition, the concept of culture encompasses definitions of people, statuses, groups, history, nature, artifacts, space, time, and the hereafter (Rossides, 1990). I was, however, concise in my discussion of the cultures of the people of La and Nsawam-Adoajiri and described only those aspects of culture that, in my opinion, have implications for partnering. These aspects were social order, social status, family membership, inheritance, and major festivals. The major festivals of the two communities were included in the discussion because festivals are important occasions that bring people together in the two communities. Festivals also serve as occasions when other important aspects of culture such as dressing and adornment, music, dance, and food are put on full display.

In both La and Nsawam-Adoajiri, there are traditional systems of governance that exist side by side with the modern or contemporary system. This is typical of most Ghanaian communities as well as communities in other African countries. The modern system is made up of such contemporary institutions as local government, commerce, education, law enforcement, courts, non-traditional religious organizations, and professional associations. In the modern system, a

person's social status is dependent upon position within a contemporary institution, wealth, level of education, and membership of professional institutions.

The traditional system, on the other hand, functions through age old structures that are deeply embedded within the values and belief systems of the people. These structures include such institutions as chieftaincy, councils of elders, and the traditional religious order. African traditional leaders play very important roles in the lives of members of their communities (Busia, 1968). Their roles include providing leadership in the spiritual lives of their people, the administration of justice, resource allocation, and the health of their people (Busia, 1968). In the traditional system, a person's social status is dependent upon position in traditional institutions, ancestry, heritage or wealth.

Anthropologists identified two broad forms of traditional authority in African communities (Evans-Pritchard, 1970; Gocking, 1963). These are the centralized system and decentralized systems. The centralized system is hierarchical in nature and is usually headed by a paramount chief or king. Typical examples of the centralized system of traditional rule are found among the Ashanti of Ghana, the Zulu of South Africa, and the Yoruba of Nigeria (Gocking, 1963). Busia (1968) gave a detailed account of the Ashanti traditional system and the role of the *Asantehene*<sup>4</sup> as the hub around which the society revolves. Decentralized systems are made up of what Gocking (1963) described as sub-states with relatively equal status and power. Decentralized systems are ruled by a committee of chiefs and elders who rule the sub-states (Gocking, 1963). A typical

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<sup>4</sup> King of Ashanti



example is found among the *Talensi* of Ghana (Evans-Pritchard, 1970). The people of La practice the decentralized model of traditional governance while the people of Nsawam-Adoajiri practice a centralized system of governance.

In La, a constitutional local government fulfils all public administrative functions. However, the social life of the town is organized around various traditional institutions that also serve certain social, administrative and judicial functions. These institutions range from extended families and lineages (also called clans) to allied lineages that form each of the seven divisions (often referred to as quarters) of the township. Each of the seven divisions has its chief or ruler who heads a divisional council. At the pinnacle of the traditional system in La is the La Traditional Council (LTC).

The LTC is the primary traditional administrative body that oversees all aspects of traditional life in La. This council is made up of the *La Mantse* (king or paramount chief of La), *the Mankralo* (deputy paramount chief), the *Gyasetse* (chief of staff), the *Shippy* (commander of the *asafoi* or the traditional army), and senior chiefs of the seven political divisions of La. The seven divisions of La are known as *Abafum*, *Abese*, *Agbawe*, *Djrasee*, *Kowe*, *Leshie*, and *Nmati*.

Next to the LTC in terms of power and authority are the divisional councils. Divisional councils are formed by the heads of the various clan houses within each division. Each divisional council has jurisdiction over the clan houses within its designated boundaries. Divisional councils form a second tier of a three tier traditional administrative system. The third tier is made up of the clan houses

which are headed by family heads and elected executives of clan house associations.

Under the decentralized system, although the *La Mantse* is the paramount chief, he does not have absolute power. He rules together with the other chiefs on the traditional council. Within the LTC, the *La Mantse* is *primus inter pares*: there are built-in checks and balances that ensure that he rules collaboratively with other leaders through the LTC.

Like La, Nsawam-Adoajiri has both an urban council that fulfils public administrative functions as well as a traditional governance system that works alongside it. As mentioned earlier, traditional governance in Nsawam-Adoajiri is centralized as is typical of Akan communities. Nsawam-Adoajiri is one of seven area councils that form the South Akuapem District. Each area council comprises several towns and villages. The principal ruler of the South Akuapem District is the paramount chief in Aburi. Each area council is headed by a divisional chief who supervises the sub-chiefs (*odikro*) and village heads in his area. The chief of Nsawam is a divisional chief. He therefore rules as the representative of the paramount chief and supervises the sub-chiefs and village-heads in the Nsawam-Adoajiri area. The chiefs and sub-chiefs in this chain of power wield so much power locally that, they are normally consulted before any development projects are carried out in their districts.

The extended family is a very important social unit in both La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities. Extended family membership is, however, defined differently in each of the two communities.

The people of La are patrilineal, meaning that each individual is recognized primarily as a member of his or her father's extended family or clan. Membership of an extended family or clan comes with certain privileges and obligations. It places one in the care and protection of the clan and places one in position to inherit collective clan valuables such as lands, titles, and chieftaincy positions. Children, however, directly inherit their fathers' and mothers' estates. Obligations of clan membership include helping to take care of other members of the family, especially orphaned children.

The clan is an important unit of organization among the people of La. It is made up of people who share a common ancestor. In other words, members of a clan are related by blood. Among the people of La, each clan is headed by the oldest male member. In some clan houses, this position is held jointly by the oldest male and the spiritual leader. These leaders head a council of elders that takes care of all matters affecting the clan. Their duties include the performance of rituals and other traditional rites for members of the clan. The elders also perform marriages (traditional) and naming ceremonies and settle disputes among clan members or between clan members and outsiders. Members of the extended family contribute towards events like funerals and naming ceremonies.

Upon the death of a family member, the entire clan meets and takes care of burial and funeral arrangements under the leadership of the elders. During this time, uncles and aunts step in to take care of orphans or support the surviving parent in taking care of the children. Usually a few years after the burial, they

meet again to share the deceased's property among his or her children. This includes formally placing orphans in the care of direct uncles or aunts.

The people of Nsawam-Adoajiri on the other hand are matrilineal, meaning that individuals are recognized as members of their mothers' extended families. In this community too, membership of extended families comes with certain privileges and obligations; people inherit maternal family valuables and positions. Children, however, do not directly inherit their fathers' estates; they inherit their maternal uncles' estates to the exclusion of the uncles' children<sup>5</sup>. In Akan culture too, the elders perform traditional marriages and organize funerals for deceased members. Individual family members are also expected to contribute towards these ceremonies.

Festivals are important aspects of the cultures of both La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities. Festivals in both communities involve the performance of rituals for ancestral spirits. Festivals are also characterized by traditional dressing and adornment, traditional music and dancing, and traditional foods.

The people of La are known for the Homowo Festival. The Homowo Festival, which is celebrated with other Ga tribes, is an annual harvest festival that also marks the beginning of the Ga New Year. During this festival, traditional leaders, including chiefs and sub-chiefs and traditional religious leaders put on full traditional regalia and perform rituals at various shrines in the township. The chiefs and religious leaders are adorned with beads and straw hats and necklaces which are very important in Ga culture. As part of this festival a special

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<sup>5</sup> This tradition is, however, changing with the passing of the interstate laws in Ghana. This law ensures that a major part of a deceased's estate is allocated to his or her children.

food called *kpokpoi* is prepared and shared with people. People perform special traditional songs and dances called *kpa*.

The people of Nsawam-Adoajiri are known for the Odwira festival which is shared with many other Akan tribes. Odwira is celebrated in remembrance of the ancestors. During this festival the chiefs and people meet at a durbar in the presence of the paramount chief. The chiefs dress in full traditional regalia. Akan traditional dressing for such an occasion is the Kente cloth and gold ornaments. Kente is a colourful locally woven silk cloth which has become a centre piece of Ghanaian art and culture. The Akan people are well known for gold ornaments; gold mining and goldsmithing have always been part of Akan culture. Consequently, during the Odwira festival the chiefs wear gold diadems, necklaces, and slippers that are adorned with gold plates. A meeting of Akan chiefs is almost like a competition of gold ornaments; the higher a chief's rank, the richer his dressing and adornment. *Adoa* dancing, which is a very important aspect of Akan culture is also performed during the Odwira festival.

In the nutshell, there are interesting similarities and differences between the Gas of La and the Akans of Nsawam-Adoajiri. One of the objectives of this study was to explore the potential implications of these similarities and differences for partnerships. For example, the different systems of traditional governance, and the different definitions of extended family membership could have implications for partnerships.

## **My Social Location**

My interest in developing effective strategies for HIV and AIDS prevention and care in sub-Saharan Africa derives from a firm belief that the appropriate response to the AIDS pandemic in Africa should involve all stakeholders in the affected communities. These include both the traditional and the modern or contemporary sectors of each community.

I have been involved in both the traditional and contemporary sectors of La. As a child, I grew up very close to the traditional system in La because my late father was a traditional leader and the spiritual leader of the *Lomotey clan*<sup>6</sup>. He was, therefore, involved in all matters concerning the clan and the entire La community. My brothers and I accompanied him to traditional events to which children are permitted. When I grew up, I became actively involved in my clan house association.

My involvement in the contemporary sector of La occurred through my education and membership of various social organizations. I undertook my entire elementary school education in La. I was a member of the La Presbyterian Church. I was also a member of the *La Town Development Association (La Mansaamo Kpee)* which is the largest local NGO in La. This association has initiated various development projects in the town to help its residents; its most notable projects are two schools, a community bank, and a consumer cooperative in La. I was also a member of the now defunct La Students' Union and a co-founder of the Nationwide Science and Environmental Club<sup>7</sup> a

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<sup>6</sup> A group of families with a common ancestor

<sup>7</sup> Formerly Nationwide Kiddies Science Club

registered NGO for promoting interest in science among elementary school children in Accra.

Besides my experience in my own community, I have spent time in the Nsawam-Adoajiri community visiting relatives; the longest continuous time I have spent in this community is about one month. I also spent a few years working in Lagos, Nigeria. My knowledge and experience of both the traditional and contemporary sectors of my community and some other African communities place me in a unique position from which I want to try and bridge those two sectors.

In studying partnerships in the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities, it is important for me to acknowledge that my knowledge about La is far greater than my knowledge about Nsawam-Adoajiri. This disparity in level of knowledge about the two communities is bound to show in the depth of my discussions and description of various aspects of life in the two communities. However, as a researcher, I am duty bound to be as objective and impartial as possible in my comparisons and conclusions. Also, whenever in doubt about anything, I consulted the research participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri who had kindly given me permission to contact them if I had any more questions.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The review of literature for this study sought to understand the concept of partnership in a social service context and its advantages and disadvantages. It includes a discussion of why individuals and organizations enter into partnerships and the factors that facilitate or inhibit partnerships. It also includes a review of the existing literature on collaboration in traditional communities, and factors that influence such collaboration. In addition, this chapter includes a description of the HIV and AIDS situation in sub-Saharan Africa as well as ongoing partnerships for HIV and AIDS related work in that region.

### **The Concept of Partnership**

Social partnership has become one of the most popular approaches to community intervention over the past two decades, yet it remains a very complex and hard to define concept (Brinkerhoff, 2003; Googins & Rochlin, 2000; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; MacGillivray & Nelson, 1998). In commerce where the term “partnership” originated, it is used to describe a relationship between two or more individuals in a joint business venture (Boudreau, 1991).

The Partnership Act of Ontario (Government of Ontario, 1990) classifies commercial partnerships into three main categories, namely, general partnerships, limited partnerships, and limited liability partnerships<sup>8</sup> (Government of Ontario, 1990<sup>9</sup>). Under this classification, members of a general partnership

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<sup>8</sup> Partnership Act of Ontario, 1990. Ch 5 and L16: [http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_90p05\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90p05_e.htm)

<sup>9</sup> The Asset Protection Law Center (2007)



have equal rights in the company, share the responsibilities for managing the business on day to day basis, and are equally liable for its debts and obligations (Government of Ontario, 1990). A limited partnership consists of at least one (or more) general partner(s) and a number of limited partners. The general partner retains control of the day to day management of the business and bears full personal liability for the business' debts and obligations. The limited partners, on the other hand, maintain very minimal influence on day to day management and accordingly, their liabilities are limited only to their investments in the business.

The third type of partnership is the limited liability partnership (Government of Ontario, 1990). This type of partnership is similar in many respects to a general partnership in terms of the liability of members, although there is variation from province to province in Canada, and from state to state in the United States. For example, in some states in the USA, a partner in a limited liability partnership cannot be held liable for the actions of other partners. However, in Ontario, the Limited Partnership Act of 1990 categorically states that all partners in this type of partnership are jointly responsible for all its debts and obligations (Government of Ontario, 1990).

Although there is a general understanding that the term partnership was adopted from commerce into the social service sector (Boudreau, 1991), it is not clear when this adoption took place. Boudreau (1991) traced the first use of the term partnership in a social service context to a 1988 article published by Godbout and Paradeise in *Revue Internationale d'Action Communautaire*, yet there is evidence that the term partnership had been used in social service

context prior to the publication in question. A review of the literature on international development revealed that the term “partnership” had appeared in the recommendations of the Pearson Commission 20 years earlier. The Pearson Commission, which was appointed by the World Bank in 1968 to review development assistance to developing countries, recommended the adoption of a “partnership approach” to international aid (World Bank, 2003).

Since its adoption to social service, however, the term partnership has assumed an expanded meaning: it has been used to describe a wide range of collaborative relationships ranging from simple referral relationships between agencies providing complementary services, to more complex collaboratives that involve joint activities by organizations in problem identification, program development, and program implementation (Julian, 1994). Several variants of the term have also evolved for differentiation purposes; many researchers have used such titles as community partnerships, public-private partnerships, environmental partnerships, and university-community partnerships to identify the specific types of partnership they studied.

**Partnership in a social service context.** In a social service context, the term “partnership” refers to individuals and organizations who have come together to achieve collaborative advantage in the pursuit of a common purpose (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). In spite of this general understanding of the concept, the term “partnership” is scarcely defined in the social service literature (MacGillivray & Nelson, 1998). This is partly due to the fact that several other

terms including coalitions, networks, and alliances are often used interchangeably with partnership.

The Merriam Webster English Dictionary defines a *coalition* as “a temporary alliance of distinct parties, persons or states for joint action” and an *alliance* as “an association to further the common interests of members”. Like most dictionaries, however, this dictionary defines partnership only as a commercial entity that brings two or more people together in a joint business. Yet, its definitions of *coalitions* and *alliances* implied a clear link between the two concepts and the concept of partnership.

Furthermore, Sutherland, Cowan, and Harris (1998) defined coalition building as “an activity of creating a network to develop a strong public-private partnership” (p. 406). Butterfoss and Francisco (2004) defined coalitions as “one type of collaborative relationship that forms when different sectors of a community, state or nation join together to create opportunities to benefit all partners” (p. 108). The use of the terms “partnership” and “partners” in both definitions give clear indication that there is no difference between coalitions and partnerships.

Perhaps due to its complex nature, several researchers who have studied partnerships completely avoided defining the concept. For instance Boudreau (1991) completed an in-depth analysis of the Government of Quebec’s policy on mental health partnerships without defining the term *partnership*. Similarly, an article by Shortell, Zukowski, Alexander, and Bazzoli (2002) which focused on evaluation of partnerships offered no definition of the term partnership. Also, in

their article titled "*Creating the partnership society: Understanding the rhetoric and reality of cross-sectorial partnerships*," Googins and Rochlin (2000) noted the glaring absence of a clear definition of the term *partnership*, yet, they failed to offer their own definition of the term. They presented Waddock's (1988) definition of partnership as "a commitment by a corporation or a group of corporations to work with an organization from a different economic sector." Although this definition was adequate for multi-sectorial partnerships, which was the subject of their study, it was clearly not broad enough to capture other forms of social partnership, especially ones that do not include corporate organizations.

There are, however, some scholars who have taken on the challenge of broadly defining social partnerships. This includes Brinkerhoff (2003), Huxham and Vangen (2005), Nelson, Prilleltensky and MacGillivray (2001), McCann and Gray (1986), and Lomotey (2002). Each of these authors, however, approached the concept from a different perspective. Nelson et al. (2001) defined value-based partnerships for solidarity as "relationships between community psychologists, oppressed groups, and other stakeholders that strive to advance the values of caring, compassion, community, health, self-determination, participation, power sharing, human diversity, and social justice for oppressed groups" (p. 72). Writing from the perspectives of mental health advocates, the authors specifically limited their definition to value-based partnerships between professionals and service users in the field of mental health.

After a review the literature on various forms of collaboration including partnerships and coalitions in a study of the Hamilton-Wentworth Supported

Housing Coordination Network, I defined partnership as “an organization of diverse groups or individuals who are working together with their combined resources for a common purpose or to effect specific change which they cannot bring about independently” (Lomotey, 2002, p. 4).

Similar to the above definition was Brinkerhoff's (2003) definition of partnership as “a dynamic relationship among diverse actors, based on mutually agreed objectives, pursued through a shared understanding of the most rational division of labour based on the respective comparative advantages of each partner” (p. 216). Both definitions recognize *common objectives* as the binding factor in partnerships and acknowledge the diversity of membership that characterizes social partnerships. The use of the phrase '*most rational division of labour*' orientates Brinkerhoff's definition towards the commercial sector, where specialization is often a key factor in collaboration (Doz & Hamamel, 1998). Furthermore, while it makes sense for social partners to share or apportion tasks according to the abilities and specialization of member groups, it is unclear in the literature whether the term division of labour truly applies in that context. Social partnerships are typically forged on voluntary basis between individuals and organizations who wish to pool their resources in response to some community need. Partners' contributions are usually what each has, or is willing to offer.

For the purpose of this study, I adopted a refined version of my previous definition of partnership, and defined partnership as “an organization of groups and/or individuals who have come together to work for a common purpose”. The common purpose may be to resolve a community problem or bring about some

change that the partners could not bring about individually. This definition was adopted because it can be applied to a wide range of partnerships including community partnerships (Poncelet, 2004; Wandersman et al., 1996), partnerships between organizations that provide complementary services, joint advocacy groups, mental health partnerships (Lord & Church, 1998; Nelson et al., 2001), university community partnerships (Knapp, Barnard, Bell, & Brandon, 1998), and public-private partnerships (Committee for Economic Development, 2000).

**Partnerships as organizations.** Partnerships can be described as organizations because they usually have identifiable structures and processes. Many associations and social clubs are partnerships among individuals. Also, partnerships among organizations are usually represented by joint committees or super organizations that operate separately from their constituents. All these organizations always have their own structures through which they function as well as laid down processes of operation.

**Partnership structure.** Partnership structure varies in complexity from organization to organization. Typically, a partnership is made up of a leadership, members, sub-committees, task forces, and/or ad-hoc committees (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Voyle & Simmons, 1999). The leadership provides guidance for the whole partnership while the sub-committees and ad-hoc committees work on specific issues and report back to it (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Voyle & Simmons, 1999). Examples of these types of partnership are the South Auckland

Diabetes Project (Voyle & Simmons, 1999) and the Cayo Hueso Community Coalition (Yassi et al., 2003).

There are, however, some partnerships with more complex structures including boards of directors and paid staff. One example of a partnership with a very complex structure was the Butterforth Regeneration Partnership which was described by Huxham and Vangen (2005). According to Huxham and Vangen (2005), the Butterforth Regeneration Partnership had a board of directors, staff, and several working groups. Its membership was also made up of various social and political organizations and groups, some of which were smaller partnerships on their own.

Leadership is an important aspect of partnerships (Butterfoss & Francisco, 2004, Strauss, 2002). Butterfoss and Francisco (2004) noted that the effective implementation and maintenance of a partnership require competent leadership skills. Competent leadership is one that promotes democratic principles and ensures good process. Good process motivates participants, and promotes consensus building around goals and objectives to reflect the aspirations of all partners (Knapp, et al., 1998; Strauss, 2002).

**Partnership process.** Margenum (1999) identified three phases in the partnership building process. These were the problem setting phase, the direction setting phase and the implementation phase. The problem setting phase involves obtaining the commitment of stakeholders and the development of structures that would facilitate the partnership process. This is a very important phase that sets the path for collaboration. Strauss (2002) noted that

many partnerships fail at take-off because their initiators underestimate the tasks of recruiting and involving partners.

The problem setting phase begins with an initiation by the person or organization that comes up with the idea that there is a need to involve others in a particular endeavour. An example is the initiation of a public-private partnership for prevention of alcohol and drug use by the Health Advisory Council, a church-based organization in Jacksonville, Florida (Sutherland et. al, 1998). The Health Advisory Council began by identifying both public and private organizations in Jacksonville that were interested in reducing drug use in the community. Similarly, in a case study of the South Auckland Diabetes Project (SADP), Voyle and Simmons (1999) identified the SADP's cultural adviser and medical director as the main initiators of what became the South Auckland Community Partnership for Health. According to the authors, after initial unilateral efforts at health education had failed, the two officials made a conscious decision to adopt the partnership model. They therefore contacted the local Maori community leaders to discuss ways to involve the community in the project. This set in motion, a process that eventually led to the mobilization of the community members for active participation.

For partnership building to be successful, Strauss (2002) recommended identifying all people with a stake in the problem. These include people who are either affected directly or indirectly by the problem, people whose job it is to deal with the problem, and people who have the power to block the partnership. Strauss (2002) suggested that it is important to involve people who have formal



power and can either aid or block a partnership's efforts. People who would like to block the coalitions' efforts are usually people who are benefiting from the status quo or people whose interests could be affected by the partners' intended objectives.

Margenum's (1999) direction setting phase requires partners to work together to identify their common goals and develop a plan of action for achieving them. This phase involves building consensus around the goals and mapping out plans for achieving them. According to Strauss (2002), the best way to build consensus is to phase the consensus building process itself. Ideally, this begins with an open forum for members to share their perspectives to the problem as well as their outcome expectations. This enables people to air their views, listen to each other, reflect, and adapt their perspectives by taking other people's perspectives into consideration (Strauss, 2002).

The direction setting phase is concluded by discussions and negotiations aimed at developing an inclusive definition of the problem. Strauss (2002) further suggested the development of a process map or work-plan to guide the partnership process during this phase. He further recommended that an individual with problem-solving and decision-making abilities be identified to facilitate the partnership process.

The final phase is the implementation phase. This phase involves the setting up of structures for implementation, defining member roles and responsibilities, actually carrying out the activities, and monitoring outcomes (Margenum, 1999). The structures of implementation may include the use of sub-

committees for carrying out specialized functions. The use of sub-committees enables members to gravitate towards issues in which they are most interested or best equipped, and also creates opportunities for more people to participate in the activities of a partnership (Linden, 2002).

Community partnerships also require good processes to be effective in pursuing their objectives. In their theory of group development, Bennis and Shepard (1978) placed the development of effective communication patterns at the heart of group development. According to these theorists, a group's communication pattern is largely dependent on members' orientations toward the general distribution of power and to one another. The way members relate to the general distribution of power and to one another determines the level of group cohesion (Bennis & Sheppard, 1978).

In order to build effective communication patterns within a partnership at the onset, Strauss (2002) suggested thoughtful exploration of issues of concern to stakeholders. According to him, potential participants in community partnerships must be given assurance that their concerns and views are valued and would be incorporated into the coalition's agenda. In the area of HIV and AIDS related work, stakeholders whose interests ought to be represented include service providers, traditional leaders, community leaders, and people who are affected by the disease and their families.

### **The Advantages and Disadvantages of Partnerships**

The debate as to whether social partnerships aid or hinder development has been ongoing for quite a while among scholars. Some proponents of the

concept of partnership have sought to make the case that partnerships are a perfect panacea for the myriad of social problems affecting humanity in modern times. Some of them have approached this topic from philosophical standpoints of human behaviour while others have sought to understand this phenomenon through practice. Among this group of scholars are Brinkerhoff (2003), Huxham and Vangen (2005), Strauss (2002), Wandersman et al. (1996), Williams and Lindley (1996) and Wolff (2001a).

Other scholars, however, oppose the use of partnerships as community development instruments because in spite of their noted outcomes, they are fraught with disadvantages and are often prone to misuse and abuse. This latter group of scholars include Cooke and Kothari (2001), Smillie and Todorovich (2001), and Teram (1991).

**The advantages of partnerships.** Several reasons have been advanced for the development of partnerships. These include the principle of collaborative advantage, reduction in duplication of services, increase in political influence and the building of social capital (Foster-Fishman, Berkowitz, Lounsbury, & Jacobson, 2001; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; McCann & Gray, 1986; Ross, 2000; Wandersman et al., 1996). Furthermore, partnerships have been found to yield multiple outcomes that sometimes go over and beyond their main objectives (Lomotey, 2002; Wellestein, 1992).

Most of the common objectives that bring individuals and groups together in partnership are often beyond the capacity and capabilities of one organization acting individually. Individuals, groups and organizations therefore seek out

partners for collaborative advantage. Huxham and Vangen (2005) outlined six common bases for pursuing collaborative advantage through partnerships. These were: access to resources, shared risk, efficiency, coordination and seamlessness, learning, and the emotional imperative.

Many individuals and organizations enter into partnerships to address self-insufficiency with regards to resources. When individuals and groups come together to form a partnership, they are able to pool their financial, human and material resources together to expand their resource base. This enhances their chances of achieving their goals (Ross, 2000; Wandersman et al., 1996). Coming together to work collaboratively increases a group's power to attract more resources through increased public support (Rog et al., 2004; Ross, 2000; Williams & Lindley, 1996). According to Ross (2000), this ability of partnerships to leverage resources is the most powerful implication of partnerships. Also, Rog et al. (2004) found that partnerships that involve multiple stakeholders find it much easier to reduce logistical barriers that hinder individual organizations.

Partnerships enable their members to share risks thereby mitigating the impact of potential losses (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). According to Huxham and Vangen (2005), partnerships formed on the basis of risk sharing are usually exploratory in nature. In such a partnership, members invest jointly into a novel project with an understanding to share its benefits or losses. Therefore, if there is failure, one agency does not bear the brunt of the loss.

Partnerships enhance efficiency (Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Wandersman et al., 1996). In commerce, partnering helps

organizations to achieve economies of scale (Huxham & Vangen, 2005) or to reduce duplication of service (Wandersman et al., 1996). Several research studies have indicated that partnerships promote the effective utilization of scarce local resources (Wandersman et al., 1996; Wolff, 2001a). This is often achieved through the devolution of planning, decision-making, and service delivery to the grassroots which have been found to be more effective (Wolff, 2001a). According to Foster-Fishman et al. (2001) partnerships help to reduce duplication of services by enhancing referrals among agencies that provide similar or complementary services (see also Lomotey, 2002). Furthermore, agencies that provide complementary services have found partnerships to be an effective medium for the exchange of information (Lomotey, 2002).

Another means by which agencies increase efficiency is through coordination and seamlessness, the third basis of collaboration identified by Huxham and Vangen (2005). Organizations that provide complementary services often coordinate services to increase access for clients (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). This is sometimes done through the co-location of services or one-stop-shopping. An example of this is the co-location of allied medical services in the same building.

Sometimes, partnerships are also initiated for mutual learning (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Witt, 2003). According to Witt (2003), working together affords individuals and organizations the opportunity to learn how others do things. This enables them to avoid mistakes and improve upon their own processes. Mutual learning often occurs among organizations in the same industry or organizations

working in the same area of public service that wish to explore their common area of interest in order to identify ways to promote their services (Huxham & Vangen, 2005).

Other times, partnerships are initiated to serve a higher purpose. For example, some corporate organizations partner with community-based organizations to address the needs of poor neighbourhoods. Huxham and Vangen (2005) referred to this type of partnership as partnership based on a moral imperative.

There is also mounting evidence that partnerships promote empowerment (Nelson et al., 2001; Peterson, Lowe, & Aquilino, 2005; Williams & Lindley, 1996; Wolff, 2001a; Yassi et al., 2003). Peterson, Lowe and Aquilino (2005) described empowerment as a social-action process through which people gain greater control, efficacy, and social justice. Wellestein (1992) further explained that empowerment promotes participation of people, organizations and communities towards the goals of increased individual and community control and improved quality of life. For instance, Yassi et al. (2003) reported that community residents gained greater control over decision-making as a result of their involvement the Cayo Hueso community development project. Yassi et al. (2003) also found strong links between civic collaboration and improved community health, access to services, and quality of life.

Additionally, partnerships have been found to be effective in influencing public policy (Boudreau, 1991, Nelson et al., 2001; Ontario Ministry of Health, 1994). For example, Ross (2000) noted that community partnerships attract a lot

of public support and this gives them political power which is very essential for influencing policy. Coming together in a coalition therefore optimizes the effectiveness of groups in bringing about change not only physically through community development projects but also through policy initiatives.

Ross (2000) noted that community partnerships serve a democratic function through their ability to effect policy change. Grassroots representation on a partnership provides an avenue through which community residents' views are channeled into the public decision-making process (Ross, 2000). A good example of this function is the success in advocacy by mental health partnerships in facilitating de-institutionalization of mental health service users. As a result of years of research and advocacy by various groups, mental health policies in Canada and the United States have shifted to reallocation of resources from institutional based services to community-based programs (Boudreau, 1991, Nelson et al., 2001). In Ontario, adoption of the Graham Report of 1988 (Ontario Ministry of Health, 1994) led to a gradual shift of resources from mental health institutions to the empowerment and community integration model.

Community partnerships serve as means for capacity building (Rog et al., 2004; Simpson, Wood & Daws, 2004; Yassi et al., 2003; Voyle & Simmons, 1999). Kretzmann and McKnight's (1993) model of community capacity building enables community workers to work with local community groups to identify their resources, strengths and potentials and utilize them effectively towards solving local problems. This model further emphasizes the importance of identifying and releasing the energies of various groups within the community and directing them

towards development using the resources identified. For example, in their cross-site evaluation of Australia's National Funding Collaborative on Violence Prevention (NFCVP), Rog et al (2004) found that technical assistance provided by staff and consultants played a huge role in developing local communities' skills for promoting health, mental health and peace. Voyle and Simmons (1999) reported similar findings from their evaluation of the partnership between the SADP and local Maori communities in South Auckland. According to these researchers, the SADP partnership focused on programs that trained local people as diabetes educators. The trainees were provided with knowledge and skills for health education and then supported with resources to educate people in their community. Involving the community promotes local ownership, enhances members' commitment and gives local people greater control over their resources.

Community partnerships build social capital, which is very important for promoting collaboration and commitment among members of a community (Cohen & Prusak, 2001; Putnam, 1993). Social capital refers to the bond of trust, mutual understanding, shared values and behaviors that develop through social interactions and create active connections within human networks (Baron, Field & Schuller, 2000; Cohen & Prusak, 2001; Rog et al., 2004). Putnam (1993) associated social capital with a history of collaboration. In a research project that compared northern and southern cities of Italy on trust and reciprocity, Putnam (1993) found that northern Italian cities, which were noted for a tradition of



working together to repel invaders in the past, had greater social capital compared to southern cities, which had no such traditions.

**The disadvantages of partnerships.** In spite of its numerous benefits and advantages, some researchers have identified instances in which the partnership model has had negative impact on communities. These scholars have sounded a note of caution about the idea that the partnership model is the answer to all problems facing humanity.

Cooke and Kothari (2001) expressed that partnerships are not always empowering. According to these authors, the partnership model has, in some instances, been used for further oppression of marginalized people. They argued that, sometimes, in their efforts to promote participation, development workers lose sight of their stated values and adopt strategies that lead to oppression rather than empowerment.

Currently, there is an ongoing advocacy by the donor community for partnerships for HIV and AIDS intervention that are led by the affected countries. This idea is very laudable because the intent is to give control over decision-making to the affected countries. However, it remains a fact that international aid always comes with strings attached. Donor countries always make prior decisions as to where funds would be utilized and this effectively limits the amount of control that recipient countries could exercise. Aid seeking countries, therefore, simply orientate their development programs towards funding (Ngwane, 2002). Ngwane (2002) described the establishment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) by the African Union's in

response to the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDG) as a mere orientation towards funding.

Similarly, Smillie and Todorovic (2001) noted that the agenda for the partnerships between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) and local non-governmental organizations in the former Yugoslavia for the delivery of humanitarian services in the aftermath of the Balkan war was driven by the UNHCR. The UNHCR's agenda led to a proliferation of agencies providing psychological services. However, when the priorities of the UNHCR shifted from psychological services to rebuilding of infrastructure, many local NGOs were instantly plunged into deep financial crisis (Smillie & Todorovic, 2001). According to Smillie and Todorovic (2002), this mostly affected NGOs that truly specialized in psychological services. Agencies that survived the financial crisis were those that were not truly committed to psychological services; such agencies just switched to infrastructure building in order to continue receiving UNHCR funding.

Teram (1991) criticized the way in which interdisciplinary teams, which are practice partnerships, are sometimes used to control clients. Although he acknowledged the importance of inter-professional cooperation in intervention, he pointed out that inter-professional solidarity that develops among team members often encourages practices against the interest of service users. In his case example of services for people with mental health challenges, Teram (1991) noted that instruments developed by interdisciplinary teams to facilitate service delivery were actually used, in some instances, to punish "uncooperative" clients.

This raises questions about the ethics of inter-disciplinary teams as an approach to service enhancement.

Other writers have described public-private partnerships through which governments pass on social service delivery to the voluntary sector as mere means for reducing budgetary allocations to those sectors (Babacan & Narayan, 2001; Scull, 1977). Scull (1977) argued that the closure of mental institutions in California and New York in the 1970s was a cost-saving measure by government rather than for the humane reasons cited. According to Scull (1977) the closures came only when projections indicated great future increases in the number of inmates and financial costs for those institutions. These critiques of the partnership model are genuine concerns that remind us that no human systems are perfect. For me, they indicate a need to constantly review models that may seem perfect through research to identify their flaws and find means to correct them.

The issues raised above notwithstanding, partnerships have numerous benefits that, in my opinion, outweigh their disadvantages. Although it is important for researchers to continue to identify these problems and attempt to address them, the partnership model is an important instrument in the toolbox of community workers. Like every tool, it does the bidding of its wielder whether good or ill intentioned. A few misapplications or misuse of the approach do not constitute sufficient reason to discard it. If anything, it provides *raison d'être* for more research not only to identify ways of making partnerships more effective but also how to avoid these pitfalls.

## **Challenges and Facilitators of Partnerships**

Like all other organizations and groups that bring together individuals and groups under one umbrella, partnerships are often faced with certain challenges. Research studies have also identified factors that facilitate partnership development, processes and effectiveness. The development and implementation of effective partnerships therefore depends upon good knowledge and understanding of these factors.

**Challenges to partnerships.** Partnership building is a process that is sometimes fraught with daunting challenges. Some of these challenges have led to the failure and sometimes dissolution of partnerships (Clarke, 2005; Huxham & Vangen, 2005). Various authors have expressed concerns about the notion that partnerships always yield positive outcomes. Huxham and Vangen (2005) coined the term “partnership inertia” to describe the failure of coalitions to achieve “collaborative advantage” (p. 3). According to them, even some of the most successful partnerships may not be completely free from pain, frustration and unintended negative outcomes (Huxham & Vangen, 2005).

Working from a social ecological framework, these factors were classified into three clusters, namely, individual, organizational, and contextual factors. Individual factors are factors related to individual characteristics and behaviour; organizational factors are related to group processes and leadership; and the contextual factors consist of the historical, cultural, economic, social and political environments.

**Individual factors.** Individual factors that pose challenges to partnerships include lack of role clarity and rigid role-expectations, lack of interpersonal skills

among partners, and differences in attitudes and personalities. Lack of role clarity and rigid role-expectations inhibit partnership development (Krogh, 1998; McCann & Gray, 1986). Most writers on community partnerships advocate for written agreements that detail members' roles and responsibilities (Strauss, 2002). Boudreau (1991) also found the issue of role-definition very challenging to partnerships. In her study of mental health partnerships in Quebec, she reported that the community partners wanted the Ministry to assign them roles on the partnership while, at the same time, complaining about excessive government control.

Krogh (1998) and McCann and Gray (1986) found that lack of interpersonal skills among partners often pose serious challenges to collaboration. Individuals who lack interpersonal skills are usually unable to relate well with other members of a partnership. Furthermore, Krogh (1998) found that procedures adopted at meetings often require professional knowledge and training, which is usually lacking in some community partners.

Furthermore, the notion that the partnership model equals empowerment has been contested by several authors. Examples are Teram's (1991) and Cooke and Kothari's (2001) arguments that partnerships are sometimes used to control individuals and organizations. This notion is supported by power/resource dependence theorists who hold that organizations sometimes initiate partnerships in order to control their environments or weaker organizations (Farmakopoulou, 2002; Njoh, 1997).

Other factors that have been identified as inhibitive to partnerships include such individual attributes as dishonesty, distrust, lack of accountability, and lack of commitment (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Margenum, 1999; McCann & Gray, 1986; Strauss, 2002; Wood & Gray, 1991). According to various authors, these factors lead to poor interpersonal and intergroup relationships and cause conflict within partnerships (Margenum, 1999; Strauss, 2002).

**Organizational factors.** Organizational factors that pose challenges to partnerships include power inequalities, inequitable distribution of benefits and lack of capacity for managing a partnership. Partnerships between professionals and disadvantaged people are characterized by power differentials, which if not addressed can seriously affect the effectiveness of a partnership (Lord & Church, 1998). Individuals with power often seek to dominate decision-making and attempt to impose their ideas on the group (Strauss, 2002). Moreover, studies have shown that disadvantaged people are unable to participate fully in a partnership when they feel that their contributions are being undervalued (Lord & Church, 1998). If partnerships between groups with obvious power differentials, such as partnerships between professionals and clients, are to be successful, a “conscious shifting of power” (p119) by the group with power is required to reduce those power differentials (Lord & Church, 1998).

Competition and rivalries among member organizations are also challenging to partnerships (McCann & Gray, 1986; Wandersman et al., 1996). When organizations that normally compete against each other for resources come together to form partnerships, their natural competitive spirits do not

evaporate. It takes tactfulness, conscious effort, patience and understanding to reduce friction in such situations (Strauss, 2002). Wandersman et al. (1996) identified competition and lack of trust as factors that lead to conflict within coalitions. They found that efforts to build a network between middle class African Americans and poor African Americans to reduce crime and violence in their community failed because of lack of trust between the two groups.

The capacity and legitimacy of the person or organization facilitating the partnership are important to the successful functioning of a partnership (Lomotey, 2002). Partners need to have confidence in the leader or lead organization. Lack of confidence in the lead person or organization increases rivalries among members and member-organizations (McCann & Gray, 1986). This reduces a partnership's chances of successfully achieving its objectives (Strauss, 2002). According to Strauss (2002), poor leaderships create conditions for disaffection within a partnership and this often leads to conflict and lack of progress.

**Contextual factors.** Differences in culture and language between professionals and community members, between case workers and their clients, between different social classes or ethnic groups create challenges to community partnerships (Krogh, 1998, Valentine & Capponi, 1989). Many partnerships for HIV and AIDS intervention in Africa are particularly prone to this type of challenge because of their intercultural nature (Miller, Fitzgerald, Murrell, & Preston, 2005). Also, Krogh (1998) found that disadvantaged people are often culturally conditioned to be dependent which limits their active participation in a

partnership. Sometimes this tendency is reinforced by low expectations of professionals (Valentine & Capponi, 1989).

Other prominent challenges for intercultural collaboration include differences in decision-making processes (Boudreau, 1991; Clarke, 2005; Krogh, 1998; Miller et al., 2005). For example, Krogh (1998) noted that the practice of adopting formal procedures at meetings sometimes create problems for community partners who lack training in formal procedures.

Valentine and Capponi (1989) offered several strategies for eliminating tokenism. These include increasing representation of disadvantaged people, strengthening their capacities to participate, and meeting their needs that are directly related to participation. They further called for elimination of incongruence between stated values and actual practice. This means ensuring that partnerships that aim at empowering disadvantaged people should actually give control over decision-making to the disadvantaged people.

Partnerships are also affected by improper control of information. In an analysis of the Scottish Inter-agency Collaboration for Children, Farmakopoulou (2002) identified inequitable exchange of information as one of the major challenges that confronted the group. The control of the flow of information among the partners, namely, education, social work and health departments, served as a bottle-neck in the work of the partnership. Farmakopoulou (2002) observed that while educators were in charge of decision-making regarding the service needs of the target population, the information required for making those



decisions was under the control of social workers. Thus decisions made were only those that the social workers thought were necessary.

The foregoing outlines various challenges to community partnerships that have been identified by various researchers. Besides these challenges, however, there are other potential challenges to partnering with traditional authorities in societies with different belief systems and values. Some of these challenges, which are derived from the community development literature and my own personal experience, are identified and discussed later in this chapter under "Collaboration in Traditional Communities".

**Facilitators of partnerships.** Various factors have been identified as facilitative to community partnerships. Similar to the challenges, these factors are classified under individual, organizational, and contextual factors. The individual factors include shared values and principles (O'Donnell, Ferreira, Hurtado, & Ames, 1998; Peterman, 2004); the organizational factors are effective leadership, mutual trust and understanding, and equity (Butterfoss, Goodman & Wandersman, 1996; Knapp, Barnard, Bell & Brandon, 1998; Strauss, 2002; Wolff, 2001a); and the contextual factors include respect for human diversity, and the economic, social, and political contexts of a community (Wandersman et al., 1996).

**Individual factors.** Individual factors identified in the literature as facilitative to partnerships were such individual attributes as honesty, trust, accountability, and personal commitment (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Margenum,

1999; McCann & Gray, 1996; O'Donnell et al. 1998; Peterman, 2004; Strauss, 2002; Wood & Gray, 1991).

Huxham and Vangen (2005) noted that honesty promotes collaborative advantage within partnerships. Also, Wood and Gray (1991) found that honesty increases trust in partnership initiators to ensure a fair process.

Closely related to the value of honesty is the value of trust. According to O'Donnell et al. (1998), since partnering restricts independent action, individuals and organizations partially give up their independence when they partner with others. There is, therefore, an inherent assumption that partners trust each other to live up to their expectations. Various studies have also established that trust among partners promotes good interpersonal relationships and enhances partnership processes (Doz & Hammel, 1998; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Strauss, 2002).

Another individual attribute that facilitates partnerships is accountability (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; McCann & Gray, 1996; Wood & Gray, 1991).

Accountability ensures that partners take responsibility for their actions. According to Huxham and Vangen (2005) perceived accountability among partners enhances collaborative advantage because it reduces the incidence of mistrust and conflict.

The individuals' commitment to a partnership and its objectives is another important facilitator of partnerships (Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Margenau, 1999). According to Foster-Fishman et al. (2001), lack of commitment often results in non-fulfillment of roles, and ultimately to the demise of a partnership.

To avoid the problems associated with lack of commitment, Margenum (1999) suggested that partnership initiators need to devote enough time to build a common understanding of the problem of interest and a shared vision of how to solve it at the onset.

**Organizational factors.** Good leadership has been described by various writers as very essential to the development and effectiveness of community partnerships (Butterfoss et al., 1996; Peterman, 2004; Strauss, 2002; Wolff, 2001a). Lord and Church (1998) noted that leadership is one of the most important issues that need to be addressed at the onset to enhance the chances of success of a partnership. Good leadership brings vision and energy to a coalition's work (Strauss, 2002; Wolff, 2001a). Furthermore, good leadership helps to ensure a good process that promotes equity in participation and encourages consensus building. Butterfoss et al. (1996) also found that effective leadership was a very important factor in members' satisfaction with the work of a partnership.

Leadership theorists have identified several characteristics of effective leadership. Trait leadership theorists associate good leadership with intelligence, adjustment, extroversion, dominance, masculinity, conservatism, and sensitivity (Johnson & Johnson, 1982). In a meta-analysis of research findings on leadership, Stogdill (1974) found several other characteristics that are associated with successful leadership. These include alertness to the needs of group members, responsibility, initiative, persistence, insight, self-confidence, strong drive for task completion, and previous leadership experience.

Knapp and his colleagues (1998) noted that coordination of a multi-stakeholder organization is very complex and requires devolution of leadership responsibilities. Devolution means that “a balance is struck between centralization and decentralization of control and authority” (Knapp et al., 1998 p.150). This balance is achieved by encouraging coalition members to take responsibility for various activities or work in small committees. In a related finding, Coe (1988) noted that there was a relationship between devolution of leadership and meaningful participation in partnerships. According to him, when people are given leadership responsibilities, they are more likely to work with enthusiasm.

Lord and Church (1998) also identified power sharing as very important value in building community partnerships. Power sharing requires a willingness of individuals occupying leadership positions to share power with other group members. Shared leadership, according to Knapp et al. (1998), involves the equitable distribution of leadership roles and responsibilities among partners.

According to Lord and Church (1998), power sharing facilitates partnerships because it encourages participation and is also inherently empowering. Empowerment gives disadvantaged members of a partnership some control over matters affecting them (Schoepf, 1993). For example, Schoepf (1993) observed that after participating in a workshop that was aimed at empowerment, Congolese women who would normally avoid discussing issues about sex with their partners showed increased ability to do so.

Besides good leadership, a partnership's success depends on project management ability and good partnership process. Project managers need to have good knowledge of organization and group facilitation. According to Strauss (2002), effective project management strategies include organizational structures that are made up of different dimensions. This includes small committees and task forces with varied responsibilities. Using small committees in partnership work creates opportunities for participation and broadens a partnership's human resource base (Lomotey, 2002).

In recent times, advanced communication and technological systems have been found to give organizations many advantages in effective management (Strauss, 2002). Sophisticated information systems enable partners to communicate with each other and share ideas with ease. The internet, teleconferencing, and video conferencing enable people to share information at a fast pace today (Strauss, 2002). Furthermore, disseminating information through the internet makes it readily available for partners to access whenever they need it. Although these modern communication systems are enabling to community partnerships, regrettably, they are largely unavailable in most rural communities in Africa. They may be of use only in large urban centers.

**Contextual factors.** The impact of the environment on partnerships is well recognized (Wandersman et al., 1996; Wood & Gray, 1991). Wood and Gray (1991) posited that groups and organizations relate to each other in response to turbulence in their shared environment. Wandersman et al. (1996) found that the social, economic and political environments of partnerships affect their

functioning. Also, Nelson, Prilleltensky and MacGillivray (2001) noted the importance of supportive environments to the success of partnerships involving service users and service providers in mental health. According to Nelson et al. (2001), supportive environments promote a sense of equity and meaningful participation among disadvantaged people.

Wandersman and his colleagues (1996) identified four contextual variables that enhance the success of community partnerships. These were human diversity, the national and local economic context, the social context, and the political context. Human diversity has many dimensions. These include age, gender, social status, and cultural differences. Wandersman et al. (1996) found that age differences between two African American groups; youth and older residents, prevented the two groups from finding a common ground for working together on crime prevention in their neighborhood, although both groups expressed concern about the problem.

Gender differences are particularly important when considering partnerships across cultures. The fact that many African cultures have different perspectives on women's rights, makes this a very important factor to take into consideration when developing partnerships for HIV and AIDS related work in African communities. This is important because HIV and AIDS disproportionately affect women in Africa (UNAIDS, 2007). Moreover, women's roles in society as nurturers and caregivers have implications for orphan care.

Racial, ethnic and class composition of a community has direct impact on its ability to organize itself for development (Wandersman et al., 1996). For

example, Wandersman et al. (1996) found that competition, distrust, and linguistic barriers arising from diversity negatively affect partnership development. Also, Putnam (1993) observed that it is more likely for people who share a common history, religion and culture to work together than people with little in common.

Another important contextual variable is the national and local economic context. The current state as well as the trends of the local and national economies affects the ability of a community to respond to its problems (Wandersman et al., 1996). One way to address a problem of unemployment in a community is to create conditions that will enable existing businesses to expand or attract new businesses (Fellin, 2001). However, a downturn in the national economy, directly impacts the ability of weak communities whose businesses are already shrinking to attract new businesses and consequently their ability to grapple with the problem of unemployment. This is a very important variable with regards to HIV and AIDS work in Africa because a majority of AIDS victims are of working age (McGeary, 2001; UNAIDS, 2003).

The political context is another important factor that impacts community partnerships. According to Wandersman et al. (1996) strong open minded political leadership facilitates coalition building. Open minded political leadership encourages private participation. They support the involvement of public institutions in community partnerships for collective problem solving.

Finally, it is important to consider ongoing activities in a community that are related to a coalition's field of interest (Wandersman et al., 1996). Individuals

and groups that are already working on a problem form a natural base for coalition building. For example, the Hamilton-Wentworth Supported Housing Coordination Network (HWSHCN) began as a small discussion group of professionals from the Schizophrenia and Psychosocial Rehabilitation Program (SPRP) (Lomotey, 2002). This group invited the Mental Health Rights Coalition, the Canadian Mental Health Association, and service providers who were already advocating for improved housing for people with mental health challenges to join them to form the Housing Development Group (HDG). This was the group that later evolved into the HWSHCN.

### **Partnerships in Traditional Communities**

Collaboration is a natural part of social life (Kropotkin, 1976; Pusey, 2005; Strauss, 2002). Human beings learned very early in their socialization that a task that is too big or too difficult for one person can be easily accomplished by a group of people working together (Pusey, 2005). According to Pusey (2005) this is a trait that human beings share with many other gregarious animals, including social insects like termites; social carnivores like lions, wolves, and wild dogs; and primates like baboons and chimpanzees (see also, Anderson & Franks, 2003). Also, after studying various animal and human species, Kropotkin (1976) concluded that, contrary to Darwin's theory of evolution, it was collaboration rather than competition that served as a mechanism for survival of species. He further noted that the band or tribe, which was the earliest form of social life, was characterized by mutual aid.



Mutual aid is a term in political economy that describes the spontaneous exchange of goods and services by members of small communal societies for their individual and collective benefit (Kropotkin, 1976; Schwartz, 1961).

Schwartz (1961) described mutual aid groups as alliances of individuals who need each other to work on problems of common interest. Members of mutual aid groups also provide each other with social, emotional and material support (Kelly, 1999).

Gitterman and Shulman (2005) identified ten dynamics underlying mutual aid. These were, data sharing, the dialectical process, discussing a taboo area, all-in-the-same-boat phenomenon, developing a universal perspective, mutual support, mutual demand, individual problem solving, rehearsal, and the strength-in-numbers phenomenon. According to Gitterman and Shulman (2005), data sharing, the first dynamic of mutual aid, refers to the exchange of information among group members. Information shared includes accumulated values, views, knowledge and experience that may be of help to other group members.

The second dynamic of mutual aid is the dialectical process. This dynamic relates to dialogue that leads to new conclusions about issues upon which group members initially disagree (Gitterman & Shulman, 2005). According to Steinberg (1999), the dialectical process enables group members to explore their differences and try new ways of thinking about issues.

The third dynamic of mutual aid, discussing the taboo area relates to help and encouragement from members of a mutual aid group that create a safe haven for each other to discuss personal problems (Steinberg, 1999). According

to Gitterman and Shulman (2005) this process enables individuals to overcome the norm of behaviour that forbids or restrains individuals from openly talking about threatening personal issues without fear.

The fourth dynamic of mutual aid, “the “all-in-the-same-boat phenomenon” is the understanding that one is not alone and that one’s difficult experiences are shared by others. The all-in-the-same-boat phenomenon allows group members to identify their shared experiences and receive comfort from the knowledge that others understand their suffering (Gitterman & Shulman, 2005).

The fifth dynamic of mutual aid is developing a universal perspective. This dynamic refers to the development of an understanding that other people share one’s experiences. As individuals realize that they are not alone in their experiences, they begin to develop broader understanding of issues that affect them and others who are or have been in similar circumstances (Gitterman & Shulman, 2005).

The sixth dynamic of mutual aid is mutual support. This dynamic refers to the social, emotional and material support that individual group members receive from other members of the group when they are in difficulties (Gitterman & Shulman, 2005). An example is the support that group members receive when they are bereaved (Gitterman & Shulman, 2005).

Mutual demand, the seventh dynamic underlying mutual aid refers to mutual aid group members’ expectations of each other. Members of mutual aid groups have expectations of each other, the fulfillment of which enables the

entire group to achieve its collective goals. Gitterman and Shulman, (2005) described these negotiated expectations as mutual demand.

Individual problem solving, the eighth dynamic underlying mutual aid refers to the process by which individual members of a mutual aid group strive to solve their own problems. Such members are often assisted by other members who may have been in a similar situation to resolve their own problems (Gitterman & Shulman, 2005).

The ninth dynamic is rehearsal. "Rehearsal" refers to a form of role play in which individual members of a group rehearse their thoughts and feelings about specific problems with which they are dealing (Gitterman & Shulman, 2005). This process enables people to become more comfortable in dealing with real situations with which they normally feel uncomfortable.

The tenth dynamic underlying mutual aid is "the strength-in-numbers phenomenon". This phenomenon refers to the collective power of groups for advocacy (Gitterman & Shulman, 2005; Steinberg, 1999). Gitterman and Shulman, (2005) asserted that individuals who are going through difficulties often feel powerless in the presence of large institutions and agencies. However, they find some strength in unity with other people with whom they share interests.

Collaboration is central to community life in Africa as it was in the Siberian communities Kropotkin (1976) observed. Meebelo (1973) posited that the practice of mutual aid in African communities is based on an African ontology that places human beings at the centre of the order of existence. This, according

to him, explains why African people place a high value on human relationships that involve mutual support and inter-dependence.

My personal experience growing up in Africa has taught me that the value of mutual aid in African society is exemplified by the extended family system and communalism. This explains why people in Ghanaian communities tend to view and refer to neighbours and other people, with whom they regularly interact, as family. Correlates of the term “partnership” in many African societies translate into words like unity and brotherliness. Among the Gas of Accra, Ghana, partnership is referred to as “*ekome feemo*” which literally means uniting or becoming one. Partners refer to each other as “*wo webii*” (meaning “our people”) or “*wo nyemime*” (meaning “our brothers”). The implication is that a partnership is viewed more as a family than a working relationship.

Similarly, the Akans, also of Ghana, refer to partners as “*ye kro four*” which translates into “our people”. The Akan people, therefore, liken the relationships among partners to relationships among neighbours. This has more depth to it because neighbour, in the Ghanaian context, is usually a lifelong relationship; people rarely move out of their communities.

Both the Ga and Akan examples reveal deeper relationships that go beyond working relationships; partners support each other and share in their joys and sorrows outside the main partnership activities. While some may argue that this can be a distraction, the people who practice this form of partnership would counter argue that it builds greater cohesion and ensures that no one is left behind as the partnership moves forward.

**Facilitators of partnerships within traditional society.** Certain factors have been identified as facilitative to partnerships between formal organizations and local communities. These include the readiness of the community for self organization, the availability of local leadership materials, and an understanding of the local political setting (Buechler, 1993; Graham, 2000; Morris & Mueller, 1992).

Resource mobilization theorists have identified some elements that indicate the readiness of a community to work towards social change. They have argued that a community that is ready for social change must have both internal and external supports as well as an ability to organize itself (Buechler, 1993; Morris & Mueller, 1992). The ability to organize rests on initiative, shared vision, and good leadership (O'Donnell et al., 1998; Strauss, 2002; Wandersman et al., 1996). Internal and external supports include contextual variables as well as financial and material resources that are available within and external to the community.

Strauss (2002) identified leadership as very important for successful community coalitions. As mentioned earlier in this paper, there are two forms of leadership that exist side by side in most African communities: formal leadership and traditional leadership. Traditional authority lies within traditional institutions like chieftaincy and councils of elders while formal leadership lies with the educated elite and elected or government appointed public officials. Formal leadership, in this context, refers to political leadership, business leaders and leaders of religious organizations. Typically, formal leaders are individuals who

are knowledgeable of legal and administrative processes. Although such individuals wield a lot of political power and influence, especially at the national level, they usually have very little influence at the local community level.

The local communities are the realms of traditional leaders who are held to be the representatives of the ancestors and the custodians of the gods (Malidoma, 1999). A typical traditional African community maintains close links with its ancestors. The ancestors are the spirits of departed leaders who are believed to go on to live in a spirit world after they depart this earth. From this spiritual world, it is believed, they watch over their people and protect them from evil spirits, help them in time of trouble, and punish them for disobedience (Malidoma, 1999). Traditional leaders' spiritual link with the ancestors and the gods is a source of power and legitimacy in the eyes of community members.

Owing to obvious value and procedural differences between formal institutions and traditional communities, most international organizations naturally seek out formal leaderships for collaboration (Graham, 2000). According to Graham (2000), this happens because formal organizations understand the legal and administrative processes that are important in western cultures. In spite of this perceived advantage in partnering with local formal organizations, outsiders often experience difficulties in getting community support for their projects (Graham, 2000).

The importance of traditional leaders in community mobilization cannot be over stated. Traditional authority is still the most effective means for mobilizing community residents. One needs to witness local festivals like the "*Ga Homowo*"

to fully understand this effectiveness of traditional leaders at mobilization. It is therefore a mistake to leave them out or give them token roles in community development on the pretext of their “lack of understanding” of legal and administrative matters.

Besides, the notion that traditional leaders lack understanding of legal administrative procedure is largely false as there are many traditional leaders in Africa today who are well educated individuals who have held high offices in their respective countries. For example, the *La Mantse* (King of *La*) Nii Kpobi Tettey Tsuru is a director of Ghana National Lotteries. His predecessor Nii Anyetei Kwakwanya II served as Ghana's Commissioner for Lands and Mineral Resources in the 1970s. The current Asantehene (King of Ashanti) was a practicing lawyer before he became King. In Nigeria, senior Yoruba chiefs like Oba Sijuade II and Oba Tejouso were very well educated individuals before ascending their thrones.

The well educated African traditional leader who was able to participate in business and national politics, which used to be rare, is now becoming the order of the day and a new image of the African traditional leader is emerging. This new image is a positive indicator that African traditional society is better able to engage in meaningful dialogue with formal society. This does not imply that they have to or are ready to let go of their attachment to their ancestors and their belief systems. Those links remain the sources of their legitimacy and power. The changing orientation of the African traditional leader promotes interaction with the formal system.

The World Wildlife Fund realized the importance of traditional authority when developing a partnership with the *Foi* people of Papua New Guinea (Regis, 2000). After the fund's representatives had carefully analyzed local leadership structures of the Lake Kutubu community, they arrived at a decision to partner with traditional leaders rather than with formal leaders, although they admitted that formal leaders would have been more suitable partners for administrative purposes.

**Potential challenges to partnering with traditional society.** Besides the normal challenges experienced by partnerships, partnering with traditional society tends to pose other problems. These challenges, which are derived from the community development literature and my personal experience of partnerships in the La community, include cultural differences, gender roles, and local political issues.

***Cultural differences.*** Normally, meetings with traditional leaders in Ghanaian and other African communities are characterized by ceremony (see Malidoma, 1999). Clan meetings among the Gas would normally begin and end with the pouring of libation to ask for the guidance of the gods and ancestors. The clan leader would normally speak through an interpreter<sup>10</sup> and not directly to a gathering. These ceremonies are similar among many African tribes though there may be variations. These elaborate ceremonies developed over years of practice are maintained and passed on to new generations (Malidoma, 1999).

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<sup>10</sup> The interpreter is an individual who assists with oral communication between chiefs, other traditional leaders and the elders on one hand, and the assembly or visitors on the other. Interpreters are often referred to as linguists because of their ability to speak languages other than their own.



Culture does not only influence what we do or shape how we do things, it also influences the way we perceive and interpret what other people do (Benhabib, 2002). Our belief and value systems serve as a sounding block for interpreting what we perceive with our senses. For example, the way a person responds to illness varies according to the causal ontology of disease and suffering in his or her culture (Schweder, 2003). Most people from western cultures are likely to seek medical treatment for an illness because disease is explained by an understanding of the disease process, anatomy and physiology.

Unlike Western societies, African traditional societies subscribe to interpersonal and moral causal ontology of disease and suffering (Paratt, 1996; Schweder, 2003). African interpersonal causal ontology attributes disease and suffering to sorcery, evil, black magic, the influence of spirits, or witchcraft. Illness may be interpreted as punishment for wrong doing or disobedience to the gods and ancestors (Paratt, 1996; Schweder, 2003). Among many African tribes, a sudden illness or death is believed to be the result of witchcraft, black magic or punishment from the gods (Schweder, 2003).

Moral explanations to disease and suffering include both acts of omission and commission. Negligence, trespass and ethical failure are believed to lead to disharmony within the individual. According to an Akan belief, internal disharmony ultimately results in illness. The Akans believe that each individual is inhabited by two types of spirit; the "*kra*" (ancestral spirit) and "*sunsum*" (personal spirit) and that disharmony between the two spirits manifests illness (Paratt, 1996).

Such subtle differences in the way people explain disease have implications for partnerships for the prevention and cure of a disease. For instance, people who believe HIV is a curse may not heed messages for precaution. They are, however, more likely to heed traditional leaders admonition against promiscuity for fear of the spiritual consequences.

***Gender roles.*** Power relations affect interpersonal dynamics in partnerships (Valentine & Capponi, 1989). Studies have shown that women in Africa have unequal power relations with their male counterparts (Serwadda, Wawer, Musgrave, & Sewankambo, 1992). According to such studies, unequal power relations, especially around sex, increases women's risk of HIV infection. Serwadda and her colleagues (1992) found that the most important HIV risk factor for women was their male partners' sexual behaviours. Generally, sex is a taboo subject in African cultures and this mostly affects women who are already marginalized in many ways.

Schoepf (1993) reported that poverty is another risk factor for women with regards to HIV. He found an association between women's socio-economic status and their risk for HIV infection. Women's role as caregivers in African society sometimes creates a dependence on men for their financial upkeep. This further affects their ability to negotiate around sex with their partners. According to Schoepf (1993) many women reported that they were able to talk to their husbands about sex for the first time in their lives only after participating in an empowerment workshop. Though, I agree that African women's poverty must be confronted in the struggle against HIV and AIDS, the image of the dependent

African woman needs to be corrected. The fact that many African women are very hard working must be acknowledged. In some cases women have actually become the bread winners of the family.

UNAIDS statistics indicate that women in sub-Saharan Africa are more likely than their male counterparts to be infected with HIV. Among people aged 15-24 years, the ratio of infection for women to men is 2.5 (UNAIDS, 2004). Prevalence of HIV among pregnant women has also been consistently high over the past decade. This, coupled with women's role as nurturers, makes them important stakeholders in any community-based initiative for HIV and AIDS prevention and care.

Most African traditional societies have practices that openly discriminate against women (Danziger, 1994). In the La community, for instance, men and older boys are given privileges over women. At clan house meetings, young men sit in the front row facing the elders while women, both old and young sit in the back row. Women rarely speak at such meetings. Also, male siblings often get preferential treatment when sharing inheritance. These things happen mostly because most African communities are male dominated (Danziger, 1994).

In some local communities, certain practices that are opposed by children's and women's rights groups such as female circumcision, underage marriage, and non education of girls are still being practiced. Interestingly, some of the most ardent supporters of such practices in local African communities are women (Meebelo, 1973). Meebelo (1973) explained that this often happens

because many women have been conditioned by their cultures to accept those practices.

All the issues discussed above could pose a problem for partnerships involving formal organizations, international NGOs and local communities. Community workers need to find a way to assist local leaders to address these issues and practices that violate the rights of women and girls. Furthermore, understanding the practices of communities with regards to women and children can help to develop strategies to eliminate barriers to women's participation in partnerships for HIV and AIDS intervention.

***Internal conflicts.*** Other potential sources of problem for community workers seeking to partner with African communities are factionalism and chieftaincy disputes. Many African societies are rife with inter-tribal and intra-tribal conflict. Conflict often results from territorial disputes and factional struggles for power. On a higher scale, such conflicts lead to inter-tribal warfare and civil wars. The genocide in Rwanda and Burundi and the civil war that tore Somalia apart are standout examples of inter-tribal conflict that exploded to engulf whole countries.

Factionalism includes inter-religious and intra-religious conflicts. Violent inter-religious conflicts have repeatedly broken out in the northern Nigerian City of Kano since the 1980s. Community workers often get caught up between two sides. Graham (2000) noted that the problem of factionalism was one of the most challenging problems for wildlife management partnerships with local people.

According to her, this problem nearly marred the wildlife management partnership with the Xavante.

The wildlife management partnership was a conservation project that aimed at preventing over-hunting and sustaining the natural resources that were vital to the survival of the Xavante and other tribes in the Barbosa Reserve of Brazil (Graham, 2000). At some point, this project was caught up in a struggle for power between two community factions. When a faction leader who was very active in the project lost the backing of the community in a power struggle, his continued involvement began to negatively affect community participation (Graham, 2000). At some point, the project was forced to choose between this particular leader and the community. Resolution came only after the leader left the village with his followers to set up a new village.

Although such problems seem to suggest disorganization, Graham (2000) cautioned that such internal power struggles indicate that a community is politically active. She viewed such conflicts as important for the re-alignment of loyalties and the political renewal of local communities. Understanding such power dynamics within local communities is therefore very vital to the success of community partnerships.

Another potential challenge is failure to study and understand the people with whom one wishes to partner. In Graham's (2000) study, the World Wildlife Fund's failure to understand the importance of hunting in the life of the Xavante nearly marred the beginning of the project.

In traditional African society each community has its own values that outsiders need to understand in order to be able to work in partnership with them. One of the objectives of this study was to fulfill this need. While the focus of the study was to understand the concept of partnership from traditional African perspectives to enhance the development of effective community partnerships in general, my personal focus was on how to build partnerships for HIV and AIDS prevention and care. For this reason, it was important to understand the HIV and AIDS situation as well as ongoing partnerships for HIV and AIDS intervention in Africa.

### **HIV and AIDS**

Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is a disease that is caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Infection of the HIV virus causes a progressive weakening of the human immune system making its host vulnerable to disease. The first known cases of this condition occurred in the United States of America around 1979 (CDC, 2009). However, it was not until 1982 that the Centers for Disease Control officially named the condition Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome or AIDS (CDC, 2009).

By the mid 1980s, AIDS had become an epidemic among certain population sub-groups in North America and Western Europe. The main population sub-groups affected by the AIDS epidemic in these regions were men who have sex with men (MSM), injecting drug users, and recipients of blood transfusion (CDC, 2009). MSM is a term used in reference to men who have sex with men irrespective of whether or not they identify themselves as gay men.

According to the CDC (2009), the MSM population is the population sub-group that has been most impacted by HIV and AIDS in the United States.

By the mid 1990s the AIDS epidemic had been mostly contained in North America and Western Europe through effective intervention and prevention programs: prevention programs had led to dramatic reductions in the numbers of new infections while access to antiretroviral therapy had resulted in improvements in the quality of life and an increase in the life expectancy of people who are living with HIV and AIDS in these regions (UNAIDS, 2008).

According to "The Body" (2009), a web based resource on AIDS, in spite of its containment, the AIDS epidemic in Europe and North America has moved steadily into poor neighbourhoods that are often inhabited by immigrants and racial ethnic minorities. Among all ethnic groups in the United States, the African American population has been the hardest hit by AIDS: 49 percent of all people living with HIV and AIDS in the United States are African Americans (CDC, 2009).

During the same period of containment in North America and Europe (i.e. the 1990s), the AIDS epidemic was beginning to take hold in many developing countries, especially among countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (The Body, 2009). Till today, the regions that have been most affected by HIV and AIDS in the world are South and East Africa. The spread of HIV and AIDS in eastern and southern Africa in the late 1990s was so rapid that by 2001, the United Nations AIDS Agency (UNAIDS) had declared the AIDS situation in the whole sub-Saharan African region a pandemic.

The spread of HIV and AIDS in the developing countries assumed a pattern that was very different from in the developed countries. For instance, while the main populations affected by the disease in Europe and North America were men who have sex with men and injecting drug users, in the developing countries, the disease spread through the general population making it more difficult to target.

The most common mode of transmission of HIV in developing countries is through heterosexual intercourse (The Body, 2009; UNAIDS, 2007): According to UNAIDS (2007), 80 percent of all HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa occur through heterosexual intercourse. The spread of the HIV virus was further fuelled by life styles, ignorance and attitudes in many communities in sub-Saharan Africa (Kristener, 2003; Varga, 1997). As Varga (1997) explained, in a typical African community, having multiple female sexual partners is viewed as a measure of masculinity. These factors, coupled with poor national economies and weak public health systems, caused the HIV virus to spread unabated until the mid 2000s. The AIDS epidemic therefore cut across the social strata of the affected countries in the developing world. In some of the most affected countries of southern Africa (e.g. Botswana), the disease was reported to have wiped out entire communities (McGeary, 2001).

Furthermore, AIDS disproportionately affects women in sub-Saharan Africa (UNAIDS, 2007). According to statistics from the United Nations AIDS Agency (UNAIDS, 2007), about 61 percent of all adults living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa are women. This phenomenon has been linked to women's lack



of power in African socio-cultural contexts especially in relation to marriage and sex (Dunkle, Jewkes, Brown & Gray, 2004; Kalichman, Simbayi, Cain, & Cherry, 2007; Kathewera-Banda, Gomile-Chidyaonga, Hendriks & White, 2005). Another reason for the disproportionate numbers of women infected with HIV is the inclusion of female sex workers whose profession places them at high risk of infection in this gender category.

In spite of its containment in Western Europe and North America, HIV and AIDS remains a world-wide problem (UNAIDS, 2007). Currently, there are over 33 million people living with HIV world-wide. This includes a new wave of infections in Western Europe and North America: the 2008 UNAIDS' Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic showed slight increases in new infections and the number of people living with HIV and AIDS in North America and Western Europe. Slight increases in HIV infection were also reported for Latin America and Oceania between 2001 and 2007 (UNAIDS, 2007). Over the same period, the number of people who were living with HIV and AIDS in Eastern Europe, more than doubled from 630,000 to 1.6 million (UNAIDS, 2007).

The HIV and AIDS situation in the rest of the world, however, pales in comparison with the situation in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia: Of the 33 million people living with HIV and AIDS world-wide, sub-Saharan Africa alone accounts for 22 million (70%) while Asia accounts for 5.3 million (16%) (UNAIDS, 2007). Sub-Saharan Africa also has the highest HIV prevalence compared to any other region in the world. In 2007, the HIV prevalence among adults in sub-Saharan Africa was 5.0. This was sixteen times the prevalence rate for South Asia (0.3),

the region with the world's second highest prevalence rate. Within sub-Saharan Africa, this statistic is much higher among the most affected countries. Most notable among these countries are Swaziland with an HIV prevalence rate 26.1, Botswana with a prevalence rate of 23.9, Lesotho with a prevalence rate of 23.2, and South Africa with a prevalence rate of 18.1. The HIV and AIDS pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa has had severe social, economic and political impacts on the sub-continent and its people, especially in the most affected countries.

### **The Impact of AIDS in Africa**

AIDS currently ranks first among all causes of death in sub-Saharan Africa (UNAIDS, 2007). The number of adults and children who died of AIDS in this region was 1.2 million in 2001, 1.9 million in 2003, 2.0 million in 2005, and 2.0 million in 2007 (UNAIDS, 2004, 2006, 2008). The disease has generally lowered life expectancy on the sub-continent. For example, life expectancy in five of the most affected African countries, namely Botswana, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe had decreased from about 55 years in 1990 to less than 40 years in 2008.

AIDS-related deaths in sub-Saharan Africa have economic, social and political implications (UNAIDS, 2004). HIV mostly infects people in their prime and this has caused great devastation to the workforce in the hardest hit countries. In countries like Swaziland, Botswana, South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, and Malawi, between 15 and 36 percent of the adult populations are infected with HIV (UNAIDS, 2007).

Studies in this region have indicated a high rate of HIV infection among skilled workers (Danziger, 1994). Also, Foreman, Bennett and Karam (1992) reported higher rates of HIV prevalence among people of higher socio-economic status and skills in Rwanda, Zaire, Zimbabwe and Swaziland. These facts have negative implications for productivity in the sub-region. There is noticeable dwindling supply of skilled labour (Foreman et al., 1992) and diminishing family incomes coupled with higher health expenses (Love, 2004) in the most seriously affected countries. Productivity in these countries is also affected by time taken off work by healthy workers to look after sick relatives (Foreman et al., 1992).

The HIV and AIDS pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa has also had multiple social impacts (UNAIDS, 2007). Differences in policy priorities between community development agencies and communities have led to conflict and ultimate failure of initiatives for HIV and AIDS intervention in many affected communities (Gruber & Caffrey, 2003). According to Gruber and Caffrey (2003) such conflicts often lead to severe breakdown in social cohesion, resulting in reduction or the total cessation of important HIV and AIDS intervention activities.

Furthermore, HIV and AIDS related deaths have left behind millions of orphans in many African communities (UNAIDS, 2007). At last count, there were about 11 million children in sub-Saharan Africa who have been orphaned by AIDS (UNAIDS, 2007). The flood of orphans has literally overwhelmed the traditional establishments, including the extended family system, that act as safety nets for children who have been left alone through parental death.

Lugalla (2003) reported that the mass of AIDS orphans in Africa is negatively impacting development policies and creating new public health concerns. For example, Love (2004) found reduced nutritional levels and increased vulnerability to disease within families with HIV-positive members. Love (2004) found that the death of adult family members from AIDS often lead to a collapse, and sometimes a complete break up, of households and abandonment by extended family members due to stigma and lack of understanding of HIV and AIDS.

Parental death from HIV and AIDS leads to emotional distress in children (Danziger, 1994). Danziger (1994) reported higher levels of emotional stress among children whose parents have died from AIDS compared to children whose parents are alive. The emotional stress on such children is further compounded by abandonment by relatives and the assumption of adult responsibilities by very young children. Floyd, Crampin, Glynn and Madise (2009) also found that children of HIV-positive parents are less likely to attend secondary school than children whose parents are HIV-negative.

Another social impact of HIV and AIDS is increased discrimination (Danziger, 1994; Love, 2004). Affected people and their families and friends are increasingly discriminated against (Danziger, 1994). Also, there are reports of increased gender related discrimination with regards to HIV and AIDS. For instance, girls whose parents have died of AIDS are more likely than boys to be removed from school (Danziger, 1994). Also, Danziger (1994) noted that the

AIDS pandemic has lowered the marital age for girls as men increasingly choose younger girls for marriage in the hope of avoiding HIV infection.

Until recently, very little attention was paid by the international community to the HIV and AIDS pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa and the orphan situation (Foster & Williamson, 2000). Suspicion, disagreements and arguments over the origin of the disease and the slow reaction of the major international bodies and world powers, especially the United States, drew the ire of many African nations who felt abandoned by the international community.

Due to its wide ranging social, economic and political implications, the HIV and AIDS pandemic in Africa requires a multi-sectorial approach. Such an approach should necessarily involve all stakeholders in the affected communities together with external non-governmental and governmental organizations in broad-based partnerships. It is necessary to note that there are several ongoing partnerships for HIV and AIDS prevention and care in sub-Saharan Africa. The question is, how are these partnerships are being pursued? And what have they achieved?

### **Ongoing Partnerships for HIV and AIDS Related Work in Africa**

Ongoing partnerships for HIV and AIDS related work in sub-Saharan Africa include multi-stakeholder initiatives by organizations like the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), CARE international, Family Health International and African Women in Science and Engineering.

IFAD has been working with multiple community stakeholder groups for HIV and AIDS education in several African communities (International Fund for

Agricultural Development; 2005). IFAD's initiatives include participatory needs assessment and socio-economic production system studies (IFAD, 2005). IFAD's programs emphasize the involvement of NGOs, donor organizations, national AIDS commissions and other UN agencies as partners. According to a press release by IFAD in 2005, the local NGOs provide expertise in community mobilization, capacity building, and implementation of HIV specific community programs.

CARE International and Family Health International (FHI) are among international NGOs for health that have developed partnerships for HIV and AIDS prevention in various African communities. In Tanzania and Ethiopia, FHI has reported remarkable successes in collaborating with local NGOs to provide HIV and AIDS prevention and survivor support programs (FHI, 2005). This organization said it adopts a process that meaningfully involves local groups in assessing community needs around HIV and mobilizing local residents to take action.

Besides initiatives by foreign organizations, local NGOs, faith-based organizations, labour unions, and professional associations are actively engaged in partnerships for HIV and AIDS prevention. African Women in Science and Engineering (AWSE) is currently working in collaboration with African institutions of higher learning to foster civil engagement on the HIV pandemic on the continent. AWSE focuses on strengthening campus community partnerships for HIV and AIDS education, and the role of women in HIV prevention. The AIDS Foundation of South Africa promotes the partnership model for HIV and AIDS

prevention among hard to reach marginalized sections of South African society (South African AIDS Foundation, 2005). This foundation partners with families, faith-based organizations, and other community groups to disseminate information and provide HIV and AIDS education in these communities.

In Ghana, the ENABLE project has focused on engaging community health advocates, traditional leaders, and youth in implementing family planning and reproductive health education for families (Norwegian Council for Africa, 2004). This program utilizes existing traditional social structures to promote awareness of HIV and encourage safe sex. According to the program's coordinators, ENABLE emphasizes empowering women to make the right choices to protect themselves and their children.

The above are some examples of partnerships going on in African communities on HIV and AIDS related work. There has been some progress in these efforts. For instance USAID reported that over 130,000 orphans and other vulnerable children in Zambia have received life sustaining care and support services through Strengthening Community Partnerships for the Empowerment of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (SCOPE-OVC) one of its initiatives in Africa.

In line with the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals, the African Union adopted the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in Senegal in 2002. NEPAD was adopted as a strategy to tackle the problems of low economic growth, widespread poverty, and increasing marginalization of Africa in an increasingly inter-dependent world (Funke & Nsouli, 2004). In a key note address to twenty African Heads of State representing the five regions of

Africa, Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade described NEPAD as a new vision and a strategic framework for Africa's economic and social development. The objectives of this initiative were very laudable in that they were based on developing a partnership that allows African countries to "set their own priorities". The representatives at the meeting made commitments on their own behalves, and on behalf of other heads of state in their respective regions, to work towards providing the necessary requirements for sustainable growth, namely, peace, security, democracy and good governance (Nsouli, 2004). They further pledged to strengthen their countries' capacities by developing the necessary social and economic infrastructure needed for implementing NEPAD.

Receptivity to this new-old-idea of partnerships is great and provides an opportunity to test the partnership model at the governmental level in Africa. It is, however, important to note that the vision of NEPAD did not come about without prompting. Clearly it is a favorable response by the African Union to the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals. This in itself is not a bad idea because NEPAD's goals of creating peace and security, and encouraging democratic ideals are very laudable. Yet describing the initiative as a new African vision is far from the truth. It is very clear that the agenda for NEPAD had already been set in the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals. Addressing the African seminar of the World Social Forum, Ngwane (2002) called for a boycott of NEPAD by the African social movement. He pointed out that there were no proper consultations between African governments and the African social movement over the initiative. Besides, the two organizations that set up the



NEPAD agenda, namely, the World Bank and the IMF were institutions with a track record of promoting the exploitation of developing countries and cannot therefore be trusted.

Kayizi-Mugerwa (1998) pointed out retrospectively, that there is very low probability of finding governments that are truly committed to promoting the very ideals espoused under NEPAD. This may sound skeptical in light of the positive political changes that Africa has witnessed over the past two decades. It is, however, important to note that long periods of adaptation to command and control systems cannot easily give way to democratic beliefs overnight. Even if some of the dictators in Africa truly commit to democracy because they have no choice (though I doubt this in some cases), corresponding changes in the average person on the street will be long in coming. Communities that are not used to being consulted would require a very steep learning curve to participate actively in decision-making.

The increasing use of partnership as a major tool for addressing the HIV and AIDS problem in sub-Saharan Africa and other regions of the world makes it very important to understand this concept from different cultural perspectives. This study, therefore, sought to explore the concepts of partnership in the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities of Ghana and their implications for community-based initiatives for HIV and AIDS prevention and care. While understanding the concept of partnership from the perspectives of these two Ghanaian communities does not constitute an understanding of the concept from all traditional African

perspectives, it certainly provides one window onto traditional African concepts of partnership.

### **Gaps in the Literature on Partnerships**

This literature review identified three different gaps in the literature on partnerships. These were: 1) lack of single, clear and concise definition of partnership in a social service context 2) lack of representation of knowledge from non-Western perspectives in the literature on partnerships, and 3) lack of a comprehensive theory of partnership in a social service context.

The issue of lack of single, clear and concise definition of partnership in a social service context was addressed extensively in this chapter, under the heading "Partnership in a Social Service Context". The literature revealed some difficulty on the part of researchers to give a clear and concise definition of partnership that could be generally applied to all types of social partnerships. For this reason, many researchers have either avoided defining partnership or have defined it narrowly to apply to one specific field. The former includes Boudreau (1991), Shortell, Zukowski, Alexander, and Bazzoli (2002), and Googins and Rochlin (2000) all of whom noted the glaring absence of a definition of partnership in their writings but offered none to address the problem. The latter includes Brinkerhoff (2003), Nelson, Prilleltensky and MacGillivray (2001), and McCann and Gray (1986) who provided narrow definitions of partnerships. For example, the definition of partnerships by Nelson et al. (2001) was specific to mental health partnerships involving professionals and service users.

In order to address this gap, and for the purpose of this study, I defined partnership as “an organization of groups and/or individuals who have come together to work for a common purpose”. The common purpose is often to solve a common problem or problems affecting a whole community. It may also be something that does not solve an existing problem but brings about a desired change for collective benefit.

The second and third gaps identified in the literature are related in a sense that the development of an unassailable theory of any concept requires comprehensive knowledge about the concept. It therefore follows that since the preponderance of the literature on partnership is from Western perspectives, any theory derived from such literature could be described as tenuous. Several authors, including Nsamenang (1998), Nsamenang and Dawes (1998) and Zukow (1998), have raised questions about the bases of various theories of human behaviour that are derived, almost exclusively, from knowledge about Western populations. For example, Nsamenang (1998) challenged the Eurocentric nature of psychology by questioning its bases for claiming relevance to all humanity. Also, Zukow (1998) strongly questioned the representativeness of samples from which theories of human nature are derived. According to him, the majority of psychological principles that are presumed to be universally applicable are based on information gathered about western populations that form only five percent of the entire world population. Also, Simon (1997) pointed out that, social researchers tend to interpret situations from their own cultural perspectives. Therefore, the fact that western based theories exclude 95 percent

of the world's population provides strong basis for questioning their applicability across cultures (see Zukow, 1989).

Other critics of existing theories of human nature include Benhabib (2002), Malidoma (1999) and MacGaffey (1981). MacGaffey (1981) blamed early European anthropologists who worked in Africa for the lack of cross-cultural representation in the body of world knowledge. According to him, although those anthropologists opened up the continent for further studies, they erred in measuring traditional knowledge by European standards and then categorizing them as myths. He therefore commended recent scholars for acknowledging that many African narratives that were described as myths in the past are true sociological theories. This realization of the true value of African traditional narratives provides grounds for comparing ethnic knowledge with known western theories and assessment of the latter's cross cultural application.

In several of his articles, Nsamenang (1998) has sought to provide an alternative view of human development that captures the African social and cultural reality (see also Nsamenang & Dawes, 1998). Nsamenang (1998) called for theories with bases in multiculturalism that captures the essence of human diversity to replace current unilateral western theories of human behaviour. Similarly, Benhabib (2002), Malidoma (1999), and Strumpfer (1981) have sought to present the African perspective to the world for greater understanding. All three writers have advanced arguments for the recognition and inclusion of traditional knowledge into the body of world knowledge in order to make it more representative and comprehensive. According to Nsamenang (1998), diversity

shapes both the content and form of mentality, which impacts behavioural patterns that emerge through socialization processes. People perceive, interpret and evaluate their worlds with cognitive structures that they have developed through years of interaction with their physical and social environments (Noteboom, 2000). As people continually evaluate their worlds, they gain experiential knowledge that aids their adaptation to the environment. To enable people from different cultural backgrounds to work together successfully in partnerships, it is important for them to gain insights into each others' perspectives, be able to acknowledge their differences, and build on their commonalities.

This study therefore serves as one of the building blocks for addressing this huge gap in the body of world knowledge about the concept of partnership. It is specifically aimed at understanding the concept of partnership from the perspectives of two Ghanaian communities. Its findings are additions to the body of knowledge about partnerships and a small contribution towards the development of a comprehensive theory of partnership that integrates both Western and non-Western perspectives.

### **The Current Study**

The aim of this research study was two-fold: (1) to understand the concept of partnership from the perspectives of the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities, and (2) to identify ways in which knowledge about the concepts of partnership in the two communities can be utilized for HIV and AIDS prevention, care, treatment and support.

The literature on partnership clearly reveals a lack of understanding of the concept of partnership from non-western perspectives. Although there are numerous project reports outlining some of the factors that affect partnership with traditional communities, there is hardly any research study that has sought to capture the meaning of the concept of partnership from non-western cultures (World Wildlife Fund, 2000)<sup>11</sup>.

Secondly, the HIV pandemic in Africa is a major problem that requires the collective efforts of all stakeholders including local community leaders and community groups as well as national and international organizations. Comprehensive knowledge about the concept of partnership from both western and traditional African perspectives would enhance the development of effective partnerships for HIV and AIDS related work in African communities.

**Research purpose.** The purpose of this study was to understand community partnerships from perspectives of two Ghanaian communities and determine how knowledge of their traditional concepts of partnership could be utilized to enhance the development of community-based initiatives for HIV and AIDS prevention and care in those, and other African communities with similar characteristics.

Having better understanding of the concept of partnership from the perspectives of the communities studied will enrich and complement the literature on partnership. It will further enable us to identify ways to promote HIV awareness and prevention, and strengthen supports and services for people who

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<sup>11</sup> World Wildlife Fund (2000)

are living with HIV and AIDS and people who have been affected by HIV and AIDS.

**Research questions.** This research sought to answer two main questions:

1. What are the concepts of partnership in the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities?
2. How can the concepts of partnership in the two communities facilitate the development of effective partnerships for HIV and AIDS prevention and care?

The first research question was intended to explore the traditional concept of partnership from the perspectives of the two communities while the second sought to identify ways by which that knowledge and understanding of local concepts of partnership could be utilized to enhance the development of effective community partnerships to address the HIV and AIDS problem that is facing many African communities.

**Research paradigm.** This research study was carried out from an interpretivist perspective, which is a branch of social constructivism, and utilized a social ecological framework for the analysis of data.

Interpretivism is a branch of social constructivism that focuses on how people construct meanings of their lived experiences. Working from this perspective, I gathered qualitative information about the concepts of partnership in two Ghanaian communities through direct interviews with members of those communities. This approach enabled an exploration of the meanings that people

attach to their concepts of partnership as well as their implications for HIV and AIDS prevention and care.

Social constructivism is a research paradigm that assumes a relativity of multiple social-realities (Charmaz, 2005). According to Lincoln and Guba (2005), social reality is a construction of the mind as a result of individual experiences. Reality is therefore influenced by the social context within which it is constructed. The implication of this is that, in order to understand a social phenomenon, one must ask the people in whose minds that phenomenon was constructed. Also, Kvale (1996) asserted that, in order to truly understand how people experience the world, one must allow them to express their own perceptions, feelings and actions in their own words (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, social constructivism recognizes that knowledge is co-constructed (Kvale, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 2005; Schwandt, 2005). In the words of Lincoln and Guba (2005), the inquirer cannot, and should not, be separated from the observed. Consistent with these beliefs, social constructivists adopt qualitative methods that bring the researcher and researched together in social interaction (Chase, 1996; Kvale, 1996; Patton, 2002).

The theoretical framework adopted for analyzing data in this study was social ecological theory. Various studies have shown that social problems like poverty, addiction, crime, and environmental degradation are multi-faceted and consequently do not yield to linear interpretations and approaches (Stokols, 1996; Whitemore, D'Eramo-Melkus, & Grey, 2004; Williams & Lindley, 1996). This validates the social ecological standpoint that human behaviour is a product



of the interactions among human beings and their environment, and cannot therefore be understood separately from the social environments in which it occurs (Longres, 1990; Stokols, 1996; Whittemore et al., 2004).

Social ecological theory is a systems theory that views the social system as a bounded set of interrelated and interdependent parts or sub-systems and activities (Luhman, 1995; Stokols, 1996). In a social ecological system, the functioning of a sub-system influences, and is influenced by other sub-systems (Luhman, 1995). Any change or disturbance in a part or sub-system within a social ecological system therefore affects the entire system causing a shift in equilibrium (Luhman, 1995; Whittemore et al., 2004). According to theorists of this persuasion, the functioning of the entire social ecological system is aimed at maintaining equilibrium (Luhman, 1995; Whittemore et al., 2004). The system, therefore, constantly adjusts itself to compensate for changes in its sub-systems in order to restore a state of harmony or homeostasis (Luhman, 1995; Whittemore et al., 2004).

Social ecological systems theory provides a useful framework for integrating the effects of multiple factors on social phenomena. Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1994) described a model of five environmental systems that influence human development, namely, the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1994) theory, the microsystem is made up of one's immediate environment consisting of a person's family, peers, school and neighbourhood. The mesosystem encompasses the connections and interactions between the structures of the

microsystem. For example a child's development is influenced by the relationship between his or her parents and school. The exosystem comprises the larger social system while the macrosystem is made up of the culture within which the person lives. Bronfenbrenner (1994) called the final system the chronosystem because it is related to changes in environmental factors over time. He illustrated the effect of the chronosystem with the impact of parents' divorce on a child's development.

Stokols (1996) developed a simplified version of Bronfenbrenner's (1994) theory of social ecology. In it, he identified three main levels of influence on social phenomena, namely, the individual level, group level, and the contextual or environmental level. Stokols' (1996) individual level factors consisted of personal characteristics and behaviors; group level factors consisted of both interpersonal and institutional factors, including relationships, group structures and processes; and the contextual or environmental factors consisted of the physical, social, cultural, economic, and political environment.

Stokols' (1996) social ecological systems theory therefore provides an adequate structure, not only for analyzing the influences within community partnerships but also for analyzing the relationships between community partnerships and the social, economic and political contexts within which they operate.

### **The Theoretical Framework for this Study**

The literature on partnerships includes several frameworks for understanding partnerships. Most of these frameworks include components and

processes as well as factors that influence partnerships. Examples of these frameworks are the frameworks of partnerships that were set out by Margenum (1999), Strauss (2002) and Huxham and Vangen (2005).

Both Margenum (1999) and Strauss (2002) adopted phased approaches to understanding partnerships. Margenum (1999) divided the partnership process into three phases, namely, the problem setting phase, the direction setting phase, and the implementation phase. Strauss' (2002) framework included Margenum's three phases and an additional phase that he called the outcomes monitoring phase.

In a deviation from this phased approach to understanding partnerships, Huxham and Vangen (2005) developed a four-dimensional theme-areas approach in their study of partnerships. The four dimensions identified in their framework were; practitioner generated themes, policy generated themes, researcher generated themes, and cross-cutting themes. The elements of the four theme-areas are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Huxham and Vangen's (2005) framework of partnerships

Theme-Area	Elements
Practitioner generated themes	Common objectives, working processes, resources, communication and languages, commitment and determination, culture, power, trust, compromise, risk, accountability, democracy and equality
Policy generated themes	Leadership, learning, and success
Researcher generated themes	Identity and social capital
Cross-cutting themes	Membership structures

While Huxham and Vangen's (2005) framework differs from the phased frameworks adopted by Margenum's (1999) and Strauss (2002) all the three frameworks share common elements. For instance, they all portray partnerships as collaborative relationships that work through certain structures, adopt certain working processes and are guided by certain principles and values (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Margenum, 1999; Strauss, 2002; Voyle & Simmons, 1999). These partnership frameworks further recognize that the environmental contexts of partnerships have impact on their effectiveness (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Wandersman et al., 1996).

The common elements of these three different models provide a basis for an integrated framework for studying partnerships that comprises the concept of partnership, partnership structure, partnership process, and influential factors. The elements of these four dimensions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: An integrated conceptual framework of partnerships

Component	Elements
The concept of partnership	What is referred to as a partnership, why people partner with each other, what it means to partner with others
Partnership structure	Membership committee, sub-committees/task forces/ad-hoc committees, leadership, staff
Partnership process	Initiation, procedures, appointment of leaders, roles, and decision-making
Influential factors	Factors operating at three levels of the social ecology, namely the individual, organizational and contextual factors that influence partnerships

The concept of partnership refers to how each community conceptualizes partnerships, why people partner with each other, and what it means to work in partnership with other people. Partnership structure refers to the identifiable components of a partnership. These include a group's leadership structure, members, and committees through which tasks are carried out. The partnership process begins with initiation and includes the appointment of leaders, the roles assumed by members, and the decision-making process. This theoretical framework also applies social ecological theory in understanding factors that influence partnerships and the various levels at which they operate. These factors are the various individual, organizational and contextual factors that either facilitate or challenge partnerships. This integrated framework of partnerships informed data gathering about partnerships in the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities in this study.

In summary, the research design for this study, which is presented in the next chapter, was influenced by social constructivist theory and social ecological theory. Social constructivist methodology was adopted for data gathering, and social ecological theory provided a framework for categorizing factors that influence partnerships in the two communities. This involved the use key informant interviews and focus groups for data gathering, and adopting Stokols' (1996) classification of social ecological factors at three levels, namely, the individual, organizational and environmental levels for understanding factors that influence partnerships in the two communities. Data gathering was guided by the integrated framework of partnerships in Table 2.

## **Chapter 3: Method**

This chapter provides a description of the research design that I used for this study and the assumptions underlying it. Furthermore, I outline the research method which includes a description of participants, participant selection methods, data gathering methods, the research process, and the process of data analysis.

### **Research Design**

This study is a multiple case study involving two Ghanaian communities, namely, the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities. These two communities constituted the cases and the phenomenon of interest was the concept of partnership.

A case study is a study designed to carefully examine and understand a particular phenomenon, situation, activity or entity (Rubin & Babbie, 2001; Stake, 2006). Case studies are therefore conducted to describe, and in some cases, to explain a phenomenon of interest. Multiple case study designs involve the study of a number of cases simultaneously for the same purpose. Multiple case studies, however, provide researchers the opportunity to both examine a phenomenon of interest in-depth and draw comparisons across cases to discover any existing contextual differences and their implications. Stake (2006) maintained that in order to have deeper understanding of social phenomena, it is as important to examine their situational uniqueness as it is to study their common characteristics. Understanding the situational or contextual uniqueness

of a phenomenon requires a careful study of its interactions with the environment.

A qualitative approach was used for this study because it is most suited for a study of this nature. The aim of qualitative or naturalistic inquiry is to study real-world situations unobtrusively as they unfold naturally without an attempt to manipulate or control them (Patton, 2002). According to Kvale (1996) the focus of social constructivist research is to discover and understand how people perceive and experience their worlds, and the meanings they attach to their experiences. The study therefore involved directly speaking to individuals with partnership experience from the two communities in order to learn from them how they conceptualize partnerships and the meanings they ascribe to them.

**Data gathering methods.** Two different qualitative methods were used to gather information. These were key informant interviews and focus groups. A key informant interview is an interview with one person on a specific topic. Key informant interviews provide in-depth information about a phenomenon of interest which in the case of this study was concept of partnership. According to Patton (2002) "key informants are people who are particularly knowledgeable about the setting and can articulate about their knowledge" (p. 320).

A focus group interview is an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic (Patton, 2002). Focus groups provide interactive forums for participants to share their views and listen to other participants' views. In this study, focus groups provided participants an opportunity to discuss the concept

of partnership and help identify effective models of partnership for HIV and AIDS prevention and care in their communities.

#### a) Key Informant Interviews

Altogether, 28 key informant interviews were conducted with 24 individuals from the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities. The key informant interviews were conducted in two phases. In the first phase, eight key informants were interviewed in each community.

In the second phase, four additional key informant interviews were conducted in each community. This included interviews with two new key informants and a second iteration with two previously interviewed participants in each community. The second iteration of interviews was done partly to explore emerging themes in the data, and partly to check data credibility.

In addition to these interviews, four more key informant interviews were conducted with traditional and community leaders in La to make up for a planned community leaders' focus group which could not be organized due to scheduling difficulties. The focus group was scheduled twice with five traditional and community leaders but each time only one or two people showed up at the appointed time. For this reason, key informant interviews were arranged with the five invitees but only four were completed. The fifth person could not be reached.

#### b) Focus Groups

Four focus groups were conducted; two in La and two in Nsawam-Adoajiri. In the La community, both focus groups were conducted with youth groups. There were seven participants in the first focus group and five in the second. In



the Nsawam-Adoajiri community, one focus group was conducted with community leaders and one with youth. The focus group with community leaders had six participants and the one with youth had eight participants. All focus groups were audio taped in the respective local languages and were translated into English by the research assistants both of whom are graduates of the University of Ghana<sup>12</sup>.

**Participant selection.** The participant selection method that was used for this study was snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a form of purposeful sampling that aims at identifying information rich sources for interview to provide in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2002). This sampling method involves key informants who are knowledgeable about the setting in identifying other information-rich key informants who can shed more light on the topic of interest (Patton, 2002).

For the purpose of this study, my two research assistants and I first used our knowledge and ties within the two communities to identify and recruit individuals from the four stakeholder groups, namely, traditional leaders, community leaders, women leaders and youth leaders, who have partnership experience to participate in this study as key informants. Although women leaders are also considered community leaders, they were identified as a separate stakeholder group in participant selection to ensure adequate representation of women's views in the study. For this reason, they were correctly referred to as female community leaders in the results section.

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<sup>12</sup> The research assistants from La and Nsawam-Adoajiri hold a Master of Science degree in Environmental Science and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology respectively from the University of Ghana.

The initial group of key informants was made up of individuals who are, or have been leaders of partnerships or groups and associations considered to be partnerships in the two communities. These were therefore individuals who could articulate their knowledge, understanding and views about partnerships not only from their own perspectives but also from the collective perspectives of the organizations in which they are holding or have held responsible positions.

At the end of their interviews these key informants were asked to help identify other people who had partnership experience and could share their own experiences with us. Some of the individuals so identified were interviewed either as additional key informants or focus group participants.

**Assumptions underlying the study.** The assumptions underlying this study are that:

1. Social reality is constructed by the individual based on his or her experiences, history and present social circumstances (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). Therefore, African and specifically Ghanaian concepts of partnership are likely to differ from western concepts of partnership.
2. Ghanaian concepts of partnership are yet to be explored and can only be understood from the perspectives of people living in Ghanaian communities. Talking to key members within these communities would provide information that would enable us to understand their concepts of partnership and the meanings they ascribe to them.
3. Good understanding of traditional African concepts of partnership would enhance the development of effective partnerships for HIV and AIDS

related work in those communities and other communities with similar characteristics.

## Participants

In total, 50 people from the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities participated in the study: 26 from La and 24 from Nsawam-Adoajiri. Twenty-four of them participated in key informant interviews and 26 participated in focus groups.

The participants included eight traditional leaders, 22 community leaders, and 20 youth leaders. Slightly more males participated in this study than females; 28 males (56%) and 22 females (44%). Out of the eight traditional leaders who participated, six were male and two were female; half of the 22 community leaders were male and half were female; and 11 of the 20 youth were male and 9 were female. Table 3 gives a distribution of research participants by method, leadership category and gender.

Table 3: Distribution of participants by data gathering method

Method	Leadership Category	La		Nsawam-Adoajiri		Total
		Male	Female	Male	Female	
Key Informants	Traditional	3	2	3	-	8
	Community	4	2	2	3	11
	Youth	2	1	2	-	5
Focus Groups	Community	3	2	2	4	11
	Youth	4	3	3	5	15
<b>Total</b>		<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>50</b>

All participants in this study self identified as adults. Their ages were not asked in order to avoid discomfort. Besides, the categorical format which,

according to Healey and Gendall (2009), is the most reliable format for asking the age question could not be conveniently adopted for a qualitative study of this nature.

### **Procedure**

My two research assistants and I conducted the key informant interviews face to face and by telephone. Each of the first 16 key informant interviews was conducted jointly by one research assistant on site and me by telephone. The focus groups were facilitated by the research assistants while I listened by speaker phone. At the end of the first focus group in each community, the research assistant involved and I reviewed the facilitation process and the discussions. During the reviews, we discussed question-structure and the responses they elicited. As a result of these reviews, the research assistants and I developed additional probes to enhance the depth of responses to the questions. This review helped in planning for the second focus group.

Based on initial findings from the first batch of key informant interviews and focus groups, I conducted a new batch of key informant interviews with eight new participants (two in Nsawam-Adoajiri and six in La) and went through a second iteration of interviews with four previously interviewed participants (two in each community). As explained earlier, the four extra key informant interviews conducted in La were conducted in the place of a planned focus group with community leaders that could not be held.

At the beginning of all interviews and focus groups, the purpose and methods of the study were explained to the participants. It was further explained

that participation was voluntary and that they had the right to refuse to answer any question or completely withdraw from the interview; and that their responses would be treated as confidential and anonymous. To document that the participants' rights had been explained to them they were each required to complete and sign a consent form which was kept by the research assistant. For the telephone interviews, the informed consent process was done on the phone and was audio recorded.

All participants were offered the option of being interviewed in their local languages. A majority of them were, however, educated and felt comfortable speaking in English. Out of the 24 key informants, 17 were interviewed in English; four in *Ga*; and three in *Twi*.

Interviewing of key informants and focus group participants were guided by the framework of partnership (see Table 2) developed from the literature on partnerships (see interview questions in appendices 1 and 2). All interviews and focus groups began by asking participants an open ended question about the concept of partnership. Their responses were further probed to give a clear understanding of the concept, what it meant for them to work in partnership with others, and the relationships among partners.

Participants were further asked to draw on their own personal experiences to talk about partnership structures, processes, and the principles and values that guide partnerships. This was followed by questions about the benefits of partnering, the challenges that partnerships experience and the factors that facilitate partnerships. After these questions, the participants were asked to

reflect on how effective partnerships could be developed in their communities for HIV and AIDS prevention and care.

All interviews and focus groups were audio recorded. In addition, the research assistants and I took handwritten notes. The audio recordings were transcribed and the handwritten notes typed out. Interviews that were conducted in *Ga* and *Twi* were translated into English by the research assistants. After that, I listened to the audio tapes and compared them to the transcripts to ascertain their accuracy. The research assistant from *La*, who speaks *Twi* more fluently than I, also listened to the audio tapes from the Nsawam-Adoajiri interviews to check the accuracy of the translations.

### **Understanding Cultural Norms and Practices**

There are cultural norms and practices that guide the way to approach and engage different groups of people in any forms of activity in different cultures (Sue, Ivey, & Pederson, 1996). When conducting research in a community, it is important to have a level of understanding of the community's cultural norms in order to ensure procedural appropriateness and cultural relevance of the study and its findings (American Psychological Association, 2003; Whitbeck, 2006).

In African traditional communities, there are traditional protocols that must be followed when approaching a traditional leader for any purpose<sup>13</sup>. Traditional leaders in African society are regarded both as representatives of the ancestors and the custodians of historical knowledge (Malidoma, 1999). They function

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<sup>13</sup> I have first-hand knowledge about such protocols in Nigeria and Ghana and have read about communities in other African countries including Liberia, Ivory Coast, South Africa, Kenya, and Uganda.

through age old structures that are deeply embedded within the values and belief systems of their people.

In Ghanaian culture, one is required to bring a bottle of schnapps or other drink when requesting an appointment with a high ranking traditional leader, and another bottle on the day of appointment. Also in some cultures, depending upon where they rank in the traditional system, one may speak to them only through interpreters. However, sometimes, formal protocols are waived when such leaders are approached informally by individuals they know. There are also different norms regarding the way women are approached. In some places, approaching a married woman directly to request her participation in an interview, especially by a man contravenes cultural norms.

In the two communities studied, there were no special cultural norms regarding how women are approached for such an activity. In approaching traditional leaders, we used our personal connections to these individuals and so we were not required to perform any special formalities as would be required of strangers. All the participants in the study including the traditional leaders, community leaders, youth, and women leaders were approached with respect and sensitivity, and an understanding that the people under study were the “experts” of their culture (Kvale, 1996; Sue, 2006; Whitbeck, 2006). At the end of the interview, each participant was given a token of appreciation.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The two research assistants and I followed the Wilfrid Laurier University Research Ethics Board’s ethical guidelines throughout the data gathering

process (see appendices 4 and 5). These included the principle of informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and protection from harm. Research participants were given letters that gave details about the purpose and methods of the study; and an informed consent statement and form. The informed consent statement contained a statement assuring participants of their rights to refuse to answer any questions that they did not wish to answer and to withdraw completely from the study without any penalty. It further assured them of the confidentiality of the information they would share and their anonymity.

Other ethical guidelines for community research that were observed were respect for the dignity of participants, maintaining equality, and sensitivity to cultural differences.

To ensure that the ethical guidelines were followed, interview questions were carefully constructed to avoid questions that could cause discomfort to participants. We also took care to ensure that participants were treated with respect and their dignity was preserved. At the end of interviews, participants were debriefed to ensure that they had a clear understanding of the objectives of the study. Interview tapes and transcripts were kept under lock and key to ensure that no one besides the research assistants and I, had access to them. Finally, preliminary findings of the research were shared with participants as a reality check to ensure that their views were properly represented.

### **Data Analysis and Data Credibility**

Data analysis is a systematic process for organizing and interpreting data. The data obtained from the key informant interviews and focus groups in this



study were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis. The process of data analysis is described in the following sections.

**Data analysis.** Content analysis was used for analyzing data in this study. The analysis of data was conducted in two phases: the first phase involved the first batch of 16 key informant interviews and four focus groups. Data analysis involved a three-step coding process, namely, the discovery and naming of ideas, identification of themes, and integration of themes (Glasser, 1992; Patton, 2005; Sarantakos, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The themes generated were then organized for answering the research questions.

The first step in the coding process involved an analytic process through which ideas and concepts were discovered in the data and labeled (Sarantakos, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1998) referred to this process as open coding. In this step, I first read through one interview transcript each from the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri sites identifying and labeling ideas expressed by the participants. During this initial phase of coding, I paid attention to concepts that were related to the research questions and concepts that appeared unrelated to them.

This was followed by a more thorough re-reading of the two transcripts and reviewing/refining of the labels that I created during the initial reading. This process involved collapsing and renaming ideas and concepts based on their shared characteristics and related meanings (Patton, 2005; Sarantakos, 1998). The initial labels created from the two transcripts served as a basis for coding the rest of the data using NVIVO software. In NVIVO, I used tree nodes to link the

codes and organized them into main categories and sub-categories. These main categories and sub-categories formed the basis for further data gathering and analysis in Phase 2. For example, I noted that participants from La described three different organizations as partnership, two of which were similar to groups described by participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri. These concepts were therefore further explored in the second phase of data gathering to clarify them.

The second step in the data analysis process involved identifying themes or patterns in the coded data (Patton, 2005). The patterns identified provided bases for clustering and collapsing codes that conveyed similar concepts or meanings to develop meaningful and coherent themes for interpreting the data.

The third and final stage of data analysis involved the integration of themes into constructs for understanding the concept of partnership from the perspectives of the two communities (Patton, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). At this stage, I identified themes for answering each of the two main research questions. For the first research question, I identified and integrated themes that described partnerships in the two communities. I also identified themes related to why people form partnerships, the meanings that they attach to partnerships, the characteristics of groups and organizations that people regarded as partnerships, and factors that influence partnerships.

For the second research question, I integrated themes related to participants' insights regarding how their concepts of partnership could be used to develop partnerships for HIV and AIDS prevention and care in their

communities, who should be involved in such partnerships, and the potential challenges and facilitators of such partnerships.

***Models of partnership in the two communities.*** The analysis of the initial data gathered in this study revealed a pattern in the types of groups that the research participants described as partnerships. I observed that groups that the research participants described as partnerships fell within three distinct categories. The characteristics of the three types of partnership were further explored in the second set of interviews, which included a second iteration of interviews with four previously interviewed individuals.

The three types of partnership identified in the data were; groups that have very basic partnership structures and adopted purely traditional processes, groups that adopt formal structures and processes with varying degrees of sophistication, and groups that integrate both formal and traditional structures and processes. Further exploration of these three types of partnerships revealed specific attributes which served as a basis for naming them.

***Naming the models of partnership.*** The naming process involved a classification of the attributes into three groups. The first category included partnerships initiated mainly by individuals who are traditional in outlook, including traditional leaders and elders. The second category included those partnerships that are mainly initiated by individuals who have understanding of legal/administrative procedures as described by Graham (2000). The third category, found only in the La community, reflected combined attributes of the first two categories.

Based on their attributes, I initially named the three models of partnership as follows: (1) traditional partnership, (2) formal partnership and (3) mixed partnership. This was followed by a review of each model's attributes, namely, its origin, initiation process, and procedures, to determine whether the labels listed above adequately captured those attributes<sup>14</sup>. The review led to a revision of the labels. The final labels adopted were: (1) customary model, (2) adaptive-transactional model, and (3) the culturally dynamic model.

The customary model of partnership was so named because it is deeply rooted in the customs and traditions of the people of the two communities. Research participants from both communities credited their ancestors for their wisdom with establishing this type of partnership and passing the knowledge on to them, their descendants.

The "adaptive-transactional model of partnership" is an adaptation of Western models of partnership. This type of partnerships is mostly formed by individuals who are contemporary in outlook and have understanding of formal and legal procedures.

The "culturally dynamic model of partnership" which was found only in the La community has evolved from the customary model and integrated attributes of the adaptive-transactional model of partnership in a dynamic way. The evolution, initiation and processes of the three types of partnerships are presented in more detail in the results section of this report.

**Data credibility.** Data credibility was enhanced by the use of an audit trail, triangulation of data sources and member checks. An audit trail is a paper

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<sup>14</sup> The attributes of the three models of partnership are summarized in Table 4.

trail of field notes, interview transcripts, journals and memos documenting decisions made throughout the research (Rubin & Babbie, 2001). In this study, the audit trail was made up of my interview notes, memos, interview transcripts and notes from discussions with the research assistants. This audit trail was used to verify information and research procedure to enhance rigor. For example, the notes that I made during the interviews that I facilitated or co-facilitated were checked against transcripts from interviews that were facilitated by the research assistants. This helped to establish consistency in the interview process.

Data triangulation involves combining and comparing data from different methods or sources to check for agreements and disagreements (Patton, 2002). In this study, triangulation involved comparing data from key informant interviews and focus groups. Through these comparisons, information from one source was used to confirm and complement information from another source.

In addition to triangulation, a selected number of participants participated in a second iteration of interviews to verify and clarify previous statements. The second round of interviews also provided an opportunity to further explore new ideas and concepts that had emerged from the data that was gathered in the first round of interviews. The fact that those interview participants had had time to further think about the subject from their previous interviews added value to the information they provided in the second round of interviews.

Furthermore, transcripts from both communities were reviewed by two members of the research team to ensure accuracy. I reviewed the transcripts from the La community by listening to the audio recordings while the research

assistant from La who also speaks *Twɔ* fluently reviewed the tapes and transcripts from the Nsawam-Adoajiri interviews. Cross checking the data this way provided further means for establishing the credibility of the data.

In summary, data was gathered from the two communities using the research design and data gathering methods outlined in this chapter. The data was then analyzed using content analysis. Data analysis also involved using an iterative process in identifying and naming models of partnership found in the two communities. This iterative approach involved classifying the models of partnership based on their characteristics, then reviewing and renaming them, again and again until arriving at names that were deemed to appropriately capture the essence of the models of partnership. Data credibility was enhanced through triangulation of methods. In addition, a few participants were interviewed in two iterations as a way of checking facts and further exploring ideas established from the first iteration. Data credibility was further enhanced by a review of each audio recording and transcript by a second member of the research team to ensure that transcripts accurately represented what the participants had said in the interviews. The findings are presented and discussed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 4: The Concepts of Partnership in La and Nsawam-Adoajiri**

This chapter is a presentation and discussion of the results from an analysis of data that was gathered from the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities regarding their concepts of partnership. Its focus was to answer research question one: *What are the concepts of partnership in the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities?* The presentation of the findings on the concepts of partnership from the perspectives of the two communities follows the integrated framework of partnerships in Table 2.

Research question one was intended to explore the concept of partnership from the perspectives of the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities. In order to answer this research question, I endeavoured to learn from people in the two communities; what they regard as partnerships; what it means to partner with other individuals or groups; why individuals and groups come together to form partnerships; what factors enhance the success of partnerships; and what are some of the challenges experienced by partnerships.

The concepts of partnerships from the perspectives of the two communities presented are here based on the meanings of partnership as expressed by research participants from the two communities. For further understanding, I explored the two concepts using the integrated framework of partnerships proposed in Chapter 1 for guidance. The integrated framework of partnerships comprises four main components, namely, partnership initiation, partnership structure, partnership process and partnership context. The

discussion of the concepts of partnership was followed by a discussion of factors that facilitate or challenge partnerships in each community.

In presenting the results, participants' names were not attached to quotes for reasons of confidentiality. However, I have presented some demographic information about participants to give readers a sense of who are being quoted. First, the interviews and focus groups were numbered in the sequence in which they were conducted. These numbers were used as references for quotes. In addition, Appendix 3 provides demographic details about each key informant. Focus group participants were only identified by the leadership categories to which they belonged.

### **The Concept of Partnership in the La Community**

The findings of this study indicated that, in the La community, a partnership is a group of people or organizations working together towards a common purpose. The common purpose may be to solve a common problem, to provide support for each other, or maintain extended families as close-knit groups. This concept was consistent with the definitions of partnership by Brinkerhoff (2003) and Lomotey (2002) as organizations that bring individuals and groups together to work towards a common purpose.

According to many participants from La, it had always been a practice in their community for people to work together to address the needs of the community or solve problems when they arise. In the words of a male community leader,



*The idea of partnership in our traditional context is a group of people who have come together to solve a problem in the community (Key informant #10, La)*

Another participant, a female community leader said,

*It [the concept of partnership] is basically about communalism. When there is a need in the community, we work together to address that need. (Key informant #8, La)*

This expression by the participants corroborates Meebelo's (1973) assertion that African communities have always known the benefits of working together. A male traditional leader who was also a member of the La Traditional Council (LTC) used the (LTC) to illustrate the communal nature of the concept of partnership. According to this individual, the LTC is a perfect example of partnership in the traditional sense because it is representative of the entire La community and provides a forum for collective decision-making. In his words,

*For me, a very good example of the traditional concept of partnership is what we practice in the La Traditional Council. The council is a partnership among the seven [political] divisions of La. Through it, they all participate in decision-making that affects the whole community. (Key informant #9, La)*

As described earlier in the introduction, the LTC is a traditional ruling council that is made up of the La *Mantse* (king or traditional ruler), the *Mankralo*

(his deputy), the three highest ranking sub-chiefs *Shikiteele* (secretary), *Akwashongtse* (army commander) and *Djasetse* (chief of staff), and seven divisional chiefs. Besides these ranking or voting members, prominent elders and community leaders from La are co-opted onto the council as non voting members. Together with the *La Mantse*, the LTC is the highest decision-making body in the La Traditional Area which includes the La Township and towns and villages under its jurisdiction. According to the traditional leader who was cited above, their ancestors initiated the LTC to fulfill an important need for collective leadership in the community.

*The council was started by our fore-fathers for the chiefs and elders to work with the La Mantse in looking after and protecting the people and the lands of La. When they came to settle here, they divided the land among the various quarters [political divisions] and set up the traditional council to provide [collective] leadership. (Key informant #9, La)*

Other examples of partnerships for addressing common problems were the *La Mansaamo Kpee* (LMK) and the La Youth and Classmates Association (LAYOCA). The LMK is a voluntary based community organization made up of individuals who are committed to the development of La. The association began with a focus on sanitation by organizing the youth for clean-up exercises to enhance environmental sanitation. The LMK later expanded its objectives to include the promotion of education and commerce in the La community. It has built a primary school, and a community vocational school for school-dropouts. It

has also set up a consumer cooperative and a community bank to promote commerce in the La community.

LAYOCA, the second example, is a joint association of several classmates' associations in La. Individual classmates associations representing school year groups had sprung up in the town to support their members and promote education in the community by helping to build and maintain school infrastructure. LAYOCA was formed as a union that coordinates the development activities of these independent year groups.

Besides coming together to solve common problems, some participants from La expressed the viewpoint that a partnership is a group of individuals who have come together to help and support each other. According to a female community leader,

*When we talk about the concept of partnership, we are talking about a group of people in a community who have come together to help each other. (Key informant #8, La)*

The implication of this assertion was that mutual aid groups are partnerships. This description of partnerships conforms to Kropotkin's (1976) discovery that mutual aid collaboration was part of social life in human communities. Typical examples used by the participants from La to illustrate mutual aid as an underlying principle of partnerships were *susu* groups and the various La classmates' associations. *Susu* groups are local financial cooperatives. They are made up of individuals who contribute specified amounts of money on weekly or monthly basis in order to give a lump sum to each

member in turn. The members of such groups often use the moneys they collect as capital for trading, renovating their homes, or purchasing needed household items such as electronic gadgets. One female youth leader, described the *susu groups* as groups that encapsulate the real reason for partnering; helping to solve members' financial problems and at the same time providing social support for them. According to her,

*Individuals get into these groups to help themselves or improve their finances by collecting lump sums of money. Additionally, they look forward to and get relief from the financial, emotional and social support that they receive from the group when they are in difficulties or faced with emergency situations. (Key informant #6, La)*

As explained earlier in the description of LAYOCA, the La classmates associations promote education in the community through the development of school infrastructure. Some of their activities include building libraries, helping to maintain dilapidated school buildings and enhancing sanitation at schools.

Besides promoting education in the La community, one important aspect of the La classmates associations is developing and strengthening relationships among members of the various year groups. These associations enhance their members' sense of belonging by providing them with material and emotional support in time of need. In describing the concept of partnership some participants laid more emphasis on this relationship building and maintenance aspect. As one male community leader explained, when people come together in partnerships, they become "like one family". In his words,

*In our group, we eat, drink and dance together. I mean we live as one family. This really means a lot to me. (Key informant #3, La)*

In the view of some other participants, relationship building and maintenance through partnerships is exemplified by the extended family system as practiced in La. For example, a male traditional leader who participated in this study said,

*The traditional African concept of partnership, I believe, is based on the extended family system. (Key informant #11, La)*

This was echoed by another male community leader who said,

*Partnership is people who are the direct descendants of a common ancestor who have come together to support each other. (Key informant #4, La)*

The La extended family system keeps individuals who are related together in supportive social units known as the La clan houses. The clan houses are traditional institutions that manage extended family resources and take care of various needs of their members. The functions of a clan house include performing traditional rites and ceremonies for its members or on their behalf. Some of the rites and ceremonies it performs are traditional marriages, naming ceremonies for babies, and funeral rites. Besides these rites and ceremonies, the executive committees and elders of a clan house settle disputes among members of the extended family or between them and other people.

The clan house further serves as a social safety net for its members in time of crisis. For example, members of the extended family take care of orphans left behind by a deceased member. According to some research participants, a clan house is an embodiment of the essence of the traditional concept of partnership because of the services and support that it provides to the members of its constituent families. This understanding that members of a partnership become family captures the essence of Nelson and his colleagues' (2001) definition of partnership, which emphasized the values of caring, compassion, community, and human diversity.

When asked why people come together to form partnerships, the research participants from La said that partnerships offer collective advantage. To support this assertion, almost all of the participants cited traditional axiomatic propositions that promote the spirit of partnership. Some of these axiomatic expressions were: *Ekome feemo mli hewale yeo*, meaning "in unity lies strength"; *Ake nine kome moo nmonn*, literally meaning "the task of grooming cannot be accomplished with one hand"; *Mor ker mor woor nor ni eyaa ngwei*, meaning "two people working together can lift a heavy object higher than just one of them working alone". These axiomatic expressions allude to collaborative advantage by conveying a simple message that any task is easier accomplished when people work together. Besides recognizing that collective advantage is generated through partnerships, the research participants indicated that people form partnerships because they yield many benefits. According to the participants, partnerships help to solve individual and collective problems, and provide forums

for social interaction. Through this function, they help to build and strengthen relationships among people. These findings corroborate findings by Foster-Fishman et al. (2001), Huxham and Vangen (2005), Rog et al. (2004) and Packer et al. (2002). According to Huxham and Vangen's (2005) theory of collaborative advantage, one of the main reasons why individuals and organizations enter into partnerships is to increase efficiency.

The findings of this study indicated that mutual support is an important aspect of partnerships in the La community. Groups provide social and emotional support to their members in time of need. Members of a group therefore come to expect such support and feel abandoned when their expectations are not met. For example, people need support when they are bereaved. According to one male youth leader, when faced with an emergency situation, people rely on the support and assistance of their kinsmen and other groups of which they hold membership.

*When an individual is bereaved his or her partners raise funds to assist him or her. They also help to organize the funeral and provide moral support for him. It is in such situations that many people acknowledge the benefits of partnerships. (Key informant #5, La)*

Such supports enjoyed by members of a partnership are characteristic of mutual aid (Gitterman & Shulman, 2005; Steinberg, 1999) which Kropotkin (1976) identified as the earliest form of collaboration within small communities. Some research participants from La referred to the emotional and social supports that individuals receive from their partners as non-material benefits of

partnerships. According to a male traditional leader, these non-material benefits were the things that he appreciated most about partnerships.

*To me material benefits [of partnerships] are not as important as the spirit of brotherliness that we enjoy. (Key informant #2, La)*

Research participants from La also noted that partnerships enhance access to resources. According to some participants, many individuals who lack access to loans from the banks rely on *susu* groups to finance projects that would otherwise require several years of individual savings. This finding supported Ross' (2000) assertion that partnerships increase access to resources.

**Partnership structure.** The structures of partnerships in La vary according to the sophistication of the group. In most partnerships the most discernible structures are leadership or executive committee and membership. In most partnerships involving people who are traditionally oriented, including traditional leaders, chiefs and elders, the traditional leaders and elders form a pseudo or informal executive committee that provides leadership.

In many other groups, especially groups of individuals who are contemporary in outlook, the structure may vary from a formal executive committee and membership, to an executive committee, other standing committees, ad hoc committees, and membership. A male traditional leader explained that the structure of the *La Mansaamo Kpee* evolved gradually with the organization's growth. According to him, in the beginning, there was no formally appointed leadership. As the membership grew, they decided to formally appoint a leadership committee to lead the organization. In his words,



*In the case of the La Mansaamo Kpee, as we continued to grow, we decided that we should formally appoint leaders to guide the association. Formally selecting leaders enabled us to clearly assign duties and roles. This made it easier for us to work together. (Key informant #1, La)*

The structures of formal partnerships in La were similar to those described by Margenum (1999). Margenum (1999) identified the use of subcommittees for carrying out specialized functions as very important for the effective functioning of partnerships. Also, Lomotey (2002) found that the use of sub-committees provided more opportunities for meaningful participation in partnerships.

At meetings, most partnerships can be likened to a town hall meeting or community forum with all members attending. There were, however, a few examples of partnerships in La which adopt a representational system. Examples of these types of partnerships were the La Traditional Council and the La Youth and Classmates' Association.

**The partnership process.** The partnership process begins with its initiation. Initiation of partnerships in the La community usually begins as the brain-child of one person or a small group. This person (or group) usually consults with other people who are considered to be interested parties in the issue. This process of involving others and getting their commitment is what Margenum (1999) referred to as the "problem setting phase" in his three phased framework of partnership. Often, the individuals consulted are other members of the community including close friends, family, acquaintances and colleagues. To illustrate this, a female youth leader who participated in this study said,

*The initiators [of the Esteem Youth Club] were a group of young men and women who wanted to improve the lives of young people in the community. They decided to work together and to involve other people in the neighbourhood who were interested. In the beginning, they mostly approached friends. (Key informant #6, La)*

The initiation of the *La Mansaamo Kpee* (LMK) followed a similar process. According to those participants who are involved in this association, the LMK began as the brain-child of Mr. T. K. Ollennu, a renowned community developer in La. According to one male traditional leader,

*The La Mansaamo Kpee was initiated by one of my ... called Mr. Ollennu. It was his idea to form an association for the development of La and he sold this idea first to some of us who were very close to him and we in turn talked to other people about it. (Key informant #1, La)*

Other times partnerships are started with a discussion among a few people who are interested in a particular issue. A typical example of this initiation process was described by one of the founding members of the La Youth and Classmates Association (LAYOCA). According to this participant, who was a male community leader, the individual classmates' associations were working independently until one group of leaders came up with an idea to form a union to coordinate their activities. In the words of this community leader,

*It was started by a few senior classmates. These individuals came up with the idea of bringing together the various classmates associations of La in*

*a union to harness their efforts to help develop the La community. (Key informant #3, La)*

The initiation of partnership among traditional leaders, however, takes a different form. Usually, when an issue arises in the community a senior traditional leader may initiate a gathering by sending emissaries to other traditional leaders inviting them to a meeting to discuss ways to resolve it. This gathering of traditional leaders may then constitute itself as a partnership for resolving the issue. Even when the idea to organize originates from another individual, he/she is more likely to take it to the traditional leader who has the power to summon other leaders to take action. A male traditional leader who was interviewed in this study stated that,

*It [the Leshie council] was initiated by Yemotey Odoi We. We realized that if all the clan houses in Leshie came together, we would have a stronger voice in the affairs of La. The family head therefore invited the elders of the other Leshie [clan] houses to a meeting and shared the idea with them. They all accepted it and that is how this council was started. (Key informant #2, La)*

Although it was clear from the description above that the initiation of the Leshie council was a collective idea, the head of the clan house was given the credit for his initiative in organizing the meeting.

The partnership initiation process includes initial discussion of the issue of interest. This discussion enables the participants to share ideas about the issue

and develop a collective plan of action. A female youth leader who participated in this study described the initiation process of the La Esteem Youth Club as follows:

*It was a time of economic difficulty and some of us were struggling. Many young men and women were unemployed and were facing hardships. People were losing hope. Some of us started talking about the situation and at one point we decided to meet and discuss what we could do to help each other. (Key informant #6, La)*

This initial sharing of ideas and developing a plan of action is what Margenum (1999) referred to as the “direction setting phase”. According to Margenum (1999) discussions at this phase of partnership initiation enable the potential partners to develop shared objectives, which is one of the practitioner generated themes in Huxham and Vangen’s (2005) partnership framework.

As the objectives begin to shape up, other potential partners are identified and recruited. According to the participant quoted above, when they had a clear idea of what they wanted to do, they began sharing those ideas with other young men and women in the community as a way of broadening the partnership.

*We went round the vicinity reaching out to everyone, especially the youth, explaining the idea and the benefits working together on it. (Key informant #6, La)*

Partnership process in La incorporates tradition in which meetings usually begin with a prayer ritual for spiritual guidance. Traditionally, prayers take the

form of pouring libation. This has translated into the offering of Christian prayers in contemporary partnerships. Also, it is customary that traditional leaders only speak through interpreters who pass communication between the traditional leaders and community members. In other partnerships, however, communication is direct. This is especially true with groups that have formal structures. In such groups, all communication is addressed to the chairperson. Such meetings usually follow an agenda that had been prepared by the executive.

The appointment of leaders varies from group to group. In most groups, leadership is determined by position, age, gender, or social status. Leadership in partnerships involving traditional leaders is typically determined by position: the most senior traditional leader present automatically presides over meetings. One male traditional leader explained thus,

*The presiding officer of the LTC is the 'La Mantse'. He is the de facto leader and he conveys all meetings through the council's administrator.*  
*(Key informant #9, La)*

Where there is no traditional ruler, the oldest male or another person with a higher social status assumes leadership. In some partnerships, leaders emerge based on their knowledge and understanding of the issue of interest. More often than not these are the individuals who started the initiative. In most partnerships with formal structures, leaders are appointed by consensus or through elections. This was described by a male community leader, who said,

*The executive [of the La Youth and Classmates Association] is elected. We know individuals among us who are capable and have leadership qualities. These individuals are nominated for positions and we vote on them. People who prove themselves worthy of leadership are given the opportunity to lead. (Key informant #3, La)*

Elections are conducted either by show of hands or by secret ballot depending upon the sophistication of the group. Groups that select their leaders by elections often hold periodic elections. In other groups, however, leadership positions are held perpetually or until the members lose confidence in the existing leadership.

In some groups, such as the La clan house associations, there is power sharing between elected executives and the elders. The elders perform traditional rites and rituals such as the pouring of libation or conducting traditional marriage rituals. The executive committee, however, conducts all meetings and keeps records of meeting proceedings as well as the financial records of the association. For example, the secretary takes and reads minutes and the chairman leads discussions. The council of elders provides support to the executive by settling disputes or resolving issues that are referred to them by the executive.

The decision-making process in most partnerships was described as participatory in nature. One female community leader described the decision-making process in the clan house associations saying,

*... Matters are discussed openly with all members of the family. (Key informant #13, La)*

She further explained that decisions are usually made by consensus and in some cases through voting by show of hands. This approach to decision-making reflects what Strauss (2002) and Butterfoss et al. (1996) described as a good partnership process.

Another important part of the partnership process which seems to contradict the participatory nature of decision-making was reported about the clan house associations. This involves the elders taking complex matters into chambers for deliberation. In the words of a female traditional leader,

*If an issue is considered very sensitive the elders take it into chambers to discuss it and make a decision. (Key informant #12, La)*

It is, however, important to note that the functions of elders in the clan houses include judiciary functions. It is therefore customary for them to take complex or sensitive matters into chambers for deliberations just as judges do. For example, after initial open discussions, the elders might take decisions about sensitive marital problems into chambers. That way, they are able to debate the issue among themselves and come out when they reach a consensus on the issue. In such situations, decisions returned by the elders become final and are respected by all.

Many meetings, especially those involving traditional leaders, are oral in nature and usually do not involve minute-taking or written-record keeping. Other partnerships, however, adopt formal procedures such as the taking and reading

of minutes. Leadership in such partnerships, therefore require what Graham (2000) referred to as knowledge of legal/administrative procedure.

**Factors that influence partnerships.** The findings of this study indicated that, like partnerships elsewhere, partnerships in the La community are influenced by many factors. These factors include various individual, organizational and contextual factors that either facilitate or impede partnerships. The individual factors identified were related to certain fundamental principles and values that members of the two communities hold dear; the organizational factors were related to leadership and group processes; and the contextual factors were related to shared beliefs and values, and the economic environment within which the partnerships are formed. The individual and organizational factors identified serve as facilitators of partnerships when present. However, their absence poses challenges to partnerships. The contextual facilitators also facilitate partnerships when positive and pose challenges when negative.

**Individual factors.** Individual factors that were identified as facilitative or inhibitive to partnerships included the core values of honesty, trust, and accountability. Other factors identified as affecting partnerships were personal commitment and moral responsibility.

All the research participants from the La community said honesty among partners was an important facilitator of partnerships. According to the participants, it is very important that individuals who are entrusted with leadership positions, especially those entrusted with resources belonging to a partnership,



have this quality to be deemed qualified to lead. According to a male youth leader,

*Honesty and openness are qualities that we look for when selecting leaders. We know that we will only be successful in what we are doing if we put people with these qualities in charge. (Key informant #14, La)*

According to many participants dishonesty, especially among the leaders of partnerships, has negative consequences for partnerships. In the words of a female community leader who participated in this study,

*Dishonesty, especially by leaders, is a serious challenge to a partnership. Such things breed suspicion and mistrust. (Key informant #7, La)*

Some participants hinted that dishonesty within a partnership was often evidenced by embezzlement of funds by people who are placed in charge of finances. For example, a male youth leader from La bluntly said,

*Dishonesty is one of the main challenges to people working together as partners. For example, the \*\*\* partnership started well but now it appears dead because people who were entrusted with moneys failed to account for them. (Key informant #14, La)*

These opposite effects of honesty and dishonesty on partnerships were identified by Huxham and Vangen (2005) and also by Wood and Gray (1991). Huxham and Vangen (2005) noted that honesty enhances collaborative advantage while dishonesty leads to collaborative inertia. Collaborative inertia

refers to the frustrations that often lead to failed partnerships (Huxham & Vangen, 2005).

Huxham and Vangen (2005) also identified the value of trust as an important element in collaborative advantage. According to the Collin's English Dictionary, trust entails a belief that a person is honest and truthful and means no harm. Trust, therefore, has an implied sense of safety for individuals working in association with other people. This was acknowledged by many participants from La who expressed that honest individuals can be trusted with resources that belong to a partnership. They can also be trusted to be fair in dealing with all partners. In the words of a male community leader,

*We must be able to trust people to whom leadership roles are assigned. After knowing people for a long time, we come to know those who are trust-worthy, honest and dedicated, and whom we can count on to be our leaders. (Key informant #4, La)*

Many participants from La also expressed the view that acts of dishonesty breed suspicion and distrust within a partnership. According to them, this often leads to a break up of a partnership and discourages many people from further working with other people. Mutual trust and respect, on the other hand, ensure that partners are comfortable with each other (Doz & Hammel, 1996; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Lord & Church, 1998; Strauss, 2002; Wandersman et al. 1996).

Another facilitative factor identified by many research participants from La was accountability. According to the participants, members of a partnership must be accountable for their actions as well as resources that are placed in their care.

This would ensure that other members continue to trust them. Accountability also implies that members perform tasks that are been assigned to them. This finding corroborates findings by various researchers that accountability is an important element in the effective functioning of partnerships (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; McCann & Gray, 1996).

The majority of participants asserted that lack of accountability poses a challenge to partnerships. According to them, partnerships experience problems when people who are appointed to leadership positions become entrenched and fail to be accountable to their partners. For example, one male youth leader expressed utter disappointment with, what he considered, a lack of accountability among some leaders of an organization to which he belonged. In his words,

*I remember that, in the club that I was just talking about, we bought chairs for hiring as means of generating funds to keep [the association] going. You won't believe, but some of the executive members who were in charge of this venture started giving out the chairs to their relatives and friends without collecting the fees. (Key informant #5, La)*

The negative effects of lack of accountability on partnerships are also well recognized by other researchers including Huxham and Vangen (2005) and Strauss (2002). According to Huxham and Vangen (2005), lack of accountability can be very debilitating to a partnership because it creates a lot of frustration.

Commitment of partners is another factor that affects the functioning of partnerships (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Margenum, 1999; Strauss, 2002). Many participants from La expressed a belief that commitment of partners is one of the

most important factors in the success of a partnership. According to them, people who are committed to the partnership are more likely to fulfill their financial and other obligations to the organization. In the words of a youth leader who participated in one of the youth focus groups in La,

*Some of the factors that aided [our partnership's] success were dedication, commitment, understanding, and discipline among members. People showed their commitment by rallying to carry out the association's activities. (Focus group #1, La)*

This point was reinforced by the majority of participants from La who identified a lack of commitment by partners as a challenge to partnerships. According to them, individuals who are not committed to a partnership frequently absent themselves from meetings and often fail to honour their obligations to the group. One male community leader lamented saying,

*Lack of commitment and punctuality are some of the challenges that we face. Some people never showed up for meetings nor carry out tasks assigned to them. Partnering with such people became very frustrating. (Key informant #4, La)*

Another participant, a male youth leader, expressed similar sentiments using the following words,

*I think lack of commitment and gossiping by partners [negatively] affect partnerships. When partners fail to perform their duties and rather resort to*

*gossip and criticism, the group is unable to achieve anything. (Key informant #14, La)*

According to the participants, failure by members to fulfill their roles in a partnership handicaps the group and prevents it from achieving its objectives. For this same reason, Margenum (1999) noted that it is very important for initiators of partnerships to devote time at the beginning of a partnership to obtain the commitment of individuals who have a stake in the issue of interest.

The two issues, accountability and commitment are not always as straight forward as they seem. Huxham and Vangen (2005) elaborated that sometimes partners who represent groups or organizations are faced with dilemma. Being accountable to one's parent organization usually means checking with that organization before committing to certain partnership actions. While delays from checking back and forth could be interpreted as lack of commitment to the partnership, not checking would also imply lack of accountability to one's parent group.

Another facilitator of partnership identified mainly by youth leaders was moral responsibility. Youth clubs tend to be places where young people meet and begin friendships and even love relationships. According to some participants from La, this social aspect of youth organizations needs to be approached with a sense of moral responsibility and decency. Most research participants indicated that responsible behaviours, especially those that pertain to intimate relationships, are expected of all partners. They suggested that irresponsible behaviours, especially those characterized by engaging in multiple, and

sometimes, inappropriate intimate relationships within a partnership breed rivalry and conflict among group members or between group members and outsiders. A male traditional leader put it in the following words,

*Partnerships thrive when members hold themselves to high moral standards. Illicit love relationships among members [of a group] often lead to disrespect and quarrels. Although this is usually a youth problem, it sometimes happens among mature adults. Such things are most devastating when they occur among leaders. (Key informant #2, La)*

The participants expressed that conflicts affect both interpersonal relationships and group dynamics and often distract a group from its objectives. The impacts of conflicts that are unrelated to a partnership's objectives have not been discussed broadly in the literature on partnerships. However, participants in this study indicated that such conflicts lead to disharmony within a partnership. Internal disharmony slows down or inhibits partnership success (Lomotey, 2002).

**Organizational factors.** Organizational factors identified as facilitative to partnerships in La were mutual understanding, mutual respect, equity and good leadership. These factors influence partnership process as well as interpersonal and intergroup dynamics within a partnership.

All of the research participants from La indicated that it is important for people who are working together to share a common understanding of their objectives and the means to achieve them. Various authors including Butterfoss and Francisco (2004), Margenum (1999), and O'Donnell et al. (1998) have similarly found that shared understanding is a strong facilitator of partnerships.

Margenum (1999) stressed the need to build mutual understanding during the problem setting phase of a partnership. According to him, mutual understanding is achieved through discussions that ensure that the objectives of the partners reflect their collective viewpoints and aspirations.

According to most participants from La, a lack of mutual understanding among partners, on the other hand, is the source of many problems within a partnership. According to one male community leader,

*Lack of mutual understanding [among members] is one of the problems that [negatively] affect partnerships. Sometimes people who are supposed to be working together don't see eye to eye on issues. More often than not, this is the root-cause of many conflicts within a group. (Key informant #10, La)*

Many participants suggested that sometimes individuals and groups come to the partnership table with different agendas, and unless those agendas are discussed and somehow harnessed into a collective agenda, they give rise to conflict. This finding corroborates findings by O'Donnell et al. (1998), Strauss (2002), and Wandersman et al. (1996) that mutual understanding promotes a good partnership process and ultimately the effective functioning of a partnership.

Good partnership process is another key facilitator identified by many participants from La. According to those participants, a good partnership process is characterized by mutual respect and listening. One male traditional leader from La said,

*It is important that we respect each other's views even if [we think] they are unacceptable. When people's views are not respected, they become disgruntled and try to withdraw from the group. (Key informant, #9, La)*

They further said that respect for each other's views is very important because partnerships bring together people with diverse perspectives. They also noted that working together involves sharing ideas which can only be done by listening to each other. MacGillivray and Nelson (2001) described listening as an important value that promotes partnerships; especially partnerships between groups with clear power disparities. Examples of such partnerships are partnerships between mental health service users and service providers.

Another key factor identified as facilitative to partnerships in La was equity. Equity, according to some research participants, means that all partners are treated equally and fairly. When asked what facilitates a partnership, one female traditional leader said,

*All members of our partnership are treated equally and fairly. For example, welfare benefits are granted equally to every partner. (Key informant #11, La)*

Another participant, a youth leader who participated in one of the focus groups said,

*Everyone is treated equally. For example, in this group, we have people of different educational levels and yet when we are at a meeting it is very*



*difficult to tell the difference because we treat each other as equals.*

*(Focus group #1, La)*

According to these research participants, when people feel that they are not being treated fairly, they are likely to pull out of a partnership. This finding corroborates findings by Lord and Church (1998) that partnerships are more effective when members perceive equity. Furthermore, Wood and Gray (1991) indicated that organizations are more likely to join a partnership when they perceive that its initiator is able to ensure fairness and equity.

The majority of participants from La also identified good leadership as a very important factor for the effective functioning and ultimate success of a partnership. According to one youth leaders' focus group participant,

*A very good leadership is a crucial factor for the success of a partnership.*

*Good leaders lead by example and inspire partners to work hard to achieve their [collective] goals. (Focus group #1, La)*

Many participants indicated that partnerships need leaders with vision, the capacity, and skills to steer a group towards its goals. Also, previous studies have shown that good leadership ensures a good process and respect for the core values and principles that promote group work (Butterfoss et al., 1996; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Strauss, 2002; Wurtele, 1999). Huxham and Vangen (2005) identified good leadership as one of the principal factors in building collaborative advantage. Also, Wurtele (1999) called good leadership a key ingredient in collaboration.

When asked to identify challenges to partnerships, many participants from La conversely noted that poor leadership was a major hindering factor to partnerships. In the words of one youth leaders' focus group participant,

*When there are irregularities or problems which can [negatively] affect the organization, the leaders should be able to ensure that things are put right.*

*That requires good leadership skills. (Focus group #2, La)*

This finding was consistent with findings by Strauss (2002) that poor leadership leads to poor partnership process and ultimately to partnership difficulties. It was also consistent with findings by Bellamy, Garvin, MacFarlane and Mowbray (2006) that poor leadership often leads to partnership failure.

**Contextual factors.** Research participants from La identified four main contextual factors that influence partnering in their community. These were culture and tradition, shared beliefs and values, interrelatedness among people in the community, and local economic conditions.

When asked what promotes partnerships in their community, almost all the participants from La said that it was part of their culture and tradition to work together. These participants explained that people are used to working together with other people and so they naturally seek the collaboration of other people whenever they have new ideas about problems in the community. There was evidence of a strong role of culture and tradition in the roles that traditional rulers and elders assume in some community partnerships. Gitterman and Shulman (2005) demonstrated that a culture of mutual support develops gradually within mutual aid groups through engagement, the sharing of ideas, and the

development of trust. It was therefore not surprising that such a culture was said to have developed among people who are mostly related by blood and have lived together for generations.

Another facilitative factor identified in La was shared beliefs and values. According to the participants, individuals who share beliefs are able to work together in harmony. For example, one traditional leader from La asserted that the La Traditional Council has withstood the test of time not only because the ancestors laid down a sound process but also because the people revered their ancestors. Other participants also expressed that shared traditional beliefs play a strong role in keeping extended families together in the clan house associations. This finding supported findings by Wood and Gray (1991) that shared values and beliefs enhance compatibility among partners and consequently promote harmony in a partnership. Also, Nelson et al. (2001) identified the values of caring and compassion as important facilitators of interpersonal relationships which enhance the success of partnerships.

Conversely, many research participants expressed the view that differences in values and beliefs impede the progress of partnerships. This was consistent with research findings by Coe (1988), Nelson et al. (2001) and Wood and Gray (1991). According to some participants from La, differences in beliefs and values typically affect partnerships involving people with different religious beliefs. According one of these participants, an example of partnerships that experience this type of problem is the clan house association. They explained that differences in religious beliefs and values between family members who

have adopted “the new religions<sup>15</sup>” and those who practice African traditional religion sometimes create tension. According to a male youth leader who was also a clan house executive committee member, one source of conflict in the clan house associations is the branding of some customary ceremonies as paganism by some churches. To support this assertion, this participant cited the taking over of naming ceremonies for new-born babies by some churches. According to him, naming ceremonies have always been the preserve of the elders and the extended families. However, some pastors have branded it paganism and are trying to take over this role from the elders. In his words,

*The charismatic churches are creating problems that are eroding our culture. People are beginning to take their children to church to be named. They say our culture is paganism or fetishism. Some of the leaders of these churches come from different cultures, and although they respect their own traditions, they do not give respect to our traditions. (Key informant #14, La)*

This assertion was consistent with findings by Huxham and Vangen (2005) that differences in beliefs and values negatively impact partnerships.

Another contextual factor that participants identified as facilitative of partnerships in La was the interrelatedness among the people of La. Many people in the La community are either related by blood or have lived together for so long that they have become “one people”. According to some participants, inter-marriage among people living together in the same community has created

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<sup>15</sup> Christianity and Islam

strong bonds among them and this enhances cohesion. The interrelations have created a strong sense of belonging among the members of the community and that makes it easier for them to work together. One female youth leader expressed this in the following words,

*What binds us together is simple. It is because we all come from the same stock. We are all brothers [and sisters] and we have a common destiny. So for instance, if you come from Leshie [quarter] you participate in activities to make it strong because if Leshie goes down, you go down with it. (Key informant #6, La)*

According to Rosenberg (2004), interrelatedness reduces isolationism and increases collaboration. Also, Pope and Lewis (2008) noted that partnerships are based on relationships. Pre-existing relationships therefore make it easier for people to collaborate with each other.

Many participants from La indicated that the state of the local economy impacts partnering in the community. According to some of them, the majority of groups in their community are poorly funded because they rely almost exclusively on membership dues and other contributions for all their financial needs. For example, various community development projects that have been undertaken by the La Classmates' Associations in La were completely funded by contributions by their members. However, there are high rates of unemployment in the community and this affects members' ability to pay membership dues or make other financial contributions towards projects. One female community leader

cited a failed attempt by the LTC to establish a community education fund as an example. According to this participant,

*The LTC set up the La Development and Education Fund (LADEF), with the aim of building and funding school projects. The fund is supposed to be financed from local economic activities. This has not been possible because of the existing poor economic conditions and we don't have any external funding. So this good initiative may just die. (Key informant #8, La)*

Some of the participants explained that when people lack the financial means to sustain themselves, it is difficult to expect them to contribute towards projects that are aimed at the collective good of the community. They further asserted that the inability to honour financial obligations also negatively affects membership and meeting attendance. According to them, some members of the various year groups stay away from the activities of classmates' associations because they cannot afford the membership dues.

The finding that a weak local economy negatively impacts partnerships corroborates findings by Wandersman et al. (1996) that the local economic and political contexts are very important factors that initiators of partnerships need to understand at the onset. Understanding the local economic context would enable initiators of community partnerships to seek ways to promote income generation programs alongside the issues of interest to assist community members to participate. According to Lord and Church (1998), addressing the financial issues

facing disadvantaged partners is one way to reduce power inequalities within a partnership.

### **The Concept of Partnership - Nsawam-Adoajiri Community**

Research participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri described the concept of partnership as a social unit that is made up of individuals or groups that come together to achieve a common purpose. The people of Nsawam-Adoajiri further said they enter into partnerships to solve problems of common interest, or to help and support each other. In the words of a female community leader,

*People form partnerships when they have [shared] goals. For example, people work together to solve a problem that concerns all of them. Also, people sometimes work together to help each other in time of need. (Key informant #2, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

The participants' description of partnerships was similar to the concept in La and was also consistent with the definitions of partnership by Brinkerhoff (2003) and Lomotey (2002). The research participants further indicated that problems of common interest include problems that affect the partners as individuals, their families and relations, or their communities. For example, the majority of participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri described durbars with chiefs as partnerships. A male traditional leader from Nsawam-Adoajiri described the durbar as a partnership using the following words,

*One common type of partnership is the durbar. Durbars are partnerships between the chiefs and their people. They are occasions for sharing ideas*

*about how to address problems facing their community. (Key informant #8, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

A durbar is a meeting between the chiefs and elders and their entire communities in a town or village square or in an open field. Durbars take place as festivals or as community consultation on specific issues. In the participants' opinion, durbars are therefore partnerships between the chiefs and elders, and their people.

Other groups that were cited as partnerships included community development projects such as a water committee that was initiated by a traditional ruler to bring potable water to a village near Nsawam, *nnoboa* (mutual help) farming groups, women's groups, traders' associations, and groups of people doing communal labour. According to the traditional leader who was mentioned above,

*My experience was with a partnership for bringing potable water to my village. The issue of water concerns everyone so people responded well when we put out the call for a meeting to discuss it. We agreed on the problem and worked together to find a solution to it. (Key informant #1, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

Research participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri also identified mutual aid groups as partnerships. Many of them expressed the view that a partnership is a group of people who have come together to help each other. A female community leader who was also a service provider said,



*Sometimes people come together to support one another. They come to each other's aid when the need arises and this gives people great relief.*

*(Key informant #2, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

Participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri also used various adages to illustrate the concept of partnership. The most commonly used adage by participants from this community was *tiriko nko egyina* which literally means "one head does not go into council". This adage, which is sometimes translated as "three heads are better than one," is an Akan affirmation that more people have a better chance of solving a problem than one person working alone.

*Tiriko nko egyina*, is an adage that is frequently used to draw attention to the superiority of collective wisdom over individual ideas. Other sayings in Akan that illustrate the advantages of partnering are: *Yeye kro a yegyina, ye pae pae mua ye hwease*, meaning "together we stand, divided we fall; *Praye, wo yi baako a ebu, nanso wokabom a emmu wo din*, meaning "single broomsticks break easily but a bunch of broomsticks is very strong." These Akan adages contrast individual vulnerability to collective strength.

All the research participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri also showed clear understanding that partnerships generate collaborative advantage. When asked why people form partnerships in their community, the first reason they gave was that partnerships make work easier. This was consistent with Huxham and Vangen's (2005) theory of collaborative advantage. It was also consistent with findings by Rog et al. (2004) and Packer et al. (2002) that partnerships increase efficiency. Other reasons that participants gave for partnering were that

partnerships provide a forum for sharing ideas, and also yield many benefits to their members. In the words of one female community leader,

*There are a lot of benefits in working together. It saves time. For example, a piece of work that could take one individual three days to complete might take a group of people less than a day. (Key informant #3, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

Another participant, a male community leader said,

*A burden becomes lighter when it is shared by many people. It could be very tiring and frustrating when tackling a big problem alone. (Key informant #7, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

These responses were consistent with findings by Foster-Fishman et al. (2001), Huxham and Vangen (2005). Foster-Fishman et al. (2001) found that partnerships often yield numerous benefits to their members.

According to all participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri, when people work together, they are able to pool both human and material resources together to enable them to accomplish their objectives more easily and faster. The participants recognized that pooling of resources also includes knowledge and sharing of ideas. As one male community leader and service provider explained, a partnership provides a forum for sharing ideas in order to identify alternative solutions to a problem. In his words,

*The advantage in working together with other people is that they bring different perspectives to the problem. This enables the group to select the best solution or at least try alternative solutions. (Key informant #7, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

According to this participant, sharing of ideas and experience makes a task easier to accomplish. This replicated previous research findings that showed that partnerships increase a group's resources, and ultimately, enhances its effectiveness (Ross, 2000; Wandersman et al. 1996). Furthermore, sharing of ideas is one of the dynamics of mutual aid groups identified by Gitterman and Shulman (2005). The recognition by the participants that partnerships involve the sharing of ideas provides another linkage between partnership and mutual aid. According to Gitterman and Shulman (2005), the process of sharing of information in mutual aid allows individuals to share their knowledge and experience of specific situations with others who are grappling with similar situations.

When asked what benefits people derive from partnerships, most of the participants mentioned personal gains through mutual support, personal enrichment through the sharing of knowledge and experience, and strengthened interpersonal relationships among partners. These findings were consistent with some of the dynamics of mutual aid outlined by Gitterman and Shulman (2005), namely, sharing data, the dialectical process, discussing a taboo area, all-in-the-same-boat phenomenon, and mutual support. The participants who associated

partnerships with personal gains noted that mutual support brings relief in time of need. According to one female community leader,

*Coming together has brought some kind of new life to us. In many groups, members are provided financial assistance for funerals, out-dooring (child naming) ceremonies, and other family emergencies. These things bring many people relief. (Key informant #2, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

In the words of another participant, who was a traditional leader,

*Through mutual help, people who did not have any hope now have some kind of hope of becoming successful. At least they know that they can get help from the group when they are in need. (Focus group #1, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

Many participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri also said individuals who join partnerships derive personal enrichment through the sharing of knowledge and experience. According to one of these participants, who was a male community leader and service provider,

*You gain a lot of experience from working with other people in a partnership. For example, some people who are shy become more outspoken as they participate in discussions. (Key informant #7, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

This finding was supported by Steinberg's (1999) assertion that members of mutual aid groups learn from each other.

Some participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri also noted that partnerships strengthen interpersonal relationships through regular social interactions. According to these participants as they work with other people, old friendships are strengthened and new ones are developed. According to one youth leaders' focus group participant,

*[Partnerships] bring people closer and together, fostering unity and friendliness. "Nnobia" farming gives a clear example of this. Through the many hours spent working together in "nnobia" farming groups, people become very close, almost like family. (Focus group #2, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

This assertion emphasized the role of partnerships in building strong community relations. It was also consistent with findings by Packer et al. (2002) and Lomotey (2002) that community partnerships promote good relationships among their members.

**Partnership structure.** Partnerships in Nsawam-Adoajiri have simple structures. Most partnerships in Nsawam-Adoajiri have simple structures made up of leaderships and members. There were, however, other partnerships that have more formal structures, usually including an executive committee. In describing the structure of a partnership between a parent-teacher association and a school's alumni association for a school building project, a male youth leader said,

*We formed an executive committee under the chairmanship of the assistant head teacher to lead the project. (Key informant #4, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

Both traditional and non-traditional partnerships in this community sometimes include smaller committees for specific tasks and responsibilities. In traditional partnerships, such committees are usually set up on an as needed basis. In contemporary partnerships, however, such committees may include such standing committees as finance committees, social committees, and ad hoc committees. For example, the participant who talked about the school building committee said,

*Besides the executive committee, we had other committees for specific tasks and responsibilities. These included a finance committee and a welfare committee. The welfare committee looks after the needs of members. (Key informant #4, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

The sub committees form an important part of the structure of partnerships. According to Margenum (1999), sub committees are important because they enable small groups to focus on specific tasks while the larger group carries on with a partnership's regular activities.

Some partnerships in the Nsawam-Adoajiri community also adopt representational formats. One example of this type of partnership was a partnership between a parent-teacher association and an alumni association of a school in Gyankrom. This was a partnership that was initiated to put up an

elementary school building. According to one research participant who was a member of this partnership, the partnership committee was made up of representatives of the parent-teacher association, the school, and the alumni association.

**Partnership process.** In the Nsawam-Adoajiri community, a partnership usually begins as an idea by one individual or a small group of individuals. In most partnerships, the initiator (or initiators) identifies an idea and consults with other members of the community with whom he or she shares interest in the issue at hand. This consultation corresponds to Margenum's (1999) "problem setting phase". Normally, those consulted tend to be family, friends, acquaintances and colleagues. For example, the female community leader and service provider who was cited earlier said,

*\*\*\*\* was my idea. I brought about the whole idea because I know many hardworking women in this town and I know we are all interested in seeking children's welfare in this community. So I suggested to them that we come together and form [a group] to care for street children and they all agreed. (Key informant #2, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

This initial group of individuals often becomes the core group that goes out to recruit other members into the partnership.

The initiation of partnerships involving traditional leaders, such as chiefs and elders, is usually credited to the most senior traditional leader who invites subordinates to the initial meeting, even though the original idea may not be his. Subordinates invited may include other chiefs, elders and community leaders. A

male traditional ruler gave himself credit for initiating a partnership for pipe-borne water in his community said,

*I initiated the water committee. We [the elders and I] were concerned about the lack of clean water in the village so we asked the “town crier”<sup>16</sup> to make an announcement to the whole community. We summoned them to a meeting to discuss the issue and find a solution to it. (Key informant #1, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

This participant credited himself for initiating the water committee because as the traditional ruler, he had the authority to summon community members to a meeting. However, he made it clear that it was a shared concern between him and his elders that brought about the initiation. In that situation, it did not matter whether the idea to start a water committee came from one of the elders or another member of the community. It was the traditional leader’s privilege to take the credit. This is not different from credit given to Heads of State and Heads of Government for public policy that may have originated from rank and file public servants.

Partnership meetings in Nsawam-Adoajiri begin with a prayer ritual for spiritual guidance. Prayers may be in the form of libation for people who are traditional in outlook or Christian prayers for people who are religious and/or contemporary in outlook. As customary in this community too, communication in partnerships involving traditional leaders, is usually done through an interpreter. However, in other partnerships, especially ones with formal executive

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<sup>16</sup> An individual who makes announcements on behalf of traditional rulers



committees, communication is done directly without using an interpreter. In such partnerships, the chairperson together with a secretary regulates the meeting and keeps order. Such meetings usually follow an agenda that had been prepared by the executive. These processes were similar to those adopted by partnerships in La.

Partnerships in Nsawam-Adoajiri also vary in the way they select their leaders. Leadership in partnerships involving traditional leaders in Nsawam-Adoajiri is typically determined by position, age, gender, and social status, or in some cases by eloquence. In most cases, the most senior traditional leader present presides over group's meetings. In the words of the traditional ruler who initiated the water committee,

*As the chief of this [traditional] area, I was the automatic leader. It was my duty to bring the people together to discuss the problems of the community and find solutions to them and therefore I had to chair the meeting. (Key informant #1, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

This statement was corroborated by another participant, a female community leader, who said,

*The chiefs have much power. Whenever they are involved in any partnership, they automatically become the leaders. (Key informant #10, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

Where there is no traditional ruler, the oldest male or another person with a high social status may take up the leadership role. In some partnerships,

leaders just emerge based on their knowledge and understanding of the issue of interest. In other partnerships, however, leaders are appointed by consensus or through elections. Describing how the leadership of a market women's association in Nsawam was appointed, a female community leader who participated in this study said,

*In the beginning, we just appointed our leaders by consensus but now we elect them. Once we all agree on the right people to lead the organization we feel comfortable about it. (Key informant #3, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

While some groups hold periodic elections to fill leadership positions, in other cases leadership positions are held perpetually or until the members lose confidence in the leaders.

Decision-making in most partnerships in the Nsawam-Adoajiri community could be described as participatory in nature. Most research participants said that, decision-making in partnerships, in which they have participated, was by consensus. They indicated that all partners usually have a say in decisions. In the words of a male community leader,

*During meetings, there is sharing of ideas. Everyone has a say. The best ideas are taken when making decisions. So there is democracy. (Key informant #6, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

Consensus is usually reached through discussions among members. This approach to decision-making was also similar to what was described by the participants from La, and also consistent with findings by Strauss (2002). Many

non-traditional partnerships adopt the democratic procedure of voting by a show of hands.

Meetings involving traditional leaders are oral in nature and usually do not involve minute-taking or the keeping of written records. Contemporary partnerships, however, adopt such formalities as taking minutes during meetings and reading them at the beginning of the next meeting. They also keep financial records and conduct periodic auditing of accounts. All of these tasks require knowledge of legal/administrative procedure (see Graham, 2000).

**Factors that influence partnerships.** Information shared by participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri revealed a strong influence of individual, organizational and contextual factors on partnerships. In this community too, the individual factors were related to values that research participants identified as fundamental in their community. The organizational factors were related to leadership and partnership process and the contextual factors were related to culture and the local economic environment. In this community too, the absence of factors identified as facilitators were said to present challenges to partnerships.

**Individual factors.** Individual factors identified as influential to partnerships in the Nsawam-Adoajiri community were honesty, trust, accountability, and commitment. Responses by most participants in this study indicated that honesty is an important value that serves as a basis for other values that promote harmony within groups and hold them together. According to one female community leader,

*Honesty ensures the success of partnerships. It sets the basis for all other values and principles that enable people to work well together. (Key informant #3, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

Another female community leader said,

*We look for honesty, hard work and previous experience when identifying partners. These qualities indicate whether potential partners would be committed or not. (Focus group #2, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

Conversely, when asked to name some of the challenges experienced by partnerships, most participants from this community mentioned dishonesty. In the words of the female community leader quoted above,

*Challenges to partnerships include dishonesty and self-centeredness. Partnerships experience challenges when members are not honest or when they think only about themselves and personal gains. (Focus group #2, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

This indicated that the people of Nsawam-Adoajiri recognized the opposite impacts of honesty and dishonesty on partnerships. This finding supported findings by Huxham and Vangen (2005) and Wood and Gray (1991) both of whom identified honesty among partners as a very important element for building collaborative advantage.

Most research participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri also related honesty to trust. According to them, individuals who are dishonest cannot be trusted as

partners. Several studies have demonstrated that trust builds and sustains interpersonal and intergroup relationships (Doz & Hammel, 1996; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Strauss, 2002; Wandersman et al., 1996). Lack of trust, on the other hand, creates conflict within partnerships (Strauss, 2002).

Another factor identified as facilitative of partnerships was accountability. According to the majority of research participants from this community, it is important for partners to be accountable to the partnership. Accountability is vital to the success of a partnership, especially from people who have been assigned leadership roles or important tasks. Responses by participants also indicated that lack of accountability by partners serves as a hindrance to partnerships. They expressed that lack of accountability creates mistrust and causes partners to lose confidence in each other. According to them, people who contribute financially towards projects like to know how the money is being spent. So when leaders fail to be accountable, people become suspicious. A female community leader said the following about a partnership, in which she was involved,

*There were accusations here and there about financial improprieties.*

*Many people lost confidence in the leadership and this caused some of them to quit. It took a lot of effort for us to resolve the issue and get ourselves back on track. (Key informant #3, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

This challenge was also closely related to the problem of dishonesty. For example, a participant noted that placing a dishonest person in charge of the finances of a group often leads to financial impropriety which can seriously affect a partnership's ability to pursue its goals. This finding was consistent with

Huxham and Vangen's (2005) finding that lack of accountability leads to collaborative inertia. It was also consistent with findings by Strauss (2002) that lack of accountability creates conflict which negatively impacts partnerships.

Another factor identified as facilitative of partnerships in the Nsawam-Adoajiri community was members' commitment to the partnership and their dedication to its objectives. According to the female community leader who was cited above,

*...commitment and dedication have ensured the success of our group. Most of us attend meetings quite regularly and actively participate in the group's activities. When people are committed they put in all their efforts to the group's project to ensure that it succeeds. (Key informant #3, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

According to some participants, commitment involves regular attendance at meetings and active participation in activities. Furthermore, people who are dedicated and committed to a partnership fulfill their financial and other obligations in order to promote the group's success. In the words of one male community leader,

*In the \*\*\* Foundation, we have a core group of people who are very reliable. They attend meetings regularly, pay their dues and help to implement our [the group's] ideas. Without these individuals, I don't think we would have achieved anything. (Key informant #7, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

This finding supported findings by Huxham and Vangen (2005), Margenum (1999), and Strauss (2002) that commitment facilitates partnerships. According to Margenum (1999), commitment is an attribute that ensures that partners would fulfill their roles and obligations (see also Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Krogh, 1998).

In reverse, many research participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri said that lack of commitment by partners poses a serious challenge to a partnership. As one male youth leader explained, when partners lack commitment, they display “nonchalant attitudes” towards a group’s activities. Such people often leave the burden for a few people to shoulder. According to him,

*The challenges include “social loafing”, that is when people leave the whole task to a few others. It is very discouraging when some partners fail to perform their roles. It’s all due to a lack of commitment. (Key informant #4, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

The majority of research participants asserted that lack of commitment results in poor turnout at meetings, failure to pay their dues or contribute otherwise towards achieving the partnership’s objectives. A participant in the community leaders’ focus group put it in the following words,

*A partnership’s success depends upon whether or not members have time to attend meetings. A group can achieve nothing when most of the members regularly absent themselves from meetings. (Focus group #1, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

These findings were similar to findings from the La community. They were also consistent with findings by Margenum (1999) that commitment is an important element in successful partnering. Foster-Fishman et al. (2001) also noted that poor attitudes to partnership activities lead to the demise of a partnership.

**Organizational factors.** Research participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri identified three main organizational factors that influence partnerships. These were mutual understanding, good leadership, and good process.

When asked to identify factors that facilitate partnerships, the majority of participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri said that partners need mutual understanding about the goals and objectives of the partnership and how to pursue them. In the words of a male traditional leader,

*The water project that I just talked about was successful because there was mutual understanding. We shared ideas about what we wanted to do, and how to do it. In my eyes, this is what has helped us to be successful.*  
(Key informant #1, Nsawam-Adoajiri)

The participants noted that lack of mutual understanding among partners often leads to major challenges to partnerships. According to the traditional leader quoted above,

*Sometimes there is misunderstanding of issues. A case in point was when we instituted a funeral levy for all [people] 18 years and above in times of bereavement. Some people disagreed with the idea and refused to pay.*  
(Key informant #1, Nsawam-Adoajiri)



In the opinion of the research participants, some of the challenges resulting from lack of mutual understanding are suspicion, distrust and petty squabbles. Some of the participants further explained that it is difficult to achieve mutual understanding when some partners lay more emphasis on their personal interests than on the collective interest. This finding from Nsawam-Adoajiri corroborated findings by O'Donnell et al. (1998), Strauss (2002) and Wandersman et al. (1996) that lack of understanding among partners often leads to problems. According to Strauss (2002) partnerships that are unable to build mutual understanding among their members about their common objectives at the onset often struggle with the partnership process.

Several participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri opined that partnerships need good and effective leaderships to be successful. In the words of a female community leader,

*Having good and effective leaders facilitates partnerships. (Key informant #3, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

This finding was consistent with findings by several research studies including studies by Huxham and Vangen (2005), Strauss (2002) and Wurtele (1999). Huxham and Vangen's (2005) theory of collaborative advantage identified the quality of leadership as an important element in partnerships. Also, Strauss (2002) and Wurtele (1999) stressed the role of good leadership in promoting good partnership processes.

Consistent with the findings by Strauss (2002) and Wurtele (1999), many participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri expressed the understanding that good

leadership ensures good process and respect for the core values and principles that promote group work. A male community leader explained that,

*The success of a partnership depends on having leaders who uphold the rules. Such leadership ensures that other members also abide by the rules. (Key informant #7, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

When individuals with vision, leadership capacity, and leadership skills are appointed to leadership positions in partnerships, there is greater likelihood that the group will thrive. This finding supported Huxham and Vangen's (2005) finding that good leadership is an important element in building collaborative advantage.

The participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri also noted that poor leadership, on the other hand, impedes the progress of a partnership. According to them, when individuals who lack leadership abilities assume the leadership of a partnership it often results in poor process and ultimate failure. In the words of the community leader cited above,

*A PTA [parent-teacher association] of which I was a member was not successful because the elected leaders did not perform well. Those who were elected to lead the association could not give good direction to the group. They simply lacked vision. (Key informant #7, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

This finding was consistent with findings by Bellamy et al. (2006), Strauss (2002) and Wolff (2001a) that poor leadership lead to poor partnership processes. According to Bellamy et al. (2006), poor leadership behaviours elicit

problematic responses from other members and this often results in conflicts, non-fulfillment of roles, and absenteeism.

**Contextual factors.** Participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri also identified three main contextual variables that influence partnerships. These were culture and tradition, interrelatedness, and the local economic environment.

Most participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri said that partnering was part of their culture and tradition. Responses by participants from this community indicated that living together for a long time has developed a culture of trust and mutual support which makes it natural for people to come to the aid of one another. In this community too, the influence of culture and tradition was evident in the roles assumed by traditional rulers and elders in issues affecting the entire community.

The next contextual factor that affects partnerships in Nsawam-Adoajiri was the people's interrelatedness. According to research participants from this community, people in their community have lived together for generations and have consequently developed strong inter-relationships that make it easy for them to work together. A male traditional leader who participated in this study said,

*The people of Nsawam and Adoajiri are one people. We have always lived together. We are, therefore, able to come together to face challenges to this community. (Key informant #9, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

Another traditional leader said,

*Many people in this community are related. Even people who are not related by blood are bound together by neighbourliness and friendships developed from years of living together in the same community. (Focus group #1, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

Interrelatedness is one of the elements in sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Also, Rosenberg (2004) noted the role of interrelatedness in promoting a sense of belonging and group commitment. Both McMillan and Chavis (1986) and Rosenberg (2004) indicated a relationship between interrelatedness and individual commitment to a group.

Another facilitative factor identified by participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri was shared values and beliefs. According to most participants, they are able to collaborate successfully because they share certain values as a people with one culture. Some of these values were honesty, trust, and accountability all of which have been discussed as individual factors. According to one participant in the youth leaders' focus group,

*We are one people and we have common principles and values that guide the things we do as a community. Some of our principles and values are on moral behaviour. For example, people know that they will be ridiculed if they embezzle funds belonging to a group. Such values promote honesty and accountability and promote the success of partnerships. (Focus group #2, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

These findings were consistent with findings by Coe (1988), Lord and Church (1998), Nelson et al. (2001), and Wood and Gray (1991) that shared beliefs and values increase compatibility among partners. Coe (1998) noted that shared principles and values are key factors in promoting harmony within partnerships.

Some research participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri further indicated an understanding that the local economy has an impact on partnerships. A strong local economy is supportive of partnership activities. Weak economies, on the other hand, inhibit partnering. According to the participants many partnerships struggle with funding and this affects their ability to reach their goals. In the words of one male community leader,

*Money is also a factor in ensuring that a partnership is successful. Many organizations find it very difficult to raise funds to do the things that they would like to do. (Key informant #7, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

When asked why these groups struggle financially, they said that most organizations in their community rely on the contributions of members for funding their activities. However, there are many people in the community who cannot afford such contributions. In the words of a participant in the community leaders' focus group,

*Challenges to partnering include lack of funds. For many groups, this happens when individual members fail to make their contributions. It creates a lot of problems. (Focus group #1, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

This finding was consistent with findings by Wandersman et al. (1996) that healthy local economic environments facilitate partnerships.

### **A Comparison of Concepts: La versus Nsawam-Adojiri**

The concepts of partnership expressed by participants from the La and Nsawam-Adojiri communities were similar. There were, however, both commonalities and differences in factors identified as influential to partnerships and the power of traditional leaders in partnerships. These similarities and differences are discussed below.

Consistent with the concepts of partnership described by several researchers, including Boudreau (1991), Brinkerhoff (2003), Foster-Fishman et al. (2001), Huxham and Vangen (2005), Lomotey (2002), and Wandersman et al. (1996), the people of both communities conceptualize partnerships as individuals and groups that have come together to work towards a common purpose. For example, Brinkerhoff's (2003) definition of partnership as "a dynamic relationship among diverse actors, based on mutually agreed objectives" captures the essence of partnerships in both communities because participants' responses indicated that developing a common purpose at the initial stages was an important part of partnership building in both communities. The subject of Boudreau's (1991) study was Quebec's mental health partnerships for housing, a partnership that brought together the Government of Quebec, housing-providers, support service-providers, mental health service users and family members for the common purpose of improving housing for people with mental health

problems. Similarly, Wandersman et al. (1996) identified the common purpose of crime prevention as the basis of the community partnership that they studied.

Research participants from both communities also asserted that partnering was part of their cultures. According to them, their communities had always relied on communalism to provide for their needs. Partnering was, therefore, a social institution of great utility for both communities. This assertion that partnership was an essential part of social life in both communities corroborated Kropotkin's (1976) standpoint that collaboration evolved early in human development as a mechanism for self preservation. Kropotkin (1976) posited that, contrary to the Darwinian dictum that competition was the essence of survival, gregarious animals increased their chances of survival by keeping together and supporting each other.

To confirm their understanding of partnerships, participants from both communities cited axiomatic expressions. In both communities, the citation of an axiomatic expression was usually preceded by the phrase "our ancestors said" or "our elders said" indicating that the axiom represented knowledge that had been passed down by their ancestors. Axioms that are ascribed to the ancestors embody traditional philosophical values. In African traditional narrative, the citation of axioms indicates a speaker's maturity and deeper understanding of a subject. Axiomatic expressions, therefore, form a very important part of African traditional narrative.

Chukwu (1998) captured the philosophical essence of axioms in African traditional narrative in his rendition of Nkrumah's (1964) *Philosophy of*

Decolonization when he stated that “it is quite proper, instead of giving a direct definition of an introduced term, to elucidate its meaning by means of axioms” (p.82). MacGaffey (1981) recognized the relevance of African traditional narratives in philosophy. The invocation of axioms by the participants in this study was therefore meant not only to show their understanding of the topic, but also to affirm a strong belief in the advantages and benefits of partnerships.

**Principles underlying the concepts of partnership.** The concepts of partnership explicated by research participants from the La community and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities had two main underlying principles in common. These were: using collaborative advantage to solve problems, and for providing mutual aid. In addition to the two shared underlying principles, the concept of partnership in La had a third underlying principle, namely, using collaborative advantage for group self-preservation.

The principle of collaborative advantage was implied in participants’ descriptions of partnerships in both communities. Members of both communities demonstrated an understanding that when people work together, they are able to accomplish a task that is too big or too complex for one individual or group. Pussey (2005) noted that this understanding of collective advantage is shared by all human societies and forms the basis of collaboration among human beings.

Groups that were described as partnerships in the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities focus on solving both individual and collective problems. These groups utilize the collaborative advantage generated through their numerical strength and the pooling of resources to pursue their common



objectives. The concepts described by participants from both communities also demonstrated Huxham and Vangen's (2005) six bases for pursuing collaborative advantage. These bases of collaborative advantage were access to resources, shared risk, efficiency, coordination and seamlessness, learning, and emotional imperative. For instance, the *susu* groups or local financial cooperatives found in La, as well as traders' associations and parent-teacher associations in both communities are formed primarily to pool resources towards solving specific individual or community problems. These organizations had all been initiated to overcome individual or small group self-insufficiency with regards to resources.

Risk sharing is demonstrated through the activities of groups like the La Youth and Classmates' Association and the parent-teacher/alumni associations' school building committee of Djankrom. Although joint investment into projects by the partners in these organizations only carry minimal risk, there was shared understanding among the partners that benefits as well losses would be borne by all.

Enhanced efficiency is one primary reason for partnering in both communities. Huxham and Vangen (2005) noted that many organizations seek partnerships with other organizations in order to enjoy economies of scale. Also, Wandersman et al. (1996) found that partnerships among social service agencies enhance efficiency by reducing duplication of services. Consistent with these findings, participants in both communities asserted that partnerships enable groups to complete tasks well and at a faster pace.

There were also instances in the two communities where the three remaining bases of collaborative advantage identified by Huxham and Vangen (2005), namely, coordination and seamlessness, learning, and moral imperative were applicable to partnerships in La and Nsawam-Adoajiri. For example, coordination was the main reason behind the formation of the LAYOCA in La. As explained earlier in this paper, the LAYOCA was formed to coordinate the activities of the various individual classmates' associations to ensure harmonious development. Also, many research participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri identified learning and sharing of experience as important outcomes of partnerships. As well, responses by research participants from both communities indicated that the moral imperative was the driving force behind voluntary organizations like the LMK and LAYOCA in La, and a village water committee near Nsawam-Adoajiri. The focus of all three organizations was on solving community problems.

The second shared principle underlying partnerships in the two communities was the use of collaborative advantage for mutual aid. When asked why individuals and groups come together to form partnerships, many participants from both communities responded that "people enter into partnerships to help each other". Mutual aid or the voluntary and reciprocal exchange of resources and services for mutual benefit is an intrinsic part of the culture of small communal societies (Kropotkin, 1976). Mutual support, one of the ten dynamics of mutual aid identified by Gitterman and Shulman (2005), was a major reason for partnering in both communities. For instance, the description of *nnoboa* groups (mutual help farming groups) and *susu* groups (local financial

cooperatives) as partnerships underscores the importance of collaboration for mutual aid in the two communities. The primary activity of such groups is to pool resources to assist each member in turn.

Other dynamics of mutual aid such as information sharing, emotional support and problem solving are also characteristic of partnerships in both La and Nsawam-Adoajiri. For example, research participants from both communities said that partnerships share the joys and sorrows of their members. This includes helping them to solve their individual problems.

Use of collaborative advantage for group self-preservation, the third underlying principle of the concept of partnership in La corroborates Kropotkin's (1976) hypothesis that collaboration rather than competition was a mechanism for the preservation of species. In La, this principle pertained to partnerships among extended families to promote their collective interests and typified by the La clan house associations. Such groups emphasize relationships which reflect the true meaning of the term partnership in the Ga language. As discussed earlier in this report, Ga people refer to their partners as *wo webii* which is closer in meaning to family members. Although the participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri did not identify any partnerships that had been formed mainly for group preservation, they recognized that partnerships foster the building and maintenance of relationships.

Generally, many partnerships in both La and Nsawam-Adoajiri reflect combinations of the principles discussed here. A group may, however, emphasize one principle more than another. For example, a group whose

primary concern is to provide mutual aid eventually develops into a network of friends. As these relationships become stronger among partners, they develop stronger sense of belonging. Also, groups like the LMK that focus on community development often provide mutual support for their members.

Partnerships in the two communities play an important a role in the building and maintenance of relationships. The research participants clearly indicated that the relationships among people who are working together as partners transcends working relationships. In the words of some participants partners “become family”. As people work together, they develop the bonds of trust, mutual understanding, and shared values and behaviours that Baron, Field, and Schuller (2000) described as elements that create active connections within human networks. According to Baron and his colleagues (2000) such active connections are inherent in families.

In a reverse direction, existing relationships enable the building of partnerships in the two communities. This finding confirmed something that I have always known about partnerships in African communities: that they are as much about relationships as they are about solving problems. This interesting association between partnerships and relationships support Montuori and Conti’s (2004) call for a move from the old meaning of partnership, which looks at structures and processes, to a meaning that looks more at the dynamics of human relationships and how they are created and maintained through working together. According to Montuori and Conti (2004), the term partnership could mean much more than simply working together. It is therefore imperative for the

study of partnerships to focus more on the quality of relationships involved in partnering.

**Partnership structure and process.** Partnership structure in both communities vary from very simple structures of leadership and members, to more complex forms involving executive committees, standing committees, and ad hoc committees. In both communities, the complexity of partnership structure depends, to a large extent, on what Graham (2000) referred to as knowledge of legal administrative procedures. Knowledge of legal/administrative procedure is exhibited through activities including the registration of an organization, record keeping, and the adoption of formal procedures, such as the Robert's Rules of Order during meetings. In both communities, partnerships involving people who are traditional oriented tend to have simple structures while contemporary partnerships tend to have more complex structures.

Also, the findings of this study indicated that partnerships in both communities adopt either self-representation or group representation formats. Group representation formats show clear understanding of the democratic principle of representation which allows the inclusion of large groups of people through their natural leaders or appointed representatives.

There was an indication that traditional leaders in Nsawam-Adoajiri tend to have more power in partnerships than traditional leaders in La. It was clear that in La, the elders and traditional rulers lead by committee. For example, although the La *Mantse* presides over the LTC, he does so with the will of the people expressed through their representative chiefs. In Nsawam-Adoajiri, however, the

paramount chief becomes the de facto leader of a partnership in which he is involved and is supported by the sub-chiefs who need his approval to serve. This difference may be explained by the fact that the two communities practice different models of traditional governance; a decentralized model in La, and a centralized model in Nsawam-Adoajiri<sup>17</sup>.

This study also found that the partnership process in the two communities were quite similar. In both communities, partnership processes depend, to a large extent, upon the initiators' orientation and knowledge of formal procedure. Partnership initiators with traditional orientation adopt traditional processes while those who are contemporary in outlook adopt contemporary processes.

The appointment of leaders of partnerships in both communities follows similar procedures. Leaders are either appointed by position or status in most traditional partnerships while leaders of contemporary partnerships are usually elected. The only difference observed between the two communities was the shared leadership format between elders and elected executives in the La clan house associations. Examples of this leadership format were not found in the Nsawam-Adoajiri community.

The findings of this study further indicated that decision-making in most partnerships in both communities is inclusive. Research participants from both communities asserted that decision-making in partnerships is by consensus. Knapp et al. (1998) identified this approach to decision-making as part of a good partnership process. Also, Strauss (2002) noted that such inclusive processes motivate participation in partnerships.

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<sup>17</sup> The two models of traditional governance have been described in detail in Chapter 1.

**Factors that influence partnerships.** The findings of this study revealed several common factors that influence partnerships in the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities. These included various factors operating at the individual, organizational and contextual levels.

In both communities, individual factors identified as facilitative to partnerships were related to personal integrity. Tracy (2007) described personal integrity as a foundation of character and a primary value that locks in all other values and virtues held by an individual. According to Tracy (2007), it is personal integrity that enables individuals to adhere to other principles and values and to live consistently with them.

From the perspectives of participants from the two communities therefore, partnerships with individuals who lack personal integrity are unlikely to succeed. They also stressed that the value based qualities were especially important for individuals who hold leadership positions within a partnership. For example, several participants from La pointed out that dishonesty among leaders of community-based organizations is associated with embezzlement and misappropriation of funds.

Lack of moral responsibility which was identified as a problem affecting partnerships in La was not identified as a problem by participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri. This factor relates to the conduct of responsible relationships among partners, especially among the youth groups that were described as partnerships. Lack of moral responsibility can be described as one indicator of

lack of personal integrity which was a common problem affecting partnerships in both communities.

The organizational factors that were identified in both communities as facilitative to partnerships were related to good partnership process. Research participants from both communities clearly recognized that a good partnership process enhances success which was consistent with findings by Foster-Fishman et al. (2001), Doz and Hammel (1996), O'Donnell et al. (1998) and Strauss (2002).

In both communities, there was recognition that shared culture and sense of community play important roles in partnerships. The three elements of sense of community that were identified by McMillan and Chavis (1986), namely, interrelatedness, sense of belonging and the shared values and beliefs were viewed as very important facilitators of partnership in both communities.

Wandersman and his colleagues' (1996) observation that the local economic environment impacts a partnership, was true about the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities. Participants from both communities recognized that local economic conditions affect community members' ability to work effectively in partnerships. For example, they noted that unemployment or low incomes reduce an individual's ability to pay membership dues or contribute towards projects.

When asked to identify challenges that partnerships experience, none of the participants from either community mentioned gender issues and how they shape interactions among partners. The participants, however, agreed that like



most societies elsewhere in the world, Ghanaian society is male dominated and this is reflected in partnerships involving members of both sexes. They also agreed that it is important for all partnerships to seek ways to address such differences.

In a nutshell, the concepts of partnership in the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities were very similar. People in both communities recognized groups that bring individuals and organizations together to work for a common purpose as partnerships. The study showed that people in the two communities have always known the advantages of partnerships and practice partnerships on everyday basis. Partnerships in the two communities are facilitated by personal integrity, good partnership process, shared culture, a strong sense of community, and a healthy local economy. The research participants from both communities further agreed that HIV and AIDS is a community wide problem that needs collective efforts to address. They, therefore, shared their insights on how to bring the different sectors of their communities together in community-based initiatives for HIV and AIDS prevention and care.

## **Chapter 5: Local Concepts of Partnership and HIV and AIDS Related Work**

The main objectives of this study were 1) to understand the concept of partnership from the perspectives of the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities and 2) how to utilize knowledge about the concepts of partnership in the two communities for HIV and AIDS prevention and care. The first objective was addressed in the preceding chapter. This chapter addresses *research question two: How can the concepts of partnership in the two communities facilitate the development of effective partnerships for HIV and AIDS prevention and care?*

This research question was intended to explore how partnership is practiced in each of the two communities and identify a suitable model of partnership that can bring together diverse community groups, service providers, and non-governmental organizations for HIV and AIDS prevention and care. In the following sub-section, I describe the different models of partnership identified in the two communities and, based on suggestions from participants, propose a model of partnership that would be effective for HIV and AIDS prevention and care in the two communities.

### **Models of Partnership in La and Nsawam-Adoajiri**

This exploration was aimed, in part, to identify a suitable model for a community-based initiative for HIV and AIDS prevention and care. To this end, participants from both La and Nsawam-Adoajiri were asked to share their experiences with partnerships. In response to this question, each participant mentioned and described at least one partnership in which he or she had been or still is a member. Many of the participants had actually held positions of

responsibility in the partnerships about which they talked. They were therefore able to give substantial information about those partnerships.

The groups that participants talked about included traditional committees, *nnoboa* farming cooperatives, youth groups, women's mutual aid groups, town development associations, classmates associations, and associations of tradesmen and women. An analysis of the information provided by the participants on these groups revealed three distinct models of partnership in La, two of which were also found in Nsawam-Adoajiri.

The three models found in La were named the customary model, the adaptive-transactional model, and the culturally-dynamic model based on their history and characteristics. The process involved in naming the three models of partnerships is described in Chapter 3. Applying the same classifications to partnerships in Nsawam-Adoajiri, I identified two of the three models, namely, the customary and adaptive-transactional models in that community.

While all three models of partnership bring individuals and groups together to work towards a common purpose, they exhibit some differences in their structures and processes.

**The customary model.** The customary model of partnership is a culturally based model of partnership that embodies traditional values. This type of partnership adopts traditional rules and procedures, and follows customary norms that have passed down from generation to generation in each community.

Research participants from La and Nsawam-Adoajiri cited several groups that could be classified as customary partnerships. Examples of the customary

model of partnerships in La were the La Traditional Council (LTC) and the various La divisional councils. The La divisional councils are made up of the divisional chiefs and elders of the various clan houses in each division<sup>18</sup>. These councils provide the clan houses with forums for discussing and taking action on issues of common interest to them. The LTC and the divisional councils are long standing partnerships among the various lineages of the town which have become permanent traditional administrative institutions.

Customary partnerships in Nsawam-Adoajiri included councils of chiefs and sub-chiefs, partnerships between a chief and community members for development, and *nnoboa* farming groups. The councils of chiefs bring together leaders of various sections of the Nsawam-Adoajiri community to deliberate on matters that affect the community. *Nnoboa* farming groups, on the other hand, are temporary partnerships that spring up during each farming season among individuals who wish to clear their farm lands with mutual assistance.

Besides these notable customary partnerships, individuals from both communities form customary partnerships for specific issues. One example was the partnership that was formed to bring pipe-borne water to a village near Nsawam.

**The adaptive transactional model.** The second model of partnership identified in both the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities are adaptations from western models of partnership or other group work. While there are variations in this model, its archetype usually has such formal structures as an elected, or in many cases appointed, executive committee, a general assembly meeting

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<sup>18</sup> One of the seven traditional political divisions of La

format, standing committees, and sometimes ad-hoc committees for specific tasks. This model of partnership is often practiced among people who are contemporary in outlook. This model requires knowledge of such legal and administrative procedures as registration, written record keeping and accounting.

Adaptive transactional partnerships in both communities include community development associations, parent-teacher associations, religious groups, youth associations, and cooperatives. Typical examples of this model of partnership in La were the LMK, La Youth and Classmates Association (LAYOCA), and the Esteem Youth Club. Examples cited in the Nsawam-Adoajiri were Women in Action and an alumni association of a school in Gyankrom.

**The culturally dynamic model.** The culturally dynamic model of partnership is a blend between the customary and adaptive transactional models of partnership. Consequently, it combines characteristics of both models of partnership: It involves both traditional and formal structures and adopts a mix of traditional and formal procedures. For example, this type of partnership adopts shared leadership between the elders and an elected executive. The elected executive committee members are usually individuals with good understanding of formal and legal/administrative procedures. Furthermore, Christian prayers are offered to open and end meetings in place of the traditional pouring of libation: The beginning of meetings with Christian prayers is a formality that is adopted at most gatherings in Ghana, including national events. Yet, traditional rituals including the pouring of libation sometimes takes place during specific events.

This type of partnership is typified by the La Clan House Associations<sup>19</sup> and the *Ga Asafoianyemei Akpee* (an association of Ga women traditional leaders). The culturally dynamic type of partnership was identified only in the La community. The characteristics of the three models of partnership are summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4: Models of partnership and their attributes**

<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Customary Partnership</b>	<b>Adaptive-Transactional Partnership</b>	<b>Culturally Dynamic Partnership</b>
<b>Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Informal structure made up of the elders and members</li> <li>□ Ad hoc committees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Formal structures made up of elected or appointed executive and members</li> <li>□ Standing committees</li> <li>□ Ad hoc committees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Combination of formal and informal structures; an elected executive and elders</li> <li>□ Standing committees</li> <li>□ Ad hoc committees</li> </ul>
<b>Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Initiated by people who are traditional in outlook</li> <li>□ Adopts traditional procedure</li> <li>□ Ritualistic</li> <li>□ Speech through an interpreter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Initiated by people who are contemporary in outlook</li> <li>□ Adopts formal procedures</li> <li>□ Formal use of agenda</li> <li>□ No use of interpreters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Mostly transformed customary partnership</li> <li>□ Adopts formal procedures and traditional procedures</li> <li>□ Power sharing between elected executive and elders</li> <li>□ No use of interpreters</li> <li>□ Sometimes, such rituals as libation pouring are performed</li> </ul>

<sup>19</sup> An association of the members of related extended families or people from one lineage

## **The Origins of Partnership Models**

Information shared by the participants suggested a progression in the development of partnerships beginning with a purely traditional model (the customary model) through the adoption and adaptation of western models in both communities (adaptive-transactional model), to an integration of two models into a mixed model (culturally-dynamic model) in La.

A commonality among these three models of partnership was that they all create and utilize collaborative advantage (Huxham & Vangen, 2005) towards achieving a common purpose. The models, however, have subtle differences in who is involved, how they are initiated, their processes, and the structures through which they function.

The customary model seemed to have always been part of social life among the people of the two communities. Both communities therefore conform to Kropotkin's (1979) idea that cooperation was an integral part of community life in early human societies. The adaptive-transactional model on the other hand, seemed to have evolved with formal education which became part of social life in colonial times<sup>20</sup>. The third model, the culturally-dynamic model which combines some aspects of the customary and adaptive-transactional models had clearly emerged through integration of aspects of the first two models.

The emergence of the integrated model of partnership demonstrates the ability of people in traditional societies to adapt in a dynamic way. More importantly, the adaptation process seemed to have evolved naturally. This signifies a new phase in the relationship among the three elements of African

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<sup>20</sup> Ghana was colonized by the British between 1806 and 1957.

society identified by Nkrumah (1964), namely, the traditional, the Western, and the Islamic (Nkrumah, 1964). Nkrumah (1964) noted that the coexistence of these three elements, which had shaped African development from the pre-colonial era to post-colonial times, had always been “uneasy”. According to Nkrumah’s (1964) thesis, the philosophical differences among traditional, Western, and Islamic thought had created disharmony in African society. The emergence of the culturally dynamic model of partnership in La demonstrates that the traditional and contemporary sectors of African communities are able to find common grounds for working together in a partnership.

#### **A Partnership Model for HIV and AIDS Prevention and Care**

When asked how their concept of partnership could be applied to HIV and AIDS related work in their communities, all the research participants from both La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities indicated that it will be important to bring all stakeholders in the community together to develop and implement an HIV and AIDS strategy that would incorporate the shared values of their communities. According to them a multi-stakeholder approach was needed because the problem of HIV and AIDS transcends all social boundaries. In the words of one female traditional leader,

*HIV is an issue of interest to all sections of the community and we would need to get all groups involved. (Key informant #12, La)*



The research participants further explained that a community-based AIDS initiative should include both the traditional and contemporary sectors, and should involve processes that respect the beliefs and values of both sectors.

The research participants recognized that there was a need to raise more awareness of the disease through education. People need to know more about AIDS and what causes it, how HIV is contracted, how to reduce the risk of infection, and also how to reduce the stigma attached to HIV and AIDS. Individuals who are living with HIV need information and care in order to cope with the disease and prevent its spread. Furthermore, families whose members have contracted HIV need information and support to deal with the emotional, social and economic distress associated with it, and provide optimal care for their relatives who are living with HIV and AIDS.

According to the research participants, the best way to achieve these objectives is to bring together all stakeholders to form a central AIDS committee that can initiate programs to address issues related to HIV and AIDS. In the words of a participant in one of the youth leaders' focus groups,

*It is better for all groups within the La community to come together to form a central committee, a kind of partnership, to carry out such [AIDS related] work. (Focus group #2, La)*

This was echoed by a participant in the youth leaders' focus group in Nsawam-Adoajiri,

*By coming together, we can develop a collective initiative through which issues concerning AIDS can be addressed. (Focus group #2, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

These statements indicated recognition that HIV and AIDS is a complex issue that requires a multi-sectorial approach. This was consistent with Best, Stokols, Green and Leischow's (2003) recommendation that the best approaches to complex community problems are comprehensive participatory and collaborative methods.

Most participants from both communities emphasized that the first task of such a committee should be to develop a plan to address the stigma attached to HIV and AIDS. According to a participant in the community leaders' focus group in Nsawam-Adoajiri,

*I believe that the bigger problem is eradicating the stigma attached to AIDS. If stigma can be reduced, people [who are infected with HIV] will start coming out willingly. (Focus group #1, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

These participants recognized that the stigma attached to HIV and AIDS is the biggest obstacle in providing AIDS related service. According to them, it prevents people who contract HIV from coming out and seeking help. A youth leaders' focus group participant noted that,

*Once you've got the disease, it is difficult to come out. This prevents people from seeking the help they need. (Focus group #2, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

Some research participants further suggested that, in addition to initiating new programs, a community HIV and AIDS committee should have the responsibility of coordinating existing HIV and AIDS programs to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. They said the committee should be in a position to obtain and disseminate appropriate and comprehensive information about HIV and AIDS, and help to organize support for families that have been affected by this disease. The suggested membership and structure of a community-based initiative for HIV and AIDS prevention and care, as well as potential challenges and facilitators are discussed in the following subsections.

**Membership.** The tasks envisaged for a community-based HIV and AIDS committee necessitates careful consideration of its membership. All key stakeholder groups in each community would have important roles to play in such a partnership. The stakeholders that research participants identified were traditional leaders, community leaders, church leaders, youth groups, and women's groups. Others were community-based organizations (CBOs), ethnic associations (Hometown Associations), health institutions, and the Ghana AIDS Program. According to a male traditional leader from Nsawam,

*The chief and his elders are one group that should be involved [in the HIV and AIDS initiative]. Others are the churches, the hospitals, community organizations, and external organizations that are willing to help us. (Key informant #9, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

This was echoed by another participant from Nsawam-Adoajiri, who was a male community leader,

*Those to be involved in such an initiative should include the churches, youth leaders, peer educators, parents, schools, assemblymen [and assemblywomen]<sup>21</sup>, chiefs and the Ministry of Health. (Focus group #1, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

The research participants suggested that it will be important to lay a strong foundation for a community initiative for HIV and AIDS prevention and care by getting “the right people” involved. When asked who would be “the right people”, these participants suggested that they include individuals who are interested and passionate about the issue as well as individuals in the community who have power that can affect the process. This was consistent with Strauss’ (2002) recommendation that it is always important to involve individuals with the power to both facilitate or impede a partnership.

Some participants, mostly youth leaders and community leaders who were service providers, also recognized the importance of involving people who are living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA). According to these participants, people who are living with HIV and AIDS can champion the cause and help people to better understand the disease. In the words of a youth leader who participated in one of the focus groups in Nsawam-Adoajiri,

*We should look for [people who are living with HIV] to play a leadership role in such an organization. These people can champion the cause for our unfortunate brothers and sisters who are living with the disease.*

*(Focus group #2, La)*

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<sup>21</sup> Municipal councilors

In order to facilitate the work of a central HIV and AIDS committee, some of the participants proposed involving such retired professionals as teachers and nurses because of their experience and knowledge about child health and child education. According to a participant in one of the youth leaders' focus groups in La,

*People who have experience in child-education, such as retired teachers and nurses can be very useful for this type of work. (Focus group #1, La)*

When asked who should initiate such an HIV and AIDS committee, the majority of participants responded that individuals and community-based organizations that are already doing HIV and AIDS related work should take the lead in building such a partnership. These would include both local and external community-based organizations that are doing HIV and AIDS related work in the two communities. According to one male traditional leader from La,

*People with knowledge about the disease [health professionals, and leaders of CBOs<sup>22</sup>] should approach the traditional leaders and discuss the formation of such a partnership with them, and seek their assistance in implementing it. (Key informant #1, La)*

Some of the participants, however, thought traditional leaders should be the initiators of such a partnership. This group included both traditional leaders and community leaders. According to these participants, the traditional leaders should lead such an initiative because they are the custodians of community

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<sup>22</sup> Community-Based Organizations

resources, and they can bring those resources to bear on the problem. A male traditional leader from La said,

*The La Traditional Council should take up the leadership role. They can then involve health workers, youth leaders, and the various groups that are already doing HIV related work in this community. (Key informant #2, La)*

Some community leaders and service providers from Nsawam-Adoajiri, however, placed less emphasis on the role that traditional leaders could play in initiating a partnership for HIV and AIDS intervention. When asked who should initiate such a partnership, they said it should be church leaders. These participants, however, recognized that traditional leaders must have ceremonial leadership roles in a community-based initiative for HIV and AIDS prevention and care. A female community leader from Nsawam-Adoajiri expressed this notion by saying,

*I think the churches should lead. Most church leaders are very eloquent and can be identified to lead. We should, however, give reverence to the chiefs because we live on their land. Everyone would agree that the chiefs should have some ceremonial leadership role in such an initiative [for HIV and AIDS prevention and care]. (Key informant #10, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

The membership of the community initiatives for HIV and AIDS prevention and care proposed by research participants from the two communities were, in many ways, similar to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's HIV

Prevention Community Planning Initiative (CDC, 1993). In its initiative, the CDC specified the involvement of all key players including health departments, service providers, people who are living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA), and populations at risk in community planning for HIV prevention. Like the CDC, the research participants from the two communities recognized the advantages of an inclusive community-based participatory model for a community-based initiative for HIV and AIDS prevention and care.

**Leadership and roles.** The majority of research participants recognized that traditional leaders can play a very important role in an HIV and AIDS prevention initiative because they have a lot of influence and can mobilize people and resources to enhance the success of the initiative. According to them, traditional leaders provide a strong link to many people in the community. In the words of a male youth leader from La,

*The traditional leadership, as an institution, can form the backbone of the initiative that would provide support for it. When their names are attached to things, people take it seriously. (Key informant #9, La)*

Regis (2000) emphasized the importance of involving traditional leaders in community-based initiatives, especially those that are related to community resources, because they are the custodians of those resources. Moreover, traditional leaders are a major link to people who attend clan house meetings; they can be relied upon to relay information about the HIV initiative to the people in their communities. Participants from Nsawam-Adoajiri also suggested that

traditional leaders can organize *durbars*<sup>23</sup> to which resource persons can be invited to speak to the whole community about the disease.

Furthermore, traditional leaders' understanding of the issues around HIV and AIDS would greatly enhance success of an initiative for HIV and AIDS prevention and care. As the custodians of custom and tradition, they are the only people in a position to change customary practices that can inhibit progress in the fight against AIDS. Some participants suggested that involving traditional leaders is important because they have the power to open up traditional festivals and other forums for the discussion of issues around HIV and AIDS. They can also relax some of the customs, such as the taboo of child-sex education, that stand in the way of HIV and AIDS education. According to a female community leader from La,

*Traditional leaders can use festivals to educate the people about the disease. They can encourage the formulation of "Kpa" songs that teach people about HIV and AIDS during the Homowo festival. (Key informant #7, La)*

Some participants also suggested that some traditional leaders are also custodians of community resources including lands and may be able to invest some of those resources in the initiative. Furthermore, they can mobilize resources from individuals, groups and businesses in their communities as well as the government towards a community-based HIV and AIDS intervention. One male community leader from La opined that,

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<sup>23</sup> An assembly of chiefs, traditional leaders, elders, and community members



*As leaders, people will look up to them to finance the project and they must be up to it. If they are first to put their shoulders to the wheel, other people will follow suit. (Key informant #4, La)*

A male community leader from Nsawam-Adoajiri, on his part, stressed traditional leaders' ability to mobilize resources saying,

*Traditional leaders can request funding from the local assemblies to finance HIV education. Everyone listens to them [traditional leaders] so we would need their voices to be heard for such a community-based initiative for HIV and AIDS prevention and care to be successful. (Focus group #1, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

Many participants also agreed that since traditional leaders command a lot of respect among community members, their involvement should not be merely ceremonial; they should be directly involved in educating community members about HIV and AIDS. Their active involvement would also set good example for other people to follow.

Research participants further identified existing organizations in the communities as important stakeholders who can play very important roles in a community-based initiative for HIV and AIDS prevention and care. Included in this stakeholder group are community-based organizations, youth associations, and traders' associations. Participants said that community-based organizations that are already involved in HIV and AIDS education can provide leadership in program development and service delivery. They can also network with other

organizations to provide comprehensive care for people living with HIV and AIDS. Participants further said that the various groups in the community such as youth associations and women's groups can carry out HIV and AIDS education campaigns in the community or organize community events that can help raise awareness of the disease. According to a male youth leader from La,

*These groups can organize talk-shows and drama to educate the community about HIV and AIDS. There is a need to create more awareness about HIV and AIDS in this community. In fact, lack of awareness is one of the main problems. (Key informant #5, La)*

More importantly, these organizations can help by educating their own members about HIV and AIDS. Some of the groups have health care professionals within their ranks who can help to educate other members about HIV and AIDS. These groups can use their regular meetings as forums for HIV and AIDS education. The education provided to members of these organizations can have a ripple effect because people can share what they learn from these meetings with their family members and other people in their circles. One participant in the community leaders' focus group at Nsawam-Adoajiri noted that,

*Leaders of community-based organizations and other groups should serve as role models. As such they should be well educated about the issues involved so that they can, in turn, educate other people in their circles about the disease. (Focus group #1, Nsawam-Adoajiri)*

Research participants also suggested that, members of youth associations could be trained as peer educators to educate members of their associations and others about HIV and AIDS. Some of the groups are also in a position to mobilize support for individuals and families that have been affected by HIV and AIDS. They can collect donations and mount food and medication drives to help provide for affected individuals who are in need.

**Potential challenges.** When asked what would be some of the challenges to a community-based initiative for HIV and AIDS prevention and care, almost all participants said that all the challenges to partnerships that they had previously identified would affect such an initiative. These include dishonesty, immoral behaviour, lack of accountability, lack of commitment at the individual level; lack of mutual understanding, mutual distrust, and poor leadership at the organizational level; and poor economic environment and differences in beliefs and values at the contextual level. However, the participants also acknowledged that there would be some specific challenges to this type of partnership.

One of the main challenges that can potentially affect the cohesion of a community initiative for HIV and AIDS intervention that brings the traditional and contemporary sectors of the communities together in a partnership would be differences in beliefs, and certain cultural norms and practices that could stand in the way of HIV and AIDS education. For example, in many Ghanaian societies, it is a taboo to talk to children about sex in any form. Parents could therefore feel uncomfortable having their children involved in such a program.

Many traditional leaders in African communities are not only ancestral worshipers; some of them are spiritual leaders and custodians of the ancestral gods. Individuals who occupy such positions often follow traditional procedures and rituals, some of which they cannot easily compromise, in their everyday interactions. Also, traditional protocol differs from non-traditional protocol. For example, custom demands that many traditional leaders speak only through an interpreter. Some traditional leaders, especially in the Nsawam-Adoajiri community where the culturally dynamic model of partnership has not been tried, may feel ill at ease with addressing people directly or being addressed directly by other people. Such differences would have to be negotiated at the initial stages of a community-based initiative for HIV and AIDS prevention and care.

Participants from both communities also expressed a concern about the potential involvement of people who may want to join such a community-based HIV and AIDS initiative primarily for personal gain. According to them, there are many people who may see this initiative as an opportunity for personal enrichment. Involving such people in an initiative for HIV and AIDS intervention would open the door for all the potential issues that can derail the project.

Another potential challenge would be working with new partners with diverse orientation and from much more varied backgrounds. The participants pointed out that although some of the groups identified as stakeholders have worked with each other in partnerships, there is likelihood that some of them would be working with each other for the first time and this can pose a challenge. A La youth focus group participant said,

*Since the people forming the partnership may be coming from different backgrounds, it may be difficult for them to complement each other. For instance, just finding a day for a joint meeting can be a challenge because different groups hold different days holy. (Focus group #1, La)*

All participants, however, indicated that it will be very important to involve all stakeholder groups because each had an important role to play in a community-based initiative for HIV and AIDS prevention and care.

**Potential facilitators.** When asked what factors will facilitate a partnership for HIV and AIDS intervention, many research participants said that all the facilitators that they had previously identified would facilitate such a partnership. These include values related to personal integrity and good partnership process. Some participants stressed that such an initiative would need the willingness and strong commitment of the different stakeholder groups to work together. One youth leaders' focus group participant said,

*The willingness of the people to embrace the partnership idea will be very essential to its success. An initiative of this nature will require strong commitment from all members of this community including our leaders, the youth, women and people who are HIV positive. (Focus group #2, La)*

The research participants further noted that such a community-wide partnership for HIV and AIDS prevention and care would require ample resources to succeed. According to them, it will be very important to mobilize community resources and also obtain material, financial and legal support from

the different levels of government, namely, the local, regional and national governments. Furthermore, the initiative will need assistance from both local and external philanthropic organizations to be successful.

The findings of this study have important implications for social work theory and practice. These implications are discussed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 6: Implications for Theory and Practice**

The people of La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities conceptualize partnerships as groups of individuals and organizations that have come together to work for a common purpose. This concept was consistent with the concept of partnership described in the Western literature by authors including Brinkerhoff (2003), Foster-Fishman et al. (2001), Huxham and Vangen (2005), Lomotey (2002), Margenum (1999), Strauss (2002), and Wandersman et al. (1998). Based on the concepts of partnership described by research participants, I identified three models of partnership in the La community, two of which were also found in the Nsawam-Adoajiri community. These were the customary, and the adaptive transactional models of partnership, which were found in both communities, and the culturally dynamic model of partnership, which was found only in the La community.

Customary partnerships usually involve individuals who are traditional in outlook. Consequently, this type of partnership adopts traditional procedures and follows customary norms. Adaptive transactional partnerships, on the other hand, involve individuals who are contemporary in outlook. They therefore adopt legal administrative procedures. Culturally dynamic partnerships represent a blend between customary partnerships and adaptive transactional partnerships. Accordingly, this type of partnership combines the characteristics and procedures of those two models: They involve power-sharing between traditional leaders and contemporary leaders, and adopt both traditional and contemporary practices

and procedures. These findings have important implications for social work theory and practice.

### **Implications for Theory**

The characteristics of partnerships identified in the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities provided a basis for the formulation of a theoretical model that describes and explains the functioning of all models of partnership (see Figure 3). In this theoretical model, a partnership is represented by a system made up of six main components: 1) formation, 2) structure, 3) process, 4) the social ecological context, 5) collaborative advantage, and 6) outcomes.

Formation, the first component of the theoretical model includes such activities as initiation, identification and recruitment of stakeholders, and the process of developing common goals and objectives. The initiation of a partnership begins with an individual (or a small group of people) who comes up with an idea for solving a specific common problem, or achieving another goal in which other people are interested. This individual or group then identifies other people who are either affected by the problem, or are interested in the desired goals, and consults with them. This consultation process begins a small group, which often forms the core of a partnership.

Usually, discussions within the core group begins to shape the partnership's objectives. One of the first activities of such a core group is to identify and recruit other stakeholders in the issue to form a partnership. Initial meetings of the larger group focus on developing the core group's initial ideas to set the objectives and goals of the partnership. These formation activities form



part of Margenum's (1999) and Strauss' (2002) problem setting and direction setting phases of partnership building.

The second component of the theoretical model represents partnership structure. Typically, the structure of a partnership begins to evolve in the core group. The form of this structure depends upon the orientation of the initiators and members. In the two communities studied, orientation is either traditional or contemporary. In a customary partnership, the leadership that emerges in the core group is usually based on tradition. Typically, traditional and community leaders assume leadership due to their natural positions as leaders within the community. In adaptive transactional and culturally dynamic partnerships, on the other hand, temporary leaders may emerge to facilitate the formation of the partnership and the development its structure and processes. However, initial discussions would usually include issues related to leadership formats, how leaders are appointed, and committee structure. In most cases, a constitution or guide document would be developed to specify the structure of the partnership. The structure of a partnership, therefore, varies from a simple structure of leadership and members, to a more complex structure that includes committees, task forces, and in some cases, paid staff.

The third component of the theoretical model represents the process of a partnership. Similar to the structure, partnership process evolves during formation activities and is usually based on people's usual ways of interaction: the way they communicate with each other, the way they organize activities, and the procedures they adopt in group activities.

The partnership process, therefore, evolves simultaneously with the structure during formation, with each component influencing the evolution of the other. For example, temporary leadership, which is part an emerging structure, facilitates the partnership formation process. At the same time, the emerging structure of a partnership is determined by tradition, which is a process, or by the development of a constitution or guide document, which is requires a process. For example, a committee may be set up early in the partnership process to draft a constitution for the partnership. Moreover, together, the structure and process of a partnership inform the procedures that are adopted for developing and implementing strategies towards achieving partnership goals.

The fourth component of the theoretical model is the social ecological context of a partnership. This component is represented by three circles in the background of the other components of the theoretical model in Figure 3. Akin to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) and Stokols' (1996) multi-layered model of the social ecological context, which were discussed in Chapter 2, the circles delineate three levels of influence on partnerships, namely, the individual, organizational and contextual levels.

The inner circle of this component represents individual level factors that affect a partnership. In the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities, these factors are the core values of honesty, trust, accountability, and morality. The middle circle represents such organizational factors as mutual understanding, mutual respect, equity, and good leadership. The outer circle represents such contextual factors as culture and tradition, shared beliefs and values, interrelatedness

among community members, and local economic conditions. The presence of these factors enhances the success of a partnership while their absence poses challenges to it.

The fifth component of the theoretical model represents the principle of collective advantage. This component is conceptualized as a form of energy and is represented in Figure 3 by wavy shapes. When individuals and organizations come together to form a partnership, and put in place a sound structure and a good process, in the presence of facilitative social ecological factors, they generate what Huxham and Vangen (2005) referred to as collaborative advantage. Collaborative advantage may, therefore, be described as a form of energy that is generated through numerical strength, increased access to resources, mutual trust, shared risk, and shared commitment and determination. Trickett (2009) somehow alluded to the potency of this force or energy when he suggested that the functioning of socially inclusive multilevel interventions represent phenomena in which “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts” (p. 262). The purpose of all partnerships is to generate this energy and use it to achieve its aims and objectives.

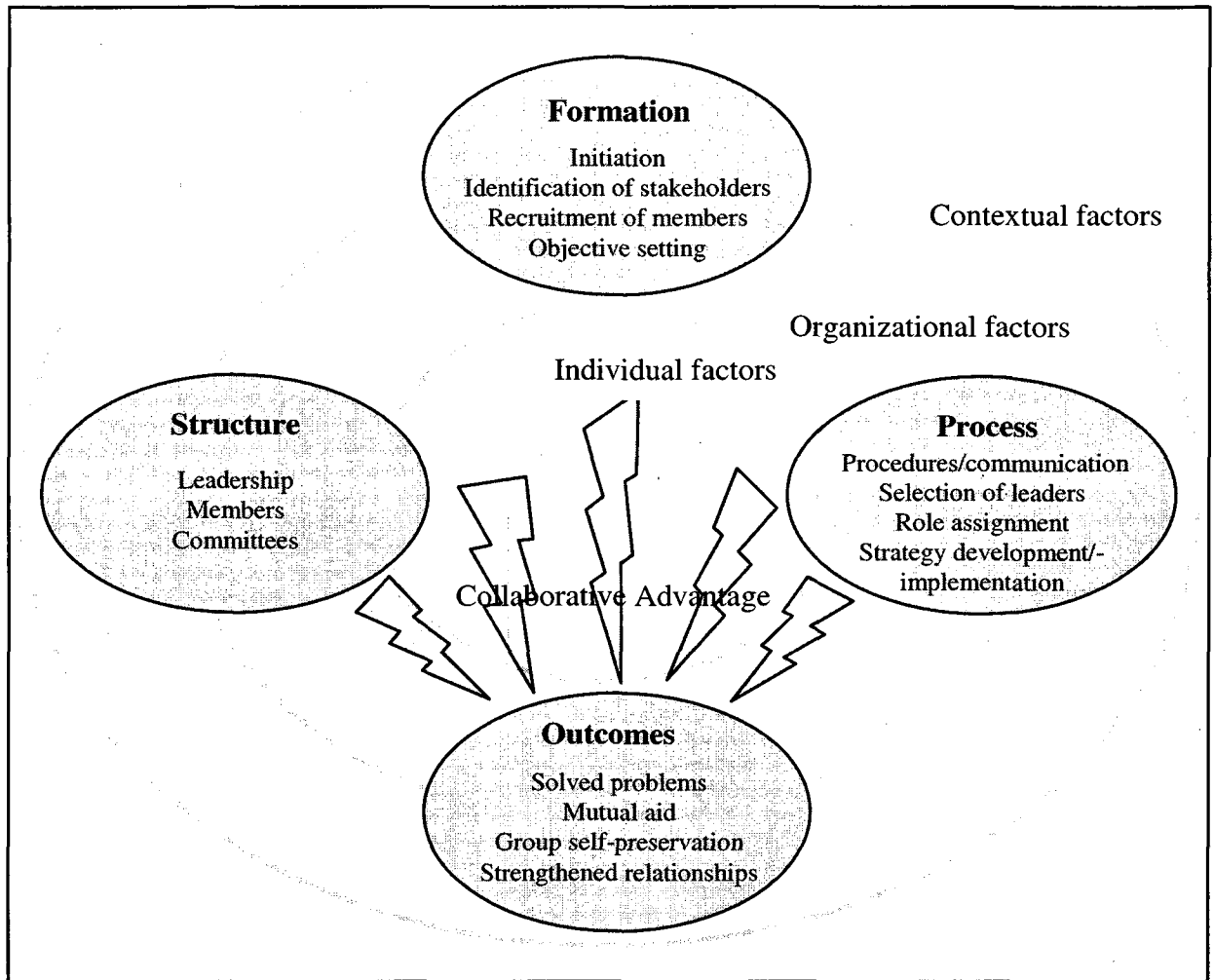
The sixth component of the theoretical model represents the outcomes of a partnership. Usually this includes both intended and unintended outcomes. The intended outcomes of a partnership may be to solve a problem, provide mutual aid, or preserve an identity group as a social unit. For example, a partnership may be formed for the purpose of addressing a problem that affects a whole community, or a particular population sub-group within it. Other partnerships are

formed solely to help their members address their individual problems through mutual aid. Also, as found in La, groups of related extended families form partnerships for the purpose of preserving their identity as a social unit that shares a common ancestor.

The unintended outcomes of a partnership include the natural development of friendships and networks among members. As people work together sharing risks and benefits, natural bonds are created among them. Where those natural bonds are pre-existing, they are strengthened. This process increases a sense of belonging and builds a strong sense of community. According to most participants in this study, a strong sense of community serves as basis for more collaboration in their communities. In the words of one research participant, “we work together in partnerships because we are one people”.

Figure 3 represents a diagrammatic depiction of the theoretical model of partnerships.

Figure 3: A Theoretical Model Explaining the Functioning of Partnerships



This theoretical model is based on the assumption that individuals and groups who come together to form partnerships formulate clear objectives and put in place good structures and processes that would enable them to achieve those objectives. In addition, it is assumed that all the ingredients necessary for building collaborative advantage, namely, adequate resources and facilitative social ecological factors, such as, good leadership, trust, mutual understanding, personal commitment, shared sense of community, and a vibrant local economy are present. Failure to meet these basic assumptions may lead to what Huxham

and Vangen (2005) described as “collaborative inertia”. Collaborative inertia is a state in which people who try to work together become frustrated and fail to achieve their goals because the elements for achieving collaborative advantage are absent (Huxham & Vangen, 2005).

This theoretical model fits all the three models of partnership identified in the study, namely, customary partnerships, adaptive transactional partnerships, and culturally dynamic partnerships. Each model of partnership begins with the activities outlined in the formation component. Out of these activities evolve a partnership structure and process which are based on tradition and personal orientation of the initiators and members. Also, in each model of partnership, collaborative advantage is generated by a combination of a sound structure, a good process, and facilitative environmental factors. Furthermore, the outcome component of the theoretical model of partnership captures the three underlying principles of partnerships identified in this study, namely, the use of collaborative advantage to solve individual and collective problems, provide mutual aid to members, or preserve a group’s identity as a social unit. These three principles fit with the theories of collaboration expounded by Huxham and Vangen (2005), Margenum (1999), and Strauss (2002), and also with Kropotkin’s (1976) and Gitterman and Shulman’s (2005) theories of mutual aid.

Huxham and Vangen’s (2005) theory of partnership was built on collaborative advantage. Their theory describes partnerships as social entities that are formed to generate collaborative advantage for pursuing a group’s common goals. The understanding displayed by research participants from both

La and Nsawam-Adoajiri that people working in partnership are better able to accomplish their goals than people working individually, fits with Huxham and Vangen's (2005) theory that collaborative advantage increases efficiency and effectiveness. Moreover, the research findings validate the other bases for pursuing collaborative advantage that were identified by Huxham and Vangen (2005), namely, access to resources, shared risk, coordination and seamlessness, learning, and emotional imperative.

The theoretical model of partnership also complements Margenum's (1999) and Strauss' (2002) theories of partnership by identifying and naming how the partnership process actually leads to the achievement of intended goals. Although both authors identified all the elements and activities in the formation, structure and process components of the theoretical model of partnership, neither theory indicated how these elements and structures combine to produce partnership outcomes.

Kropotkin (1976) identified mutual aid as a form of collaboration in early human society to enhance their survival. The assertion by participants from La, that clan house associations represent partnerships for identity group self-preservation, substantiates Kropotkin's (1976) claim. According to participants from La, the clan house associations do not only maintain relationships among individuals who share a lineage, they also serve as support and safety mechanisms for their members. As discussed earlier in the presentation of results, participants' responses to interview questions about partnerships in their communities demonstrated the dynamics of mutual aid outlined by Gitterman and

Shulman (2005). Partners provide social and emotional support to each other. They also assist each other in different ways outside partnership activities.

Finally, this is the first study that has adopted a social ecological framework in the study of partnerships. This study identified three main levels at which environmental factors influence partnerships. These are the individual level, the organizational level, and the contextual level. This finding extends the application of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) and Stokols' (1996) social ecological theories from human beings to partnerships. By successfully adopting this framework in the study of partnerships, this study has demonstrated that, as social entities, partnerships are affected by factors operating at multiple levels of the social ecological environment. Furthermore, it has demonstrated that understanding social ecological factors and the levels at which they influence partnerships is very relevant for a global understanding of partnerships.

### **Implications for Social Work Practice**

Social workers are employed in a variety of community settings in urban areas in the large cities but more importantly for this research, in African communities such as the two Ghanaian communities studied, where they are employed in a variety of roles as development workers. The findings of this study have several implications for social work practice in places such as Ghana but also in other international locations with similar contexts. They inform certain principles and practices that would enhance social work practice in terms of building and evaluating community partnerships. Social work practice is based on achieving outcomes that benefit the whole community. If such outcomes are to



be achieved, then the complexities of community partnerships need to be understood and acknowledged. The theoretical model of partnership in Figure 3 seeks to fulfill this requirement.

The theoretical model of partnership identifies distinct components of a partnership that can serve as a road map for social workers and other development workers, especially those working internationally or in cross-cultural settings, in developing community partnerships. Careful consideration of the elements in the formation, structure, process, social ecological context, and outcomes components of the theoretical model during planning would enhance the potential of a partnership to generate collaborative advantage, and consequently, its ability to achieve success.

The description of the theoretical model does not only explain how those components evolve, it also identifies the factors that influence their evolution. This knowledge would enable social workers to understand the different models of partnership they encounter in different communities and how they function. Furthermore, the theoretical model demonstrates the importance of understanding the environmental context of a partnership. This would enable practitioners to manage the factors that facilitate or pose challenges to a partnership.

Additionally, a complete evaluation of a partnership should involve an assessment of its formation activities, structure, processes, and existing social ecological factors, and their impacts on partnership outcomes. The theoretical model provides a structure for linking all the other components to the outcomes

through collaborative advantage. Understanding how stakeholders were identified, how they were recruited, how common objectives were developed, leadership style and quality, and partnership procedures, and how they impact partnership outcomes would contribute immensely in identifying best practice for building community partnerships.

From a standpoint that human behaviour is a product of interactions among human beings and their environments, social ecological theorists have advanced the argument that “multilevel community-based” initiatives are best suited for such complex social problems as HIV and AIDS, poverty, addiction, crime, and environmental degradation (Longres, 1990; Stokols, 1996; Trickett, 2009; Whittemore et al., 2004). Multilevel community-based initiatives are participatory in nature, and usually involve all key stakeholders within a community in planning and action to address the community’s needs (CDC, 1993). The findings of this study indicate that this participatory approach to community planning will be effective for community-based initiatives for HIV and AIDS prevention and care in the two communities studied and, with caution, in other communities in sub Saharan Africa that have similar contexts to the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities<sup>24</sup>.

The key stakeholders identified in the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities that need to be involved in such community planning initiatives for HIV and AIDS prevention and care were: traditional leaders, community leaders, religious leaders, youth groups, women’s groups, and people who are living with

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<sup>24</sup> The issue of generalizability of case studies’ findings is discussed in the next section under limitations.

HIV and AIDS. Other key players identified were community-based organizations (CBOs), health institutions, and the Ghana National AIDS Commission.

As discussed earlier in Chapter 1, there is evidence that many agencies doing HIV and AIDS related work in Africa and other parts of the world have sought to involve all these stakeholder groups in local HIV and AIDS initiatives, and have actually succeeded in involving almost all of them with the exception of traditional leaders. For example, Campbell and her colleagues (2007) succeeded in involving some traditional and community leaders in their HIV and AIDS initiative. They were, however, unsuccessful in involving the “most senior” traditional leader in the community.

The involvement of traditional rulers, who are usually the most senior traditional leaders in community-based initiatives, is very crucial to success. Busia (1968) described the traditional ruler as the hub around which the whole community revolves. This statement underscores the importance of traditional leaders in African communities. Simply put, nothing works in their communities without their involvement. There seems to be a general understanding of this point as most agencies working in African communities have sought to involve traditional leaders. How to do this effectively in order to gain traditional leaders' commitment and full involvement in community-based HIV and AIDS initiatives, however, remains a problem.

The primary role of African traditional leaders in their communities is to provide leadership. The findings of this study indicate that the best way to effectively involve traditional leaders in community-based HIV and AIDS

initiatives is to ask them to fulfill this traditional role: that is, provide leadership. Traditional leaders can provide leadership in organizing and mobilizing their communities around the issue of interest. They can also provide leadership around resolving inter-cultural differences while community workers and their agencies provide leadership around resources, program content, and expertise.

Asking traditional leaders to provide leadership to community-based HIV and AIDS initiatives necessitates that they are the first stakeholder group to be approached when building such an initiative. Moreover, the appropriate request is to ask the traditional leaders how we can support them and their communities with our resources and expertise, to solve their communities' problems. This implies that all plans for a community-based initiative should be developed together with the traditional leaders and community members. Asking traditional leaders first, and offering to share power with them in this way is more dignifying than inviting them to join initiatives that we have already started, and is more likely to attract a positive response.

The finding that such contextual variables as culture and tradition exert a strong influence on the structures and processes of partnerships makes power sharing with traditional leaders even more important. As the custodians of culture and tradition, power sharing with them would make it easier to resolve issues related to inter-cultural differences within the partnership rather than between the partnership and community leaders. Also, as Regis (2000) noted, power sharing with traditional leaders better aligns a community-based initiative to the natural

distribution of power within a community. This would further reduce friction between a community-based initiative and a community.

This study found that almost all types of partnership in the two communities involve some form of mutual aid and mutual support. This knowledge is very important for building enduring community planning initiatives for HIV and AIDS prevention and care. Members of groups usually contribute towards providing assistance for other members in need. This can be augmented by making a small provision in the budget for a project for such assistance. This should not be misconstrued as rewarding participants in the initiative because the research participants made it clear that taking care of each other's needs is cultural. There were also indications that the absence of a mutual support system in any group can cause despondence and apathy. This finding also has implications for future research to explore the inherent strengths and dynamics of mutual aid groups in building community-based initiatives for HIV and AIDS prevention and care (see Gitterman & Shulman, 2005).

In a final analysis, the culturally dynamic model of partnership identified in La provides a suitable format for fully involving both the traditional and contemporary sectors of a community in a community-based initiative. The culturally dynamic model of partnership naturally offers the type of power-sharing proposed for involving traditional leaders in community-based HIV and AIDS initiatives. It also allows the use of traditional procedures with which most traditional leaders are comfortable, alongside the contemporary group processes that formal organizations adopt.

The following is a set of recommendations, derived from the findings of this study, for enhancing the formation of community partnerships in international and cross-cultural social work practice. They emphasize the importance of fully involving traditional leaders in community-based initiatives, especially initiatives in African communities, and suggest ways for doing that effectively.

### **Recommendations for Social Work Practice**

Based on suggestions by research participants from La and Nsawam-Adoajiri, it is recommended that the development of a community planning initiative for HIV and AIDS prevention and care in the two communities, and speculatively, in other African communities with similar characteristics, should incorporate the following principles and practices.

The recommended principles are:

- Understanding the local culture: A community developer's sound understanding of the local culture and traditions of the people is paramount in ensuring that community leaders are approached in a culturally appropriate way. This will not only ensure that the essential people are involved in the initiative, it will also promote a positive response from the community and its leaders.
- Inclusivity: Involve all stakeholder groups in the community in order to make a community-based initiative for HIV and AIDS prevention and care inclusive. These include traditional leaders, community leaders, community-based organizations that are doing HIV and AIDS related

work, organizations for people living with HIV and AIDS, youth organizations, and women's organizations.

- Respectful processes: Institute a partnership process that respects the histories and practices of the community. A good process involves effective communication, and respects the beliefs and values of all partners. Decision-making should be inclusive. It should involve practices that give all members a voice. The initiative should also incorporate both traditional and non-traditional meeting procedures to make all partners comfortable and promote active participation.
- Equity: A community-based initiative for HIV and AIDS prevention and care should incorporate processes that treat people equally and equitably. Equal treatment includes ensuring that the objectives of the group incorporate the hopes and aspirations of all subgroups within the initiative. Benefits such as mutual aid and assistance should be equitably distributed among members.
- Power-sharing: Leadership of such a partnership should incorporate power-sharing between the leaders of the traditional and contemporary sectors of the community. Both sectors have their own leadership styles and processes that should be integrated for the initiative to be fully inclusive.
- Mutual aid: Mutual aid is an integral part of partnership in both communities. It will therefore be important to promote the mutual support that partners naturally provide and enjoy as members of various groups.

This can be achieved by making a small budgetary allocation for supporting partners in need.

The recommended practices are:

- Engage a cultural interpreter: In building a partnership for HIV and AIDS intervention in any community, it will be very important to engage a local community member as a cultural interpreter. A cultural interpreter is an individual who clarifies communications and gives cultural guidance (Vance, Vaiman, & Anderson, 2009). This should be an individual who knows how to navigate the tradition and norms of the various stakeholder groups. An individual who has access to the traditional leaders of the community will be an asset. This individual can be hired as a community worker to help with the engagement of traditional leaders, community leaders, and other community members.

The process of engaging a local guide is part of a community worker's entry into a community and cannot be prescriptive as communities vary in norms and practices. For example, the first point of call for a visitor to a small village in Ghana (that is a visitor who has no pre-existing connections to the village, such as friends, family or acquaintances) is usually the chief's house. This is the place where the visitor introduces him or herself to the community leaders and tells them about his or her mission. This is also the place where a community worker can begin making inquiries about community norms and also about individuals who can be potentially engaged as guides.



In relatively larger urban communities like La and Nsawam-Adoajiri, however, there are several other options for seeking help in identifying a guide. For example, besides the chief's house, such help may be sought from community leaders, local community-based organizations, and churches.

- Approach recruitment with cultural understanding: Approaching different groups of people in different communities require a good understanding of the norms and cultural practices of the community. For example, in the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities, there are traditional norms and protocols that must be followed in arranging and conducting meetings with traditional leaders. In other communities, there are traditional protocols for engaging women which must be respected. It is, therefore very important for external community workers to find out about these protocols. This understanding can be aided by the local guide.
- Develop common objectives: Initial meetings should be geared towards developing the common goals and objectives of the partnership. This can be achieved through an open forum at which all stakeholders can present their perspectives and listen to other stakeholders' perspectives.
- Build local leadership capacity: Capacity building for local leadership should be part of a community initiative for HIV and AIDS prevention and care. This will enable traditional leaders and leaders of the contemporary sector to share their experiences and leadership styles with each other.

This will enhance cooperation and consequently the effectiveness of the initiative.

- Institute action planning: The initiative should involve the development of an action plan that incorporates the goals and objectives of all stakeholders and describes the means for achieving them.
- Clarify roles: Efforts should be made at the onset to clarify the roles of all stakeholders within the partnership in order to avoid role confusion.
- Leverage resources both internally and externally: A community-based initiative for HIV and AIDS prevention and care in either community studied or communities with similar characteristics would require adequate resources to be successful. Resources should be mobilized both locally and externally to support the process. The initiative should therefore include a clear plan for resource mobilization. This can include a workshop for training local leaders in how to locate and leverage resources.
- Be mindful of the community's economic realities: The potential impact of poor local economies on a community partnership for HIV and AIDS intervention should be taken seriously. Being mindful of the community's economic realities will enable the initiator of a community-based initiative for HIV and AIDS intervention to identify areas where participants can benefit from involvement. Such benefits can take the form of training and employment opportunities.

## **Dissemination of Findings**

The dissemination of the findings of this study will be done through publications, presentations at community forums in the two communities studied, and web posting.

### Publications:

- a) This dissertation will be placed in the Wilfrid Laurier University libraries for public access. Also, the National Library of Canada will be given a non-exclusive license to reproduce this dissertation for dissemination.
- b) I will develop at least two journal articles from the findings of this study for publication in peer reviewed journals as a way of further sharing the findings of this study with the general public.

### Community forums:

- c) I will make presentations of the findings of this study in each of the two communities in which this study was conducted. I will visit the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities about a year from now. In each community, I will organize a community forum, to which all participants in this study, traditional leaders, other community leaders, community members, community-based organizations, and representatives of the Ghana AIDS program will be invited. At the end of each presentation, the communities will be invited to provide feedback and discuss how they might utilize the research findings for developing community-based HIV and AIDS initiatives.

Web posting:

- d) In order to increase access to the findings of this study, I will create a personal website, on which I will post the research findings and recommendations.

## **Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings of this study make important contributions to our understanding of partnerships from the perspectives of the two communities studied. The findings have implications for both theory and practice. Like every research study, however, this study has some limitations that should be taken into consideration when reading or utilizing its findings. The experience of conducting the study in the two communities also yielded important lessons and ideas for new research. These limitations and lessons are presented in the following sub-sections.

**Limitations.** The results of this multiple case study are peculiar to the two Ghanaian communities that were studied and can, therefore, only be generalized to other communities with caution. Generally speaking, findings from case studies do not lend themselves easily to empirical generalizability (Campbell et al., 2007; Cornish, 2004). Cornish (2004), however, argued that the generalizability of case studies lie in their ability to generate useful concepts that are relevant to a range of contexts. In concordance with Cornish's (2004) view, I believe the findings of this study are applicable to other communities with similar contexts to the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities, especially similar African communities. Also, the findings of this study open the way for similar studies to be conducted in other African communities. Consistency of findings from different communities will provide a basis for some level of generalization.

As Patton (2002) noted, the quality of data obtained in a qualitative study depends to a large extent on the expertise of the researcher. In this study, although the research assistants had previous research experience and I

personally went through a qualitative research training with them, there is a chance that my personal presence in the field may have made some difference, even if very little. That notwithstanding, my use of telephone interviewing for some of the interviews, and calling-in to some of the interviews and focus groups as well as reviewing each interview or focus group with the research assistant who conducted it were adequate measures to address any issues related to data quality. Another measure taken to ensure data quality was conducting the second round of interviews with four participants to check data credibility.

Conducting telephone interviews and not being physically present in the field denied me an opportunity to actually observe partners in action. Such an observation may have given me another perspective to partnerships, and insight into some of the dynamics involved in them.

The issue of not being physically present in the field was, however, mitigated by my previous knowledge and experience of both communities: I grew up in the La community and I have family in the Nsawam-Adoajiri community. Though I have not lived in the Nsawam-Adoajiri community, I have spent many weeks there visiting with relatives in that community.

Studies of concepts, such as partnerships, are intellectual in nature. Most people do not think about an activity that they engage in as part of everyday life as concepts. Thus presenting partnership as a concept during interviews may have reduced people's ability to engage with the subject as they would in everyday conversation. The data gathering process in this study generally brought to light qualitative differences between the way people engage with an

issue during informal conversations, and the way they engage with issues during formal interviews. The formalities of introducing the study and informing people about ethics set a formal tone to the interviews and focus groups and this changed the normal dynamics of interaction: Most responses were very brief and to the point. Although this helped in obtaining direct answers to the research questions in this study, it may have limited the contexts of the responses as some participants became a little more careful and reserved about what they had to say. These observed differences in participants' response patterns may have stripped their responses of some of the contexts that could provide deeper understanding of their perspectives on the concept of partnership.

The issue above did not pose a big problem to this study because its main objective was to capture the concept of partnership from multiple perspectives within each community. The focus was therefore more on breadth and consistency than depth. For example an in-depth case study of one partnership in a community would have failed to reveal the three models of partnership that has helped to understand the evolution of partnerships in the two communities.

Finally, the issue of gender was not fully addressed by this study. Although efforts were made during this study to ensure gender balance in participation, gender differences in how people conceptualize partnerships and how gender issues may be addressed in community initiatives for HIV and AIDS prevention and care in either community were not fully explored.

These limitations and lessons learned through this study have implications for future studies. They form the basis for new research ideas and also suggest a research approach that might yield useful results.

**Recommendations for future research.** In order to address the difficulties involved in the study of concepts discussed above, I recommend adopting the self-immersion approach of ethnography for future studies of traditional concepts in La, Nsawam-Adoajiri, and other African communities. Having grown up in the La community and spent time in the Nsawam-Adoajiri community, I am familiar with people's level of engagement in the two communities. During leisure time in both communities, elderly people like to chat with young people about their life experiences and share with them, their knowledge about history, and culture. Ethnography can make use of this natural inclination of elderly people to share information about life for deeper understanding of concepts. Similarly, informal discussions with young people and other members of a community would yield more information than formal interviews.

Having identified three different models of partnership in this study and traced their origins, I feel a need for deeper understanding of the process of evolution of the models. An ethnographic approach with continuous engagement with traditional leaders, for instance, might shed more light on the customary model of partnership. I therefore recommend future research that focuses on the customary model of partnership for in-depth understanding of this purely traditional model of partnering. High level of engagement with traditional leaders



on the subject can bring to light differences in procedure between customary partnerships involving traditional leaders such as chiefs and elders, and those between other community members or partnerships between youth and older people.

Furthermore, participants in this study identified poor local economic conditions as an important factor that affects the effectiveness of community-based initiatives. They subsequently recommended leveraging resources from the government and external sources for any community initiatives for HIV and AIDS prevention and care. According to Campbell et al. (2007) one of the qualities of an HIV and AIDS competent community is its ability to obtain external financial resources. To enhance the competency of the two communities in leveraging external financial support, I recommend organizing workshops for community members who are involved in an initiative for HIV and AIDS intervention to train them in fundraising. This will enhance their capacity to obtain financial resources externally to support the initiative. A future study into how to enhance the capacities of communities for leveraging external financial resources will be very helpful in this regard.

The findings of this study indicated that relationships are very important in partnerships in the two communities. This is consistent with Montuori and Conti's (2004) observation that the study of partnerships ought to focus on the relationships among partners. Future studies of partnerships should therefore consider the relationships among partners and its role in holding partnerships together, and facilitating the functioning of a partnership. Furthermore, a cross

cultural understanding of this topic will be an important contribution to knowledge about partnerships.

Finally, the study identified mutual aid as an important aspect of partnerships in the two communities. The research findings suggested that mutual aid plays a role in building commitment among partners. This opens the way for exploration of the inherent strengths in mutual aid for building community-based initiatives for development. Further understanding of why mutual aid is such an important part of partnerships in the two communities will facilitate the building of partnerships in many African communities.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

The findings of this study showed that members of the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities have always known about the advantages of partnership. This echoed Kenneth Kaunda's declaration that "...our ancestors worked collectively and co-operatively from start to finish" (Meebelo, 1973, p5). Both the traditional and formal sectors of both communities engage in partnerships as part of everyday life: traditional rule in both communities incorporate aspects of partnership, and members of the two communities partner for various social and economic activities. Also, in the La community, related families partner to support each other. These facts give a clear indication that the difficulties experienced by service organizations trying to build partnerships for HIV and AIDS related work in various African communities may be the result of a lack of understanding of how to approach partnership building in the contexts of those communities. The findings support the logic of this study that understanding the concepts of partnership from the perspectives of African communities will enhance the building of effective partnerships for HIV and AIDS prevention and care.

The concepts of partnership in the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities entail groups of people who have come together to work for a common purpose (Brinkerhoff, 2003; Lomotey, 2002). Partnerships in the two communities shared two main underlying principles, namely, using collaborative advantage to solve individual and collective problems and for mutual aid. In addition, partnerships in La had a third underlying principle: using collaborative advantage to foster group self-preservation.

Applying a social ecological framework to data gathering and analysis revealed that membership, structure and processes of partnerships in La and Nsawam-Adoajiri are influenced by factors operating at multiple levels of the social ecological environment, namely, the individual level, organizational level and contextual level. Partnerships in the two communities are facilitated by personal integrity, good partnership process, shared culture, a strong sense of community, and a healthy local economy. The absence of these factors inhibits partnerships.

Three models of partnership were identified in this study, two of which were common to the two communities. These were the customary and adaptive transactional models of partnership. The third model, the culturally dynamic model, was found only in the La community. The customary model of partnership involves mostly people who are traditional in outlook. This type of partnership adopts traditional structures and its processes are guided by customary norms and practices. The adaptive transactional model of partnership usually involves individuals who are contemporary in outlook and adopts more formalized structures and legal administrative procedures. The culturally dynamic model of partnership combines the characteristics and processes of the customary and adaptive transactional models. As such, they usually have shared leadership between traditional leaders and formal executive committees and also adopt a mix of customary and legal administrative processes.

The research participants articulated the utility and advantages of partnerships as social institutions that serve important purposes. They conveyed

clear understanding that the formation of a partnership generates collaborative advantage that enables groups to achieve more than an aggregation of what the partners could achieve individually. The understanding shown by the people of both communities about the advantages of working together was consistent with Huxham and Vangen's (2005) theory of collaborative advantage. This finding also lends credence to Trickett's (2009) suggestion that multilevel community-based initiatives create a phenomenon in which the "whole is greater than the sum of its parts" (p. 262). The two communities hold that partnerships are very beneficial to individuals, groups and whole communities. Their benefits include efficiency, increased effectiveness, increased human and material resources, sharing of knowledge, enhanced interpersonal relationships, and increased sense of belonging.

All participants in this study recognized the need for inclusive community initiatives for HIV and AIDS prevention and care in their communities. They recommended the formation of HIV and AIDS committees that involve all stakeholders including traditional leaders, community leaders (including leaders of women's groups), community-based organizations, youth, education and health care professionals, and government. According to the participants, such a committee must have the mandate to develop a community specific HIV and AIDS plan to promote HIV and AIDS education, and provide care and support for people who are living with HIV and AIDS and their families.

The findings of this study further indicated that both the traditional and contemporary sectors of both the La and Nsawam-Adoajiri communities are

prepared to work together on community-based initiatives for HIV and AIDS prevention and care. Based on the suggestions of research participants, the culturally dynamic model of partnership that was identified in the La community, would serve as a practicable and fitting model for partnerships involving both sectors.

According to resource mobilization theorists, a community that is ready for mobilization must have both internal and external supports as well as the ability to organize itself (Buechler, 1993). Using Buechler's (1993) yardstick, I conclude that both communities are ready for mobilization. Participants indicated a high level of organization, especially in La where there are numerous ongoing partnerships including well established community-based organizations. Both communities have ample leadership materials in both the traditional and contemporary sectors. Also, there are internal supports available in the two communities in their traditional institutions, churches, community-based organizations, and other associations that can assist with the mobilization of local resources. What would be needed are external supports including material, financial, and legal resources to complement their internal resources for action to enhance community HIV and AIDS competency.

Most importantly, the findings of this study have significant implications for partnership theory and practice. Firstly, it is the first time that a social ecological framework has been applied to the study of partnerships. Successfully adopting a social ecological framework in this study of partnerships demonstrated that, like other social entities, partnerships are affected by factors operating within their

social environments. This finding draws attention to the importance of understanding the inter-play of environmental factors in the successful functioning of partnerships.

Secondly, although this study was influenced, to a large extent, by the theories of partnership propounded by Huxham and Vangen (2005) and Margenium (1999), it generated a theoretical model of partnership that extends our understanding of partnerships beyond the models expounded by the aforementioned authors: My theoretical model differs significantly from Margenium's three stage theory and Huxham and Vangen's theory of collaborative advantage in two ways: 1) it incorporates a social ecological framework that is made up of the individual, organizational and contextual factors that affect partnerships; and 2) it conceptualizes collaborative advantage as a force or energy that is generated when individuals and organizations come together in a partnership. The model further explains how this energy is channeled through structures and processes towards achieving a partnership's objectives. While this theoretical model was derived from the concepts of partnership from two Ghanaian communities, they can be conveniently applied to partnerships elsewhere because all partnerships have the components identified in the theoretical model. One may, however, admit that there are bound to be differences in the elements within each component.

In addition to the foregoing points, the findings that individuals who come together to form partnerships in the two communities come to view each other as family further confirmed my understanding that partnership, in the African

community setting, is as much about relationships as it is about solving problems. This finding underscores the need to understand relationships among partners and lends credence to Montuori and Conti's (2004) call for a new meaning of partnerships that looks at quality of relationships rather than structures and processes.

Furthermore, there was evidence that mutual aid is an important aspect of most, if not all, types of partnering in the two communities. The findings clearly indicated that any partnership developed in either community without a mutual aid component would be missing an important piece that plays a role in holding groups together. This was consistent with Kropotkin's (1976) proposition that historically, mutual aid is a self-preservation mechanism that was inherent in all human societies. This understanding that mutual aid groups and primary identity groups that seek self-preservation through collaboration are partnerships further extends the boundaries of social partnerships. This new knowledge opens a door for the exploration of the inherent strengths and dynamics of mutual aid groups (Gitterman & Shulman, 2005; Steinberg, 1999) towards developing effective community-based partnerships.

Both the relationship and mutual aid aspects of partnerships have important implications for cross cultural understanding of partnerships. Further exploration of the two elements in cross cultural studies may shed light on why attempts to replicate Western models of partnership in African communities have often proven difficult.



Lastly, the recognition that the best way to develop an effective community-based initiative for HIV and AIDS prevention and care is to build a partnership that includes both the traditional and contemporary sectors of a community reiterates the social ecological theorists' standpoint that socially inclusive and participatory approaches to community planning initiatives are the best approaches (Trickett, 2009). The findings of this study further indicated a strong need for community workers to understand the culture and norms of a community. This was an endorsement of Whitbeck's (2006) suggestion that understanding a community's culture is an important piece in community development work.

In summary, the findings that the concepts of partnership in the two communities entail groups of people working together towards a common goal and that working together generates collaborative advantage for achieving this goal; the findings that the concept of partnership has three underlying principles, and that factors operating at multiple levels of the social ecology affect partnerships, provided bases for a theoretical model of partnership that explains the functioning of partnerships in the two communities (see Figure 3). This theoretical model of partnership enhances our understanding of the concept of partnership from non-Western perspectives. Overall, the findings of this study are important additions to the body of world knowledge about partnerships and significant contributions towards the development of a comprehensive theory of partnership that integrates both Western and non-Western perspectives.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Key Informants' Question Guide

1. What is the traditional African concept of partnership?
  - a. What is considered to be a partnership in your community? (Why do groups and individuals partner? When do they partner? What does it mean to partner?)
  - b. How partnerships are formed? (initiation, identifying partners, partnership building process)
  - c. How do partnerships work? (Structures, process, authority, leadership etc.)
  - d. What principles values guide relationships among partners? (Equality, commitment, mutual trust, reciprocity)
  - e. What factors enhance the success of partnerships?
  - f. What are some of the challenges to partnering? (How are they resolved?)
  - g. What do you know about partnerships with or between formal organizations? (What do you think about these forms of partnership? How does it differ from the traditional concept of partnership?)
2. How can knowledge about traditional African concepts of partnership be utilized to develop effective partnerships for HIV and AIDS related work?
  - a. Are you currently involved in any partnerships or do you know about any on-going partnership in this community? (What is it about? Who is involved? How does it work? If the partnership is between community

groups and a formal organization(s), how were the differences addressed? )

- b. How can partnerships be applied directly and effectively to HIV prevention work, services for people living with HIV, and care for children who have been orphaned by AIDS in this community? (How can it be initiated? Who should be involved? What roles must they play? What contributions will they make? How important will those contributions be? How can the partners work together?)
- c. Is there anything else you would like to say? (Anything else about partnerships that you would like to talk about that I did not ask you)

## **Appendix 2: Focus Groups' Question Guide**

- 1) Can you share with me experiences with partnering with other people?
  - a. Why did you work with other people?
  - b. How did it begin?
  - c. How did you work together? (Structures, process, authority, leadership etc.)
  - d. What principles values guide relationships among partners? (Equality, commitment, mutual trust, reciprocity)
  - e. What factors enhance the success of partnerships? (Principles and values)
  - f. What were some of the challenges to partnering? (How are they resolved?)
  
- 2) How can knowledge about traditional African concepts of partnership be utilized to develop effective partnerships for HIV and AIDS related work?
  - a. Are you currently involved in any partnerships or do you know about any on-going partnership in this community? (What is it about? Who is involved? How does it work? If the partnership is between community groups and a formal organization(s), how were the differences addressed? )
  - b. How can partnerships be applied directly and effectively to HIV prevention work, services for people living with HIV and AIDS, and care for children who have been orphaned by AIDS in this community? (How can it be initiated? Who should be involved? What roles must

they play? What contributions will they make? How important will those contributions be? How can the partners work together?)

- c. Is there anything else you would like to say? (Anything else about partnerships that you would like to talk about that I did not ask you)

### Appendix 3: List of Interviewees by Community

Site: La Community		
Interviewees	Category of Leadership	Gender
1. Key informant #1	Traditional	M
2. Key informant #2	Traditional	M
3. Key informant #3*	Community	M
4. Key informant #4	Community.	M
5. Key informant #5	Youth	M
6. Key informant #6	Youth	F
7. Key informant #7	Women	F
8. Key informant #8	Women	F
9. Key informant #9*	Traditional	M
10. Key informant #10	Community	M
11. Key informant #11	Traditional	F
12. Key informant #12	Traditional	F
13. Key informant #13	Community	F
14. Key informant #14	Youth	F
15. Focus group #1	Youth	M=3 F=4
16. Focus group #2	Youth	M=3 F=2

Site: Nsawam-Adoajiri		
Interviewees	Category of Leadership	Gender
1. Key informant #1*	Traditional	M
2. Key informant #2	Women/Service provider	F
3. Key informant #3	Women	F
4. Key informant #4	Youth	M
5. Key informant #5	Youth	M
6. Key informant #6	Community	M
7. Key informant #7*	Community /Service provider	M
8. Key informant #8	Traditional	M
9. Key informant #9*	Traditional	M
10. Key informant #10	Community	F
11. Focus group #1	Community leaders	M=2 F=4
12. Focus group #2	Youth leaders	M=3 F=5

\*Two iterations

## **Appendix 4: Consent Form and Information Letter for Key Informants**

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT/INFORMATION LETTER

### **Topic: Exploring the Concept of Partnership and Its Implications for HIV and AIDS Prevention and Care in Two Ghanaian Communities**

Principal Investigator: Jonathan Lomotey

Project Advisor: Eli Teram

(Ph.D.)

You are invited to participate in a research study as a key informant. The purpose of this study is to explore Ghanaian concepts of partnerships from the perspectives of two cultures, namely, the Ga-Adangbe and Akan cultures. The study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work degree at the Faculty of Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario.

#### **INFORMATION**

The research is a case study and will involve two qualitative data gathering methods: key informant interviews and focus groups. Altogether, about 56 individuals will participate in this research. As a key informant, your participation will involve sharing your insights and experience regarding the concept of partnership with the researcher and/or a research assistant in an interview. The interviewer will ask questions about what constitutes partnership in your culture and how to build effective partnerships in your community for HIV and AIDS prevention and care. The interview will take about one hour to complete.

The interview will be tape recorded with your consent. The tapes will be played-back, translated and transcribed by the researcher and research

assistants. The transcripts will be combined with information provided by other participants in the research and analyzed to give an understanding of the concept of partnership in your community. We may contact you again after the interview if we find need for further information, explanation or clarification of an issue during the transcription or data analysis. All interview materials such as tapes and transcripts will be stored separately from any materials that include your name to protect confidentiality. At the end of the research, the tapes and transcripts will be kept under lock and key for a period of one year after which they will be destroyed.

The research results will be published in a thesis to be submitted to the Faculty of Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University. A number of journal articles will also be written and published on the research findings. Furthermore, summaries of the findings may be shared with organizations involved in HIV and AIDS prevention and care in Ghanaian communities that may find it useful. The thesis, report summaries and journal articles will not identify the participants.

### **RISKS**

There are no foreseeable risks, discomforts or costs from participation in this research. However, if you feel uncomfortable at anytime during the interview and you would like to have a break or withdraw completely from the research please notify the researcher or research assistant immediately.

### **BENEFITS**

Benefits from participation in this research are two –fold. You may find personal satisfaction in having an input in what constitutes the concept of



partnership in your culture. Secondly, the knowledge gained may inform the formation of effective partnerships for HIV and AIDS prevention and care that may benefit members of your community.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

We assure you that all information you share with the researcher and research assistants in this research will be treated as confidential. We will not share the information with any other person. Tapes and transcripts from the research will be kept under lock and key when they are not being used. Electronic copies of the data will also be password protected. Only the researcher, research assistants and the research supervisor will have access to these materials. Furthermore to ensure your anonymity, your name will not be associated with any written reports or articles on the research. We will use quotations from participants to illustrate research findings. However the quotations we will use will not contain any identifying information.

You may consent to participate in the research but not to be quoted. If you do not wish to be quoted in this research, please inform the researcher or research assistant before the interview begins.

### **COMPENSATION**

There is no financial compensation for participation in this research. However, you will be provided with refreshment at the end of the interview.

### **CONTACT**

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study) you may

contact the researcher, Jonathan Lomotey, at Faculty of Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University, 75 University Avenue W. Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, N2L 3C5 and 519-884-0710 x 2480 (or local address/telephone number in Ghana to be provided on final version of form). This project has been reviewed and approved by the University Research Ethics Board at Wilfrid Laurier University. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. Bill Marr, Chair, University Research Ethics Board, Wilfrid Laurier University, (519) 884-0710, extension 2468.

### **PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you can decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer without any explanation. You can ask not to be recorded or have the recorder turned off without explanation. You may also withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

### **FEEDBACK AND PUBLICATION**

The results of the research will be presented at the community forum at the end of the study. You will be invited to this forum to afford you and other members of the community an opportunity to accept, reject, or correct the

findings from the research. This community forum will take place approximately in April, 2007.

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**KEY INFORMANT CONSENT FORM**

**Topic: Exploring the Concept of Partnership and Its Implications for HIV  
and AIDS Prevention and Care in Two Ghanaian Communities**

I have read and understood the above information. I agree to participate in this study on the terms stated in it.

Participant's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Gender:     Male         Female

Category:  Traditional Leader         Community Leader         Youth  
Leader

Women's Group Leader     Other community member     Service  
provider

Participant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 5: Information Letter and Consent form for Focus Groups**

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT/INFORMATION LETTER

**Topic: Exploring the Concept of Partnership and Its Implications for HIV  
and AIDS Prevention and Care in Two Ghanaian Communities**

Principal Investigator: Jonathan Lomotey

Project Advisor: Eli Teram

(Ph.D.)

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

You are invited to participate in a research study as a focus group participant. The purpose of this study is to explore Ghanaian concepts of partnerships from the perspectives of two cultures, namely, the Ga-Adangbe and Akan cultures. The study is being conducted in partial fulfillment for the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work degree at the Faculty of Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario.

### **INFORMATION**

The research is a case study and will involve two qualitative data gathering methods: key informant interviews and focus groups. Altogether, about 56 individuals will participate in this research. There will be about 10 people in the focus group in which you are being invited to participate. As a focus group participant, your participation will involve sharing your insights and experience regarding the concept of partnership with the researcher and/or a research assistant in a discussion with other members of your community. The focus group facilitator will ask questions about what constitutes partnership in your

culture and how to build effective partnerships in your community for HIV and AIDS prevention and care. As a focus group participant you are required to keep what other people say during the focus group confidential and not repeat it to any person outside the focus group. The focus group will take about two hours to complete.

The discussion will be tape recorded with the consent of the participants. The tapes will be played-back, translated/ transcribed by the researcher and research assistants. The transcripts will be combined with information provided by other participants in the research and analyzed to give an understanding of the concept of partnership in your community.

We may contact you again after the focus group if we find need for further information, explanation or clarification of an issue during the transcription or data analysis. All interview materials such as tapes and transcripts will be stored separately from any materials that include your name to protect confidentiality. At the end of the research, the tapes and transcripts will be kept under lock and key for a period of one year after which they will be destroyed.

The research results will be published in a thesis to be submitted to the Faculty of Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University. A number of journal articles will also be written and published on the research findings. Furthermore, summaries of the findings may be shared with organizations involved in HIV and AIDS prevention and care in Ghanaian communities that may find it useful. The thesis, report summaries and journal articles will not identify the participants.

## **RISKS**

There are no foreseeable risks, discomforts or cost from involvement in this research. However, if you feel uncomfortable at anytime during the focus group and you would like to have a break or withdraw completely from the research please notify the researcher or research assistant immediately.

## **BENEFITS**

Benefits from participation in this research are two –fold. You may find personal satisfaction in having an input in what constitutes the concept of partnership in your culture. Secondly, the knowledge gained may inform the formation of effective partnerships for HIV and AIDS prevention and care that may benefit members of your community.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

We assure you that all information you share with the researcher and research assistants in this research will be treated as confidential. We will not share the information with any other person. Tapes and transcripts from the research will be kept under lock and key when they are not being used.

Electronic copies of the data will also be password protected. Only the researcher, research assistants and the research supervisor will have access to these materials. All participants are required to keep what other people say during focus groups confidential, however we cannot guarantee that participants will keep that promise. To ensure your anonymity, your name will not be associated with any written reports or articles on the research. We will use

quotations from participants to illustrate research findings. However the quotations we will use will not contain any identifying information.

You can elect to participate in the research without being quoted. If you would like to participate but do not wish to be quoted, please inform the researcher or research assistant before the interview begins.

### **COMPENSATION**

There is no financial compensation for participation in this research. However, all participants will be provided with refreshment at the end of the focus group.

### **CONTACT**

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study) you may contact the researcher, Jonathan Lomotey, at Faculty of Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University, 75 University Avenue W. Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, N2L 3C5 and 519-884-0710 x 2480 (or local address/telephone number in Ghana to be provided on final version of form). This project has been reviewed and approved by the University Research Ethics Board at Wilfrid Laurier University. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. Bill Marr, Chair, University Research Ethics Board, Wilfrid Laurier University, (519) 884-0710, extension 2468.

## **PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer without any explanation. You can ask not to be recorded or have the recorder turned off without explanation. You may also withdraw from the focus group at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

## **FEEDBACK AND PUBLICATION**

The results of the research will be presented at the community forum at the end of the study. You will be invited to this forum to afford you and other members of the community an opportunity to accept, reject, or correct the findings from the research. This community forum will take place approximately in April, 2007.

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## **FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM**

**Topic: Exploring the Concept of Partnership and Its Implications for HIV and AIDS Prevention and Care in Two Ghanaian Communities**

I have read and understood the above information. I agree to participate in this study on the terms stated in it.

Participant's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_



Gender:  Male  Female

Category:  Traditional Leader  Community Leader  Youth Leader

Women's Group Leader  Community member  Service provider

Participant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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