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# Article

## ***Forbearance, Endogenous Development, and Aid Work***

Selina L. Haynes\* and Mark S. Williams<sup>†</sup>

*The international aid industry continues to export paid and unpaid Westerners to undertake development work of questionable and suspect utility to Africa, and to the less-developed countries of other regions. Despite its widespread acceptance in the West and tremendous financial support, this work has been criticized as failing to meaningfully improve the quality of life due to a multitude of systemic challenges within the industry. This range of challenges includes the intrinsic power imbalances found between debtor nations and their creditors; the dominant position of great powers within international organizations and as the funders of international non-governmental organizations; the pathological dysfunction of the developmental bureaucracies; and the state and institutional weakness of developing countries who, despite their inability to create the rule of law, often interpose themselves between the international aid industry and the communities who are the intended beneficiaries of development. It is the regime of international development that inhibits the forbearance necessary to permit an endogenous development which prioritizes the input and direction of the*

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*beneficiary communities themselves and would thus encourage the aid industry to formalize self-autonomy and to defend the dignity of the people whose resources the industry has ostensibly mobilized to assist. The structures of the international development regime present an overpowering inertia against reform towards forbearance; however, organizational reform of the aid industry remains the most realistic method of advancing endogenous development.*

## INTRODUCTION

*“We are unable to find a way out [of the crisis] because we are captives of the very terms in which the crisis is defined. We reason from within it and it is the crisis that imposes a horizon on our ability to see.” -José Aricó as quoted by Joseph (2000).*

For the aid industry, business is booming. Trillions of dollars have poured into thousands of development projects in the Global South over the past five decades, with 163 billion USD (United States Dollars) in Official Development Assistance (ODA) transferred to developing nations in 2017 alone (World Bank Data 2018). What once was largely the domain of churches and altruists has become a complex global enterprise involving NGO (nongovernmental organization) partnerships, foreign-state sponsored programs, and international conventions. By the 1990s there were ten times the number of international NGOs receiving major funding for their work on development issues compared to the mid-1950s (Keck and Sikkink 1998). These efforts have not been altogether unsuccessful. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) extols the claim that the number of people who were living in extreme poverty declined from 1.7 billion in 1999 to 767 million in 2013 (UNDP 2017). While laudable, the above figure is cold comfort to the hundreds of millions of people who continue to experience the indignities of extreme poverty to this day, over half of which are found in Africa (Haas 2020: 137). Given the sheer size and scope of the aid industry, why does so much poverty remain? Why are some nations that have received large quantities of foreign aid and other forms of assistance still struggling to provide even the most basic of needs for sectors of their populations?

Ghana, a small country on the West Coast of Africa is an excellent example of this paradox of the aid industry and development. A “donor darling” of the international aid community, Ghana managed to achieve middle low-income status in 2011, yet

continues to experience high levels of malnutrition, extreme regional inequality, and a doctor-patient ratio of one doctor per nine thousand patients (World Bank 2011).

This paper contends that due to its historical roots of global inequality, geopolitical tensions, and the pathologies of the bureaucratic structure, the current form of the aid industry is fundamentally unable to solve our most pressing development issues. It is the lack of forbearance in the regime of international development that prohibits a genuine recognition of endogenous development coming from within a community. Forbearance is defined as, “patient self-control; restraint and tolerance,” and its institutional importance for politics is receiving greater recognition (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018: 106). Institutional forbearance occurs where political authority has the capacity to intervene in an environment where there are vested interests, but voluntarily chooses not to enforce particular outcomes or conditions (Holland 2016: 232–33). Forbearance is the conscious decision to not impose a set of interests, values, or actions. Despite the clarion calls against the paternalistic and domineering agenda set by donors of aid, international development pathologically fails to practice forbearance in supporting community directed endogenous development. Drawing on examples from Ghana and other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, we contend that there is a need for a new form of international development, one that is endogenous in nature and holds sacrosanct both human dignity and self-autonomy.

### **ORIGINS OF THE AID INDUSTRY**

The current aid industry is the result of the merging of four closely intertwined forces: traditional humanitarian aid based on the ideas of charity and altruism, the ever-paternalistic presence of neo-colonialism found in the international political economy, the geopolitical competition produced by state interest, and the institutional pathologies within the bureaucracies that directly govern the operations of the aid industry. These are all long-term, structural forces in world order that broadly shape the “regime” of international development. Regimes, according to Cohen in his intellectual history of the discipline of International Political Economy, “embody implicit or explicit understandings about the rules of the game that help to sustain mutually beneficial patterns of cooperation” (2008: 100). It is this broadly defined regime of international development as global rules and norms, whether stated outright or consisting of unstated assumptions, that makes reforming

the system of the aid industry profoundly difficult. International development is captured by a global regime of the structures of the international political economy. The regime of international development resists reform because the industry benefits powerful actors amongst both donors and recipients. The study of international political economy and development presents a compelling narrative on this international development regime that we discuss below.

Michael Barnett (2011: 21) notes that throughout history, until approximately the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, altruistic acts remained largely a “private affair, the domain of the privileged, the pious, and the philanthropic.” While charity even in its purest form can be problematic, the burgeoning field of humanitarianism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was routinely inseparable from attempts to spread Western Christian values and was often caught up in European great power competition. These ethnocentric missions to “civilize lesser culture” are a reminder of the subjective nature of progress, and that any act of intervention, regardless of motivation, is also an act of control where progress is measured by mirroring Western political and economic institutions (Barnett 2011).

An iconic figure in 19<sup>th</sup> century European international humanitarianism is Henry Dunant, who after seeing the horrors of war began a campaign that ultimately led to the establishment of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Geneva Conventions (Barnett 2011). This gave rise to an area of humanitarianism strictly defined by relief aid given to those affected by conflict and natural disasters. Barnett (2011) posits that this is but one form of many *humanitarianisms*, with the origins of humanitarianism marked by a responsibility of care to others that extends across borders, driven by a desire for moral progress and to alleviate the suffering of others. This altruistic desire comes with its own particular set of pitfalls. Lupton (2011) writes in his book *Toxic Charity* that even with the best intentions charity can become more harmful than helpful to those who receive it. He uses the term “toxic charity” to refer to a type of one-way giving that infringes on human dignity by creating an exchange in which the giving party is implicitly superior and consequently the receiver is implicitly inferior. Over time this form of charity subverts the receiver’s capacity to provide for themselves and creates dependency. Examples of toxic aid would include mission groups which travel internationally to construct houses instead of hiring local labor, mass imports of food aid which undercut local markets, or the dumping of used clothing from the West into the markets of Sub-Saharan Africa, a practice negatively correlated with the region’s production of apparel (Lupton 2011; Frazer 2008).

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Another study has shown how corporate donations to international development charities are little more than “low-cost heroism” and found to be entirely lacking the intention or capacity to bring meaningful change (Riche and Ponte 2012). Thus, charity and altruism fall prey to two major challenges, the first occurring when motivations behind the aid are not truly benevolent and are instead an excuse to enforce either Western cultural norms or the dictums of faraway great powers, and the second being that purely benevolent intentions do not guarantee that the aid given will be beneficial to the recipient.

The strong connection between the aid industry, neo-colonialism, and state power are easily observed across three major eras of humanitarianism that we find traditionally expressed in the scholarship on international development (Rapley 2007; Wai 2007; Andrews and Bawa 2014; Williams and O’Brien 2020: 271–77). While each stage presents unique characteristics, it is equally important to note the overlapping features across each era, especially the recurring patterns of donor charity, unequal power relations between donors and the Global South, and the geopolitics of interstate tensions that work together to prohibit the observance of forbearance in international development. The first period, from 1800–1945, Barnett dubs Imperial Humanitarianism (2011: 30). It is marked by explicitly colonial values and a focus on responding to destructive forces such as war and interstate great power rivalries in Europe.

The second period, from 1945–1981, is the era of a statist approach of national capitalism. Early in this period is found the drawn-out, uneven, and often catastrophically violent process of decolonization, where the gap left by colonialism is filled by superpowers competing in a bipolar structure of power during the Cold War. Harry Truman’s Inaugural Address from January 1949 is often cited as a revolutionary moment in the history of international development that characterizes this second era, where a sitting U.S. president exhorted the American public on injustices of the destitution posed by humanity’s “ancient enemies” of “hunger, misery, and despair.” Truman attempted to distance his call to international development from the previous colonial era by rooting international development in the prerogatives of a democratic government rather than autocratic Europe, citing: “The old imperialism—exploitation for foreign profit—has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair-dealing.” The address is significant in its call for a “deliberate effort” and a “moral obligation” towards international development (Parkinson 2013: 4).

Fundamental to the conception of international development posed by Truman was the threat directed at America's national interests by people who might be persuaded by their poverty to accept what he called the "false philosophy" of communism in the address.

The need to contain communism was fundamental to this era of post-World War II international development (Haas 202: 243–44). It was also this fear of communist insurrection that caused the U.S.—and the Bretton Woods international economic system of trade, finance, and development—to adopt an approach intended to strengthen the sovereign authority of the state in the decolonizing world (Rapley 2007). The prominence of Keynesian economic thinking, which called for statist intervention in a range of market areas, propounded a variety of capitalism that accepted the contributions of the state to success in banking, employment, education, and the channeling of investment capital and aid into developmental projects (Stilwell 2011). So dominant were Keynesian views that Republican U.S. president Richard Nixon reluctantly suggested that both he and the general public were Keynesian. Though much of the world experienced a postwar economic boom, the international system fell into crisis by the early 1970s. This was due to a combination of factors that included the "stagflation" of combined unemployment with inflation; supposedly former Keynesian president Nixon moving the U.S. from fixed rates to market-based floating exchange rates; the immense human and economic costs of the Vietnam War; and two major oil crises, the second of which was met with dramatic increases to interest rates and resulted in a crushing debt crisis for most of the developing world.

The final and present stage that began in 1981 has been described as the era of neoliberal capitalism through a "Washington Consensus" of free-market reform and the downsizing of the role of the state in the economy. Though the tensions of the Cold War increased at the beginning of this phase, before it these tensions would recede towards the end of the Cold War in 1989, the economic crisis of the 1970s created new political configurations that eroded the legitimacy of the more statist variety of capitalism that had become so dominant since the 1930s. Free-market enthusiasts such as U.S. president Ronald Reagan and UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher were elected to the highest offices across much of the rich world, eager to accelerate the financialization of an international system no longer hindered by the state-led fixed exchange rates of previous decades. The developing world, faced with servicing debt payments to creditors valued at around 40% or 50% of total exports, became desperate to avoid a balance of payments crisis. Both short-term credit from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as long-

term aid from the World Bank for development projects, became subject to the punishing conditionalities of privatization, deregulation, and government austerity. In the case of Africa, the conditions imposed on the continent were akin to telling people in a raft being buffeted by a raging storm to row faster (Woods 2006). Furthermore, it made a catastrophic assumption that the causes of underdevelopment were endogenous to African countries, downplaying the exogenous context of the structures existing in the regime of the international political economy, such as the high interest rates, the reduced demand from Western countries, and subsidized sectors, such as agriculture. The 1980s became reviled as the “lost decade of development” as the prescribed conditions of international financial institutions contracted demand in the economies of the Global South and largely worked against domestic savings. Even “good government” reforms that on the surface were meant to foster democratic accountability have been criticized as having heavily prioritized accountability to creditors, rather than the public (Abrahamsen 2000).

It is during this present age where NGOs became an integral component of the aid industry, delivering “on the ground” international development work. However, this has not at all insulated the work of international development from the national interests of states or the logic of free-market driven development (Hindman and Fechter 2011). Instead, NGOs have become fully integrated and connected with state and international organizations. This institutionalized interdependence between self-interested states, international organizations, and international NGOs, exists within both a funding structure, and discourse, that Arturo Escobar (1995) has described as conditioning the definition of development and the means of measuring development, and to delegitimize the agency of the local “objects” of development projects.

Each of the aforementioned stages of international development have been fiercely contested, especially the colonial period (Mishra 2013). The era of statist capitalism that dominated the approach of international development during the post-WW II era was contested by a number of newly independent states at the Bandung Conference in 1955 in Indonesia, a time characterized by populist leaders like President Sukarno who told the U.S. government “to go to hell with your aid” (quoted in Taylor 1965). The Non-Aligned Movement created in the aftermath of Bandung, and later the New International Economic Order (NIEO) that comprised of a group of 77 states, protested against the practices of international development, specifically, as well as the overall structures of the



international political economy regime that was governed through the Bretton Woods institutions (Amin 1990: 43–52).

The neoliberal turn has been subject to scathing critiques from the field of international development. It is now even common to discuss “post-development” in the literature (Rapley 2007). International development has been and continues to be used as a tool of statecraft, directed by the national interests of powerful donor countries to further geopolitical advantages (Hancock 1989). Robert Chambers was a pioneering voice within international development that denounced the pathological urge within the field to universalize top-down prescriptions that had the audacity and hubris to assume that standard operating procedures could be generalizable across the globe (Chambers 1993). Calls for post-development reform of international development during the 1990s to “empower people” and practice “participatory democracy” have resulted in some tangible change, but rarely involves a sincere bottom-up approach that is endogenous.

A major critique of the implementation of greater beneficiary inclusion in international development revolves around how efforts purporting to be bottom-up define civil society in incapacious terms, often simply colluding with local elites (Scholte 2001; Van de Walle 2001). Even the International Monetary Fund, an organization that has been famously described by one of its official historians (Boughton 2001: 996) as, “a tidy disciplinarian wanting to be respected but not loved,” ostensibly responded to the maligned SAPs (structural adjustment programs) by designing a system where borrowers “own” their domestic reform efforts. However, these changes to IMF conditionality have been described as a means of social control, whereby state officials in borrowing countries are required to roleplay the position of IMF officials, manufacturing consent from African government officials (Fraser 2005). One major study on local participation in northeast Tanzania described the efforts of NGOs and donors as less participatory and characterized more by a “mobilization” around projects that served village elites (Kelsall and Mercer 2003). One notable example from this study detailed the “cows project,” where individuals who had the capacity to keep a cow but lacked the capital to purchase a cow, were able to receive a cow from an internationally funded NGO. What the authors found was that the project overwhelmingly prioritized those serving in village government and their immediate family, excluding the majority of the people more suitable to receive assistance from the program (Kelsall and Mercer 2003: 206–300). Similar dynamics of elite collusion are found in the Village Groups organized in Burkina Faso that were meant to promote

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grassroots development (Atampugre 1997: 60–61). Other studies have shown that the regime of international development might be more willing to internalize traditional African social customs if they are seen as useful to donors and international actors, even if the embraced customs are recognized as an affront to the basic dignity of people in society (Branch 2014).

The UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), that replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015, are illustrative of these shortcomings of the international development regime. The MDGs were a parsimonious list of 8 goals that largely centered around poverty reduction. They were criticized for conceptualizing development through a narrow and Western-centric lens, and provided little structural support for impoverished countries in Africa that had little capacity to meet the goals without external resources (Sachs 2012, 2206). The SDGs seem audacious in comparison, promulgating 17 goals that boldly expand and build on the MDGs, such as fully mainstreaming gender into their conceptualization of development. However, the SDGs are reticent on the structural constraints in the international political economy that are the context of entrenched poverty in much of Africa, and the document provides marginal support for empowering local peoples enduring the indignities of extreme poverty, nor does it take seriously the role that local knowledge may play in development programs (Struckman 2018).

Approaches to international development have changed over the decades but there is a continuity there in the unwillingness to practice institutional forbearance, which is the self-restraint of political authority from imposing its directives and interests on the intended beneficiaries of development. International development is structurally and historically, “an interventionist and managerialist discipline. It involves telling other people what to do” (Pieterse 2000: 182). For Pieterse, it is precisely this dynamic of administrative control that needs to be reformed to help usher in a more ethical and a more effective approach to international development. Sally Matthews echoes this point in the context of working through a regime of post-development for Africa, arguing that the African experience needs to direct international efforts and for those of us in the West to appreciate a sense of forbearance in how we universalize from a Western view of economic development to Africa (Matthews 2004).

From its inception, the aid industry was built on colonial and neo-colonial relationships, because of which even its most innocent intentions carry an undercurrent of paternalism. It is inherently political, exasperating power imbalances between individuals, NGOs and communities, and at the level of the state. Barnett (2011: 8) observes that “humanitarianism has become a full-blown area of global governance, meaning it has become increasingly hierarchical, and institutionalized.” The dynamics from which the aid industry evolved, including frequently toxic charitable leanings and being a tool of political influence, are firmly entrenched in the international aid system.

### **GHANA AND THE AID INDUSTRY**

Ghana was the first African country to gain independence from colonization, and its relative stability and British colonial heritage have made it a favorite for international development projects (Arhin, et al. 2018). In the decade spanning 2006–2016 it received 16.13 billion USD in official development assistance, and as of 2010 there were 4463 registered NGOs, which coordinate over 184,000 individuals as either employees or volunteers (GSS 2015: 46). Yet, despite the enormous amount of foreign labor and capital flowing into the country, the nation still faces a number of development issues. For example, the infant and under-five mortality rate in Ghana is 60 deaths per 1000 live births (World Bank 2011). The national average obfuscates the enormous regional disparities that exist within Ghana, where 47 deaths/ 1000 live births occur in Greater Accra, but 111 deaths/ 1000 live births are reported in Ghana’s Northern Region (GHS 2015). Statistics such as these fuel the growing debate over the effectiveness of NGOs and foreign aid within African nations and the Global South as a whole.

In the article “Self-help without the Self,” Osei (2015) explores why after forty years of work in rural Ghana, NGOs have made little progress. Osei’s main argument posits that while effective community development programs are “self-determined, self-directed, and self-delivered,” NGOs operating within Ghana fail to make use of local human capital, relying on outside experts and expatriate staff (2015: 499). Kamstra and Shulpen (2015) note that NGOs tend to employ international academics, who excel at speaking to donors, rather than local community members. Volunteers match this elite profile as well, meaning that many NGOs have a paucity of local representation and diversity (Kamstra & Shulpen 2015). Furthermore, local partnerships and coalitions often lack sufficient inclusion of locals in decision making and planning (Strutt and Kepe 2010).

A major study of the internal and external causes of the collapse of microfinance institutions (MFIs) in the Ashanti region of rural Ghana in 2013 similarly identifies international-regional power imbalances between creditors and borrowers as a fundamental obstacle to development (Boateng, et al. 2016). Though the causes of the collapse of MFIs are recognized as both internal to the practices of the MFIs and the external macroeconomic situation of Ghana, former employees of the MFIs interviewed by the authors of this study identified unethical lending practices of MFIs. The creditors effectively did nothing to vet applications for loans or evaluate the prospects of development, and instead, served to inflame an “irrational exuberance” amongst the poor (2016: 47).

The result is a number of communities that are being acted upon by external, typically Western forces, to achieve a development goal that has also been set externally. In this way, many NGO programs are mere extensions of neo-colonialism, denying the intended beneficiaries their right to self-autonomy, that is, to choose their own development goals and the path they take towards them. What constitutes a good life is highly subjective and lies at the heart of development ethics (Goulet 1995). While all people share a need for life-sustaining goods, esteem, and the freedom to create a meaningful life, what brings people fulfillment is entirely relative (Goulet 1995). Without the input of local communities, there is no way of knowing if a program is truly improving quality of life. For example, in Northern Ghana there is a distinct difference between being wealthy and being rich (Millar, et al. 2008). Wealth includes having “family, land, livestock, respect, knowledge, skills, harmony, happiness, soundness, acceptability and money (at the tail end),” while being rich includes having commercial crops and other assets that can be used to purchase goods (2008: 62). A poor man can be wealthy and a rich man may lack wealth, and by extension many rural Ghanaians would prefer the former over the latter. Therefore, a program which increases indicators of richness without increasing wealth may go unsupported by communities (Millar, et al. 2008).

Mohan (2002) also observes the paternalistic elements within NGO interventions in Northern Ghana. He examines the relationship between foreign-based NGOs (also referred to as Northern NGOs, or NNGOs), local organizations, and community members, and concludes that these partnerships are inherently unequal due to political power and access to funding. Mohan (2002) lists the assumption of NGOs that their methods are superior, poor selection of field staff, and a refusal to release control of local projects to

local partners, as factors that prevent meaningful collaboration between NGOs (both foreign-based and local) and communities. This insistence on NNGO control not only undercuts program effectiveness but alienates the very individuals that these programs are intended to help. Literature has shown that externally designed and run programs are less successful than those done with local consultation and participation (Kamstra and Shulpen 2015). Foreign organizations often do not have the contextual knowledge and legitimacy within local communities that is necessary to create project success (Mohan 2002). Within Ghana this is compounded by a cultural gap that exists between the North and South. While much of development needs are located in the rural North, most NGO and administrative offices are in urban centers in the South (Osei 2015). Many NGOs simply do not understand the daily lives of rural Ghanaians, leading to programs that are contextually inappropriate. A lack of presence within the community can lead to the misdistribution of resources, such as the selection of wealthy families for training and sponsorship, rather than those who are most in need. All of this suggests that in order to be effective, development organizations must be a part of the very communities they intend to help.

### **THE STRUCTURE OF THE AID INDUSTRY**

Unfortunately, it is not just the voices of the communities that are being lost within the machinery of the aid industry. The aid industry has become increasingly bureaucratic and hierarchical over time (Barnett 2011; Kamstra and Schupen 2015). While paternalistic aid infringes on the dignity and self-autonomy of local communities, the bureaucratization and institutionalization of development organizations has had a similar effect on aid workers. In-community NGO workers often deal with harsh working conditions, low wages, and high stress (Joseph 2000). When considering that ineffective and even harmful practices enacted by NGOs have persisted over decades, it is surprising that a considerable number of aid workers are painfully aware of the system's many flaws. Arcaro (2016) surveyed over 1000 aid workers, delving into their motivations for working in their field, and the perceptions they have of the aid industry as a whole. Of the 816 respondents to the question "In general, how much do you like what you do as a humanitarian aid worker?" Four-hundred and thirty-three aid workers provided a narrative response of what they liked and disliked about their job (2016: 109). Workers reported enjoying making a difference, acting in a manner that aligned with their values, and having work that felt meaningful. Overwhelmingly, aid workers disliked the bureaucratic nature of their work, or as one

respondent stated, “the mind-numbing, soul-numbing, stifling layers of bureaucracy,” where one is merely “a cog” in the aid machine (2016:111).

If human dignity and self-autonomy are to be inviolable, then this must also apply to those working within the aid industry. The current system is failing in this regard. Joseph laments the loss of talented development workers who have left the industry due to “in-built structural deficiencies built on well-meaning ideologies” (2000, 390). In order to continue within the industry, aid workers are faced with reconciling their desire to do good with their own observations of the harm the aid projects can cause, all while under the expectation of personal sacrifice for the cause (Fechter 2014). These constraints do not just exist within NGO organizations, but emerge from a complex web of international agencies, state politics, and the disproportionate influence of donors (Weger 2012). Joseph (2000) states that NGOs who acquiesce to these outside agendas consequently lose autonomy and flexibility. Though programs tailored to local communities have higher success rates, the institutionalization of NGOs is leading to their homogenization (Kamstra & Schulpen 2015). In other words, as the call for development projects to become more responsive to local context (and therefore more unique) increases, NGOs and their programs are in fact becoming more similar.

It is this dysfunction of internationally operating bureaucracies, rooted in the culture of the bureaucratic structure as a social form, that led Barnett and Finnemore to characterize the scale of their mission failure as “pathological” (1999: 715, 720–722). The bounded rationality of decision-making is largely shaped by turf-wars over funding and universalizing SOPs (standard operating procedures) rather than community informed feedback and local consensus building. This bureaucratic pathology typically leads to an “irrationality of rationalization” that flattens the diversity of development projects, undermines social democracy, and even inhibits the efficacy of development projects. Though international bureaucracies may come to accept that practices need to be altered in the context of challenges, they proceed to universalize such necessary changes by implementing them into new SOPs, rather than to appreciate that different contexts may require different approaches. Institutional adaptation in the face of structural failings is pathologically prevented by the insular structure of the bureaucracy’s workforce and the disciplining effects of their technocratic training. Such bureaucratic pathologies, combined with fiercely held ideological convictions, contributed to the poorly informed structural

adjustment policy years of the 1980s for Africa after the Berg Report, which called for a toxic mix of public sector firings, austerity of services and food subsidies, and financial and exchange rate liberalization before financial stability (Woods 2006: 156–58). These bureaucratic pathologies of the international financial institutions have worked against any notion of forbearance, or restraint, in their work in Africa.

The role of the state in the aid industry takes two different forms. For the Global North, this role includes setting international development agendas, sponsoring bilateral aid partnerships within developing nations, and participating in multilateral agencies. For the Global South, state government interacts with all levels of the aid system, oscillating between playing an important role and being ignored entirely (Strutt and Kepe 2010; Mohan 2002). Woods (2006) argues that influence comes from the “sympathetic interlocutors” within the bureaucracies of the borrowers, often Western-trained economic-activists promoting a top-down, open-market reform as aloof technocrats who will implement borrowing conditions to the extent that they will make political or personal gains (70–76, 82). Less-developed borrowing countries may be able to influence international organizations, but it is not a force that emerges from the frontlines where the social risks of poverty are most acutely experienced. Woods is hard-pressed to identify examples of sympathetic interlocutors, aside from a failed attempt at reform by Abdou Diouf’s government in Senegal between 1981–2000. Struckman (2018) provides the example of South Africa’s support for the 2015 Millennium Development Goals, but shows that this performance of support is mostly chimerical, and predicated on not actually being committed to its targets, such as meaningfully empowering women, an essential area of concern expressed in the SDGs.

In Ghana, the state depends on large sums of foreign aid to supplement its national budget. For the past twenty years, forty percent of Ghana’s government expenditures have been paid for by official development assistance (Borson 2017). These funds, provided by wealthy OEDC (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries, come with stipulations, allowing for Western countries to leverage aid for their political goals. The dilemma is cyclical in nature: the state lacks the self-sufficiency to fund and guide development, while ODA has been criticized for undermining state sovereignty and creating dependency (Strutt and Kepe 2010; Borson 2017; Mohan 2002). Likewise, NGOs have been accused of undermining the state by undercutting local initiatives, or of weakening state systems by setting up their own parallel systems, duplicating effort and

jeopardizing the sustainability of existing government structures (Weger 2012). This undermining of the state is antithetical to development: there is academic consensus that economic growth in Ghana and across the developing world requires strong formal institutions at the state level (Rodrik 2007).

Finally, there is the challenge of donor control to NGO effectiveness (Weger 2012). NGOs are dependent on the funding provided by donors with their goals and strategies often set by donors rather than the communities themselves (Osei 2015). This can lead NGOs to choose projects that are more marketable to their donors, and to choose more visible change over the attempt to address underlying social processes. International development projects have historically been compromised, at least in some degree, by the inconsistent commitments of major funders, such as the World Bank, to the prioritization of poverty reduction as integral to overall development. This courting of donors has led to a competition between organizations for funds, the adoption of fashionable terms such as “sustainability” or “consensus building” without more than a cursory application, and the practice of using previously successful development models without adapting them to new environments (Joseph 2000). The unreliable flux of funding can lead to difficulties sustaining long term projects or, alternately, can flood small organizations with capital and program demands. Of the latter, Mohan (2002) observes that innovative, successful organizations that experience this sudden excess of funding experience their own challenges: “Such rapid growth is a problem for any organization, but more importantly the funders tend to treat these organizations as infinitely flexible... [the organization becomes] too full of demands to deliver programs at the grassroots” (2002, 141). All of these influences constrain effective action by those best equipped to enact change: in-community aid workers and the local communities themselves.

The current form of development aid gives power to institutional structures, while silencing the voices of the humans that are within the system and under its influence. We have, in a sense, dehumanized development. Rather than basing assistance on need, the aid industry commonly develops programs based on the availability of funding and donor demand. This “funding first” model, that allows for the amount of funding to validate the worthiness of a project and for funding sources to direct its use beyond their level of expertise, is in desperate need of critical analysis in and of itself. Funding cannot lead the



vision of development; without a purpose, the influx of capital is merely poison in the wound, exasperating greed and corruption, and precipitating waste.

### **A CASE FOR ENDOGENOUS DEVELOPMENT**

*“I don’t know of any country in the world where a bunch of foreigners came and developed the country. I don’t know one: Japan? Korea? No! No country did that.”* -Herman Chinery-Hesse (2011)

Any system that will move beyond the power imbalances and pathologies of the aid industry must have the hitherto under-appreciated values of human dignity and self-autonomy at its core. It is not enough to consult local communities and seek the participation of community members. Development goals must come from within the communities themselves. Endogenous development aims for communities to make use of their indigenous knowledge, institutions, and resources to direct their own development. What is required is the practice of forbearance in the realm of international development. In this way, the process is cognizant and respectful of how material, social, and culture interact to form the community’s worldview. Only external resources that are appropriate to local needs are used.

Zakiya (2014) details some of the following principles of endogenous development: 1) that the “process, methodology, and vision” come from the community (thus respecting their self-autonomy), 2) that people have a feeling of satisfaction when they achieve things for themselves, especially when it is done in a way that respects their heritage and cultural identity (thus respecting human dignity), 3) that change is lasting and meaningful when it is done by choice, rather than external pressure, and 4) “that every person has capacities, gifts, and ideas” (705). Endogenous development does not mean ignoring problems that stem from certain cultural practices, but rather that the solutions for these issues must be reached through internal community discussion and use of indigenous systems of knowledge. The worldview of the beneficiary community as the foundation of development, endogenous development is able to overcome the ethnocentric bias inherent in most participatory development.

A compelling case study involves the work of Millar, *et al.* (2008), and the Centre for Cosmivision and Indigenous Knowledge (CECIK), an NGO which uses the endogenous development framework. After asking permission from the Chief of Gowrie-

Kunkua, a small community in the Bongo Region of Ghana, CECIK first spent time learning the traditions and social norms of the village and mapping community institutions. After dialoging with the village, discussion turned to agricultural development. The community raised issues of controlling *sigra*, an invasive weed, increasing food productivity, and reforestation. CICEK then helped the villagers develop a plan to address these issues, using the socioculturally significant concept of *sor-le*, also referred to as “footpath knowledge” or “bush knowledge” (Millar, et al. 2008, 57). This detailed knowledge of the landscape was then used to design experiments on what could help control the growth of *sigra* and raise crop yields. With guidance from CICEK, the experiments were designed and led by the local farmers, including the choosing of progress indicators such as soil quality, crop growth rates, and harvest yield. Technical and research support were provided by the University of Development Studies located in Tamale, Ghana.

The project was both time-intensive and much more difficult to create than an externally designed project but was successful in two main ways: it yielded useful agricultural knowledge and also built the capacity of the local farmers to conduct their own agricultural experiments. Furthermore, it built a relationship of trust between CICEK staff and the community, and seemed to achieve a partnership that was truly collaborative, without aggravating power imbalances. CICEK has helped facilitate other development projects in Uganda, South Africa, and Tanzania with relatively consistent success. Most importantly, rather than a system that constrains those who possess indigenous knowledge, endogenous development is people-centric and empowers local community members to take action.

While NGOs and global actors still have a role to play under this new framework, their role is more one of support and partnership, which can pose a slippery slope towards paternalism. The defense against shifting back into an unequal partnership that is eerily reminiscent of colonialism primarily lies in the fact that the agenda is not set from above. That is, agencies do not come in with a predefined plan and attempt to implement it via endogenous development. Rather, agencies practice the restraint of forbearance and provide technical information or begin a dialogue, and the community selects how this may fit into their vision for development. Instead of dictating the pace and direction, government and NGO employees must come to local community members ready to learn.

This provides the foundations from which development is built. Rather than development strategies being designed by international organizations, steering committees, or round tables, they are chosen by those who have the greatest stake in the process—the intended beneficiaries of development.

Andrews and Bawa (2014) have made the case of context specific development where local populations are sincerely involved in a “dialogic” process of fostering international development that is “open to alternatives” and “in tune with the socio-cultural dynamics of the people ‘development’ targets.” This argument resonates with other memorable commentaries on post-development, such as in the following reflection (Wai 2007: 93):

*Ideas about social transformation and quests for human emancipation and dignity in Africa must be based on the lived social realities of the people who are targets of that transformation.*

It is the regime of international development and the confluence of powerful states in competition with each other, market-driven logics, and the pathologies of bureaucracy that structurally countervail even the most heartfelt and well-intentioned calls to reform the system. A realistic approach for reform towards endogenous development that is based on forbearance in the international development regime will most likely come from attention on organizational restructuring of bureaucratic arrangements.

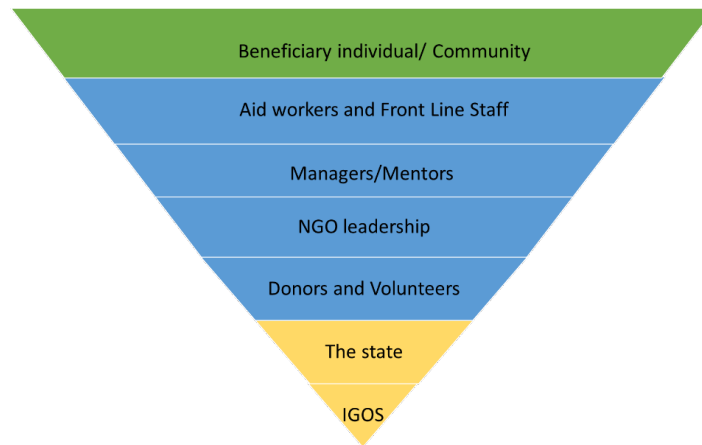
In order to effectively support endogenous development, make decisions based on local context, and respond quickly to changing conditions, NGOs must not only build strong relationships within communities they wish to assist, but also have the forbearance to allow frontline workers to have operational discretion. It is on this point where meaningful reform of the aid industry could occur. This requires the inverting of the standard organizational pyramid into what is known as the “servant-leadership model,” or “Lean Model” (Marshall 2012). In the standard organizational model, the narrowest point of the pyramid is at the top, and represents the most important member of the organization; in a business this may be a CEO or the president of the company. Immediately beneath this would be the managerial segment of the company, then beneath that supervisors, followed by workers at the bottom, widest level of the pyramid. The idea is that the bottom levels report to the level above them, and the upper levels direct the operations of the levels below (Marshall 2012).

In the servant-leadership model the pyramid is flipped upside-down. The upper levels retain the highest importance and direct operations, but leadership is given to the workers (Marshall 2012). Supervisors and managers serve and support by mentoring this upper, frontline level, and providing the workers with what they need to perform at their best. The CEO or president serves, monitors, and supports the supervisors and managers above him on the pyramid. Flynn, Smither, and Walker (2015) list a number of dimensions of servant-style leadership, including but not limited to: “empowering others; helping others succeed; exhibiting positive personal qualities such as humility, integrity, egalitarianism, authenticity, and courage; building relationships through listening, demonstrating empathy, and collaborating; and demonstrating conceptual skills” (261). Lest this model be criticized for emphasizing sentimentality over effectiveness, a modified servant-leadership model has been extolled by members of the U.S. Department of Defense for its ability to direct resources to those best suited to achieve organizational goals, such as those on the frontline of combat situations (Marshall 2012). Flynn, Smither, and Walker (2015) correlate organizations using the servant-leadership model with higher individual and organizational performance and lower employee turnover.

Reimagining the aid industry using the servant-leadership model, one may find a structure similar to the one observed in figure 1. Direction is set by the members of the community. The aid industry, consisting of powerful states, international organizations, and foreign-based NGOs, would practice forbearance in development projects. Aid workers within the community help the community members reach their chosen goals, and along with community leaders communicate resource needs to the donors and the state. The state then allocates support to the levels above and communicates resource needs to multi-lateral partners and international government organizations.

It is a controversial stance that IGOs (intergovernmental organizations) such as the UN and the IMF, as well as the governments of the Global North, should step back from dictating development policy for developing nations. Perhaps more importantly, it is unlikely that governments of the Global North will willingly relinquish such a powerful method of political influence in global affairs. A second level to this debate surrounding the nature of state involvement pertains to the role of the state undertaking development.

Figure 1: The Aid Industry reimagined as a servant-leadership inverted pyramid



The Asia-Pacific region experienced a post-World War II economic boom that has no precedent in other regions of the world (Stubbs 2018). What unites these otherwise disparate countries, who experienced their economic growth in different decades, is the role of the state in marshalling resources towards economic growth—the developmental state. Only Botswana, of the many countries of Africa, has been cited as having the institutional capacities and political culture that is comparable to countries in the Asia-Pacific and seemingly required by a developmental state (Edge 1998). The case of Ghana, and much of the rest of Africa, invokes an enduring debate on whether the developmental state model is realistic. The axes of this debate circulates around the institutional limitations of Accra, and other capitals, and the extent to which these governments have the capacity to enact property rights reform, encourage savings and investment when faced with such chronic weaknesses in demand, and perhaps above all, whether powerful donors will act with the same forbearance in allowing state governments to pursue an independently directed path towards development experienced by countries such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and China (Cox and Negi 2010). As Dani Rodrik (2007) notes in his survey of development, there must be a role for the state for development to proceed at a rate quick enough to lessen poverty, but the nature of state involvement will vary depending on the institutional strengths of the state.

Even if multilateral organizations choose to shift to a truly endogenously led development strategy, the conditionality of foreign aid is a double edge sword. On one hand, stipulations often have not been catered adequately to local contexts and are rife with ulterior political motivations. On the other hand, aid without conditionality can lead to rent

seeking by receiving governments (Moyo 2009). In order to avoid these pitfalls, Moyo (2009) heavily advocates the wooing of foreign direct investment (FDI), the issuance of bonds, a focus on inter-regional trade, and lowering international trade barriers in order to lessen developing states' dependency on aid. Whether Moyo overstates the pernicious characteristics of foreign aid remains debatable. Lemi, et al. (2013) demonstrate in their cross-national study that official development assistance has encouraged good governance practices across Africa more effectively than foreign direct investment and has improved the rule of law much more effectively than other official development aid flows.

Ghana's change in status to a lower middle-income country (LMIC) greatly reduced its access to concessional aid, making other sources of capital beyond official development assistance, such as the issuing of bonds, all the more attractive (World Bank, 2015). China has been the primary source of foreign direct investment in Ghana, and the two nations signed a loan agreement in 2010 worth 13 billion USD, the first 2.85 billion of which was earmarked for road development (Tang and Gyasi 2012). In addition, Ghana has issued five rounds of Eurobonds since 2007, raising an excess of 6.5 billion USD (Darko 2017). Raising capital in this way is not without risk, while Ghana's strong economic growth has acted as a type of collateral on its bonds, issuing Eurobonds increases the nation's debt to GDP (gross domestic product) ratio, which in itself can hamper growth. However, the transformative aspect of playing the bond market is that it will put responsibility for development on the government in Accra. These bonds present risk for Ghanaian society, but so too might they be a step towards a state-led endogenous development. It bears noting that China's FDI (foreign direct investment) is hardly altruistic, and China will undoubtedly recoup its investment by extracting various resources from the West African nation (Tang and Gyasi 2012). Still, if developing countries are to attain self-sufficiency they must take charge of their own development, and focus on strengthening state institutions rather than continually relinquishing decision-making power to state partners in the Global North.

Lastly, using the inverted pyramid redefines the role of individual donors and volunteers. Using themes from the endogenous development framework, it is important to recognize that everyone has gifts and capacities, and that "some people in any situation are getting things right" (Zakiya 2014). However, the needs of the beneficiaries must take precedence. Talents and capacities should be matched to appropriate tasks and there should

be more expectation that amateur development workers need to be trained to be more useful. While demands for transparency and accountability are positive aspects of increased donor control, the idea that donors should be setting development goals when the majority have neither met the intended beneficiaries, visited the community, nor have any training in community development is laughable. NGOs must instead shift their mentality from courting the donor to training them. Ostrander (2007) notes that donors must be educated about the programs they donate to, and an emphasis must be placed on collaboration between donors and recipients, rather than merely acquiescing to donor demands. She argues that NGOs must offer opportunities for donors to experience self-fulfillment from their contributions, “but the idea that recipient groups must defer to donors’ wishes [in order] to raise money must be challenged” (Ostrander 2007: 370). Voluntourism and other travel for charitable purposes is not unethical by default, but it must be reframed in an accurate light. When visitors do not have skills or resources that match the needs of where they are going, the goal should be an enriching experience and cultural exchange, without the pretense that they are providing “aid” (Lupton 2011).

## **CONCLUSION**

We propose that the reason that a paradigm shift to endogenous development has not yet occurred is due to the lack of forbearance in a highly entrenched regime of international development characterized by systemic inequality, state interest, and pathological tendencies of bureaucratic governance. However, a huge proportion of aid workers, fundraisers, volunteers, and policies makers genuinely want to help others and effect change in an unjust and impoverished world (Fechter 2014). It is a harsh truth that this “help” often hurts those whom we want to benefit. The case has been made that practices such as voluntourism, and the mass export of clothing and food to the Global South, has been at best ineffective and at worst disempowering to beneficiary communities and destructive to local markets. The reason that these practices continue under the guise of development is because of the inertia of the international development regime that is resistant to change, but also because the detractors have yet to find an appropriate way to channel the need of the individual to create a life they deem meaningful. This would depend on the supposition that living a life of meaning, or the pursuit of a life that is meaningful, is in and of itself a fundamental human need. If indeed the pursuit to create a life with meaning is fundamental, and one holds the belief that the fundamental needs of humans

should be met, then it is not outrageous to consider the right to a meaningful life, or the pursuit thereof. This is useful in analyzing why development workers continue to partake in practices that are often not in the best interests of the beneficiaries. It is not enough to tell people to “stop helping because they are making the situation worse.” There must be a satisfactory channeling of the desire to help. We must find ways to make supporting endogenous development as fulfilling as marching into a village and handing out food aid or building a well. While a modern, developed society has many benefits, opportunities to create meaning in our lives, in a culture that idealizes consumerism and “busyness,” are becoming increasingly scarce.

The aid industry has grown into a juggernaut of powerful IGOs, bilateral and multilateral state partnerships, NGOs, and development projects. It wields trillions of dollars and a workforce of hundreds of thousands. As the UN promotes its Sustainable Development Goals, hopes remain high that the development strategies created over decades of aid work will raise developing nations out of poverty and into a new age of wealth and prosperity. Yet Ghana’s position as a developing nation is emblematic of what is happening in Global South countries all around the world. Struggling to set its own course while heavily under the influence of the creditors of international aid agencies, and caught between its rich cultural heritage and embracing Western practices that promise economic growth, Ghana is proof that more is not always better.

The West African nation has reached a point of aid saturation, and it is unlikely that more ODA, more NGOs, and more externally set development programs will help the country reach its development goals. Due to the aid industry’s historical roots, the current aid system cannot adequately engage communities at the grassroots level and frequently infringes on the dignity and self-autonomy of aid beneficiaries and aid workers alike. The existing aid structure is simply unable to address the challenges that face today’s developing nations. What is required is a complete paradigm shift from top-down, hierarchical and bureaucratic aid structures to an endogenous framework where development is truly “self-determined, self-directed, and self-delivered” (Osei 2015: 499). Only by redistributing power to those who hold the highest stake in the process through the practice of forbearance, and the contextual knowledge to ensure success, will development programs be truly effective. NGOs new role in this framework is to support, rather than direct development, and create meaningful ways for donors and recipient



communities to engage and connect with the ensuing process. For NGOs and policy makers, endogenous development may seem time consuming and difficult. However, if we are not helping developing communities reach their vision of development, then for who exactly is all this money and effort for?

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