

Advocating Recognition and Redistribution in Poverty Alleviation Programs in Ghana:  
An examination of State and NGO Programs and Policies

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## **Dedication**

To my parents and family, especially my niece, Asunta-Marie Numbo Bawa, whose birth is yet another reason to strive for excellence. All my love.

*'Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound...'*

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## **List of Abbreviations**

GPRS	Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
WB	World Bank
IMF/Fund	International Monetary Fund
IFI	International Financial Institutions
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MDBS	Multi-donor Budgetary Support
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Country Initiative
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
LNGO	Local Non-Governmental Organization
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
ESC	Economic, Social and Cultural
CP	Civil and Political Rights
SL	Pseudonym for one of the NGOs interviewed for this study
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
SES	State Empowerment Program
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UDHR	Universal Declarations of Human Rights
ISODEC	Integrated Social Development Centre

## **Abstract**

This thesis argues that poverty alleviation strategies and programs carried out by the government and Non Governmental Organizations in Ghana provide affirmative solutions to poverty. This is because, these intervention strategies have been influenced by conventional discourses on poverty that fail to adequately address non-economic issues of poverty such as powerlessness, marginalization and under-representation. The study is carried out in a two-pronged manner; first, it analyses state policies and strategies, particularly the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS), on poverty alleviation and compares these to NGO programs, implemented with funds and support from external donor organizations. Specifically, I focus on how NGOs and the government of Ghana negotiate autonomy and financial dependency with their funding donor-partners and how these affect their policies and programs. Findings from this study reveal that while external influences dominate poverty alleviation policies and strategies, NGOs and the government of Ghana exercise varying degrees of agency in navigating these issues. In particular, NGOs have been able to adapt their programs to the changing needs of donor markets, and are also actively engaged in re-orienting poverty back to the political domain through advocacy campaigns. Overall, rural communities in Ghana depend on charitable NGOs for the provision of essential social services, while the Ghanaian government depends on international donor assistance for its development projects.

## **Introduction**

The phenomenon of poverty in most developing countries is characterized by both economic and non-economic issues. While empirical economic crises remain the most obvious manifestation of poverty in many of these countries, non-economic factors appear to have more damaging effects on people especially since these are rarely seen, much less discussed. In this thesis, I examine the importance of recognizing and incorporating these non-economic issues into state and Non Governmental Organizations' poverty alleviation programs and strategies in Ghana.

Ghana was the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to gain political independence from British colonial rule in 1957. As defined by the joint International Monetary Fund /World Bank's Heavily Indebted Poor Country Initiative (HIPC), Ghana is a heavily indebted developing country with the majority of Ghanaians, 70% of the population, living in rural areas. These rural communities, according to the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) of Ghana, are impoverished. As in other developing countries, several poverty alleviation or reduction initiatives, mainly donor-funded, have been implemented by both state and non-state institutions in Ghana. From 1983<sup>1</sup> to the present, the government of Ghana has adopted several poverty alleviation/reduction strategies to combat poverty. The most recent was the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS), financed mainly by the International Monetary Fund (IMF)/World Bank under the Heavily Indebted Poor Country initiative (HIPC).

While state poverty alleviation initiatives have tended to focus on macro-economic policies, Non Governmental Organizations' (NGO) programs have until

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<sup>1</sup> I am using this timeline because that is the period that Ghana implemented IMF/World Bank sponsored Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). I have discussed SAPs in detail in this thesis.

recently been geared towards the provision of basic social services to the rural poor. The involvement of Non Governmental Organizations in poverty alleviation in Ghana, particularly as social safety nets for poor and marginalized rural folk, intensified during the 1980s, following the high social costs of the very unpopular Economic Recovery Program (ERP) otherwise known as the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP).<sup>2</sup> These economic recovery programs were introduced to developing countries in the 1980s by the Bretton-Woods institutions. These programs contained “a package of aid finance from the World Bank and other Multilateral and bilateral donors, and a package of economic reforms, introduction of which is specified as a condition for the release of aid” (Elson, 1995, p. 1851).

These programs and strategies seem to reflect the interests of the donors more than the interests of beneficiaries (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001; Interview data). The government and NGOs operating in Ghana appear then to be “service delivery mechanisms for predetermined development agendas” (Mohan, 2005, p. 69). While it is undisputable that external influences in policies affect state and NGO programs and strategies for poverty alleviation, these ‘service delivery vehicles’ (the Ghanaian government and NGOs), do not act without agency or control over their policies and programs. In the case of the government, its agency, while present, is limited in terms of negotiating the focus of loan agreements and conditions from International Financial Institutions (IFIs), especially the Bretton-Woods institutions (World Bank and IMF). The government can choose to accept or reject these policies and loans altogether. Its

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<sup>2</sup> Aimed at reducing the incidence of poverty, SAPs were economic recovery programs from the IMF which were adopted by many developing countries. SAPs emphasized the diminished role of the state in the provision of social services and encouraged market operations in the provision of these services (Elson, 1995).



acceptance of terms and conditions associated with loans is therefore an indication of its willingness to accept any issues of control or lack of recognition such assistance may come with. On the other hand, NGOs are aware of the limitations of their programs and some of them are making frantic efforts to persuade the state to take over projects that they have started and cannot continue because of financial constraints.

Although income-based measurements of poverty reveal some improvement in the poverty levels in Ghana, there is still pervasive poverty in the country, with the rural poor being the worst affected (NDPC, 2005). At the macro level, economic instability and inflation have become household terms. This has ensued in continued state indebtedness and dependency on foreign aid, perhaps resulting in inability to provide basic social services to people at the micro level. NGOs respond by filling this gap and providing social capital to rural communities. Social capital “refers to the norms and networks that enable people to act collectively” (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000, p.226).<sup>3</sup> Despite these efforts, the various strategies adopted by the state and NGOs appear to be focused on economic redistribution that have been influenced by an economic conception of poverty. As a result of the narrow focus of these strategies, poverty has not been holistically tackled.

My thesis argues that these initiatives and programs should emphasize both redistribution and recognition. I further argue that, by not addressing redistribution and recognition in tandem, these strategies and programs provide affirmative rather than

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<sup>3</sup> Through out my thesis, I refer to the idea of social capital in various ways. In particular, I refer to principles of social capital in the relationship NGOs have with their beneficiary communities. In this case, NGOs constitute formal social capital to people in rural communities because of their ability to lend support to communities in hard times. For a detailed discussion on social capital and development, please see, Woolcock and Narayan, (2000). *Social Capital: Implications for Development Theory, Research, and Policy*. In *The World Bank Research Observer*. 15 (2), pp. 225-49; Evans, P. (1996). *Government Action, Social Capital and Development: Reviewing the evidence on Synergy*. In *World Development*, 24 (6).

transformative solutions to poverty in Ghana. Transformative solutions incorporate both recognition and redistribution in their design and implementation (Fraser, 1995). However, affirmative solutions are temporary remedies for a social injustice issue that fail to transform the underlying generative framework that may contribute to the injustice being tackled (Ibid).

From my initial examination of literature on poverty alleviation in Ghana, it is clear that poverty alleviation has been carried out affirmatively by both the government and NGOs working in the country. It is important to note that even though some of these programs are affirmative, they contain elements for transformative solutions. Others with some modifications have the potential of generating transformative solutions. The various programs do not adequately address systemic<sup>4</sup> problems of poverty that relate to Ghana's position in the global political economy.

Without addressing systemic issues relating to Ghana's poverty in the international political economy, current poverty alleviation programs in Ghana are encouraging, sustaining or strengthening a situation of dependency, which already exists.<sup>5</sup> Dependency in this case is a multi-tier problem. The state is largely dependent on IFIs and bilateral aid institutions from developed countries such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for sources of funding, while rural

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<sup>4</sup> Systemic/structural issues used in this thesis refers to relations and interrelations in the global order that determine decision making processes and how power is vested in institutions and nations.

<sup>5</sup> The dependency theory has been influential in many debates on development in Africa and Latin America. Perhaps, this theory, outdated as it may be, is still relevant to debates on critical development theory because it addresses certain core issues at the heart of development aid and policies. It has been modified to be applicable to present development discourses on Africa and Latin America. For an extensive discussion of this theory, see Blomstrom and Hettne (1984); and Bauzon, (1992). However, the use of this term here denotes a situation where Ghana relies on aid for development in a variety of ways. Dependency is then sustained by a constant renewal of 'contracts' for and from development agencies to continue to carry out various development projects with or without modification. I also use the term here to imply a situation where the country depends literally on external aid in the form of loans and donations for poverty alleviation.

communities tend to depend on NGOs for the provision of essential social services such as water, primary health care and education. NGOs in turn rely on charitable sources of funding for their programs. This thesis argues that such strong NGO involvement in poverty alleviation, while depoliticizing poverty, also masks the failure of state policies and strategies to meet basic subsistence needs of its citizens. Even though their programs de-politicize poverty to an extent, NGOs are, through advocacy campaigns, also re-orienting poverty back to the domain of politics. This ability of NGOs to provide where the state has failed is interpreted as partnership between the state and civil society for the development of the country. These notwithstanding, NGOs are not merely good Samaritans for the poor. While poverty alleviation remains the *raison d'être* for their existence, many of these organizations are unwilling to invest their own money into their programs. They rely on, and use funds from their donor partners for their development projects, claiming that monies generated from their private consultancy work remain private profit used for organizational capacity building (ProNet-North, September 2006).

I contend that the most *transformative* solution to this crucial human rights issue is not only a political one, but one that emphasizes both redistribution and recognition at the local and international levels. This study approaches the topic in a two-pronged manner; first, it analyses state policies and strategies, particularly the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS), on poverty alleviation and compares these to NGO programs, implemented with funds and support from external donors.

## Conceptual Definitions and Issues

First, I approach the topic of poverty<sup>6</sup> as a human rights and therefore social justice issue. While it is not the intention of this thesis to take a particular side in the ongoing debates on the topic, I critique a purely economic conception of poverty as too narrow. This should not be interpreted to mean that the economic aspects of poverty are not important in tackling it. In fact, redistribution of economic/material resources is crucial to any attempts at alleviating it. This critique seeks to draw attention to non-economic issues of poverty and advocate that both be seen as equally important in the ‘fight against poverty’. Discussions of some of the contentious issues of poverty are taken up in chapter two of this thesis. In the discussions that follow, poverty is used generally to refer to the situation where a country, individual or community lacks various economic and non-economic resources. More specifically, my working definition is that poverty *encompasses both conditions of want for economic redistribution and cultural recognition; a state of being, embodying social exclusion, marginalization and powerlessness (to control the means of economic redistribution and production) as a result of lacking economic or material resources.*

Consequently, *poverty alleviation* and *poverty reduction*, while theoretically distinct, are practically similar and used interchangeably in this study. This in part stems from their interchangeable use by research participants and in primary documents relating to poverty in Ghana. Ideally, poverty should be eradicated in Ghana and other parts of the

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<sup>6</sup> Writing on this topic presented various ambiguities and challenges that were sometimes overwhelming to me as a young researcher. The discourse on poverty is voluminous. It is also very contentious. While this project has benefited from some of the broad general discussions on the topic of poverty itself, it has had to, as a matter of necessity, limit the scope of discussion to issues related to the theme of the study. Obviously, this study is an on-going dialogue and remains open to discussions on the vast expanse of literature on poverty, especially aspects not adequately tackled in its discussions.

world; however, given that poverty can be defined in relative terms, it is inevitable that some people and nations are always going to be poor relative to others. However, people who are poor should not be denied certain rights, especially as they relate to basic human sustenance and political representation. It is only when these basic needs are met, and institutional changes made, locally and globally, that attempts can be made at totally eradicating poverty. My starting point is that this has not yet even been done, hence my argument for sustainable poverty alleviation.

*Redistribution*, as used here, refers to the allocation/provision of material resources, or activities that provide economic relief to poor communities and countries. The use of recognition, as employed by Fraser (1995), is used broadly to encompass issues of participation in decision-making and respect for the views and autonomy of poor developing countries and communities. Generally, this encompasses non-material components of poverty, including power, representation and voice as well as systemic issues. Together, these two broad aspects of poverty need to be tackled in tandem to provide a transformative solution to poverty. The use of these terms here has been simplified just for the purposes of the study.

Existing programs which tend to privilege economic redistribution over recognition only provide *affirmative* solutions to poverty. '*Affirmative solution*', is borrowed from the works of Fraser (1995) and refers to the situation where solutions proposed for solving a problem fail to tackle underlying structural causes, but only deal with the situation in its present state. In other words, whatever is being done to solve a problem works within the same structural system which in fact, may be the cause of the problem. In this study, affirmative solutions for poverty in Ghana refer to programs that

ignore structural issues, especially as they relate to Ghana's position of dependency in the global political economy. Ghana, as a state, is relatively powerless and marginalized in the international political economy. In other words, its representation in major world institutions at the helm of economic and political affairs is weakened by its economic poverty. If the international system is restructured in a way that is conducive to propelling growth and empowering developing nations, then it is assumed that programs will easily be planned, implemented and sustained autonomously by developing countries such as Ghana. Conversely, *transformative solutions*, is used here to refer to the situation where systemic issues related to a problem are adequately dealt with. In other words, such solutions incorporate recognition and redistribution. For example in my study, the argument is made that the structures of IFIs make it difficult for developing countries to act independently, and allow internal democratic institutions to operate independently. Therefore, if these deficiencies in these institutions are addressed, then the situation will improve and the dependency cycle will be broken.

Neo-liberal economic policies emphasize market forces as crucial to economic growth and individual wellbeing. This approach "sees the individual, rather than the market, as blameworthy for poverty and unemployment" (Bezanson, 2006, p. 4). Neo-liberalism is used in this thesis generally to refer to the emphasis on macro-economic growth as the engine of growth and development for Ghanaians. This approach is evident in government's economic policies constantly referring to the private sector as the 'engine of growth' and predicating poverty alleviation/reduction on macro-economic growth (see discussion of the GPRS and budget statement of Ghana discussed in detail in Chapter Three of this thesis).

### **Central Research Questions**

Why has the unbearable incidence of poverty persisted despite various programs, policies, strategies and efforts by state and NGOs to reduce/alleviate it in Ghana? Has the

economic conception of poverty limited strategies to the domain of economic approaches? By and large, poverty as a case of injustice requires both redistribution and recognition if *transformative* solutions are to be found (Fraser, 1995) for it. Affirmative solutions condone unjust socio-political economic systems at local and international levels.

## **Methodology**

To adequately address the central research questions, a combination of qualitative techniques were used for the study. This eclectic method consisted of interviews, some critical discourse analysis, and documentary research. Primary sources of data included in-depth telephone interviews with executive and program officers of NGOs and personal communications. Various government and institutional policy documents, including the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, 2006 budget statement of Ghana, NDPC<sup>7</sup> reports, the Heavily Indebted Poor Country initiative policy, annual reports and fact sheets from the IMF and WB, and UNDP reports were examined.

I started by analyzing various policy documents on poverty in Ghana. This was done simultaneously with literature reviews. From my initial analyses, I realized that I really could not discuss poverty alleviation in Ghana without analyzing policies of the IMF and WB because they are Ghana's main development partners. The analyses of Government of Ghana policies or strategies could not be done independently of IMF/WB policy documents. At this point, I decided to conduct an interview with a finance minister of Ghana to get the views of the government on its strategies and to find out how much

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<sup>7</sup> The NDPC is a constitutionally established body in Ghana with a mandate to advise the president of Ghana on development planning and strategy. Among other things, this body "undertakes studies and makes recommendations on development and socio-economic issues" (NDPC website, no page number).

ownership the government had over its poverty alleviation policies. However, after several futile attempts to interview the minister, I gave up on getting an interview and relied mainly on documents for the analyses. Compared to the interview data from NGOs, the documentary reports provided scanty information on the topic. They lack depth and do not really tell the whole story. After identifying some key themes and reading up on the activities of some NGOs, it was clear that there were substantial differences and similarities in Government and NGO strategies in terms of approach. However, it was not clear whether or not NGO programs were potentially more transformative than state programs. Armed with this knowledge, I designed the interview guide for NGOs.

A total of five NGOs were reviewed for this study, and five officials of these NGOs were interviewed. Of the five interviewees, there were four were male participants and only one female participant. Interestingly, all four male interviewees were officials of the four local NGOs reviewed for the study while the only female was an official of an international NGO. Of this total number, three were executive officers. The remaining two were program officers. Interviews were conducted between August and November of 2006 and lasted between one to two hours.

The NGOs that participated in the study are: Village Aid, a UK based NGO which operates via local partners in developing countries; Simli Aid, a local Ghanaian NGO which receives funding from Village Aid; ProNet-North, also a local Ghanaian NGO which primarily works in the water sector, providing water to rural communities in Ghana and receives funding from various external sources; ISODEC- a rights based NGO



mainly working in social policy advocacy; and finally, SL<sup>8</sup> which also receives funding from external sources and works in various places in the country. I also had personal communication with an official of the NDPC. Four of these NGOs concentrate their activities on rural areas in Ghana mainly because these are the endemic poverty stricken areas in the country. It is important to note that the northern sector of Ghana has been my main reference point for the study because of its state of poverty.<sup>9</sup> Three of the ten regions in the northern sector of Ghana have the highest poverty levels in the country according to NDPC reports. This sector of the country in a way mirrors the country's own position as a Heavily Indebted Poor Country. It lacks visible infrastructure, adequate basic social amenities such as water, electricity, and health care facilities.

The only criterion for selecting participating NGOs was their involvement in poverty alleviation/reduction in Ghana. Preliminary research on these NGOs was done mainly via internet. Before contacting these NGOs for interviews, some background reading on their programs and policies was done on their official websites. Following this, introductory emails were sent, introducing the research topic and requesting permission for interviews. Although about twelve different NGOs were contacted through email, only two responses from e-mails were received. It became necessary to follow up with phone calls. After telephone contact was made, I requested personal email addresses of executive and program officers to which my official statement of purpose as well as consent form was sent. This was to ensure confidentiality in communication. The

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<sup>8</sup> This is a pseudonym used for an NGO. In the interview, the interviewee requested that this be done.

<sup>9</sup> I am familiar with the Upper West Region, one of the three most impoverished regions in Ghana, because I not only grew up in this region, I have carried out several advocacy/awareness campaigns on various issues in secondary schools in this region. I had the opportunity of traveling to, and interviewing farmers in, rural areas in this region as a research assistant for the University of Ghana's Institute for Statistical, Social and Economic research. This was in July 2005.

interview guide was also sent to interviewees as required by the ethics board. Besides, interviewees wanted a sense of the questions I would be asking. It is possible that interviewees gave me socially desirable responses given that I am a student of Social Justice and Equity Studies. However, given that the interviews were lengthy with various follow-up questions, I am sure this issue was adequately dealt with. Since the interview guide was semi-structured and allowed for a lot of interaction between interviewer and interviewees, follow up questions were easily asked. I also paid attention to exploring activities of NGOs in general.

Participants for the study were executive directors and program officers of their organizations. I chose this category of people because of their various positions and experiences in their organizations. Their views on the topic are important since they are in charge of planning poverty alleviation programs. They also approve programs planned by their staff. In cases where NGOs only implement broad policy guidelines from funding partners, people holding such positions have the power to determine what actually gets done on the ground. Many of these executive officers are also founders of their NGOs and as such their ideas and visions drive their organizations. Ultimately, people in such positions of power, determine in one way or another, what services are provided to communities. They therefore exert enormous influence on their beneficiary communities. For instance, ProNet-North shifted the focus of their programs from direct provision of social services to advocacy, because funding for social service programs was running out. Such decisions ultimately affect the lives of people in communities they operate in. In this case, a decision to change their outlook on poverty or the way to tackle

it raises important issues for consideration. Are their definitions of poverty holistic enough? And finally, do their programs adequately address systemic issues of poverty?

Even though the interview guide was structured to solicit information on the nature of programs carried out by NGOs, it became difficult to decipher between what was personal opinion and organizational view. This became obvious when during interviews some participants used the phrase 'I think...' However, these opinions are sometimes the 'law' in these NGOs because of the power vested in their executive directors. It is worth mentioning that there was a noticeable difference in the amount and kind of information disclosed by participants in relation to their position within the organization. While the executive directors had no problems disclosing information on all aspects of their operations and engaging in 'frank talk' with me, one of the project officers I interviewed was quite careful with the kind and amount of information he shared with me. On several occasions, he referred me to their website. For instance, when I asked about the source of funding for their NGO, he asked why I was interested in that kind of information. He was of the opinion that that kind of information was not very relevant to their operations. Here, he asked me to look it up on their website. While all executive directors interviewed had no problem with me disclosing the source of information from them, this was not the case for this program officer. He was hesitant to be quoted or cited on the record. The second program officer requested a transcript of the interview to ensure that he would not be misquoted. This clearly reflects internal power dynamics at play within these NGOs.

Furthermore, I had to give a more extensive introduction of myself to the program officer who was initially very skeptical of what I actually wanted to do with the

information. This person requested my CV; family ties in Ghana and even a picture. Given that I was not gathering personal information from them, I wondered why all this was necessary. However, I provided all the information with the exception of the photograph and finally got the interview! The executive directors on the other hand, were satisfied with the information I provided in the introductory letters. They however also quizzed me on my nationality and personal experiences with poverty and some of their programs. Even though I am not familiar with the internal climate and structures of NGOs, reflecting on my interview experiences, it is obvious that because NGOs mainly have a small staff, they could easily become paternalistic with the executive director being in charge of everything, sometimes including being the founder of the organization. Furthermore, financial information is not easily disclosed. Interviewees were careful about how much of that information was disclosed, with one participant declining to speak on the issue of funding at all. Recently, NGOs in Ghana have come under a lot of criticism from the government and media as organizations that are feeding off the name of the poor, and becoming local elites.<sup>10</sup>

Because I interviewed executive directors or people in policy making positions of NGOs, it may appear that this study adopted a top-down approach to the subject of poverty. This is not the case. While it would have been beneficial to interview actual beneficiaries of poverty alleviation programs to find out their views and opinions of NGO activities, it was not feasible to do so because of distance and the limitations of communication. Telephone interviews were not possible since many poor people have no access to telephones, especially in rural areas. To compensate for this, I analyzed

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<sup>10</sup> For example, see a BBC news report on the threat to blacklist some NGOs in Ghana because of their inability to render accounts of donor-funding. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3517827.stm>

information gathered in a large scale study in rural communities in Ghana by Narayan (2000) where people were asked to define poverty and discuss access to resources from various sources including government and NGO.

The second major strategy was the examination of the GPRSP, the 2005 Budget statement of Ghana, Ghana's letter of intent to the IMF for joining HIPC and the HIPC initiative itself. I found country information on Ghana from the IMF and World Bank websites, as well as the government of Ghana websites. Here, I sought information on how such policies, with the support of the IMF and World Bank, influenced the nature of the strategy for poverty alleviation by the government. The letter of intent from the government of Ghana to the IMF to join the HIPC initiative officially indicates a willingness of the state to go along with conditions spelled out in the initiative. If the government consents to the conditions and policies of HIPC, is it because they have no other choices or because they see these programs compatible with their own development agendas? Is the government resorting to the language of the IFIs to negotiate loans because that is the only way to find funding for development programs? Most importantly, I wanted to find out if these programs allowed the government to cater to the needs of the very poor in rural areas. The personal communications I had with an officer of the NDPC provided some insight on government policies in this regard. I used these as primary sources of data. I could not directly quote him on such information because it is not part of his job description to grant such interviews.

Analyses of these programs and initiatives were based on critical discourse analyses (CDA). CDA is rooted in feminist-post-modern thought. It seeks as a general objective to question certain normally taken for granted assumptions especially

concerning power relations (Carroll, 2004). In this thesis, I looked at how the relationship between Ghana and the IMF/WB, through loan programs, is embedded in power relations just as the situation is between NGOs and communities they work in. Since IFIs and NGOs provide financial resources to aid community and national development, they possess and exercise power and control over their beneficiaries. Overall, for analyses of both interview data and documents I paid attention to whether or not these programs addressed both recognition and redistribution equally.

### **Organization of Thesis**

Following this introduction which outlines my research problem and methodology, the rest of the thesis is organized into four chapters, as follows.

Chapter One: *The Search for a Transformative Solution* provides a discussion of Ghana's socio-political and economic situation and the influence of the IMF and World Bank in policy making on poverty alleviation in the country. It discusses the context within which the IMF, World Bank and NGOs have become so involved in poverty alleviation and development in Ghana, as well as the formal and informal political structures of the country. This section also provides some statistics on key poverty indicators in the country. This provides a general background to later discussions of government's agency in negotiating poverty alleviation policies. In this and other chapters where the IMF and World Bank are discussed, I analyze information from official websites of these institutions which I consider as primary data.

In Chapter Two, a discussion of the literature on poverty alleviation is provided, alongside the theoretical framework for the thesis. In this theoretical section, I engage

with the literature in the form of a dialogue, discussing key findings and providing examples on how my current study is, in dialogue with these theoretical issues. The discussions in this segment are taken up in themes that reflect the major premises for the study. This also generally sets the broader context of a discussion of the neo-liberal<sup>11</sup> approach and discourses of the IFIs on poverty not only in Ghana, but in other places where they operate.

Following this, Chapter Three: *Conceptualizing Poverty in Ghana*, focuses on the limitations of orthodox approaches to poverty in Ghana. This chapter also examines how non-material issues in poverty have been addressed, by examining the various initiatives and policies (mostly state policies) for poverty alleviation in Ghana. Have these programs been helpful to Ghanaians? How is the agency of the government compromised in these initiatives? Or how does government negotiate its agency? This discussion takes up issues raised in Chapter One in a more detailed discussion. Are the statistics on poverty in Ghana in Chapter One all that there is to poverty in Ghana?

Finally, Chapter Four: *NGO and State Programs: Similarities, Divergence, Convergences and Creative Tensions*, provides analyses from the findings of the study. The analyses presented here focus on key thematic issues and findings from the study. It also contains a discussion on directions for future research.

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<sup>11</sup> Neo-liberalism is used in this thesis generally to refer to the emphasis on macro-economic growth as the engine of growth and development for Ghanaians, and the reduction in state's direct expenditure on basic social services such as water, education and health care. This approach is evident in government's economic policies constantly referring to the private sector as the 'engine of growth' and predicating poverty alleviation/reduction on macro-economic growth (see discussion of the GPRS and budget statement of Ghana discussed in detail in chapter three of this thesis).

## **Chapter One: The Search for a Transformative Solution**

### **Ghana: Socio-Political Context of Development**

Once referred to as the Gold Coast, Ghana's political independence from British Colonial rule in 1957 was a sign of hope and promise for the rest of Africa. Ghana's first president, the renowned Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, clearly stated that "the independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked up to the total liberation of Africa."<sup>12</sup> This promise was however short lived when Nkrumah was overthrown in a military coup in 1966. Up until now, it is still unclear to many ordinary Ghanaians how Ghana, with a thriving gold mining industry, became impoverished and heavily indebted soon after independence. One way to get around it, perhaps, is to blame it on political instability and financial misappropriation in periods of military coups following independence.

Geographically, Ghana is located in West Africa, with a population estimate of twenty-two million, one hundred and thirteen thousand (22,113,000). Fifty-four (54%) percent of the population is rural.<sup>13</sup> There are ten regions in the country, three in the northern savanna sector of the country and six in the southern, mainly rain-forest sector. Politically, each of the ten regions is headed by a minister appointed by the ruling government. In each region, governance is structurally decentralized. There is a regional coordinating council, district assembly, and a number of unit committees. These structures, ideally, provide for grass-root participation in governance and political decision-making. Democratic elections for the presidency and members of parliament are held every four years. The Parliament of Ghana comprises two hundred and thirty

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<sup>12</sup> This is contained in Nkrumah's Independence Day speech he delivered on the eve of Ghana's independence-6<sup>th</sup> March 1957. It has become quite a common statement that is repeated even by pupils in elementary schools for school plays on the independence story among others.

<sup>13</sup> WHO, Country Cooperation Strategy at a Glance:  
[http://www.who.int/countryfocus/resources/ccsbrief\\_ghana\\_gha\\_06\\_en.pdf](http://www.who.int/countryfocus/resources/ccsbrief_ghana_gha_06_en.pdf). Accessed on 3rd March 2007.



members who are elected at local constituency levels. Even though there have been a number of coups in the country since independence, many of these have not degenerated into civil wars. Ghana returned to full democratic rule in 1992 following elections that brought to power an erstwhile military ruler, Flt. Lt. J.J Rawlings. Four successful elections have been conducted since the 1992 elections and the mantle of government has successfully passed from one political party to another. A centre-right political party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP), has been in power since 2000.

In terms of development and development planning for the country, the different political parties have proposed and implemented various strategies and policies. Development policy and planning have been heavily influenced by foreign aid with the largest donor/lender being the World Bank (Whitfield, 2005). Governments since independence have inherited debt from previous governments and have thus continued the relationships with donors, especially the Bretton-Woods institutions. It is estimated that even though Ghana's debt problems date back to the 1960s, the period of structural adjustments escalated the debt problem, and made it unsustainable (Tetteh, 2003). The widely condemned SAPs, while scoring points on the macro-economic sector in Ghana, failed to improve Ghana's general situation as a heavily indebted country, thereby compelling the government to spend more and more money servicing debt, reducing spending on social services and maintaining a donor-recipient relationship with multi-lateral and bilateral donors (Whitfield, 2005; Osei and Quartey 2001). The WB and IMF, as well as other donors have actively played crucial roles in the policy formulation sector in Ghana. A more detailed discussion of the agency of the state vis-à-vis the Bank is taken up in the following section.

The main stay of the majority of Ghanaians is subsistence agriculture. Ghana exports a number of primary products. The main cash and export crop, cocoa, is grown in the southern sector of the country. Economically, the southern sector of the country is more developed than the northern sector. Generally, Ghana's GDP in US \$ in 2003 was estimated to be 2,238 (UNDP Report, 2005), ranking 138 out of 177 in terms of its human development index (HDI) in the 2005 Human Development Report. Luxemburg's GDP in the same year was \$62,298. The HDI sums up the country's physical situation as a poor country since it measures life expectancy, literacy and income. As indicated in the UNDP report, this measure is only a starting point. For instance, according to the report, life expectancy at birth is 56.8 but the quality of this life is not discussed. In Japan, which ranks first in this sector, it is 82.0 years. While the combined enrollment in primary, secondary and tertiary education in Ghana for 2002/2003 is 46%, the United Kingdom, which ranks first in this sector, records 123%.

The healthcare system in Ghana has until very recently been inaccessible to the majority of people, particularly in rural areas, because it ran on the 'cash and carry' system (Biritum, 2001). This is a system where patients had to pay upfront for the full cost of drugs and medical treatment. Before the implementation of this system in 1992, the provision of health services in government hospitals was virtually free (ibid). Recently, the current New Patriotic Party (NPP) government initiated a national health insurance scheme. Since this is a new initiative, it is hoped that it will improve the health sector in the country. There is currently no data on how effective this system is in curbing health problems in the country. Generally, in terms of health, there is a dismal picture. For instance, only a total of seventy-five percent of the population is reported to be using

improved sources of drinking water, with eighteen percent using adequate sanitation facilities according to United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) report for 2004.

Having provided a background of Ghana's socio-political and economic climate, the next section focuses on the politics of policy making in Ghana. It analyses the major players in national development planning. This section touches on issues of hegemony, power and dominance of the WB and IMF in their relationship with the government and how government negotiates and exercises agency in poverty alleviation policies. This section is important to the overall discussion of poverty alleviation because it provides insight into how Ghanaian governments have been tackling poverty through broad policy frameworks that have also created the environment for NGO activity in the country.

### **IMF and WB Policies: Role and Influence on Poverty Alleviation in Ghana**

Despite the general admission of the failure of SAPs, Ghana and many other developing countries continue to solicit funds and development assistance from the Bretton-Woods institutions, thereby entrenching the dominance and role of these institutions in economic policy making in Ghana (Whitfield, 2005).

The IMF, mainly a financial institution, among other things, promotes "international monetary cooperation and provides temporary financial assistance to countries to help ease balance of payments adjustment" (IMF Fact sheet, 2006, no page). The IMF concerns itself mainly with the macro-economic policies of member countries and "helps a number of countries make the transition from central planning to market-oriented systems and enter the global market economy; and to promote growth and

poverty reduction in the poorest countries at risk of being left behind by globalization” (ibid). It is clear from this that the IMF is interested in a uniform neo-liberal global economic system. Interestingly, the IMF professes that global economic interdependence has called for integrated economies since “any country’s prosperity depends more than ever both on the economic performance of other countries and on the existence of an open and stable global economic environment” (IMF Fact sheet, 2006, no page). Such a statement gives the impression that member countries interact on equal power scales irrespective of their financial circumstances. Perhaps, naively, it is expected that all member countries hold equal say in the affairs of the Fund.

However, this is not the case. Major decisions of the fund are taken through a “weighted voting system: the larger a country’s quota in the IMF, determined broadly by its economic size, the more votes it has” (ibid). Here, clearly, power is not only vested in countries with larger purses, the power of the purse is used as a controlling mechanism to ensure conformity to the Fund’s neo-liberal agendas. Given that many developing countries lack adequate financial resources, their say at such levels is limited. Invariably, the economic policies adopted by this Fund largely benefit wealthier countries. Developing countries are also compelled to adopt neo-liberal economic policies which may not be beneficial to their developmental goals (Konadu-Agyemang, 2001). According to a chief economist of the IMF, Michael Mussa, the Fund’s programs “...are like medicine. *Some of the medicine has [sic] harmful side effects, and there are real questions about what the dosage ought to be.* The best that can be hoped for is that we are prescribing more or less the right medicine in more or less the right dosage” (Konadu-Agyemang, 2001, p. 427, emphasis added). Such an admission demonstrates that the

Fund is not only aware of how harmful its policies have been to the poor, but also indicates the Fund's unwillingness in changing tactics. This is quite worrisome.

Can the state decline or modify IMF/World Bank policies that it finds harmful to its people? The main tool for ensuring that member countries conform to these neo-liberal policies is the power of the purse. While governments can, in fact, refuse to carry out all the policy guidelines of the Fund, defaulting governments are constrained for alternative borrowing sources. This has even become more difficult in the present era because of the current arrangement for harmonizing all donor aid through the Multi-Donor-Budgetary Support (MDBS), which started in 2003. Through this system, all major donor-aid to Ghana is channeled into budgetary support for the country's poverty reduction strategy. While this is expected to inject more predictability in aid flows and reduce transaction costs, the common criteria, the GPRS is not wholly owned by the state. In other words, the support, though important, will be channeled into a strategy which reflects policy guidelines of the IMF and the WB. As evident in the case of the GPRS and SAPs, the IMF virtually imposes economic reform programs on borrowing countries. This is done through assessments and recommendations. For instance, after visiting a country to assess its economic policies and programs, staff of the Fund submits a report to the executive board. "The board's views, summarized by its chairman, are transmitted to the country's government" (IMF, 2005, no page). This policy statement demonstrates clearly how the Fund imposes its policies on beneficiary states. While *transmission* may not directly translate into imposition, in practice, this is the case. In Ghana's case, this interference in policy space of the government limits government's strategies to the Fund's neo-liberal policies. This notwithstanding, the government of

Ghana is not an unwilling party in all these negotiations. The Fund cannot exercise control over the government without its consent in one way or another. What is arguable is that the level of ownership and autonomy the government has over its economic and social policies is compromised by the Fund's strict insistence on observing its policy guidelines.

As explicitly stated by the Fund, it is neither a development bank nor an aid agency! Consequently, conditionalities applied to loans are "... a way for the IMF to monitor that its loan is being used effectively in resolving the borrower's economic difficulties [with neo-liberal prescriptions], so that the country will be able to repay promptly, and make the funds available to other members in need" (IMF, 2005, no page). The Fund is thus primarily concerned with ensuring that its business is running and therefore adopts the policies and programs it deems necessary to ensure that borrowing countries make good their payments on loans. This policy statement absolves the Fund of blame concerning the fact that it does not pay attention to the non-economic factors in its lending practices. This is because its mandate is purely an economic one.

The reduction in government spending on social services is a direct outcome of these stringent financial mechanisms. Ghana government's decision to borrow from the IMF must be understood against the background of its knowledge of these neo-liberal policies. Therefore, the borrowing government cannot totally shirk responsibility towards the provision of social services even under such circumstances. Government agency is implicated and negotiated through its relationship with the Fund. As I will demonstrate in the discussion of the GPRS, this is done through acquiescence, claims to ownership and

actual defense of such policies especially as they fall inline with the ruling government's political ideological leanings.

Unlike the IMF, the World Bank claims to be more 'development' oriented with a stated focus on long term policies of poverty reduction in the world's poorest countries. The Bank has emerged literally as the 'author' of development for Ghana and other developing countries because of its influential position. By creating certain discourses of development and following through with policies geared at 'developing' Ghana and other beneficiaries of its aid, the Bank clearly defines the direction, progress and level of development of Ghana. Generally, as western dominated institutions, the Bank and Fund impose Western development models on the rest of the world. This is evidenced in the emphasis on neo-liberalism as a centralized economic system throughout the world by these institutions (Konadu-Agyemang, 2001). The IMF/World Bank occupy a privileged position in the UN system and have grown powerful because of the force and power of major contributors behind their operations (Sachs, 2005). Therefore, in the IMF/World Bank, democracy is built around the dollar. "It is a one dollar one vote" system (Sachs, 2005, p. 287). Arguably, the Bank and Fund therefore act as ideological messengers for their main contributors, whose purposes are served through the promotion of neo-liberalism in the world. Jeffery Sachs captures this state of affairs when he details how differently these two institutions operate from the UN General Assembly where it obtains its mandate. The modus operandi of the Bank is contrary to the UN's stated ideal of 'one country, one vote'.

Interestingly, the Bank, according to its stated mission, aims to "help developing countries and their people reach the [millennium development] goals by working with

[their] partners to *alleviate poverty*. To do that we concentrate on building the climate for investment, jobs and sustainable growth, so that economies will grow, and by investing in and empowering poor people to participate in development” (World Bank, 2006, no page). While the millennium development goals talk about poverty *eradication*, the Bank discusses poverty *alleviation*. Yet the Bank claims to be working with developing countries towards the realization of this millennium development goal. There does not seem to be an agreement on the goal being discussed since the MDGs discuss eradication and the WB discusses alleviation.

The Bank’s ideals are lofty, and it uses buzzwords that appear to recognize non-economic factors in development and poverty. In designing programs of assistance to developing countries, however, the Bank’s lofty ideals appear to be overshadowed by the IMF’s concentration on the economic aspect of developmental issues. Even though the Bank states that it is interested in the human development aspect of development in developing countries, its emphasis on neo-liberal economic policy (exemplified in the PRSPs) as a means of achieving poverty alleviation leaves much to be desired. In terms of human development, it is important to deconstruct human development from the Bank’s perspective. The ‘official’ mandate of the Bank emphasizes the need for voices of the poor and marginalized to be incorporated in development projects. Again, from the examination of its questionable practices, this stated objective is a public relation stunt. The recent joint IMF/World Bank initiative, the HIPC, provides ample evidence of this. This initiative does not give enough room for adequate participation, and representation of poor states in the decision making of the policies that are to be carried out by the beneficiary states under the initiative. This is because, Poverty Reduction Strategies



Papers are prepared by the WB and expected to be adopted by the beneficiary countries under the initiative. This top down approach contradicts the stated objectives of the Bank. Is there evidence from Ghana's Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) to this effect? Or does the document, which is Ghana's developmental framework under the HIPC initiative show country ownership of the poverty alleviation programs carried out by the state? These issues are the subjects of discussion in chapter three of the thesis.

Since neo-liberal policies focus more attention on macro-economic policies, the provision of basic social services especially to the rural poor has gradually and successfully shifted to the domain of NGOs and other charitable organizations in the country. In what follows, I provide some general discussion on the contributions of NGOs to development and poverty alleviation in Ghana.

### **NGOs and Poverty Alleviation in Ghana**

The involvement of NGOs and other private organizations in social service delivery in Ghana to marginalized communities is not a recent phenomenon. Even though NGOs are increasing in number the world over, Clarke argues that "the phenomenon is especially significant in Asia, Africa and Latin America" (Clarke, 1998, p. 36). Ghana officially registered the first ten NGOs in the country in 1960 (Denkabe, 1996). This number rose to three hundred and fifty in the early 1990s, escalating to nine hundred NGOs by the mid 1990s with most operating and offering relief services in poor rural communities (Denkabe, 1996). This number has since increased considerably. Today, a total of over three thousand NGOs are registered in Ghana (Ghana Government, 2006). Denkabe further contends that NGO activity in Ghana can be traced to missionary work

in Ghana. Missionary activity in Ghana has benefited many people especially in rural areas where institutions such as the Catholic Church have been active in building and running schools, providing health care facilities and potable water, as well as other services mainly to rural areas in the northern sector of the country. Since the colonial period, the Catholic Church and other Christian missionary groups have remained some of the biggest service providers in this area, providing much needed relief as in the past, with some becoming full scale development institutions and organizations. Edwards and Hulme (1996) argue that NGOs provided some of these services by ‘default since African and Asian governments lacked the resources to provide universal coverage [for basic social services especially because of the neo-liberal focus of their programs]’ (Edwards and Hulme, 1996, p. 961). Examples of these NGOs include the Christian Mothers Association, Catholic Relief Services and Adventist Development and Relief Agency International.

Many other non-religious NGOs have joined the crusade against poverty, providing similar services as Christian missionaries in the past. These include ProNet-North, Simli-Aid, SL and ISODEC. These NGOs have acted as social welfare safety nets, absorbing the costs of economic recovery programs and macro economic policies, such as SAPs and now the GPRS. Tvedt (1998) asserts that the growth of NGOs is donor driven or even donor created (in Townsend et al, 2004, p. 872). This seems to be the case in the present era where NGOs are borne not merely out of need but in response to donor-interests in particular developmental areas. In many cases, local NGOs develop in response to donor interests in these areas.

Two main types of NGOs operate in Ghana, local Ghanaian NGOs (LNGOs) and International NGOs (INGOs). In practice, LNGOs operate in partnership with INGOs, with INGOs acting mainly as funding partners and groups that provide technical advice and support to their Ghanaian counterparts. These LNGOs in turn, also offer funding and technical support for development projects in rural communities. NGOs have been recognized both by the state and citizens as development partners of the state (SL and ProNet-North, September 2006). Many NGOs see their services as crucial to the development of the country particularly for rural and deprived areas. They also see their roles as complimenting efforts of the state in poverty alleviation. Of late, many NGOs have shifted their focus from direct provision of social services to raising civic awareness about poverty and educating people in their service areas to be politically active and hold the state responsible for these services. Details of this are taken up in chapter four of this thesis.

Although NGOs have provided and continue to provide relief services to many deprived areas in Ghana, severe poverty still remains a sad reality to many in rural communities. Many LNGOs are not financially self-sufficient, and like the state, rely heavily on donor aid to carry out their programs. Given that a lot of these NGOs have until recently focused on providing direct social services to rural communities, their solutions have not only been affirmative, they have tended to depoliticize poverty in Ghana. The causes and solutions of poverty are individualized rather than viewed as outcomes of political action and negotiation. However, some NGOs are now advocating for poverty to be tackled in the political realm. Some crucial questions arise here. Have NGO programs, unlike those of the state, paid equal attention to economic and non-

economic factors in poverty, or have they merely mirrored the state at a micro-level? Are they free of policy constraints from their funding agencies? These issues are taken up in the discussion of the services that individual NGOs provide to rural communities in chapters three and four of the thesis.

## **Chapter Two: Theoretical Literature Review**

This chapter provides a review of relevant literature on the topic of poverty alleviation and provides a theoretical framework for my study. The literature reviewed here is categorized under various sub-headings to make for easy connection with the main thematic areas of my thesis. This review leads into a discussion of an appropriate critical theoretical framework. In order to relate research findings to existing literature and provide grounds for later discussions of findings, interview data related to the literature are briefly discussed and taken up in much detail in the discussion segment.

### **Literature Review**

There is a vast array of literature on the topic of poverty in general and poverty alleviation in particular. While a lot of the literature on poverty alleviation, especially in developing countries, focus on the failures of programs implemented for poverty alleviation, others have focused exclusively on critiquing IMF/World Bank Policies and others still, have focused specifically on NGO operations in developing countries. For example, whereas a study carried out by Geo-Jaja and Magnum (2004) on Structural Adjustment Programs in Nigeria explicates how this IMF initiative failed to work because of the conditions attached to it, another study conducted by Mohan (2004) explicates issues of non- representation from local communities in their dealings with an NGO in Ghana, citing a situation where the NGO is more accountable to its funding partners than the local community. This is corroborated by Veltmeyer and Petras (2001) as they discuss ideological implications of NGOs operating in developing countries. These studies are taken up in greater detail below, categorized under subheadings.

The present study draws from and builds upon previous works on the subject to incorporate feminist postmodernist perspectives which highlights limitations of orthodox definitions of poverty and the lack of attention paid to recognition and representation in issues of poverty alleviation.

### **Critique of IMF and WB Policies**

It is generally agreed that developmental aid and loans from the IMF and World Bank promote neo-liberal economic models (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001, 2002; MacEwan, 1999). These policies contain conditions that promote dependency on these institutions by the beneficiary countries. On the subject of policies that promote dependency for developing countries in general, Geo-Jaja and Mangum's study (2004) assess the impact of SAPs on Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), focusing on human development, through an analysis of the educational sector in Nigeria. They argue that SAPs have failed not because of problems with implementation, but because of the conditions attached to them. This study provides a window for analyzing conditions of aid for SSA and the ripple effects of these on poverty alleviation. As they rightly indicate,

these policies (SAPs) also set the conditions for downsizing public enterprises, reducing their staffing...and creating intrasystem competition between educational and health institutions. Only when a government signs these loan agreements does the IMF agree to arrange a restructuring of a country's debt that includes a provision for a new loan package (p. 45).

A striking point about the study, which makes it useful for this thesis, is that the IMF policies are evaluated within the parameters of their own stated objectives.

The quotation above speaks directly to the lack of independence or autonomy of borrowing governments, as far as loans from the IMF are concerned. Relying on loans

that do not tackle the root causes of problems leads to the continuous perpetuation of the dependency of Sub-Saharan Africa (Ghana included) on external funding sources. Geo-Jaja and Magnum's work clearly illustrates the inability of SAPs to deal with poverty alleviation because "at the end of the day, the prescriptions have brought neither development nor economic relief. Rather they have exacerbated unemployment, poverty, and decay in human resource development by requiring governments to cut back spending on special services" (p. 47). Another important aspect of this study which I draw on for this project is that it touches on the fact that the World Bank is aware of the impact of SAPs by implementing safety nets in various countries including Ghana to deal with these negative effects. This indicates that the problem is not one of ignorance, which can be written off as an unintended consequence of good policies. Instead, it is the lack of political will on the part of the IMF and WB and other major power-brokers to deal with the problem.

Engaging critically with the discourse of policies for poverty alleviation, Cornwall and Brock (2005) deconstruct the rhetoric of development and poverty alleviation and what these actually mean as far as funding and executing pre-planned programs are concerned. They assess the use and impact of buzzwords in framing development policy and practice through a critical examination of the use of 'participation, empowerment and poverty reduction' in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (P.R.S.P) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These two documents are very influential in framing intervention strategies for poverty and are the framework for most if not all development programs in Ghana and other developing countries. The authors assert that the consensus among development practitioners is captured in their use

of common buzzwords. My study also finds that, to a large extent, there is a consensus among NGOs on the pervasive use of terminologies such as ‘participation, local community involvement in programs, voice of the people and empowerment’ among others.<sup>14</sup> Cornwall and Brock critically analyze these buzzwords in order to capture their actual meaning in development discourse. Using this methodology, they capture the power of discourse in shaping development policy. Indeed, it is clear that the Bretton-Woods Institutions use “the appropriation of nice- sounding words to dress up business as usual” (p. 1044). Furthermore, they assert that,

*discursive framings are important in shaping development practice, even if a host of other factors also affects what actually happens on the ground”* (p.1045 - emphasis added). Discourses frame certain problems by distinguishing ‘some aspects of a situation rather than others...and as Hajer argues, “in doing so, they define the paths of action, containing in their problem-statements certain kinds of solutions” (p. 1047).

My research in some ways confirms some of these issues raised by Cornwall and Brock. For instance, even though some NGOs stated that beneficiaries made the decisions about the projects they engaged in, they later talked about ways in which beneficiaries were ‘encouraged’ to adopt certain programs partially because of the financial incentives that came with these ‘suggested programs’ from the NGOs. The study further demonstrates that these may be unintended consequences of well-intentioned policies without any hidden agendas.

In addition, Cornwall and Brock discuss the power of buzzwords in depoliticizing poverty. In their analysis of the PRSPS, they explore the co-dependence of ‘poverty reduction and participation’. Using the example of the implementation of the PRSP in Tanzania, Cornwall and Brock argue that:

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<sup>14</sup> From interview data



the international aid agencies have convinced state representatives to remake their multilateral aid relationships into a new breed of '*partnership*'. Under the terms of this partnership, the donor community promises African government's greater 'ownership' of their social policies. For the elected leadership, the main perk was the increased leeway for political maneuver that the (partial) relief of foreign debt can provide. In return, recipient/partner governments are required to commit themselves to a multi-tethered program of state reform (p. 1052).

As stated earlier, discourse plays a major role in intervention strategies for poverty. Even though I do not analyze the same buzzwords, the study by Cornwall and Brock is helpful in understanding the importance of properly contextualizing discussion of poverty alleviation and indeed of operationally defining certain terms so that they are not mixed up in mainstream development discourse. Since IFIs are major sponsors of poverty alleviation and developmental programs in Ghana, a crucial issue arises as to whether these criticisms leveled against them are by implication leveled against the government of Ghana (as well as other governments of developing countries) since the government is the main implementing body for IFI sponsored programs. In other words, are state programs autonomously planned and implemented or are they unduly influenced by IFIs? Are NGO programs anymore autonomous than those of the state?

### **NGOs and Poverty Alleviation in the Third World**

Amidst criticisms of IMF/WB policies on poverty alleviation, attention has been drawn to the role of civil society and NGOs in poverty alleviation. While these may appeal to some people because of their non-political nature, analysis by Mohan (2004) indicates a not too significant difference between their operations and those of governments in developing countries. Mohan's study examines the creative tensions between the State and NGOs operating in Ghana. He examines the case of *Village Aid*, an

NGO based in the northern sector of Ghana and analyses the normative challenges of international NGOs or internationally funded NGO operations. He contends that even though these INGOs work with local partners, local representation is still missing because local NGOs are headed by educated elites. This may be due to the fact that as discussed by Cornwall and Brock earlier, these 'elitist' NGOs speak the language of funding organizations and as such share common grounds with such agencies. Another possibility is that local NGOs just tap into the lingo of buzzwords in order to attract funding for their projects. The issue at stake is whether or not NGOs are also unduly influenced by their funding partners in the implementation of their programs for poverty alleviation and 'development'. Mohan's study raises an issue which is crucial to this thesis; are NGOs, despite the claim to be representatives of local voices, actually representing the interests of these communities?

Mohan alludes to the problem of accountability of NGOs to their funding partners rather than the local populace for whom they work – a situation discussed extensively by Veltmeyer and Petras (2001). The state also finds itself in a very similar situation where it has become even more accountable to its paymasters. Mohan's discussion of the ability of NGOs to beat states in the competition for funding addresses the notion that NGOs are better at managing funds than state institutions. However, as his study shows,

...insidious is the use of NGOs as vehicles for personal and party political gain by local officers. This is achieved through various mechanisms-petty corruption, largesse, interlocking political affiliations...In effect; some NGOs become fiefdoms for local elites to further their material and political status (p. 67).

Mohan also asserts that through the mode of delivery of NGOs, they become “...service delivery mechanisms for predetermined development agendas” (p. 69). This is applicable to the case of the state as well.

Although I agree largely with Mohan’s assertions, his discussions fail to incorporate the power dynamics at play in some of these issues. Without acknowledging and understanding the dynamics of power involved in the negotiation for and implementation of donor-funds in developmental projects, Mohan assumes that NGOs operate with greater autonomy than they actually do.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, Mohan’s study points out the increasing marginalization of locally organized NGOs mainly because, in becoming critical of issues of corruption and accountability of NGOs, funding agencies have become stringent with funding packages. Here, it is the ‘elitist’, although not necessarily the more accountable NGOs that are able to attract funding, not the NGOs that may actually be representative of the people. This defeats the purpose of grass-root participation. Mohan’s conclusion from this study points out a crucial dimension worth exploring.

While self-help is more likely to embed ownership and inject greater relevance into projects, it also serves to place the burden for poverty alleviation on the structurally poor which, in turn, leaves NGOs defacto legitimizing SAPs [now PRSPs] by filling in the welfare delivery gap. ...*localism diverts attention from the structural causes of poverty and feeds into the belief that market-based globalization can and should be harnessed to work for the poor...* (p. 69-emphasis added).

Similarly, Hintjens (1999) asserts that “the state is no longer to be held accountable for ensuring that citizens’ basic needs are met; instead private citizens, individually and collectively, are expected to provide for themselves, however poor or disadvantaged they

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<sup>15</sup> This can be inferred from discussions of challenges LNGOs in Ghana face in their relationship with their funding partners. These discussions are taken up in chapter four of the thesis.

may be” (p. 386, as quoted by Mohan, 2004, p.70). My study finds that although this may have been the situation in the past, there is a changing perception about the role of the state in the provision of basic needs among the NGO and beneficiary community. While pulling out of direct service delivery, many NGOs are at the same time constituting strong pressure groups advocating more state involvement in these core areas.

Overall, however, systemic issues of poverty are ignored in such policies and governments of beneficiary countries are held responsible for failures of these affirmative programs. This is replicated in rural communities where NGOs expect such communities to ‘take ownership’ of programs they implement.

Discussing the lack of representation of local interests in NGO programs, Petras and Veltmeyer (2001) explore ideological implications of NGO operations in developing countries. In particular, they analyze problems of accountability of NGOs to their funding partners, asserting that their operations carry underlying political ideologies which perpetuate the global North-South divide. With at least 50,000 NGOs in the third world, poverty is still prevalent. They attribute this problem to the normative challenges of imposing western ideologies and programs on developing states. Most of the critiques they level at NGOs are exemplified in Mohan’s study of *Village Aid* in Ghana. This INGO and its funding partner, are interviewed for this study.

Since I examine problems related to NGOs taking over responsibility for poverty alleviation in Ghana, this study highlights the fact that most NGOs implement short-term intervention strategies depending on the funding they receive from donors. Contrary to myths of grass-root participant programs by NGOs, Veltmeyer and Petras’ work is helpful in addressing the fact that programs implemented may actually reflect the broader

policy guidelines of funders. My study confirms this. It is important to note, however, that irrespective of these criticisms, NGOs have provided invaluable services to many deprived communities especially in rural areas since many of the neo-liberal policies implemented by the government focus more on macro-economic stability than the provision of basic services. NGOs then fill an important gap in development practice in local communities.

On the need for collaboration between state actors and NGOs in the fight against poverty, Friedmann (1992) offers a comprehensive analysis of alternative development through a re-conceptualization of poverty and its attendant problems. One of the few to advocate active and increased state involvement in alternative development and poverty alleviation, he advocates a development process which is people-centered and which serves the ultimate interests of people. His analysis dwells on both economic and social consequences of development for Third World countries. He examines multiple forms of oppression that developing countries face because of their poverty.

Furthermore, Friedmann discusses debates for alternative development put forth by some scholars that usually emphasize non-involvement of the state while advocating NGOs as the most appropriate group to deal with alternative development. Friedman is, however, not convinced that non-state involvement is the answer; he finds inherent problems with any such model because of future repercussions. In fact, it is his position that,

although alternative development must begin locally, it cannot end there. Like it or not, the state continues to be a major player. It may need to be made more accountable to poor people and more responsive to their claims. But without the state's collaboration, the lot of the poor cannot be significantly improved. Local empowering action requires a strong state (p.7). If the goal of alternative

development is to advocate the social empowerment of the poor, it must also advocate their political empowerment (Friedmann, 1992, p. 7).

This central theme which runs through the study, directly informs my own advocacy for a strong democratic state in poverty alleviation, and the need for political solutions as opposed to charitable ones. This study cautions against corrupt practices by the state. It is important to note that claims that governments of Third World countries are corrupt are sometimes used to justify stringent control over economic and political processes in developing countries. Advocates for NGOs as alternatives to governments of developing countries premise their advocacy for these organizations on the basis that generally they are assumed to be less corrupt. NGOs are also reputed to engage in participatory development practices which empower the poor (Meyer, 1992; Sollis, 1992; Vivian, 1994, in Edwards and Hulme 1996; Westergaard and Hossain, 2002). Donors and charities give similar reasons for funding NGOs and ‘supporting’ the poor.

Unwin’s study (2004) advocates the need for a holistic understanding of poverty beyond economic need and growth. He argues that understanding poverty as an absolute term that can be eliminated through economic growth is dangerous and will have negative consequences for the poor and marginalized. He argues for equity as an important element in fighting poverty. Furthermore, Unwin contends that budgetary support to developing countries without attention “to issues of social equity, difference and place make it incapable of delivering the objectives claimed for it by its advocates” (p. 1502). Unwin criticizes the policies of the HIPC initiative because of its concern with economic growth instead of social equity and difference. He cautions against the myth that absolute poverty can be eradicated through economic intervention which is reflected in major aid policies such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and HIPC.

Applying this to Africa, he shows that “all of the indicators suggest that despite decades of development assistance the continent is actually less well off than it was twenty years ago and even though this growth model has failed Africa, ‘the rhetoric of growth’ continues to dominate” (Unwin, 2004, p. 1506).

Although Unwin’s study provides a wide criticism of budgetary support to governments of developing countries, it is clear that most NGOs in development practice also focus on economic growth through so-called self-help programs while ignoring various other issues. For instance, SL, one of the NGOs interviewed for this study, promotes small business ventures to its beneficiaries as a ‘sure way out of poverty’. As Unwin (2004) and Ibhawoh (2007) both argue, this is yet another treatment of symptoms, not the underlying causes of poverty. Unwin’s contention that “a shift in focus to a relative understanding of poverty would lead to a fundamental reconsideration of African poverty” (Unwin, 2004, p.1517), is timely. He concludes by making several recommendations to donors and the international community. The most important of these calls, as far as this study is concerned, is the call for donors to “show greater commitment to *working ‘with’* the poor rather than ‘for’ the poor” (p.1528). This call advocates the need for lived experiences of poor people to be incorporated into policies for poverty alleviation. It is clear that NGOs, the IMF and World Bank in Ghana all seem to be working *for*, and not *with* the poor.

### **Limitations of Conventional Approaches to Poverty**

Typically, poverty is defined mainly in terms of economic deprivation, or the inability to gain access to material goods and services. This “monetary approach to the identification of poverty is the most commonly used” (Laderchi, Saith and Stewart, 2003,

p. 247). A basic definition of poverty is that it is “the state of being poor and as wants of the necessities of life” (The Concise Oxford Dictionary). This definition is broad and open ended, lending itself to various interpretations. In this case, the person or group of people that define poverty play an important role in deciding what is important in poverty, or how the term ‘necessities’ is interpreted. Anyone with the power to define poverty can significantly influence the lives of the poor. Definitions invariably suggest solutions to certain social problems including poverty. Similarly, Boltivink (2005) asserts that,

poverty and the poor are associated with a state of want; with deprivation... such deprivation is related to the necessities of life. Thus the term poverty, in its daily use, implies a comparison between the conditions of a person, family or human group, and the perception of the one who speaks or writes, about what is necessary to sustain life (p. 2.).

As far as developing countries are concerned, institutions such as the World Bank are central to the definition of poverty and development. The World Bank’s definition of poverty is often used as a yardstick in determining developmental aid. The World Bank views poverty as being “concerned with the absolute standard of living of a part of society-the poor [...] poverty [...] is] the inability to attain a minimal standard of living” (World Bank, 1990, p. 26). This definition lays emphasis on material needs; it gives little indication of non-material aspects of being poor. For example, power relations and control have been occluded from this definition. Ironically, the World Bank’s dominance and power over poor countries is very much a part of what defines them as poor though hardly any attention is paid to this aspect of the problem.

Jones (2004) argues that the definition of poverty offered by the World Bank is “...an empiricism which identifies empirically manifest wants with needs...one that is



blind to the real, non-empirical relations that generate empirical appearances” (quoted in Carroll, 2004, p.149). Jones sees the definition of poverty merely in economic terms as reductionistic, and bordering on empiricism. Jones further postulates that, such empiricist approaches to poverty alleviation “sticks to surface appearances and denies the existence of real but non-empirical structures and causal mechanisms” (Carroll, 2004, p.156). Jones asserts that poverty should be conceptualized as “a condition in which human needs are not adequately met and the realization of various human powers is restricted or prevented” (Jones, 2005, p.149). She further postulates that, from an orthodox perspective, poverty is seen to be a problem to be tackled by private charity. The solutions offered represent at the most the amelioration of affairs, or symptom suppression (p. 156).

Jones’ argument provides a good reference point for analyzing orthodox approaches to the fight against poverty. Her critique of the World Bank’s definition of poverty in economic terms reflects the deep-seated problem of definitions and intervention strategies based on a narrow conception of poverty. This is reflected in the focus of the GPRS. It is important to note that although Jones’ point about adopting a holistic approach to poverty is central to this thesis, a total neglect of the empirical economic issues only presents a reverse situation where poverty is equally narrowly conceived.

Carroll (2004) has argued that as a hegemonic development institution, “the agenda and advice of the world bank is central to any orthodox understanding of poverty and attempts at poverty alleviation [...]” (p.145). Given its dominance in the world, statements on poverty from the World Bank are important in determining the fate of the

poor as far as policies and funding are concerned. This dominance is evident in the Ghanaian situation where policies have far reaching implications even for the operations of NGOs that do not receive funding from the Bank. For instance, the World Bank's policy on cost sharing for rural water in Ghana has affected the operations of ProNet-North which provides potable water to rural communities. This, according to the executive director of ProNet-North, is because as NGOs, they operate within broad policy frameworks of government, whose policies are influenced largely by IFIs (PI/2, ProNet-North, September 2006).

Given that the poor are also powerless, it is apparent that poverty is not only defined *for* and *on* behalf of the poor, policies for its alleviation are shaped around economic redistribution, with little attention to non-economic aspects of it. Concentrating on increasing the income levels of poor countries or people in itself does not translate into power for self-representation and determination. A study carried out in Ghana and other developing countries by Narayan (2002) revealed that people in rural communities in Ghana assert poverty in terms of conditions and issues that exclude them from fully participating in community life. Participants in the study generally stated that life (without money and other economic resources) in the past was more bearable than it is now where having a good life has come to be increasingly tied to having economic and monetary resources (Narayan, 2002).

Overall, Maxwell (1999) asserts that in terms of measuring poverty from both monetary and non-monetary components,

so-called money-metric measures are often used, because they are either regarded as sufficient on their own or seen as an adequate proxy for poverty. However, there is a clear fault line between definitions of poverty which are restricted to

income (or consumption) and those that incorporate such factors as autonomy, self-esteem or participation. [...] (Allen and Thomas, 2000, p.13).

This theorizing suggests that measures of poverty that exclude mention of power, autonomy and recognition only partially capture the issue. By extending the definition to cover social exclusion, and general exclusion from decision-making, domination and oppression, one captures fully, the problems of poor people. I think that the bigger problem of poor people is not the lack of material possessions but the inability to fully express themselves in a platform where they are at least guaranteed an audience.

In order to adequately understand poverty, its various dimensions need to be taken into account. Its multifaceted and multidisciplinary nature needs to be captured in order to present a holistic picture (Narayan, 2002). It is said that no matter how knowledgeable a doctor may be, it is only the patient who really knows how it hurts and where. In Ghana, poor people are really the only ones who can describe what it is like to be poor. It is therefore important that the voices of the poor be fully incorporated into policy making for poverty alleviation. What is even more important is that the service providers that work for them understand poverty from the perspective of the poor, their beneficiaries.

In Narayan's (2002) two field studies conducted in Ghana, many poor people saw poverty as the inability to afford basic resources such as food and being voiceless and powerless and having few choices. "Poor people are acutely aware of their lack of voice, power and independence that subjects them to exploitation" (Narayan, 2000, p. 31). Incorporating the multifaceted nature of poverty in her conceptualization of poverty, Awumbila (2004) argues that poverty results in both 'physiological deprivation' and 'lack of knowledge and participation in civil society and to the denial of opportunities and choices basic to human life or development' (Awumbila, 2004, p. 9). Even though

this definition draws attention to non-economic aspects of poverty, it is not clear what Awumbila refers to as ‘lack of knowledge...’. It is important that NGOs that work at the grassroots level recognize the knowledge and local expertise of people they work with, or for.

Since poverty is universally experienced, the experiences of poverty by Ghanaians though particular, could be better dealt with within universal calls for poverty alleviation. Indeed, universal appeals for poverty alleviation are linked to the concept of human rights.

### **Human Rights Approaches to Poverty Alleviation**

Poverty as a case of injustice is also a human rights issue. Two broad sets of rights make up the framework of human rights; Civil and Political (CP rights) and Economic, Social and Cultural (ESC rights). CP rights embody various civil and political sets of rights including the right to representation, and participation in decision-making. For the purposes of this study, these constitute recognition. ESC rights on the other hand include rights to economic resources, right to a decent standard of living, cultural recognition<sup>16</sup> and social belonging. These constitute redistribution in this study. These sets of rights are interconnected. Human rights advocates approach poverty as a violation of people’s basic rights to material needs and participation, and therefore recognize the need for both economic redistribution and recognition or political self-representation as a way of addressing human rights violations associated with poverty. It must be noted here that this human rights framework immediately introduces some of the creative tensions embedded in the recognition-redistribution model. In mainstream discussions on poverty,

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<sup>16</sup> Cultural recognition appropriately belongs to the set of rights that constitute recognition in this study.

there is a consensus that recognition is inadequate in the design and implementation of poverty alleviation programs. However, in the human rights framework, the opposite is true.

If poverty is a violation of fundamental human rights of the poor, then the ability to name the violator of these rights (in human rights discourse) in order to hold them accountable for such violations should be possible (at least theoretically). Through their advocacy campaigns, a rights-based NGO in Ghana, the Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC), has used this methodology effectively to the benefit of the poor. Using the media as a sounding board, ISODEC openly criticizes government policies, indicating how such policies violate the rights of ordinary citizens. A detailed discussion of this is taken up later in this thesis. Given the complex nature of global poverty, this task is a lot more complicated if not impossible. While multiple factors account for individual and state poverty, it is not clear if any particular states or institutions should be blamed for the plight of the poor. If blame seems a little far-fetched, is it possible to hold any institution responsible for global inequalities? Probably, what is more feasible is the argument that certain policies of certain global institutions or states perhaps unintentionally tend to worsen the already existing problem of poverty and inequality. Is there a justification for ending poverty as it relates to human rights? In what ways are human rights discourses relevant to the issue of poverty alleviation in general and poverty in Ghana in particular?

Article 25, section 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights (UDHR) states that,

everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of

unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control (Ishay, 1997, p. 411).

This article clearly articulates the universal nature of human rights. However, it must be noted that the relative nature of implementation presents a whole other debate on which rights should be implemented where and how and according to what criteria. Furthermore, article 22 of the UDHR places the responsibility of ensuring universal human rights on both the national and international community as follows:

everyone, as member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each state, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality (Ishay, 1997, p. 410).

Economic redistribution is an important aspect of tackling poverty as a human rights issue. However, recognition and representation need to be taken in tandem with economic redistribution in order not to violate political rights of the poor. Given that article 22 of the UDHR (quoted above) holds both national governments and the international community equally responsible for allocating resources to poor people the world over, the manner in which the resources should be allocated is not clearly indicated. These should correspond to principles of CP rights. Mere membership to the human race is all that is needed to enjoy the entitlements set forth in the UDHR. Consequently, due to the uneven nature of global resource allocation, wealth redistribution from the global North to the global South is one way of ensuring that people everywhere get a certain minimum allocation of resources sufficient to their needs.

Arguing for resource allocation from the global North to the global South on the basis of the UDHR alone presents various challenges. The UDHR, in itself is not a legally binding document. Historically, ESC rights to a large extent were rights that

national governments and the international community were encouraged to make progressive provisions for in specific programs (Ishay, 1997). This provision is recognized by Ghana's Constitution and the international covenant of economic, social and cultural rights. Therefore, ESC rights, while claiming universality are mainly not universally judicially enforceable. In fact, at the international level, there is no clear mechanism in place to ensure that the international community lives up to its obligations. Mapulanga-Hulston (2002) argues that ESC rights are necessary for the realization of civil and political rights. The deprivation of one set of rights invariably leads to a violation of the other. When rights are given judicial legal backing, they are better enforced than when left as only justiciable. To ensure that the rights of poor people are not violated, it is important that the enforcement mechanism for human rights be strengthened. Poverty alleviation should therefore not remain only a social ideal, and in the realm of justiciable rights, it should gain judicial support to ensure enforcement by both states and the international community. Countries such as South Africa have taken bold steps by making the provision of these rights legally binding on the state irrespective of the argument that there may be resource scarcity. Perhaps, this is only possible within the domestic front. How can this be achieved internationally?

Pogge (2005) contends that a large transfer of material resources to the Third World to *end* poverty would not affect the wealth of rich countries. Sachs (2005) supports this assertion. According to Pogge, very minimal financial commitment is required from rich countries to end extreme poverty. However, this gets complicated if the only reason for advocating the transfer of wealth is on moral grounds. This is because it becomes difficult to advocate that wealth redistribution be pursued in tandem with recognition.

Secondly, making a case for adequate level of representation by developing states becomes problematic since they appear to be recipients of largesse in a case of wealth redistribution. Moral appeals alone to *ending* poverty are problematic because they rely on goodwill from benefactors. Consequently, beneficiaries are then expected to be grateful for the favour. It implicitly sets up a hierarchy between giver and receiver with little room for the voice and representation of the recipient. Pogge's arguments suggest that affluent countries are at least *responsible* for the plight of the poor. Probably, in order to actually argue that poverty be tackled in the political realm, it is necessary to find out what ties developing nations like Ghana have to global wealth. Are they part owners of wealth in the world? If they are not, is there even a basis for advocating redistribution? Is it enough to apply the universal claims of the UDHR to people everywhere without any further justification? How can such moral appeals be upheld?

Arguably, colonialism initiated hierarchical relations between the global South and the North. The establishment of dominator-subordinate relationship in that sense is re-enacted in present day relationships between rich and poor countries. Occupying the subordinate position has weakened developing states as far as voice and representation is concerned. I agree with Pogge's (2004) assertion that 'a morally deeply tarnished history must not be allowed to result in radical inequality' (p. 203). Since it already has, steps should be taken to remedy it. Why is this position so entrenched even today, several decades after the colonial period? Here, Pogge's (2004, 2005) postulation that shared international institutions, such as the UN, World Bank etc, retain positions of dominance and implement policies which are not necessarily beneficial to developing countries, is useful in understanding the interlocking issues of interdependence and dependence in the



global system. Such institutions have merely served to legitimize the hierarchical relationship between the global North and global South, which to an extent also legitimizes marginalization and exploitation of developing countries. As indicated in earlier discussions, it is clear that the World Bank and IMF dictate the pace and standards of development and help *transmit* dominant western standards of development to the rest of the world mainly through trade liberalization and neo-liberalism. Unfortunately, contrary to the rhetoric for prosperity, it is common knowledge that trade liberalization has not benefited developing countries. If anything, there are more losses than gains (Taylor, 1991; Stiglitz, 2002).

McMorrow (1993) argues for international obligations to fight poverty as a matter of ensuring human rights for the poor. Drawing on the political theory of Emmanuel Kant, she asserts that,

ending absolute poverty is more than an optional international (or national) project, aspiration, or ideal. Ending absolute poverty is an obligation that binds rich and poor states alike—an obligation generated by the basic human right of subsistence and activated at the international level by the extent, severity, and geopolitical configuration of the destitute (p. 41).

By making a strong moral argument for fighting poverty, McMorrow appeals not only to the international community, but to individuals as well as developing countries to ensure subsistence for the poor. Again, moral appeals usually have relative binding effects. While calling on rich states to contribute their surplus resources to fighting deprivation in the world, McMorrow equally challenges developing countries to ensure accountability and transparency in order to justify the resource investment. No matter the argument, both beneficiary and lending states have different obligations to meeting this basic need

of people. Political will to alleviate/reduce poverty cannot end at the international level. It must be complemented with local effort from poor or developing countries.

The human rights appeal in poverty alleviation is perhaps the strongest because of its universalist claims for human dignity. However, can the poor in Ghana hope that such appeals will help, given that within those universalist appeals, Ghana's case stands out as different from other cases in the world? Indeed, can there be a universal blueprint applicable to all areas under the human rights umbrella to help fight poverty?

Additionally, exploring the various reasons for the justification of human rights, Orend (2002) asserts that human rights are 'elemental moral commitments which we share' (p. 76). As already stated earlier, moral relativism weakens his arguments since they do not convey a universal binding effect. Despite this criticism, Orend argues that various principles can be offered to justify a human rights approach to poverty alleviation. These include the following two principles. First, the principle of personal prudence. This stipulates that one should respect the rights of others because it is in one's best interest to do so since one would expect reciprocity in the future. This is said to be ingrained in human nature – people have a need to be treated with respect and dignity at all times-. This is a good reason to respect the dignity of other people. Second, the principle of consequentialism holds that the violation of human rights has serious repercussions for the victim as well as the victim's close associates. This principle would have been a strong argument for justifying human rights except that it insists on human happiness, which has also been criticized as a vague concept since what constitutes happiness varies from place to place (Shyns, 2004; Duncan, 2005). What has been the contribution of the human rights framework to poverty alleviation in Ghana?

The human rights movement has until recently not paid enough attention to issues of poverty, which constitute serious human rights violations. As many advocates of human rights have postulated, it is almost impossible to achieve true political and civil rights without first ensuring that people's basic subsistence needs have been met (Ibhawoh, 2007). Indeed according to Ibhawoh, the intricacies of CP and ESC rights are such that they are inseparable. They are mutually dependent and reinforcing. This human rights framework is indispensable to the fight for poverty alleviation in developing countries like Ghana because it emphasizes both redistribution and recognition. Secondly, the framework's claim to universality justifies the allocation of resources from wealthy countries to developing countries to fight poverty.

In addition, Ibhawoh addresses some of the challenges international human rights NGOs face in their advocacy for economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights in developing countries. He contends that INGOs are not insensitive to local cultural situations as they are often accused of, because they operate with local partners. In this study, the case of the international NGO, Village Aid, which works with the local NGO, Simli Aid validates this claim. However, there are still subtle issues of control, dependency and perhaps, cultural imperialism. A detailed discussion of these and other issues are taken up in Chapter Four of the thesis. An important aspect of Ibhawoh's study addresses the important role discourse plays in shaping the ideology and intervention of western INGOs in developing countries. He asserts that "INGOs tend to portray the non-western subjects as needy, incapable of self government, and in need of long term external assistance" (Ibhawoh, 2007, p. 8). This echoes Cornwall and Brock's (2005) study on poverty alleviation discourses. This study points out the fact that IFIs are also responsible

for human rights violations through the stringent conditions they set out in loan agreements which include budgetary cuts in social spending, or placing costs on basic services such as water supply. There is ample evidence of this in the untold hardships SAPs inflicted on the poor in Ghana.

### **Conclusion from Literature Review**

In conclusion, the literature reviewed here highlights a number of important issues crucial to my thesis. First, discourse plays an important role in shaping particular responses to poverty alleviation. In this case, conventional discourses on poverty limit intervention strategies to economic/material distribution. Consequently, more emphasis is placed on economic redistribution as a means to solving the problem of poverty. This approach excludes solutions for non-economic aspects of poverty. This is evidenced in the human rights framework in prioritizing civil and political rights over economic, social and cultural rights in human rights discourse. Socio-political empowerment and voice appear to be lacking in such approaches and in cases where they are addressed, their inclusion appears inadequate. Finally, developing countries like Ghana rely overwhelmingly on external aid for development. This form of dependency has serious implications for self-determination and autonomy of both the nation and its citizens; and finally, poverty infringes on the basic human rights of people.

### **Theoretical Influences**

This section discusses the various theoretical perspectives that have informed the conception of my research problem as well as informed the framework for the study.

These include theories of redistributive justice and recognition, human rights, international political economy and critical developmental.

Writing from a critical feminist perspective, Young (1990) presents a critical analysis of the tendency to reduce issues of justice to the realm of distribution of material resources. According to her, more critical issues of oppression, marginalization and powerlessness among others cannot be adequately addressed within a model of material redistribution. She emphasizes the need for recognition in the fight for social justice. Young's analysis resonates with Fraser's contention that social justice requires both redistribution and recognition (Fraser, 1995). According to Young, distributive injustice (in this case poverty) may contribute to and or result from the five faces of oppression, which she identifies as Exploitation; Marginalization; Powerlessness (whereby people do not participate regularly or even ever in making decisions that affect their lives and actions); Cultural imperialism (the universalism of dominant group's culture and experiences as the norm to which others must follow- making other's cultural beliefs and practices inferior) and Violence.

Three of these faces, marginalization, powerlessness and cultural imperialism are central to this study as they provide a window for analyzing the non-economic and socio-cultural and political nature and consequences of poverty. Beyond these, I incorporate another face, that of dependency. With some modification, I use these faces to examine power dynamics of poor communities in their dealings with NGOs as well as the government of Ghana in its negotiations for aid at the international level, in order to showcase the type of oppression poverty entails, both locally and internationally.

Furthermore, Young postulates that instead of focusing on distribution, a conception of justice should begin with concepts of domination and oppression. She further states that in the case where there are clear differences between various social groups, that difference should be acknowledged so as to undermine oppression. Young's reaction to mainstream theories within the distributive paradigm of social justice can be summarized in the following statement.

The distributive paradigm implicitly assumes that social judgments are about what persons have, how much they have, and how that amount compares with what other persons have. This *focus on possession tends to preclude thinking about what people are doing, according to what institutional rules, how their doings and having are structured by institutionalized relations that constitute their positions, and how the combined effect of their doings has recursive effects on their lives* (Young, 1990, p.103- emphasis added).

Young's theorizing can be applied with modification to analyzing the relationship between rich donor states and poor developing countries. Moreover, her focus on institutional structures is useful in analyzing the need to change the present existing relationship between the two where it appears that one dictates and the other obeys. In order for developing countries to actually have control over their domestic economic and social policies, the current 'shared' institutions need to be restructured in a way that allows these nations to have a say in the conditions that are attached to loans and other developmental funding packages.

As far as the inadequacies of the distributive approach to justice (and poverty alleviation in this case) are concerned, Young identifies two primary problems. First, it tends to focus thinking of social justice on the allocation of material goods and resources or the distribution of social positions. Second, by extending this distributional paradigm to non material goods such as rights, power, opportunity etc, they are represented as

though they were static things produced independently of social interaction and relationships. She further asserts that the distributive paradigm tends to depoliticize, by not tackling issues of decision-making power and other forms of oppression. This reiterates the point made earlier, that by not tackling relational issues of poverty and other non-economic aspects of poverty, an important aspect of the problem is overlooked or inadequately dealt with. De-politicization occurs when political issues such as poverty are pushed to the domain of charities, exemplified in NGO activities in Ghana. Also, by locating the solution of poverty within the local, NGOs suggest that poverty has local causes. They therefore do not adequately address the problems of external institutional causes of poverty (Ibhawoh, 2007). Solutions sought in this way are temporary and affirmative.

From the analyses so far, it is clear that to effectively find a solution to poverty or severe material inequality, it is important to focus on the systems and processes that produce distribution. Young's theorization captures the importance of institutional oppression. For instance, according to Young, oppression refers to 'structural phenomena that immobilize or diminish a group' (ibid, p.42). Thus while 'oppression constrains self-development; domination constrains self-determination' (p. 42).

Advocating for a combination of both redistribution and recognition, Nancy Fraser (1993, 1995) provides clear theoretical grounding for this project particularly because she postulates that both redistribution and recognition should be pursued in tandem in social justice advocacy. Fraser argues that cultural injustice is different from socio-economic injustice but that people can, and usually do suffer both at the same time. Creative tensions exist between redistribution and recognition to the point where they

appear almost incompatible. However, Fraser proposes that despite these tensions, both recognition and redistribution are needed to deal with cases of injustice since neither is sufficient on its own. Since the two are intertwined, Fraser advocates the use of transformative remedies that may solve both issues. She identifies two forms of remedies: political-economic structuring for economic injustice (redistribution) and recognition for cultural injustice. Redistribution calls for de-differentiation while recognition calls for differentiation of groups. This raises a crucial question. How do bivalent categories, i.e., people subject to both cultural and economic injustice remedy the situation when according to the paradigm they have to claim and deny their specificity at the same time? In the case of developing countries that depend on loans and aids from international financial institutions and other developed countries, they claim specificity as poor and developing countries on the one hand, while on the other hand, denying that their poverty or underdevelopment should prevent them from adequately representing themselves on the international stage and sharing powers of decision-making equally with developed countries. Ghana and the poor in Ghana are bivalent categories because they require these. In other words, they deny and reclaim their specificity at the same time in dealing with poverty. On the one hand, they claim specificity as poor people who need special recognition yet deny this specificity in order to reject and or protest marginalization.

In this case, the kind of redistribution carried out in Ghana does not even fit into these criteria. Or rather, the insistence on good governance and domestic macro-economic restructuring seem to be the redistribution described here. This is however still affirmative, not transformative. This is because, despite recognition for the need of social policies, these are usually added to the macro-economic policies, not integrated in the



design of these policies (Elson, 2000). In fact in many instances, as in the case of the GPRS, social policies that are expected to yield desirable outcomes such as poverty alleviation are predicated on the performance of the macro-economic sector.

According to Fraser, without addressing structural causes and problems associated with injustices, solutions to social injustices will remain affirmative. Transformative strategies are “aimed at correcting inequitable outcomes precisely by restructuring the underlying generative framework” (Fraser, 1995, p. 82). The WB’s generative framework needs overhauling or drastic changes to accommodate elements of transformative solutions. In order to reverse this trend of dependency and marginalization, it is important to argue for alternative development models to move away from the economic model consistent with a capitalist oriented western model of development. In other words, the economic growth of nations is important but only in so far as citizens of the nation state own the development projects, and indeed define the kind of development they are interested in.

Friedmann (1992) defines alternative development as ‘improving the conditions of life and livelihood for the excluded majority, whether on a global, national, or even regional scale’ (p.37). This means among other things that people for whom development is *intended* must be empowered at all levels. Therefore, giving citizens a say in matters concerning them at the local level implies a strong state which is able to advocate for its citizenry at the international/global front. In the case of Ghana, decentralization programs provide people opportunities to participate in planning development programs.<sup>17</sup> These

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<sup>17</sup> Decentralization as an administrative policy has been established in Ghana. However, a lot of local decentralized government offices still lack institutional capacity to effectively deal with participatory development.

structures, for various reasons are however constrained from functioning efficiently. Furthermore, Friedmann opines that the principles of human rights, citizen rights, and human flourishing are three principles on which claims of entitlement to adequate material conditions of life, and active involvement in political life are premised. Citizen rights are specific to states and outline citizens' autonomy vis-a vis the state. Therefore, all citizens must have the rights and privileges that everyone else enjoys.

Emmanuel Kant is among many theorists that explicitly argued that the provision for the poor should be the matter of the state rather than private obligation (Fleishacker, 2004, p. 68). According to Fleishacker (2004), Kant sees state provision for the poor as encompassing more dignity for the poor than private charity which he asserts has some moral corruption which flatters the giver while degrading the receiver. Even though the agendas of many developing countries are focused on poverty reduction and development, most of these programs are dictated and or imposed on them from their benefactors as in the case of Ghana. In this case, these programs should be determined freely by the states or beneficiaries of the programs. The debate over whose legal responsibility it is to provide aid is increasingly being replaced by a moral obligation to provide aid. According to Kant, the deeper problem with charity is 'the implicit hierarchy it sets up between giver and recipient' (Fleishacker, 2004, p. 72).

There is a difference between justice and beneficence. The work of charity and in some cases NGOs is beneficence since it is done more out of goodwill than obligation. The Roman thinker Cicero in 'De Officiis' articulates an important distinction between justice and beneficence where he sees justice as a required legal obligation of people

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while beneficence is not (Fleishacker, 2004, p. 21). The difference between state and charitable organizations for justice and beneficence respectively is characterized by associating justice with Caesar and charity with Christ (Fleishacker, 2004, p. 21). This distinction is important in understanding problems associated with shifting justice to the domain of charity, since it is not a social requirement of people to help out others, especially strangers.

Certain hegemonic discourses of development dominate development practices. In fact according to Escobar (1994), 'the study of development discourse is akin to Said's study of the discourses on the Orient' (p. 6). In *Orientalism*, Said (1978) alludes to the fact that certain discourses created the orient, portraying it as something which must be feared and controlled. According to Said,

orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient-dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient...' (quoted in Escobar, 1994, p. 6).

The above quotation speaks to the use of language by dominant world institutions or powers to cast the 'Other' in a manner that suggests how this Other should be perceived and eventually treated. This is evidenced in development discourse, moral appeals for aid by NGOs and charities among others. Since these discourses tend to authorize views about this Other, it also suggests solutions to problems faced by the other without necessary consultation or communication with the Other. Even where there is communication, preconceived notions about the Non-Western Other tend to influence responses to the Other's own ideas. The normative criticisms leveled against NGOs as carriers of imperialism (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001) are exemplified here in the

continuous 'authoring' and shaping of, the path of development for Third World communities. Thus, the preconceived notions of 'the Third World' influence the drawing up of poverty alleviation programs by NGOs, the WB and Fund on 'perceived need' of people/communities resulting from discourses created about them as the Other.

### **Chapter Three: Conceptualizing Poverty in Ghana**

*The language of politics is intimately related to the politics of language* (Veltmeyer and Petras, 2001, p.121).

This chapter examines the conception of poverty in Ghana, as well as economic redistributive and recognition based approaches to poverty alleviation. I focus on analyzing state poverty alleviation strategies with particular emphasis on the GPRS under the HIPC initiative as a major policy document for poverty alleviation in Ghana. I argue that the state's macro-economic policies, though voluntarily adopted by the government, have been significantly influenced by policies of the Bretton-Woods institutions. These policies, while satisfying donor-policy requirements, and recording gains at the macro-level, have not addressed Ghana's powerlessness as a poor country and have sometimes exacerbated poverty, especially for the rural poor. Potentially, these macro-economic policies could be transformative if they incorporated true recognition and did not localize both the solutions and causes of poverty. The UNDP has argued that even though economic growth is "an important prerequisite for elimination of poverty, it is not a sufficient condition" (Elson, 2000, p. 1353).

#### **Understanding Poverty as Powerless In Ghana**

Poverty is predominantly a rural phenomenon in Ghana. The National Development Planning Commission of Ghana (NDPC), which provides the policy framework for the country's development, estimates that over seventy percent (70%) of Ghana's poor live in rural areas with food crop farmers being the worst affected. As far as development and poverty are concerned, the NDPC plays a crucial role in determining priority areas of concentration. For instance, the GPRS was prepared by the NDPC.

Poverty in Ghana is understood by the NDPC to be multi-dimensional and multi-faceted.

The commission identifies three main dimensions of poverty. These are,

income or consumption dimension, access to social services dimension, and the participatory dimension of poverty.... The social services access dimension of poverty includes lack of access to health-care, education, good drinking water, decent housing and healthy sanitation. The participatory dimension includes lack of voice and political rights (NDPC, 2005, p.2).

In terms of income and consumption rates, participants in a recent study by Narayan (2002), specifically a focus group of women, in a village in Ghana (Dobile Yirkpong), stated that the definition of a livable life has changed drastically with more emphasis now placed on money. Therefore, according to these participants, “having deep pockets’ means having clothing, modern housing, property, a car, and the means to educate children” (Narayan, 2002, p. 42). To paint a more vivid picture of poverty in Ghana, the following extract from Narayan’s study gives a description of Dobile Yirkpong, one of many poor rural communities in Ghana. It is important to note that this description does not adequately capture non-economic issues related to poverty in this community. This description is also focused on espousing problems the community faces without any detail on their agency in navigating these issues.

Dobile Yirkpong, Upper West Region (population 330) is a suburb of Wa, the capital of the Upper West Region...seventy-five percent of adult men are farmers and each farmer owns some livestock, usually goats, sheep, cattle, and guinea fowl. Men also engage in masonry, petty trade, and carpentry, and work as guards. The women are predominantly traders of vegetables and firewood. They also help their husbands to farm and some rear animals. Dobile Yirkpong has no school, no electricity, and no sewerage. Pipe-borne water is not readily available, so the community obtains water from hand-dug wells, although they are believed to be infested with guinea worm (Narayan, 2002, p. 45).

The picture of Dobile Yirkpong to a large extent represents prevailing conditions in other rural areas in Ghana. The inability to afford basic necessities is a course of concern for

many. As one participant from Dobile clearly puts it, “food is life, and no hungry man can claim to have a good life” (Narayan, 2002, p. 20). This statement captures issues of powerlessness associated with poverty. The term ‘good life’ as used here also represents a number of things, including the ability to participate in decision-making; self-representation and recognition. The tables below illustrate key poverty indicators in Ghana.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> These tables are taken from the Human Development Report 2006. Ghana country fact sheet (F:\Human Development Report 2006 - Country Fact Sheets - Ghana.htm)

**Table 1: Ghana's human development index 2004**

HDI value	Life expectancy at birth (years)	Adult literacy rate (% ages 15 and older)	Combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio (%)	GDP per capita (PPP US\$)
1. Norway (0.965)	1. Japan (82.2)	1. Georgia (100.0)	1. Australia (113.2)	1. Luxembourg (69,961)
134. Pakistan (0.539)	130. Yemen (61.1)	109. Burundi (59.3)	149. Mozambique (48.6)	121. Papua New Guinea (2,543)
135. Bhutan (0.538)	131. Myanmar (60.5)	110. Timor-Leste (58.6)	150. Tanzania, U. Rep. of (47.8)	122. Cambodia (2,423)
<b>136. Ghana (0.532)</b>	<b>132. Ghana (57.0)</b>	<b>111. Ghana (57.9)</b>	<b>151. Ghana (47.2)</b>	<b>123. Ghana (2,240)</b>
137. Bangladesh (0.530)	133. Sudan (56.5)	112. Papua New Guinea (57.3)	152. Solomon Islands (47.1)	124. Pakistan (2,225)
138. Nepal (0.527)	134. Cambodia (56.5)	113. Togo (53.2)	153. Comoros (46.3)	125. Angola (2,180)
177. Niger (0.311)	177. Swaziland (31.3)	128. Mali (19.0)	172. Niger (21.5)	172. Sierra Leone (561)

**Table 2: Selected indicators of human poverty for Ghana**

Human Poverty Index (HPI-1) 2004	Probability of not surviving past age 40 (%) 2004	Adult illiteracy rate (%ages 15 and older) 2004	People without access to an improved water source (%) 2004	Children underweight for age (% ages 0-5) 2004
1. Uruguay (3.3)	1. Hong Kong, China (SAR) (1.5)	1. Cuba (0.2)	1. Bulgaria (1)	1. Chile (1)
56. Comoros (31.6)	130. Sudan (27.0)	99. Sudan (39.1)	79. Senegal (24)	90. Solomon Islands (21)
57. Namibia (32.5)	131. Eritrea (27.6)	100. Burundi (40.7)	80. Central African Republic (25)	91. Tanzania, U. Rep. of (22)
<b>58. Ghana (33.1)</b>	<b>132. Ghana (27.7)</b>	<b>101. Ghana (42.1)</b>	<b>81. Ghana (25)</b>	<b>92. Ghana (22)</b>
59. Morocco (33.4)	133. Madagascar (27.8)	102. Papua New Guinea (42.7)	82. Bangladesh (26)	93. Malawi (22)
60. Kenya (35.5)	134. Gambia (27.8)	103. Togo (46.8)	83. Rwanda (26)	94. Guatemala (23)
102. Mali (60.2)	172. Swaziland (74.3)	117. Mali (81.0)	125. Ethiopia (78)	134. Nepal (48)

Dobile Yirkpong's case is not unique. As the above tables indicate, this sad state of affairs is very much the reality in rural Ghana today. The state's macro-economic policies only seem to further impoverish people in these communities, making them objects of pity and creating the right atmosphere for NGO intervention. These are the places that are eventually expected to benefit from macro-economic growth. People in these communities have waited and hoped for these trickle down benefits for a long time now. Indeed, officials of NGOs state that they are moved by pity to make a difference in the lives of people living in deprived communities such as Dobile Yirkpong. For



instance, the director of ProNet-North stated that his organization targets communities that do not ordinarily benefit from government support (ProNet-North, September, 2006). Clearly, these villages are impoverished and should have been the beneficiaries of poverty alleviation/reduction programs. As far as state policies are concerned, they are said to be the *eventual* beneficiaries of government programs. On the other hand, NGOs provide direct and immediate services to people in these communities. In both cases, the rural poor are at the end of decision-making processes. Clearly, NGO programs provide the cushioning that is needed to support these communities as they wait for macro-economic policies to yield results. However, the supply of basic necessities to the rural poor is not guaranteed since NGOs are not under any obligation to provide these services.

Even within the contexts of these short term solutions provided by NGOs, it is important to analyze how poverty is conceptualized by these service-providing good Samaritans and how decisions are made concerning the provision of these services to the rural poor. Some questions that arise in regards to this are whether or not communities are consulted about what they would prefer to have and why, or whether they are approached by NGOs with services because they visibly lack these services and *should need them*.

NGO-participants in this study view poverty from a variety of perspectives. While ProNet-North looks at it from an opportunity point of view, Village Aid defines it in terms of powerlessness and looks at it from a political point of view. On the other hand, SL looks at the material aspect of it, seeing it basically as the inability of people to meet the basic needs of life. In Simli Aid's view, poverty is a human rights issue and should be tackled primarily as a human rights case. These definitions of poverty indicate

that while there are some underlying factors common to all, the orientation and approach to poverty differs greatly from one organization to the other. There is a general agreement among these NGOs that poor people lack basic necessities of life and that there is pervasive poverty. However, they have different theories and approaches for tackling it. Each of them justified their conception of poverty by providing laudable examples of why they looked at poverty the way they did. For instance, according to Village aid, “truly poor people are just modern day slaves, they have no power” (Village Aid, August, 2006). They believe empowerment is the way to deal with it. ProNet-North thinks that providing poor people with opportunities to turn the circumstances of their lives around is the best way of dealing with the issue and actually empowering people.

Simli Aid also believes in empowerment but adopts an educational approach to it. It is the position of Simli Aid that such empowerment will ensure social justice and guarantee equity in resource distribution and allocation. Finally, ISODEC adopts an advocacy approach making effective use of the media to ‘name and shame’ neo-liberal policies that violate people’s basic rights to water and health care. A fundamental difference in the definition of poverty offered by the NDPC and these organizations is the emphasis on non-material aspects by the NGOs. While the general definitions share broad similarities, the approaches emphasized by the NGOs interviewed here vary greatly from that of the state and among themselves. This study finds that both the funding source and mandate of NGOs determine their conception and approach to poverty alleviation. Do their approaches fall into a mainly distributive realm or are they providing transformative solutions? In this next section, I analyze economic redistributive approaches and recognition based approaches adopted by the state and NGOs in Ghana.

## **Economic Redistributive and Recognition-based Approaches to Poverty in Ghana**

Because material scarcity is the most visible aspect of poverty in Africa, the continent is presented in media discourses in a manner that not only appeals to sympathy and philanthropy, but also constructs victims of poverty as docile and desperate people in need of material resources only. In response to questions on funding for programs, the NGOs interviewed indicate that they receive funding from various international partner or funding NGOs and charities. Some generate funding on their own. However, self-generated income is rarely, if ever, used for funding community projects. According to the executive director of ProNet-North, such funds are used for capacity building for the organization and not for programs in their beneficiary committees. In other instances, such incomes are counted as private/personal profit. Since Chapter Four is largely a discussion of NGO activities based on interview data, this section focuses more on state policies.

The GPRS<sup>19</sup> and other state intervention policies for poverty alleviation in Ghana have been based on trickle-down neo-liberal policies. This is amply demonstrated in the 2006 budget of Ghana, which places much emphasis on developing the private sector as an engine of growth for the country (Budget of Ghana, 2006). Such an approach is a direct response to conditions of foreign aid and international loan agreements from the IMF and World Bank.<sup>20</sup> Since the issues of control and ownership over development policy is complicated, the situation can be likened to freeing a caged bird (freedom from debt is emphasized in HIPC) but restricting its access to areas determined by the ‘freerer’ of the bird. Therefore, the direction the bird flies is controlled and determined by the

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<sup>19</sup> Details of the GPRS are discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>20</sup> See discussions of the content and focus of the PRSPs and their influence in domestic policy formulation in this chapter.

powerful other, but of course with the bird's consent. However the inability of the bird to fly to other areas is explained away as a problem of the bird's own making. In Ghana, large amounts of money in the form of loans and foreign aid are disbursed to the state to carry out developmental programs. However, donor policies, tied to aid grants and loans, still largely dictate how such money is spent. When these policies fail, bad governance and corruption are blamed for the failure. The government then takes the blame wholly for the failure of the programs. While internal factors such as bad governance and misappropriation of development funds indeed contribute to the failures of such policies (Ghana's Centre for Democratic Development, 2004), other factors such as the control and restriction of the freedom of the government equally play an important role in such a failure. Sachs (2005) argues that "the focus on corruption and governance is exaggerated, and seriously overstates the causal role of corruption and poor governance in Africa's laggard growth performance" (Ibid, p.312). This notwithstanding, the incidence of corruption, whether real or perceived, in developing countries casts doubts on the ability of these governments to put aid money to good use, hence justifying in a sense, the heavy-handedness of the IMF and World Bank (personal communication with officer of NDPC). However, there is a thin line between monitoring a country's fiscal prudence and controlling its development policies. In this context, blame cannot be placed at the doorsteps of the donors since the government willingly signs onto these programs. Bradshaw and Tshandu (1990) argue that African countries that benefit from development funds from IFIs are faced with two dilemmas: "adopt the constraints requested by international lenders, thereby decreasing wages, services, and other

phenomena associated with their citizens' quality of life; or refuse to abide by these constraints, thereby risking a reduction in future loans from IFIs" (p. 231).

Government's participation in the process of developing the GPRS has been arguably constrained by its major 'development' partners or funders, the IMF and World Bank. Ghana's poverty reduction strategy is largely a reflection of the goals and ideals of the IMF and World Bank. However, arguing that the government of Ghana does not own the GPRS constitutes a denial of the government's agency in the preparation of the strategy. However, the true ownership of a document whose parameters were set before the strategy was even drafted is questionable. To this extent, I contend that the GPRS is a customized version of the IMF/WB's PRSPs. Government's agency then, is understood against the backdrop of certain external constraints that it has no true control over. At the same time these are not directly imposed on the government. In other words, what I am referring to as constraints may not be seen as constraints by the government since it willingly signs on to these policies. It is important to note that, ideologically, the sitting government in Ghana leans towards the right. It appears that there is some amount of ideological harmony between the IMF/WB's neo-liberal economic policies and the government's ideological leanings. However, this does not mean that the focus of the GPRS was not directly influenced by the WB and IMF's PRSPs. In fact, it must be noted that, in drawing up their policies, the IMF/WB do not consider the ideological leanings of any sitting or prospective Ghanaian government. In this case, the NPP's ideological leanings, perhaps, makes it easier for the government to justify its poverty alleviation strategies.

With the focus of the GPRS on macro-economic stabilization and development, social services are increasingly privatized and no longer seen entirely as a priority of the state. Generally, “the process of downgrading the social began with the ascendancy of neo-liberalism at the nation-state level in the late 1970s and globalization has carried the process forward by empowering and privileging neo-liberal economics as a transnational force beyond the control of nation states and governments” (Mishra, 1998, p. 485). A concentration of efforts at ensuring macro-economic stability, and even merely with the provision of basic social services alone does not guarantee a ‘good life’ for the poor since these do not necessarily constitute recognition especially for self-representation. Invariably, there’s the need to take the non-economic factors of poverty into account, both at the local and international levels. Particularly for poor people, representation is crucial in the definition of a good life (Narayan, 2002). Representation is not possible without participation. Even if the means to poverty reduction is through the supply of economic resources, it is still very important that participation in decisions concerning economic supplies be incorporated into such policies. Ultimately, the inability of the government to exercise complete autonomy in the international arena is an indictment on the political rights of the citizens. This is because citizens elect their government only to have them report to the IMF and World Bank.

### **State Poverty Alleviation Strategies in Perspective**

Ghana’s history is replete with various poverty alleviation programs and strategies implemented by the state with support from donor agencies. Some of the donors, multilateral and bilateral, operating in Ghana include the African Development Bank, European Union, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), US Aid, the IMF

and World Bank (Whitfield, 2005). These development partners have been helping Ghana with resources to deal with poverty and have recorded successes in various sectors, especially water supply and provision of basic educational facilities and resources.<sup>21</sup> Since Ghana has been preoccupied with development since independence, the IMF and World Bank have been her major ‘development partners’ offering both financial and technical advice to the state (Whitfield, 2005; Hutchful, 1996; Kraus, 1991). In 1983, Ghana implemented the IMF-initiated SAPs in a bid to boost economic growth and reduce poverty, in hopes of becoming economically self-dependent. Theoretically, SAPs were proposed by the IMF as antidotes to poverty and debt in developing countries. However, the neo-liberal focus of these programs required the state to cut down on social service spending, thus exacerbating poverty for the rural poor (Riddell, 1996; Bryceson, 2004). In Ghana, “the introduction of the Program of Action to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment (PAMSCAD) was a tacit admission of the failure of economic recovery and market reforms to improve the conditions of life of most Ghanaians” (Tettey et al, 2003, p. 1). Invariably, the manifestation of poverty as a largely rural phenomenon, and a situation characterized by the lack of essential social services in rural communities has persisted to this day. This is exemplified in the Dobile Yirkpong case. Even though the devastating social costs of SAPs were recognized by the Bretton-Woods institutions, they were dismissed as a temporary set-back that would be corrected once the country’s economic situation improved (Watkins, 1995). Watkins argues that though there are no universal blueprints for successful implementation of economic recovery programs, institutional changes are necessary in ensuring that the world’s poorest countries are rid of their debt problems (Ibid, p.103). He further argues that if any economic policies

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<sup>21</sup> This is evident from observations in many rural areas in Ghana.

proposed by the IMF and World Bank are to be successful in developing countries, then governments of these countries should have the power to shape these policies themselves.

**Table 3: Poverty Rates**

Area	Poverty Incidence 1/		Extreme Poverty Rate 2/	
	1991/92	1998/99	1991/92	1998/99
<b>Accra</b>	23.1	3.8	11.3	1.7
<b>Urban Coastal</b>	28.3	24.2	<b>14.2</b>	<b>14.3</b>
<b>Urban Forest</b>	25.8	18.2	12.9	10.9
<b>Urban Savannah</b>	<b>37.8</b>	<b>43.0</b>	<b>27.0</b>	<b>27.1</b>
<b>Rural Coastal</b>	52.5	45.2	32.8	28.2
<b>Rural Forest</b>	61.5	38.0	45.9	21.1
<b>Rural Savannah</b>	<b>73.0</b>	<b>70.0</b>	<b>57.5</b>	<b>59.3</b>
<b>All Ghana</b>	51.7	39.5	36.5	26.8

Source: Ghana Living Standards Survey; October 2000

1/Poverty line=US\$363

2/Poverty line=US\$283

Table three above shows the incidence of poverty between 1991 and 1999. Even though this table indicates overall improvements in poverty levels in the country, extreme poverty increased in the urban and rural savannah areas of the country. The improvement recorded here is based on income-based measurements of poverty which addresses only the economic aspect of it. Several scholars have argued that poverty in many developing countries became worse following the implementation of the SAPs



(Riddell, 1996; Konadu-Agyemang, 2001). A report prepared by staff of the IMF/WB on Ghana's economic progress following the implementation of SAPs indicate that although Ghana made progress in the macro-economic sector, it suffered shocks in trade, which resulted in falling prices for its two main primary export products, gold and cocoa, thereby resulting in "a sharp deterioration in macro-economic performance..." (IMF, June 2001, p. 5). SAPs, arguably, worsened not only the debt situation of many developing countries, but also increased the dependency status of developing countries to the IMF and World Bank (Cheru, 1999). Furthermore, "many private banks will not loan money to Third World nations unless the IMF has 'approved' their domestic economic policies. Thus, African Countries cannot abandon agreements with the IMF and hope to receive loans from other sources" (Bradshaw and Tshandu, 1990, p. 231).

Interestingly, governments in Ghana have emphasized again and again that development and true poverty alleviation lies in wealth creation which is only feasible through the growth and involvement of the private sector.<sup>22</sup> Developing the macro-economic sector in Ghana has consequently involved sacrifices on the part of the poor who to this day are waiting and hoping to realize the benefits of macro-economic growth. For instance, the government responded to the worsening terms of trade in 2000 by "tightening monetary policy, postponing public expenditures and by raising VAT rate" (IMF, June 2001, p. 5). Also, "petroleum prices were doubled...and similar increases in electricity and water tariffs took effect in May [2001] to curtail losses at those utilities" (IMF, June 2001, p. 6). The maintenance of the macro-economic sector inadvertently implies sacrifices for the poor.

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<sup>22</sup> These statements are usually made through presidential addresses, or addresses by finance ministers. This is also evident in the budget statement of Ghana discussed a little later in this chapter.

## **The Heavily Indebted Poor Country Initiative (HIPC) and Ghana's Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS)**

In this section, I examine the HIPC initiative, in order to deconstruct some of the dominant assumptions about it and assess its potential to offer transformative solutions to poverty in Ghana. For example, what does it really mean to have a *consultative process* in drawing up a PRSP? It will be demonstrated that the PRSPs are in a lot of ways similar to the SAPs. Solutions presented through this approach, even with the potential for transformative solutions internally, still largely constitute an affirmative solution internationally.

The HIPC initiative is a joint IMF/WB debt relief initiative for developing countries deemed to have unsustainable debt levels. Under the initiative, portions of debt are cancelled for any country that is successful at implementing various policy conditions or performance criteria. Launched in 1996, the initiative has undergone some reviews and is now called the 'enhanced HIPC initiative' (IMF, 2005). According to the IMF, in order to qualify for HIPC, a country must "*establish a track record of reform and sound policies through IMF and IDA-supported programs; and (4) have developed a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) through a broad-based participatory process*" (IMF, 2006, no page). However, these alone do not guarantee membership to HIPC since the final decision rests with the executive boards of the IMF and World Bank. These boards "formally decide on [the country's] eligibility for debt relief, and the international community commits to reducing debt to the agreed sustainability threshold" (IMF, 2006, no page).

The process of qualifying for HIPC debt relief is complicated. For instance, even though the PRSPs required by the initiative are supposed to be prepared by the

beneficiary state, the focus and direction of these strategies are still shaped by the Bretton-Woods institutions irrespective of the participatory process emphasized in the initiative (Jones and Hardstaff, 2005). It is apparent that the consultative process involving the IMF and World Bank actually refers to a veto or approval process. For example, it is reported that Ghana's first interim poverty reduction strategy paper (GPRS1) was summarily rejected by the Bretton-Woods Institutions because apparently, it didn't meet the board's expectations (ISODEC, October, 2006). The PRSPs are thus rubber-stamped by receiving governments and although these are not directly imposed, the adoption of such policies cannot also be said to constitute actual ownership in the real sense of the word. Studies by Jones and Hardstaff (2005) on the participatory process of preparing the GPRS in Ghana show that the process of preparing the PRSP was known to lack parliamentary inputs, known to have problems with quality of citizen participation and direct donor imposition of policies (Gould and Ojanen, 2003).

The above notwithstanding, the HIPC initiative has succeeded in canceling some of the debt owed by developing countries. For instance, the government of Sweden, under the HIPC program, cancelled US \$14.5 million out of US \$18.3 million of Ghana's debt owed to Sweden (Eurodad news article, 2005). The president of Ghana also reports that the G-8 has cancelled total debts owing to the tune of over US \$8 billion (President of Ghana, October 2006). This should hopefully provide leverage for accelerated economic growth and development.

Despite these 'success' stories, the policies of HIPC make it even more difficult for member countries to exercise agency since any departure from the conditions set out in the agreement will result in loss of bilateral aid and the implementation of even more

stringent and perhaps harmful conditions for new loan agreements (Oxfam, 2005). For example, the Fund and WB have on several occasions suspended financial support to Ghana for ‘financial slippages’ between 1992 and 1996 (IMF and WB, June 2001). Even though HIPC policies emphasize a lot of domestic economic restructuring in Ghana, these policies do not spell out mechanisms for restructuring the control mechanism of the Fund and Bank. For instance, setting broad policy guidelines for beneficiary countries and insisting on strict adherence to conditions and performance criteria set by the WB/IMF do not give any indication of economic independence for developing countries like Ghana. According to the UN Millennium project, which was “commissioned by the United Nations Secretary-General in 2002 to develop a concrete action plan for the world to reverse the grinding poverty, hunger and disease affecting billions of people” (UNDP, 2006, no page number), the current debt relief project still undermines the efforts of HIPCs to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the first of which is the eradication of extreme poverty. This is because many HIPCs still retain a substantial amount of debt to IFIs even after debt relief is granted under the HIPC initiative. Clearly, these policies have continued to sustain economic dependency on the IMF/WB. This is a clear indication that as Stewart and Wang (2003) contend, no *real* change has occurred in focus of IFI’s programs from previous structural adjustment programs. It can be deduced from this that these programs have been affirmative.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) contain a summary of a country’s developmental policies, outlining the macro-economic, structural and social programs the country wishes to pursue over a three year period. These are supposed to be prepared by

the country in a *consultative* manner with various stakeholders, domestic and foreign.

These stakeholders include the IMF and World Bank. According to the IMF, PRSPs are

*prepared by governments in low-income countries through a participatory process involving domestic stakeholders and external development partners, including the IMF and the World Bank. A PRSP describes the macroeconomic, structural and social policies and programs that a country will pursue over several years to promote broad-based growth and reduce poverty, as well as external financing needs and the associated sources of financing (IMF, 2005, no page number).*

The stated objectives of this strategy as articulated by the IMF are laudable, especially since they indicate that “as a result of previous reviews and evaluations, the PRSP approach has been amended to allow countries greater flexibility to articulate and implement their strategies, and reduce the perception that the process is driven by the requirements of the IMF and the World Bank” (IMF, 2005, no page number). The fine print of the PRSPs gives the impression that the Bretton-Woods institutions have taken steps to ensure that developing countries have full ownership over the whole process of drawing up their economic adjustment programs or strategies. However, the consultative process involving the IMF/World Bank in itself contradicts the idea of recognition for ownership in this case. The IMF’s influence over the ‘country-driven’ PRSP is evident in the process of approval and feedback from the IMF thus, “IMF and World Bank staff are to focus on providing candid feedback to countries on the PRSP... and on *linking more explicitly the lending operations of the IMF and the World Bank to the PRSP's own strategy and priorities*” (IMF, 2005, no page number). Here, the heavy-handedness of the IMF and World Bank are still very clear. The recommendations of the Fund and Bank for macro-economic restructuring are in the GPRS.

The GPRS, according to the government of Ghana, is a ‘comprehensive strategy’ for growth and poverty reduction; the strategy outlines the following goals.

- Ensuring sound economic management for accelerated growth;
- *Increasing production and promoting sustainable livelihoods;*
- *Direct support for human development and the provision of basic services*
- Ensuring good governance and increased capacity of the public sector; and
- The active involvement of the private sector as the main engine of growth and partner in nation-building.<sup>23</sup>

Upon careful examination of these goals, it is clear that the emphasis is on macro economic programs and an orientation towards neo-liberal economic policies as implied in points 1, and 4 above. The document goes on to state that, ‘emphasis over the period will be on stabilizing the economy and laying the foundation for a sustainable, accelerated and job creating agro-based industrial growth’ (GPRS, 2003, p. i). It also explains that this will eventually enable all Ghanaians irrespective of class to gain access to basic social services including health care, education, potable drinking water etc. From the document, it appears that the provision of basic social services is a secondary goal, with the government spending as little as 2.0% of budgetary allocation on health and 2.8% on education. In terms of access to social services, the document vaguely states ways through which people’s access to these services can be improved or achieved, without actually talking about concrete ways in which this can be achieved within the framework. For example, the document states: “consequently, the GPRS *aims at removing key obstacles* to access and utilization, by the poor, of basic education, health care, population control, good drinking water, and improved sanitation ...access to basic education will mean the rehabilitation of dilapidated public school buildings, provision of

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<sup>23</sup> Quoted from the GPRS policy statement released by the government of Ghana (19<sup>th</sup> February, 2003).

basic school materials etc” (GPRS, 2003, p.iv). This document is silent on the concrete measures on how these can be achieved.

Clearly, the emphasis on domestic macro-economic policy as a way of ensuring poverty reduction in the GPRS is indicative of the fact that even this document does not seek to change institutional structures at the international level as far as the country’s financially dependent status is concerned. For instance, it is the government’s conviction that “the GDP needs to grow by more than 7% annually in order for real poverty reduction to take place” (GPRS, 2003, p.vii). In other words, the emphasis on the economic factors alone as a way of ensuring poverty alleviation is reductionistic because it implies that the achievement of high GDP in Ghana will ultimately lead to poverty reduction; this does not take into consideration the fact that achieving the desired GDP is tied to control of the international economy, which the country lacks. Secondly, the strategy aims at ensuring macro-economic stability in order to *support* poverty reduction. In the budget statement of Ghana for 2006, the finance minister states that “ the main thrust of GPRS 2 will be to accelerate economic growth and poverty reduction by assisting the private sector to grow and generate employment” (Budget of Ghana, 2006, p. 18). In other words, the rural poor will have to wait for the macro economic situation of the country to improve before they can have adequate access to basic social services. As poor people, they are powerless to advocate otherwise, since the government’s own dependent situation makes it powerless to advocate otherwise at the international level.

The GPRS is strikingly similar to the SAPs because of the emphasis on macro-economic performances. Even though Ghana, through the implementation of the SAPs recorded significant macro-economic gains, that did not directly translate into better

livelihoods for people (Tetty et al, 2003; Konadu-Agyemang, 2001). In an assessment of Ghana's macro-economic performance by staff of the Fund and Bank in 2001, Ghana was again praised for macro-economic gains sometimes made or sustained through increasing tariffs and rates on basic social services as indicated above. According to the assessment team, "Ghana has made progress on structural and macro-economic reforms since 1984, sustaining output growth and increasing private sector activity and investment over the last two decades" (IMF/WB, June 2001, p. 3). Arguably, then, although the GPRS, under the HIPC initiative has succeeded in achieving macro-economic gains, it is not clear that the living conditions of the poor have benefited from this achievement. In fact, in some instances, the poor have had to make sacrifices to sustain the performance of the macro-economic sector. While indicating that "economic growth was the main factor that *lifted households out of poverty*" (IMF/WB, June 2001, p. 2-emphasis added), the assessment team also reports that "poverty actually rose substantially" in the northern sector of the country (ibid). Indeed it is interesting that households have been reported to be 'lifted out of poverty'! One plausible explanation for this disparity between macro-economic growth and improvement in social conditions is the lack of integration of social policy into macro-economic policies (Elson, 2000). In this case, redistribution and recognition are present, but not tackled in tandem.

Furthermore, the implementation of the GPRS under the HIPC initiative, calls attention to the serious issues regarding the little autonomy that the state exercises in running the country, because of its close adherence to the policies of the IMF and World Bank as primary providers of development funds. Tetty et al (2003) argue that in Ghana, state institutions are



weakened by neo-liberal reforms and cutbacks, are functionally incapable of effectively administering its own economic reforms, institutional restructuring and grassroots participation in the political process. The result both *undermines the legitimacy of the state* and politics, and constrains the development of precisely the kind of strong and viable indigenous capitalist bourgeoisie that is supposed to be the agent of economic transformation in the neo-liberal model (p. 3, emphasis added).

Indeed, through the letters of intent that Ghana submits to the IMF in requesting for assistance under the initiative, there is direct accountability to the IMF. This is because, in these letters of intent, the government reports what has been achieved with the loans and its ability or otherwise to adhere to the guidelines of macro-economic policies. Any ‘slippage’ is explained in detail and a request made not to be ‘punished’ for the slippage. For instance, in the letter of intent for 2005, the government requested ‘waivers for non-observance of three quantitative and one structural performance criteria’ (Ghana Government, Letter of Intent, 2005).

Perhaps, the expectation that NGOs and Civil society will provide the needed services to rural communities while the government concentrates on macro-economic policies is what is holding the illusion firmly in place. This situation is captured by Clarke (1998) when he refers to Upoff’s (1993) assertion that neo-liberals “see NGOs as part of the private sector, of socio-economic significance mainly, delivering services to the poor cheaply, equitably and efficiently” (quoted in Clarke, 1998, p. 40). This view holds true to a large extent, mainly because of the activities of NGOs especially in the recent past. However, the significance has moved beyond the realm of socio-economic provision of services to political activism through advocacy while still largely maintaining the earlier function of providing affordable social services. Also,

there are spaces of resistance within the development NGO arena. Both NGOs and their clients are active subjects of the neo-liberal project, *not simply*

*subjugated by hegemonic forces* [but none-the-less overpowered somewhat by it]. Some employ a mixture of acquiescence, strategic subversion and resistance to achieve, in part, their goals and desires (Townsend et al, 2004, p. 872).

In addition to providing basic services to beneficiary communities, the NGOs that participated in this study are also involved in various advocacy programs, holding the government accountable for policies that have exacerbated poverty in the country. From the analyses, it is evident that though economic redistribution is important, it remains only an affirmative solution if systemic or policy defects related to poverty are not adequately addressed. This is clearly related to the economic conception of poverty from the point of view of the state and its main development partners.

## **Chapter Four: NGO and State Programs: Similarities, Divergence, Convergences and Creative Tensions.**

Findings from this study indicate that the approaches and strategies for poverty alleviation adopted by NGOs and the state share just as many similarities as they share dissimilarities. In this section, using the findings from the study, I examine various issues and challenges confronting both the state and NGOs in their poverty alleviation efforts. I begin by briefly stating the programs and initiatives of each of the NGOs interviewed. Issues of autonomy, dependency, powerlessness, and recognition are crucial to poverty alleviation strategies in Ghana. These challenges are manifested in various ways and negotiated differently by the two key players in this sector. The manner in which these issues are dealt with, to a large extent, impacts the lives of ordinary Ghanaians who are ultimately at the receiving end of the policies.

### **NGO Programs and Initiatives in Ghana**

As indicated earlier, NGOs examined and interviewed for this study carry out a number of projects and initiatives in their beneficiary communities. Village Aid (INGO) funds projects on adult literacy in rural communities and also provides funding for small scale rural agricultural training. In terms of adult literacy, they focus on using drama to educate communities on the *marginalization* of women in their beneficiary communities. This technique is geared toward *gender empowerment*. In addition, the organization facilitates the construction of small dams; provides grinding mills and gives micro-credit loans to people interested in setting up small-scale businesses. It does this through a partner organization in Ghana.

Simli Aid is a local Ghanaian NGO which is a partner to Village Aid and operates mainly in the Northern Region of Ghana. Their programs are therefore similar. In fact, the programs and initiatives outlined above are actually planned, coordinated and carried out by Simli Aid with funding from Village Aid. Simli Aid seems to derive its mandate from Village Aid. It is important to note that even though Village Aid is the main funding partner for Simli Aid, Simli Aid also receives funding from other organizations and charities locally and internationally.

ProNet-North primarily works in the water and sanitation sector in rural communities in the Upper West Region of Ghana. It provides potable drinking water to communities, organizes educational campaigns on good governance and political participation in communities to encourage people to be more assertive in demanding basic services and other rights from their local government representatives. In addition, the organization also supports girl-child education by providing items such as books, school uniforms and other stationary to girls enrolled in basic education. Additionally, it has formed local community-based committees to encourage girl-child education in its beneficiary communities.

SL carries out a number of different projects for their beneficiary communities. They provide an international market for items such as baskets by advertising and selling them on the internet. They also provide micro-credit to people interested in starting small scale businesses. In addition, they donate bicycles to ease transportation problems of people in villages. As well, they donate vegetable seeds and financial support to basic schools for school gardens to help in the government's school feeding program for poor children in basic schools. This program is intended to serve as an incentive for poor

parents in the Northern and Upper East Regions of Ghana to send their wards to school since that takes the burden of feeding them off the parents. They also provide or build schools for local communities.

ISODEC is mainly an advocacy based organization which operates nationally. It holds advocacy campaigns on various issues on poverty. In particular, its research and advocacy revolve around IMF/World Bank and government policies' inability to meet the basic needs of the poor and marginalized. In addition, it also provides water, school buildings and incentives to both students and schools, especially girl-children.

Although all these organizations provide basic social services, sometimes including food to people in deprived communities, they all recognize and admitted, during interviews, that charity is no solution to poverty. They agree that in order for their efforts to yield the desired results, the state needs to corroborate their efforts and take up much of what they are providing to local communities. Although they are perceived as better alternatives to the government in terms of providing the needs of the poor, these service providers face similar challenges as the government. Ironically, some of the non-economic issues of poverty they seek to eliminate from their beneficiary communities, such as vulnerability, marginalization, and lack of autonomy are the challenges that they face in their relationships with their various development partners. It is interesting that NGOs then seek to empower local communities with resources that they themselves lack!

### **Autonomy and Dependency**

Relatively speaking, in comparison to the government of Ghana, the NGOs interviewed here seem to enjoy more autonomy from their funding partners than the state.

This is partially attributed to the fact that it is easier to ‘punish’ a defaulting state than an NGO.<sup>24</sup> Even though there are checks and balances in place for NGOs from their funding partners, the level of monitoring is minimal compared to the monitoring mechanisms for the state. NGOs have multiple funding partners who do not operate under an umbrella organization such as the Bretton-Woods institutions (especially in relation to the MDDBS). The issue of trust is important in such negotiations. NGOs seem to be trusted more with money and are therefore given a little more room for flexibility in their operations than the state.

Furthermore, another significant difference in terms of funding related autonomy is that NGOs mainly get grants, while the state gets loans, with different terms and conditions. NGOs are also subject to various conditions from the different funding agencies that provide them with grants. The autonomy NGOs have, as well as the flexibility with which they implement their programs varies from ‘partner’ to partner. This is the case for the partners or funding agencies themselves who are also subject to terms and conditions from other funding partners (ProNet-North, September, 2006; Village Aid, August 2006). There are different tiers of authority and autonomy, depending on the source of the money. Autonomy and authority are passed on from one partner to the other ending with the receiving LNNGO. For instance, according to an official of Village Aid, “...we are funded by the government (of the UK) so we respond to their calls for program suggestions...” (Village Aid, August, 2006).

Moreover, the vulnerability of NGOs and beneficiaries is generally increased as a result of financial dependency (Edwards and Hulme, 1996; ProNet-North, September

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<sup>24</sup> This is because, state borrowing is coordinated by the Bretton-Woods institutions while NGOs source funds from any available source for their projects.

2006). Recounting experiences of vulnerability with funding agencies, the executive director of ProNet-North indicates that, financial dependency is a big vulnerability for third world NGOs. A solution to this, according to him is getting the government to continue with projects they start as a security measure, so that:

when the main donor funds dry up or for any reason they withdraw then you are sure that the [district] assembly, once they believe in that same cause, will apply resources to continue with that project (ProNet-North, September, 2006).

Overall, Western donor organizations (intentionally or unintentionally) seem to be using the power of the purse to maintain their dominance by encouraging the dependency of LINGOs and governments of developing countries on their resources. Invariably, in the case of the government of Ghana, Hittle's (1992) assertion that "the World Bank is a body whose loans allow a country to go into debt in order to purchase developed country goods or developed country advice" (Hittle, 1992, p.14), seem to have credence in this case. Having found themselves in bad financial crises, many developing countries including Ghana were desperate to improve their economic situations, however, the only way out was for further borrowing from the IFIs, as well as accessing IFI-funded initiatives such as HIPC. Consequently, since HIPC embodies policies that are similar to SAPs, it is predictable that the current HIPC initiative will only strengthen the dependency cycle or the continued reliance on IFIs for economic growth and progress.

Similarly, NGOs create, and/or sustain a situation where their beneficiary communities are dependent on their services. Because many NGOs provide basic social services to communities, such as safe drinking water, health care and educational facilities, at little or no cost, rural communities have come to rely on the continual provision of these services from NGOs. In many instances, though helpful, these services

are provided in the 'hand-out' fashion to communities. The executive director of ProNet-North captures this in an interview when he states that because of the reliability of their services, beneficiary communities have built a lot of confidence in them "but unfortunately... it also leads to dependency; I believe ... it is because of the long tradition of communities being at the receiving end of projects. This has been the problem whether from central government or from NGOs" (ProNet-North, September, 2006). In other words, beneficiary communities are unable to sustain such programs. Furthermore, because NGOs have provided social support to many impoverished communities, many rural areas have come to rely heavily on NGOs as service providers instead of the government. By and large, as far as sustainability of projects is concerned, NGOs and the government of Ghana depend largely on external sources of funding. The majority of participants in this study indicated that their programs were largely dependent on external funding. As such, if such funding should cease, their projects will grind to a halt.

Many NGOs have started income generating activities for themselves. In some instances, such funds are not used for community projects. This trend indicates that NGOs will soon become 'for profit organizations' and become part of the private sector. While the ability to be self-sufficient in income generation is beneficial in ensuring that NGO vulnerability is reduced, the situation may not prove too helpful to the rural poor who depend on benevolent services from NGOs. There is a thin line between financial autonomy on the part of NGOs and sustaining the benefactor-beneficiary relationship with rural communities. In other words, this relationship will change once NGOs become for profit organizations instead of non-profit organizations. As argued in the case of the



state, NGOs themselves need to assert their independence or autonomy in order to provide services that lead to autonomy for their communities.

The above notwithstanding, ISODEC's experiences as a relatively more autonomous NGO sets it apart from the rest of the LNGOs interviewed for this study. According to an officer of ISODEC, the organization has been able to assert its autonomy over its projects irrespective of its reliance on external donor agencies. According to this officer, ISODEC has on occasion refused funding from funding partners that insisted on programs not compatible with its mandate. In this case, ISODEC is not as vulnerable as the other LNGOs and actually seems to be a little more independent in terms of its programs and advocacy.

### **Powerlessness and Recognition**

Powerlessness and recognition play an important part in determining whether or not, strategies offered by the state or NGOs are transformative or affirmative. Taking the holistic definition of poverty into consideration, findings from this study suggest that as a poor country in need of development funding, Ghana depends on international development initiatives such as HIPC for poverty alleviation and development. Perhaps faced with few choices for funding, the government *consciously* signs onto preplanned neo-liberal economic policies. As indicated in my analyses of the GPRS, which is Ghana's version of the PRSPs for accessing funds under the HIPC initiative, even though policies in the PRSPs are 'customized and owned' by the government in the GPRS, the overall focus of the strategy still reflects policy prescriptions from the Bretton-Woods institutions. As a poor country, Ghana experiences many of the frustrations and

challenges that ordinary poor people experience. For instance, the poor are often unable to make choices on developmental programs affecting their lives, therefore, donors make developmental decisions on their behalf.<sup>25</sup> Here, power relations come into play. This is because the lending or providing institutions are wealthier than the receiving communities. One speaks, and the other obeys. While this appears simple, the distinction between ‘ruler and ruled’ is complicated and the roles of the two can be confusing since the beneficiaries, in this case the ruled, can falsely assume the role of the ruler or appear to be in charge of the programs that are already preplanned for them. The selection criteria used by IFIs, Western donor INGOs and local NGOs, are strikingly similar and reinforce hierarchies between the rich and the poor. While the HIPC initiative is open to heavily indebted poor countries, NGOs tend to select poor and marginalized communities. For instance, Village Aid, selects “the very marginalized and the poorest” (Village Aid, August 2006). ProNet-North also talks about working with communities that would normally fall outside of mainstream government development agenda, the same with SL and Simli Aid. This difference between the beneficiary communities and donor organizations promotes the atmosphere where discourses of poverty not only affect intervention strategies but also affects the relationship between beneficiaries and benefactors. For instance, Village Aid sets out to ‘empower rural poor women’. As an INGO, it is important to note that the idea for empowerment is already conceived in its definition of poverty, from its perspective, before these empowerment programs are

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<sup>25</sup> It can be argued that the exercise of voting rights to elect representatives to government represents the ability of ordinary citizens to make these choices since their elected representatives at the level of government make the decisions on their behalf. However, the parliament of Ghana, which represents people from all areas of the country, is not only dominated by the MPs of the ruling party, but is also not in a position to engage in formulating policies. This is because its role is to “approve the legislative framework for policy reforms” (Whitfield, 2005, p. 648).

drawn. Such conceptions are clearly informed by a distant 'pitiful' observation of the Other, i.e. the poor rural Ghanaian woman.

Generally, NGOs claim to incorporate the voices of the poor in the plan and implementation of their activities. Participants in the study stated that their organizations were people-centred because as one official indicated,

poverty alleviation actually has a lot to do with the people. So we ensure that the beneficiaries are actually involved. They contribute much ...based on the decisions we make so whatever project they bring to us, we observe it technically and make our suggestions and recommendations to them and after that we work out a scheme at the end of it, they implement the project so the project is fully for them we serve just as a guide (SL, August, 2006).

This notwithstanding, the level of representation and actual participation in decision-making for local communities is still questionable because NGOs end up playing a monitoring role. This speaks volumes on how decisions and program choices for the poor are determined by the more powerful benefactor-organizations. As it is, beneficiaries are involved in contributing ideas to the planning of the programs; however, they are left out in the final decision-making process, but *own the projects since they implement them*. They are left with little or no choice but to go along with the suggested programs since that is usually the only alternative open to them. Again, this is strikingly similar to the type of ownership of the PRSPs encouraged by the World Bank and IMF in the HIPC initiative. Furthermore, some NGOs carry out preplanned programs in line with funders' policy requirements. In an attempt to counter this charge, SL indicated that research was first carried out before proposals were drawn. In further discussions, however, it became clear that even the component of participation was a donor requirement! In some instances, the decision to provide water is already taken even by virtue of the fact that some NGOs are interested in, and carry out specific projects. Consequently, in such

cases, the participation of the community is minimal, limited only to how the facility should be maintained and where it should be sited. This in itself is a complex situation because, sometimes what is considered necessary by some NGOs may not actually be seen as such by the communities for which these projects are intended. For instance, sometimes it is taken for granted that every community needs a health facility or water facility. This may not be the case for the beneficiary communities that may not see these projects as important, given their particular world view. In any case, communities hardly turn down offers for such projects since they turn out to be very cheap or even free.

Although representation in NGO activity by rural folk is not as desirable as expected, the level of involvement is still commendable compared to the level of involvement of the state in policy decision-making at the international level. This, coupled with the transitory nature of governments in Ghana, has increased reliance on NGOs for the provision of social services. Many a time, programs started by previous governments are hardly continued by new governments, partially because of the different ideological leanings. Governments, then, appear to be temporary to people, while NGOs are for the most part seen as permanent. Moreover, NGOs mostly have no political motives for their activities, though their activities provide leverage for becoming consultants in their fields of operation. This is true for ProNet-North and ISODEC.

How is Ghana able to negotiate with her wealthy western counterparts or major IFIs such as the IMF and World Bank? Similarly, how are poor people in rural communities able to negotiate fairly with their benefactor NGOs? Ironically, the HIPC initiative targets poor developing countries, yet the actual programs implemented under the initiative tend to benefit people who are already well-off because of the macro-

economic focus of these programs. There are also ideological issues embedded in the particular focus of these programs (Sachs, 2005; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001). As far as the HIPC initiative is concerned, prescriptions for neo-liberal economic policies appear to be a 'take it or leave it initiative'. Evidence of this is manifested in the requirement for qualification for HIPC funds (IMF Fact Sheet, 2005) which states among other things that "to receive the full and irrevocable reduction in debt available under the HIPC initiative...the country *must* adopt and implement the PRSP for at least one year" (IMF Fact Sheet, 2005, no page). Since the Ghanaian government is encouraged to own the process, the government justifies the implementation of neo-liberal policies with a rhetoric of how this propels growth which will then eventually lead to poverty reduction.

The above notwithstanding, it is important to note that macro-economic growth policies are necessary in the long run. The issue at stake here is that, government representation is necessary in such policy decisions at any level. At present, the Ghanaian government appears weak in pursuing its own policy agenda even if it falls in line with that of its lending partners. The presence of state agency cannot be denied in this process since the government is usually fully aware of the implications of going in for development assistance. While the argument that the Ghanaian government lacks alternatives in this area, is plausible to a large extent, advocacy oriented NGOs have argued that the government can always reject certain loans if the conditions are unfavourable to the overall developmental goals of the country (ISODEC, November 2006). Evidence from this study supports the idea that government is constrained for alternatives and is aware of the restrictions on its agency involved in poverty alleviation initiatives offered by the IM and World Bank. For instance, the 2006 budget statement of

Ghana indicates that “under the G-8 and multilateral debt relief, Ghana is to be *forgiven* an additional US \$4.2 billion by July 2006. *This leaves the country with a historic and an immense opportunity to pursue its national aspirations*” (Ghana Government Budget, 2006, p.3). This is almost a sigh of relief from years of both financial indebtedness and lack of autonomy. Even though macro-economic progress is said to have been achieved through the implementation of SAPs and GPRS 1, dependency on IFIs has not declined. The 2006 budget statement expresses this powerlessness as follows “GDP growth in sub-Saharan Africa has been forecasted at 5.9% for 2006 from this year’s figure of 5.4 %. *If this is achieved*, it will put the growth in sub-Saharan Africa back above 4.5% per annum for the first time in over a decade...” (Ghana Government Budget, 2006, p.11). The ‘ifs’ in the budget projections of economic growth do not sound promising for a bright future despite its macro-economic gains. ISODEC has indicated that the GPRS has not been able to sustain livelihoods and protect farmers from the vagaries of international trade liberalization policies.

Voice and representation at the international level for poor countries is crucial to sustainable poverty alleviation programs. To alleviate or reduce poverty at the domestic level, it is important that other aspects of poverty be acknowledged and dealt with at the international level. I propose that it will be beneficial to have some form of a State Empowerment Strategy (SES) to compliment the PRSPs. While the PRSPs under the HIPC initiative are expected to reduce poverty domestically, the SES will address structural issues of inequality at the international level. One of the first issues to be addressed under the SES perhaps, should be how the IMF in particular can incorporate a human development aspect, which the World Bank professes as its mission, into its

policies. The SES will also address ways of respecting other developmental plans other than neo-liberalism in order to stem imperialism championed through neo-liberal policies by the Bretton-Woods institutions. Empowerment of developing countries such as Ghana will therefore be an important component of the SES.

On the domestic front, NGOs are equally guilty of not adequately addressing recognition in their programs for their beneficiary communities. Compared to the IFIs, NGOs have initiated steps to listen to, and incorporate voices of the poor in their policies and programs. While identifying that poor people and communities experience powerlessness, NGOs claim to adopt strategies that ensure participation by the poor. However, perhaps unintentionally, the way in which the programs are structured undermine the power and true empowerment of rural communities or the poor in their programs. For example, SL has a monitoring mechanism to ensure that “all loan beneficiaries are [doing well]; at least they, [monitoring officers], look at their performance to ensure they are doing well” (SL, August, 2006). As a micro-credit organization, SL provides start up capitals in the form of revolving loans to benefactors to ensure their ‘development’, however, “...we monitor you, we give you all the necessary ideas, *we provide real technical advise, we have the expertise* ...and provide the technical advice” (SL, August, 2006). Here, provision of expert advice in some ways also constitutes a mechanism of control, which restricts the agency of the beneficiaries in such a loan scheme. Similarly, Village Aid views its literacy program as a tool of empowerment for adults in their beneficiary communities. After basic training in reading and writing, an official stated that, “the next thing *we encourage them to think* about is to

set up a small business or lots of small business, *we offer-credit...*” (Village Aid, August, 2006).

The difference between this and the monitoring mechanisms of the IFIs is the scale and level at which it is done. Clearly then, in some ways the relationship between the government of Ghana and IFIs is re-enacted in local communities by NGOs. ‘Encouraging’ people to think about certain things also has significance in power relations between NGOs and beneficiaries as is the case in the relationship between the Ghanaian government and IFIs. Such encouragement is furthered with incentives such as micro-credit to the people who take the ‘encouragement’ to set up small business. This becomes a subtle way of advancing a certain agenda as opposed to allowing people to come up with ideas on their own, or giving the space for people to decide on what they could do with a loan. This is strikingly similar to the manner in which Ghana is ‘encouraged’ to sign up for certain initiatives such as HIPC because of the promise of financial assistance. In the forward to the budget statement of 2006, the government asserts that “*with great reluctance, Ghana accessed the HIPC initiative coupled with growth and poverty reduction strategy in 2001*” (Ghana Government Budget, 2006, p.3).

Accordingly,

government, counting on the support of the people, has had to implement austere fiscal and monetary policies and bold economic reforms. This *policy record has convinced our creditors to acknowledge the sacrifice of our young democracy and decide to forgive* the nation about US\$8 billion of debt accumulated over the years (Ghana Government Budget, 2006, p.3).

Again, this is a clear indication that given a choice, the government may not have accessed funds under the initiative.



## **Human Rights Appeal in NGO Activity**

The study found that many NGOs used human rights as a basis for their advocacy because they consider poverty a human rights issue. Irrespective of their perspective on issues of development or even the focus or method of their programs, all NGOs in this study indicated in one way or the other that they considered themselves fighting for the rights of the poor to basic services. In particular, ISODEC uses the human rights framework in its advocacy. This NGO identifies the over-emphasis on civil and political rights in human rights discourse and are working at ensuring, economic, social and cultural rights especially for the rural poor. This they do by providing basic social services to the poor and also advocating for government's recognition of the need to provide and institutionalize the provision of essential services such as water. They also employ the human rights approach of 'naming and shaming' as a major methodology. Although this was not explicitly stated by the officer interviewed for this study, a look at their website and programs, especially in the media advocacy section, reveals that their ability to hold government responsible for violation of human rights ensures that the government pays attention to, and corrects certain mishaps in policy planning. For instance, ISODEC campaigned for the abolishing of user fees in the basic educational sector and succeeded in obtaining the capitation grant for school pupils. This grant provides each child in basic school with 30,000 Ghanaian cedis, the equivalent of about \$4 (Ghana Government Website-Ministry of Education). In fact, ISODEC was able to persuade the government and the IMF to reconsider a water policy which according to them would have deprived a lot of people from getting any access to water. Overall, ISODEC uses 'human rights' as a concept to advocate for the provision of basic social

services. This they do by tagging the issues they address as rights, or rather, emphasizing the ‘rights’ aspects of these. For instance, according to the officer I interviewed, reproductive health is seen as a right and they are “...now into family reproductive health as a right... and within that framework we are [advocating for] anti-retroviral drugs [as a right to HIV/AIDS patients]” (ISODEC, October, 2006).

Generally, all interviewees stated in one way or another that they see poverty as a human rights issue. Interviewees indicated with passion that poverty was basically a violation of people’s human rights. While there were no elaborate efforts to use the ‘human rights framework’ in advocating for basic services, they used the concept in their advocacy campaigns.

In conclusion, I found that the use of human rights appeals by NGOs was strengthened by the fact that, generally, there is a fear or shame of being accused of human rights violations, either as a direct or indirect or even unintended consequence of policy. This is more so for the government which cannot for political reasons be seen to be violating or denying the human rights of people under any circumstance at all. The particular methodology of naming and shaming, as employed by ISODEC also works very well in this regard. The mention of the term, ‘human rights’, is enough to get swift responses from the state and even the IMF and WB! Generally then, the human rights appeal saves NGOs the task of justifying the provision of essential basic social services to the poor. In relation to the literature on human rights, one realizes that human rights discourse has become a powerful force to reckon with. Thus, though scholars are still debating the justifiability of human rights (Mapulanga-Hulston, 2002; Eide et al, 1992; Roth, 2004), the term in itself seems to have taken on a life of its own, justifying both its

very existence and reasons for its recognition. Despite the fact that the human rights appeal is strong and has been used strategically to the advantage of the poor in Ghana, the moral appeal in it still stands out as worrisome since that reinforces the idea that we need to appeal to the kindness of people and institutions for a major issue such as poverty. If enough pity is evoked, then something is done about it, or if institutions will get condemnation from 'kind-hearted people' then, in order not to appear 'cruel' and insensitive, institutions or people then take measures to correct the situation.

Irrespective of its weaknesses, perhaps the human rights appeal could be explored further to advocate for more transformative solutions to poverty in developing countries generally, and Ghana in particular.

### **Shifting Focus of Poverty Alleviation Programs**

Some converging themes emerge in NGO conceptions of poverty. Essentially, NGOs identified the two broad components of poverty (material and non-material) with different emphasis on these aspects. Interestingly, all five NGOs see it from a rights perspective in one way or another. The study found that the manner in which poverty is perceived indeed plays a key role in determining the focus of poverty alleviation programs. Overtime, conceptions of poverty among participating NGOs have changed significantly, resulting in the change from direct intervention to advocacy activities or a combination of both. The changes in perception of solutions to the problem of poverty have resulted from their experiences (ISODEC, ProNet-North and Village Aid-interviews). NGOs expanded their services to cover other areas that were not initially a

part of their mandate. It is unclear from this study whether these changes are tied to the changing notions of poverty by international funding organizations.

One significant development in this sector is the introduction of advocacy as a major aspect of their campaign against poverty. In line with this, ProNet-North, Simli-Aid and ISODEC have incorporated educational campaigning into their programs. They educate people about their rights to basic services and the need to strongly demand these from the state. According to executive officers of these NGOs, the government's primary responsibility is to ensure the welfare of Ghanaians. Therefore, people's basic human rights to services such as water, healthcare and food should be the unfailing responsibility of the state. Also, the executive director of ProNet-North admitted that in recent times, funding for NGOs has been limited especially with the introduction of the Multi-Donor Budgetary Support (MDBS) where donors no longer carry out their own projects but channel financial resources to the government for various projects. This, according to him, calls for civil society to be the watchdogs of government in order to ensure accountability from government. Since the MDBS has limited funding for NGOs, it is possible that their change in focus is a response to donor calls for good governance on the part of the state. In other words, donors are investing some money in campaigns to ensure good governance from government and NGOs are probably changing their focus to be able to tap into this new available source of funding. Advocacy is also seen as a tool of empowerment and provides the opportunity for self-representation. This is evident from the policy of Village Aid, where one official stated in an interview for this study that, "...we've taken the stance that we want our African people, friends and partners to speak for themselves; we try and give them a voice in Europe" (Village Aid, August, 2006).

This gives credence to Clarke's (1998) assertion that NGOs have become "important political actors in the developing world" (p.37).

This new level of engagement with and in the political process has seen gains in various areas. ISODEC has succeeded in influencing and changing various government policies. ISODEC has formed various coalitions to advocate for poor friendly policies from the state. For instance, the Centre for Budget Advocacy conducts research on budgetary issues and campaigns for equity in budgetary allocations. This centre also carries out educational campaigns to encourage people to monitor government in its implementation of financial policies. More significantly, ISODEC's free basic education campaign pressurized government to introduce the capitation grant program which has increased primary school enrollment from 3.7 million to about 4.3 million (ISODEC, 2006). This campaign was premised on a constitutional provision for free universal basic education in the 1992 constitution of Ghana. However, the introduction of user fees for education constituted a barrier to this goal. As such, ISODEC campaigned for the abolishing of user fees and succeeded in obtaining the capitation grant. As well, advocacy has so far proven effective in reaching major goals in poverty alleviation in the world. Recent campaigns aimed at eradicating poverty have played a huge role in debt cancellation efforts by major power brokers of the world. However, such advocacy is still hinged on purely redistributive approaches.

Furthermore, this shift may be a conscious effort by NGOs to pull away from communities and disengage with them as more and more NGOs gradually become 'for-profit' organizations. This is still on the small scale, but interview data suggest that income generated by NGOs themselves is hardly used for poverty alleviation programs.

NGOs then, depend on benevolence to show benevolence to rural communities that they work in. This also suggests that goodwill is the only commodity that can be provided free of charge. State-funded programs while not free (since people pay taxes), would be more dependable in this regard.

During interviews, there was a consensus that the state is interested in "...visible schemes, infrastructural schemes, like good roads or something that actually can be seen to bring the country to the level that looks more European or American" (Village Aid, August, 2006). Also, as the executive director of ProNet-North puts it, "the government looks at the economic, the government looks at infrastructure, and the government doesn't look at the social" (ProNet-North, September, 2006). This observation was confirmed in part by the planning officer at the NDPC who spoke of the various 'obvious and visible benefits of HIPC funds' (personal communication). This preoccupation with visible structures serves a number of purposes: first, it provides evidence of government's use of donor funds, and helps political parties campaign effectively for office during elections.<sup>26</sup> Political parties usually speak of 'development accomplishments' by pointing to visible structures. This in a way is also tied to the perception of corruption in the country. Since it is probably difficult for government to give evidence of qualitative human development activities and proof for example that 'x' amount of money went into organizing a council of elders meeting to think through developmental activities, the money is better spent actually providing a structure for which accounts are easily made. Huge posters and signs advertising HIPC projects are spotted on major roads in the country. What is important in these analyses is how such infrastructural schemes benefit the poor, the majority of whom are women.

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<sup>26</sup> References are often made to development projects during campaigns for elections by political parties.

## **Gender Focus of Poverty Alleviation Programs**

Poverty in Ghana is clearly gendered, with a disproportionate number of females being poor as compared to their male counterparts (NDPC, 2005). Awumbila (2004) stresses that, 'poverty is experienced differently by men and women. As a result of their different opportunities, constraints, options and needs, women and men frequently have different priorities and are affected differently by many kinds of situations and development interventions' (p.10). She further affirms that women in Ghana experience greater poverty than their male counterparts due to 'limited opportunities, capabilities and empowerment in terms of access to and control over production resources including land and 'social capital assets such as participation at various levels, legal rights and protection' (ibid). This observation is corroborated by all interviewees in this study. They agreed that experiencing greater poverty consequently results in greater powerlessness and marginalization for women. Numerous studies rightly support the fact that women suffer more from poverty and bad economic policies than their male counterparts (Bezanson and Luxton, 2006; Elson, 1998; Awumbila, 2004). Analyzing the negative impact of SAPs on women, Jochnick (2006) asserts that "these policies have been particularly devastating to vulnerable sectors of the population such as the poor, women and children" (p.5). Similarly, Fall's (2006) study on the negative impacts of IFI's economic policies on women in Senegal and Sierra Leone reveals a lack of recognition of the status of women in these countries through insensitive economic programs. As she points out, "policy makers are not seriously concerned with the elimination of gender imbalances in access to and control over resources" (p. 2).

Discussing how indebtedness of African countries affects African women, Dube (1999) recounts a Swetswana myth in which a hen borrowed a needle from a hawk and lost it in the process of sewing. Refusing to accept the hen's apology for losing the needle, the hawk warns her that he would continue to eat her chicks until the needle is found. Since then, the cock has joined the hen in search of the needle but constantly looks up as in a plea to the hawk that the needle is lost. The hen has to this day continued to scratch with feet and peck with her beak in a desperate search for the needle since the hawk is still eating the chicks despite the cock's plea. Using this story, Dube explains that African men and women, despite their differences both face a higher enemy which flies high above them: their former colonizers. Dube contends that the African woman fights for "basic survival needs such as food and shelter to keep ... her family going" (Dube, 1999, p. 2).

In relation to this study, Dube's analyses can be broadened to include the following: first, the 'hawk' in this parable can be seen as referring to the IMF and World Bank. For example, through conditions placed on loans, the IMF continuously 'denies' social services to Ghana which is still 'pleading' as in the case of the cock, for debt forgiveness. On the other hand, Ghanaian women are engaged in activities that sustain life through their search for solutions to present problems. Secondly, dependency on donor financial institutions results in abuse, i.e., constant reminders of debt and threats to cut down on 'development funding' (similar to the hawk's threat of picking up chicks). As the government of Ghana, male-led and dominated, (exemplified by the cock) continues to concern itself with fulfilling debt conditions by actually cutting back on social services, women (hens) are left to perform 'magic' to fend for their families.



It is not out of place to argue that women in Ghana suffer the double agony of systemic oppression. Not only is their source of oppression from controlling donor countries, but from the government of the country because of the lack of clear institutionalized policies supporting their (women) development and emancipation within a profoundly patriarchal system (or the lack of enforcement of such policies where they exist).

In response to this, NGOs in Ghana have broadened their programs to include special programs for women even if they did not start out with a clear gender focus. For instance, ProNet-North did not start out clearly with a gender focus, but ended up taking on gender issues because during their activities, they realized that many girl-children were not in school in their beneficiary communities. They therefore devised a strategy to encourage girl-child education through an incentive program which has been successful so far. Similarly, according to the program officer of SL,

when we started our operations in the north,<sup>27</sup> we realized that women basically do everything. They go to the farm, they go to the market, they work at home and we realized even though they work very hard they become poor because they sacrifice all their resources educating their children...(SL, August, 2006).

NGOs have made significant progress in this sector, with ProNet-North instituting girl-child sponsorship programs, and ISODEC making a huge contribution to girl-child education through the implementation of their girl child scholarship program known as Girl Child Education Project (GCEP) which has provided educational scholarships from basic to tertiary education to over six-thousand (6000) girls presently (ISODEC, October, 2006). As far as incorporating gender programs are concerned, NGOs are dynamic in

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<sup>27</sup> Interviewee was referring to the northern sector of Ghana

quickly adapting to changing situations or at identifying problems as they observe them during implementation of other programs.

SL now provides health services to women because they realized that poverty affects women's health more than men's health. This focus on poor women's health is also the focus of ISODEC's programs on gender poverty alleviation where they focus on women's reproductive health-again, seeing it from the human rights perspective-. Their advocacy for the supply of anti-retroviral drugs is expected to be more beneficial to women.

This notwithstanding, this targeting of women in poverty alleviation programs unintentionally further marginalizes them since they are singled out as a needy special category that needs help. While this is in fact the case, care must be taken not to cast them as objects of pity. Their subjectivity should be acknowledged. It is imperative that these special programs be incorporated into mainstream planning and execution of poverty alleviation programs, not merely added (Elson, 1998). Indeed, a transformative solution is required for this.

One significant issue observed during interviews, is the difference between male headed and female headed NGOs in terms of their approach to the gendered dimension of poverty in Ghana. I observed during interviews that all interviewees, with the exception of the only female interviewed, talked about poverty mainly in gender neutral terms. In their discussions, they referred to the case of women as a special category and only later on in their discussions. The official from Village Aid, started discussions from a gendered perspective and defined poverty in relation to powerlessness and marginalization of women. This was without prompting. She expressed a lot of empathy

for women in poor rural areas. For instance she states, “I think if you’re really poor you have no chances in your life and you have no choice about how many children you have...I mean I talked to one lady in Ghana...” (Village Aid, August, 2006). She goes on to recount a story of a woman from one of the villages in Ghana who had six children and wished that she would stop having children. It is important to note that this official acknowledged that “I don’t know whether our whole organization will agree on this [her definition]” (Village Aid, August, 2006). This speaks volumes of the influence of people in decision-making positions on poverty alleviation policies. The focus of Village Aid on gender empowerment is an example in this case.

What the study demonstrates quite clearly is that the manner in which poverty is conceptualized has a direct bearing on the policies and programs for its alleviation. Deducing from this, it is appropriate to posit that leadership affects programs for poverty alleviation in Ghana. Female-headed NGOs are more likely to pay more attention to the gendered dimension of poverty than male-headed organizations. With participants in this study acknowledging and designing programs in recognition of the special circumstances of women, it is clear that a conscious effort is at least made in recognizing women’s disadvantaged positions. It is very likely that the recent injection of money into women’s empowerment programs, by external donor organizations, in poor communities is the reason for the shifting focus to women by LNGOs. However, at the moment, with no strong evidence to support this, it is comforting to see the efforts that NGOs are making in addressing this issue.

Even though it is undeniable that women empowerment is needed in poverty alleviation programs and the efforts of NGOs are commendable in recognizing this need,

it is important to note that without cultural recognition and proper communicative ethics (Habermas, 1987; Butz, 1993) in the planning of these programs, these intended beneficiaries may in fact become victims of unintended imperialism from NGOs. Village Aid and Simli Aid's gender empowerment programs need to be critically evaluated for such cases of unintended consequences.

The following story provides a clear example of the lack of recognition of difference in intervention strategies. A legend is told of a flood in the animal kingdom. Monkeys in the kingdom were quite unaffected by the flood. As they swung happily on treetops, they noticed fishes submerged in the water. Thinking that the fishes were trapped, the monkeys rushed down from their privileged positions (tree tops) to help the fishes. They lifted the fishes out of the water (their natural habitat) and placed them gently on dry ground. As the fishes, now gasping for breath wriggled about on dry land, the monkeys were quite pleased with their work of 'saving the poor fishes'. They misinterpreted the wriggling to mean dances for joy. In a few moments, however, the fishes dead, lay motionless. After a while, the monkeys got angry at the 'show of ingratitude' by the fishes and said among themselves 'look at those ungrateful fishes, not even a word of thanks for saving them'!<sup>28</sup>

An analogy can be drawn between this story and some of the gender-development programs that some western NGOs implement to help Ghanaian rural women. In other words if value systems are imposed from outside without proper communication and negotiation, women may be worse off at the end of the process. The focus on individual women's liberation, perhaps instead of modeling that to fit into community dynamics has

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<sup>28</sup> This story is an African Oral Tradition

the potential of breaking the social vitality (Butz, 1993) of these communities, leading to a breakdown also in political validity of women.<sup>29</sup> Since most of these women do not have any strong economic viability as interpreted by macro-economic experts, they rely on social support networks, and social capital for their livelihoods. The extended family has been a good cushion to most people, most especially women in times of difficulty. Food and medical bills are shared and the effects of poverty are seemingly less devastating. In a way, western feminist emphasis on individuation isolates and alienates the individual woman in all spheres of life. As demonstrated in the interview with the official from Village Aid, her show of empathy and pity for rural women may not have been understood in the context of the daily struggles these women face. The pity that her encounter with women from beneficiary communities evoked may have resulted from her lived experiences and world view which may not reflect the situation of these women.

According to Butz (1993), Western development agencies sometimes fail to take the interconnectedness of the social structure into consideration in making decisions for interventions. I think it is usually the unintended consequences of some of these developmental projects that destroy the community (in this case, women) and not the intended consequences. Indeed through proper communicative action,<sup>30</sup> shared meanings and understanding of issues would be arrived at by both development advocates and beneficiaries. Overall, it is important to note that even though poverty disadvantages women more than their male counterparts, poverty is not the root cause of gender

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<sup>29</sup> This refers generally to social cohesion and social networks that give people a sense of self-determination and worth (David Butz, 1993).

<sup>30</sup> Used by Habermas, communicative action generally refers to a process of negotiation between policy makers/implementers and beneficiaries for shared meaning in order to avoid a colonization of the life world through the process of modernization. In other words, applied to social justice, Habermas advocates justice through a deontological process (locating justice in the process not outcome).

inequality and marginalization in many culturally patriarchal societies. In other words, gender friendly poverty alleviation programs may not necessarily lead to gender equity or stem women's subordination (Jackson, 1998). However, unfriendly gender poverty alleviation programs may exacerbate the situation.

### **Internal Politics and Hindrances to Development and Poverty Alleviation**

It is worthy of mention that certain internal problems in developing countries constitute hindrances to successful poverty alleviation. These include civil wars, and cases of corruption and misappropriation of development funds. In Ghana, misappropriation of national financial resources can be blamed for the increasing impoverishment of people particularly in the northern sector of the country. This was acknowledged by interviewees. In personal communication with a planning officer of Ghana's NDPC, he alluded to the fact that stringent conditions and policies from IFIs on loans are not entirely misplaced in checking corruption among government officials (NDPC, Personal Communication, October 2006). Irrespective of the causes of these problems in developing countries, which no doubt requires critical examination, they have hindered the progress of many strategies aimed at improving the economic situations of these countries which in some way would have provided the leverage for recognition on the bigger world stage.

Recently, the government of Ghana spent US\$20 million<sup>31</sup> for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of Ghana's independence from British Colonial rule. This, in my opinion, is extravagance that is not only unnecessary, but consolidates the notion that Africans cannot handle development funds responsibly. This amount could be used at the

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<sup>31</sup> Reported in Ghanaian news media

very least for debt servicing in a bid to free Ghana from debt and external control and dependency. This amount could also be channeled into more productive ventures to generate jobs and incomes for the rural poor. In fact, Ghana is currently experiencing severe electricity crises (Ghana web News Editorial, 2007). This has negatively affected the economy. Ironically, media reports on President Kuffuor's recent visit to the UK reports the president as saying that "failure of the west to help poor countries to fight poverty is enough justification for many youth to attempt to migrate to Europe, even at the cost of their lives" (Public Agenda, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2007). The president is also reported to have said that "their fight against corruption will backfire unless they help poor countries to improve the quality of life of their people" (Public Agenda, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2007).

## **Conclusion: Hope for Sustainable Poverty Alleviation**

A story<sup>32</sup> is told of an orange seller on the streets of a poor country who was barely able to make ends meet. On a particularly bad sales day, a very wealthy man walked up to this petty trader and inquired about the price of one orange. Realizing how cheap these oranges were, he got interested in finding out how the woman made ends meet at all. Out of pity, he offered to buy everything the trader had on sale and immediately counted money for clearing out the trader's stall. Surprisingly, the trader vehemently refused to sell all her wares. Asked why, she responded calmly "if I sell them all today, what will I do tomorrow?" Shocked, the rich man said "you can buy some more and expand your stall". Again the woman responded "what if another rich man doesn't come my way tomorrow?" The moral in this story can be applied to the situation that many poor people find themselves today. Money is important and in fact may be the only reason why many people work hard on their farms everyday. However, money does not give anybody a livelihood. Livelihoods rather give money to people. Livelihoods define identity to a certain degree and people derive a sense of meaning of life from engaging in familiar daily practices that give them a sense of achievement, accomplishment and control. In the story, one of the reasons why the orange seller refuses to let go of all her wares is because that will amount to a lack of control over her sales.

The foregoing study has explored poverty alleviation programs in Ghana in order to find out what the nature and focus of these programs have been and why, despite various programs implemented for poverty alleviation/reduction in the country, the country still continues to experience poverty. My arguments are premised on the fact that there's a disconnect between what poverty alleviation programs are focused on and what

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<sup>32</sup> This story is an African oral traditional parable



is actually needed to provide a transformative solution to the problem. In other words, the over-emphasis on the economic aspect of the problem, without adequate attention paid to issues of recognition, have resulted in a situation where poverty is not holistically tackled, creating a situation of dependency for many poor people and nations. This study has therefore looked at the ways in which these various programs have resulted in dependency both for Ghana as a sovereign state, and poor people in Ghana, by engaging in a comparative study and analyses of state implemented and NGO implemented programs and policies. Findings from the study reveal significant issues worth exploring in further research as well as point to the complex nature of poverty and poverty alleviation programs in Ghana.

At the beginning of the study, I was highly critical of poverty alleviation programs by both state and NGOs. This research has, however, compelled me to reconsider some original arguments on the nature of these programs, seeing more hope in programs of NGOs, but none-the less still critical of how these programs provide only temporary relief to communities. This study has indicated clearly that the way forward for poverty alleviation is through politics in one way or another. I started by theorizing that NGOs were consistently de-politicizing poverty through their activities. This was found to be true to some extent. However, NGOs were also found to be actively involved in the political process, by being involved in advocacy and actually working in partnership with the government, and best of all, working vigorously to send poverty back to the political realm.

This study also found the activities of NGOs in poverty alleviation crucial and inevitable to the development of the country. However, their programs, in one way or

another, are pre-planned. There also appears to be cases of pseudo-participation by beneficiaries in their programs, more so for these organizations to satisfy donor requests for such participation or to use the little participation to advance their agendas. However, it is not clear if these issues are unintended consequences of well-intended actions. To this end, funds received from governments and major institutions particularly from the West need to be scrutinized for political and ideological underpinnings. Funds from well-meaning individuals are probably stripped of any such ideological underpinnings. Further research on the actual motivation for the offer of assistance to developing countries would provide insights into whether or not there are political or ideological motivations for such support or if these simply arise from long periods of providing support. Donor-fatigue or increased pressure on donors to provide funding could contribute to donors providing prescriptions on how to wean receiving institutions from them. For instance, Village Aid has “tried to engage with [their] partners on ways of income generating” (Village Aid, August, 2006). Such research will also critically examine how religious NGOs through programs and activities, promote their faith sometimes to the detriment of local beliefs and practices, disturbing the socio-cultural balance of the community. This is particularly important in the case of Africa, since many traditional beliefs hitherto were seen as antithetical to western style development.

NGOs have become an important part of community life in Ghana because they constitute an important source of social capital for rural communities. By helping rural people with resources for their strategic daily survival needs, NGOs tend to localize solutions for poverty. To this extent, extensive research needs to be done on how localizing solutions for poverty affects chances for transformative solutions and

providing false hopes of development to rural communities. In addition, further research is needed on how rural communities can use the social capital provided by NGOs as a bridge for getting ahead, not just getting by (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000) as seems to be the case at present.

In addition, further research is needed on how small developing countries such as Ghana, which are not strategically positioned to any major power, can assert themselves politically on the world stage and make their voices count despite their weakened economic and political positions. In the international political economy, power is seen to be vested in the resources that a country has or can dispense. Perhaps, an answer lies in regional networks such as ECOWAS, which may provide the lobbying strength for poor countries on the world stage, instead of relying on bilateral negotiation mechanisms. Perhaps, this is where the State Empowerment Strategy will be beneficial in providing the much needed space for such negotiations.

It is evident from the study that for any transformative solution to poverty to be found, all programs and strategies need to incorporate fully, both economic redistribution and recognition. Moreover, poverty reduction or alleviation is about sustaining chosen livelihoods of people. To this extent, many NGOs operating in the country have identified the need to push for the institutionalization of their intervention policies and programs by advocating state involvement in areas that used to be their domain.

Second, the study discovered that NGOs have evolved over time and become major stake holders in poverty alleviation debates in the country. Thus, contrary to the perception that NGOs merely localize and de-politicize poverty, this study found that NGOs in Ghana are actively involved in the political process in one way or another and

are fighting vehemently to re-orient poverty back to the domain of politics. NGOs have implemented programs aimed at drawing the attention of policy makers in governments to the effects of policies on the lives of the poor, particularly in deprived areas of the country. NGOs have thus become a strong force to contend with as far as advocacy is concerned. There are several success stories in this sector, the most outstanding being the ability of ISODEC to compel government to reconsider IMF/World Bank sanctioned cost sharing policy for water for rural communities. This organization has also been able to push for the implementation of the capitation grant for basic education in the country. As indicated by interviewees during the study, NGOs have become watchdogs over government policies.

Furthermore, this study revealed that NGOs are changing the focus and direction of their services from direct intervention to advocacy. It is fairly safe to predict that in the very near future, most NGOs will completely shift focus to advocacy and research on social challenges confronting the country. Similarly, the study found that the rights appeal in poverty alleviation is used effectively by NGOs and has a very strong appeal. Perhaps, government can also make use of it in its dealings with the WB and IMF. The method of naming and shaming could also be effective in ensuring that governments provide economic, social and cultural rights to people.

The above notwithstanding, NGOs, especially through their services also perhaps inadvertently encourage dependency on their services just like the IFIs. This was admitted by interviewees in this study. It is clear that for NGOs to become a really powerful force both locally and internationally, there is the need for coalition building

within and between NGOs and the state. This has already been initiated by some NGOs for joint projects in the water and educational sectors.

Overall, this study has unearthed some of the complex issues regarding poverty alleviation in Ghana. For instance, even though it is clear that the GPRS is heavily influenced by the IMF/World Bank, the government of Ghana presents and defends it as its own. While this could be an attempt to present the country as a truly politically independent state, it could also imply that the state has particular ideological leanings to the policies that IFIs articulate. In addition, poverty reduction<sup>33</sup> could potentially be more transformative than poverty alleviation since the latter can be seen to imply temporary solutions to the problem. Poverty reduction on the other hand, appears to be focused on setting the stage for long lasting solutions to poverty in Ghana.

This presents a complex case of the creative tensions between redistribution and recognition for bivalent categories (Fraser, 1995). Will redistribution not open up the way for recognition? Recognition, especially in this case, opens up space for economic redistribution. In other words, even if simplistically employed, recognition leads to policies for economic redistribution. Alternatively, redistributive policies already embed recognition. The mere fact that there are redistributive programs could imply that there is at least a recognition of a category or group that requires some attention. Perhaps then the complexities arise in the manner in which these redistributive programs are carried out. So if recognition precedes and generates redistribution, then, recognition of the fluid

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<sup>33</sup> Note that throughout the study I use the terms poverty alleviation and poverty reduction interchangeably. This as explained earlier is partly due to their interchangeable use in policy documents and by interviewees who primarily see any distinction as a theoretical one. I have therefore treated the distinction of these two terms as theoretical but acknowledging and marking a difference between poverty alleviation/reduction and poverty eradication. In this particular section, I am engaging in a theoretical argument on the analytical distinction of these two terms.

nature or changing needs of the group involved needs to be constantly redefined. In other words, it ought to be a changing rather than stagnant issue. Or rather, the definition of recognition then evolves to include complex issues within recognition itself. In the light of this and the evidence from this case study, bivalent categories are seen to be interwoven through and within redistributive approaches. For instance, if transformative solutions can be found in redistributive programs, then is redistribution by itself not sufficient? In other words, going back to Fraser's (1995) theorizing, redistribution in this case embeds recognition if it offers a transformative solution. In this case study, poverty reduction programs carried out by the state, if taken in the context for providing infrastructure that will eventually provide the means for institutionalizing poverty alleviation in Ghana, are transformative in a sense. This transformative solution, however, simplistically assumes that no external influences and pressures act on the country's economic and political processes. The problem here is that, the international system does not undergo the corresponding change to complete the process. Here then, the argument for redistribution and recognition to be pursued in tandem will have everything to do with looking closely at the multi-tier segments of the programs or the players or power-brokers involved in any case of injustice. Here, an argument worth pursuing arises. If initiatives such as HIPC are set up at the international level, by the international community, for poverty alleviation, then there is, arguably, a component of recognition. However, such recognition has the potential to further marginalize the poor since it does not translate into actual recognizable political participation and self-representation. I think that to a large degree, recognition is embedded in and derived from redistribution, however, it is important that such recognition translates into the ability of

the poor to participate actively, politically and socio-economically in decisions affecting their lives.

Finally, findings from this study support the fact that policy makers seem to be paying more attention to economic redistribution than recognition. Given that redistribution is an important aspect of poverty alleviation, redistributive activities need to be transformative both locally and internationally. The means to the end is as important as the end product. Thus, the process of arriving even at redistributive approaches requires recognition to be effective. Such redistributive programs still need to go beyond 'diplomatic or pseudo representation' by actually incorporating the views of beneficiary states or communities.

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DATE: August 28, 2006

FROM: Linda Rose-Krasnor, Chair  
Research Ethics Board (REB)

TO: Kate Bezanson, Sociology  
Sylvia Bawa

FILE: 06-018 BAWA

TITLE: The Politics of Poverty Alleviation in Ghana; Affirmative NGO Solutions Versus Transformative Political Solutions

The Brock University Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above research proposal.

**DECISION: Accepted as clarified.**

This project has received ethics clearance for the period of August 28, 2006 to December 31, 2006 subject to full REB ratification at the Research Ethics Board's next scheduled meeting. The clearance period may be extended upon request. ***The study may now proceed.***

Please note that the Research Ethics Board (REB) requires that you adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and cleared by the REB. During the course of research no deviations from, or changes to, the protocol, recruitment, or consent form may be initiated without prior written clearance from the REB. The Board must provide clearance for any modifications before they can be implemented. If you wish to modify your research project, please refer to <http://www.brocku.ca/researchservices/forms> to complete the appropriate form **Revision or Modification to an Ongoing Application.**

Adverse or unexpected events must be reported to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants and the continuation of the protocol.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and clearance of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored. A Final Report is required for all projects upon completion of the project. Researchers with projects lasting more than one year are required to submit a Continuing Review Report annually. The Office of Research Services will contact you when this form ***Continuing Review/Final Report*** is required.

Please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence.

LRK/bb

Brenda Brewster, Research Ethics Assistant  
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## Appendix A: Interview Guide

### Interview Guide

#### **\*\* Name and position with organization**

1. ***PI1.* Could you give me an overview of your organization? I.e. what is your purpose, mission, and a little bit of history of the organization.**
2. ***PI2.*What services do you render to communities you are involved in?**
3. ***PI3.*How do you decide on the communities? What basis/criteria are used in selecting communities as beneficiaries?**
4. ***PI4.*What is your organization's conception of poverty/how does your organization define poverty?**
5. ***PI5.*What approach does your organization take to poverty alleviation and why?**
6. **What are your responses to government's poverty alleviation programs?**
7. **Has the GPRS, in your experience been helpful to Ghana?**
8. ***PI6.* How do you sustain your programs?**
9. ***PI6.* Do you pay equal attention to economic and non-economic issues in designing your poverty alleviation programs?**
10. ***PI7.* Is this approach the same as what the government takes?**
11. ***PI8.* Does the state/Government provide the same services as you?**
12. ***PI9.*Do you work in partnership with the government?**
13. ***PI10.*How are you funded?**
14. ***PI12.*Does your funding dictate sustainability of programs?**
15. ***PI13.*Are your programs short-term or long term?**
16. ***PI14.*Are you a charitable organization?**