THE ROLES OF NON-STATE ACTORS IN AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN GHANA

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INTRODUCTION

Non-state actors play a vital role in development nationally and globally, especially in the current globalised and multipolar world. The globe was controlled by sovereign nations until the start of the twenty-first century. Non-state actors, including the World Bank, Fitch Rating Inc., Bloomberg, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Transparency International, now dominate international headlines as often as governments in many states do and are frequently able to dramatically impact state decision-making mechanisms (Wijning et al., 2014). One major example of non-state entities is non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which are very contemporarily prevalent to change the current day problems in their developmental pursuit across the world. They exist within local, national, and international settings.

It was noted in a manuscript authored by Betsill and Corell (2008) that sovereign states with limited resources, bad governance, as well as endemic forms of corruption have failed to bring development to all their population across the developing nations. They further submitted that alternative modes of development have been attempted in this context. Since the 1980s, NGOs have been extensively championed as a method of bridging the gap between people's wants and existing services. Menashy (2016) observed that when states are unable to offer enough products, services, or enabling conditions to assist people in securing their livelihoods, or when underprivileged groups are alienated from existing state institutions, NGOs come in to bridge that gap and shelter some of these necessities.

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NGOs have five major features, even though they work on a range of subjects and are motivated by a range of motivating factors. They are formal in the sense that they have some management structure and permanency, are institutionally independent of the government, and are non-profit in the sense that surpluses are not distributed to the organisation's owners or directors. Furthermore, they are autonomous and voluntary, such as in the manner of a stakeholder board (Lewis and Kanji, 2009).

In Ghana and, by extension, Africa, NGOs are not a new phenomenon. Our governance, economy, culture and social tradition, education and health, as well as agriculture, have all benefited from the efforts of NGOs. The importance of establishing authorised organisations, as well as their participation and involvement in rural and national development, is now widely acknowledged. They have grown in number in recent years, launching a slew of new initiatives in the field of socio-economic development. According to Fowler (2003), NGOs are seen as part of civil society, which is defined as "the third sector in relation to the state and the market" and, therefore, as "a counterbalance to state power by unlocking avenues of communication and involvement" (Hulme and Edwards, 1997). They are also seen as bridging the gap between the state and the market by offering relevant and needed developmental services to individuals who are unable to access them (Clark, 2006).

Bebbington et al. (2007) clarified that NGOs are only non-state actors in any politically important context if they provide options to dominant development models, activities, and ideologies. It is critical that NGOs utilise their impact on society to influence agendas and debating processes in ways that endure to the benefit of the impoverished and underprivileged (Hulme and Edwards, 1992). Scholars have typically come up with three categories in terms of the distinct functions NGOs are believed to have as development agents. They serve as "implementer(s)", "catalyst(s)," and "partner(s)," according to Lewis and Kanji (2009). They serve as implementers, mobilising resources to give products and services to those in need. As a result, the government or funders frequently hire NGOs to provide these services (Hulme and Ibrahim, 2010).

As previously stated, NGOs are seen as presenting alternatives to contemporary development practices via advocating on matters of diverse scales. As a result, they use external pressure and dissent to try to reform institutions, but they also work within these organisations to develop more suitable and successful policies (Hulme and Edwards, 1992). Lewis and Kanji (2009) submitted that NGOs serve as catalysts because of their capacity to stimulate, facilitate, or make meaningful contributions to thinking and action geared towards promoting change.

NGOs are also seen as key partners by governments, funding agencies, and the corporate sector (Hulme and Ibrahim, 2010), and they have strengthened their relationships with one another on a local, national, and global level. International NGOs (INGOs), Southern NGOs (SNGOs), and Grassroots Organisations (GROs) frequently collaborate, "exchanging resources, services help, as well as staff personnel, or conducting projects jointly" for development initiatives (Kang, 2010). Dhillon and Hansra (1995) stipulated that NGOs establish their root systems in the community and can successfully respond to the community's needs and ambitions.

They have established themselves on a local, national, and even global level. Several of them have initiated and spearheaded work in places that have been overlooked by the national development planning process (Anandharajakumar, 1995).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

NGOs have been instrumental in global development efforts for decades, with their significance becoming increasingly pronounced since the United Nations (UN) set forth the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These 17 goals, established by the UN General Assembly, aim to address critical issues such as poverty, hunger, education, gender equality, environmental sustainability, and healthcare by 2030, succeeding the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Sachs, 2012; Karver et al., 2013).

Considering these ambitious objectives, individual countries face significant challenges in mobilising the necessary resources and capacity to achieve them, particularly in developing regions like Africa. Governments in such areas often struggle due to financial constraints and limited capabilities. Therefore, the involvement of NGOs becomes crucial, as they serve as vital non-state actors capable of mobilising funds and expertise to address these pressing issues.

NGOs play a multifaceted role in advancing the SDGs. Firstly, they contribute substantially to raising funds to support various developmental initiatives. Secondly, they often collaborate with governments by participating in committees focused on specific thematic areas such as health, education, gender equality, and environmental protection. In these capacities, NGOs leverage their expertise to provide valuable insights and solutions, complementing governmental efforts.

Overall, NGOs serve as indispensable partners in the pursuit of sustainable development, bridging the gap between government resources and the ambitious goals set forth by the international community. Their contributions extend beyond financial support, encompassing advocacy, capacity-building, and technical assistance, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and inclusivity of development efforts worldwide.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study seeks to critically explore inquiries into the following.

What are the developmental roles played by various NGOs in Ghana? What are the levels and types of NGOs contemporarily operating in Ghana? What are the relevance and impact of the developmental roles played by NGOs in Ghana?

BRIEF METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a descriptive-based qualitative approach for its findings and onward interpretation. The findings were derived from secondary sources coupled with the researcher's own deductions made

in making relevant empirical analyses and conclusions. The study makes a predominant case for Ghana, albeit in the context of Africa, as the research topic reveals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The phenomena of development

Galtung (1996) delineates development as the fulfilment of necessities, beginning with essentials like food, security, and water. His approach underscores the provision of these fundamental needs alongside robust economic growth without incurring any drawbacks for the populace. While Galtung's perspective prioritises meeting people's basic requirements, it tends to overlook the significance of social justice and human rights in fostering sustainable development.

Amartya Sen's concept of development emphasises improving people's capacities and liberties rather than relying just on conventional economic metrics. Sen contends that human choices are expanded with development, allowing people to have meaningful lives. He highlights how crucial social inclusion, political engagement, healthcare, and educational opportunities are to promoting sustainable development. Sen's capability approach stresses the need to enable people to reach their full potential and draws attention to the complex character of human well-being. Sen's view of development pivots from economic growth to human-centred progress by emphasising the expansion of capabilities and freedoms (Sen, 1999).

In contrast, Kusi (2006) views development as encompassing enhanced infrastructure, education, health systems, increased employment opportunities, and effective societal modernisation. This perspective aligns with Galtung's emphasis on fulfilling human needs to drive economic growth. However, it also advocates for local engagement and economic empowerment, which Galtung's viewpoint tends to sideline.

Streeten (1980) characterises development as a concerted effort to combat prevalent societal ills such as starvation, illiteracy, sickness, unemployment, and inequality. By focusing on eliminating these impediments, Streeten (1980) argues that development can be achieved. Although Streeten's emphasis on addressing poverty,

unemployment, and inequality resonates with this study, his approach overlooks strategies for mitigating negative influences and promoting local engagement and economic empowerment.

Todaro and Smith (2012) define development as the alleviation of unemployment, poverty, and inequality within the framework of economic progress. Their perspective underscores the importance of local involvement, social justice, job creation, and the provision of essential services like water, education, health, and food. Kumssa (2002) echoes this sentiment by defining development as a qualitative improvement in people's lives through access to fundamental requirements and services.

This study aligns with Kumssa's perspective, aiming to evaluate the contributions of NGOs to development by addressing people's basic needs and providing essential services such as education, health, water, food, local participation, social justice, and job creation (Kumssa, 2002). By incorporating these diverse viewpoints, the study aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of development and the strategies employed by NGOs in Ghana.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

The term "non-governmental organisation" (NGO) traces its origins back to the establishment of the United Nations (UN) in 1945. According to an article titled "What is a Non-Governmental Organisation," NGOs emerged in response to the UN's need to delineate participation rights for specialised intergovernmental agencies and international private organisations outlined in its Charter (UN, 1945). Consequently, the term "NGO" was coined to refer to a cohort of international non-state organisations granted consultative status in UN activities (UN, 1945).

Prior to the formation of the UN, the term "NGO" was not commonly used. However, NGOs have been active at the international level in Western countries since the 18th century, particularly focusing on national issue-based groups advocating for causes such as the abolition of the slave trade and peace movements. By the turn of the century,

NGOs were increasingly asserting their identities and objectives on both national and international platforms (Charnovitz, 2006).

Charnovitz (2006) notes that following a decline in the activity of the League of Nations after 1935 due to escalating political tensions in Europe, private bodies were not initially recognised in the first draft of the UN Charter. However, during the 1945 San Francisco Conference that established the UN, the United States advocated for changes to this provision. This resulted in the inclusion of measures to formalise the interactions of the League of Nations with private organisations and significantly strengthened the UN's engagement in economic and social issues by elevating the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to a primary institution (Charnovitz 2006).

Consequently, new terms such as "special agencies" and "non-governmental organisations" were coined to delineate ECOSOC's interactions with international organisations, with the term "NGO" gaining common usage in the early 1970s as it provided NGOs with a structured framework for consultation with the UN.

While NGOs have existed in various forms for centuries, they witnessed a surge in prominence on the global development front during the 1980s and 1990s, leading to an increase in their numbers. According to the United Nations, there were approximately 35,000 recognised NGOs by the year 2000 (UN, 2000). Additionally, Riddell (2005) reports that in 2004, NGOs were responsible for approximately $23 billion in total humanitarian funding.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Theoretical Framework plays a crucial role in guiding and legitimising research endeavours. As highlighted by Adom et al. (2018), it serves as the foundation for establishing the credibility of a study while also directing the trajectory of the research. By aligning research findings with theoretical constructs within the field, the Theoretical Framework ensures that the outcomes are both acceptable and meaningful. Moreover, it facilitates the generalisability of research findings. Additionally, the theoretical framework serves to stimulate research

activities and extend knowledge within the field. By offering direction and impetus to the research inquiry, it aids in the exploration of new avenues and the advancement of understanding. Overall, the theoretical framework serves as a guiding framework that not only enhances the validity of research findings but also contributes to the growth and development of knowledge in the respective field (Adom et al., 2018).

The actor-oriented theory

The Actor-Oriented Theory of development intervention traces its roots back to Max Weber's concept of social action (Long, 2004). It emerged as a response to a perceived stagnation in development studies, characterised by an excessive focus on the conditions, contexts, and deterministic forces governing social life, often neglecting the agency of individuals who influence and transform the development landscape (Long, 2001).

Anthropologist Norman Long introduced the actor-oriented paradigm in his study of the Peruvian Land Reform Program conducted between 1969 and 1975 (Long, 2004). According to this theory, the activities and interactions of individual actors and social groups play a pivotal role in shaping both the process and outcomes of development interventions.

Central to the actor-oriented approach is the dynamic interplay between local and foreign actors in development projects, wherein they become embroiled in a web of conflicts over resources, meanings, institutional legitimacy, and control (Long, 2001). Long (2001) describes these interactions as the encounters between "development specialists" (both local and foreign) and the beneficiaries aimed at addressing local development challenges.

In essence, the actor-oriented approach shifts the focus of development intervention towards understanding the actions and interests of development actors and how they influence the processes involved in generating development interventions. It emphasises the importance of recognising and engaging with the agency of individuals and groups in shaping development outcomes (Long, 2004) Top of Form.

DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

The levels and types of non-governmental organisations contemporarily operating in Ghana.

A close examination of the architecture of NGOs reveals that they differ greatly. According to Lewis and Kanji (2009), NGOs are difficult to categorise into simple categories since they reside in the space between states and markets and take numerous organisational configurations. According to Willetts (2002), the most effective way to differentiate between NGOs is to collect precise data on a variety of variables: the number of full-time staff members, number of staff members and annual budget financing provide measures of an NGO's magnitude; opinion poll data on recognition of and support for an NGO or its goals, as well as the frequency of positive mentions in the news media, provide measures of its political strength; and rather subjective data on recognition and support for an NGO or its goals provide measures of its political strength.

Mostashari (2005) divided NGOs into two categories: operational and advocacy. He saw the distinction as a selection among small-scale changes achieved explicitly via initiatives versus large-scale change fostered indirectly via political system influence. Operational NGOs strive to "achieve small-scale change directly through initiatives," whereas advocacy NGOs aim to "achieve large-scale change advocated indirectly through political system influence," according to Willetts (2002).

Implementing projects is the distinguishing function of operational NGOs, according to Willetts (2002), whereas advocacy NGOs are preoccupied with staging rallies or campaigns to protect, advance or support a given cause. As a result, operational NGOs require an efficient headquarters bureaucracy in addition to operational personnel on the ground, whereas advocacy NGOs do not have similar administrative constraints. Operational NGOs concentrate on service delivery and welfare. Advocacy NGOs, sometimes known as campaigning NGOs, work to increase knowledge, understanding, and acceptance via lobbying and activism.

Cousins (1991) divided NGOs into two categories based on their mission and degree of functioning. The form of operations that an NGO engages in is referred to as its orientation (for instance, human rights, environmental, or development work). The extent to which an NGO works, such as local, regional, national, or international, is determined by its degree of operation (Vakil, 1997).

Cousins (1991) identified four sorts of NGOs based on their orientation: charity, service, participatory, and empowering NGOs. The actions of charitable NGOs are aimed at satisfying the needs of people experiencing poverty, including clothing, food distribution and medication, as well as the provision of accommodation, transportation, and schools. NGOs with service orientation take part in activities such as providing family planning, health or education services in which the NGOs design the programs, and people are required to engage in their development and delivery.

Cousins (1991) goes on to say that participatory NGOs are characterised by self-help programs in which local people contribute cash, tools, land, materials, and labour to the project's implementation. The Empowerment of NGOs, on the other hand, focus on helping the impoverished gain a better grasp of the political, social and economic elements that influence their lives, as well as a stronger consciousness of their own potential strength over their lives. Cousins (1991) distinguished between community-based, city-wide, national, and worldwide NGOs depending on their level of operation. These classifications make it easier to determine the scope of NGOs' operations and are more precise in determining the scope of NGOs' activities.

Cornman et al. (2005) divided NGOs into two categories: international and local. Local non-governmental organisations (LNGOs) are owned and controlled by nationals; they are created on local initiative rather than by donors, and they are motivated by a desire to recognise specific felt needs or experiences and discover local answers to development challenges (Turary, 2002; Cornman et al., 2005). Northern NGOs, also known as international NGOs (INGOs), are organisations that get money

from bilateral, multilateral, or private-sector donors and have headquarters located outside of the country (Cornman et al., 2005; Malunga, 2007).

Others have classified NGOs according to their independence, geography, and range of operations (Farrington and Lewis 1993; Paul 2000). Another method to categorise them is by the principal goals and roles they pursue: development NGOs, welfare NGOs, service NGOs, advocacy NGOs, environmental NGOs, human rights NGOs, women's NGOs, as well as religious NGOs (Gallin 1999; Tvedt 1998).

The legal position of NGOs has also been used as a basis for differentiation. Whereas this categorisation can vary depending on the laws and practices of each country, Stillman (2007) divided NGOs into four main family groups based on their legal status: organisations created or licensed under specific NGO or non-profit regulations, including voluntary and unincorporated trusts, associations, foundations, and charities.

The role of non-governmental organisations in Ghana

The roles of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the development process are divided into four categories by Najam (2013): advocate, monitor, innovator, and service provider. As part of a coalition of groups or as a single organisation, NGOs can engage in policymaking processes. It could be formal, government-oriented institutionalised participation or informal, non-government-influenced non-institutionalised participation. For example, In Ghana, several NGOs are crucial in promoting policy change, keeping an eye on government operations, encouraging innovation, and offering vital services to underserved populations (Tshiyoyo, 2019). While the Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) keeps an eye on election procedures and encourages good governance, groups like the Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII) support openness and combat corruption (Darkwa et al., 2006). NGOs like the Ghana Red Cross Society offer essential services in healthcare, disaster relief, and community development, while Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) uses data and research to create evidence-based solutions (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2019). These NGOs collaborate with government agencies, international

partners, and local communities to address social challenges, promote human rights, and drive sustainable development initiatives across Ghana. Through their diverse roles as advocates, monitors, innovators, and service providers, these NGOs contribute significantly to enhancing the well-being of Ghanaians and advancing the country towards a more equitable and prosperous future.

This study expands on the use of job creation and local participation as part of NGOs' role in providing basic needs. According to the UNDP (2007), non-governmental organisations have primarily taken on the job of filling the gap, that is, taking measures to improve basic education where the government lacks the capacity to do so or does not perceive it as a concern. Some academics attribute this function to the structural adjustment programs of the 1980s and 1990s, alleging that they led to the disengagement of most African governments from their duty as suppliers of "non-productive" social services such as health and education.

According to Fowler (2000), NGOs' primary mission has been to provide education and health services. Because of their "gap-filling" role and autonomy from the government, they have been able to develop new techniques that can serve as examples for the government and the public sector. In this context, NGOs must keep doing what they do well to serve as a beneficial testing ground for the government. Scaling up successful innovations in collaboration with government, beyond the individual and community level, becomes a capacity development process par excellence; this type of scaling up can become part of education sector reform, involving all levels and actors and including NGOs as policy partners and advisors. With an eye toward adoption by larger and more powerful entities and the building of claimants' capacity, NGOs can become acknowledged innovators in the public good (Fowler 2000). Fowler's perspective on the role of NGOs is like that of the UNDP. Nevertheless, this study agrees with Fowler (2000) and will add local engagement, job creation, food security, and water provision to the mix.

Another role of NGOs, according to Chapman (2002), is to take on capacity development initiatives at differing stages. Within a fragmented

education system, the opportunities for making an influence are numerous and do not have to be limited to a school focus. Partnerships with both local and central governments might be formed or institutionalised. NGOs, he believes, may contribute as policy partners at all levels, adding information and clarity to the creation and implementation of education policies. Engaging with authorities at the community level can help to develop local education, governance and civil society. The latter may be seen as playing a more tangential role than a direct role in capacity building, but it is significant since it can result in increased civil society involvement at the government level. By virtue of the educational element of NGOs' role, Chapman's viewpoint is comparable to Fowler's; however, Fowler's viewpoint appears to be the best for this article because of the emphasis on NGOs in delivering education and health services.

Capacity building, health care delivery, economic empowerment of vulnerable groups, development training, provision of employment opportunities, quality education and social amenities, planning and execution of communicative projects are all examples of the role NGOs play in Ghana.

Challenges of non-governmental organisations in Ghana

Many NGOs in Africa lack well-organised structures in terms of organisational charts, physical infrastructure, and human resources. Lotsmart (2007) suggests that establishing local revenue-generating procedures is essential for local NGOs to attract local funding. However, most local NGOs lack the necessary structures and operational mechanisms, hindering their ability to secure funding systematically. This constraint, exacerbated by limited financial resources, affects their capacity to effectively plan, organise, and equip their offices (Ansah, 2008; Molomo and Somolekae, 1999).

Numerous local NGOs heavily depend on volunteers to carry out their activities, often with limited control over the quality of work they receive. Lekorwe (2007) notes that volunteers often have the freedom to determine their own level of involvement, while some personnel in charge lack adequate training to fulfil their responsibilities. The shortage

of well-trained and experienced human resources restricts the capacity of local NGOs to manage daily operations effectively, plan initiatives, and monitor programs (Lekorwe 2007).

Insufficient quality training or a lack of emphasis on educating local NGO workers affects their ability to attract donations. This deficiency in human resource capacity hampers local NGOs' efforts to raise funds locally and attract high-quality staff, as it requires both skills and motivation, particularly in communities where scepticism towards fundraisers is prevalent (Lekorwe 2007).

Many local NGOs have informal board compositions, often comprising of family or church members. This familial or religious association can lead to an executive director making unilateral decisions, with family members occupying key positions within the organisation. Consequently, local NGOs suffer from a lack of management expertise, technical knowledge, clear objectives, and well-defined organisational structures.

CONCLUSION

Over time, NGOs have emerged to address societal needs, becoming recognised as vital institutions for meeting the demands of both individuals and the nation. Viewed as alternative support mechanisms, NGOs have gained acceptance from governments as partners in various development initiatives.

NGOs have significantly contributed to Ghana's development by investing in educational infrastructure and providing resources like school buildings, textbooks, uniforms, and teacher training. Additionally, they have facilitated healthcare access, empowered women, and engaged in advocacy efforts, particularly in rural areas. These initiatives have positively impacted people's lives across multiple dimensions.

However, some NGO interventions have been criticised for their inefficiency and lack of sustainability. Often, community members were not adequately involved in the planning and execution of these

initiatives, leading to shortcomings in implementation. Moreover, NGOs face challenges that hinder their capacity to operate effectively and contribute to long-term development.

Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort. Effective networking and collaboration among stakeholders, continuous capacity building, sound financial management, and ongoing consultation and advocacy are essential for ensuring the sustainability of community development efforts. Despite the obstacles encountered by NGOs, stakeholders must focus on enhancing their effectiveness in delivering development services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of NGO projects in rural Ghana, community engagement should be prioritised throughout all project phases, including design, execution, monitoring, and evaluation. By involving community members from the outset, projects are perceived as belonging to the community, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for their success and maintenance.

Additionally, NGOs in Ghana should strengthen their partnerships with international allies to secure additional funding, access capacity-building opportunities, and foster collaboration with other development partners. This strategic networking can facilitate easier access to grants and resources, further supporting project sustainability and impact.

Collaboration between NGOs and the Ghanaian government is crucial to prevent project redundancy and ensure equitable distribution of resources. By coordinating efforts, duplication of initiatives can be avoided, and underserved communities can receive the necessary support for sustainable development.

Regular monitoring and evaluation are essential for assessing the impact of NGO programs on Ghana's sustainable development. By continuously evaluating project outcomes and adjusting strategies as

needed, NGOs can optimise their contributions to the country's long-term development goals.

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