Enhancing NGO Management in Ghana: An Alternative Approach

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Abstract

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been widely criticized for failing to transform the lives of poor neighborhoods in Ghana. Critics have variously attributed the failure of most NGO activities in the country to issues of insufficient funding support from external sources, inappropriate donor control, competition among recipient/agent NGOs, and an inability to sustain collective action in beneficiary communities. Naturally, efforts at addressing these challenges have often emphasized a need for external donors to increase funding support, reduce control over NGO activities, and ensure collaboration rather than competition among agent NGOs. However, merely outlining donor weaknesses, and incessantly holding external funders responsible for ineffective NGO operations, seem to suggest that improving the lives of disadvantaged Ghana must be externally initiated and funded. The purpose of this study was to conduct an in-depth investigation into the operations of different types of NGOs in the Upper West Region of Ghana by examining factors that enhance and hinder desired NGO performance in the region. It involved interview of NGO officials, consultants of NGO work, and focus group discussion with beneficiaries of NGO interventions in the region. The study revealed two important options for NGO operators. 1) NGOs may continue to pursue the current strategy of having their projects solely sponsored by foreign philanthropists, if they aim only to develop NGO staff, or 2) NGOs would need to adopt a more participatory management approach if their target is realistic transformation of the beneficiary community, help drastically reduce duplication, waste, and optimize use of donor resources.

Keywords: Organizational leadership, NGO management, strategy, performance management, Ghana

1. Introduction

In recent years, various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have become the face of most African communities. The trust reposed in NGOs working in poor neighborhoods and the funding incentives for these organizations have, over the years, seen a continuous rise in the number of NGOs undertaking similar or different poverty reduction initiatives in different beneficiary communities (AbouAssi, 2012; Anheier & Salamon, 2006; Brown, 2008). In Ghana, particularly in the Northern sector of the country where poverty is considered most prevalent (Takahashi, 2006), it is not clear how many of such NGOs, local and international, are fighting poverty in different capacities. It is also not clear the extent to which poverty levels have reduced in the Northern part of Ghana as a result of NGO interventions. What is probably clear is that most of the northern-Ghana-focused NGOs, some of whom provide duplicate services to beneficiary communities, tend to compete for funding favours from donors rather than realistically achieve envisioned development outcomes for target populations. In most cases, an apparent scramble for funding services has often subsumed the overriding objective of serving target communities. Interestingly, as agent NGOs compete for funding support, so do target communities compete for 'free' money from these agent NGOs, such that there is a kind of vicious cycle of competition for financial favours among groups that ought to be working as development partners. Members of beneficiary communities, both young and old, have openly expressed interest in working with NGOs because of the monetary reward and social recognition attached to the NGO sector. In some target communities, illiterate women, together with their male counterparts, are seen everywhere forming groups and associations because, to them, belonging to such groupings provides access to micro credit from NGOs. It is often not difficult to recognize beneficiary groups, as they are easily seen receiving money or other forms of assistance from project agents, although what actually happens beyond the group formation and 'sharing' of money appears to be a matter only between the agents and their sponsors (Ebrahim, 2005). Project outcome is often hardly visible to beneficiary communities and observers, although paperwork covering such outcomes may detail outstanding achievements. The result of this behaviour by agents of transformation and their target communities is that the job often remains undone since, by the close of most NGO projects, it is the plight of target communities that continues to worsen whereas conditions for the few NGO staff are improved multiple-fold. The impression created here seems to be that NGOs have no alternative to this failing donor-controlled approach. The purpose of this paper is to examine the NGO landscape in the Upper West Region of Ghana with a view to determining alternatives to the current external donor-invaded structure. As discussed in the next section, such an assessment

would be useful in addressing some of the challenges facing effective NGO performance in Ghana, a vital component of most developing economies.

2. NGO Management Debate

In the development discourse of Ghana, ineffective solution efforts in rural communities are often blamed on NGOs, both local and international, although government bodies are sometimes implicated. These NGOs, ubiquitously 'working' to help build self-help capacities in rural Ghana, have been widely criticized for their inability to lead poor communities out of poverty (Porter, 2003). Critics contend that, although NGOs have, over the years, remained the preferred channel for tremendous donor support, the NGO sector has largely failed to achieve socio-economic transformation for beneficiary communities (Moyo, 2009). Several studies have been conducted to examine the factors that facilitate or hinder effective NGO operations in Ghana (see Bawole & Hossain, 2014; Marshall & Suarez, 2013; Lyon, 2003; Porter, 2003, for example). These studies range from nation-wide assessments to sectorial investigations of the benefits and challenges of NGO operations in the country. The findings of such studies have, however, often converged on a certain foreign-donor-led development and the devastating effects of such donor-controlled NGO operations on beneficiaries; researchers hardly examine alternatives to this NGO management style.

Lyon (2003), for example, studied how collective action and donor support interplayed to sustain development projects in rural Ghana and found that local communities had become so addicted to donor support that they were unable to sustain collective action in the absence of foreign donor support. The study, which involved semi-structured interview of more than 100 community group members, revealed that the majority of community groups cease to exist once foreign funding is removed. The researcher lamented the sudden collapse of such community groups as soon as donors leave project site, and attributed such failure primarily to the use of groups as mere "requirements for projects" (p. 330). In the view of the researcher, group activities are useful only when the right resources are available, and in adequate supply, to sustain such activities over a long period of time. The renowned NGO scholar's argument then appears to be two-fold: 1) donors must not start group projects that they cannot sustain, and 2) donors should discontinue attaching strings or policy directives to funding support packages, particularly when such directives are inconsistent with the needs of beneficiary communities and their agents of transformation. It is important to note that the researcher's call on foreign donors to allow poor Ghanaian communities take charge of their own development is well resonated in several other studies.

In a study to determine some of the factors that enhance or hinder the effective delivery of NGO services in Ghana, Porter (2003), for example, raised similar concerns. Unlike Lyon's (2003) study that focused on the sustainability of collective action in the Central and Brong Ahafo regions, Gina Porter carried out a nationwide investigation of the Ghanaian NGO sector using a cross-sectional interview of the staff of 33 NGOs and the conclusions of a discussion at a workshop in Kumasi that brought together NGO staff, members of the academic community, and employees of some donor agencies. Porter's (2003) study, a review of the "precise nature of their [NGOs'] field staffing, participatory approaches and partnership arrangements" (P. 141), presented some very interesting findings. The research revealed, for example, that many NGO programmes, intended to improve the livelihood of poor communities in Ghana, are "being distorted and diverted into less laudable operations and inappropriate approaches, encouraged by externally generated processes operating at various different levels within the country" (p. 133). This, the researcher has argued, is largely due to a kind of 'master-servant' relationship between foreign donors and local agent NGOs in which the former routinely demands ridiculously voluminous reports from the latter. As a result of the 'heavy' paperwork requirement by donors, most NGO staff are often "too busy writing proposals, filling in forms, chasing money, *tracking* rather than *achieving* change" (Porter, 2003:140, citing Mawdsley *et al.*, 2002) to realistically serve the needs of target communities.

As a result, one can say that the value chain of NGO operations in Ghana revolves around a certain ability to please donors with well-crafted field reports that can create wealth and job security for the NGO staff (Belshaw, 2002; Porter, 2003). What this means is that, as long as colourful paperwork is a core requirement for donor support, Ghanaian NGOs would always "see themselves in direct competition with each other […] to the disadvantage of the poor people they aim, at least in theory, to serve" (P. 135). Yet, as the NGO analyst has argued, there is probably no end to these 'damaging consequences' of the donor-NGO partnership in Ghana, as there is no indication that donor control of the Ghanaian NGO sector would stop any time in the foreseeable future. This is probably why NGO activists, such as Fowler (2000a, b), continue to call on donors to endeavor to limit control of NGO activities in the country, a call that creates the impression that the Ghanaian NGO sector is so condemned to this relationship that there cannot be alternative ways of promoting NGO operations in the country. Put differently, must the much needed changes in the relationship between donors and local NGOs be externally initiated? Must the Ghanaian always be at the receiving end of 'othered' initiated development? What donor options are available to NGO operators in Ghana?

This study seeks to examine alternative routes to funding NGO operations in Ghana by exploring the donor potential of the country, for, to be support worthy is to be partially capable (Kpinpuo, 2011). The NGO sector is a huge one and its operations cannot be reduced to a mere external donor and local agent relationship. NGOs differ by orientation and level of operation. By orientation, four types can be identified: charitable NGOs, service provider NGOs, the participatory type, and those that seek to 'empower' beneficiaries (Cousins, 1991; UNEP, 2003). A good understanding of NGO type by orientation is critical for understanding the behavior of funders. For example, charitable NGOs are often 'paternalistic' in nature and would always use a top-down operational structure. It would therefore be interesting for local agents of these charitable organizations to expect an administrative structure that is uncharacteristic of such NGOs. Similarly, for NGOs with service orientation, the task is to design programmes that would facilitate the provision of such services as health and education, also with similar command characteristics as the charitable ones. Beneficiary contribution in these two types is fundamentally non-existent. The third type, which seeks to empower beneficiary communities by creating a certain level of awareness that encourages beneficiaries to take control of their own lives through self-help initiatives, appears a little focused on the beneficiary. The participatory approach to NGO management, the fourth NGO type, actually depends on active involvement of the locals, in that beneficiaries contribute money, materials, equipment, labour and other resource needs to help the NGO work toward achieving set targets.

From the foregoing, it is probably clear that NGOs have different orientations and cannot all behave in like manner toward beneficiaries and their change agents or fieldworkers. While a 'command' approach may be used to sponsor and supervise projects for some NGO types (charitable and service provider), a participatory style of leadership informs the operations of the second set of NGO types. For the purpose of this research, the former group of NGOs will be described as 'authoritarian' and the latter 'democratic'. AbouAssi (2012) refers to the two NGO types as supply-led and demand-driven NGO leadership styles. Uniformity of funder behavior, or rather calls for reduced donor influence and control over local projects, do not seem well aligned with the missions of all NGO types (Edwards, 2008). Perhaps, the Ghanaian NGO sector needs to examine the NGO types for the purpose of determining the one(s) that is/are consistent with beneficiary and agent needs. Interestingly, as discussed above, debates around effective operation of NGOs in Ghana have often tied ineffective outcomes to inappropriate foreign donor behavior, as though all NGOs operating in Ghana are of one type with a set of expected funder, agent, or even beneficiary behavior. This paper examines the NGO landscape of the Upper West Region of Ghana with a view to determining alternatives to the current external donor-invaded structure. The aim is to help explain why the NGO sector in Ghana is faced with the problem of ineffective resource management, perceptibly engendered by donor influence and control, inadequate funding, and competition for funding favours among local NGOs. The paper also serves as advocate for the adoption of self-help strategies by leaders of Ghanaian entities. The next section specifies how these objectives were achieved.

3. Methodology

Primary data for this research were gathered through the conduct of an in-depth investigation into the management options available to NGOs in the Upper West Region of Ghana by examining factors that enhance or hinder desired NGO performance in the region. To do this, 16 interviews, involving 52 respondents, were conducted while reviewing NGO records at the offices of participating organizations as well as from the Upper West Regional Office of the Department of Social Welfare. It involved eight regional executives (directors, project officers, and site supervisors) of NGOs working in the UWR, 40 individual beneficiaries of NGO services, and four consultants working for various NGOs in the region. While face-to-face interviews were used to collect data from the regional executives and the NGO consultants, beneficiaries were made to participate in four focus group discussions of ten members per group. The interviewees ranged between the ages of 25 and 65 years and comprised 33 females and 19 males. The twelve face-to-face interviewees were drawn from the management pool of ten NGOs while the consultant interviewees and focus group discussants were snowballed from NGO leadership and beneficiary communities of the ten selected NGOs respectively. Records kept at the Department of Social Welfare showed that, at the time of this research, there were a total of 46 organizations that had attained NGO status and that was working in the Upper West Region. The list of NGOs also included important information about the organizations, such as their location in the region, postal address, e-mail address, telephone numbers, and the kinds of programs or activities undertaken by the NGOs. This information served both as a sampling framework and a guide for the preparation of the research instruments for this study. As sampling framework, the list was useful in helping to identify ten NGOs whose leaders were interviewed on a face-to-face basis, although two of them had to be contacted and interviewed on phone. The contact information that came with the list of NGOs was also helpful in making preliminary contacts with selected organizations, in sampling (snowballing) the interviewee group of consultants, and in making interview arrangements with subjects. The accompanying NGO activities included in the list, though cursory, provided a premise for the kind of in-depth investigation that characterized this research on options available to NGO operators seeking to

improve performance in the UWR.

As the foregoing description suggests, interviewees were all purposefully selected, as much of the information required to carry out this research could only be provided by certain individuals in top-level NGO management positions, consultants in the NGO sector, and beneficiaries of NGO services. As Maxwell (2005) advised, the purposeful selection of subjects was to enable the researchers gain information on a deliberately chosen setting (Upper West Region), persons (regional executives, consultants, and beneficiaries), and problem (ineffective NGO management).

Once interview files were gathered, Sekaran and Bougie's (2010) steps for effective data categorization were followed, in that the interview files for NGO officials, consultants, and beneficiaries were all transcribed, coded, and categorized under themes that emerged. For ease of reporting, transcripts for interviewee NGO officials were coded RO1, RO2, RO3 … RO8, those for participants of the focus group discussion were coded RF1, RF2, RF3 … RF40, and data from the four consultants were labeled RC1, RC2, RC3, and RC4. Several rounds of listening to, transcribing audio and video files, and reading resulting transcripts resulted in a re-categorization of triangulated data into major themes and sub-themes, as presented in the next section.

4. Findings

The purpose of this research was to examine the donor landscape of Ghana by determining NGO types and the kinds of funding options that are, or that could be, available to such NGO operators in the Upper West Region of Ghana. From the responses provided by all 52 respondents, two major themes emerged: (1) effective NGO service delivery, and (2) major challenges facing NGO activities in the region. Under each of the two themes, a number of important sub-themes were identified. Although several other operational issues were mentioned, such as poor infrastructural service, government interference, and unfavorable weather conditions, the major themes identified and their respective sub-categories are presented below.

4.1 Effective NGO service delivery

Data relating to factors that promote effective NGO service delivery suggest that NGO activities in the UWR are typically supported by external donors and a bit of cooperation from beneficiary community. As the details below show, while respondents lauded external donors for their efforts at getting the region NGO-industrialized, they (respondents) also acknowledged the crucial support of some members of target communities, though beneficiary input was found to be woefully inadequate in many respects.

4.1.1 External donor support

Respondents indicated that NGOs in the Upper West Region are nearly solely supported by external funders. Donor cooperation in terms of funding, provision of logistics, physical and moral support was found to be a key motivator for NGOs in the area. For example, one NGO official (RO8) suggested that their NGO was able to deliver quite efficiently because of the "timely release of funds, provision of logistics and good cooperation from partners [external donors]". For RO3, the success of their organization is attributable to "access to foreign donors who are willing to support the projects of the organization" and the "physical presence of staff from partner organizations [donors] working with them, or demonstrating how to implement projects". NGOs in the UWR believe that "good funding by external donors, such as the USAID" (RO5) is the hallmark of their organizational work. They are also appreciative of the material and physical support given to their field workers because it would be difficult to reach out to beneficiary communities without "logistics such as cars, farm equipment, etc.", along with the technical assistance that comes with such support (RO7). The observation that external sources serve as sole providers or sponsors of NGO work in the UWR was amply supported by all respondents, who were quick to add, however, that donor commitment to funding support is more reliable when it concerns lifesaving operations, and lamented that such interventions are hardly sustainable.

4.1.2 Beneficiary cooperation

A second sub-theme that built on the perceived success of NGOs in the UWR was beneficiary cooperation. Interviewees indicated that beneficiaries have been supportive of NGO activities, which provided NGOs with "extensive familiarity with the local business environment" (RO5). For these NGOs, the ability to familiarize oneself with local business environment, depending on "the length of time used in providing services to clients on site" (RO2), determines their organizations' efficiency. This was confirmed by several of the focus group discussants. For example, RF17 observed that the effectiveness of an NGO resides in the "full participation of [its] beneficiary communities", a confession that was religiously held by all four focus groups. The views of the four consultants interviewed were no different. For instance, stressing the critical role of local participation, RC8 identified "the major problem facing NGO work in Ghana [to be] how to get the communities empowered to take charge of their own development needs". The expert further argued that "if there is a way to place funding responsibility of these NGOs in the hands of local philanthropist, if any, accountability would certainly learn to

grow in this part of the world". Quite paradoxically, however, the kind of beneficiary corporation available to NGOs is only reflected in radically positioning beneficiaries at the receiving end of externally funded NGO operations; beneficiary communities hardly cooperate when it comes to contributing cash, materials, tools, land, and other resources that NGOs may require to deliver effectively. As RO9 rightly observed, "they [beneficiaries] never have anything to contribute …they're just too poor to … you know … do anything like that … that's probably why they're called beneficiaries [laughs]". Contrary to this view, though, beneficiaries have demonstrated, in very isolated cases, a willingness to contribute to NGO success, where possible. Underlining this willingness, RO2 observed that, depending on type and cost of contribution, beneficiaries may cooperate or not. According to this NGO official, for lifesaving services, such as the provision of portable water, beneficiaries are often willing to donate labor, stones, and sand which they can easily gather without paying anything for them. Even here, the NGO leader laments that "it is only the poor and illiterate rural dweller who will offer to contribute these 'free' materials". Those indigenes in the position to contribute cash, logistics, etc. are simply reluctant to do so because of a fervent belief that NGO funds must be externally sourced.

4.1.3   Self-help projects for illiterate beneficiaries

One important finding of this research was a call for the use of local funding sources to support NGO operations. Respondents found this approach a viable alternative that could help strengthen NGO management in the area. Basing their arguments on the success of some 'pilot' self-help projects, respondents contended that the NGO sector would better serve beneficiaries if this funding alternative is adopted. One of the successful pilot projects cited was a micro finance initiative, proudly referred to as *Banking on Change*, which was started in the UWR and now operates in seven out of the nation's ten administrative regions. It is a group based effort by an NGO to send self-providing banking services to the doorsteps of citizens of communities where there are no banks, or where community members are incapable of accessing the services of traditional banks in their locality. The *banking on change* project organizes communities in groups of 15 – 30 members per group for the purpose of contributing a small amount of money daily, weekly, or monthly. These contributions (or shares), often determined by the group, are saved until the end of a cycle of 52 weeks when members are allowed to borrow from the accumulated amount. Any amount borrowed by a group member is to be paid back in three months and with interest that is determined by the group. According to officials of the facilitating NGO as well as beneficiaries of 'Banking on Change', the project has been very successful. An official (RO7) explains that the extraordinary success of the project stems from the fact that locals, or beneficiaries, are themselves funding their own project and would want to commit their efforts to much success. Similarly, a Ghanaian philanthropist, resident abroad, has been funding the projects of another NGO without any of the challenges associated with foreign funding. Explaining the basis for this achievement, the program officer of the agent NGO argued that since the Ghanaian donor is very familiar with the target community, he only chooses to fund projects that can hardly be mismanaged. Indigenous funding of NGO activities, in the view of most respondents, is a good way to enhancing NGO management.

4.2. Challenges facing NGOs

On the major challenges facing NGOs in the UWR, most of the findings corroborated those of earlier studies, except the aspect on donor options. Three sub-themes were identified under this second major theme. They are collaboration, competition, and donor support options.

4.2.1   Collaboration

One major challenge that interviewees brought up was lack of collaboration among NGOs working in the UWR. Respondents unanimously identified, as a major threat to effective NGO operation in the region, lack of a system that would enable NGOs operating within the same locality to collaborate among themselves. Emphasizing this point, RO6, for example, charged all NGOs in the region to "effectively work together to address the needs of the communities in which they work". According to this respondent, the present "lack of collaboration leads to duplication of services and a waste of resources", adding that "if the NGOs could collaborate effectively, not only would this reduce their cost, but also there could be synergy in drawing on each or one another's strengths or areas of expertise".   Similarly, RO2 observed that this "lack of collaboration in implementing projects to improve impact on clients", gravely affects NGO performance in the area. The lack of networking among NGOs was therefore seen as having severe consequences on their performance. Yet, these consequences are being exacerbated by a kind of unhealthy competition among organizations, as presented next.

4.2.2   Competition among NGOs

Another concern raised by interviewees was that, rather than collaborate to resolve community problems, NGOs tend to compete for funding favours from external donors. It is interesting that respondents tied the problem of competition to that of collaboration, a connection which suggests that competing NGOs are ineffective because

they fail to collaborate. For example, stating this tie, RC1 lamented that the lack of collaboration among NGOs is "worsened by competition among the NGOs, the issue of who takes the credit, donor requirements etc." The NGO consultant's concern here appears to be that, as NGOs strive to remain in competition, they generally fail to meet beneficiary needs. Consequently, there is usually a "mismatch between the needs of the beneficiaries and the mission of the organization". Illustrating this further, the NGO architect explained, rather apologetically:

> You see, the expectations of beneficiaries, or those who receive the services, are mostly not the same as those of the organization. Regrettably, it is the voice of the donor that rules in such conflicting situations … and if donor interest does not favour beneficiary needs, then so be it!

As discussed earlier in this paper, undermining beneficiary needs this way obviously spells doom for effective NGO initiatives in the country. This winner-takes-all approach, often "characterized by each organization having carved an area or a community in which to serve or provide services that would guarantee continuous funding support from external sources" (RO8), was found to be commonly practised by 'authoritarian' NGOs, such as charitable and service provider organizations.

4.2.3   Donor support options

Foreign donor support was generally viewed as medium for external influence, interruption, and 'distortion' of development programmes, referred to earlier in this paper. Since NGOs in the region are typical survived by external charities, it is difficult to imagine an NGO sector in the region without support from external donors. As RO8 quizzed, "How can an NGO survive in a poor region like this without the benevolence of the developed world?" RO8's position was however strongly challenged by several respondents who held the view that Ghana has a huge potential for philanthropy. As one participant argued, and as demonstrated in 4.1.3 above, it is a question of getting Ghanaians to rethink the role they play as mere recipients of NGO services. As RO7 has argued, "if the Ghanaian, or the African, for that matter, had developed a culture of contributing meaningfully to their own development, we wouldn't be where we are today!" Interestingly, this regret resonated in the responses of several other interviewees who readily observed that people in the UWR and the rest of the Ghanaian community have grown used to 'receiving' from NGOs that they hardly consider alternative ways of running the NGO sector. Indeed, nearly all respondents (90%) noted that an effective NGO sector in Ghana is possible only with active participation or contribution of the indigenes. Yet, this study was unable to identify an NGO in the UWR that is not funded by external sources. In the view of the NGO experts interviewed, a good way to compete would be to reverse the trend, such that rather than having field workers compete for funding favours, indigenous donors could compete with external sponsors for local projects. It is only when external donors see the indigenous donor as a threat to their charities that they (external funders) may consider redirecting attention from 'quality paper work' to achievement-based reward, in the form of funding incentives. The relevance of this point of view and other important issues raised in this paper are further discussed in the next section.

5. Discussion and conclusion

In spite of the perception that, with reduced donor influence and control, adequate funding from external sources, logistical, and technical support, NGOs working in upper western Ghana would be effective in their provision of relief services to beneficiary populations, the findings of this study have unfolded several other challenges facing effective operation of NGOs in the area. Challenges identified were mainly lack of collaboration, unhealthy competition among NGOs, and a lack of donor support options. While the issues of collaboration, donor control, and competition among NGOs only serve to corroborate the findings of earlier researchers, such as Porter (2003), the originality of this paper resides in the critical aspect on donor support options. Admittedly, a variety of NGOs exists, with different mission statements. This research revealed two categories of NGO types: authoritarian NGOs and democratic ones. At the time of this research, the UWR only benefitted from authoritarian NGOs, whose operational structure may be described as instructional. For this type of NGOs, since they are the sole sponsors of most field activities, they reserve a certain right to determining how their funds should be used or how the monies should be accounted for. As Benjamin (2014) recently advised Ghanaians, Britain (or foreign funders) always have to ensure that funds sent to Ghana and other developing countries are well accounted for since the British Government will always need to explain to its taxpayer that their monies are well spent. The point made by Jon Benjamin, the British High Commissioner to Ghana who was speaking on the topic "Integrity in Public Office" on the occasion of the 10th anniversary celebration of IMANI – Ghana, could be viewed as justification for the colorful paperwork requirement from most donors. As suggested earlier in this paper, local participation in the process of funding NGO activities will help move accountability in the NGO sector from mere paperwork to realistic transformation of the lives of beneficiaries. As long as the Ghanaian pretends that there is or cannot be alternatives to the way NGO business is currently conducted in the country, external funding authorities will have no reason to alter their style of leadership. After all, they have beautiful 'cover notes' to show success and good use of the taxpayers' money, and may not worry so much about what

actually happens on the ground.

As has already been stated, a key contribution of this research has been a proposed change in this trend. This research suggests that the participatory style of NGO leadership is a more effective approach to realizing the much needed socio-economic transformation and the Ghanaian community needs to consider its immediate adoption. With a participatory NGO environment, Ghanaians will play active role in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of NGO programs by contributing cash, labor, materials, tools, land, and strategy. This will help localize donor supervision since donor sources will be wholly or partially Ghanaian. The incidence of foreign donor control and influence, and the resulting mismatch between donor requirement and beneficiary need, would be minimized, or even entirely eliminated.

Some may fear that the democratic approach to NGO management may not work in Ghana due to the influence of existing structures that portray NGO activities as externally controlled, with beneficiary communities only playing recipient roles because they are too poor to fund or support NGO activities. While this paper acknowledges that the North-South development gap is a huge one and that NGO funding capacities may be different from region to region, it does not belief that participatory NGO work in Ghana is not possible. Indeed, participatory NGO programs have long worked in African communities like Mozambique, where Concern Worldwide tested and found that participatory NGO management was more useful in serving primary beneficiaries (target communities), and less so in serving the needs of NGO staff and the organization for which they work (Cousins, 1991). As a lower middle income earner, Ghana promises to respond more positively to a participatory management style and only requires some structural and cultural changes of the NGO sector to enhance effective leadership of the sector.

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