

Examining Poverty from Ethnicity, Local Governance and Socio-Cultural Value System Perspective: Issues of Entitlement, Endowment, Vulnerability, and Empowerment

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Abstract

The high level of poverty, as a development challenge, in emerging countries has attracted global attention. The situation led to formulation of the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) as well as Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030), by United Nations, for addressing the challenge. However, the slow progress made in achieving the global millennium development goals, in developing countries has become a source of concern and thereby raising several questions that call for critical reexamination of poverty and the common strategies that have been designed to address it in developing countries. It is an undeniable fact that much resources have been spent on implementation of the global policies for addressing poverty. Again, several researches have been conducted on the subject have come out with some results which have informed policy design in addressing the challenge. However, it has been realized that many researches have concentrated on economic or monetary parameters in analysing poverty to the neglect of socio cultural parameters which are equally relevant in this context. This has led to imbalance in development paradigms for addressing poverty. Since poverty is usually measured mainly with reference to economic indicators such as income, production, total output and unemployment levels just to mention a few, positive changes in those variables are considered as a success story in addressing poverty. However, sustainability of those achievements has become a mirage in the attempt to address poverty in many developing countries. This research was undertaken as an exploratory one with the view to examining some non- economic factors that influence poverty in emerging countries but are usually played down or overlooked in examining the challenge. Among the basic research questions are: Could ethnicity and traditional governance influence negatively the welfare of some citizenry? How do cultural norms contribute to impoverishment in communities? To what extent do national policies for poverty reduction, in recent years capture noneconomic parameters which influence poverty in society? In terms of objectives, the study was designed, to assess influence of local governance system on poverty in communities; to review influence of traditional norms on promoting poverty and to examine the effectiveness of some national policies and strategies for poverty reduction. The outcome from the research has brought to the fore the need to address some negative institutional, cultural and attitudinal issues, in policies and strategies designed for poverty reduction in emerging countries. The point is that some of the traditional norms that influence poverty such as endowment, access to means of production, including land, widowhood rites, inheritance system, and early marriages just to mention a few, call for review or abolition to remove their negative impact on society and thereby assist to reduce poverty in some communities within some ethnic groups in Ghana. This throws a challenge to policy formulators and law makers involved in modern and traditional governance, in exercising their functions effectively as administrators and development managers.

Keywords: Poverty, Ethnicity, Governance, Entitlement, Vulnerability, Empowerment

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1. Introduction

Poverty is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon with several dimensions. Therefore, it has been defined in different ways using different variables. Hence, a simple definition of the phenomenon is likely to overlook many important facets of this development challenge. For example, economic bias analysts define poverty with reference to specific daily wage earned by employees, below that wage level, one is considered poor. This definition also implies that increasing one's daily wage above a certain threshold would take one out of the poverty bracket. It might be argued, however that, the definition has ignored several variables that are associated with poverty and livelihood. In other words, it is possible one could earn wages above the standard threshold wage level and have a poor lifestyle and livelihood.

One major weakness in that definition of poverty, among others, is that it does not relate income to the bundle or basket of goods and services that one's income could provide for the household. This is making reference to

income and affordability in poverty analysis. In this context, a poor person could be described as one whose income is not enough to acquire minimum bundle or basket of goods and services (food and nonfood) deemed adequate for meeting one's consumption needs for survival. The implication of this argument is that anyone who cannot acquire adequate goods to satisfy his/her minimum basic consumption needs could be considered as a poor person irrespective of the level of daily wage earned. This submission seeks to describe poverty in relation to "acquisition difficulty" which is often neglected, in poverty analyses. It could be emphasized that the ability to acquire goods and services for consumption and survival is influenced by both exogenous and endogenous factors which is related to the environment in which one dwells.

Based on the background of 'acquisition difficulty' concept, one might submit that, famine in a community does not necessarily mean the absence of adequate amount of food related to inability of farmers to produce adequate food from their farms. It could be due directly to general failure to exercise control over some factors which influence, production, acquisition and consumption. That is, the system of exchange and entitlement mapping in a community influence poverty therefore they must be considered in analyzing poverty in emerging countries, where traditional norms influence entitlement, production and labour compensation in society. Hence, failure to consider some traditional norms might lead to the formulation of ineffective policies to address poverty in traditional societies. That could partially explain the low impact of several poverty reduction policies, and strategies in traditional societies.

Against this background, the study was undertaken by critically examining some societal norms and cultural values which promote poverty in emerging countries. The appropriate approach to the study was an exploratory one since it was directed at investigating into some important issues which could influence prevalence of poverty in societies but have been taken for granted or completely ignored when poverty issues are discussed hence there is limited theories and principles from socio cultural point of view. Some of the important questions raised included: How is the ethnic structure of Ghana related to poverty? What are some of the cultural values that influence poverty? What are some of the traditional norms and value systems that impact on poverty within households.

The research questions led to analyzing some concepts such as entitlement, endowment, vulnerability and empowerment which are closely associated with poverty in Ghana. Although these concepts are relevant in poverty analysis in traditional societies they are overlooked in several poverty studies in developing countries. Closely associated to those concepts are other issues such as ownership of means of production, wealth creation, compensation for labour, gender and differentiation in household dynamics.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Paradigm

In examining a complex subject as poverty it was imperative to identify some research paradigms that could be used to address the multivariate issues from the social point of view. In this context, an acceptable research paradigm is a way of examining phenomena from which particular understanding of these phenomena can be gained and explanation attempted. Some of the paradigms adopted to guide the research included radical humanism, radical structuralist, interpretive and functionalist (Figure 1)

These paradigms were chosen for obvious reasons for example radical humanism was considered relevant as the study of poverty is associated with humanity and the way people struggle for survival and also the fact that the study is concerned with working towards changing the status quo of the existing social patterns which make people poor.

The issue of examining some social structures in relation to poverty made radical structuralist paradigm necessary as that is concerned with achieving fundamental change based on analysis of underlying structures that cannot be observed easily. For example, power relationships and pattern of conflict in society. Also, interpretive paradigm was adopted as the study involved an attempt to understand the way human beings make sense of the world around them. Again, the functionalist paradigm was considered appropriate for the study by virtue of the fact that. The study is concerned with a rational explanation of behaviours and institutions such as, why a particular organizational problem is occurring in terms of the functions people perform in society.

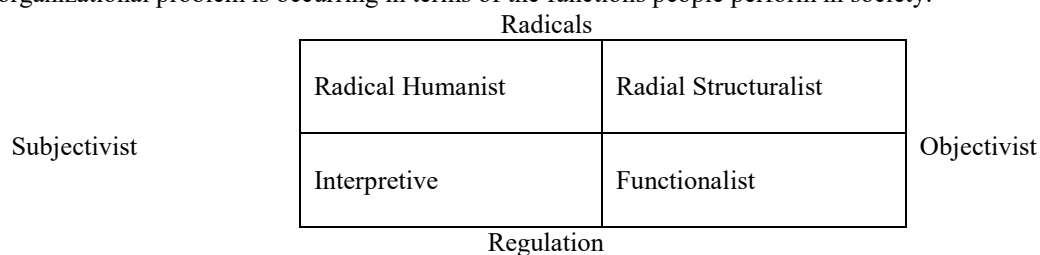


Figure 1: Four Paradigms for the analysis of social theory
 Source: Adapted from Saunders (2007)

It could be observed that the four paradigms are arranged in the structure of radical change and regulation. The radical paradigms namely humanist and structuralist relate to the basic changes that have to be undertaken in a society or organization in place of the normal way of doing things. On the other hand regulation aspect seeks to explain the way in which societal affairs are regulated and offer suggestions as to how they may be improved within the present framework of doing things. These paradigms also could be applied in analyzing issues from either subjective or objective points of view. Within the context of the subject under investigation that is, poverty, the mix approach of paradigms was considered suitable for a research of this nature.

2.2 Conceptual and Analytical Framework

The issues that directly and indirectly account for prevalence of poverty are many and varied. Some of the issues are associated with social relations, economic resource distribution and redistribution, public policies and traditional norms. The submission is that these issues should receive serious attention in designing a policy to address poverty in developing countries, in order for the scheme to have positive impact on communities.

The schematic representation is a summary of the socio cultural factors that influence poverty in society. It shows that the subject is a complex phenomenon which is influenced by variables including local governance, traditional norms, cultural values, resource endowment, entitlement and ownership rights, technology, vulnerability as well as social relations and empowerment within a community.

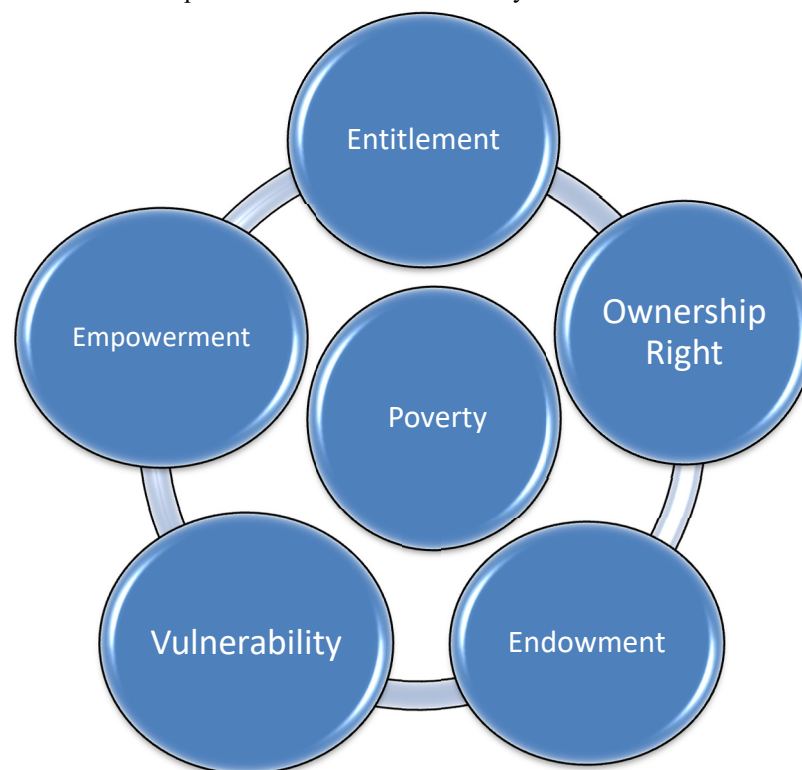


Figure 2. Poverty and Non Economic Parameters
Source. Author's Construct.

Among others, the complexity of poverty is based on diverse ethnic groups and communities that follow different traditional norms and value systems in developing countries. The complex nature of ethnicity is discussed with reference to the ecological zones Ghana

3. Ethnicity and Ecological Zones in Ghana

The total population of Ghana is about 29 million which is made up of 72 different ethnic sub groups. It is argued that the sub groups could be reclassified into nine major ethnic groups namely; Akan(47.5%), Mole-Dagbon(16.6%), Ewe(13.9%), Ga-Dangme(7.4%). Gurma(5.7%), Guan(3.7%) Grusi(2.5%) and Mande-Busanga(1.1%), and others(1.6%)(Figure 3). These groups are spread across ten administrative regions in three ecological zones namely: Northern Savanna Zone comprising, Northern, Upper West and Upper East regions: Middle Forest Zone covering Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, Eastern and, Western regions and Coastal Savanna Zone, composed of Greater Accra, Volta, and Central regions. These ten administrative regions were delimited for governance without recourse to ethnicity. Therefore all ten regions are multi ethnic by nature.

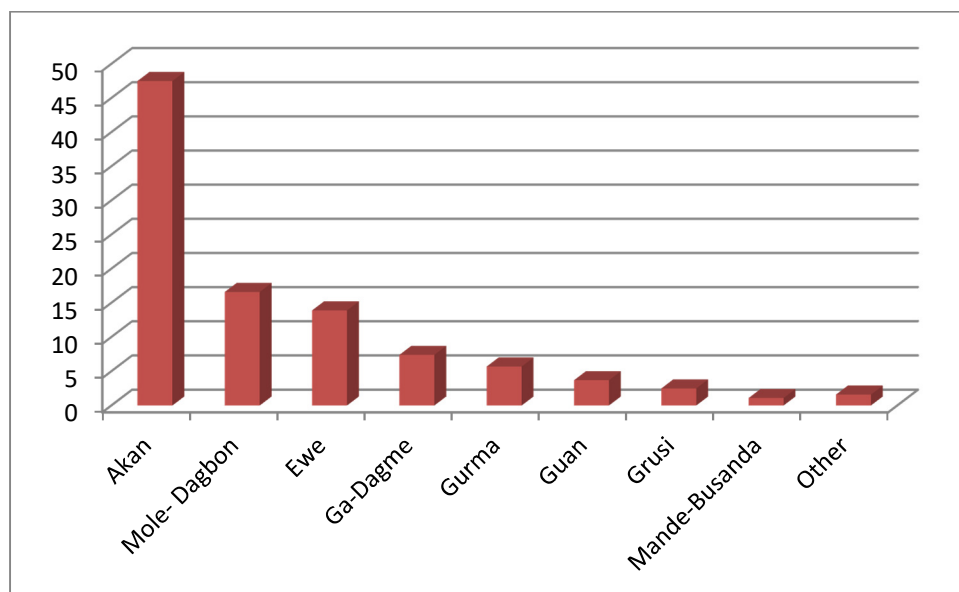


Figure 3. Major Ethnic Groups in Ghana

Source: Author's Construct: GSS Data base

Again, each of the nine ethnic groups has constituent ethnic sub groups. For example, the Akan group has sub groups including, Asante, Fante, Bono, Akyem, Akwamu, Akwapim, Assin, Sefwi, Wassa among others. Furthermore, each ethnic sub group has distinct customary laws, cultural values and traditional norms in relation to marriage, birth rites, chieftaincy, inheritance as well as ownership and succession rites, among others. These norms, in various ways, affect household livelihood and dynamics.

4. Poverty, Ethnicity and Administrative Regions

The population of Ghana distributed among the ten administrative regions is captured in Table 1. The regions in the middle forest and southern savanna zones are Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, Central, Eastern, Greater Accra and Western. These regions are occupied by different ethnic groups. Table 1,

Table 1. Poverty, Ethnicity and Administrative Regions

Administrative Region	Major Ethnic Group	Percentage of National Population	Major Ethnic Groups as Percentage of Regional Population	Poverty Incidence by Region
Ashanti	Akan Mande-Busanga	19.7	57.8	14.8
Brong Ahafo	Akan, Grusi	9.9	26.8	27.9
Central	Akan, Guan	8.9	25.9	18.8
Eastern	Ga-Dangbe Guan	10.4	45.8	21.7
Greater Accra	Ga-Dangbe, Ewe	16.3	79	5.6
Western	Akan, Mande-Busanga	9.2	23.4	20.9
Volta	Ewe Guan	8.7	66.1	33.8
Northern	Gurma Mole-Dagbon	10.0	87.1	50.4
Upper East	Mande-Busanga Mole-Dagbon	4.1	49.2	44.4
Upper West	Grusi, Mole-Dagbon	2.9	34.9	70.7
All Ghana		100		24.2

Source: Author's Construct

Data base Asante and Gyimah-Boadi and Ghana Statistical Services.

The Ashanti and Western regions are occupied mainly by Akan and Mande- Busanga groups; Brong Ahafo region

is occupied by Akan and Grusi ethnic groups. Central region is dominated by Akan and Guan groups. The Ga-Dangbe and Guan groups occupy the Eastern region. The Ga-Dangbe and Ewe groups occupy the Greater Accra region whilst the Ewe and Guan ethnic groups occupy Volta region. The Northern region is occupied by Gurma and Mole Dagbon whereas the Upper East is dominated by Mande- Busanga and Mole Dagbon groups. The Grusi and, Mole-Dagbon occupy the Upper West region.

The distribution shows that Akans dominate southern Ghana whilst Mole-Dagbon group is found throughout Northern Savanna zone.

Generally, the common traditional norms and cultural practices in regions reflect those associated with the two main ethnic groups in Table 1. There is cultural diversity in regions that accounts for different shades of cultural values, beliefs and practices among people who live in the same administrative region.

The arbitrary delimitation of regions for administrative purpose accounts for some ethnic groups associating themselves with other ethnic groups outside the administrative regions, where they reside. A case in point is some Akan ethnic groups living in the Volta and Brong Ahafo regions who owe allegiance to the Ashanti King living in the Ashanti region. This shows the important role played by ethnicity in addressing development challenges in traditional societies. This same system has influence on local governance.

5. Local Governance

The local governance in Ghana is a mix system, especially with the emergence of modern local government. This has created parallel systems of local governance with each one claiming to be in control of areas of jurisdiction. These two systems could be described simply as formal (modern) and non-formal (traditional) local governance machinery. (Kessey, 2006).

The formal system of local governance was created, directed and guided by national laws and legislative instruments with structured public administrative system which covers both central and local government institutions. Therefore in formulating a policy to address a local development challenge such as poverty, it is imperative that institutions to be affected by the policy and their roles in the process are stated explicitly. The point is that operating two parallel systems could create conflict among the governing authorities and the governed. This impedes development and progress.

5.1 The Process of Governance

In the act of governance there is always a governing group who exercises authority over another group who are described as the governed. Be it simple or complex, formal or non formal, modern or traditional, any act of governance, among others, should exhibit the governing body and the governed working together, in terms of directing, planning, controlling, determining, influencing and having the power or authority to do something or to prevent people from not doing something.

In terms of formal government, legislations are enacted, for example, the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936), to give power to various governing institutions to perform specific functions. Although these legislations are meant to promote community interest, the changes in the society, change in government, and focus of government, are some of the factors that lead to amendments in existing laws and in some cases abolition of the laws.

On its part Traditional Authorities owe their right to govern to their birth right, that is, by virtue of the fact that they were born into a particular family. Those people use taboos, values, norms and inhibitions to consolidate their position over the governed, the natural resources and assets which they control.

Therefore, it is important to emphasize that in formulating a policy, especially for poverty reduction, it is important that one gets to know the background of the target population (governed) whose interest is the focus of the policy. This is critical in poor traditional societies whose actions or inactions are heavily influenced by cultural values and norms. For that matter, it is important to identify and factor the traditional governance system into a policy directed at addressing poverty in a traditional society. That is, in addressing poverty, in traditional societies it is necessary to understand the composition and backgrounds of the target groups, the policy, is focusing on. For example, one has to understand and appreciate the relationships between the entrepreneurs and their employees, clients and patrons, landlords and tenants, men and women among others. The composition of the governed to a large extent determines the nature of policies, rules and regulations guiding the relationships. Invariably, the governing groups control, direct and influence the governed in specific ways by the authority and power at their disposal, for purpose of self interest. This is one main factor causing poverty in Ghana.

5.2 Prevalence of poverty and ethnicity

The data in Table 1 indicate that poverty is widespread throughout the ten regions in Ghana having different intensities. The average incidence of poverty is highest, about 55.2 per cent, in the northern savanna zone where population is sparse. The correlation between regional population and incidence of poverty in Ghana has Rho index of negative 0.67 at 5 per cent significance level which confirms that there is inverse relationship between regional population and incidence of poverty.

Table 2 Ecological Zones, Administrative Regions and Poverty Incidence

Ecological Zone	Poverty Incidence	Mean
Northern Savanna Zone		55.2
Northern Region	50.4	
Upper East Region	44.4	
Upper West Region	70.7	
Middle Forest Zone		21.3
Ashanti Region	14.8	
Brong Ahafo Region	27.9	
Eastern Region	21.7	
Western Region	20.9	
Coastal Savannah Zone		19.1
Greater Accra Region	5.6	
Volta Region	33.8	
Central Region	18.8	

Source: Author's Construct

Data base Asante and Gyimah-Boadi and Ghana Statistical Services.

It has been stated in the conceptual framework that poverty in a traditional society is influenced by major issues such as entitlements, ownership, endowment, vulnerability and empowerment schemes in society, Table 2 shows that the mean incidence of poverty is high in the northern savanna zone where traditional norms and cultural values are strongly upheld.

6. Ecological Zones, Ethnicity and Incidence of Poverty

It would be realized that the places where incidence of poverty is high are occupied by the Gurma, Mole-Dagbon, Mande-Busanga and Grusi ethnic groups. The research showed that these ethnic groups uphold some strong traditional and cultural value systems that promote poverty

Table 3.

Table 3 Ethnicity and poverty Incidence

Ecological Zone	Poverty Incidence	Mean
Northern Savanna Zone		55.2
Gurma; Mole-Dagbon	50.4	
Mande-Busanga; Mole- Dagbon	44.4	
Grusi; Mole-Dagbon	70.7	
Middle Forest Belt		21.3
Akan, Mande-Busanga	14.8	
Akan, Grusi	27.9	
Ga-Dangbe, Guan	21.7	
Akan, Mande-Busanga	20.9	
		19.1
Ga-Dangbe, Ewe	5.6	
Ewe, Guan	33.8	
Akan, Guan	18.8	

Source: Author's Construct

Data base Asante and Gyimah-Boadi and Ghana Statistical Services.

In the light of high prevalence of poverty in the northern savanna zone many people in that zone have migrated to the other two ecological zones, where poverty is less severe, in search of greener pastures.

7. Discussions and Findings: Poverty and Non Economic Parameters:

7.1 Entitlement System

Entitlement system implies giving somebody the right to own or to do something in a community with the endowment one possesses. This is for enhancing livelihood and personal survival. In several communities failure of the entitlement and exchange system is associated with ownership rights and title to means of production. That is, an individual's entitlement set is acquired through endowment or original ownership rights. This implies that those who have ownership title to means of production have advantage over those who do not have that right. Among others, the citizens who have title to productive assets, decide on what to do with their assets as well as how they would compensate people they employ as input in production and management processes of their resources. For example, in Ghana, there is a system in place, referred to as 'sharecropping'. This is an established system for compensating, farm hands employed by entrepreneurs. By that arrangement the owner of a farm takes

two-thirds of total output from the farm and gives one-third to the employee(s) or farm hand(s). In this context the caretaker's compensation is determined by a traditional contractual arrangement which gives advantage to the landlord.

This system of compensation is common among cocoa farmers who engage care takers to manage their farms and compensate them after an annual harvest according to the outlined contractual terms. Since this sharing is done after annual harvest, the compensation becomes the annual income for the caretaker. This is a common system which has impoverished many caretakers in the cocoa growing areas in Ghana. The children of those workers eventually drop out of school, to support their parents on their farms constituting, child labour. Therefore, it is being intimated that with such system in place, one cannot overlook the issue of compensation that goes to unskilled labour in various economic sectors in formulating a policy for reducing poverty.

7.2 Ownership Right

Closely related to entitlement is resource ownership and labour power. In other words, an individual acquires his/her entitlement through his/her endowment and ownership. This implies that one main factor that influence poverty in Ghana is structure of ownership title to means of production. The ownership rights one has to means of production such as land, determines the level of investment one could undertake. For example, in the agricultural sector in Ghana, where major means of production are land, labour and capital, people who don't own neither land nor capital could be considered disadvantaged in society and therefore are unable to invest in farming. The limited ownership right to basic means of production, namely land and capital, largely explains poverty among women in households. The point is that in many communities household heads are males who own the available means of production. Again, several rural women work to support their husband businesses without any direct compensation nor ownership title to the assets of the households. Since females and children do not own resources for production logically they are the vulnerable ones in several households in Ghana.

Furthermore, in the northern savannah zone it was found out that some ethnic groups, according to tradition, do not permit females to have ownership title to land which is the major means of production. The ownership right, according to customary laws is reserved for men in the society. For that matter, upon the demise of a male household head his land property (asset) is shared among his sons while his daughters are left out. Since women do not have land title right they consider it unsafe to invest in land-based assets such as farm, since any investment in land could be lost to the landlord any time he makes a demand for the land. In most cases, the landlords are husbands, therefore in the event of divorce women lose access to their farms. This cultural practice is one of the major reasons underlying poverty among women in the northern ecological zone, which affects their livelihoods negatively.

One could argue that the government strategy, captioned 'Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP)' as part of its efforts to reduce poverty among the populace, introduced in 2008, which provides cash grants and social insurance for the poor and vulnerable segment of the Ghanaian populace such as widows, orphans, aged, physically challenged among others does not address the root of poverty. Notwithstanding the fact that many people have benefited from the grants one might say that a poverty reduction policy of that nature focuses on effects of poverty instead of addressing the cause of poverty.

7.3 Resource Endowment

In terms of space one ethnic group might have more endowments than others. Hence in discussing ownership title rights and poverty one cannot overlook natural resources, endowment and poverty in communities. It is not by sheer coincidence that several well endowed communities in terms of natural resources such as gold, diamond, manganese, bauxite, tropical hard wood forest to mention but a few in Ghana, are among the impoverished communities in the country. This is by virtue of the fact that the laws of Ghana are designed for:

"Vesting of property and ownership right of every mineral in its natural state under or upon any land in Ghana, rivers, streams, water course throughout Ghana the exclusive economic zone and any area covered by territorial waters or continental shelf.....in the government for and on behalf of the people of Ghana."

"Where any land is required to secure the development or utilization of such as mineral resource, the Government may acquire or authorize its occupation and use under any applicable enactment for the time being in force" (Minerals and Mining Law, 1986 (PNDCL 153, Minerals and Mining (Amendment) Act, 1994 (Act 475))

How does the law cater for people who are natural owners of the resources and are directly or indirectly affected by its exploitation? As communities in these state owned resources are poor, the issue of social contract as related to wealth creation and redistribution is critical in addressing poverty in developing countries. The point is that citizenry do not know the total amount paid as royalties. The central governments collect royalties in addition to Corporate Taxes, Pay as You Earn, Withholding Taxes from the mining firms. Table 4, before deciding on how much of the amount has to be returned to the affected communities

Table 4, Taxes and Royalties 2011-2017(GHS)

Year	Corporate Tax	Pay As You Earn	Withholding Tax	Royalties	Total
2011	139,590,210	18,309,603	11,308,408	47,812,790	217,021,011
2012	244,235,080	24,138,751	14,733,648	47,038,033	330,145,512
2013	178,116,045	28,772,741	14,234,124	48,288,992	269,411,902
2014	186,956,591	40,806,012	15,374,257	50,138,855	293,275,715
2015	58,555,829	46,059,714	20,858,870	45,180,571	170,654,984
2016	93,870,326	47,400,955	31,651,790	52,937,722	225,660,793
2017	48,172,519	47,211,498	26,262,939	42,122,694	163,769,650
Total	949,296,600 (56.8%)	252,699,274 (15.1%)	134,424,036 (8.0%)	333,519,657 (20.0%)	1,669,939,567 (99.9%)
Mean	135,613,800	36,099,896	19,203,433	47,645,665	243,207,466

Source: Author's Construct

Data Base (Ghana Chamber of Mines 2011-2017)

The point is that a mining firm in Ghana pays about four separate taxes including royalties to Central Government. The Table 4 indicates that royalties constitute an average of 20 per cent of total taxes paid by a mining company. For the sake of transparency couldn't the company have paid royalties to local authorities directly to finance development activities in those areas; an action that would enhance the communities' welfare and for that matter reducing vulnerability and level of poverty. This is an example of a public policy having negative effect on citizenry and communities.

7.4 Vulnerability and Poverty

Many public policies, rules and regulations, governance principles, environmental degradation and cultural value systems, among others, have made many people in Ghana vulnerable in communities. It is estimated that about 75 percent of the poor in Ghana live in rural areas. This implies that poverty is prevalent in rural areas. Put in another way, one could argue that poverty is largely a rural phenomenon, in Ghana, implying that many rural households are vulnerable in relation to poverty. On main cause of this trend is the fact that, the rural economy, is basically agrarian with low productivity. Also, this is part of the country where traditional norms are upheld strictly, notwithstanding the fact that some of the cultural values do promote poverty. Apart from low productivity, other factors that have made rural residents vulnerable might include; insecurity, low self respect, low social recognition, low public/political voice, low survival rate, and exposure to health risk, among others compared to the citizens in urban areas. In recent past illegal mining activities have degraded large rural environment making it difficult for the residents to have access to pure drinking water and fertile lands for farming.

Again the traditional norms associated with early marriage have compelled some girls to drop out of school to go into marriage prematurely without training even in child care, thereby making infant mortality a common experience. Also, it could be argued that the high incidence of poverty promoted by some traditional norms such as widowhood rites and social inhibitions, in rural areas constitute some push factors for migration from rural communities to urban areas. These migrants travel to urban areas with the view to addressing poverty and enhancing their social and economic livelihood. However without education and specific training, this vision is far from reality as they are unable to find immediate employment. Also, the monetized nature of the urban economy makes them more vulnerable. By virtue of the fact the urban economy is highly monetized these migrants spend huge sums of money on livelihood and survival. This experience compels them to sell their labour 'cheaply' and use their low income for purchasing food, shelter, clothing, social services including health, utilities and transport services just to mention a few. This underscores the concept of urban poverty.

The implication is that several urban and rural households are vulnerable as they are neither in the position to own assets, nor create and store wealth for investment. As several traditional norms are among the factors which account for poverty it makes the challenge a difficult one to address. Therefore it has to be addressed from different angles with the view to empowering the vulnerable urban and rural poor.

7.5 Empowering the Poor

The concept of empowerment has been used extensively in works of several poverty analysts. Many agree to the contention that, among others, the poor and the vulnerable ought to be empowered in addressing poverty. Among others, such an argument is an admission of inequalities and inequities in poor societies. What is not specific is how empowerment should be operationalised. In reality, a nation's empowerment policies and strategies are informed by laws, traditions and values. Therefore one might argue that effective empowerment policies addressing poverty must have several dimensions and phases including, review of some traditional norms; some national laws and policies on resource endowment, ownership rights to assets and, store of wealth for investment among others.

The fact is, in agrarian economies such as Ghana, poverty is directly related to access and ownership title to

land. Therefore, empowering people who do not own land nor possess capital would call for assisting them to obtain the right to own basic factors of production. In this context empowering some women would imply assisting them to have ownership right to basic factors of production such as land. This calls for review of the cultural norms by traditional leaders in the northern savanna zone where women are denied the right to own land, the basic factor of production in an agrarian economy. In some ethnic groups women are considered as agents of production, provision and reproduction in communities. This is unfair to them. Therefore, empowering women to own land in some communities will go a long way to make them less vulnerable with fairness in society. This would be in line with United Nations development paradigm which states that “Any society committed to improving the lives of its people must also be committed to full and equal rights for all”.(UN-HDR, 2000)

Also, rural farmers would reduce poverty if they are able to store properly their marketable surplus. This implies that a person’s ability to store the wealth one creates is crucial in addressing poverty. In other words, there is indirect relationship between level of wealth storage and vulnerability. Therefore households that produce high output but cannot store the marketable surplus after harvest and for that reason, sell it at low price, at harvest season become vulnerable. To empower such people would mean provision of storage facilities for vulnerable households in farming communities.

Also, it could be argued in the name of equity governments by reducing poverty in communities could pay royalties from companies exploiting local resources directly to the local authorities as against payment of royalties by investors into the central government consolidated fund. It is from the fund that allocations are made to affected communities who don’t know the total value of royalties paid by firms exploiting their natural resources. Also, in developing economies central governments control lucrative taxes to the disadvantage of local government, hence the inability of the latter to finance development activities and absence of social services that could directly benefit the poor.

8. Conclusion

From the foregoing analysis, it is obvious that understanding ethnicity, traditional norms, and principles of governance is essential in designing sustainable policies for addressing poverty. The reason is that some of the factors promoting poverty in communities are socially embedded in the society and must be dealt with.

The advocacy for empowerment of some citizens especially women and rural dwellers means the placement of high value on their economic activities with the view to increasing their endowment in society. Unless that is taken serious by government it could lead to migration for sale of endowment usually labour for enhanced livelihood and survival.

This discussion has brought to the fore the multi faceted nature of poverty and tools for addressing it. Some vital issues highlighted in the discussions include; social contract arrangement in an economy, title to factors of production, the role of some traditional norms in poverty creation, rural poverty as a push factor for out migration to urban areas where the economy is monetized; thereby making lives unpleasant for migrants and making them vulnerable in urban areas. Also highlighted in the discussion are poverty and public governance, spatial endowment and poverty that have led to rural- urban divide in many developing countries. For these reasons policies for addressing poverty should pay attention to the multiple dimensions of the phenomenon for balanced development paradigm to promote enhanced livelihood and equity.

Again, widespread poverty in rural areas in Ghana points to the necessity to consider ethnic diversity in formulating strategies for addressing poverty; as some negative traditional norms are still adhered to in those areas. Therefore, it is being submitted that analysing poverty from ethno cultural point of view is necessary for purposes of knowledge acquisition, awareness creation and redesigning of effective development policy paradigm for reducing poverty in developing countries.

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