

Effectiveness of Non-Governmental Organisations in Poverty Reduction in Kasena-Nankana and Builsa Districts in North-Eastern Ghana

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Abstract

Governments in the world particularly those in Africa and Ghana have been challenged by global socio-economic changes that made it difficult for them to provide adequate support for their peoples. For some time now, NGOs have stepped in to complement Government efforts in reducing poverty. However, in spite of an increase in the number of NGOs, the incidence of poverty still remains high in the Upper East Region of Ghana especially in the Kasena-Nankana and Builsa Districts. The aim of this study was therefore to find out how effectively the strategies of NGOs in the two Districts are contributing to poverty reduction. The survey research tools included household questionnaire administration, interviews, focus group discussions, direct observation and a review of related literature. The findings suggested that the strategies of NGOs have not had any significant positive effect on poverty reduction in the Kasena-Nankana and Builsa Districts. This is because of low level of investment by NGOs in the area, poor networking, advocacy, accountability and community empowerment as well as low collaboration between the District Assemblies and the NGOs. It was however noted that communities' commitment to participate in the development process in the two districts was encouraging once they were given the opportunity to engage the District Assemblies. The communities were found to be very weak at monitoring projects being implemented in their areas. The study however confirmed that poverty is still a serious constraining factor in the lives of the people. Their description of the poverty phenomenon differed from the elitist views of the NGOs and District Assembly staff. Discussions with focus groups indicated that District Assemblies and NGOs have not targeted the poor appropriately and this is one other reason why remarkable poverty reduction in the area has not been achieved.

Key Words – Effectiveness, Non-Governmental Organization, Poverty Reduction, Ghana.

Background

The African continent is in the midst of many complex challenges. These challenges include , wars and conflicts, the search for appropriate processes and institutions of governance, increased poverty and devastating impact of HIV/AIDS. Others are declining external aid and investments. These challenges which impacted adversely on social and economic development in Sub-Saharan Africa resulted in the emergence and multiplication of civil society organizations, particularly Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) whose primary aim is to beef up support for poverty reduction. In Ghana, poverty and its various dimensions are precarious with four out of the ten regions being the hardest hit. Poverty in the country has largely been a rural phenomenon. For example, in 1999, the urban poor constituted only 17.3% as compared to 36% for rural areas. The phenomenon is very common among food crop farmers, 59% of whom are poor (Republic of Ghana, 1999).

According to Chambers (1989), causes of poverty in Ghana can be attributed to nine factors including inappropriate policies and institutional arrangements which do not favour the poor, such as the small expenditure on grassroots social protection, production and productivity. Another factor is high fertility and rapid population growth. Ghana's total fertility is 4.5 children per woman while the inter-censal population growth rate is 2.7%, which is above the average rates for the world (1.5%) and Less Developed Countries, which is 2.0% (Republic of Ghana, 2002). The rest of the factors are environmental degradation in rural areas and cultural norms against women development. For example, even though females form 51% of Ghana's population, 41% of them never attended school as compared to 21% of males while 63% of males are literate as compared to only 36% of females. Also, of the 55% of the population in agriculture, women constitute 45%. This shows the dismal situation of women development in Ghana (Republic of Ghana, 1999). Harsh tropical weather conditions, low productivity and income levels, illiteracy and low level of productive skills, globalization of the world economy as well as the structural adjustment and economic recovery programmes that brought hardship to the people as well as a history of political instability are other factors of poverty in Ghana.

In spite of Government efforts towards poverty reduction in Ghana, rural development continues to lag behind urban development resulting in the migration of rural people to the urban areas in search of a "better life". Government's realization that it cannot surmount the problem alone due to financial constraints coupled with efforts at decentralizing development planning and implementation to the local level as well as existing market failures have all culminated into increased penetration of NGOs into the rural communities with various strategies (Kokor, 2001; Republic of Ghana, 1992).

The aim of most of these NGOs is to fill the gaps that have been created as a result of the inadequacies of the market and Government. Some of these gaps include inadequate funding of some basic services by Government, exploitation by elite and poor grassroots capacity to mobilize for development (Clark, 1991). According to Goodin (2004), because NGOs are motivationally and organizationally distinct, they are capable of doing many things that neither the state nor the market sectors can do reliably or well.

Even though it is estimated that there are about 3000 foreign and local NGOs operating in Ghana currently (South African Institute of International Affairs, 2004), the task of measuring their collective performance so as to determine the extent to which they are contributing to poverty reduction is a daunting one. This is because of the varied fields of operation that these organisations engage in and the absence of common performance indicators to measure progress (Cotter, 1988; Fisher, 1993).

Adu (2005), however, observes that enhancing the participation of NGOs, as part of Civil Society, in Government decision making and the development process requires them to be effective. Their participation will be further enhanced depending on the extent of their credibility,

accreditation, good governance, accountability and transparency in dealing with Government, donors and communities or beneficiary groups.

However, what remains a fact is the increasing incidence of poverty in various areas in the Country where some NGOs have operated and still continue to operate. Northern Ghana which is noted to be the poorest in the country accounts for a good number of NGOs in the Country. Our exploratory survey indicated that at the regional level, more than forty NGOs operated in the Upper East Region since the year 2000 while a total of twenty and fifteen of them operated in the Kasena-Nankana and Builsa Districts..

The Problem

In spite of the fact that NGOs have an integral role to play in promoting good governance by acting as local voices of dissent and providing services that Government struggles to offer, they are sometimes taunted as ineffective, corrupt and lacking transparency. They are said to have more important motives other than complementing government efforts and supporting communities to meet their basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, healthcare, education and self-determination (South African Institute of International Affairs, 2004; Gyimah-Boadi, 2003; Safo, 2003). It is noteworthy that there is very little literature based on empirical studies conducted to support the claims made above in the case of Ghana.

However, it is a fact that there has been a proliferation of NGOs specializing in various sectors of the development process in Ghana since the 1990s against the background of increasing democratization and decentralization. Also, the poverty situation of some of the very communities that the NGOs targeted continues to worsen. These are two clear indicators that something somewhere went wrong. The basis of this dismal development situation is arguably linked to the existing operational arrangements and relationships between NGOs, communities, civil society and District Assemblies.

It has been stated in the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy I that the Country's goal is sustainable equitable growth, accelerated poverty reduction and the protection of the vulnerable and excluded within a decentralized, democratic environment (Republic of Ghana, 2003). The Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda also highlighted the importance of poverty reduction and the need for the masses to actively participate in the development process and also obtain a fair share of the positive outcomes of national progress (Republic of Ghana, 2010). Drawing inference from these statements, the expectations of all stakeholders in the development process undoubtedly is very clear. However, where there are dysfunctional linkages between the key players, as may be the case in the Upper East Region, the attainment of the overall goal of the country may never be realised. This therefore makes the study relevant as it would examine the effectiveness of NGOs and the relationship between such organisations and their target communities as well as the role of District Assemblies and Civic Unions in promoting accelerated community development within the framework of District Development.

Despite the great number of NGO operatives in the Upper East Region, the poverty incidence in the Region remains high. In 1999 for example, 88% of the people were poor as compared to 40% of the population of the Country that were considered poor. The 1999 Ghana Living Standards Survey conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service indicated that poverty increased in the Region by 21% between 1991 and 1999 whereas the overall national situation improved by a reduction of 10% within the same period (GPRS, 2003). Even though the population below the lower poverty line declined to 60.1% whereas those below the upper poverty line was at 70% (Ghana Statistical Service, 2007), these are still considerably remarkable.

The Kasena-Nankana and Builsa geo-political areas of the Upper East Region, are experiencing a proliferation of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) yet the communities

continue to lag in terms of development. This problem could probably be partially traced to ineffective strategies of the NGOs whose interventions are expected to complement government efforts.

A situation of this nature as indicated above raises a number of pertinent questions including the following:

1. How effective are the strategies of NGOs in reducing poverty?
2. What roles do the District Assemblies play in fostering community and NGO relations, especially with regard to transparency and accountability of the various stakeholders in poverty reduction?

Research Methodology

Using the survey method a preliminary reconnaissance survey was conducted to determine the extent of NGO penetration in the districts. Primary data was collected using a survey questionnaire from 45% of NGOs operating in the area that were purposively selected. Besides, another survey questionnaire was administered to 200 households that were simple randomly selected and covered in the survey. Staffs of the two District Assemblies were interviewed and Focus Group Discussions held with identifiable civil society groups. Additional information on sample selection is provided in appendix 4 and 5. Correlation and descriptive statistical tools were used for data analysis.

The profiles of the two districts are very relevant in this study because issues studied are put in the geographical context.

The study area comprise of the Builsa North and West, Kasena-Nankana Municipal and Kasena-Nankana West Districts of the Upper East Region of Ghana. The Builsa North and South districts have an area of 2,220 square kilometres located between longitudes 1° 05' and 1° 35' West and latitudes 10° 20' and 10° 50' North.

The Civil Society Sector

The civil society sector which is sometimes referred to as the social economy, with its various membership including non-profit organizations, associations, co-operatives, mutual societies and foundations has been growing and its recognition as a formidable force in the world's development process is becoming increasingly widespread. However, if social justice is to become enshrined in all processes of development as a means of harnessing the human potential for the good of all, then it is important that due regard is paid to all stakeholders so that there can be co-operation with the aim of deriving synergy for holistic development. This is particularly relevant for Ghana where 40% of the population is poor and poverty is predominantly a rural phenomenon (Republic of Ghana, 2002). It is arguably true that the local level can best identify the appropriate strategies for reducing poverty. Therefore, it is important that the local level's capacity is built and incorporated into formal decision-making since they have a veritable potential that can be tapped for development (Lukkarinen, 2006).

The social economy, especially its NGO membership, is recognized as very effective in the mobilization of the local level for development as compared to the market and the public sector. According to Lukkarinen (2006), the role of the social sector extends beyond social mobilization to include employment generation and meeting local needs. This is normally the case in remote communities where the public sector and the market have not been able to penetrate. Besides, the local level easily associates itself with the social sector since both share similar ideals such as democratic governance based on the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity (Kokor, 2001).

Policy determines the environment and framework within which development takes place. The Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy I (GPRS I), which is the Government's policy document on poverty reduction and rural development, recognizes the importance of collaboration between NGOs, community and the state towards the achievement of a good standard of living of the people. However, the extent to which such partnership indicated above would lead to poverty reduction depends on the kind of strategies that the NGO sector in particular devises. It also depends on how such strategies reflect conditions and aspirations at the local level as well as the enabling environment that Government creates to allow them to thrive (Republic of Ghana, 2003).

According to Adu (2005), even though Government-NGO relations in Ghana have improved from limited interaction and discord to greater engagement and accommodation within the past decade, some amount of mistrust still exists. For example, many NGOs are accused of malpractices that range from the making of private gain in the name of humanitarian work, duplication of efforts, waste of resources, non-cooperation with central and local government authorities, fraudulent claims of tax exemptions, exploitation of the ignorance of local communities among others.

However, through their interactions at all levels of governance, Government officials and NGO leaders and activists are acknowledging the complementary nature of their separate but related roles. They are also appreciating the importance of each other towards the achievement of the common national goal such as their shared aspirations and commitment to poverty reduction, human development and good democratic governance in the country.

This is an indication that there is a growing awareness of the need for Government and NGOs to work together notwithstanding the determination of each actor to protect and promote civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and perform duties fundamental to the establishment of a just and free society.

Just as the relationship between the state, NGOs and communities evolved from a state of limited involvement to one of increasing engagement, the policy environment of NGOs and Civil society in general has also evolved gradually in Ghana.

The goal of the policy is for Government to engage Civil Society in the achievement of national priorities as provided in the GPRS I document. While the passage of this bill will enhance relations between Government and civil society in no uncertain terms, it will also mark a turnaround from a period of mixed feelings on the activities of the Civil Society sector to an era where the contributions and effectiveness of the strategies of NGOs and Civil Society in general can be measured without much difficulty.

NGO Strategy

The concept strategy has historical links with military tactics and practical methods adopted to overcome opponents (Mitreanu, 2006). It also involves the use and close integration of economic, political, cultural, social, moral, spiritual, and psychological power to achieve a predetermined objective (Microsoft Corporation, 2005). The concept is used in relation to NGOs to consist of all activities integrated to form a package which when properly implemented would result in the achievement of the overall goal of the organization. It therefore involves the main steps and principles as well as all what the organization wants to do and how it would execute them in order to achieve its goal.

Some of the strategies that NGOs adopted towards poverty reduction included the provision of basic services, community empowerment, community participation and advocacy. In this regard, the strategies of NGOs would be measured through an evaluation of their projects to determine how they have helped to address the basic needs of communities, whether communities have been empowered and the extent of their participation in the planning process. The extent to which NGOs

are accountable to communities and their networks would also help to determine how they have organized themselves to overcome the task of reducing poverty.

Poverty

Poverty is both a social and economic phenomenon that has been defined by various people depending on their background and orientation in life. Normally, those who define it with the purpose of formulating policies and devising strategies to deal with the situation happen to have no live experience. According to Rahnama (1996), phrases like “lack of” and “deficiency of” suggest some measure of poverty. However, poverty has been defined in terms of consumption and/ or income levels (White, 1998).

White et al (2001), maintain that even though material deprivation is at the core of poverty, it also includes deficient command over assets and access to key public services as well as vulnerability and insecurity which are worsened by an inability to prepare for disastrous situations.

A commonly used yardstick has been the number of people who live on two United States dollars in a day. The UNDP however observed that human poverty is much more than inadequate income or access to what is necessary for well-being. The concept also involves a denial of choices and opportunities that are basic to human development. It includes an inability to live a longer, healthier, fulfilling life; enjoying a quality standard of living with respect of others (UNDP, 1998).

Whatever the description given to poverty, the fact remains that it is relative and multi-dimensional (White et al, 2001; Republic of Ghana, 2003). It is dynamic and only those who experience it can best describe it (Kyei, 2002). In this regard, the perception of poverty among various stakeholders in the development process is very important since policy interventions formulated based on a myopic definition of poverty would not achieve the intended purposes. Thus, for the purpose of this study, the definition of poverty given by the UNDP is adopted since it provides a wider picture of the phenomenon practically.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

NGOs are an integral part of Civil Society. They embody voluntary, member-serving or public-serving activities. Institutions referred to as Not-for-Profit Organizations are synonymous to NGOs because the latter operate without any profit motive. If any profit is made at all, it is for the furtherance of their mission which may be charitable in nature.

Weaver, Rock and Kusterer (1997), observed that NGOs have been noted to be very active in those societies where interest groups lobby and mobilize inactive grassroots to participate in decision-making. Similarly, their capacity to influence policy at the local or national level depends on the collective behaviour of their membership. Their success at influencing policy positively enhances the functioning of democratic systems. This is because their activities help provide government with feedback.

In Ghana, many examples can be found of NGOs working in specified fields, such as Transparency International, Center for Democratic Development, ISODEC and Child Rights International that are working on corruption, governance, water privatization and child rights abuse respectively. Numerous other NGOS are directly involved in the provision of basic development services and the extent of their effectiveness is measured based on their ability to contribute significantly to positive change in the lives of the people.

Theoretical Underpinnings Of The Study

The fact that the Civil Society sector and NGOs for that matter are diverse in nature in addition to the role expected of it in poverty reduction and development makes a review of related theories very important for the study.

Development

Development theory has been metamorphosing throughout human history. Conceptually, the way development is perceived depends on one's own environment, which includes the type of ideological, social, economic and political orientation that one is accustomed to (Gustav, 2004). Thus, development has been perceived variously to mean growth in stages, modernization, distributive justice and the satisfaction of basic needs among others.

One school of thought prefers to regard development in terms of growth in a nation's per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Another school of thought led by Dudley Seers considers development to have occurred when poverty, unemployment and inequality have all reduced from high levels and nothing is being done to affect this trend negatively.

Goulet (cited in Todaro 2000) argued that Development is a situation where society is humane such that sustenance (the meeting of the basic human needs including food, clothing, shelter and health), self-esteem (to be a person) and freedom from servitude (ability to choose) form the basis.

However, the World Bank (1991) indicated that the challenge that development poses includes the need to improve the quality of human life by enhancing income levels, ensuring better education, high standards of health and nutrition and reducing poverty to the barest minimum. It also includes the need for a cleaner environment, more equality of opportunity, greater individual freedom and a richer cultural life.

This indeed clearly demonstrates that Development, theoretically, is a multidimensional process whose objectives include, raising standards of living and increasing the range of choices available to humans. It also makes possible the availability of life-sustaining goods such as food, clothing and shelter and widening the scope of their distribution (Todaro, 2000).

Sustainability and Local Community Development

Related to the development theory is the concept of sustainability of Local Community Development (LCD). Local Community Development is a process which involves organization, facilitation and action. It also allows people to create a community that they want to live in through a conscious process of self-determination. It is a framework in which the collective is more important than the sum of its parts (Wilkinson, 1991).

According to Maser (1997), LCD is a democratic process that works only when it is accessible and implemented by majority of the population. Local people are thus empowered by acting collectively through organizations to influence decisions, policies, programs and projects that affect them as a community. However, the theory of sustainable LCD states that local communities are influenced by the environment, just as the environment shapes the lives of the people in an attempt to meet their needs. It is only when there is harmony between the environment and the communities within it such that future generations are not denied resources to meet their own needs that there is said to be sustainable Local Community Development.

Local Community Development and Poverty Reduction

This theory is relevant for NGO poverty reduction strategies because its adoption helps to determine the effectiveness of such strategies. This is because failure to target the root causes of poverty bearing in mind the regenerative capacity of available environmental resources would mean that the poverty reduction strategies have failed the sustainability test. When this happens, it would be needless to describe such NGO poverty reduction strategies as effective.

Sustainable Community Development and Ngo Effectiveness

Alcantara, (1993), argued that sustainable development interventions have to meet seven steps. These include the need for interventions to be beneficiary driven and participatory in terms of empowerment. This means that projects should be initiated from below while interventions should make more resources available and build the capacity of the poor people to act for themselves. In addition to this, interventions should be based on problem identification as well as action oriented, using assessments and causal analysis. The analysis must also be scientific. The implementation process needs to progressively build on the status quo of the poor people. It is important that interventions are process oriented (iterative) while rooted in advocacy.

It should also be noted that another determinant of the effectiveness of NGO development strategies is the extent to which the poor are targeted. This is because if care is not taken, development projects would rather end up benefiting the people who are already better off instead of the poor.

Other theories that are of relevance to the analysis are the X and Y theories put forward by Douglas MacGregor (cited in Enrea et al, 1999). According to theory X, people are lazy, ignorant and unprepared to assume responsibility, hence they need to be directed, monitored and controlled. This theory favours a top down approach in which technocrats take major decisions regarding the development of the poor. Theory Y on the other hand indicates that people are capable and ready to work/participate if only they are motivated. Motivation in this regard can be in the form of provision of the right information, awareness creation, financial support and training in livelihood skills. Theory Y favours a bottom up or grassroots participation and is more relevant to NGOs in project/program planning, implementation and ownership by the grassroots. Even though theory Y is expensive to adopt in terms of time, money and other material resources, it leads to sustainability of projects while theory X tends to result in low ownership of projects by the grassroots.

Needs Theory and Ngo Effectiveness

An application of Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs is also vital in determining the effectiveness of NGO poverty reduction strategies. According to the theory, human needs are determining factors of human behavior. Thus, to Maslow, human needs include physiological needs which are biologically determined, safety needs which relate to freedom from bodily threat such as job security and training to acquire skills. Social needs include love, affection and a sense of belonging. Self-esteem needs however include desires of reputation, recognition and prestige. Self-actualization needs which are the highest in the hierarchy, relate to self-fulfillment and the desire to become all that one can become. Albanese et al, (1997) however categorized the human needs in a hierarchy of higher and lower level needs.

Needs of higher level are considered for satisfaction only when lower level needs such as physiological needs have been met.

The theory of hierarchy of needs highlights the complexity of human behaviour and hence the importance of needs assessment to ensure that interventions that are recommended would conform to the actual needs of the beneficiary communities. This ensures that priorities are not misplaced leading to wastage of scarce resources. It also helps to increase local community ownership of projects. Where the felt needs of beneficiaries are not identified before implementation of projects to address poverty issues, the expected outcome, which is a reduction in levels of poverty would never be realized.

Human Entitlement Sets and Poverty Reduction

However, Amartya (1986) observed that poverty is the result of inadequacies in people's entitlement and endowment sets. This is because people's entitlement and endowment sets determine

the production and exchange capacity and the development situation at the household level. According to this theory, a person is regarded as poor if his/her entitlement set does not include a commodity bundle with enough food, clothing and shelter whilst his endowment set does not also contain enough of land, labour, health and power. Thus, any effective poverty reduction strategy should target the building of people's entitlement and endowment sets.

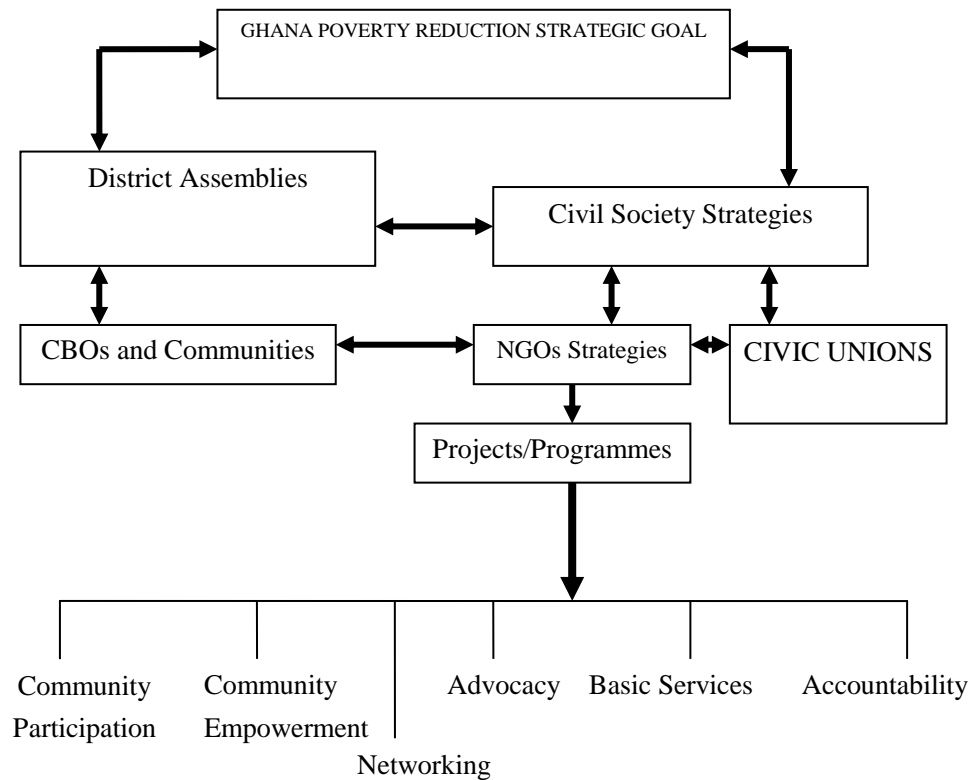
Even though the theory assumes undifferentiated household interests, this is normally not the case as both men and women in the household have different interests. Also, household poverty levels differ in terms of gender because endowment sets are not the same for men and women while the labour power of women in the household is not normally considered for their entitlement mapping.

It must be emphasized that all the theories discussed would facilitate the analysis and especially help to make an informed decision regarding the extent to which poverty reduction strategies of NGOs in the two districts are effective.

Framework for Analysis

Analysis of the effectiveness of NGO strategies in reducing poverty in the two districts focused on the linkages between government and NGO institutions as well as civic unions with regard to Ghana's poverty reduction strategic goal of enhancing the living standards of the people. In this regard, variables such as community empowerment, participation and advocacy; the nature of NGO projects, accountability and networking also form part of the framework of my analysis (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Analytical Framework



Findings

Relationship of Communities with their District Assemblies in the Development Process

People are central of every development initiative. It is therefore necessary that efforts are made to include as many people in the District Development process as possible because they are the ultimate beneficiaries of whatever output that is generated.

Relationship of Respondents to District Assembly in Development Decision-making

Effective community participation in development decision making at the district level is key to ensuring equitable distribution of resources. However, out of the 200 household respondents, only 15% indicated that their District Assemblies do not involve them in any way in taking development decisions while 74% were of the view that they have always been involved.

This implies that the decentralization process that has been introduced to bring governance closer to the grass roots is being accorded the necessary support by District Assemblies and communities. However, the fact still remains that more communities need to be involved in order to ensure that the intended benefits of decentralizing decision-making to the grass roots are shared by all. If this is not achieved, some of the communities would continue to rely on inappropriate information that would not enable them to make well informed decisions.

Stakeholder Role in Funding of Development Projects

Collaboration among stakeholders regarding funding of development projects helps to generate synergy and ensure sustainability. It also promotes fair distribution of benefits. Household

respondents in Kasena-Nankana and Builsa Districts indicated that they and other development stakeholders including NGOs contribute more funds towards their development projects than the District Assemblies. Out of 200 respondents, 38% said the projects in their communities were funded through their own contributions and those of NGOs. However, as provided in figure 3.4, 33% of the respondents indicated that projects implemented in their communities were solely funded by their District Assemblies as compared to 29% of them who noted that funding was provided by all stakeholders.

This shows that when given the opportunity, communities are prepared to partner effectively with other stakeholders in funding projects that benefit them directly. In addition to this, having contributed their quota towards funding such projects; the communities would tend to demonstrate a sense of ownership. This is because of the realization that when the projects are allowed to go waste their contribution either in cash or kind would have been wasted.

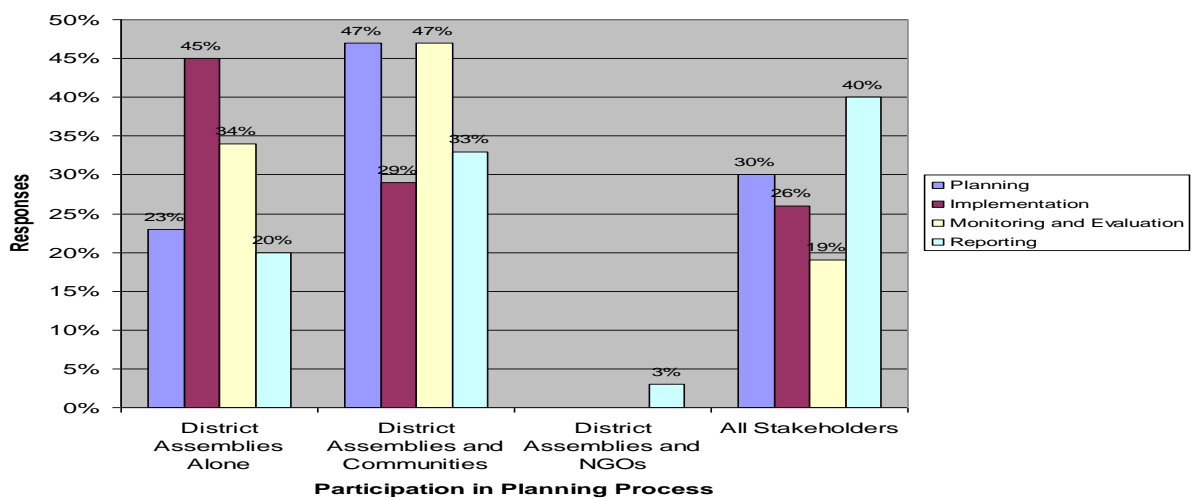
Stakeholder Participation in District Development Process

The revelation regarding the keen desire of communities to participate in funding development projects initiated by them and other partners is further buttressed by their participation in the entire development process except in monitoring and evaluation where their participation was weak. For instance, it is clear from household responses represented in figure 3.5 that where ever District Assemblies planned directly with communities, their commitment to participate was always high as compared to when the Assemblies either planned alone or with all other stakeholders.

Participation was only 30% when other stakeholders are involved in planning because the views of communities are crowded out by other stakeholders who are outspoken and believed they are more knowledgeable. The implication of this is that adequate opportunities must be created by the District Assemblies and other stakeholders for communities to make constructive contributions in the planning process without fear of being considered ignorant.

It is also evident from the chart that direct collaboration of NGOs with District Assemblies alone is non-existent except in the area of reporting where a few NGOs submit reports about their activities in the districts to the Assemblies. This situation is not healthy and makes development co-ordination very difficult leading to duplication of interventions.

Figure 3.1. Stakeholder Participation in the Development process of the Districts

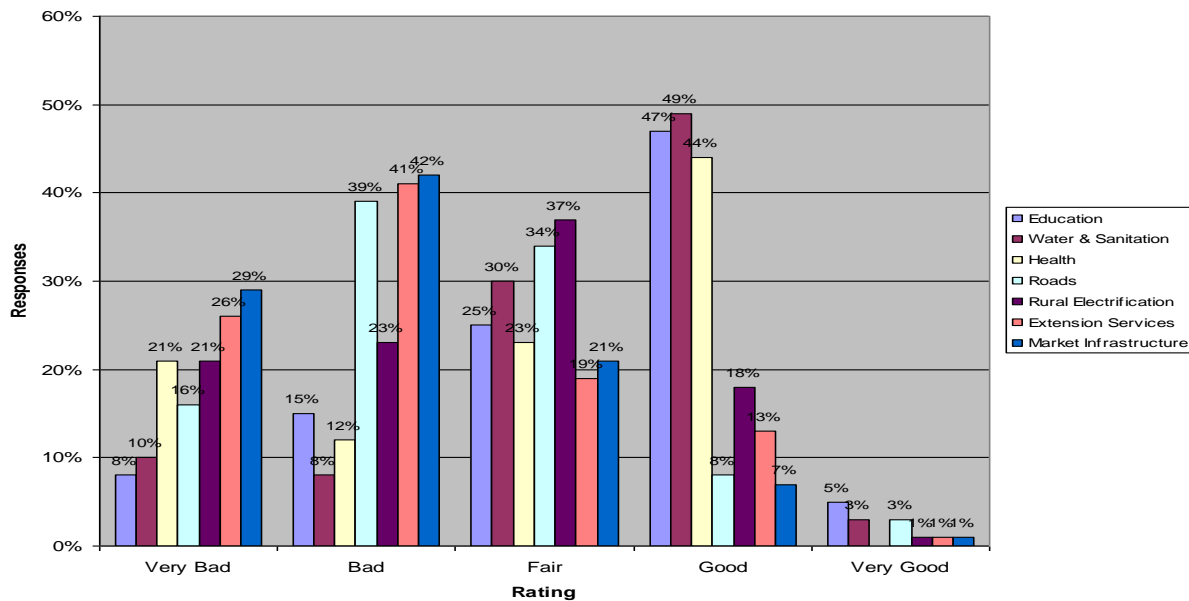


Performance Rating of District Assemblies in the Execution of Development Projects

Respondents also indicated that the performance of their District Assemblies in terms of infrastructure provision and other support services in the education, health, and water and sanitation

sub-sectors has generally been good as compared to their performance in the roads, agriculture and commercial sub-sectors. These responses as shown in figure 3.6 were given in view of the fact that agriculture is the mainstay of the people, yet the Assemblies' role in developing this sector has been said to be half-hearted. For instance, the reality is that landholdings in the two districts are low but it is possible to increase output per unit area if farmers are given the right extension services to improve on soil quality and to reduce Post Harvest Losses. However, this is not being done and majority of the farmers had no alternative than to rely on their own traditional knowledge of farming. Unfortunately, this system of farming is not generating good results. Thus, the economic empowerment that communities desired has not been a reality.

Figure 3.2 Performances Rating of District Assemblies



Community Empowerment

Community Empowerment as used here involves the capacity of communities to act on their free will to access appropriate information and to take the necessary steps aimed at ensuring that external agents working on projects in the respective communities are held accountable.

Capacity of communities to access information on Development Projects

Without the right information, communities are constrained in seeking the best development for their areas. The District Assemblies are considered as the information nerve centres. Thus, communities' capacity to visit the District Assemblies and demand access to information regarding development projects is important in this regard. Out of the sampled respondents asked whether they were capable of getting access to specific project information, only 36% responded positively.

Capacity of Communities to Hold External Agents Accountable

Accountability improves trust. However, where it is lacking, communities are expected to demand for it since their failure to do so normally leads to a situation where they lose the benefits they would have derived. In the case of the sampled respondents in the Kasena-Nankana and Builsa Districts, 200 household members who were asked what they would do when it is detected that external agents working on projects in their communities are corrupt, 5% of them said they have no power to act while 44% said they will report to the District Assemblies. Only 14% of them said they would insist that the right thing was done by the agents while 36% indicated their readiness to hold their community leaders accountable. The implication is that community members have inadequate

capacity to act on their own but would always have to rely on the District Assemblies to ensure accountability of external agents working in their communities. However, the staffs of the District Assemblies have noted that they have not been adequately equipped to be able to monitor the activities of NGOs. This therefore created a situation where NGOs operated as they deemed it fit.

Advocacy

The study also revealed that of all the respondents interviewed, 27% noted that they ever attended an Assembly session. Since 73% of the respondents said they have never attended any District Assemblies' sessions or any People's Assembly session, it can be concluded that members of the communities are incapable of acting decisively on corruption. This is because people who attended those sessions considered them as windows of opportunities for the public to demand their rights directly from the District Assemblies and other external development agents. With regards to those who attended District Assembly meetings the following comments, experiences/lessons were expressed.

1. District Assemblies normally promise a lot but deliver very little development
2. There is a gap between what we actually need and what the Assemblies sometimes provide us
3. Community mobilization is very important if we are to succeed in developing our communities
4. There is an urgent need to step up food production
5. District Assemblies are not always on the ground because of inconsistencies in Chief Executives' report
6. People were brave enough to ask questions they would dare ask the Assembly people in their offices
7. The sharing of the District Assemblies Common Fund was explained
8. They were enlightened on the steps to be taken to get support from the Assembly for their communities
9. They learnt for the first time that it is everybody's duty to report corruption in the course of development projects' execution
10. It is sometimes better for us to get to the Assembly directly to seek for redress of issues than to rely on the Assembly member
11. The success or failure of the implementation of development projects also rests on the attitude of the community members
12. The meeting was used to explain Government policies
13. There is a strong need for more dams to be constructed

Views of Communities about Poverty

The best people to describe poverty are those who experience it. In the case of the sampled respondents in the Kasena-Nankana and Builsa Districts, poverty lends itself to various descriptions and differs in terms of intensity depending on its causes. It relates to advancement in age, poor health and disability especially where there is no support from the extended family. According to the households, lack of access to land and farming inputs, low agricultural output and consequently one's inability to eat twice a day were indications of poverty. Other descriptions of poverty were people's inability to meet their food, shelter and medical needs, lack of access to land by widows,

joblessness, and lack of family support and the consumption of seed meant for the next cropping season. The rest were leaking mud huts, inadequate clothing, terminal sickness and a general sense of hopelessness in which death is considered a better option.

The communities indicated that the causes of their poverty were varied and required a four-prong attack if any impact was to be made. For instance, they cited bad weather, land fragmentation and bad personal traits such as laziness, drunkenness, womanizing and mismanagement of resources as the major causes of the incidence of poverty in the area. The detailed causes of poverty as enumerated by the respondents include widowhood, old age, ill-health, poor farm yields, high cost of farm inputs, land fragmentation and irregular rainfall as well as poor marketing systems. The rest are lack of alternative livelihoods, ignorance, laziness, drunkenness, womanizing and high cost of credit for investment.

Poverty Reduction

In spite of various interventions by District Assemblies, NGOs and communities themselves, the sampled respondents provided indications that their poverty has not reduced remarkably. As presented in table 3.3, only 32% Of the sampled respondents said poverty has reduced. As many as 49% were of the opinion that their poverty had increased while 19% said there had been no change at all.

Those households that said poverty had actually increased happen to have monthly expenditure outlays of less than GH¢99 as indicated in table 3.4. They also spent more than 80% of their income mostly on food. They also indicated that the rest of their income was spent on clothing, shelter, medical care, purchase of textbooks and uniforms for their school children. The implication of this is that virtually nothing was always left for saving as a precaution against any eventuality. This trend also implies that the sampled respondents could not build on their capital stock in order to invest on income generating ventures leading to a vicious cycle of poverty.

NGO Effectiveness

The major strategies and interventions adopted by NGOs in the two districts so as to reduce poverty were mostly long term investment projects including infrastructure provision such as the construction of hand dug wells and toilets, financial and logistics support to schools and school children, especially the girl child. Some of the strategies like limited supply of seed on credit, micro credit, donkey carts and agriculture technology transfer have immediate bearing on the economic activities of the people.

However, the respondents said these interventions were inadequate. For instance, they noted that most of them were compelled to consume the seed that was saved against the next cropping season in order to avert starvation. Their only hope was to benefit from the seed supplied by the Gia-Nabio Agro-forestry Development Organization but this was not possible because the Organization itself run out of stock. Beside this, majority of the farmers who benefited during the previous season could not pay back the principal plus the interest due to poor crop yields. They were therefore refused further supply of seed.

Another reason why the sampled respondents said the interventions of the NGOs were inadequate was related to the inability of the NGOs to introduce income generating activities as part of their interventions. This is because the respondents indicated that apart from the single cropping season which lasts for just five months, they are unemployed for the rest of the year and normally find it difficult making ends to meet. The respondents from Chiana, Katiu and Kayoro; most of whom were either harvesting wood to make charcoal for sale or hunting in the game reserves and were stopped from their trade vowed to start all over again because they felt they had not been provided alternatives by the NGOs.

The implication of this is that the gains that the NGOs made in conserving the bio-diversity would be seriously jeopardized when these people actually carry out their threats.

Apart from the above, the Hand Dug Wells that the NGOs constructed had not served respondents all year round because the wells normally dried up in March every year. This means that for up to three months the communities resorted to the use of contaminated water from ponds and streams. As a result, they contracted water borne diseases which further worsened their poverty situation.

In addition, the fact that these hand dug wells could not retain enough water for drinking meant that the opportunities for dry season gardening using the dugouts were very limited or non-existent.

Beside the inadequacy of the interventions of the NGOs cited, respondents also indicated that inappropriate targeting of the poor was one of the reasons why NGOs had not made significant impact on poverty reduction. The respondents indicated that some of members of their communities were poorer than them but the NGOs had not consciously identified such people among the poor to grant them first rate treatment. For instance, sampled respondents mentioned the terminally sick, the aged and widows as people who were very poor in the communities but because of their inability to attend meetings when staffs of the NGOs visited, their plight was mostly not considered during the introduction of poverty reduction interventions.

Effective collaboration between the District Assemblies and the NGOs was also considered a vital strategy for poverty reduction. This is because the District Assemblies had been granted the authority and responsibility to co-ordinate all development activities at the district level. As a result, whatever interventions that NGOs make were expected to complement development efforts of Government. However, the fact that sampled respondents mentioned instances where they reported faulty execution of some NGO projects to the District Assemblies only to be told that they were not aware of such NGO projects provided an indication that collaboration had been low. This implies that co-ordination of development programmes of the two stakeholders had not been effective.

In addition to the ineffective collaboration, another reason cited by respondents for the insignificant impact of NGOs on reducing poverty was that of poor accountability. NGOs were able to raise funds and other resources from donors because of the general perception that their guiding principle was service to humanity. They had also demonstrated to their donors who were mostly from the advanced countries that they could be trusted to deliver services and other support that was required to get the poor out of their predicament better than Government. However, as many as 84% of the respondents said that NGOs were not accountable to communities. This was because the NGOs hardly discussed the quantum of resources that they raised to invest in poverty reduction ventures and what was actually invested in the communities.

The District Assemblies agreed with the views of the respondents that the NGOs were, indeed, accountable but their accountability was to their donors. However, the NGOs themselves believed that they were accountable to District Assemblies, communities and their donors. The implication of this is that so long as communities and District Assemblies continued to hold suspicious opinions about the activities of NGOs, collaboration between them to reduce poverty cannot create a synergic effect in the development situation of the two districts. It was therefore against these reasons that 48% of the respondents were of the opinion that the strategies of NGOs had significantly reduced their poverty levels. Conversely, 38% of the respondents indicated that the strategies had no impact while 14% stated that they had actually ineffectively reduced poverty.

Two main reasons were given for the effectiveness of the strategies of the NGOs. The first reason was about their support in providing infrastructure such as water, places of convenience, community clinics and nutrition centres. In addition, the NGOs had also succeeded in rekindling the

communal spirit of communities in the execution of infrastructure projects in addition to the significant support given to educational institutions in the two districts especially the Girl-child Education Programme and the Quality Improvement Programme in Schools (QUIPS) as well as the School Health Programme (SHEP). These had been complemented by the Government's Capitation Programme to increase school attendance and retention in the area.

Half of the NGOs operating in the two Districts that had been reporting their activities to the District Assemblies for co-ordination purposes brought tremendous help to the districts' development process. This had been because instances where limited District Assembly resources had been spread thinly among all the communities due to lack of information about the existence of specific NGO interventions in some of the communities had been averted. As a result instances of duplication of efforts concerning NGOs that reported regularly to the District Assemblies had been non-existent.

However, the reasons that the respondents gave for the lack of effect on poverty reduction regarding NGO strategies related to respondents perception that whatever interventions NGOs brought to their communities must necessarily be tailored to meet their immediate felt needs. This assertion by the respondents is partially tenable because they must survive first before they think of the future generations. The part that they got wrong relates to the fact that without the basic infrastructure such as schools, places of convenience and clinics the phenomenon of poverty would continue to revolve round the communities.

Another reason the respondents gave for lack of effect of NGO strategies in poverty reduction was about the number of people who benefited from the interventions of NGOs. According to them, the resources invested in the communities were inadequate as compared to the population of the area. Beside this, they lamented that the poverty reduction programmes of NGOs had not been pro-poor since they had not consciously identified the poorest of the poor. For instance, the respondents noted that disaster relief items brought to the communities were rather given to people who were not considered as the poorest.

With regards to respondents who felt the strategies of NGOs were ineffective, poor co-ordination, corruption on the part of some local NGO officials and lack of income generation activities in NGO poverty reduction programmes were cited as the major reasons why their poverty situation was still serious.

The implication of this is that respondents' expectations from NGOs to support them to reduce their poverty were higher than what has been delivered. However, some progress had been made because when the respondents were given the opportunity to give a general evaluation of the performance of the NGOs, none of them said they preferred to be without the support that the NGOs had given.

Notwithstanding this general evaluation, respondents were emphatic that the NGOs could have performed better. As they had indicated, the major causes of their poverty situation were varied and required equally varied interventions simultaneously in order to achieve the significant level of poverty reduction that had been expected. This means that the NGOs were expected to have adjusted their strategies to address all the inadequacies and to have strengthened further their strong points.

Views of community groups

Focus Group Discussions were held with five different groups made of the Abambazanga Women Group who operate a poultry farm, Irrigation Farmers Group, Association of Tradesmen and Women (MOCAS), Assembly Members Group and a Group of former hunters from Kayoro all in the Kasena-Nankana District. With regards to the Builsa District, three Focus Group Discussions were held. The Discussion with irrigation farmers of the Siyagsa/Badomsa community at Wiaga was divided into male and female groups. This was done because from experience, any time men and

women were brought together in the area for a meeting, the former tended to dominate the discussions, hence the adoption of this technique to avoid such male dominance. The third group was made up of eight Assembly members of the District.

The Focus Group Discussions revealed that the participants were in agreement with the descriptions given by sampled household respondents but differ slightly from the way Assemblies perceived poverty. Participants of the Focus groups gave various descriptions of poverty.

The group of former hunters indicated that poverty includes among others the inability to eat twice a day and lack of family support. The Association of Tradesmen and Women, the Abambazanga Women Group and the Group made up of Assembly members described poverty as an inability to pay one's medical bills and also meet his/her other basic needs including food, clothing and shelter as well as physical disability. The three Irrigation farmers Groups concluded on two different notes. The Female Irrigation Farmers Group indicated that poverty was a situation of hopelessness while the Male Farmers Group emphasized the preference for death over living.

With regard to the causes of poverty, the Former Hunters Group cited soil infertility and the breakdown of the extended family system as the causes of poverty. The Association of Tradesmen and Women, the Abambazanga Women Group and the Groups of Assembly members mentioned ill-health, unemployment and laziness as the causes of poverty while the Irrigation Farmers Groups indicated low crop yields and poor marketing systems as the causes of their poverty. In terms of their coping strategies, the Former Hunters noted that since they had been stopped from hunting, the only other means of surviving the long lean season had been gathering of fuel wood and charcoal burning. This implies that the very game that the NGOs tried to protect by stopping the hunters was still being threatened by logging for the purpose of making charcoal and unless a lasting solution could be found, the previous successes achieved would have been negated.

The Association of Tradesmen and Women on the other hand were of the view that the formation of their association was a means of coping with the poverty situation since through it they were recognized by the District Assemblies and a few other NGOs who supported them occasionally with micro credit and training. The Abambazanga Women Poultry Farmers Group however indicated that their farm had been a very reliable coping strategy even though there were times when they lost a good number of their pigs as a result of disease outbreaks. In the case of the Assembly members, there was no coping strategy better than the creation of employment by Government to reduce the increased out migration of the youth to southern Ghana. The irrigation farmers also said their farming activities and fishing were their only coping strategies.

The discussants also noted that the support of the District Assemblies has been limited to infrastructure development and provision of loans to selected persons. Assembly members and Former Hunters of Kayoro argued that the District Assemblies had not performed creditably whereas the other groups thought the Assemblies had done well. The groups were however of the view that interventions of the NGOs were inadequate to reduce poverty significantly. With Regard to the relationship between Focus Group Discussants and District Assemblies in the development planning process, all the focus groups except the Irrigation Farmers were in a consensus that the District Assemblies always consulted them.

The relationship between the District Assemblies and Irrigation farmers Group was poor with respect to consultations during planning exercises. Members of this group intimated that they had not always been consulted in the planning process even though it is a fact that their contribution to food security in the area had been remarkable. They indicated that the District Assemblies had not worked hard enough to increase the number of dams and dugouts constructed to support irrigation farming and protect them from market queens from Accra who bought their tomatoes at 'give away prices'.

There was also a consensus among the groups that their relationship with the District Assemblies regarding the funding of education, water and sanitation, health and agriculture extension services was fair. They added that their relationship with the District Assemblies concerning funding of rural electrification projects was good while that of market infrastructure and creation of access to farming inputs was bad. According to them, traders always sat in the scorching sun to conduct their businesses while the District Assemblies look unconcerned and at the end of the day collected market tolls.

In the case of access to farming inputs, the groups were emphatic that the tractors procured by the District Assemblies to help interested farmers to plough their lands were not providing the intended benefits because of mismanagement.

The five focus groups rated the general performance of the District Assemblies in delivering educational and health projects as well as information sharing as good. They rated water, extension services and micro credit fair because of inadequacies in project delivery. Road construction, market infrastructure and rural electrification projects were rated bad because most communities have either not had access to such services or project execution had been delayed. The groups indicated that they had always been on the look out for lapses so that they could report to the District Assemblies to ensure that the right thing was done. They however expressed worry about the bureaucratic tendencies of District Assemblies and a high tendency of not getting good results from reported lapses since they believe the contractors and staff of the Assemblies connived to cheat communities.

Assembly members indicated that they had always consulted the District Chief Executive directly whenever contractors working on projects in their communities misconducted themselves. They cited instances where projects for their communities were awarded without their prior notice.

The Hunters Group, however, indicated the importance of their chiefs in issues of this nature.

Apart from the Association of Tradesmen and Women Group and the Abambazanga Women group whose opinion was that poverty had fairly reduced, the other three groups including the Former Hunters, Irrigation Farmers and the Assembly members said the poverty situation in the two districts was serious.

Among the five Focus Groups, only the Poultry Farmers Group indicated that the interventions of NGOs had been fairly effective at reducing poverty levels in their district. Three other groups including the Former Hunters, Irrigation Farmers and the Tradesmen and Women Groups noted that the interventions of NGOs were too meager to have made any meaningful impact on the poverty situation of the two Districts. However, the Assembly members argued that such interventions had been less effective.

All the Focus groups except the Former Hunters Group indicated that NGOs were accountable to only their donors. The Former Hunters Group was of the view that it was only the NGO operatives who held the truth about what they had done with the funds they raised with the aim of supporting needy communities.

With respect to the overall performance of the NGOs, the focus group discussions revealed that the overall performance of NGOs in reducing poverty in the two districts had been fair given their low investment in income generation activities as compared to infrastructure provision.

Views of Non-Governmental Organisations

Questionnaires were administered to ten NGOs to determine how effectively their strategies were contributing to poverty reduction in the Kasena-Nankana and Builsa Districts. Apart from the Rural Women Association (RUWA), none of the NGOs gave indications that they had targeted the poorest of the poor. UNICEF and New Horizon were the only NGOs that focused specifically on the

development of children. None of the NGOs worked specifically in support of the youth and the aged.

Description of Poverty by NGOs

NGOs also described poverty in various terms including inability to satisfy life-sustaining needs, deprivation of every sort, inability to live decent lives and lack of opportunities to make life worth living (see table 3.3).

The Effectiveness of the Strategies of NGOs

Three of the NGOs including the two international NGOs indicated that their strategies were very effective in reducing poverty while the other seven NGOs stated that their strategies were fairly effective.

The NGOs however gave various reasons why they stated that they had been effective at reducing poverty. Rural Aid for instance indicated that its partnership with the Kasena-Nankana District Assembly and the communities had contributed in increasing water coverage from 56% to 67%. Other NGOs cited increasing demand by communities for their support, increasing donor support and reduction in the cost of fertilizing farms as some of their achievements. The two international NGOs cited increased school attendance of girls as one of their achievements.

Relationship between NGOs and District Assemblies

Apart from RUWA, which stated that as a result of the role it played in identifying lapses in the utilization of HIPC resources; senior officials of the Kasena-Nankana District Assembly had consistently sidelined it in very important programmes, the rest of the NGOs said they maintained good relations with the District Assemblies in the areas of planning, reporting, attendance of meetings and capacity building.

In the case of meetings, such as People's Assembly Sessions, only UNICEF and GAIT noted that they had the opportunity to address the people. The rest of the eight NGOs had merely observed proceedings. They however said such meetings enabled people to express their worries regarding activities of external agents in their communities.

Roles Played by Communities in Project Initiation, Planning and Implementation Process

The NGOs mentioned that communities had been active in identifying their needs and mobilizing their members to provide communal labour. For example, much emphasis were placed on the leadership role that target communities assumed during the identification of needs and contributions in kind such as construction materials like sand and stones that are readily available in the localities.

NGOs Networking

Each of the NGOs mentioned the existence of other NGOs in the communities where they operated but apart from the coalition of NGOs providing water and sanitation infrastructure, the rest of them have not had any formal relations. The implication of this is that a fertile ground had been created for duplication of efforts. RUWA for instance indicated an instance where another NGO receiving support from the same donor reported on projects that it did not execute.

Discussion of Projects with District Assemblies in the presence of Communities

Only four out of the ten NGOs reported that they had been discussing issues regarding their projects at meetings where the communities were also present to contribute. This provided an indication that linkages between NGOs, District Assemblies and communities, were not the best.

The NGOs however expected that the District Assemblies would withdraw the 5% cash contribution that communities were expected to make as counterpart funding for the provision of water and sanitation infrastructure. According to them, this practice deterred many communities who genuinely need such services from accessing them. They also expected that District Assemblies would be more open and eschew bureaucracy while embracing whatever little support that NGOs provided. The NGOs, however, expected that communities would lobby their District Assemblies and be more assertive on their rights and report corruption promptly. They were also expecting communities to work hard to reduce their dependence on external support.

NGO Rating of Relations with District Assemblies

Out of all the NGOs that responded, 60% of them rated their relations with District Assemblies as effective. However, 30% of the NGOs stated that relations with the Assemblies are just effective while 10% indicated that such relationship was less effective. This rather high level of effectiveness presented by the NGOs had been refuted by the District Assemblies and sampled household respondents.

Rating of Relations with Communities

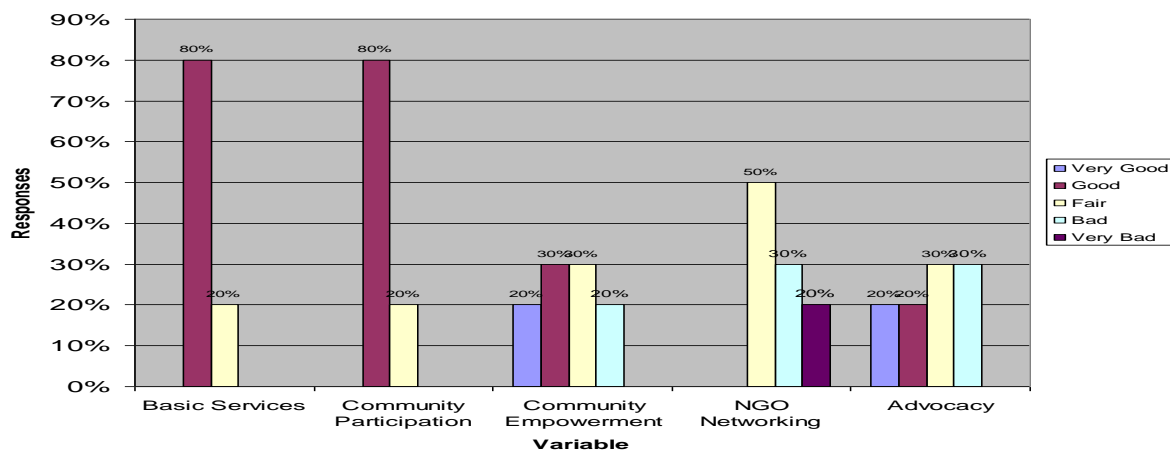
Out of all the NGOs surveyed, 70% of them stated that they enjoyed their relations with the target communities and rated their relations with them as effective while 30% of the NGOs said relations with the communities had been just effective. With regards to their accountability records, all the NGOs surveyed were emphatic that they had been accountable. However, 50% of them indicated that they were accountable to their target communities and donors while the other 50% of them said they were accountable to their donors, Board of Directors, Government and their donors other than communities.

The NGOs gave various reasons why they had always strived to be accountable. These included the need to gain the trust and support of people who were considered strategic to the continuous survival of their organizations. They added that without rendering account of their activities it was not possible for them to meet their goals. Beside this, they indicated that they owed allegiance to communities on whose behalf funds were raised for investment in poverty reduction projects. GAIT for instance noted that the communities had a right to demand for NGO accountability. Above all, the NGOs concluded that their donors were their live wire without whom there would be no funds to operate while their Board of Directors had the responsibility to control the running of the organizations. The implication is that accountability of NGOs to their target communities remained an issue that must be addressed properly before people will repose all their trust on them.

Overall Performance Rating of the NGOs

The rating done by the NGOs indicated that their strongest area was the provision of basic services and enlisting of community participation. They were weak in community empowerment, networking and advocacy. For instance, 70% of the NGOs rated their own performance in the provision of basic services as good. In the case of community participation, 80% of the NGOs rated their performance as good. This compared dismally with the other areas where not more than 40% of the NGOs rated themselves as either good or very good. Instead, they rated their performances as either fair or bad. This trend is depicted in figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3 Overall Performance of NGOs in Kasena-Nankana and Builsa Districts



Having run correlations between responses on the level of poverty reduction and household weekly expenditure levels, the result was a correlation coefficient of 0.9 and a coefficient of determination of 0.81. This means that 81% of the variation of household expenditure can be explained by the poverty situation in the two districts. This means 19% of the variation in household expenditure is explained by other factors.

In a similar vein, when responses on the level of poverty reduction was correlated with responses on the effectiveness of the relationship between District Assemblies, communities and NGOs, a correlation coefficient of 0.94 was the result. This gave a coefficient of determination of 0.88 meaning that 88% of the variations in the responses on poverty reduction were explained by that on the relationship between the three major stakeholders in the development process in Builsa and Kasena-Nankana Districts.

The last correlation was done between the effectiveness of the strategies of NGOs and responses on the level of Poverty Reduction. Here, a correlation coefficient of 0.87 was the result while the coefficient of determination was 0.76. This also gave an indication that 76% of the variation in the responses relating to the level of poverty reduction could be explained by the effectiveness of the interventions of NGOs in reducing poverty in the study area. Only 24% of that variation was explained by other factors.

Consequently, given the high correlation coefficients realized, it was clear that extraneous factors had very little influence on the results and that they were a reflection of the situation in the two districts, which was that the poverty situation of the people had barely reduced in spite of the strategies adopted by NGOs to fight it.

Conclusion

In the face of increasing global social and economic challenges, Governments in Africa and Ghana in particular could no longer adequately cater for the needs of the people and NGOs have stepped in to plug the gaps by contributing to poverty reduction. This task has, however, been a daunting one since the effectiveness of the strategies of NGOs dictates whether or not they would succeed in reducing poverty.

The Upper East Region has been one of the four spots in Ghana where poverty is defying interventions so far. The fundamental question that required an answer has been why this trend of affairs? Could it possibly be that the collaboration between stakeholders was not effective or the strategies of the NGOs have not been effective?

A desk study and a field survey of NGOs and communities, interviews with staff of the Kasena-Nankana and Builsa District Assemblies as well as discussions with groups of people who formed part of civil society in the area provided answers to the questions.

The literature showed that there has not been any remarkable reduction in poverty in the two districts even though NGO numbers have increased dramatically. This has been attributed to ineffective targeting of the poor, poor accountability on the part of NGOs and weak collaboration between NGOs and local government authorities.

The literature however pointed the fact that local people can be self-reliant if they are given the right motivation and facilitation and empowered through the building of social capital.

Results of the field survey, however, indicated that collaboration between NGOs and District Assemblies is low and that the latter need to improve their strategies and increase their investments in the districts in order to make a significant impact on poverty reduction.

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