NGOs AND POVERTY REDUCTION: A CASE STUDY OF DANISH AND GHANAIAN NGOs IN GHANA.

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Geraldine Aku Addo

Supervised by Abdulkadir Osman Farah

ABSTRACT

The development paradigm is constantly changing in the face of diverse interconnected factors such as globalization. These changes are deemed to affect NGOs poverty reduction efforts. NGOs have the objective to pursue the needs of the poor and keep multiplying in numbers. However, there is a significant proportion of people still living in poverty, despite progress in cutting extreme poverty. Thus, leading to waning legitimacy of NGOs amidst their increasing popularity. In view of the above, the objective of this research was to assess the significance of NGOs by thoroughly examining their operations towards poverty reduction and its integral components, instead of only examining their impacts.

This thesis applies qualitative method, through interviews and case study. It captures the perceptions, activities and experiences of three selected Ghanaian and Danish NGOs each. The diversity of Ghanaian and Danish NGOs, enriched the study by capturing variety of NGOs' operations as development actors. Theoretical instruments that informed data collection and analysis include Civil Society, NGO, Resource dependency, and Empowerment theories. This enhanced provision of insight on the character and trajectory of NGOs' poverty reduction activities.

The study concludes that NGOs are indeed still significant to poverty reduction in Ghana under an extensive civil society space. They do this by playing a critical role, considering their prevailing revamp of developmental approaches in reducing poverty. However, their rapidly diminishing credibility remains a problem due to several issues depicting ambivalence, and suspicious behaviours. Their constructive complementary relationship with the State, is characterised by amiable cooperation; strong voice of NGOs in demanding accountability to the poor; and independence of NGOs from the State. Their relationship is not void of disparities but is amiable, in light of tremendous improvement from tensed relationship in the revolutionary days of NGOs.

Furthermore, dependence on global funding for survival constrain the resources of NGOs in Ghana. Since Ghana has declared middle income status, that global funding channel is drying up. Ghanaian NGOs compared to Danish NGOs suffer from some level of financial constrain. Aside being an indispensable financial muscle, donors were identified as pivotal to poverty reduction, due to their influence on development transformations of NGOs. This resource challenge can be overcome by effective diversification of NGOs' resource channels, to support their activities.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to all the people who are passionate about making constant efforts to fight against world poverty, especially in Africa. Also, to all the representative of NGOs who gave me the opportunity to interview them.

I also dedicate this work to my NGO, Global Alliance for Poverty Reduction (GAPR), and all its members. The core of my interest in undertaking this project was as a result of my work experience as the Executive Director of GAPR. I dedicate this work as an inspiration for future collaborative work in fighting against poverty.

ACKNOWLEGEMENT

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CBO	Community Based Organisation
CSO	Civil society organisation
CS	Civil Society
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DNGO	Developmental Non-Governmental Organisations
ERP	Economic Recovery Program
GPRS	Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisations
IMF	International Monetary Foundation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
PAMSCAD	Program of Action to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment
PRSPs	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
SWAPs	Sector – Wide Approaches
UN	United Nations
WB	World Bank

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

1.0   Background Information

"Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon. It is the deprivation of one's ability to live as a free and dignified human being with the full potential to achieve one's desired goals in life. It also includes the concept of vulnerability, which is the likelihood that people will fall into poverty owing to shocks to the economic system or personal mishaps, and the concept of social exclusion, which focuses on the lack of participation of individuals or groups in society…" (Ferguson, 2011)

Poverty is detrimental to development, and therefore an issue that needs to be dealt with. Over 3 billion people, constituting almost half of the world live on less than $2.50 a day (Shah, 2014). In spite of commendable world efforts to fight poverty, it still prevails as a major problem. In 2015, world leaders agreed to take serious actions against extreme poverty, hunger and disease, by adopting the next set of anti-poverty goals called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2017). Poverty is the first goal among others, which signifies global urgency to tackle it. Notwithstanding, nation States have individual obligations to develop strategies, and ensure connection of relevant agents, stakeholders and resources to achieve this goal.

Poverty reduction has become the primary objective of development interventions across much of the developing world, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013). The work of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) often surfaces in poverty reduction discussions, aside that which is done by States. The role of NGO's in alleviating poverty is increasing, and they are rapidly emerging as important actors and players in international politics and economic order (Sohel, et al., 2007), and contributors to the realisation of development (Lewis & Kanji, 2009; Adjei Osei-Wusu, et al., 2012).

Developing countries especially, are major attractions to NGOs, evident in their increasing number in these countries. Kenya for example, has witnessed a substantial increase in the number of NGOs, form 125 in 1974 to over 4200 in 2006 (Brass, 2012, p. 387). Similarly, the number of NGOs in Ghana has grown steadily over the years, and currently with an estimate of about 900 to 1500 are present in the country (Bob-Milliar, 2005). This is because, NGOs are seen as quite effective in undertaking constructive experimentation at understanding and responding to the problems of ordinary people, including the poor (Manor, 2004, p. 9). With

support from donors, they provide services to vulnerable individuals and communities and also play the role of advocates.

The language of the Ghanaian government has always been 'government cannot do this alone', and indeed they do not, as aside other actors, NGOs have significantly contributed to poverty decline of the country over the years. The poverty trends of Ghana since the 1990s shows massive strides in reduction of extreme poverty. In 2006 impressive progress was made in cutting extreme poverty (from 16.5% to 8.4%). Between 1992 and 2013 Ghana's national level of poverty fell by more than half (from 56.5% to 24.2%), thereby achieving the MDG1 target, confirming that more progress for the poor has been made over the years (Cooke, et al., 2016, p. 1).

Majority of these NGOs are located in the poorest regions, with majority of the poor population. Thus, the three northern regions, namely; Upper East, Upper West and Northern regions. (Adjei Osei-Wusu, et al., 2012). However, since Accra is the capital city with most resources and exposure, majority of these NGOs (although operating in various regions in the country), have their headquarters located in this city.

1.1   Problem formulation

The world development report in 1990 with its black cover had its main theme as poverty, and in that, the issue of poverty, accountability, civil society being a complementary plan, came out very strongly (World Bank, 1990) . The awakening debut of NGOs as players in development since the 1990s, has however been accompanied with transformations. These transformations of course do not occur in isolation, but are largely connected to a country's development. Correspondingly, the operations of development actors, inclusive of NGOs, will also be affected. Is this however the case? And how have NGOs responded to this change in their work to reduce poverty? Their increasing exposure as developmental actors is accompanied with spotlight and progressively having to face and respond to concerns about their legitimacy and importance to development. And thus, increased scepticism from civil society about their relevance (Lewis & Opoku-Mensah, 2006).

Furthermore, despite the influx of NGOs in Ghana, a large poverty margin prevails in various communities. "More than 2.2 million Ghanaians (based on 2010 PHC projections) cannot afford to feed themselves with 2,900 calories per adult equivalent of food per day, even if they

were to spend all their expenditures on food. Although the absolute number living in extreme poverty has reduced over time, poverty is still quite high given the fact that Ghana is considered to be a lower middle income country" (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014, p. 12). A significant proportion of the Ghanaian population are still living in poverty despite influx of various NGOs who claim to be working on improving the lives of the poor. Why is this so? How are NGOs operating then if this is the case?

Research on NGOs relevance in development has been rife over the years with considerable studies on the changes NGOs can make as well as their challenges. As growing important players in development, with increasing surveillance from the microscopes of society, it is imperative to constantly assess the significance of NGOs to development. However, instead of just narrowly focusing on their impacts, this study assesses the significance of NGOs by thoroughly examining their operations towards poverty reduction and its integral components.

My study combines Domestic (Ghanaian) NGOs and INGOs (Danish NGOs). I specifically used Danish NGOs because, Denmark's long developmental partnership with Ghana, inclusive of the works of Danish NGOs provides fertile grounds for the research. Also, although good research about NGOs in Ghana has been done, studies combining these categories of NGOs are not common. The diversity enriches the study by capturing a wide variety of processes and transformational patterns of NGOs poverty reduction efforts. It also, provides a more diversified and strong assessment of the significance of NGOs in poverty reduction. Analysis hinges on the sub research questions and some **elemental themes[1]** which influence their operations. The importance of this is not to replicate reliance on after-the-fact judgements of NGOs output effectiveness but, provide an in depth unlimited perspective and current contribution to existing knowledge. The end goal is to attain the main objective which is **to examine whether NGOs are still significant in poverty reduction**.

The project is envisaged to provide comprehensive insight on the processes of NGO operations in reducing poverty. Also, to highlight key transformations, and true essence of NGOs poverty reduction in Ghana, through identification of similarities and differences among selected

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[1] These include; Background of NGOs; Perspective of NGOs on poverty and the poor; Approaches and strategies; Interventions; Cooperation with the State; Indispensability of donors; Efficiency (accountability; monitoring and evaluation); and Disparities of NGOs poverty reduction efforts.

NGOs. Furthermore, to unearth certain defects and pitfalls, to enlighten and enhance lessons for NGOs and other developmental actors, upon which prompt actions can be taken.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. ***Chapter one*** provides the foundational departure of the project and sets the tone for other chapters, by oulining the intent, context and justification of the project. ***Chapter two*** forms the roadmap of the project and depicts the overall process of the research and steps taken to tackle the objective of the research. The study mainly used qualitative method, involving the collection of both primary and secondary data on NGOs in Ghana, based on the research questions. The first includes data collected through unstructured interviews. Whereas the latter includes information obtained from reports, articles, and documents from NGOs' websites, through desk research on NGOs. Key representatives of Ghanaian and Danish case study NGOs were interviewed. Also, NGOs were selected based on years of experience in developmental work (especially poverty reduction), as well as accessibility.

Chapter three constitutes of the literature review, and theoretical perspectives that emanated from the review. The literature review took a general to specific approach, by looking at the general overview of NGOs, their work, and then narrows down to the specific case of Ghana. In order to provide more context for the research, a historical background of NGOs in Ghana was presented, with subsequent literature on the poverty situation in Ghana, and an account of poverty reduction efforts of Ghanaian and Danish NGOs in reducing poverty. Thus, demonstrating the link between NGOs and poverty reduction. Different classifications of NGOs were identified based on labels, activites and structure. However, the goal of pursuing interests of the poor was common among the various scholarships.

Subsequently, Theoretical dispositions, namely; Civil Society (CS); NGO; Resource dependency; and Empowerment, identified through review of literature were discussed. The CS theory depicts the evolution of CS from unstructured to more structured entitites, thus NGOs. Arguments of NGOs being effective channels of alternative development , as well as their complex relationship with the State, is displayed by the NGO theory. In terms of stakeholder relationships, the resource dependency theory, helps us to undertstand the actions and decision making of NGOs, in view of their dependence on important resources. This mainly projects NGOs relationship with donors, by asserting the influence of donors on the operations of NGOs.

Lastly, the empowerment theory furthers understanding of NGOs' activities in poverty reduction by highlighting different dimensions of empowerment of the poor.

Chapter four is comprised of presentation, analysis and discussion of empirical data. This is presented in a systematic manner, in light of research sub questions and elemental themes derived from data. Findings are subsequently summarised, using derivative research arguments. The main argument derived from the findings is that NGOs are critical development actors in poverty reduction, but their waning legitimacy does not reassure positive implication in the lives of the poor. Additionally, donors have an extensive dominace over NGOs, not because of strict demands, but because NGOs are financially heavily dependent on them. The study found that the current rights based approach of NGOs, involving increased advocacy and capacity building is the most sustainable way of reducing poverty. Thus, previous service provision activities have drastically dimished and changed to advocacy, where NGOs are able to dilligently ensure accountabilty of the State to the poor, through amiable interactions.

They therefore do not replace the responsibilities of the State, but create awareness and function as a strong alternative voice in development. NGOs therefore have a constructive complementary relationship with the State. More so, donors were identified as the financial muscle upon which NGOs survival is greatly dependent. Also, the study found certain disparities in NGOs poverty reduction efforts, which negatively affects their credibility and legitimacy. These include; ambivalent downward accountability; hierarchical relationship; dysfunctions; participatory gap; and heavy dependence coupled with shrinking financial assistance. Lastly, Contributions, complementations and contradictions of research findings to existing scholarship, were presented.

In *Chapter 5*, the study concludes that NGOs are still significant development actors in fighting poverty in Ghana despite their shortcomings. They are critical to poverty reduction as they facillitate poverty reduction through their pro poor inclinations and multifaceted view of poverty. Nevertheless, their efforts can be advanced by focusing on improving their representativeness of the poor. Furthermore, their constructive complementary relationship with the State suggests, critical function as State watchdogs, and mutual dependence, with greater independence of NGOs. They are independent in the sense that although they cooperate with, and complement the activties of the State, the State does not dictate their operations. The study also concluded the pivotal function of donors in NGOs poverty reduction. NGOs

independence in their relationship with donors is however weak, as donors have much influence over their actions.

1.2   Research Question
Are NGOs still significant development actors in fighting poverty in Ghana?

1.3   Sub research questions
- How do NGOs work on reducing poverty?

- To what extent has the role of NGOs in poverty alleviation changed?

- To what extent do NGOs cooperate with the State in reducing poverty?

1.4   Research Propositions
- The work of NGOs (both international and national) has made government reluctant to effectively tackle poverty.

- NGOs will not survive without donor support.

CHAPTER TWO - METHODOLOGY

2.0   Research Design

The aim of the project was to assess the significance of NGOs in poverty reduction, by thoroughly examining their operations and its integral components. The literature review captured the diverse perspectives of existing scholarship on NGOs, their work, and link to poverty reduction. I reviewed literature firstly by exploring and giving a general overview of what NGOs are and their work. This was then narrowed down to focus on NGOs in Ghana and their work in reducing poverty (specifically Danish and Ghanaian NGOs). My method of reviewing literature was done in a descending order, thus from general to specific.

In connection with reviewing literature, theoretical perspectives, namely; NGO and Civil Society; Resource dependency; and Empowerment theories were identified. The theories were used as an analytical tool to analyse and discuss research findings. The civil society and NGO theories illustrated the dynamic evolution of NGOs and their role as development actors. Whereas the resource dependency and empowerment theories captured the behaviour and decision-making nature of NGOs in relation to donors and the poor respectively. The study was a combination deduction and induction.

Deductive because, in the beginning, theories informed empirical data collection, and was also linked to confirmation, complementarity or contradiction in empirical analysis. Furthermore, the explorative nature of my qualitative study generated some different perspectives to existing theory, thereby depicting induction. As one scholar argues, "both extremes are untenable and unnecessary" and that the process of ongoing theory advancement requires "continuous interplay" between the two (Parke, 1987 in Perry & Oystein, 2001, p. 1). Similarly, I found it difficult to separate the two approaches in my research as they are both linked. Although my aim was not to develop grounded theories, I was open to the possibility of new discoveries which could contribute or contradict existing theories. It must also be noted that the deductive approach was not to test theory, but to use existing theories to as much as possible, get a full explanation of the problem and its associated (DeVaus, 2001, in Skjoldborg, 2010, p. 17).

The project is also a multiple case study, as it used different NGOs as case studies. Multiple case study apporach strenthens and increases the robustness of research results and findings (Vohra, 2014, p. 55). Belshaw & Coyle (2001) used this method in their study on "poverty reduction in ethiopia and the role of NGOs" to a productive end. I collected data on six (three

of each) Ghanaian and Danish NGOs operating in Ghana. In the sociological field, the approach of combining different perspectives provides an analytical framework for examining (and explaining) social and cultural differences, issues and speificity. The diversified nature of NGOs produced enriched findings on the integral components of NGOs poverty reduction operations.

2.1   Data Sources and Methods

I used the qualitative research approach for my study, mainly in the form of interviews. This enhanced a thorough assessment of NGOs poverty reduction efforts. Through the interviews I was able to actively indulge respondents and get information which are normally not captured in reports and web materials. Consistent with Dawson (2002), qualitative research enhances in-depth exploration of attitudes and behaviour of respondents leading to in-depth opinions and findings.

In order to enrich the quality of the thesis, both primary and secondary data together with theoretical perspectives, were used. This reflects methodological triangulation which is "beneficial in providing confirmation of findings, more comprehensive data, increased validity and enhanced understanding of the studied phenomenon" (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012, p. 40). All the research methods have their unique weaknesses, as a result the use of triangulation was efficient in providing a balance which enhanced efficiency of the study outcome. By using this method, I was able to support information from the interviews with that from reports, newsletters among others. And also, use theoretical perspectives to inform my empirical data collection and analysis.

Secondary data included books, reports, and articles. These materials were found on different platforms and sources ranging from electronic to physical. Worth mentioning are NGO reports and newsletters, NGO websites, Aalborg University Library, JSTOR, Google books, Google Scholar and Aalborg University E-library –Primo. These were very advantageous as it provided me with a wide pool of invaluable research materials, which greatly inspired my literature review and desk research about NGOs.

A combination of convenience and judgement/purposeful sampling was used in selecting NGOs. The latter involves selecting a productive sample to answer research questions. And in this study, it was specifically based on the amount of years' experience in developmental work

(especially poverty reduction). The former on the other hand is based on accessibility. This method was used since although a number of Danish NGOs operate in Ghana, just a few of them have offices in Ghana. Furthermore, the sample was selected from the capital city (Accra), because the offices of most experienced Ghanaian NGOs and INGOs (Danish) are located there. However, they have representatives (commonly known as field workers) in other localities, both rural and urban. In qualitative research the goal is not to generalise and work with a large population. Instead, it focuses on a smaller group of people relevant to provide acumen on the behaviour of the wider research population (Dawson, 2002). This adequately supports my use of a small sample size.

2.2   Case Study

The case of this thesis was to examine the significance of NGOs in poverty reduction, in the lens of their operations and its integral components. This was done through a comparative study of Danish and Ghanaian NGOs in Ghana. A case study is defined as "an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units" (Gerring, 2004, p. 342). In this case study, the main unit of analysis is NGOs, with the State and donors as sub units. Although findings cannot be concluded as exclusively representative of all NGOs in Ghana, they provide a fairly valid portrayal of NGOs (both Danish and Ghanaian).

2.3   Interviews

The semi-structured interview approach was used. This enabled me to conduct organised and structured, yet flexible interviews. Similarly, scholars (Belshaw & Coyle, 2001; Adjei, et al., 2009; Christensen, 2010) successfully used this approach in their research. It enhanced versatility and conversational manner of interviews, offering respondents the chance to explore important issues and provide in-depth information (Clifford, et al., 2016). My interview guide was inspired by both main and sub research questions aligned with the objective. Data collected was subsequently coded to derive patterns and meanings necessary for analysis of data (ReadingCraze, 2014).   I coded by reading through transcripts thoroughly, highlighted important responses, identified common terms among responses and finally categorised them into themes. These include; Background of NGOs; Perspective of NGOs on poverty and the poor; Approaches and strategies; Interventions; Cooperation with the State; Indispensability of donors; Efficiency (accountability; monitoring and evaluation); and Disparities of NGOs poverty reduction efforts. These themes in conjunction with sub research questions, provided structure for data analysis and discussion. For the purposes of proficiency, transcriptions of the

interviews have been attached as appendices. The table below shows the various NGOs that were interviewed.

ORGANISATION	DATE
CARE Denmark	06/04/2017
	10/04/2017
Ghana Venskab	06/04/2017
Oxfam IBIS Ghana	20/04/2017
Send Ghana	21/ 04/2017
Hope for Future Generation	09/ 05/2017
Socioserve Ghana	10/05/2017

Table 2.1: Table showing the NGOs used as research case study.

2.4   Limitations and Biases

One major limitation was the difficulty in reaching respondents due to busy schedules. Most of the NGOs gave the excuse of being too busy to grant an interview. However, upon persistence, this challenge was overcome. Another challenge was the inadequate database systems of Ghanaian organisations. This made it difficult or impossible to access certain relevant information.

Furthermore, personal bias, one of the six biases identified by Robert Chambers, which suggests possible subjectivity of a researcher, was very crucial to me during my research (Chambers, 2008). This is because of my position as an academic and heavy involvement in civic (NGO) work. Currently I am a co-founder and executive director of an NGO that I am actively involved in. As a result, this topic was sensitive for me. However, my research and academic obligation required maintenance of objectivity, in order to produce reliable results. Although this was difficult, I made a strong decision as a point of departure, to neglect any personal and subjective opinions tied to my engagement in the NGO society. The positive side of this bias however is that; I was able to effectively communicate with my respondents due to my considerable knowledge and experience in NGO work.

CHAPTER THREE (3) – LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

3.0 Literature Review

3.1 What are NGOs?

Definitions of what constitutes NGOs vary, as there is no widely shared definition. They are an extremely diverse group of organisations that take different shapes and forms within and across different country contexts (Lewis & Kanji, 2009; Lang, 2013). Sohel (2007), defines an NGO as "a legally constituted organization created by natural or legal persons that operates independently from any government and a term usually used by governments to refer to entities that have no government status" (Sohel, et al., 2007, p. 3). The NGO phenomenon amidst its multifaceted categorisation and definition has an underlying notion of bringing about some form of change. Lang (2013) constructively summarises this in her work by outlining shared characteristics of NGOs as "not related to government; not for profit; voluntary; and pursue activities for the common good instead of just for their members", all of which take the form of either service provision or advocacy of public policy (Lang, 2013, p. 12).

NGOs sprung up and increased since World War II, despite the previous long formation of voluntary groups for survival, commercial, spiritual, cultural and other purposes (Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern World, 2008). The United Nations in 1945 was the first to use the term "NGO" when it made a distinction in its charter between the participation of intergovernmental agencies and non-government associated groups (Lewis & Kanji, 2009; Lang, 2013, p. 10). In recent times, when we hear or think about voluntary actions, the first concept that comes to mind is NGOs. From media broadcasts about disaster assistance, to mere billboard advertisement of the hungry looking and deprived child (most often than not from Africa), screams NGO! This is because all charitable related actions are associated with the works of NGOs. Although the popular term is NGO, the terminological database of describing charitable and aid related actions is immensely diverse.

In their work on NGOs and development, Lewis & Kanji, put forward that, the different terms used sometimes reflect the different types of NGO. An example is the important distinction usually made between grassroots or membership NGOs, composed of people organizing to advance their own interests; and intermediary NGOs, made up of people working on behalf or in support of a marginalized group (Lewis & Kanji, 2009). Other authors also assert the importance of making a distinction between developmental NGOs and membership-based organisations, especially when assessing transformative potential. Thus, emphasising the

difference in their defining attributes (Banks, et al., 2015, p. 708). Further studies also show that based on the ideas of world institutions, NGOs are classified as the third sector, amongst the first and second sectors, being government and profit businesses respectively (Lewis & Kanji, 2009). This third sector comprises of several organisations whose social functions are categorised between government and the market. Lewis &Kanji (2009) to further project the diversity of terminologies used in the third sector, outline list of names for NGOs, to reflect a range of different but comparable labels within different contexts, traditions and cultures. It must however be noted that the main focus of my work is not the diversified labels of NGOs, but processes of their poverty reduction efforts. Although considering its variegated nature.

Other terminologies such as Grass-roots organisations, community based organizations (CBOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), all became popularized as an expression of new politics. However, difficulty in determining their level of operations (whether local, national or international) creates ambiguity. Activities of grass-roots and community organisations refer solely to the local level, whereas civil society can be associated with any level within as country (Willetts, 2002). According to a report published by Sida, 'civil society' "includes everything between and including big non-governmental organisations and small, informally structured organisations that handfuls of villagers form in remote areas of a less developed country" (Manor, 2004, p. 7). For example, in India, the definition includes a variety of groups, ranging from associations of ex-untouchables, poor women's self-help groups, to big landlords' associations.

Despite the different levels of NGOs, they all still have a similar driving force, which is to pursue the interests of the poor. The important point, is not the level of their operations, but their level of impact in the lives of the poor. The fact that the outputs of these NGOs may differ due to differences in their level of operations and capacities cannot be disputed. However, in spite of all these, the activities of NGOs contribute to improving the lives of the poor all over the world. For example, the Foundation for Sustainable Development (FSD) in California, supports over 50 community-based organisations to offer primary services to the needy. However, despite common training topics, training opportunities differ between regions and organization ((Foundation for Sustainable Development, 2016). Also, In Bangladesh, all the pro-poor CSOs were able to reach about 20% of the population (Manor, 2004). Whether CSO, Community Based Organisations (CBOs), or grass-roots, their poverty reduction efforts remain a priority.

3.2   NGOs and their work

The profiles of NGOs have improved over the years, and they are recognised as important development actors at local, regional and international levels. NGOs have gained notable prominence in the provision of public goods and developmental assistance (Lewis &Kanji, 2009, p. 1; McGuire, 2013, p. 706). Upswing of NGO recognition can be partly attributed to their assumed ability to fill gaps in service-delivery as well as their drive and tenacity in pursuing transformative agendas and equal relationships, through their people centred approaches (Holmen & Jirstrom, 2009; McGuire, 2013; Banks, et al., 2015, p. 10). They have also gained recognition in the economic and political world as important actors in international political economy, based on projections of significant increases in numbers, membership, activities and financial resources. This growth has been stimulated by globalization, as international policy coordination propelled political activity at the international level (Hudson, 2000; Mcguire, 2013, p. 706).

Although terminological categorisation of NGOs appears to be rigid, classification of its activities is diversified and cannot be sharply divided as their labels portray. They engage in several humanitarian activities that are most often aimed at the deprived and vulnerable in the society. Despite this general drive behind their work, NGOs have experienced some transformations since its inception. Most scholars categorised their activities as service delivery, advocacy, and developmental oriented work (Hill, 2005; Mcguire, 2013).

3.2.1 Service delivery

NGOs are known to be involved in providing services (such as clothing, food, etc.) to the poor. They have the ability to fill in the gaps in society through mobilization of resource to provide services for those who need them (Willets, 2002; Lewis & Kanji, 2009; Banks, et al., 2015). In spite of the tedious and complex nature of their service provision activities, engaging in such activities has boosted the recognition of NGOs as capable channels. And over the last two decades, have been increasingly contracted by governments and donors to undertake specific tasks in return for payment (Lewis & Kanji, 2009). Add some example from the Ethiopian studies on poverty reduction

3.2.2 Advocacy

The advocacy element of NGO activities is also very popular, as various NGOs have been seen to take the leading role in enforcing and demanding change in various ways. In relation to this authors have classified them as catalysts; campaigning; advocacy; political and having civil society functions (Hudson, 2000; Willetts, 2002; Lewis & Kanji, 2009; Holmen & Jirstrom, 2009; Banks, et al., 2015). According to Lewis &Kanji (2009), the catalytic nature of NGOs is evident in their ability to bring about positive transformation by facilitating agendas and contributing to improved thinking and action amongst individuals, groups, local communities or other stakeholders in developments such as government, businesses or donors. (Willetts, 2002; Banks, et al., 2015).

Through advocacy activities, NGOs act as a voice for the poor. Their advocacy take the form of researching, analysing and informing the public about issues; mobilizing citizen action through media campaigns and other forms of activism; and lobbying business leaders and policy makers (Nelson, 2007, p. 2). Aside influencing policy, the political aspects of NGO advocacy, includes their role as watchdogs of duty bearers and also promoters of democracy.

Advocacy efforts of NGO towards development, and creating an environment for poverty reduction are countless. For example, Save the Children Fund, with support from the World Bank influenced government policy to introduce participatory strategies into Mongolia's National Poverty Alleviation Programme (NPAP), to allow for local level and grassroots participation in design and choices of projects (McGee & Norton, 2000, p. 49). Oxfam-IBIS's report called "An Economy for the 99%" is another clear example of a means of influencing policy through a campaign for building a collective beneficial human economy, and not just the privileged few (Oxfam, 2017).

In relation to democracy, several authors have highlighted the role of NGOs in influencing democracy. They play an active role as advocates in building and maintaining democracy in many countries both in the North and South. For example, Bolivia and Brazil (Banks, et al., 2015); South Africa; Sudan; Congo (Lewis & Opoku-Mensah, 2006). In the 1990s, civil society had been liberated from the hegemonic grip of African States and had expression of great interest from western governments. Civil society stood as symbol of defence for democracy and played an active role in enhancing African politics through promotion of pluralism and democratic consolidation. (Raheem, 2012, p. 8).

Additionally, most governments, to an extent regard NGOs as a threat to their authority, and have made countless efforts to suppress their activities. A study done in Ghana shows that governments are most threatened by NGOs during elections, as the government is aware of the influence NGOs have on the people, especially those at the grassroots (Porter, 2003, p. 5).

3.2.3 Developmental
NGOs often undertake long term developmental goals/projects. They contribute to development projects by adapting to local context through involving local stakeholders; private enterprises; acting as gatekeepers of government in developmental activities by enforcing accountability and efficiency; and contributing real content of concepts through concrete action (Ulleberg, 2009, p. 17). In this case, NGOs are classified as "partners" (Lewis & Kanji, 2009), and "developmental" (Holmen & Jirstrom, 2009)

Over the years they have attracted the attention of most western donors, as efficient channels of development. Compared to the bureaucratic and ineffective government to government project- based aid, NGOs are more flexible and portray higher possibilities of local- level, bottom-up, grassroots participation implementation of projects (Makoba 2002; Lewis & Kanji, 2009, p. 16). Makoba, further described them as an essential factor in catering for the needs of groups in society, whose place at the State or market table is not reserved (Makoba, 2002).

Furthermore, through the developmental activities of NGOs, the lives of the poor are improved. There is an evident link between poverty and development, in the sense that it is through devotion to achieve development which leads to poverty reduction (Iniamagha, 2015, p. 2). For example, poverty related issues such as lack of education, lack of access to basic needs etc., are all tackled under developmental projects, and consequent results of tackling these issues is a reduction in poverty. NGOs in this light are a force to reckon with, as their developmental activities have underlying poverty reduction effects. For instance, infrastructural development activities of World Vision reduced poverty in the Amhara rural area of Ethiopia (Belshaw & Coyle, 2001, p. 33); and efforts to improve designated poverty indicators by Gram Vikas NGO in (Iniamagha, 2015).

3.3   Financing of NGOs

NGOs receive large amounts of money from different categories of donors to enhance their work, as described in the previous points. According to Boyson (2001), Categories of donors include; Official Development Assistance (ODA) Agencies; United Nations Agencies; Multilateral Development Banks; International Foundations; Global Corporations; International Nongovernmental Organisations; and International Church-Based or Religious Organizations (Boyson, 2001, pp. 4-7).

Most of this financial assistance are North (developed/western countries) to South (developing countries) aligned. This reference often appears due to the fact that most often than not, developmental efforts especially in relation to combating poverty is needed more in developing countries as compared to developed countries. The North and the South therefore have this donor- recipient relationship. The northern NGOs, which are based in one country and seek development objectives abroad are known as (NNGOs or INGOs), whereas those in the South who are on the receiving end are "local NGOs or SNGOs" (Lewis & Kanji, 2009; Banks & Hulme, 2012, p. 4).

Studies have shown that the donor- recipient relationship between the North and South is a blessing and a curse, with consequences of a strained relationship with the poor. As Banks and Hulme (2012) puts it, "NGOs have become too close to the powerful and too far from the powerless". Thus, in as much as NGOs need financial support to run and maintain their activities, some of these supports have invisible strings attached which clips the wings of NGOs to an extent. NGOs have been widely criticised for their lack of representativeness, ineffectiveness and difficulty in remaining loyal to their distinctive values, among others (Banks & Hulme, 2012; Banks, et al., 2015). In this regard, Holmen & Jirstrom suggest that some SNGOs instead of focusing on effectively undertaking their activities, are mainly concerned with gaining access to foreign cash flows (Holmen & Jirstrom, 2009). These results in the questioning of NGO legitimacy as significant drivers of poverty alleviation and development as a whole.

NGOs pursuing their mandate to reduce poverty through their developmental activities, in conjunction with financial resources, greatly determine the efficiency of their output. Currently, in Ghana, most CSOs are dependent on foreign donors. However, due to Ghana's emergence as an oil economy and the global economic crisis, it is envisaged that inflows of donor funding

will decrease in the coming years, which might have significant implications on NGOs (Tsikata, et al., 2013).

3.4   Historical background of NGOs in Ghana

In order to understand the link between NGOs and poverty reduction in Ghana, it is important to look at their historical foundation. This section provides an understanding of NGOs' emergence as development actors in Ghana; their evolutionary role in development (specifically poverty reduction); and the changes in their operations that have occurred over time.

The root of NGOs in Ghana is embedded in the political democratic transformation of the country from a rigid State controlled democracy to a liberal one. In the 1930s, the Ghanaian traditional ideal of mutual assistance and self-help under the 'nnoba'[2] system formed the originating foundations of NGOs by missionaries in Ghana (Bob-Milliar, 2005). Ghana since then has undergone several stages of alternating political rules, ranging from military dictatorships, coup d'états, to single party systems since independence in 1957 to 1992.

During this period, there was no space for active functioning of Civil society, to the extent of illegalising independent association by the incumbent government, which was the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) (Christensen, 2010). The country was characterised by heavy State control over all aspects, consequently suffocating the operations of civil society. The mid 1950s to 1980s were characterised by military rule and political instability, coupled with gross behaviour of ruling governments and deepened dissatisfaction and crippling of civil society.

The turning point which led to the origination and need for NGOs in Ghana occurred in 1981 when Jerry Rawlings seized power in the final military coup (Christensen, 2010, p. 38). By the late 1980s Ghana was crowned as a model reformer due to its adoption of one of Africa's first Structural Adjustment Programmes in 1983 (Porter, 2003, p. 2). Economic problems faced by the country in 1983 resulted in close collaboration with external institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), which led to the introduction of the Economic Recovery Program (ERP[3]). Desperate need of government for assistance in development, due

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[2] This is one of the varied political systems established by African societies before colonial rule. The nnoba system focused on equitable resource allocation in society.

[3] Under the guidance of the World Bank and IMF, the ERP which is a structural adjustment program was introduced. Its purpose was to reduce Ghana's debts and to improve its trading position in the global economy (US Library of Congress, 2017).

to stringent budget associated with the ERP, led to the adoption of a more liberal approach to involve civil society organisations.

The 1990s and 2000s provided and enabling environment for NGO operations due to political and economic liberalization; transition to civilian-democratic rule; neo-liberal policy ascendancy and a push to deepen democracy in Ghana (Tsikata, et al., 2013).The recognition of NGOs in Ghana was deepened due to increased interest and support from foreign donors (Christensen, 2010). NGOs activities have therefore flourished over the years from the 2000s, and have gained the status as important players in development in Ghana.

Contrary to the 1980s where NGOs gained an increased developmental role through service delivery, the 2000s depicted an expansion of NGOs' activities, to focus more on active public advocacy instead of purely service delivery initiatives (Tsikata, et al., 2013). More so, the 2000s introduced the two significant approaches to development, one of which is the Rights Based Approach (RBA) (Tsikata, et al., 2013). This involves "the shift of NGOs from service delivery to policy advocacy and holding duty bearers to account" (Tsikata, et al., 2013, p. 18).

3.5   Link between NGOs and Poverty Reduction
3.5.1   The concept of poverty
Poverty has been vastly defined by several scholars. I however, intend to briefly present some of these conceptualisations, to set the pace for understanding its link to NGOs.

The term poverty is multidimensional both in its definition and measurements, ranging from economic, social to human. According to Adjei Osei-Wusu et al., (2012), "…the major theme underlying the conceptualization of poverty is diversity; diversity of ways in which people perceive and understand poverty, diversity of how poverty is measured and how people strive to either escape or cope with it, and diversity of policy interventions employed to combat poverty" (Adjei Osei-Wusu, et al., 2012, p. 52). Scholars such as Amartya Sen in terms of measuring poverty, view poverty with different lenses, postulating the need to go beyond income in order to get a more accurate measure of poverty (Abraham & Kumar, 2008, p. 79). Sens approach focuses on enriching the lives of individuals through the opportunity to develop capabilities. People have extended abilities to do what they can do and be what they can be, thus having freedom. Jeffery Sachs similarly implies the need for capability development when

he indicated that the first solution in combating poverty is dealing with the 'poverty trap'. This depicts the inability and lack of control of the poor to overcome their poverty situation by using their own resources (Suharko, 2007, p. 4). In this research, the concept of poverty is viewed in its multifaceted nature without any rigid alignment, as NGO activities cut across all dimensions.

3.5.2 Poverty in Ghana

On account of various researches, both national and international, Ghana is one of the growing economically strong countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The country has experiences substantial economic growth over the years and in a 2012 Human Development Index (HDI) survey, it ranked 135th out of the 186 nations in the world (Caluag, 2015). Between 1992 and 2013 Ghana's national level of poverty fell by more than half (from 56.5% to 24.2%), thereby achieving the MDG1 target, confirming that more progress for the poor has been made over the years (Cooke, et al., 2016, p. 1). This is however for 'extreme poverty and not 'poverty' as a whole, as the poverty depth index was shown to decline over the period from 20.9% in 1992 to 7.8% in 2013, signifying the degree of poor people living deeply below the poverty line compared to the 1990s (ibid., 9).

Despite this growth, poverty still remains a pronounced problem in the country. There is no doubt that the country has experienced significant decline in poverty levels, however there is still an imbalance. According to the Ghana Poverty and Inequality Report, although the proportion of people living in poverty has declined by a quarter sine 2006, the number of people living in poverty has only declined by 10%, signifying the lack of correlation of poverty reduction and the population growth (Cooke, et al., 2016, p. 1). Additionally, there is a huge inequality gap between the rich and the poor. The growth rate of the poor has been lower compared to the wealthier groups who have benefited more, depicting lack of inclusive growth (ibid., 2). Poverty incidence is much larger in the northern regions of Ghana, compared to the southern regions (Ghana Statistical Service, 2015). Poverty in Ghana has been measured and presented in various reports, however it must be noted that these measurements are mostly based on consumption expenditure only. As a result, they may fail to capture other non-monetary but relevant aspects of poverty and vulnerability (Ghana Statistical Service, 2015, p. 40). Poverty as a result might even be worse in reality than that which is presented in these reports.

Over the years, the government has made several efforts towards reducing poverty, as it forms an important part in promoting the growth of the nation. Ghana's efforts at poverty reduction has resulted in the adoption of several programs over the past decades. Programs range from the Economic Recovery Program (ERP), Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), Programme of Actions to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustments (PAMSCAD), Sector – Wide Approaches (SWAPs), to Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Notwithstanding, efforts towards reducing poverty cannot be solely attributed to the government, but also giving credit to the invaluable work of NGOs. The subsequent section captures the work of NGOs in reducing poverty, and entails a brief historical background of the development of NGOs in Ghana. This provides some form of context and perspective about the research.

3.5.2   NGOs and poverty reduction

Firstly, as part of their developmental efforts and activities, NGOs are known worldwide to be one of the lead forces in combating poverty in the world (Willetts, 2002; Suharko, 2007; Lewis & Kanji, 2009; Adjei Osei-Wusu, et al., 2012; Banks, et al., 2015). The significant increase of the role of NGOs gained in poverty reduction, is a reflection of their capacities to reach the minority in society, and respond to their needs. NGOs as compared to States/governments are flexible and receptive both in their approaches and implementation, which makes them more relatable, especially when it comes to projects that deal with grassroots.

Secondly, all NGOs have different approaches to poverty reduction. These include ***macro and micro level / supply-side and demand-side approaches*** (Suharko, 2007); ***participatory, people centred rights based approaches*** (Banks & Hulme, 2012); ***'assets based approach'*** (Sparr & Moser, 2007, p. 7). These approaches entail pro-poor growth, microfinance, asset accumulation, basic service provision, and advocacy strategies that define the direct and indirect operations of NGOs in their efforts to reduce poverty.

3.5.2.1 Ghanaian NGOs and Poverty Reduction

Ghana had only 10 NGOs registered in 1960, about 80 by the early 80s, and increased to over 350 by 1991, and by 1996 there were 900, including 45 INGOs" (Porter, 2003, p. 2). NGOs' in Ghana engage in diverse activities ranging from capacity building, service provision, to micro finance. They have been persistent in pursuing their aims to promote sustainable livelihoods

among the poor. Despite the existing poverty levels in Ghana, evidence point to significant contributions made by NGOs to the lives of the poor, from provision of health and educational facilities, provision of employment opportunities and improved access to potable water (Adjei Osei-Wusu, et al., 2012, p. 53). Also, these activities are done in conjunction with CBOs and local government structures. Examples are the Smart Water for Green School Project by Green Cross International in Volta region, and water and sanitation facility provision project by Safe Water Network (SWN) and Water Health International (WHI) in Amasaman (ibid.).

Aside service provision, another means that has become popular as a strategic tool of reducing poverty is the establishment of micro finance entities (Adjei, et al., 2009). Ghana is flooded with several microfinances, being managed by NGOs. This is regarded as an effective means of reducing poverty. Having traces of Sens postulations, it is believed that provision of small loans, savings and insurance products to the poor (especially women), could be a way of developing capabilities through providing opportunities and encouraging self-reliance and active control of their households and community roles (ibid.). For example, Sinapi Aba Trust (SAT) the largest microfinance NGO in Ghana provides support and creates opportunities for enterprise development, and income generation to the vulnerable in the society. "The organisation serves as the bank for over 50,000 poor clients, offering credit, savings, insurance and holistic training services, with women constituting about 92% of the organisation's client base" (Dangah, 2012, p. 21).

NGOs in Ghana also play an increasingly active role in advocacy in the form of influencing governments development policies, serving as the voice of the poor and pushing for their benefits, through keeping duty bearers accountable to the poor. In 2003, Water Aid supported a group of local NGOs called the Ghana Coalition of NGOs in Water and Sanitation (CONIWAS) to engage with the government, towards creating a national water policy. "The Ghana government has acknowledged the role that NGOs play in making, following and monitoring the national water and sanitation policies. Due to this, investment in rural water sector increased coverage from less than 8% in 1994, to 40% in 1998, and the MOLE series created the conditions for nationwide convergence on the Right to Water" (Dangah, 2012, pp. 24-25).

3.5.2.2 Danish NGOs in Ghana and Poverty Reduction

Denmark's developmental footprints in several countries depicts its drive towards promoting development where needed. Africa remains the main focus of Denmark's development cooperation, as this is where needs are greatest (The Danish Government, 2012). In 2007, the Danish NGO assistance constituted approximately 16% of the Danish bilateral assistance to Ghana. NGO activities financed by the Embassies under the local appropriation fund are not included in the Evaluation" (Danida, 2009, p. 26).

Ghana has over the years been one of the many African countries that have benefited from developmental aid from Denmark. Danish NGOs have been present in Ghana for about 60 years, engaging in several developmental activities. The first developmental project carried out by a Danish NGO in Africa (specifically Ghana) was the Tsito Folk High School in the Volta region. This school mainly dealt with adult education, and was built and run by the Danish NGO (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2017) . Further developmental activities include provision of 22 new health centres, and rehabilitation of 22 existing centres in the Upper West Region of Ghana. This led to 84% of the region's population having reasonable access to health facilities as compared to 50% in the early 90s (Dangah, 2012, p. 22).

There are various Danish NGOs operating either directly or indirectly in Ghana, who are greatly contributing to development. Some of the popular Danish NGOs that contribute to poverty reduction in Ghana include Danish Association for International Co-operation (MS), DanChuchAid, Ibis, Danish Red Cross, Care Denmark, and Save the Children Denmark (Danida, 2009).Danish NGOs have played and still play very important roles as donors and collaborators of development, through diverse activities ranging from supporting organisational development, support to networking, to support in democracy building and maintenance (Danida, 2013). One important tool of Denmark's success in attaining democracy is civil society. Civil society is used as a driving force of instigating democracy in many authoritarian regimes through Danish aid (Raheem, 2012).

Denmark's strong will on being active in its global developmental role of reducing poverty, is evident in its policy documents. Over the years, several documents have portrayed the significant relationship between Danish aid and poverty, with an impetus to regard poverty reduction as the prime goal of Danish development co-operation policy (Udsholt, 1997, p. 10). Denmark has always seen itself as a strong partner in international development with a

commitment to the poor in the world, through its active development policy. Among countries in the UN, Denmark since 1978 has invested at least 0.7 percent of its Gross National Income (GNI) to development assistance (The Danish Government, 2012, p. 3). Furthermore, Danish NGOs receive heavy financial help from the government and private sector, financing more than 80 percent of their total activities (Marcussen, 1996, p. 407). These funds are enjoyed both by native NGOs, as well as subsidiaries of Danish NGOs in the recipient country.

Danish NGOs use the rights-based approach, through their work with partners in developing countries. However, sometimes they have to use other approaches such as the confrontational advocacy (heads on way of addressing sensitive and politically explosive issues); and collaborative (close cooperation with government in addressing sensitive issues) approaches based on the kind of organisation they are working with (Danida, 2009, p. 23). Furthermore, the Civil Society Strategy is a document which outlines strategic goals that guide Danish NGOs, embassies and multi-donor funds' support to southern civil societies. This document was first developed in 2000 and updated in 2008 (Danida, 2013, p. 8).

Danish organisations are depicted to be methodical in planning and implementing their activities by applying certain laid down approaches which enhances their output. To sum it all up, the main notion is that Denmark has always identified as a strong partner in International development and is still holding firm to that ambition.

3.6   Summary

From the review, the pattern of NGOs being a force in poverty reduction can be traced. Despite diverse labels based on capacity, activities and structure, they all have a common baseline principle which is to pursue improvement in the lives of the poor. In light of categorising them based on their activities, NGOs are classified as implementers (Lewis & Kanji, 2009); operational (Willetts, 2002); Charity and Humanitarian aid provision (Holmen & Jirstrom, 2009); and having Service delivery functions (Banks, et al., 2015).

Despite the clear labelled distinctions of NGO activities, it should be noted that their actual activities are not as sharp as the label implies. Some NGOs although development oriented may sometimes engage in campaigning activities and vice versa. NGOs evolve in their work, which has made them versatile in their activities. This is part of what makes them flexible and adaptable actors of development, thereby, making them attractive to donors. Lewis & Kanji

(2009) in their work, displayed Korten's presentation of the evolution of NGOs. This illustrates the dynamism of NGOs, and shows that, there are several factors, both internal and external, that determine the activities of NGOs. The pathway of NGOs is not static but dynamic, there is the possibility of a total change of direction in the process of growth with or without maintaining traces of originating fundaments.

It also provides understanding on the dynamic ways NGOs have approached their work over time. Classifications include first generation NGOs that mainly undertake relief and welfare activities to address immediate needs. The second generation focuses on small scale, self-reliant local development work whereas the third generation extend to national, and global levels. They focus on shaping policies and institutions through advocacy. Last but not least, the fourth generation are more interested in decentralised initiative support of a social vision coupled with influencing policies and institutions (Lewis & Kanji, 2009; Skjoldborg, 2010). Most of these NGOs in the process, either experience growth or get flushed out of the development field of players (Lewis & Kanji, 2009, p. 16).

Furthermore, NGOs are noted for their participatory approach and close linkage to grassroots, which greatly enhances the efficiency of their work. Contradictory to this, some authors (Banks, et al., 2015) assert stringent relationship and alienation of NGOs to the grassroots, due to their over concentration on shallow service provision and divergent focus from the values, and actual wishes of their target groups. Importance of donor support is made evident, but also identified as a major contributing factor to the diminishing linkages between NGOs and the grassroots. Consequently, questioning of the legitimacy of NGOs (Holmen & Jirstrom, 2009; Banks & Hulme, 2012) Despite being recognised as alternative channels of development; their legitimacy is often questioned and this has heightened over the years' consequent of their increased recognition.

In connection with the literature review, the subsequent theoretical dispositions are identified.

3.7   Theoretical Perspectives
3.7.1 Introduction / Theoretical framework
I first of all begin with the "**Civil Society (CS) theory**", because the roots of NGOs are embedded in the concept of civil society. The theory clearly depicts the inseparable connection

between civil society and NGO, and hence the synonymous use of both terms in development discourses. Early to current conceptualisation of civil society hinges on its relevance as important actors in development under which poverty reduction forms a major part of. Although several philosophical directions were referenced, the postulations of Gramsci, Hegel and Tocqueville take precedence as they project the significant place of civil society as social actors' despite contrasts in their projections. Hegel and Tocqueville both identify civil society as intermediary realms between the State and the market/family. However, in contradiction to Hegel, Tocqueville argues in line with Gramsci about the sovereignty of civil society as separate actors with different dimensions and functions although part of the super structure.

Contemporary conceptualisations of CS as associated with humanitarian, activists and part of the neoliberal agenda, led to the NGO concept. NGOs are presented as an organised, structured, institutionalized, professionalized, respectable, and tamed version of civil society. The **NGO theory**, building on the civil society theory expounds on the 'third sector' characteristic of NGOs drawn from different classifications from various scholars. It further outlines the numerous advantages of NGOs which is seen in the theoretical projections of Guy Gran. He asserts the recognition of NGOs as catalysts for development and having more advantages compared to other development agencies. This led to the discourse on State-NGO relationship, exhibiting the positive and conflictual theoretical views of different schools of thought. It must be noted that this theoretical angles were chosen not to compare NGOs with the State, but mainly to show their contributions to poverty reduction in light of their advantages.

The **resource Dependency theory** postulate the heavy dependence and influence of NGOs enabling environment on their activities, suggesting rational behaviour of NGOs. This theory gives more depth of the determining forces that influence the work of NGOs. Lastly, the **empowerment theory** presents the nature of NGOs' behaviour and decision making processes towards pursuing the interests of the poor. Hinging on the concepts of power, participation, and self-reliance.

3.8 Civil Society Theory
3.8.1 Civil Society Concept
Conceptualisation of CS varies amongst different scholars in social sciences. The originating roots of the concept can be traced to early philosopher such as Cicero, Rousseau, and Kant

(Skjoldborg, 2010, p. 26; Jensen, 2016). They described CS as a type of State regulated by a social contract approved by individuals in the society. Thus, civil society was just like a State or political society (Jensen, 2016). Subsequent definitions of the concept developed which presented a shift in the conceptualisation of civil society, where civil society was regarded as the protector of peoples' rights and freedoms and separate from the State.

To begin with, Hegel portrays civil society as a contrast to the political realm and not necessarily separating citizens from the political society. Civil society therefore became "an intermediary realm between the family and the State". They are linked to, but represent interactions between the State and the market in a different way (Jensen, 2016, p. 14). Tocqueville also conceptualises CS as "free associations that exist as intermediate institutions between citizens and the State, and in which citizens can realize their social freedom and equality" (Woldring, 1998, p. 363). He asserts the importance of equal rights for active civic participation in government and other associations, whether political or social greatly influenced by observations of the American society (Woldring, 1998). Thirdly, Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist, in the 20th century conceptualised CS as having different functions and dimensions although part of the superstructure, together with the State. Civil society acted as the opposing force of the State specifically against domination of capitalism (Jensen, 2016, p. 14). Gramsci identifies two opposing forces, being the hegemonic dominant force and the counter-hegemonic force. Thus, representing the State and civil society respectively.

According to Tocqueville, civil society was considered as a positive concept and separate from the State in contradiction to Hegel who postulates the need for State laws in regulating fragmented and immoral indivuals in society. Also, unlike Tocqueville and Hegel, Gramsci does not classify civil society as a realm between the State and the family, but as an outside realm, separate from the State and market. All these men had different CS experiences wihich is evident in their postulations. Hegel and Tocqueville both saw CS as an intermediary realm (Woldring, 1998; Jensen, 2016), with Tocqueville focusing more on CS as the answer to the problems of citizens than the State (Woldring, 1998). Gramsci's critical postulations of CS being a countrerbalance, is not merely related to the associational view of CS as common today, but as a public sphere where ideas and beliefs were shaped (Gramsci, 1971). The core pattern of civil society being a 'ruled-governed society' can be traced amongs all these early modern conceptualisations, despite their differences (Kaldor, 2003, p. 585).

3.8.2 Evolution of Civil Society

The idea of civil society was reinvigorated in the 1970s and 1980s due to the need for a change in governance by the Latin Americans and Eastern Europeans. Despite the differences in their political identifications, with the former being Marxist and the latter anti-Marxist, they both had the common need of opposing militarized regimes with the baseline being a necessary change in society (Kaldor, 2003, p. 586). According to Michnik in Kaldor (2003), failed efforts of a top to down attempt to bring about this change resulted to a change from below, which involves changing the relationship between the State and the society (Kaldor, 2003). In this case, civil society being a necessary tool for attaining some form of freedom, redistribution of power, economic wealth and democratic governance (Jensen, 2016). Traces of this democratic characteristics can be associated with Gramsci's postulations of the democratic potentials of civil society (Gramsci, 1971).

In the 1990s the idea of civil society transformed to become associated with the humanitarian regime, which mainly involved activisim for human rights as well as protests on several issues that affected the rights of people negatively (Kaldor, 2003). More so, the adoption of the term by Western governments and global institutions made it become part of the so called neoliberal 'new policy agenda'. This is what led to the outcrop of the term NGO (Lewis, 2010; Skjoldborg, 2010). According to Kaldor, "civil society was understood as what the West has; it is seen as a mechanism for facilitating market reform and the introduction of parliamentary democracy" (Kaldor, 2003, p. 589). In this neoliberal agenda, NGOs replaced the term civil society, and were regarded as an important tool for democracy. NGOs stood for a more structured, institutionalized, proffessionalized and respectable representatives, as against untamed social movements.

The above aside depicting the unseparable link between civil society and NGO terminologies, also sets the foundation for further introduction of the NGO theory and its link to poverty reduction. It must be noted that in this thesis the civil society and NGO theory are used within the framework of the development discourse, with specific emphasis on poverty reduction.

3.9   NGO theory

NGOs' are   rooted in the liberal civil society theory, which is clearly depicted in the synonymous use of both terms; 'civil society' and 'NGO'. As seen in previous sections of this

study, scholars have defined, classified and conceptualised NGOs in diverse ways. All these classifications amidst its diversity, hinges on the assumptions of NGOs interest in pursuing the needs of the poor through their activities. Assumptions of NGOs as important tools for development are subsequently presented.

3.9.1 NGOs and Alternative Development

NGOs recognition as channels of alternative development is embedded in the use of civil society (NGOs) as a tool for democracy. Democracy represents freedom, participation and opportunity to bring about change by taking control. These are all evident traces that are associated with NGOs. Contemporary discourses identify civil society as a necessity to achieve democracy, which takes precedence and is largely connected to the wider neoliberal understanding of 'good development' (Jensen, 2016, p. 16).

The work of Gramsci supports this assumption as he postulates the idea of civil society being the necessary counter force in the society to either challenge the State or promote the ideas of the State (Christensen, 2010, p. 27). Kaldor also supports this by presenting bottom up means as the only way to overthrow and conquer militarized regimes. This implies using civil society, which was regarded as the powerful weapon to bring about change in the society (Kaldor, 2003).

The desire of freedom, using civil society was capitalised upon by the West and had a trickle-down effect to other countries, especially developing countries that were under oppression. NGOs, which represented an organised form of civil society became the attractive medium for pushing democratisation, alternative ideas, and subsequently other developmental ventures. This was as a result of development agencies exposing failure of governments to fight poverty and also causing growing levels of bureaucracy and corruption (Lewis & Kanji, 2009; Tsikata, et al., 2013). The main points here are the essence of promoting social change and development through participatory bottom up approach. As seen previously, democracy formed the foundation of this approach as part of the neoliberal development agenda (Skjoldborg, 2010). Many scholars in the 1980s and 1990s have written about alternative development as a reaction to the neoliberal development agenda. The idea of alternative development is premised on bottom up approach of instigating social change by using resources at grassroots level (Christensen, 2010, p. 28).

Scholars such as Korten, Amartya Sen and Robert Chambers all asserts the importance of 'people-centred' approach to development underlain with the essence of strengthening people's capabilities and freedoms (Frediani, 2007; Christensen, 2010). NGOs are characterised by employing such participatory approaches in their work, and work closely with the grassroots. As catalysts (Lewis & Kanji, 2009), they help develop the capacities of the poor by raising their consciousness about their common problems and available opportunities to tackle those problems.

3.9.2   NGOs as effective channels of development

NGOs are regarded as a better option for comprehensive development, and a necessary catalyst to address the social conditions of the poor (Skjoldborg, 2010). Due to their less bureaucratic and flexible nature and human resource capacity, they are more likely to quickly respond to the needs of the poor. This assumption was postulated by American social scientist Guy Gran, in his detailed illustration of how bureaucratic procedures of State agencies hamper their attempts at development. He further identified how decision makers and staff of these agencies are alien from their beneficiaries, and thus fail to acknowledge their uniqueness and values, which ends up affecting their developmental efforts (Skjoldborg, 2010, p. 36). NGOs on the other hand are driven with motivation to work directly with the target group, and are willing to go to the remotest areas to undertake their activities. They are therefore more aware of the nature of their target group and community, and are able undertake activities unique to the values and needs of the poor.

Donors have also recognised NGOs as a more cost effective and efficient channel of aid allocation, as their activities are less distorted by commercial and political interests as compared to that of the State (Esbensen, 2010). According to Skjoldborg, NGOs should be able to determine the activities and projects to undertake without being concerned with donor interests. It must however be noted that this applies to more to Northern NGOs as compared to Southern NGOs (Skjoldborg, 2010, p. 38).

3.9.3   NGOs and State cooperation

The relationship between NGOs and the State is inevitable in their poverty reduction. Based on their origination from CS, NGOs are conceptualised as being intermediary channels between the State and the market, and also as a separate entity. Their reputation of being effective and flexible channels of development revolves around the acclaimed weakness and failure of the

State to protect its citizens and effectively meet the needs of the poor (World Bank, 1990; Lewis, 2010). Although my thesis is not centred on NGO- State relationship, it still forms an integral part of examining the significance of NGOs in poverty reduction and development as a whole.

One assumption is that NGOs serve as a counterbalance for the State. This portrays cooperation between the two actors to achieve developmental goals (Esbensen, 2010). According to this school of thought, NGOs are not hesitant to give up or compromise their autonomy, due to circumstances such as funding from the State. The State also acknowledges its inability to undertake certain activities and willingly gives power and reverence to the NGOs to take over such tasks (Esbensen, 2010).

Other schools of thought on the other hand align with the offensive; which is the conflicting nature of the relationship between NGOs and the State. Their argument is that NGOs and State do not cooperate but rather have a tensed relationship (Porter, 2003). There are however two opposing dimensions to this conflict. Firstly, NGOs are accused of being stumbling blocks in the way of the State to provide services for its citizens. In opposition, other scholars such as Stromquist argue that the diminishing reputation of the State has got nothing to do with NGOs being a barrier in their developmental efforts. Rather, it is due to their failure to take necessary actions in meeting the needs of the poor. NGOs must be commended in taking up these responsibilities (Stromquist, 2002 in Esbensen, 2010).

In addition to the conflicting nature of this relationship, Porter in her research argues in line with the second school of thought by highlighting the lack of respect to NGOs from the State. She asserts that NGOs in Ghana are not involved in the "important" (planning and decision making) stages of any developmental process, but rather are allocated mere service provision roles during the implementation stage (Porter, 2003). Hearn argues in the same line although having a different conflictual twist compared to the others. She asserts that contemporary development side-lines the autonomy of NGOs, and rather encourages a closer relationship with the State in the name of 'partnership', which plays a pivotal part in the 'new agenda for development assistance' (ibid.). Thus, NGOs and governments have only one ultimatum, and that's to work as partners, as this is the only means of ensuring and sustaining participatory, equitable and sustainable development (Hearn, 2001, p. 44). The two opposing assumptions are the main arguments that run through most discourses on NGO-State relationship.

3.10 Critique of the Civil Society and NGO theory

Firstly, some scholars criticized the operational extent of NGOs to reach the poor as inadequate. The argument is that NGOs do not necessarily have adequate resources and capacities as compared to the State. Their interests in the grassroots is also clouded by hidden agendas and unhealthy competition (Esbensen, 2010). Traces of this critique in terms of hidden agendas and unhealthy competition can be implied in Gramsci's postulations of patterns of hegemony even amongst the counter-hegemonic groups. According to Gramsci, there is always one group of people in each group of counter-hegemonies who will result to elements from the hegemonic group (Jensen, 2016).

Furthermore, a paradoxical nature of NGOs has been argued by certain scholars. NGOs are criticised as being undemocratic, amidst their efforts to promote transparency and democracy. This criticism is directed towards the hailed view of CS being important and strong precondition for a functioning political democracy, and NGOs serving as the medium to attain this change. Legitimacy of NGOs is therefore being attacked, by questioning their representativeness in democratic practices in light of the characteristics of they being unregulated and unelected institutions (Esbensen, 2010). Thus, NGOs as "instruments of the elite in their effort to demobilse the masses by diverting them from the path of struggle" (Esbensen, 2010, p. 47).

Additionally, despite the increasing recognition of the virtue and apolitical nature of NGOs, they are also observed to indulge in complex and to some extent dirty roles in the politics of development (Porter, 2003).In this case their legitimacy in being transparent and accountable representatives of people in the society is marred based on misunderstood assumptions. According to Edwards, the issue of democratic practices and attack on NGO accountability is a means of certain political powers to silence the voices of NGOs (Edwards 2005, p. 4 in Esbensen, 2010).

3.11 Resource Dependency theory

This theory was brought into the spotlight due to the book written in 1978 by Jeffery Pfeffer and Gerald Salancik entitled "The External Control of Organizations. A Resource Dependence Perspective". This theory has since that time been adopted by several scholars in their work (Nienhuser, 2008, p. 10). This theory helps us to understand the behaviour of organisations. Behaviour in this sense is inclusive of actions and decision making as well as non-decision making and its results (ibid.).

The main assumption of this theory hinges on the notion that organisations' decisions and actions are greatly determined by its dependence on important resources. Dependence on these critical resources influences the kind of decisions taken and actions made by an organisation (Casciaro & Piskorski, 2005; Nienhuser, 2008). There is a mutual link in understanding how organisations behave and make decisions, as well as the environment in which they operate (Jensen, 2016). Tvedt argues in the same line, by metaphorically comparing NGOs and donors to a river system analogy. In this river system, he identifies NGOs as the diversion channels and donors and funding sources as reservoirs (Tvedt, 2002, p. 367). Thus, the resources needed by an organisation is provided by the environment. Also, the criticality of a resource is measured based on the ability of the organisation to function in the absence of the resource (Nienhuser, 2008, p. 12). Donor-NGO relationship positions donors as an external environment, with their financial support being a critical resource to many NGOs.

Secondly, this theory asserts that the one in control of the resource has power over those who need the resources. Those in power tend to have great influence on their dependants, because they wield control over the resources the dependents need to survive (Nienhuser, 2008; Jensen, 2016). Similarly, in donor-NGO relationship as donors are the resource providers, and as a result weild influencial power over the activities of NGOs. Many scholars have argued that NGOs tend to focus more on pleasing donors rather than actually meeting the needs of their target groups. The advantages of NGOs are blemished by their increasingly upward and less downward accountability , making their claimed advantages doubtful (Esbensen, 2010).

In connection, it is assumed that, dependents can gain some extent of independence if they reduce their dependence on donors. NGOs as organisations can achieve this not only by reducing their demand for resources from donors, but also diversifying their resources through the development of alternative revenue sources (Nienhuser, 2008; MacIndoe, 2013).
The theory also postulates the rationality of organisations and their opportunity to exercise a bit of control in their interaction with donors. Although NGOs are mostly on the receiving end, both parties have vested interests which they want to achieve. Despite the fact that organisations adhere to the demands of the donors, there is the possibility to manipulate situations (Scott, 2008, p. 431). Exchange of resources between both actors is driven by power dynamics and as a result involved the need to make strategic decisions. Organisations in this regard despite dependence on donors tend to protect part of their autonomy by making strategic decisions

(Jensen, 2016). Demands of the extenal actors (donors) are not always accepted , and they must deal with this difficulty of knowing to what extent their demands have been met (Nienhuser, 2008).

Lastly, interdependent interactions between donors and NGOs is further captured under two concepts, thus, power imbalance and mutual dependence. According to Casciaro & Piskorski, power imbalance refers to the difference in the power of each actor over the other. Whereas mutual dependence captures the existence of bilateral dependencies, regardless of balance or imbalanced dependencies between actors (Casciaro & Piskorski, 2005, p. 170). The concept of mutual dependence can be associated with the positive schol of thought in NGO-State relationship. Both governments and NGOs have constraints which they can overcome if they manage their mutual resource dependence (MacIndoe, 2013).This assumption portrays the the prominence of power in understanding actions of organisations as well as their decision making in an attempt to protect autonomy.

3.12   Empowerment theory

The concept of empowerment has over the years become popular in social research work. The theory is often associated with psychological researches. It has also been associated with the welfare of individuals within the larger social and political environment (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Empowerment is defined as the acquisition of a significant level of control and improved capacity by a group of people in a community, due to enlightenment of their situation. Without infringing upon the rights of others, but providing support for theirs in the community (Mcwhirter, 1991 in Tsiboe, 2001). Perkins & Zimmerman also describe it as a process of enhancing the wellbeing of people, whiles providing opportunities for them to develop knowledge and skills; and exploring environmental influence of social problems to address them (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). In essence they all identify the significance of improving the lives of individuals through improving their capacity to a level where they can exercise control over their own development. This is consistent with the definition of empowerment from the development perspective, as the increase in capabilities and assets of the vulnerable through the process of enriched participation (Tsiboe, 2001). This theory is built on various assumptions, some of which have been explained below, significant to this study.

Participation. This is the baseline of empowerment. The idea in a developmental context purports community development through self-help; self-reliant economies; endogenously developed communities; good governance; and legitimacy, with focus on the process rather than outcome (ibid., 19). The assumption here is that, participation being recognised as a foundational premis is key in empowering individuals or a group of people as it involves their direct involvement and closeness to any given intervention aimed at improving their wellbeing.

Power to the powerless. Although through participation, people gain some control through being involved, they can still be powerless and dependent. Powerlessness is depicted as the vulnerables' lack of the means to gain greater control and resources (Lord & Hutchison, 1993).The assumption of power to the powerless implies empowerment where people do not merely gain control or participate in their community, but , obtain significant level of power, reflected in the effectiveness of their own actions to influence the outcome of life events and change (Lord & Hutchison, 1993). Thus, indicating comprehensive involvement of people in decisions they end up bearing the consequence of (Tsiboe, 2001). And uleashing their creative and productive energies towards continuous improvement in their living standards (Gergis, 1999). Rappaport (1987) consistently points out that the main aim is "to enhance the possibilities for people to control their own lives" (Rappaport, 1987, p. 119). In essence, people must be empowered to be gain critical influence and power in their ability to cope with and effect change in all aspects of their lives, be it economic, social or political. Consequently, enhanced level of independence signifies genuine empowerment.

Furthermore, amidst the assumption of power, control and influence through empowerment is the ambiguity of self-reliance. The idea of self-reliance is represented by two extreme view points. Thus, total self-help with minimal external intervention, and self-help with external intervention (Tsiboe, 2001). This is in connection with Gergis's steps of achieving personal goals, which are; "identification of options or strategies; decision or choice of action; mobilisation of resources; and the action itself (Gergis, 1999). The first view regards the process of people achieving empowerment as autonomously going through these steps with minimal intervention. Whereas the latter posits the relevance of proffessional persons acting on behalf of the people, recognising the importance of consultation. In this case, the people become dependent on proffessional persons, contrary to the idea of self-reliance.This raises questions of the extent to which people can acually take actions towards improving their well being and level of power.

Motivational dimensions of empowerment. It is assumed that one must have the desire to be empowered in order for empowerment to take place or be successful. Gergis (1999) outlines three motivational dimensions of empowerment. According to him, ***people will not be empowered if they do not want to be*** (Gergis, 1999, p. 7). In the absence of will for change, empowerment will fail. In some cases, people are ignorant of the importance of being empowered, resulting in their disinterest in the idea. In this case, they need to be adequately informed about the relevance of empowerment, which leads to the second dimension of ***creating the conditions conducive to enhancing motivation to perform***. People need to be supported to become aware of their situation and prospects of overcoming it. As similarly suggested by McClelland (1975), "…in order for people to take power, they need to gain information about themselves and their environment and be willing to identify and work with others for change" (McClelland, 1975 in Lord & Hutchison, 1993, p. 3). Thirdly, ***empowerment entails providing the individual with the ability to perform.*** This resonates the idea of developing capacities through the provision of knowledge and skills, which will enable them undertake effective actions towards their desired change.

Critique

Some scholars have identified the concept of empowerment as having tendencies to constrain the efforts of people to auotonomously challenge existing structures, despite its positive conotations. Thus existing powers used participation as a means to communicate the idea that they have their interests at heart , depicted through involving them in development processes (Buckley, 2000).

Furthermore, the essence of bottom-up characteristic of empowerment has been highlighted, through emphasis on the fact that empowerment must come from the grassroots and not organisations, thus, NGOs and international organisations (ibid.). Empowerment is not something that is transferable or can be imposed on an individual. This presents a limitation in the prospects of empowerment of activities undertaken by external forces (Kabeer, 1994). In connection with this, project planning processes used by development stakeholders is identified as contradictory to empowerment. In the sense that, top to down characteistic of planning, conflicts with empowerment, which posists planning and decision making by the local people themselves (Rowlands, 1997; Buckley, 2000).

Last but not least is the issue of power dynamics that exist in a community, creating a flaw in the participatory methodologies held in high esteem by development actors (Buckley, 2000). According to Goebel (1998) , power dynamics which takes the form of elites in the local community, manipulating the process of participation to reflect their preferences instead of the larger whole, is often neglected in participatory methodologies (Goebel, 1998 in Buckley, 2000). A world bank research termed this situation of local elites benefiting more than the rest of the people through projects as 'capture' (Mansuri & Rao, 2013). Despite the various descriptions they all suggest the gap in participatory methodologies employed by development actors.

3.13   Summary of Theoretical Perspectives

The CS theory first of all presents the various conceptualisations of CS, and established it as the crux of NGOs. Subsequently, NGOs were identified as more organised and structured forms of CS, and effective channels of good development. Poverty reduction activities of NGOs involve interactions with other stakeholders which are the State and donors. The NGO theory further presented diverse assertions of cooperative and tensed relationship between NGOs and the State. The Resource dependency theory highlights the behaviour of organisations in their interaction with resources and external environment (donors). These interactions influence the behaviour of NGOs in their work to pursue the needs of the poor, towards improving their lives. Thus, leading to the Empowerment theory, which depicts different dimensions of empowerment of the poor. All the theoretical assumptions resultantly lead to enhancing critical understanding and analysis of the significance of NGOs in poverty reduction, which is the main objective of this project. The diagram below gives a clear illustration of the sequential nature of the theoretical framework as explained above.
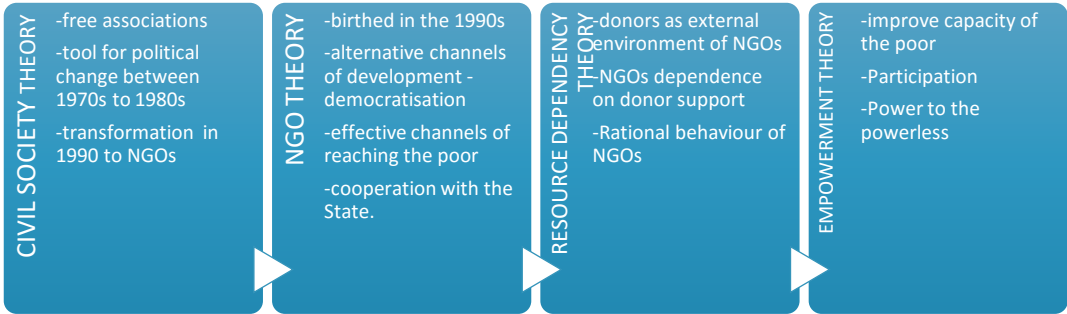
Source Author, 2017

Figure 3.1: Diagram illustrating theoretical framework

CHAPTER FOUR (4) – DATA AND ANALYSIS

4.0   Introduction

The previous chapter presented various theoretical perspectives which can be related to NGOs and their poverty reduction efforts. This chapter looks at the various dimensions of NGOs significance to poverty reduction in light of their operations and its integral components. The main argument of this section is that *NGOs are critical development actors in poverty reduction, but their waning legitimacy does not reassure positive implications in the lives of the poor. Additionally, donors have an extensive dominance over NGOs, not because of strict rules, but because NGOs are financially heavily dependent on them*. This argument is further elaborated under different dimensions in the case of Ghana.

The structure of this chapter hinges common themes that were generated from coding data (ReadingCraze, 2014). Findings are presented in a systematic manner to by looking at, **the background of NGOs; perspective of NGOs on poverty and the poor; approaches and strategies; interventions; cooperation with the State; indispensability of donors; efficiency (accountability; monitoring and evaluation); and disparities of NGOs poverty reduction efforts.**

Thus, first of all background of NGOs provides prime context on NGOs' inclination to poverty reduction. Also, in order to assess how NGOs work in reducing poverty, we must know what they think poverty in Ghana is, and who they classify as the poor. Furthermore, in determination of what actually goes into their poverty reduction efforts, their approaches and strategies comes first, as this is the baseline and of their work. And provides direction on how to undertake their operations as well as stakeholders necessary for implementation of interventions. Also, in identifying stakeholders, the State and donors are identified as important part of NGOs poverty reduction efforts. Furthermore, planning and implementation of interventions involve some levels of accountability to both beneficiaries and benefactors. In order to enhance efficiency of their operations, NGOs undertake monitoring and evaluation, during, and at the end of interventions. Lastly, since NGOs are not the exception to the rule of errors, certain gaps and discrepancies emerge from their process of reducing poverty.

Each sub section has the format of presentation and analysis of findings; coupled with discussions; and a summary. As part of the discussion element, findings were related to literature and theoretical dispositions previously introduced in the research, to identify

consistencies and inconsistencies, geared toward contributing to or complementing already existing knowledge. A summary of the findings is presented in a logical breakdown of the main research argument. Additionally, a summary of contributions, complementation, and contradictions of research findings to existing scholarship is presented.

Throughout the analysis I will use "GhNGO" to refer to Ghanaian NGOs and "DkNGOs" to refer to Danish NGOs. Where both NGOs reflect similarities, I will just use the term NGOs or "the NGOs"

4.1   Findings and discussions
4.1.1   Background of NGOs
The case study NGOs for this research were **SEND Ghana; Hope for Future Generation (HFFG); and Socioserve** Ghana, which are GhNGOs. And **CARE Denmark; OXFAM IBIS; and Ghana Venskab**, which are DkNGOs. The study first of all reveals that most of the NGOs originated between 1979 to 2002, with most of them operating in Ghana since 1994 to 2002. For example, SEND originated in 1998 (SEND Ghana, 2017) ; HFFG in 2001 (HFFG, 2014); Socioserve in 2002 (Socioserve Ghana, 2015); CARE Denmark in 1987 (CARE Denmark, 2017); Oxfam IBIS in 1970 (Oxfam IBIS, 2017); and Ghana Venskab in 1979 (Ghana Venskab, 2017).   This stresses the increasing prominence of NGOs in international development, as alternative channels of development and social change, compared to inefficient State efforts between the period of 1980s and 1990s (Christensen, 2010; Lewis, 2010). As Christensen (2010) and Holmen & Jirstrom (2009)   pointed out, the early 80s were an inception period for NGOs, as within that period, donors and international organisations justified working with NGOs with, based on the inflexible and corrupt nature of governments. Additionally, the 1990s and 2000s provided and enabling environment for NGO operations due to political and economic liberalization; transition to civilian-democratic rule; neo-liberal policy ascendancy and a push to deepen democracy in Ghana (Tsikata, et al., 2013).

From the study, it can be seen that most of the DkNGOs originated between 1970 to 1990s, and started operating in Ghana from the early 1990s, which were fairly hostile and revolutionary periods Ghana, characterised by economic and political instability (Christensen, 2010). This can be seen in the interest of DkNGOs in the issues of governance, as captured in their vision and mission Statements. For example, one of IBIS's threefold mission is "*to support democratic*

development that promotes collective rights and popular participation in policy decisions to benefit the poor and oppressed groups" (Oxfam IBIS, 2017). This is in consistency with scholarship that depict Denmark's involvement in helping some African countries democratise and grow economically, using civil society as a driving force of instigating democracy in many authoritarian regimes through Danish aid (Raheem, 2012). It also complements postulations of NGOs being used as a tool for political change (Kaldor, 2003). On the other hand, most of the GhNGOs originated in the late 90s to 2000s, when there was a better enabling environment for civil society to operate; presence of democracy; and increased assistance from foreign donors (Christensen, 2010; Tsikata, et al., 2013). And also, reflecting historical times of desperatness of the Ghanaian government for assistance in development due to budget issues of the ERP, leading to the adoption of a more liberal approach to involve CSOs (Christensen, 2010).

Furthermore, NGOs show their commitment to pursue the needs of the poor, which is reflected in their respective vision and mission Statements. These Statements include promotion of the rights and well-being of the poor (Ghana Venskabsgrupperne, 2017) (HFFG, 2014) (SEND Ghana, 2017); a world of hope and social justice (CARE, 2017); and popular participation in policy decisions to benefit the poor and oppressed groups (Oxfam IBIS, 2017). In consistency with other researches (Willetts, 2002; Suharko, 2007; Lewis & Kanji, 2009; Adjei Osei-Wusu, et al., 2012; Banks, et al., 2015), the reflection of pro-poor inclination of NGOs suggests their dedication to combat poverty, and pursue interests of the poor.

4.1.2   Perspectives on poverty and the poor
4.1.2.1 Poverty through the lens of NGOs
According to the NGOs inequality is equal to poverty in Ghana. Thus, identifying ***inequality*** as the main aspect of poverty in Ghana, with issues of "unequitable economic and resource distribution" (IBIS, 2017); "ironic widening of inequality gap" (SEND, 2017); "divide between the north and south of Ghana" (GhanaVenskab, 2017); "human rights issues" (HFFG, 2017) and "unequal power relations" (CARE, 2014). In the words of some of the interviewees:

 "...we realised that in Ghana, we had actually done a lot to reduce poverty, but inequality was actually growing, because there is no, in other words, the economic distribution, resource distribution, is really not equitable, it is not fair, and so some people are at a disadvantage... (IBIS, 2017)*".*

"…you see, we have done well…but what we have not succeeded or what we have ironically succeeded in achieving is widening the gap, the inequality gap, since the same time that we started reducing poverty. Isn't it a paradox (SEND, 2017)*?"*.

"Because we are all entitled to health, you cannot say the cities need doctors, the cities need ultra-modern facilities, the regional hospitals need ultra-modern facilities. And the people in the villages are supposed to travel thousands of miles to access those facilities" (HFFG, 2017).

The inference of inequality is glaringly evident from the comments made by these NGOs. Also, directly linked to the issue of inequality and poverty at large is the NGOs' commitment to an ***integrated approach***. Despite existence of diverse thematic areas, NGOs recognise the need to apply integrated methods in tackling poverty. However, NGOs' notably pinpointed education as the binding tool, and gave comments to reflect its significance. Examples include; *"…we are into behaviour change communication…if you give the right information on malaria, the person might not fall sick…"* (HFFG, 2017)*; "...we have worked in education for many years, so also taking it to the next stage..."* (GhanaVenskab, 2017)*;* and *"We try to see how we can support communities by way of strengthening them, we call it community education. More or less, that enables community people to understand the laws…, their rights, their responsibilities..."* (IBIS, 2017).

Thus, the NGOs, were of the opinion that when the poor people are well informed, they become less susceptible and exposed to the snares of poverty, and more probable to escape from their poverty. Respondents gave further comments portraying relevance of a unified approach in addressing poverty, by establishing links of the various thematic areas. In the words of an interviewee, *"yes, you tackle it* [poverty] *from different angles, in all its forms…so you are tackling issues of education, influence, resource, and the three are connected somehow"* (IBIS, 2017). Another illustration is that, if systems are put in place to make the poor pay less tax without taking care of their health needs, they will still spend a lot of money on their health which keeps them in their poverty (SEND, 2017). Also, with no education, the poor will remain ignorant of their situation and ways to come out of it, which will manifest negatively in their health, and resources (HFFG, 2017) (Socioserve, 2017). Thus, the more educated you are, the more influential you are likely to be. And the more influential you are, the more you are closer to getting access to resources.

Consistent with other research (Osei – Assibey, 2013; Cooke, et al., 2016), the study identifies that inequality is on a rapid rise in Ghana, with inequitable distribution of economic growth and poverty reduction benefits, and consequently, an evident widening gap between the wealthiest and the poorest. Although NGOs acknowledge the fact that work has been done in reducing poverty, indirect taxation, human rights issues, and sheer wrong assumptions of development stakeholders continue to fan the flames of inequality.

Summary. From the research findings, NGOs emphasize the multifaceted and reinforcing nature of poverty. They see the problem of inequality as the current crux of poverty in Ghana, and identify a solution to inequality as important to reduce poverty. Subsequently, due to the multifaceted nature of poverty, issues of poverty must not be seen in isolation, but as a linked reaction, requiring an integrated approach.

4.1.2.2 Who are the poor?

An important element of NGO operations is the poor since they are the ones they claim to represent, and whose interests they pursue. Women, children and youth were identified as the main beneficiaries of all the NGOs. However, although women, children and youth are mostly those that are targeted, NGOs notwithstanding established the inclusive nature of target groups. The main beneficiaries identified are targeted because they are mostly the vulnerable and poor groups in Ghana. As (UNICEF, 2009) pointed out, these groups are more susceptible to "violence and exploitation…associated with a mix of economic, social and cultural risk factors". However, they are not the only beneficiaries as there are several occasions where interventions cover a broad range of people. This can be identified from comments of some interviewees, when asked about their choice of beneficiaries.

"If it is on health, where we have maternal health….and those things, then I will say women. If it is governance, it is not really related to a particular sex or something, it is about what the community needs or some specific groups…" (Socioserve, 2017).

"…young people because there are so many young people, and the prospects for them are not very good, and they are the future of the country…women are a huge marginalized group…they have less access to land, access to many resources and also less access to education, because girls are often forced to leave school" (GhanaVenskab, 2017).

"We deal with men, but they are not our main beneficiaries. You know, when you are dealing with adolescents, we target both males and females. And the husbands and men in the communities we work with, we form daddy's clubs and we give the education mainly on gender related issues. Because if men do not understand gender issues, it sometimes affects the women, even if the women are empowered" (HFFG, 2017).

"...because we are seeking to address inequality, we cannot target anybody. There are some vulnerable groups in society, and so, these are the ones that we target. And so, depending on the project, we target persons with disability, women group, children…" (SEND, 2017).

"Well, it is a bit hard to define. But you could say the overall for a whole program, what we have targeted is natural resource dependent people who are poor and sometimes marginalised for various reasons. Including women, youth, elderly, ethnic groups (that is not so much an issue in Ghana), but still, its rural people basically, rural poor people" (CARE, 2017).

These Statements although depicting inclusiveness in different ways still reflect it. They further bring to light the fact that the common determining factor for choice of beneficiaries is the incidence of poverty. In **summary**, it is established that beneficiaries of NGOs' interventions are characterised by inclusiveness with the incidence of poverty as the core determining factor.

4.1.3 Approaches and Strategies

The study revealed that the core of NGOs' transformations is centred on their approaches and strategies. And these regulate all their activities, thereby playing a baseline role in determining their role in poverty reduction as development actors. Two main aspects, thus, Rights Based Approach (RBA) and Participatory Bottom up approach/Partnership were identified.

4.1.3.1 Rights Based Approach (RBA)

The study revealed that in the early 80s, most of the NGOs were welfare oriented and engaged in providing services, thus using the needs based approach. However, significant transformations have taken place from the 90s till date, showing a shift from needs based to Rights Based Approaches (RBA). As Tsikata, et al. (2013) pointed out in his work, the RBA was one of the two significant approaches to development that was introduced in the 2000s. All the NGO's identified this shift in the following Statements:

"…if you look back at the time we have been in Ghana, it has changed radically from needs based poverty reduction and livelihood improvement efforts to something much more political in a sense. Aiming at strengthening the representative civil society organisation of the poor and marginalised people that we represent, and supporting their agendas…Those changes normally follow the changes the donors go through…We depend on donor funding, and efforts and approaches to be used unfortunately, often, it is similar to what the donors want" (CARE, 2017).

"We started as a service delivery organisation, it was not until 2001, that we added on advocacy, because we thought that increasingly the responsibility of delivering services would be on government. So, citizens will have to use the rights based approaches to claim rights and demand accountability… (SEND, 2017)*"*

"…so in the past, the activities have been more of service provision, but as they moved along the line, and the donor lines also changed and all that, now, it's been more of advocacy, and empowering communities to demand for their right. And demand for accountability from those who are supposed to provide them with whatever services" (Socioserve, 2017)

"A lot of changes over the years…so initially, it was only volunteers, there was no external funding. Actually, some of the activities were to collect things and send to Ghana…The organisation started with external funding but working with service provision to some extent. Although the frame of mind has always been help to self-help… There was a long period where it was needs based. Gradually during the past, maybe ten years or so, it has changed to become rights based" (GhanaVenskab, 2017).

From the above comments, it can be seen that although they identity a shift, they also hinted their strategic service delivery activities, which is service delivery at a very minimal level, and rapidly diminishing. This is similar to researches which reveal NGOs expanded focus, more on active public advocacy instead of purely service delivery initiatives (Tsikata, et al., 2013). Also, from the Statements the fact that these transformations have been greatly influenced by donor requirements is evident.

Thus, the rights based approach is mostly driven by donor requirements coupled with the significant growth of the Ghanaian economy. Donors have always been prominent drivers of CSOs development, and still have an influential hand in directing the operations of NGOs, as the NGOs are heavily dependent on them for funds (Tsikata, et al., 2013). The Danish NGOs especially make reference to adhering to the Danish development strategy, and the adoption of a strategy known as the 'change triangle'. Additionally, in order to address the poverty situation of the country, it is important to know and understand the developmental context, to enhance efficiency of any intervention. And over the years, Ghana has been able to attain significant growth (Caluag, 2015), consequently affecting the approaches of addressing poverty in the country. For example, previous service provision activities of NGOs such as provision of clothes, digging bore holes, etc. are seen as needless. As the State is supposed to be able to provide those in light of current growth status.

More so, through their advocacy and capacity building activities carried out in light of RBA, NGOs have been able to make impact in the lives of the poor. NGOs' advocacy activities mostly involve acting as watchdogs to ensure that duty bearers perform their duties. This will be further highlighted in subsequent sections on their cooperation with the State. In terms of capacity building, NGOs recount that such activities involve active engagement of the poor, with the end goal of empowering them to gain some control over their lives and poverty situation. This is what underlies their all their interventions.

Examples of such impact activities are; Direct impact on the lives of 43,149 Ghanaians, through the three programmes -Grassroots Economic Literacy and Policy Advocacy Programme (GELAP), Livelihood Security Programme (LSP), and SEND Financial NGO (SENDFiNGO), undertaken by SEND Ghana. These beneficiaries are located in sixty-five (65) poor districts across six (6) regions in Ghana (SEND Ghana, 2015). Oxfam IBIS's Complementary Basic Education (CBE) programme, has led to 97% children completing, out of 6,009 children that began the class (Oxfam IBIS, 2016). Integration of CARE's VSLAs programme into Prosperous Cocoa-Farming Communities (PROCOCO) in conjunction with Cargill has resulted in "a total of 2,180 farmers (909 men, 1,271 women) being financially empowered through the establishment of 89 VSLAs, with farmers saving GH₵437,426 ($112,160.51). A total of GH₵286,752 ($73,526.15)" (Hinson, et al., 2017).

From the examples outlined, it is evident that, most of the impacts are associated with empowering and building capacity of the poor, in diverse dimensions. Thus, supporting NGOs language of commitment and devotion to the poor. Perkins & Zimmerman suggest this in their description of empowerment as a process of enhancing wellbeing of people, whiles providing opportunities for them to develop knowledge and skills; and exploring environmental influence of social problems to address them (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

In essence, NGOs were identified to make impact in the lives of the poor by engaging in several activities geared towards empowering the poor. The dimension of their activities hinge on transformations in their approach and strategy, thus from needs based to RBA. These approaches were further identified to be mainly driven by donors.

4.1.3.2 Participatory Bottom up Approach / Partnership

NGOs identified participation through partnership as one of the anchors of effective implementation of interventions. Partners of NGOs were identified as mostly CBOs and local State authorities. This idea is purported by the Danish development strategy, hinging on partnership based community programs in the south, based on an integrated approach to advocacy and change process known as the 'change triangle' (Bisgaard, et al., 2012). Just as revealed by NGOs involvement of CBOs in their projects and programs to enhance efficiency of interventions, literature on current NGO approaches to poverty reduction suggests that when there is a holistic combination of concrete thematic competencies of civil society organisations, organisational competencies, and advocacy competencies, civil society is most likely to attain sustainable results and strengthen its legitimacy and voice towards the State and the market (ibid.). In support of this view, an interviewee States that "*yes, we believe in strategic partnership…as a way of sustaining whatever intervention that we think or undertake*" (SEND, 2017).

Furthermore, in their partnership with ***local State authorities***, they ensure mutual agreement on planning and implementation strategies and sometimes even target areas (HFFG, 2017; SEND, 2017; Socioserve, 2017;). The district officials also receive training from the NGOs (GhanaVenskab, 2017; IBIS, 2017). State authorities at the district level often receive training from NGOs because their human resources are often weak, with either little or delayed support from the State (Ghana Venskab, 2017). Furthermore, one Danish NGOs explains that aside district State authorities having substantial amount of information, the concept of involving

them is to ensure sustainability of projects at the end of implementation (IBIS, 2017). Thus, the ability of the State to own and continue from where NGOs have left off. In this sense, IBIS portrays the higher goal of sustainability instead of involving State institutions merely for the purpose of information and consent to operate in a particular target area.

4.1.4   Interventions

The type of interventions undertaken by NGOs depends on their focal areas of operation. Thematic areas of education, health, governance, environment, and natural resources were identified from the findings. However, all the NGOs similarly identified health, education and governance as the prominent thematic areas in reducing poverty, among several significant others. It was also deducted that compared to GhNGOs, DkNGOs are more heavily focused on food security. DkNGOs address this issue extensively by focusing on associated issues of land rights; effects of climate change; and accessibility of farm produce to markets (CARE, 2017; IBIS, 2017; GhanaVenskab, 2017). In spite of this focus, they see poverty as a multifaceted problem, with no one aspect being more important than the other, in terms of addressing poverty. As identified in previous subsection on NGOs view of poverty.

Impacts as previously highlighted are an end result of interventions. I use the word intervention instead of projects, because, the study reveals a difference between 'projects' and 'programs'. According to my research, projects (mostly used by GhNGOs) are characterised by short services, duplication of efforts and inefficiency, whereas programs (mostly used by DkNGOs) enhances cooperation, long term services and efficiency. It was identified that the disintegrated nature of projects diminishes the efficiency of impacts. As noted in subsequent comments of respondents, sometimes, these local NGOs lose focus and undertake various projects without strategic priorities all because of money.

"One thing I believe is that when it comes to thematic or strategic, I think local NGOs tend to be less consistent in the agendas they pursue. They will say 'I work in water management', but they do a school project…Or you ask what they do, and they are like 'I do everything'. So, because they are small and they are depending so much on funding, they do whatever you want them to do. And the vast majority of them are based in districts and it's a one-person NGO. And what they do is that they implement projects for INGOs, and even for government. That is why mostly, the ones that CARE Denmark supports, have very specialised focus within different

areas. But most of the NGOs here, they don't have a focus, and they don't have the expertise" (CARE, 2017).

"I mean, there are a lot of African NGOs who are taking money to do projects that they do not believe in" (SEND, 2017)

The above comment reflects the fact that most GhNGOs lack focus and expertise which is reflected in their undertaking of projects instead of programs. The issue however, as inferred by DkNGOs can be solved by strategic planning and prioritisation, involving combined planning and implementation of interventions to achieve more sustainable results. Which the programs are an embodiment of. The findings, also reveal that all the GhNGOs, but SEND, referred to their interventions as projects. SEND Ghana on the being an exception is evident in its extensive experience as one of the largest GhNGOs. Additionally, their program approach can be associated with their source of funds from Danish sources such as IBIS. Consequently, reflecting similar strategies. In close connection to this point is the idea of INGOs providing financial support to local NGOs.

Additionally, it was identified that projects and programs alike, all involve some form of application in order to receive funds. All the NGOs identified similar means such as calls and proposals. According the findings, Calls refer to those that are broadcasted by donors with a specific intervention focus, in response to which participants will have to submit proposals (HFFG, 2017; IBIS, 2017) However, all the DkNGOs identified a different dimension in their application to their main donor (Danida), upon which they will receive funding (IBIS, 2017) (GhanaVenskab, 2017) (CARE, 2017). They are allocated funds, based on their proposal alignment with the policy guidelines of the Danida. According to DkNGOs, Danida's work in a country is based on its interest in a country and its profile. As a result, DkNGOs being funded by Danida have to fashion their program around that, guided by Danida's civil society policy as well as the Danish development strategy. However, NGOs have liberty to design their own programs although it must be relevant to the policy and strategy. (CARE 2017; IBIS, 2017; GhanaVenskab, 2017). This presupposes the limiting nature of calls mostly related to projects as compared to the widened innovative opportunities presented by the Danida program approach. Therefore, reflecting implications of limiting opportunities for GhNGOs, compared to DkNGOs.

4.1.5 Cooperation with the State

NGOs relationship with the State goes beyond partnership with local State authorities as explained in a previous section. Thus, first of all, respondents of the various NGOs inferred that, although they function as independent entities, their operations are undertaken within a State, as a result they are legally bound to adhere to the laws of the land. Additionally, NGOs in Ghana have an extensive space to operate in as compared to other African countries. Data from the study showed that, NGOs in Ghana have a seemingly intricate yet peaceful relationship with the State. This is described as a '***constructive complementary relationship/engagement'***. Thus, their complementarity implies inclination to buttress poverty reduction efforts of the State, rather than replacing government services.

The idea therefore is not to fill in the shoes of government, but, complement their efforts. The study further points out that, they do not just do mere advocacy, but undertake responsiveness action. As Stated by some interviewees:

"*...we are not lazy advocates...government people are very quick to say we will do this and that...That is fantastic, but if you* [referring to the State] *do not follow through, and remind, and demand implementation, it becomes only bust a talk shop. This is where we have a third phase which is what we call responsiveness phase. This is where we monitor and measure the responsiveness of duty bearers on the commitment they made during policy engagement. And so, it becomes a cyclical activity that goes around, until we have achieved what we want to achieve*" (SEND, 2017).

"*Of course, sometimes we do not stop there, that government has actually allocated money. But even if you spend the money, to what effect or what is the impact. We follow up to see what the impact of the spending is*" (IBIS, 2017).

Thus, where responsiveness of duty bearers to the commitment they made is not only measured but also to ensure that quality impact is being made in realising their commitment. This reflects NGOs' ability to bring about quality developmental change, depicting their more advantageous role in this effect, as compared to other development actors (Kaldor, 2003; Lewis & Kanji, 2009; Jensen, 2016). It must however be noted that not all GhNGOs are active advocates. This is sometimes because they lack the exposure and experience. SEND Ghana in this case is an exception, but also reflects prowess of other experienced and well connected NGOs.

More so, constructiveness of this relationship depicts critical complementarity of NGOs. One might think that they being complementary reduces their imminence as development actors. On the contrary, they are because, even though they ensure optimal cooperation with the State, they function as critical advocates and active stakeholders in the development of the country, whose operations are not dictated by the State. However, there is still existence of mutual respect. Tocqueville and Hegel postulate civil society as free associations (Woldring, 1998); an intermediary realm between citizens and the State (Christensen, 2010; Jensen, 2016); and according to Kaldor, a necessary tool for attaining some form of freedom, redistribution of power, economic wealth and democratic governance (Kaldor, 2003). These are similar to the study's findings of NGOs' role as advocates and watchdogs, ensuring that duty bearers perform their due responsibilities and remain accountable to the citizens.

Also, constructiveness of NGOs as suggested by the findings, similar to that of King, et al. (2010) patterns of the sovereign characteristics of NGOs as a third sector can be identified in this study. However, the findings of this study which reveals that this constructive complementary relationship promotes peaceful development premised on mutual respect, trust and sustainability towards achieving the developmental goals of the country is contradictory to the chaotic postulations of other scholars (Porter, 2003; Stromquist, 2002 in Esbensen, 2010). Lastly, complementarity of the relationship is consistent with MacIndoe (2013) suggesion of NGOs and the State having mutual dependence.

In summary, NGOs identify their advocacy role as a means to keep the State on its toes. Also, the constructive complementary relationship, characterised by amicability and cooperation between both stakeholders (NGOs and the State) is evident. The constructive nature of this relationship highlights criticality of their role.

4.1.6   Indispensability of Donors

NGOs activities in reducing poverty cannot be discussed without making reference to the significant role donors play. As Boyson (2001) pointed out in his study, NGOs receive funds from different categories of donors, which consistent with the study's finding revealing that NGOs indeed are supported by diverse donors. The experience of NGOs showed donor dependence; and constructive flexibility of donors as the two main components of their financial integrity.

Donor Dependence. Both GhNGOs and DkNGOs identify the importance of donors to their operations. They all receive funds from both international and private (individual and companies) donors. However, it was revealed that core funding was only available for DkNGOs and absent for GhNGOs. This poses a challenge for the GhNGOs and makes them more vulnerable to donor manipulations although all the NGOs are dependent on donors. As recounted by an interviewee, *"...we are no longer getting institutional support (core funding), we are only getting project support. And it is such a big thing, especially in Ghana attaining the so called lower middle income status, with many of the donors sheepishly turning their attention from Ghana as if everything is okay"* (SEND, 2017). This reveals heavy dependence of NGOs on donors for survival.

Adaptable behaviour of Donors. Donors were identified as being flexible and not restrictive. Some of the Gh (SEND & HFFG,) and all Dk NGOs made it clear that donors do not define their operations, but require compliance with their policy and call guidelines. In spite of their influence, NGOs also identify flexibility in the sense of proper communication and compliance with donor guidelines. Thus, although donors demand compliance with their guidelines, they mainly serve as pivotal inspirations. Additionally NGOs have the opportunity to make suggestions and communicate certain concerns to donors, which most often than not is resolved. Rationality (Scott, 2008; Jensen, 2010) of NGOs to exercise a bit of control in their interactions with donors is evident. However, some Gh and Dk NGOs identified inflexibility of some donors. They Stated that "*definitely. They all come with their conditions. And if you are able to adhere or you think you can work with those conditions, fine. If not, then you just have to back out*" (Socioserve, 2017) . Another respondent similarly remarks that, " *Some donors are quite inflexible. You will feel the pressure when you are developing proposals. They want it in specific ways, and you have to follow their interests on a one to one scale. There is always some sort of negotiation. But there are definitely some donors that are more inflexible than others*" (CARE, 2017).

In summary, the findings show that donors are the financial muscle of NGOs without which they will not survive. Furthermore, rational behaviour of NGOs is identified, in their ability to communicate suggestions to donors, which also portrays flexibility of donors. However, they pointed out that, despite donor flexibility, they made sure to follow donor guidelines and requirements, without totally deflecting, and taking advantage of donors' receptiveness.

Consistent with other scholars (Tvedt, 2002; Casciaro & Piskorski, 2005; Nienhuser, 2008) my findings reveal heavy dependence of NGOs on donors demonstrates the criticality of donor funds to their survival. In close connection, level of control of donors on NGOs as identified in the findings is consistent with conclusions of researches (Tvedt, 2002; Casciaro & Piskorski, 2005; Jensen, 2010) pointing out the availability of resources as great influences on the behaviour of organisations. Furthermore, rationality of NGOs is also identified, in line with the postulations of scholars such as Scott (2008) and Jensen (2010).

4.1.7 Efficiency

Both GhNGOs and DkNGOs identified accountability; and monitoring and evaluation as a way by which they maintain efficiency of their activities. In terms of *Accountability*, NGOs revealed two forms of accountability, thus to the beneficiaries and to donors. They all identified the importance of accountability in their work. Accountability to beneficiaries was described as *downward accountability*, which includes; public display of budget on notice boards and media (local radio stations) (SEND, 2017; IBIS, 2017); review meetings (Socioserve, 2017); community durbars (HFFG, 2017); accountability platforms (GhanaVenskab, 2017); and outcome mapping (CARE, 2017). NGOs noted that the purpose of this is to promote participation, in the form of communicating project details to beneficiaries, and giving them the opportunity to raise their concerns and queries. *Upward accountability* on the other hand involves, submission of reports during and after projects and programs. for example, a respondent made a comment that "*you have indicated to them in the application that you will do this evaluation. They will take the report*" (IBIS, 2017). NGOs identified these as very important to boost and maintain their legitimacy and trustworthiness.

Furthermore, NGOs identify that in order to ensure effective implementation of interventions, they undertake *monitoring and evaluation*. All NGOs identified this by making reference to Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) teams and systems in place. some comments include;

"*we have a monitoring system…then we have what we call formative monitoring mission, and then we have end of project or program evaluation…monitoring is routine…but then at the end of the year we also have what we call forum, where all partners are brought together to reflect on what you have achieved in a year, what the challenges were, what strategies you used, whether they need some adjustments…*" (IBIS, 2017).

"We have 2 M&E people…So there is monitoring, that is why we are able to revise our strategies…if you ask about efficiency, it is about the systems and procedures that we have put in place…that helps us do monitoring…" (SEND, 2017).

From the findings, it can be seen that this forms an important part of their poverty reduction activities as it is within this period that they are able to determine the real strengths and weaknesses of an intervention, and take make necessary rectifications.

4.1.8 Disparities in NGOs Poverty Reduction efforts

In early discussions of processes, certain gaps and challenges can be identified in NGOs relationship with the poor, State and donors. These have been outlined below.

4.1.8.1 Disparities in NGOs relationship with the poor

The study revealed ***ambivalence of NGOs downward accountability***, upon critical analysis. NGOs claim a downward accountability to the poor but withhold and have absolute control over budgetary information and allocation for projects. A respondent from one of the GhNGOs indirectly inferred it by commenting that

"for each program that we have, the first 15 mins [making reference to radio sessions] *is devoted to discussing how that project, that activity is being funded. From where, how much…On this notice board I talked about, we put the activity and the cost. The only thing we don't put out there is our salaries, because we do not want people to come and chase us and ask for money…but in terms of project information, yes, it is our responsibility to publish them in the newsletters and so on and so forth"* (SEND, 2017).

In a different light is a comment made by an interviewee from a DkNGO. "*We use the reflect methodology, and something called communication for social change. We have a kind of community dialogue process steps, that communities can be supported through to analyse the problem and identify what issues to address and make action plan for them. We put quite a lot of emphasis on communication because people need the platform to voice their issues…we have also been making accountability platforms to get feedback on how they* [the poor] *think the*

project is performing and that probably they can give their perspectives on the project" (GhanaVenskab, 2017).

The comment of the GhNGO, reflects downward accountability in the form of providing information to the poor. The loop hole here which creates a flaw in their accountability is that information provided to the poor is already planned and decided information. The poor had no input during decision making and planning of the project. Similar to this point, is other scholars (Rowlands, 1997; Buckley, 2000) identification of the contradictory relationship between top to down planning processes used by development stakeholders and bottom up characteristics of empowerment. Also, most often than not, most of these people are illiterates with little understanding for complex budgetary and strategic information. And the CBOs who sometimes serve as representatives of the poor in the community, are made of community elites who tend to have their selfish interests preceding their actions. This fuels the already existing ignorance of the poor, as most often than not, these poor people are not fully aware of what they ought to receive or are entitled to from the NGO activities.

On the other hand, the DkNGO depicts a deeper level of involvement of the poor in the planning of interventions. In this way, the poor are able to own the project and assume responsibility of sustaining it, rather than seeing it as someone else's responsibility. This confirms Lord &Hutchison (1993) suggesting empowerment of the poor as where they do not merely gain control or participate in their community, but obtain significant level of power reflected in the effectiveness of their own actions to influence changes in their lives (Lord & Hutchison, 1993). Thus, in this case, the GhNGOs reflect an inferior form of accountability compared to the comprehensive form depicted by the DkNGO.

The above discussions suggest that the rosy picture portrayed by NGOs (especially GhNGOs) about their relationship with the poor is dismal to a certain extent. The trait of giving minor information with no involvement of the poor in planning and decision making limits the level of empowerment through involvement. Critical analysis of data, coupled with observations during research and past involvement in NGO work, reveals this as one of the ways by which NGOs engage in corrupt acts. In the sense that they take advantage of interventions to help the poor, and manipulate resources to make money. Again, it must be noted that this is based on data related to GhNGOs. Although most of the DkNGOs did not show similar traits during my research, further studies might prove otherwise.

This paradoxical situation raises the question of whether the poor are being empowered or just being used as instruments of prosperity. Holmen & Jirstrom (2009) in their research on "second thoughts about NGOs as representing civil society" suggest the grim nature of NGOs legitimacy as genuine representatives of the voice of the poor. Their work was more global as it centred on NGOs' work and participation in global decision making. Alternatively, how NGOs represent the poor in this research varies as it is premised on their communication, engagement and accountability to the poor. It is also based on a national dimension, although inclusive of INGOs. This makes it more country specific and not generalised as that of Holmen & Jirstrom (2009).

More so, Critical analysis of research findings reveals a pattern of *hierarchy* in NGOs relationship with their beneficiaries, in spite of their bottom up attributes. This is mostly evident in their patnership with CBOs. These CBOs become channels of implementing projects with NGOs playing a monitory role.

"…we normally call it civil society strengthening…We give them money which is urestricted so they can choose how to use it…of course, for us it is important that they have a strategic plan. Then they are free to use the money as they want" (CARE, 2017).

"Yes, we, believe in strategic partnership, it is very important…as a way of sustaining whatever intervention that we think or we undertake. We have a model, we call in Participatory monitoring and evaluation framework. In every district, we choose what we call focal organisations. Those focal organisations are community based or district based ngos that we work with . but then we set up citizens monitoring groups, that are a collection of representatives or build monitoring, or is made up of a collection of social interest groups like civil society groups. So within each district, we have 11 members constituting this committee. You have 11 civil society groups appointing their representative, to lead in monitoring of intervention in their distrits. So right from that, apart from the big district level ngo that we work with, we work with women organisations, farmers based organisations, the youth, traditional authority, small holder farmers, market women, the assembly member, and then from the government side, usually , the district planning officer, the constitute that monitoring group. The district planning officer serves as a conduit between the citizens group, and the district assembly. We have it also at regional level. The same group then elects their

representatives to form the regional network, and at the national level. So you can say there is a cascading arrangement from the top to the down, or from a bottom up" (SEND, 2017).

One noteworthy difference between GhNGOs and DkNGOs in their partnership with CBOs is the level of independence and support given. The DkNGOs provide their local partners with funding and allow them to use it based on their organisational preference, however ensuring that they have a strategic plan prior to receiving funds. GhNGOs on the other hand use CBOs just as channels for implementing and monitoring projects. They do not provide any core funding, but do give them logistical support. In this sense, the level of empowerment differs between the two NGO types, although they all imply capacity building through involving CBOs.

The comments further show that delegation of responsibilities (in the guise of partnerships) is increasing compared to NGOs direct engagement to the people in the grassroots. Thereby creating hierarchy. In the above comments, the interviewee from SEND Ghana, to an extent ambiguiously infered it In his last sentence. Consistent with other research (Banks & Hulme, 2012; Holmen & Jirstrom, 2009; Manor, 2004), the increasing gap between NGOs and the people they claim to be fighting for is revealed. This Consequently results in strained relationships with the poor, as Banks &Hulme (2012) puts it, NGOs have become "too close to the powerful and too far from the powerless". NGOs claims of effective links to the poor is therefore in this sense sceptical. More so, in as much as the capacities of CBOs are being built, probability of capture (Mansuri & Rao, 2013) is increased. Thus, where local elites manipulate participatory processes to reflect their interests (ibid.). This is because majority of these local elites are those in charge of CBOs. In effect, reflecting a gap in the participatory methodologies of NGOs.

In summary, despite similar claims of accountability by NGOs, a difference was identified between Dk and GhNGOs, with the former depicting comprehensive involvement and that of the latter being minor. Additionally, Ghanaian NGOs, depicted traits of manipulative behaviour through minor involvement of the poor. And thus, raising questions about their true intent in their relationship with the poor.

Partnership of NGOs with CBOs also depicted patterns of a hierarchical relationship. Thus, a unified implication of CBOs playing an increasing role as intermediaries between NGOs and

the poor. However, the DkNGOs showed a greater level of manoeuvrability and support (funds) to CBOs, compared to the limiting nature on the part of GhNGOs. Resultant of this in coupled with previous discussions is the implementation of projects that are not tailor made to the unique needs of the people, and NGOs strained relationship with the poor. The issue of capture, which illustrate manipulation of intervention benefits by local elites was also identified as posing a challenge to genuine poverty reduction.

4.1.8.2 Disparities in NGOs Relationship with the State

The rosy picture of an amicable relationship between NGOs and the State however depicts some level of murkiness. Three main factors, thus dysfunctional representativeness of developmental stakeholders; participatory gap; and increased scrutiny of NGOs by State were identified as being particularly significant. Firstly, NGOs identify bleak receptiveness of suggested policy recommendations by State due to its *dysfunctional nature*. In Ghana, NGO leaders also function as government officials and private businessmen simultaneously, and vice versa for all sides of the stakeholder triangle. It therefore becomes difficult to know the true reflection of a policy, as it is most often than not inadvertently influenced by exclusive interests of these stakeholders (CARE, 2017). Gramsci postulates civil society as an outside realm separate from the State and market. However, findings of this study reveal a close connection and mixed interactions, which largely influences the activities of CSOs (NGOs). NGOs are as a result not as separate from the State and market as they have been portrayed to be.

The study further revealed a *participatory gap* as NGOs identify most of the involvement of civil society as mere consultation (SEND, 2017). This is regarded as an inferior form of participation. Civil society is unfairly represented in deciding on pillars and playing a significant role even 30% of development processes in the country, which will affect them more when implemented. This goes against scholars' (Rappaport, 1987; Tsiboe, 2001) empowerment postulations of critical involvement of people in decisions they end up bearing the consequence of. The implication of all this is lack of legitimate policies, relevant for addressing developmental issues in the country. Similarly, Porter (2003), in her work also reveals the absence of State institutions actually ensuring complete participation in their partnership with local NGOs and CBOs. This shows that there is more room for improvement when it comes to NGOs participation in developmental processes.

Lastly, despite the extensive CS space, giving NGOs room and manoeuvrability to operate, the State is depicting more scrutiny and concern about NGOs' operations (CARE, 2017). The watchdog role is therefore not one-sided, as the State also to an extent serves as a watchdog over NGOs. As Hegel pointed out, there is the need for State laws in regulating fragmented and immoral individuals (referring to civil society) in the society. Although NGOs are classified as a more structured and professionalized form of civil society (Kaldor, 2003), Hegel's concept of law enforcement is similarly evident in this study. The State has existing processes to monitor NGOs, but are making further efforts to introduce binding laws to regulate NGOs. This is evident in a Statement made by a respondent that, "*even now, the government is putting together a law to regulate NGOs…There was a time they tried it and we fought against it. Because it was more or less trying to regulate the way they work, but we think that it should be more about the standards they have to meet*" (IBIS, 2017).

Holmen & Jirstrom (2009) further suggest the need for regulation by calling out government and international institutions to demand a mandate from NGOs in order to promote more transparency and democracy, something that many NGOs have avoided overlong. This inclination to increased scrutiny can be attributed to the corrupt nature of some of the NGOs especially Ghanaian NGOs. However, based on observation, both NGOs and the State are of blame as both of them are not always forthcoming to each other. For instance, there was the indication that in order to work in a district assembly, you need to register with the district assembly, to ensure efficiency. As sometimes government has a standard in the particular geographical services that it wants to provide, as well as the capability of the grassroots to maintain a project. Some NGOs do the opposite, and are not reprimanded. This also shows inefficiency of some State institutions to ensure that their work is done. One can therefore see a cyclical causal relationship. As a result, the study suggests a revision of Hegel's postulation of law enforcement to draw the State's focus on ensuring that officials of State institutions lead by example, instead of condemning NGOs.

In conclusion, both NGOs purport incompetency of the State by identifying certain inconsistencies such as participation gap (SEND, 2017; HFFG, 2017) and problematic laws to regulate NGOs and increased scrutiny (IBIS, 2017; CARE, 2017). It was however further identified that NGOs are also partly to blame, and both stakeholders have created a cyclical causal relationship, adversely affecting their roles as development actors.

4.1.8.3 Disparities in NGOs Relationship with the Donors

One disparity that was identified is a decrease in donor funding which is creating a problem for NGOs, especially GhNGOs. NGOs identify inadequate funding to solve myriad of poverty issues (HFFG, 2017; SEND, 2017); and donor fatigue (Socioserve, 2017). One of the respondents associated this with donors thinking that Ghana growth has improved to a substantial level, and as a result do not require assistance previous times (SEND, 2017). Dk NGOs however, did not express any financial difficulties, as they all had core funding from Danida. Additionally, a comment from one of the DkNGO respondent illustrates the idea of shrinking funds. He States that "*you know, INGOs and local NGOs are supposed to do different things so that at one point, there won't be INGOs in Ghana. There will be a few, and they are getting fewer. Funding is reducing, so I think you want to see a Ghana that has its own independent strong civil society*" (CARE, 2017). In this sense, instead of a totally negative connotation, it suggests a positive basis for reduction in funding, and consequent diminishing number of INGOs operating in Ghana, based on independence and growth of Ghana.

The whole idea of shrinking funds is clearly supported by the Denmark- Ghana Partnership Policy 2014 to 2018. This document suggests focus of Danish organisations on political and commercial cooperation, and reduced development assistance as Ghana has moved beyond development aid (Danida, 2014). The Furthermore, heavy dependence of NGOs on donors calls NGOs independence to question. The findings reveal that NGOs activities are largely influenced by donors in the sense that donors are not only their financial muscle, but also the one of the main drivers of their transformation from needs based to rights based. In this case, it becomes difficult to classify NGOs as an independent sector, as suggested by other scholars.

4.2   Summary of findings

The main argument that emanates from the findings is that; *NGOs are critical development actors in poverty reduction, but their waning legitimacy does not reassure positive implications in the lives of the poor. Additionally, donors have an extensive dominance over NGOs, not because of strict rules, but because NGOs are financially heavily dependent on them*

The detailed logic of this argument, in light of the findings is that, first of all *NGOs enrich and expedite the process of poverty reduction, based on their view of poverty as a multifaceted*

problem with mutually reinforcing factors. Thus, they have facilitated poverty reduction by drawing attention to the issues of the poor, and been able to point out the multifaceted nature of poverty. This is evident in the pro poor mission and vision Statements of the NGOs. For example, to guarantee rights and well-being of the people (HFFG, 2014; SEND Ghana, 2017; Oxfam IBIS, 2017); and empowerment of the poor (CARE, 2017; Ghana Venskab, 2017; Oxfam IBIS, 2017). Furthermore, is their recognition of an integrated approach to reduce poverty due to its multifaceted nature, whiles highlighting inequality as the crucial aspect of poverty in Ghana. They diversely emphasized inequality by referring to "unequitable economic and resource distribution" (IBIS, 2017); "ironic widening of inequality gap" (SEND, 2017); "divide between the north and south of Ghana" (GhanaVenskab, 2017); "human rights issues" (HFFG, 2017) and "unequal power relations" (CARE, 2014). Further linked to their perspective of an integrated approach, is the implication that, information is power, which breeds influence, and consequently propagates better access to resources. In their facilitation of poverty reduction, NGOs see vulnerable groups as central, in trying to mainstream those groups. This has been augmented by a transformation in their developmental approach, embodied by activism.

The increased activism approach of NGOs is regarded as the most sustainable way of working towards reducing poverty. This is characterised by RBA (advocacy and capacity building), participation through partnerships, and accountability. A similar trait is revealed for both DkNGOs and GhNGOs. The development narrative in the 80s where NGOs were mostly providing services, shifted to advocacy and holding duty bearers to account in the 90s and advanced in the 2000s. Advocacy is characterised by confrontation and calling government to order, coupled with giving people platforms, and amplifying those voices to make sure they are heard. NGOs believe that the best form of advocacy is for the people affected to be able to communicate how it affects them, thereby reflecting participation and empowerment. One of the significant ways of empowerment and participation as recognised by both DkNGOs and GhNGOs is through strategic partnerships with CBOs. However, despite its positive connotations, the issue of capture (Mansuri & Rao, 2013) is identified as a probable effect.

Furthermore, transformation to increased activism, focused on civil society empowerment, through advocacy and partnership was identified as driven by donor requirements, which is clearly evident in statements of respondents. Reference to changes depending on the changes donors go through (CARE Denmark, 2017); changes in donor lines to reflect more advocacy

(Socioserve, 2017); and introduction of external funding resulting in gradual shift from needs based to rights based (GhanaVenskab, 2017); all clearly depict donors as the main driving force behind this transformation

In connection to the revolutionized approaches of NGOs in their poverty reduction efforts, is the assertion of *NGOs having a constructive complementary relationship with the State.* This is because first of all NGOs advocacy pursuits are mostly directed to the State. And they also partner with the State in their activities. This relationship identifies that, NGOs are not doing the State's work, but are only playing the part of creating awareness of what the development facilities are, and point out the gaps and venues to government. NGOs cooperate amiably with the State, but function as a strong alternative voice in development. This evident in comments of diligent advocacy through ensuring responsiveness action by some NGOs (IBIS, 2017; SEND, 2017). NGOs also play a significant role, as without NGOs, it will be difficult to keep an eye on the process of development by the State. Also, poverty reduction interventions will be talked down without sufficient acknowledgement of what the beneficiaries might need. Despite amiable relations, certain discrepancies such as dysfunctional representativeness in policy making (CARE, 2017); participation gap (SEND, 2017); increased scrutiny of NGOs by the State (CARE, 2017; IBIS, 2017); and inadequate capacities of State institutions (GhanaVenskab, 2017). However, it is identified that both parties are still exploring their relationship with eachother and cooperating effectively. The end goal, of NGOs constructive advocacy and partnership is to ensure sustainability of poverty reduction interventions.

More so, *donors prevail as critical developmental stakeholders.* In order for NGOs to function effectively, they need financial support, a large part of which is obtained from donors. In essence, aside being the prime initiators of NGOs, they remain crucial to poverty reduction, as NGOs are heavily dependent on them. To a large extent, NGOs depend on donor funding to survive. And once Ghana has declared middle income status, this funding channel is drying up, making some of the NGOs especially Ghanaian ones suffer some level of financial constrain (SEND, 2017). Their level of funding is project based, compared to DkNGOs who receive core funding, and therefore are more stable. The NGOs also identified existence of donor requirements, whiles acknowledging donor flexibility. This shows that although donors have influence over NGOs, it is not as a result of strict demands, but the power of their financial resources. Also, as suggested in previous discussions, donors remain one of the main drivers of development of NGOs' activities.

Lastly, certain questionable conducts have led to the ***dwindling level of NGOs' credibility and legitimacy***. The findings illustrate that NGOs processes of monitoring, evaluation and accountability are important to their work, as it enhances efficiency and strategic revisions of operations. They identified presence of M&E systems, and diversely showed importance of accountability in the form of public display of budget on notice boards and media (local radio stations) (SEND, 2017; IBIS, 2017); review meetings (Socioserve, 2017); community durbars (HFFG, 2017); accountability platforms (GhanaVenskab, 2017); and outcome mapping (CARE, 2017). However, critical analysis revealed gaps in profound participation of the poor, mainly in association with NGOs claimed downward accountability. Thus, in as much as NGOs steadily demand accountability from the State, their internal democracy is not up to speed. The argument suggests a deficiency in this area especially with GhNGOs. Consequently, repressing their legitimacy as genuine voices of the poor. See **Appendix A** for a table illustrating summary of findings.

4.4   Contributions, Complementation, and Contradictions to Existing Scholarship

As depicted in the analysis and discussion of findings, the various arguments have either contributed to, confirmed or disagreed with existing researches. For example, In consistency with other scholars, the study acknowleges the advantageous and complementary role of NGOs as developmental actors. Tocqueville and Hegel postulate civil society as free associations (Woldring, 1998); an intermediary realm between citizens and the State (Christensen, 2010; Jensen, 2016); and according to Kaldor, a necessary tool for attaining some form of freedom, redistribution of power, economic wealth and democratic governance (Kaldor, 2003). However, my study goes further to distinguish the criticality of this role, by hinting the fact that although NGOs complement the efforts of the government, their operations are not dictated by the State. Furthermore, the study reveals an amiable relationship between the State and NGOs, although certain discrepancies exist. This is contrary that of Porter (2003) that suggests tensed relationship.

Also, in consistency with my study, scholars indicate tricky NGO empowerment of the poor (Iniamagha, 2015); enhanced quality of life of the poor by NGOs (Suharko, 2007; Asamoah, 2009); incidence of capture by rural elites and the participatory gap of the poor in developmental decisions and plans (Asamoah, 2009). Additionally, They all similarly

conducted their research with focus on discovering impacts, contributions and challenges of specific projects that have been undertaken by NGOs. In this regard, my research differs as it focused on assessing the nittygritty of their operations instead of mere contributions and challenges. This revealed various intricacies associated with the final outcomes that is seen, as well as a pattern of NGOs' current development trajectory, which involves more activism.

In connection with the above is the controversial issue of self-reliance through empowerment. Similar to other researches (Holmen & Jirstrom, 2009), my study has suggested the waning legitimacy of NGOs, suggesting their uncredible representativeness as voices of the poor. However, a critical look at this point raises the question of whether improvement in their representativeness will indeed be a positive thing. This can be explained with one of the extreme view points of ambiguity of self reliance, under empowerment. This view asserts the relevance of proffesional persons acting on behalf of the people, whiles recognising the importance of consultation. As against the other point which suggests empowerment with minimal external intervention (Gergis, 1999). Although the second view may seem better, it still has some form of external intervention. Thus, In both cases, true empowerment of the poor is limited as they depend on NGOs in one way or the other, with the latter being less dependent than the former.

No, I am not downplaying the important role of NGOs in the lives of the poor, but, pointing out the loophole in their intent to represent and act on behalf of the poor, which suggests limitation of genuine empowerment. One may counter that, NGOs partnership with CBOs is a sign of genuine empowerment as the CBOs mostly constitute of people in the grassroots, but in a more organised manner. The findings even reflect this through the interests of NGOs, especially DkNGOs in building capacity of CBOs, and giving them wide room for manoeuverability and independence. Critical analysis of this suggests that through this, CBOs will build their capacity, become stronger, and more organised, similar to NGOs. There is even a probability of some of them transforming into NGOs. Currently, CBOs serve as channels between NGOs and the poor, which already reflects representation of the people in the grassroots, by a higher grassroot group. Thus CBOs become professionalized grassroot persons acting on behalf of the poor in their communities. This generates and propagates hierarchy in poverty with a negative effect of stiffling genuine poverty. My study therefore suggests recognition of the true implications of power in empowering the powerless, with focus on incidence of propagating heirarchy instead of widespread empowerment.

Lastly, in their research on the "Political Economy Analysis of CSOs in Ghana" (Tsikata, et al., 2013) and "The Role of NGOs in the Aid Effectiveness Partnership" (Christensen, 2010), both scholars similarly, suggest donors as the main drivers of the new transformations in the work of NGOs. Thus, nudging NGOs in a particular direction through their requirements and policies. Despite this consistency, my study additionally identifies the flexible nature of donors. In the sense that, although they have guidelines which NGOs must adhere to, NGOs have room for manoeuvrability, and are not necessarily stifled by donor requirements. More so, (Tvedt, 2002; Casciaro & Piskorski, 2005; Nienhuser, 2008) in the resource dependency theory, suggest the measure of criticality of a resource, to be based on the ability of an organsation to survive in absence of a resource. In connection with this, my study showed that NGOs need donor funds to survive, therefore depicting the criticality of donor funds.

CHAPTER FIVE (5) – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Various patterns, transformations, perspectives, gaps, that are relevant in assessing the significance of NGOs in poverty reduction in Ghana were discovered in this research. The study took an intent direction to find out the intricacies behind the work of NGOs in reducing poverty. Thus, an in-depth assessment of their significance than simply identifying their impacts in the lives of the poor, as is common to most research done in this field, specific to Ghana. It is also noteworthy that the topic of NGOs as social actors in conjunction with poverty is a very widespread and complex phenomenon. As a result, no one study can fully capture its entire essence. The study was further enhanced by not only studying Ghanaian NGOs but, including INGOs (specifically Danish NGOs) to provide diversified findings and conclusions. Subsequent conclusions were made from this research.

First of all, in light of the research findings, NGOs can be recognised as critical actors in reducing poverty. Existing research (Adjei Osei-Wusu, et al., 2012; Dangah, 2012; Iniamagha, 2015) similarly suggest that, they have facilitated poverty reduction through their pro poor inclinations; and multifaceted view of poverty. Additionally, my findings identify that revamp of NGOs approaches from needs based to rights based approaches (thus, extensive advocacy and capacity building) has elevated ther importance as development actors. In the sense that, they are able to empower the poor by providing platforms; and serving as a strong voice for civil society to demand accountability from the State. Thus, NGOs ensure that social and economic rights of the poor are upheld by keeping duty bearers accountable. NGOs believe that, rights based approaches are a more sustainable way of reducing poverty, due to its empowering and effective nature,

However, being critical development actors, does not make them better agents of poverty reduction. The study reveals certain discrepancies in NGO operations, consequently resulting in rapidly diminishing credibility. For instance, contrary to NGOs proclaimed empowerment of the poor, my findings suggest disparities such as ambivalent downward accountability and hierarchical traits which point to doubtful links to the poor. In support of this, existing scholarship (Rowlands, 1997; Buckley, 2000) identify contradictory top to down planning processes used by development stakeholders, which can be associated to ambivalent downward accountability of NGOs. Also, in consistency with Holmen & Jirstrom (2009), my finding suggest that NGOs legitimacy of being true representatives of the poor is questionable, and they must focus on improving their representativeness as the voice of the poor (Holmen & Jirstrom,

2009). Additionally, their focus on being more representative and empowering the poor, must be done by paying close attention to genuine empowerment, void of propagating hierarchy among the poor. Rather, propagating genuine citizen engagement, which signifies self-reliance of the poor.

Thirdly, contrary to research suggestions of tensed relationship between the State and NGOs (Porter, 2003), my study reveals an amiable relationship. NGOs were identified as having a constructive complementary relationship with the State. Thus, they are not seeking to replace the State, but rather point them in the right direction. This is evident in NGOs initiating interventions with associated models which they encourage government to take up and duplicate through partnership with local State authorities. There are some interventions that NGOs have initiated, such as complementary educational models (Oxfam IBIS, 2016) which have been successful. The idea is for government to emulate and propagate these initiatives, towards widespread poverty reduction.

Futhermore the study highlights NGOs' critical complementarity, which dismisses suggestions of dimished developmental role. Despite the general idea of complementarity signifying mutual dependence, it also suggests some level of subbordination. However, the constructive nature of NGOs' complementarity in their relationship with the State as identified from the study, purports independence. This independence is as a result of no State dictation over their activites. Donors are the only actors identified to have some level of control over NGOs' operations (Christensen, 2010; Tsikata, et al., 2013).

More so, NGOs identification as critical watchdogs contradicted the research proposition that NGOs make government reluctant to effectively tackle poverty. Thus, they rather kindle the State's poverty reduction responsibilities, by demanding it to be more accountable, participatory and inclusive. The State is admonished to revamp structures and laws relating to development of the country, instead of concentrating on political antics. All development actors must aim to constantly evaluate their roles and responsibilities; pursue stronger partnerships void of irregularities; and combine efforts towards making competent policies to achieve sustainable growth and development.

Last but not least, the study concludes that donors are pivotal to poverty reduction efforts of NGOs. Aside being one of the main drivers behind the current rights based approaches of NGOs

(Tsikata, et al., 2013), they have also been identified as critical external environment with resources necessary for NGOs' survival (Casciaro & Piskorski, 2005; Nienhuser, 2008). This supports the research proposition that NGOs will not survive without donor support. Additionally, Most Ghanaian NGOs further noted dwindling donor funds as a result of Ghanas middle income status (SEND, 2017). Nevertheless, despite this heavy dependence the study's identification of donor flexibility is in consistency with assertions of Scott (2008), which depict rationality of NGOs and their opportunity to exercise a bit of control in their interaction with donors. The study reveals that NGOs are able to make suggestions where necessary, by effectively communicating with donors, whiles ensuring that they do not deflect too much from donor guidelines, policies and requirements. Furthermore, their heavy dependence on donors also affects their credibility, as they are seen as being close to the powerful and far from the powerless (Banks & Hulme, 2012). Similar to Christensen (2010), the study suggests that upward accountability to donors, coupled with donor influence in NGOs development transformations questions NGOs independence. Thus, contrary to their independence with regards to the State, as mentioned earlier.

In essence, to answer my research question - **"are NGOs still significant development actors in fighting poverty in Ghana?** Yes, they are, despite shortcomings. This is because, my findings suggest that although they pursue the qualitative dimensions of poverty which cannot be tangibly measured, NGOs have facilitated poverty reduction, by drawing attention to the issues of the extreme poor, and being able to point out the multifaceted nature of poverty. They have also, piloted some initiatives of poverty reduction, and kept an eye of the factors that influence or reduce individuals' ability to rise out of poverty. Additionally, regardless of the fact that their impacts cannot be proportionately attributed, the presence of NGOs have deeply enriched and expedited the process of poverty reduction. NGOs are significant in the sense that without them, poverty reduction interventions will be talked down without sufficient acknowledgement of what the beneficiary might need. And the development track has proven that when an intervention is designed with the import of the beneficiary, it makes a lot of difference. Nevertheless, their efforts to reduce poverty can be further improved to provide more efficient responses to the needs of the poor and make lasting sustainable impacts. Precarious behaviours of NGOs, funding issues, and diminishing credibility are all draw backs to genuine poverty reduction, which must be addressed. As mentioned in earlier parts of this chapter, NGOs must focus on revitalising their representativeness of the poor. Additionally, they must diversify funding means, to avoid unforseen crises and stability.

In summary, it can be seen that NGOs in Ghana are still significant to poverty reduction. Currently, NGOs rarely provide services, but rather reduce poverty through capacity building and active advocacy in pursing the interests of the poor. This change is associated with the shift from needs based to rights based approaches, originating from donor influences. This transformation has led to NGOs constructive complementary relationship with the State. Thus, NGOs do not fill the shoes of the State, but rather through advocacy and partnership, calls the State to be more participatory, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of the poor. This is recognised as a more sustainable way of reducing poverty, as it promotes empowerment of the poor, and longevity of poverty reduction efforts. Furthermore, being an indespensable financial muscle and driver of development transformations of NGOs, donors were identified as pivotal stakeholders in the operations of NGOs. Also, despite significance of NGOs, certain disparities identified, make NGOs appear to be doubtful voices of the poor, consequently leading to their waning legitimacy. NGOs must therefore make strategic amendments to their operations and refocus to ehnance genuine poverty reduction.

My research conclusions highlighted the current development trajectory of NGOs, with specific relation to poverty reduction, and its associated complexes. Thus, emphasizing the constructive relationship between NGOs and the State instead of narrow conclusions; and the tendency of blindly producing hierarchy through empowering the powerless. Noteworthy also, is the diversified and extensive nature of findings as a result of the combination of Ghanaian and Danish NGOs. The research's conclusions can be said to be significantly representative. Despite creditable conclusions of this study, the discourse on NGOs and poverty reduction can be advanced by further research.

My research could expand on assessment of State poverty reduction policies and its implications on NGOs operations; market and political influences and implications on NGOs poverty reduction efforts; and NGOs actual involvement in development processes of the country. Furthermore, advanced exclusive comparative research on influences of instutional and structual context on NGOs organisational operations is recommended. I make reference to exclusive comparative research because my comparative approach was partial, as it sought not to exclusively compare Ghanaian and Danish NGOs, but to discover similar or dismillar patterns, with the end goal of obtaining enriched results.

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APPENDIX A – TABLE PRESENTING SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS		
	GHANAIAN NGOs – SEND Ghana; HFFG; Socioserve	**DANISH NGOs – Oxfam IBIS; CARE Denmark; Ghana Venskab**
Background **(Originating year & objectives)**	-SEND (1998) - policy research and advocacy; development programme monitoring; livelihoods security; -HFFG (2001) - promote the health, education and socio economic wellbeing of the poor. -Socioserve (2002) - quality education, good health, equal rights and a protected environment	-CARE Denmark (1987/1999 in Ghana)- strengthening capacities of poor; recognition of and respect for their rights. -Oxfam IBIS (1970/ 2002 in Ghana) - quality education; support to civil society; and public participation in good governance. -Ghana Venskaab (1979/ 2002 in Ghana) - promote equality and development creating opportunities for and empowering their beneficiaries to fight for their democratic and social rights.
Perspectives poverty and the poor	- Inequality is the crux of poverty in Ghana. - Integrated approach to addressing poverty - women, children and youth are mostly vulnerable. However, choice of beneficiaries is inclusive, based on incidence of poverty.	- Inequality is the crux of poverty in Ghana - Integrated approach to addressing poverty - basically rural poor, and vulnerable groups including women, children, and youth. Choice of beneficiaries is based on incidence of poverty
Approaches and Strategies	-Transformation from needs based to Rights Based Approaches. This involves advocacy; capacity building and strategic service delivery (limited service provision) - Participatory bottom up approach, through partnership with CBOs and State authorities (local district institutions)	-Transformation from needs based to Rights Based Approaches. This involves advocacy; capacity building and strategic service delivery (limited service provision) - Participatory bottom up approach, through partnership with CBOs and State authorities (local district institutions) - Activities are defined by the Danish Civil Society Strategy (CSS)– "the change triangle".
Interventions	-Thematic areas of focus include; education, health; environmental; and governance (SEND). -Mostly undertake projects, which are applied for through response to calls, for funds. These projects were characterised as unsustainable. Only SEND Ghana undertakes programs instead of disjoint projects.	-Thematic areas of focus include; education; health; governance; natural resources; climate change; with heavy focus on food security (especially CARE Denmark). - Undertake programs under a main theme, to promote efficiency, and long term sustainable impacts. Applications are made to main donor (DANIDA), in coherence to the CSS and policy guidelines.
Cooperation with the State	-Good CS space -Constructive complementary relationship; active advocacy and responsiveness action.	Good CS space -Constructive complementary relationship; active advocacy and responsiveness action.
Indispensability of donors	-Very heavily dependent on donors, but also identify rationality in communicating with donors. -lack of core funding.	-Heavily dependent on donors. However, have core funding from DANIDA. They also identify flexibility of donor demands especially DANIDA.

		NGOs are able to act rationally to a certain level.
Efficiency	-Downward accountability to the poor in the form of; public display of budget on notice boards and local media (SEND, 2017); review meetings (Socioserve, 2017); and community durbars (HFFG, 2017). -Upward accountability to donors, in the form of evaluation, monitoring, and annual reports. - Presence of M&E systems and team, that undertake monitoring during the project and evaluation after the project.	Downward accountability to the poor in the form of; public display of budget on notice boards and local media (IBIS, 2017); accountability platforms (GhanaVenskab, 2017); and outcome mapping (CARE, 2017). -Upward accountability to donors, in the form of evaluation, monitoring, and annual reports. - Presence of M&E systems and team, that undertake monitoring during the project and evaluation after the project.
Disparities in NGOs relationship with the poor/State/donors	-Ambivalent downward accountability of NGOs to the poor. Also, evidence of hierarchical relationship, despite bottom up approaches and strategic partnership with CBOs. CBOs have limited independence, thus no core funding, but just logistical support. -NGOs suggest participatory gap of the State in CS's participation in developmental processes (SEND). -Challenge of with shrinking donor funds.	- hierarchical traits and ambivalent downward accountability, to the poor. However, CBOs are more empowered and independent. CBOs are given core funding and allowed to control their own projects within a program. - The dysfunctional nature of interaction among development actors from the three sectors (State, private, and non-profit), hinders genuine receptiveness and development of policy recommendations (CARE, 2017).

Source: Author, 2017