

NGOs, spirituality and community development in Northern Ghana: Challenges and sustainability

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Abstract

The present study sought to identify barriers to sustainability as experienced by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), including the faith-based ones. The work was based on case reviews and case studies of some NGOs, which worked in the northern parts of Ghana. The study used a qualitative approach of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Reviews of the relevant textual materials supplemented the primary data. The study found a number of barriers to sustainability of the organizations, which affected their effective and efficient operation. Using religious models of sustainability and other approaches, the study suggests a combination of strategies for overcoming those barriers for their future existence. The study is important because it contributes to local and international theories of sustaining NGOs.

Keywords: NGOs, Spirituality, Sustainability; Community development.

Introduction

The periods from 1980 have generally been characterized by rising demographic increase concomitant with mass poverty and “widening spatial inequalities” in developing and developed countries alike (Adjei, Agyemang & Afriyie, 2012). Already by the early 1970s, partly because of the OPEC oil price increases and partly due to poor fiscal and budgeting policies, many African economies were experiencing severe liquidity challenges. Government expenditure at the time outstripped revenues, with serious consequences for welfare provisions (Mohan *et al.*, 2000). With an estimate of 18 million deaths each year attributable to poverty-related causes from the 1980s the multifaceted and polysemous nature of poverty remains an acute world-wide development challenge. “Thus, the emphasis on poverty reduction in global development initiatives has been necessitated by the realization and response to the reality of the growing incidence of poverty amidst so-called economic growth in the last few decades” (Adjei, Agyemang & Afriyie, 2012: 48).

Ali and Thorbecke (2003) have as well documented the sweeping, deep and chronic nature of poverty in rural communities in Africa that goes beyond single-handed states’ solution, warranting a new strategy of confrontation. In a developing country like Ghana, apart from momentary respites, Ghana’s economy beginning from the first half of the 1960s to the present, generally, was and is in a perennial ailing state. Ayi Kwei Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* vividly described the situation of Ghana’s economy at the time that made “people... only bodies walking in their sleep” living from hand to mouth (Armah, 1968: 2).

Indeed, over the years, Ghana, like most sub-Saharan African countries seeks intermittent interventions (aid) from International Monetary Fund (IMF) to regurgitate the ailing economy through Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) and Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Like in all situations, it soon becomes evident (though not before major social, economic and political upheavals) that such “medicines” (aid) do not heal “the patient” as Ghana’s economy becomes stuck in stagflation (see also Zack-Williams, Frost *et al.*, 2002).

The situation was exacerbated by the deflationary measures inherent in the SAP in particular that demand institutionalization of cost-recovery programmes. These programmes in the 1980s and 90s had a far-reaching consequence in the form of increased tax rates; complicating the already precarious situation of “vulnerable groups, such as the old, those on fixed incomes, women and girls, with the latter withdrawn from schools to make way for boys” (Mohan *et al.*

2000: 3). Thus, for the majority, the ERP and SAP were and are an immense hardship rather than a relief.

Most of Ghana's debt was cancelled in 2005 through the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. However, the economy in recent years has been suffering from "the consequences of loose fiscal policy, high budget and current account deficits, and a depreciating currency" (CIA World Fact Book, 2017). In 2016, Ghana's economic performance was a mixed one. "After making solid progress on fiscal consolidation in bringing the fiscal deficit down from 10.2 per cent of GDP in 2014 to 6.3 per cent in 2015", it missed the main aim "of narrowing it further to 5.3 per cent of GDP in 2016" by a wide margin "with the deficit widening to 9% of GDP" (World Bank, 2017). This situation is compounded by weak and unstable commodity prices in the world market.

Despite this, Ghana's external balance improved in 2016. This was reflected in its increased exports and a limit in imports. The current account deficit narrowed to 6.4 per cent of GDP in 2016 from 7.6 per cent of GDP in 2015. Moreover, gross foreign reserves increased marginally from \$4.4 billion in 2015 to an estimated \$4.9 billion, which was equivalent to 2.8 months of imports at the end of 2016. GDP growth at 3.6 per cent was slightly higher than the envisaged 3.3 per cent. Coupled with this, inflation that remained stubbornly above 17 per cent, was reduced to 15.4 per cent in December 2006 and further reduced to 13.3 per cent in January 2017 (World Bank, 2017). At the close of 2017, it constricted to 11.8 per cent missing the set target of 11.2 per cent. Presently in September, 2018 it precariously hangs at 10 per cent. Thus, it becomes very clear that in spite of the gains, the near-term challenges of Ghana are substantial and that its downside risks remain high.

This vulnerable picture in addition to the general situation of the economic crisis compelled Ghana in April 2015 to sign a \$920 million extended credit facility with the IMF. This was to help address the growing economic crisis. The IMF conditions for this loan required that Ghana reduce its fiscal deficit, cut down subsidies, decrease its public sector wage bill, strengthen its revenue administration, as well as increase revenues (World Bank, 2017). These measures seem to compound the already austere living of majority of Ghanaians.

Within this scenario of events, governments, policy-makers, development experts and researchers particularly in developing countries have tried practical and effective ways of reducing poverty by means of promoting sustainable community development. It has also been realized that if developing countries, like Ghana, want to halve the proportion of people suffering from hunger

and extreme poverty, they need “effective collaboration between states’ institutions and NGOs” (Adjei, Agyemang & Afriyie, 2012). As a response to this collaboration, NGOs have entered into partnership with states in poverty reduction and community development.

2. Spirituality (Evangelism) and community development

NGOs such as World Vision Ghana, Adventist Development and Relief Agency Ghana (ADRA-Ghana), Rural Action Alliance Programme, Plan Ghana, Action Aid and Social Development and Improvement Agency work in Ghana. Some work in the Northern parts alone and others operate nationwide. They employed strategies to improve access to and use of social services. They also helped in human and financial capital development. Among their interventions were “adult literacy, micro-finance and input loan, food security, livelihood and agricultural extension services.” Through these interventions, the poor were able to experience increase in production and expansion of their incomes. The success of these programmes was well documented by Adjei, Agyemang and Afriyie (2012). Wamani (2007) also showed how NGOs provided about 14 to 50 per cent of both curative and preventive health and medical services.

In the operations of the NGOs, there appear to be differences in their strategies. Some are faith-based whilst others are secular. What appears to be lacking in the strategies of the secular NGOs is the spiritual dimension. Faith-based NGOs such as World Vision Ghana and ADRA-Ghana include this missing link by undergirding their material and social development strategies with Christian evangelization to bring about a holistic development to the targeted deprived communities. World Vision Ghana like its international parent body, World Vision International, was founded on Christian beliefs and values. As such, its material and social development activities are spiritually based. In other words, faith underpins the organization’s development practice not only in “administrative offices where development is conceived and managed”, but also at rural project sites (Bornstein, 2002: 6). The material and social development goes hand in hand with proclamation of the Gospel or evangelism. The spiritual programme as it were, complements the material and social development. This is in line with their commitment to propagate the Christian faith through witnessing with lifestyle; and praying over sick people to produce signs such as healing and which encourages people to respond to the Gospel (Brennan, 2013). This is done in partnership with local churches with specially designed Christian witness programmes (World Vision Ghana, n.d.).

Unlike World Vision Ghana, ADRA-Ghana, originally set up as Seventh Day Adventist World Services (SAWS) provided relief assistance to Ghanaians during the 1983 drought which led to widespread famine and hunger in the country. This activity was done as a way of showing compassion to those in need and emulating Christ who taught Christians to do good to all manner of persons. As a result of this activity, several churches sprang up in the areas and communities which enjoyed these relief activities. The formation of these Seventh Day Adventist Churches were, however, unintended outcomes of the activities of ADRA-Ghana and not a deliberate act of evangelism on the part of the organization (Key interviewee, 2018). The key to understanding this type of development is “the emulation of Jesus Christ in the process of development, and the attention to spiritual as well as material poverty” by development actors (Brandt, 1995; Bornstein, 2007: 7). This dual need – religious and socioeconomic or spiritual and material, is what is termed “holistic development” or “integral development.” Thus, the main objective of faith-based organizations is to bring about a holistic transformation in the form of spiritual and material/social developments to the lives of their clients. It is envisioned that as the attitudes and lifestyles of individuals change for the better, entire communities may be transformed resulting in progress and development (Brennan, 2013). In other words, as the full gospel is propagated, individuals may have the inner transformation that may lead to a change in their attitudes and lifestyle and through this, communities may also be transformed (Ter Haar, 2011).

In spite of these efforts, NGOs, including the faith-based ones, experience certain common challenges, which act as barriers to their own sustainability. While their operational challenges vary, NGOs working in rural settings face a common challenge of financial constraints associated with inadequacy and delays in the release of donor funds. World Vision Ghana and ADRA-Ghana in addition to the common constraints, face challenges of ethnic and chieftaincy conflicts and socio-cultural practices that destroy, damage or render unusable completed projects in beneficiary communities in the Northern regions of Ghana. What worsens the situation is that locals are not able to provide much support in the case of World Vision. However, for ADRA-Ghana, beneficiary communities or households provide counterpart funds or materials depending on the type of assistance. Thus, the questions this paper seeks to address in relation to the problem are: What are the challenges that act as barriers to sustainability of NGOs? In which ways can those barriers be removed for their sustainability? Since barriers to sustainability experienced by the NGOs are

similar, the paper intends using World Vision Ghana and ADRA-Ghana as a case study and supplementing it with case reviews on the secular NGOs. The paper is very significant because, among other things, it helps NGOs, including the faith-based ones, to deal with barriers to sustainability. It also contributes to local and international theories of sustaining NGOs.

3. Definition of Concepts

3.1. Non-Governmental Organization

Definition of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) is always controvertible. However, they can be described as “private, voluntary and non-profit organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interest of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services or undertake community development based on the principle of altruism and voluntarism” (Adjei, Agyemang & Afriyie, 2012: 52). Among the NGOs are faith-based ones, which are affiliated or identified with a church, a mosque, a synagogue and others (Fritz, n.d.). The faith-based NGOs self-consciously derive their identity and mission from the teachings of spiritual traditions. These organizations do not only express moral values, but also provide dependable support base for millions of people in the developing world (Shah, 2017). Over the years, they intervene first to help those who find themselves in poverty before the state provides its source of help (Clarke, 2013).

Globally, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are rated 5% of the global gross domestic product, or \$1.6 trillion per year in economic activity and acknowledged as an enormous sector of global economy (Lambert, n.d.). This shows that the non-profit sector of the world economy is growing significantly. It is indicated that every year more than 50,000 new non-profit organizations emerge in the US alone. Analysis has also established that in Tanzania the numeric growth of NGOs is in geometrical ratio. For instance, in 1990 while there were only 41 registered NGOs, by 2000 as many as over 10,000 NGOs existed in that country. “At the end of the 1990s, NGOs in Africa managed nearly US \$3.5 billion in external aid, compared to less than US \$1 billion in 1990” (Lambert, n.d., p. 3). This figure, certainly would increase in the contemporary time.

In Ghana, literature dealing with statistics on NGOs is woefully inadequate and therefore difficult to provide a precise number of these organizations presently operating in the country. But what is known is that the beginning and growth of these organizations in Ghana was very slow. In 1930 there were only three of

them that had been officially registered. This number increased steadily in the 1960s and 1970s. From the 1970s, NGOs were at the forefront of providing both material and religious/spiritual development in this country. Some of the NGOs known to the rural communities in Ghana include 31st December Women's Movement, Rural Action Alliance Programme (RAAP), Plan Ghana, Social Development and Improvement Agency (SODIA), Action Aid, World Vision Ghana, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and ADRA-Ghana (Bob-Milliar, 2005).

Christian Faith-Based Organizations such as the last three originated from a history of missionaries who gave economic development assistance during the colonial period and after. Erica Bornstein (2002: 5) affirmed that before the emergence of such organizations "missionaries were at the forefront of offering agriculture assistance, education, and self-help programmes for Africans where colonial states did not". Similarly, the organizations operated as a social space "to missionaries of earlier eras; at times collaborating with states and at others resisting state policies" (Bornstein, 2002: 5). After independence, many Christian faith-based Organizations continue to assist governments in religious, social, educational and economic development.

3.2. Development

Development as a concept is traditionally understood as improvement in economic and social conditions of any group of people that may be referred to as a community or society. It implies improvements in the way of managing a community's or society's natural and human resources in such a way that wealth is created and people's lives are qualitatively improved (Shah, 2017). What is clearly missing in this definition is the religious/spiritual as well as other dimensions of life. Leslie Newbigin (1989: 6-7) attributed this missing link in the theory and practice of development to modern worldview that dichotomizes the sacred from the profane. This modern worldview dichotomizes the spiritual world as an arena of sacred revelation, in which people know through believing; while the physical world - a place where we hear, see, feel, touch, observe and know things with certainty is scientifically based. Thus while faith is seen as part of the spiritual world, reason and science, on the other hand, are things responsible for providing explanations for problems in the physical world. The spiritual world is an interior, private matter of personal choice, and has no relevance in the public square where politics and economics operate all alone. These false dichotomies, according to Newbigin, have influenced the traditional development theory and practice limiting it to only matters that are material.

This traditional model of development is destructive of nature because it is bereft of or not impelled by basic values. In other words, it is ethically vacuous since it is not anchored on concepts of rights and responsibilities (Jabareen, 2008: 182).

While there is no one universally endorsed definition, the globally accepted aim of development is to make conditions possible for actualization of potentials and quality improvement in human personality (United Nations General Assembly, 1987). Shah (2017) indicated how powerful economic interest groups could set societal agenda of development, which in most cases might be “unrepresentative of the heterogeneous and diverse nature of our civil society making for a consolidation and concentration of power and resources in the hands of a few.” It means majority would have a limited access to social and other benefits. This may be root-caused by the restricted nature of participation of people in the development process particularly in developing countries like Ghana; and often compounded by the unsuccessful and weak redistributive policies of governments. As a people-centered concept, there could be many different roads to development and self-reliance. Thus, the notions such as “human-centered development”, “the development of people”, and “integrated development” demand a more inclusive and sensitive approach to social, economic, political, educational and religious/spiritual development. It calls for a unified approach that integrates all the components of the human person in plans, policies and programmes for peoples’ betterment. It also means a simultaneous integration of cross sectorial and regional developmental needs as well as making way for a participatory development that is sustainable (Shah, 2017).

3.3. Sustainability

Linked to the discussion of development is “sustainability”. According to Steer and Wade-Gery, the concept of sustainability had its source from the physical, biological and engineering sciences (Steer & Wade-Gery, 1993). Yosef Jabareen, on the other hand, maintained that the concept originally was an ecological term that epitomized “an ecosystem’s potential for subsisting over time, with almost no alteration” (Jabareen, 2008). He indicated how the concept changed its ecological status after the concept of development was added to it. Since then sustainability is viewed from the point of society as well as capital economy.

This argument as to whether the planet’s limited resources can indefinitely support human development is traceable as far back to Thomas Malthus in the late 18th century (Dixon & Fallen, 1989). As the popular environmental

movement gained momentum in the 1960s, “sustainability entered the cultural mainstream” and has remained there ever since (Steer & Wade-Gery, 1993: 23). Indeed, the concept has generated a tremendous public awareness for better environmental stewardship. It fundamentally refers to the ability to make things work continuously without an end. Managing the ecological systems or all aspects of financial investment such as mutual funds, bonds, stock, equities, fixed assets and deposits and many others, might be seen as sustainable if their activities do not exhaust the material base on which they depend (Jenkins, 2009). In the context of the current study, one can say that NGOs like World Vision Ghana, ADRA-Ghana (non-profit faith-based organizations) can be described as sustainable if their activities do not exhaust their financial and human resource bases to cripple their survival and operation. Thus, the study implicates how the organizations can sustain themselves and therefore, their development activities by providing enough without exhausting their resource bases, and which can make them continue to exist. It means sustainable development is the type of development that meets the needs of the present making sure that the needs of future generations are not compromised (United Nations General Assembly, 1987: 43). Thus the objective of this concept is to maintain economic advancement and progress for quality life of communities or societies and at the same time, protecting the long term value of the environment and “providing a framework for the integration of environmental policies into development strategies” (United Nations General Assembly, 1987). Scholars, long before the late 20th Century pointed out the need of not creating a dichotomy between environmental sustainability and economic development (Emas, 2015).

3.4. Sustainable Development

The fundamental principle of sustainable development is to integrate environmental, social, and economic concerns into every aspects of decision making (Emas, 2015). Thus, as indicated, it implies that NGOS, including faith-based ones can be described as sustainable if their activities do not exhaust their environmental, financial, social as well as other resource bases to cripple or nullify their own present and future survival and operations. Thus, the concept of sustainable development “aims to mitigate and moderate... the paradox between the two” concepts – development and sustainability (Jabareen, 2008: 181). It can be indicated that the concept, while it is all inclusive and ambiguous, it brings humanity’s dependence on natural resources into moral relation with its economic and political systems. Seen this way, one can argue that there must be contextual interrelatedness between the economies of NGOS, including

the faithbased ones and the society and environment in which they operate. It implies, as indicated, for example, that while NGOs like World Vision Ghana and ADRA Ghana carry out their development activities, sustainability demands that they do not consume their resources faster than they can be renewed, or produce waste faster than it can be absorbed.

Literature on the role of NGOs in community development has attracted massive scholarship, but little on how to sustain such organizations to continue with their operations. Thus, the main objective of the study is to identify challenges faced by NGOs such as World Vision Ghana and ADRA-Ghana, during their operations, which act as barriers to their sustainability so as to find out how such barriers can be removed for their sustainability.

4. Methodology

The study sought to identify the barriers to sustainability as experienced by NGOs, including the faith-based ones so as to provide suggestions on how to remove those barriers for their sustainability. The NGOs studied were World Vision Ghana, ADRA-Ghana), Rural Action Alliance Programme, Plan Ghana, Social Development and Improvement Agency, and Action Aid. The study of the secular NGOs involved case reviews of relevant literature on their operations and challenges while the faith-based NGOs like World Vision Ghana and ADRA-Ghana were studied via cases.

Verschuren and Doorewaard (1999) recommended small numbers in strategic sampling when conducting a qualitative research instead of a random sample as in a survey. Accordingly, the study used in-depth interviews and telephone conversations involving 10 key informants from national, regional and district offices and other stakeholders of the faith-based NGOs. In addition, the study employed focus group discussions in order to obtain not only in-depth, but also enormous data from other respondents. Five (5) key informants were drawn from World Vision Ghana and another five (5) from ADRA-Ghana to provide information concerning barriers to sustainability of their organizations. Twenty-three (23) others comprising chiefs, opinion leaders and ordinary citizens were drawn from project beneficiary communities, namely Gorugu, Nandom, Savelugu, Gonja and Gumbungu respectively in the Upper East, Upper West and the Northern regions of Ghana. The reason for the inclusion of these informants was to find out their views about projects that had been undertaken among them; what support their communities gave to the organizations and how they thought the activities of these NGOs could be sustained for further

development activities. As indicated, the strategy of selection of informants was purposive. Finally, significant data was obtained from fieldwork interviews and group discussions in July and August 2015, July and August 2016 and updated in December 2017 and August 2018 some of which were cited in the paper.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Barriers to Sustainability

The common barrier to sustainability as experienced by the secular NGOs reviewed, pertains to “financial constraints in the form of inadequacy and delays in the release of donor funds.” An interview with the Programmes Manager of Action Aid who supervises work in the Tain district of the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana confirmed that “partnership funding from donors such as Ireland Aid, the Italian Government and UNDP for various projects sometimes got delayed due to the weighty procedures involved” (Adjei, Agyemang & Afriyie, 2012: 69). It was also realized that adherence to certain cultural practices bordering on “complex land tenure systems and discriminatory gender role differentiation rooted within the rural milieu”, had adverse effects on community organization and engagement with some NGOs initiatives that were made to promote equity and reduce inequality. Refusal to cultural change also manifested in a stiff opposition displayed, for example, by the people of Dalanyiri community as they were reluctant in forfeiting the taste developed for their initial unsafe water source so as to adopt usage of potable water from a borehole provided for them by Plan Ghana (Adjei, Agyemang & Afriyie, 2012). Adjei, Agyemang and Afriyie further indicated transportation and communication problems as barriers to successful projects implementation by the NGOs that would benefit rural communities in the Wa West and Tain districts of Ghana since project sites were impassable especially during the rainy season. Some of the projects had to delay or be abandoned altogether.

In addition, the study identified a number of barriers to sustainability experienced, for example, by World Vision in Ghana. Informants through field interviews and focus group discussions, mentioned rampant ethnic and chieftaincy conflicts, lack of maintenance culture and insufficient trained personnel as some of the main challenges facing World Vision Ghana. The ethnic and chieftaincy conflicts were corroborated in an earlier study by the United Nations Development Programme in 2012.

According to key informants and discussions emanating from focus groups, ethnic and chieftaincy conflicts were major challenges to development in the

three regions of the north. They are major challenges in the sense that they hinder development leading to endemic poverty of locals. Informants indicated how during the conflicts, many development projects and equipment were either damaged or destroyed. Some officers and programme staff had to be removed from conflict zones and relocated as a means of safeguarding their persons. This challenge was experienced, for example, in Bawku in 2001, 2008 and 2009. This also happened during the Konkomba and Nanumba war from 1994 – 2010, and in 2017.

According to two key royal informants of Kumbungu and Gonja traditional areas, “ethnic and chieftaincy conflicts were and are the main cause of their communities’ “under-development.” Both chiefs cited the wars mentioned above and many others that negatively impacted lives in their communities because many life-enhancing projects were damaged or destroyed. They maintained that “due to the persistent conflicts many organizations do not want to come to the north for investment.”

The lack of maintenance culture in some catchment areas is another challenge. Participants of the focus group discussions, and interviewees have all indicated the lack of maintenance culture as a major problem to the development efforts of World Vision Ghana and ADRA-Ghana. They identified this problem as particularly happening in Savelugu district in the northern region, stressing that it costs a lot of money to these organizations. A typical example is the provision in the area of borehole drilling where beneficiary communities do not take proper care of facilities. These facilities go out of use sooner than expected. Other key informants who are civil servants at Saboba corroborated the lack of maintenance culture among their people and the difficulty this poses to sustainability of projects, especially water facilities. Community maintenance teams which are trained to manage such facilities become ineffective due to their inability to raise funds at their community level for maintenance and replacement of broken down parts. Additionally, spare parts are not readily available for replacement, hence rendering the facilities unusable. Some of the informants are unhappy because beneficiaries are not deeply involved in the development process and decision-making pertaining to their communities, hence they do not take ownership of the projects. Such challenges are not only related to water facilities, but other community owned facilities such as school buildings, institutional latrines and clinics.

Some key informants who are workers of World Vision Ghana admitted the dwindling financial position of their organization. They also alluded to the same incidents of conflicts and lack of maintenance culture in project communities as

sucking the already weakened financial strength of the organization, making it unable to sustain itself and its development projects. This is understandable in light of the fact that World Vision Ghana depends solely on external donors to carry out its development activities. What makes the situation more serious, as indicated, is the fact that securing support from the international donors at times takes a long period; and funds provided are often inadequate.

Informants from ADRA-Ghana also indicated that the proliferation of NGOs has increased the competition for donor funding from such major funding agencies such as the United State Agency for International Development (USAID) which has been their main development partner over the years.

Additionally, other key informants noted that the large-scale natural disasters such as drought or famine, flooding and earthquakes which precipitate or attract huge donor funding are not present in Ghana. Private companies in Ghana, which should have helped also set up their own internal mechanisms to manage their corporate social responsibility funding or projects because they perceive NGO remunerations as too expensive for such projects. This and other challenges have prompted the need to look for new strategies that can help sustain NGOs, including the faith-based ones such as World Vision Ghana and ADRA-Ghana to enable them continue with their development projects in deprived communities in Ghana.

5.2. Models of Sustaining NGOs

The common challenge that all the NGOs experienced in this paper has to do with financial constraints in the form of inadequacy and delays in the release of donor funds, which acts as a barrier to their sustainability. NGOs, particularly World Vision and ADRA-Ghana being development oriented faith-based, nonprofit organizations, do not only facilitate market access but also emerge as fostering development for marginalized groups. They are expected to be flexible, adaptive, cost effective and quick to respond to issues of need. This is why it is imperative to put sustainability in perspective for the purpose of this study.

The economic model of sustainability theory has suggested that in a financial challenge such as that faced by NGOs such as World Vision Ghana and ADRA-Ghana, it is proper for the organizations to maintain an opportunity usually in the form of assets if donor requirements permit. This view of the economic model is in consonance with the religious model of sustainability and also satisfies the mission and vision of these NGOs. Since the Christian vision and mission is to follow the Lord Jesus Christ's steps by working with

the poor in order to reduce poverty and to help the oppressed, to promote human transformation, seek justice, and bear witness to the good news of the Kingdom of God, the idea of investing in the poor and the marginalized in society through concrete development projects as social capital (religious/spiritual), is laudable. It means organizations like World Vision Ghana and ADRA-Ghana need to use dividends accrued from their religious resources to create new opportunities that are of similar or greater value than financial capital. That is to say that the economic model does not only focus on financial capital, but also on social capital in the form of religious or spiritual connections and appealing to the benevolence of people with similar beliefs. In other words, for these organizations and their activities to be sustained, their focus should not only be on financial capital but also on natural and social (religious) capital (Jenkins, 2009: 383).

Remigijus, Ramanauskiene and Martinkus (2009) similarly indicated that economic sustainability approach seeks to maximize the flow of income and consumption that could be generating or engendering, while it maintains the stock of capital that produces beneficial outputs to the society or community. In light of this, NGOs like World Vision Ghana and ADRA-Ghana can be sustained if they maximize the flow of income from both local and international donors judiciously to the benefit of the community or society in which they operate. Respondents made it clear that the poor in the project beneficiary communities can contribute in some small ways, for example, by fetching water, sand or stones which may be needed for a project or by making community contributions as matching fund. By this means the beneficiaries are able to take ownership of the project for proper management.

The economic model of sustainability focuses its attention on developing a healthy economy that supports and sustains the organization, community, projects and the environment over a long-term. Also environmental and social benefits must offer economic value to the organization for it to sustain itself (American Society of Landscape Architects, n.d.). The contrast of this approach is that while conventional development theory and practice, as indicated, focus on property and wealth so as to maximize short-term monetary value at the expense of the resource base, sustainability, on the other hand, looks at long-term monetary or resource-base value in relation to the enjoyment of present and subsequent generations (Ikerd, 1997; Ellis, 2000).

Literature on sustainability also proposes diversification of sources of support as an effective sustainability mechanism for non-profits organizations (Jeanetta, 2007). Findings from field discussions with focus groups corroborated

suggestions that all successful organizations for profit or non-profit have funding that includes a mix of individual contributions, grants (local and international), and others. A non-profit organization with the best cash flow tends to be in groups that have many collaborative relationships with other organizations. Through these networks and associations, the organization can secure funding to help in its activities or team up with other organizations to source for funding. Field participants also agreed that organizations with clear purpose, transparent values and strong principles must be innovative and shift or redirect focus in line with global trends to successfully attract the attention of donors both locally and internationally.

The findings suggest that since development is a people-centered concept, it obliges a more inclusive and sensitive approach that is participatory. They stressed that NGOs like World Vision Ghana and ADRA must embark on demand driven projects which involves the beneficiaries in project development viz, needs assessment, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes. This would make it easy to secure the peoples' supports in every aspect of their activities. It implies that advocacy should be part of the organizations' activities. It entails using a set of tools, including meetings with relevant decision-makers, public speaking, and involving the media to reach the general public (De Jong, 2003). The result would be that various communities who benefitted from the development activities would contribute to the organizations' sustainability by supporting their activities. The fieldwork emphasized the importance of local support because it realized that securing foreign support, as indicated, at times may take a longer period to materialize. In a situation like this, resources obtained locally can be used to leverage grants and contracts to accomplish important output in the communities.

NGOs like World Vision Ghana and ADRA-Ghana in particular must be more transparent and accountable by practicing religious ideals and values on which they were founded, thus being properly accountable for all donations received. Good financial management is one that involves planning, organizational ability, controlling and monitoring financial resources to achieve projected objectives. This enables managers to make effective and efficient use of resources and to fulfil commitment to stakeholders.

The religious models of the sustainability theory also mention, among other things, spiritual commitments as the driving force for change in people; and that religious institutions have powerful authority to transform society's way of life.

The importance of including religious models in sustainability theories is due to the fact that the origin of the world's economic and technological systems is located within a moral consciousness that is completely shaped by religion (Jenkins, 2009). Interviews of key informants and focus group discussion corroborated this assertion and further added that since World Vision Ghana and ADRA-Ghana are faith-based and rely primarily on donors' funds for their projects, they must demonstrate good stewardship.

The role of religion in the organizations' work is also important because it is realized that useful cultural change relies on contemplating religious values that can renew the sustaining power of cultural worldviews. That is to say that receiving communities of projects who, for example, may not have the culture of maintaining projects, must be taught how to do so through evangelistic activities. In other words, field interviews and focus group discussions insist that in their evangelical activities that undergird the social and material development programmes, the NGOs could teach individuals and community project beneficiaries to understand religious values such as good stewardship, love of one's neighbor, forgiveness and compassion, and the need to live in a peaceful co-existence and therefore conflict-free environments that can allow developments to take place. This idea is significant because if actors of sustainability are to comprehend the mutual relationship of humanity and nature within a wider worldview, religions may have helpful resources. That is why field discussions realized that the crisis of sustainability should be an opportune moment for religious renewal or spiritual revival by the organizations within their catchment areas leading to changes in attitudes of projects beneficiaries. This could have the rippling effect of reducing or eliminating ethnic and chieftaincy disputes.

This is why the consensus of field focus group discussions stressed the need for World Vision Ghana and ADRA-Ghana to undergird the material and social development activities in the deprived communities with sustained evangelism; knowing very well that when individual project recipients undergo religious/spiritual experience leading to an inner transformation, this may affect the entire community or society leading to the cessation of conflicts and its attendant destruction of projects, and even lives. The inner transformation might also induce the spirit of good stewardship of completed projects.

6. Conclusion

The study sought to identify barriers to sustainability experienced by NGOs, including non-profit faith-based ones. The analysis was based on case reviews and case studies. The study found a number of challenges such as dwindling financial resources, frequent ethnic and chieftaincy conflicts, lack of maintenance culture, among others, as barriers to sustainability of the organizations in focus. These barriers affect effective and efficient operation of the organizations. Using religious models of sustainability and other similar approaches, the study suggested a combination of strategies for overcoming the barriers. If the suggestions made in lieu of the study problem are implemented, they may remove the barriers to sustainability experienced by the NGOs, including the faith-based organizations such as World Vision Ghana and ADRA-Ghana. It means these organizations would become sustainable for them to continue with the needed development activities in deprived communities in Ghana. In the final analysis, the study is important because it has contributed to local and international theories of sustaining NGOs, including the non-profit faith-based ones.

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