LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND NGO RELATIONS IN GHANA: THE
PARADOXES, RHETORIC AND THE ISOMORPHIC FORCES

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<table>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CG</td>
<td>Central Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCD</td>
<td>District Coordinating Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCE</td>
<td>District Chief Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPO</td>
<td>District Planning Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLSS</td>
<td>Ghana Living Standards Surveys</td>
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<td>GYEEDA</td>
<td>Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship Development Agency</td>
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<td>IORs</td>
<td>Inter-Organisational Relations</td>
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<td>LEAP</td>
<td>Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty</td>
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<td>LG</td>
<td>Local Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASLOC</td>
<td>Microfinance and Small Loans Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCD</td>
<td>Metropolitan/Municipal Planning officer</td>
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<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>MMDAs</td>
<td>Metropolitan/Municipal and District Assembles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPO</td>
<td>Metropolitan/Municipal Planning Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTDP</td>
<td>Medium Term Development Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NHIS</td>
<td>National Health Insurance Scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIT [IT]</td>
<td>New Institutional Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>NYEP</td>
<td>National Youth Employment Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>PNDC</td>
<td>Provisional National Defence Council</td>
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<td>SAPs</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEND</td>
<td>Social Enterprise Development Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>SFP</td>
<td>School Feeding Programme</td>
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<td>WFP</td>
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Local Government and NGO Relations in Ghana: The Paradoxes, Rhetoric and the Isomorphic Forces

ABSTRACT

In recent years, interest in the relations between government and NGOs and the implications of these relations for service delivery in developing countries has surged. This results from the increasing role of NGOs in many facets of development, especially in service delivery and poverty reduction. However, the focus of attention especially among researchers has been on the relations between central government and NGOs. Relations between local government and NGOs have received limited research attention, especially in developing country contexts. To contribute to opening the black box created as a result of the limited research interest, this study investigates the nature, driving forces and the implications of the relations between local government and NGOs for poverty reduction programme implementation in Ghana. The study adopts a qualitative research methodology, a multi-dimensional classification regime and a New Institutional Theoretical lens to investigate the phenomena. The study was conducted adopting semi-structured interviews and mini focus ground discussions; documentary reviews; and participant observations as the key data collection tools to document the nature, driving forces and the implications of local government and NGO relations in Ghana. This study establishes that the relations between local government and NGOs in Ghana are complex but fit into a four-dimensional classification typology of superficial and suspicious cordiality; tokenistic collaboration; friendly foes; and convenient and cautious partnerships. This typology is novel as previous studies have not classified the relations in this way. Further, it finds that a complex mix of forces drive the relations but in different directions – constraining and facilitating directions - contrary to conventional arguments that institutional isomorphic forces drive organisation into homogenisation. It adds that both the positive and the negative forces can be either beneficial or detrimental for poverty reduction programme implementation. In addition, the study establishes that the relations have more diverse implications for poverty reduction programme implementation than just the economic and efficiency arguments dominant in the extant literature. The relations have implications which are social, cultural, organisational, personality and political.
DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Justice Nyigmah Bawole

September, 2013
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to:

1. My sweetheart, Precious, who was only three months old when I left Ghana to start the PhD in Manchester; and
2. To Joshua, Michael and my wife Jane who have had to endure my long absence from home.
1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

In recent years, interest in the relations between government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the implications of these relations for service delivery in developing countries has surged. The reasons for this surge are varied but have been largely due to the increasing space claimed by NGOs in development thought, policy and practice. Increasingly, the role of NGOs in many facets of development, especially in service delivery and poverty reduction has attracted attention of both researchers and development practitioners (see: McLoughlin 2011; Batley 2006; Batley and Rose 2010; Batley and Rose 2011; Brinkerhoff 2002; Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2002; Brinkerhoff 2003; Batley and McLoughlin 2010). However, while the interest lingers on, the focus of attention, especially among researchers has been on the relations between central government (CG) and NGOs. Increasingly, mention of government has been in reference to central government and consideration for local government in the scheme of things has been rather less. Consequently, research efforts have followed this trend with less emphasis on local government and NGOs especially within the developing country context. Research into the nature of relations, rationales for the relations and their implications for service delivery have all been largely skewed in favour of central government and NGO relations. To contribute to opening the black box created as a result of the limited research interest, this study investigates the nature, driving forces and the implications of the relations between local government and NGOs for poverty reduction programme implementation in Ghana.

In this chapter, a general introduction to the study is presented. The chapter outlines the background and the key problem under investigation. The chapter maps out five areas which constitute the research problem that this study addresses. The research problem is then formulated into three research questions. This chapter also presents the research context within which the study is situated. The chapter disposition of the entire thesis is also outlined.
1.1 Background and Problem Statement

The relations between governments and NGOs have attracted significant research interest (see: McLoughlin 2011; Batley 2006; Batley and Rose 2010; Batley and Rose 2011; Brinkerhoff 2002; Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2002; Brinkerhoff 2003; Batley and McLoughlin 2010). Among the areas of high interests are the nature and driving forces of the relations. This interest has soared in the last three decades or so when NGOs and their role in development have surged. NGOs have become a force to reckon with both in the practice of development management and the amount of research efforts spent on them (Tvedt 1998:66; Opoku-Mensah 2007a; Hulme and Turner 1997). Hitherto, development policy had largely been focused upon the role of the state or the private sector (Hulme and Turner 1997). The rise in NGO activism contributed to filling the void that will otherwise be left by desires to reduce the size of the state (Opoku-Mensah 2007a). Gaining more impetus within the global development architecture, NGOs have moved to occupy a very important position in the global development agenda. In view of this, significant research has been undertaken on NGOs as entities in their own right and as entities which have attained some space within national governance frameworks. In the light of the latter interest, research has sought to investigate the nature and drivers of the relations between government and NGOs.

Studies into the relations between government and NGOs present a complex mix of relationship types and a complex mix of drivers occasioning such relations. Often, the motivation for such studies have stemmed from the increasing role of NGOs in national affairs and the extent to which they have affected and shaped national policy and local service delivery. The extant literature on the relations between government and NGOs reveal a number of limitations including the following which constitute the research problem for this study.

1.1.1 Dominant Focus on the Nature and Typologies of Central Government and NGO Relations

Studies on government and NGO relations have been largely focused upon central government and NGO relations. Studies such as Coston (1998) Gidron et al., (1992), Maxwell and Riddell (1998), Farrington and Bebbington (1993), Kuhnle and Selle (Kuhnle and Selle 1992), Batley (2006), Batley and Rose (2010), Batley and
McLoughlin (2010), Batley and Rose (2011) Sansom (2006), Sansom (2011) have all focussed upon the relations between central government and NGOs. Many of these studies have focussed on various aspects of the relations and distilled relationship typologies characterising the nature of the relations between the two actors. These relationship typologies have been categorised by this study into five categories - binary classification; binary continuous classification; continuous classification; multi-dimensional classification; and multi-layered classification. In spite of these prolific efforts at studying the relations between central government and NGOs, the same cannot be said about the relations between local government and NGOs. There appears to be far less research interest in studying relations between local government and NGOs. The implication of this is that, relations between local government and NGOs are assumed to mimic the relations between central government and NGOs. However, the nature and dynamics of local politics present differentiated relations that make the relations between local government and NGOs differ from the relations at the national level. Gidron (1992) has argued that the nature of the relations between government and NGOs differ, depending on the level of government under consideration; and that the overwhelming analysis of the central government and NGO relations fails to acknowledge a critical key aspect – the fact that the level of government in question can seriously affect the dynamics of such relations. It is believed that the relations between local government and NGOs are far more complex than the relations at the national level (Mercer 1999). This fact has not been taken seriously by researchers in the field and consequently, research into these relations has been largely skewed in favour of central government and NGOs relations.

1.1.2 Dominant Focus on Local Government and NGOs Relations in Developed Countries

Of the limited number of studies on the relations between local government and NGOs, there appears to be a concentration on the relations within developed country contexts. These studies unveil the nature of the relations and the driving forces within these countries with significantly autonomous local government systems and largely well-developed NGO sectors. Some works are identifiable. For instance Grødeland (2008), Snavely and Desai (2001b; 2001a), Keese and Argudo (2006) and Osborne et al.(2008) all study local government and NGOs relations in Europe. These studies show complex relations between local government and NGOs. Studies from the developing world
especially from Africa are rather on a limited scale or non-existent. The implication is that, relations within developed country environments may differ in their nature and the forces that drive them from developing country contexts. Africa’s fragile states and mostly centralised regimes with minimal decentralisation and weak local governments present enormous diversity compared with their counterparts in developed countries. This way, studies about relations between local government and NGOs within such jurisdictions may differ markedly from developing countries and Africa more specifically. As argued by Sen (1999) social and institutional histories and behaviour, local conditions and politics and behaviour of local actors all provide bases for differences in the relations between government and NGOs in different contexts. Perspectives from developing country contexts and from the Africa region may provide peculiarities necessary for enhancing development policy implementation. Ghana’s case may provide very good ingredients for analysing the relations within the African context and the developing world generally. This is because, Ghana’s two and half decades of the decentralisation reforms and her two decades of stable multi-party democracy have probably created enough space for the interaction of local governments and NGOs.

1.1.3 Dominant Focus on Driving Forces of Central Government and NGOs Relations

Further, it is striking to note that research interest on the drivers of the relations between government and NGOs have largely been on central government. Although several forces [both facilitating and constraining factors] drive the relations between local government and NGOs, research into these has been less prolific compared with studies on central government and NGO relations. The drivers of government and NGO relations are as varied as the governments and the NGOs and can be predicated on several driving or constraining forces. These include organisational forms and motivations of actors; the organisational milieu and culture; history and nature of organisations and their relations (McLoughlin 2011). Also important are the structure of government; the legal and policy regimes; the role of external agents; resource reasons; neoliberal agenda and its influence and the efficiency, economy and effectiveness arguments (see: Heurlin 2010; Bratton 1989; Ferguson 2002; Shivji 2007; Nega and Milofsky 2011; Batley 2006; Mayhew 2005; Jalali 2008; Elbayar 2005; McLoughlin
2011; Brass 2012; Sen 1999; Nabacwa 2010; Parks 2008; Wu and Chan 2012). Forces at the local level may not mimic the national level forces; however, not a lot of research evidence exists to draw this conclusion.

1.1.4 New Institutional Theory View of the Relations

New Institutional theorists have studied different institutional contexts and how institutional forces drive and shape relations between actors within the institutional fields. In recent years, these studies, largely influenced by DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983) classification of isomorphic forces have examined different organisational fields including the public, private and third sectors. However, relations between local government and NGOs have rarely been studied with New Institutional Theory lens. Secondly, the concept of isomorphism presupposes that all forces pull organisations towards the same direction into becoming more and more similar. This presupposition assumes that there would be no countervailing forces that constrain the relations and pull the organisations towards different directions and therefore breed differences in the structure and philosophy of these organisations. It also assumes that these organisations lack agency and only conform to the dictates of the forces within the institutional field. However, studies indicate that these organisations are not passive conformists but active negotiators within the fields (Pelling et al. 2008). If they do have agency and do not always conform, then it stands to reason that there would be moments where they may pull away from the forces that pull them, especially if those forces are not strong enough. However, studies on isomorphism do not recognise that forces may pull these organisations away from becoming similar to others within the institutional field.

This study argues that since organisations within an institutional field relate to many other organisations both within and without the institutional field, they get pulled towards different directions. These forces which pull organisations away from falling in line with organisations in the field have previously not been articulated by the extant literature making the literature limited to that extent. This study proposes to contribute to addressing this limitation.
1.1.5 Implications of the Relations between Local Government and NGOs

Relations between local government and NGOs are expected to produce impacts and these have been discussed. For the relations at the central government level Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff (2002) have stated thus:

Government–nonprofit relations have significant actual and potential impacts in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery, the quality and responsiveness of public policies, the degree of social exclusion, the expression of public values and the building of social capital.

While these may differ at the local level, it is significant to note that research has been largely skewed towards the economic rationale and benefits to be gained from the relations (See eg: Sansom 2006; Sansom 2011; Batley 2006; Batley and Rose 2010; Batley and McLoughlin 2010; Batley and Rose 2011). What appear less adequately researched are the implications of the relations between local government and NGOs for poverty reduction programme implementation. In other words, how is poverty reduction programme implementation at the local level influenced by the relations between local government and NGOs? Unfortunately, not a lot of answers to this question exist in the extant literature. There are implications of the relations beyond efficiency and economy considerations which have received limited research attention in the extant literature. This study attempts a novel exposition of the implications of the relations for poverty reduction programme implementation.

1.2 The Research Context

In view of the above limitations, significant aspects of the relations between local government and NGOs in the developing African country context and especially Ghana have been articulated, as there is very little research focussing on these contexts. To this end, the nature of the relations, the drivers and implications of the relations have remained largely unknown and less researched. This study therefore seeks to unveil the relations to provide an extension to knowledge on the subject. A study of the relations between local government and NGOs in Ghana is very appropriate in providing
developing country perspectives into the nature, driving forces and implications of the relations for poverty reduction programme implementation.

### 1.2.1 Decentralisation, NGOs and Poverty Reduction

Decentralization, one of the elements of the New Public Management discourse has been thought to possess certain qualities that should enhance poverty reduction. However, there have been serious doubts about whether decentralisation can have any positive impact on poverty reduction (Priyadarshee and Hossain 2010). In recent times, evidence in support of a positive impact of decentralisation has been challenged with researchers stating that decentralisation has had varying successes and said not to have a direct impact on poverty reduction (Crook 2003; Crawford 2008; Jütting et al. 2005).

In spite of the lack of evidence to establish a credible relationship between decentralisation and poverty reduction, the advocacy for the adoption of decentralisation has been overwhelming as to warrant the use of the reform as a condition for development assistance by advanced economies and multilateral organizations (Peters 2001; Ouedraogo 2003). The euphoria that has characterised the concept of decentralization has contributed to its mass adoption by countries in the south as an avenue for expediting development and to reduce hitherto centralized planning and management (Crawford 2008; Ishii et al. 2007; Rees and Hossain 2010). The advocacy for decentralisation seems resolute in spite of contrasting evidence that decentralization might not have had a significant impact on poverty levels as it should (Crook 2003; Steiner 2007; Crawford 2008; Rees and Hossain 2010; Johnson 2001).

However, decentralization continues to receive significant and profligate inculcation in the national development agenda of many developing countries including Ghana (Crawford 2008). Studies on the impact of decentralization on poverty reduction involving Ghana indicate mixed results ranging from successful, somewhat positive to failure (Jütting et al. 2005). Crawford’s (2008) study concludes that decentralisation had not resulted into reducing poverty in Ghana and ISSER (2008) estimates that about 18.5% of Ghana’s population lives in extreme poverty. These confirm an earlier study by Crook (2003:80) that the impact of decentralisation on the underprivileged in rural areas has not been notable. Moreover, Johnson (2001) had asserted that the recurring theme that emerges from a sizeable body of literature is the relatively weak correlation that
exists between democratic decentralisation and poverty reduction. The foregoing gives credence that decentralisation is not a sufficient condition for or synonymous with poverty reduction (Rees and Hossain 2010). In spite of the overwhelming evidence against the impact of decentralization on poverty reduction, experts and academics still hold the concept as having some remedy for poverty reduction (Crawford 2008).

To have decentralisation impact positively on poverty reduction, an array of extraneous factors must exist (Crook 2003; Steiner 2007; Crawford 2008; Johnson 2001). Steiner (2007) argues that poverty is such a complex phenomenon, and that its eradication cannot be achieved by any single remedy like decentralization. But decentralization is not a single remedy, for it has various dimensions (Smoke 2003; Rees and Hossain 2010) and comes with a barrage of institutional rearrangements within the public, private and third sectors which should all come with remedies for addressing the many ramifications of poverty.

In investigating the impact of decentralization on poverty, the arguments appear to centre on the role of local government and its agencies (Ishii et al. 2007). This appears to be an obvious but unnoticed limitation in the literature. This is so because the decentralised space houses several actors playing various roles. For instance, Ouedraogo (2003:98) intimates that actors in the local decentralisation arena are “local state institutions, communities, NGOs, cooperatives, associations and the private sector”. NGOs in particular have played key roles in facilitating poverty reduction around the world. However, their role in poverty reduction has not gone without criticism. Until recently, NGOs had also been heavily depended upon as the agents for stimulating development and consequently reducing poverty. Heralded as the epitome of flexibility and proactivity as well as proximate to the poor, NGOs have been recognized for their contribution to poverty reduction (Zaidi 1999). Zaidi (1999) concedes that just like the public and private sectors, NGO have been acknowledged as a channel for development.

In pro-poor interventions, one of the primary hurdles is how to target effectively the poor; appropriate targeting has generally proved elusive (DESA 2004; ISSER 2008; Ishii et al. 2007). However, NGOs have been said to respond better to most problems of poverty advocacy, social mobilization, delivery of social services and provision of livelihood programmes (Adablah 2003). Further, as Nkrumah (2000) explains, decentralization has given space to NGOs. In the case of Ghana, the activities of NGOs have intensified under decentralization. This seems to confirm the views of Turner and
Hulme (1997), Esman (1991) and others; that decentralisation, among other things, seeks to open up space for the private sector and civil society. The activities of NGOs have sought to increase participation which is considered key in pro-poor targeting. In spite of these claims, research on NGOs is beginning to reveal weaknesses in their activities (Tvedt 1998; Shivji 2007; Ullah and Routray 2007).

Arguments seem to suggest that the two key actors within the decentralised space – local government and NGOs – can work together (Snavely and Desai 2001b; Snavely and Desai 2001a; Grødeland 2008) but evidence of the relations between the actors in the developing world remains sketchy. Studies into government and NGO relations are largely skewed towards central government. The decentralised terrain is however different and can exude complex relations between the actors and their parent organisations, which can facilitate or constrain relations. This is so as the level of government can affect the nature of the relations between NGOs and government (Gidron et al. 1992). To this end, the nature of relations, the driving forces and their nature, and the implications of these relations for local government and NGOs require research to help unveil the relations for the enhancement of development policy management.

1.3 Research Aim and Questions

The thesis centrally examines the relations between local government and NGOs operating within Ghana’s system of decentralised local governance. It investigates the nature of the relations that is fostered within the decentralised space between local government and NGOs, with the aim of distilling generic typologies of the relations between these actors. The study also investigates the drivers of the relationships and how such drivers or forces shape the relationships between the two actors. In this regard, it applies isomorphism as discussed by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) within the New Institutional Theory framework to broaden understanding of the driving forces and the nature of these forces in shaping relations. Finally, the study seeks to illuminate understanding on the implications of the relations between local government and NGOs for poverty reduction programme implementation. To achieve these objectives, the following research questions will guide the enquiry:
1. How do local government and NGOs relate in Ghana?

2. What forces drive the relationships between local government and NGOs and how do these forces shape their relations?

3. How do these forces influence poverty reduction programme implementation in Ghana?

These research questions are justified in view of the limitations identified in the literature and summarised as follows. The relations between government and NGOs have attracted a lot of research interest but the literature is limited to the extent that it ignores the relations at the local government level (See e.g.: Batley 2006; Batley and Rose 2010; Batley and McLoughlin 2010; Batley and Rose 2011; McLoughlin 2011; Thomas et al. 2010; Struyk 2002; Sansom 2006; Sansom 2011; Opoku-Mensah 2007b; Opoku-Mensah 2007a; Elbayar 2005; Brinkerhoff 2002; Brinkerhoff 2003; Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2002). Although a lot of research examines government and NGO relations in service delivery in developing country contexts, these studies fail to acknowledge that as a result of the decentralisation reform in many of these countries, local government is now a key actor in the governance architecture of these countries. The changes that result from decentralisation have implications for governance and the relations between the decentralised agencies and NGOs. However, as will be indicated in chapter two, very little research attention is given to the relations between local government and NGOs especially in developing countries. As a result of this limitation in the literature, not a lot is known about the nature of the relations between local government and NGOs. The first research question is therefore formulated to investigate and contribute to addressing this limitation.

The second research question responds to the limitation in the literature with regards to driving forces of the relations between local government and NGOs. Hitherto, the concentration of research efforts has been at examining the relations at the central government level. In addition, governments and NGOs are driven by certain factors which constitute the rationale and motivations for their relations. These forces have been analysed and discussed in the literature relying on some frameworks and theories. Isomorphism has been presented as forces that drive and shape the relations between organisations within an institutional field (See e.g: DiMaggio and Powell 1983;
Mizruchi and Fein 1999; Frumkin and Galaskiewicz 2004; Barreto and Baden-Fuller 2006; Caemmerer and Marck 2009). So far, only limited amount of research evidence exist on the use of New Institutional Theory to understand how these relations at the local level are driven and shaped. Ramanath’s (2009) work on the limits of isomorphism remains one of the exceptions. However, the analysis is on central government and NGO relations. The limitation in the literature then is that so far, there is no test of the New Institutional Theory framework of isomorphism in the relations between local government and NGOs. This study applies the isomorphism as an analytical framework to understand the forces that drive and shape the relations between local government and NGOs.

Finally, the extant literature espouses largely economic and efficiency arguments as rationales for the relations between government and NGOs. In other words, the arguments suggest that relations between government and NGOs yield efficiency and economy gains. However, the larger literature on inter-organisational relations avers that these are only part of the whole. The argument from this body of literature is that organisations engage in relations for several reasons, many of which have nothing to do with economy and efficiency. But the literature is limited on detailed analysis of these non-economic and efficiency reasons driving the relations between government and NGOs for service delivery. Further and since research is limited on the implications for local government and NGOs, the third research question addresses the limitations in the literature. In other to achieve the research goal and appropriately respond to the research questions of the study, the following was undertaken.

A review of current and relevant literature was carried out to position the study within the on-going discussions and debates on the subject (relations between local government and NGOs) as well as drawing occasionally on the literature on government and NGO relations. The literature classifies the various relations typologies dominant in the literature and establishes that although there is a significant amount of research interest in the relations between central government and NGOs, the same cannot be said about local government and NGO relations. The literature review also discusses the isomorphism within New Institutional Theory as the theoretical lens for unveiling the types and nature of forces driving the relations between local government and NGOs. In the end, the literature identified a number of research gaps which this study addresses.
The study also outlines the philosophical and methodological approaches considered appropriate for understanding the relations. In this regard, an interpretive research paradigm with a subjective approach which adopts normalist ontology, anti-positivist epistemology, voluntarism human nature and ideographic methodology is chosen. A qualitative case-study research strategy was selected because the research had to be conducted in its natural setting. It relies on interviews, documentary reviews, mini-focus group discussions and observations to collect appropriate data to answer the research questions.

The data are analysed simultaneously during the data collection through continuous listening to the interview tapes and reading of institutional documents; transcription; reading and categorisation; and re-categorisation of the emergent themes and consolidation of the themes through reflexive iteration.

The study then applies the New Institutional Theory perspectives to the findings and provides perspectives and inferences in a discussion that also links the findings to both the conceptual and theoretical debates. The study establishes the criteria for evaluating the quality of the research process and output and applies these to demonstrate how the study meets those criteria. It also distilled the contribution to knowledge that this study brings into the debate. These include empirical demonstration of relationships between NGOs and local government; a novel classification of local government and NGO relations; an extension of our understanding of forces driving relations between NGOs and local government; the application of the New Institutional Theory as a theoretical lens to understand the relations between local government and NGOs; classification of the nature of influence of the isomorphic forces; and a distillation of the implications of the relations for poverty reduction programme implementation.

The study provides some policy proposals to help address development policy management challenges in developing countries similar to Ghana.
1.4 The Structure of the Thesis

The study is organised into nine chapters. The following are the summaries of the focus of each of the chapters.

Following from this chapter [Chapter 1] which presents the general introduction, the first section of chapter 2 of the study reviewed the relevant literature on the relationship between government and NGOs and the relationship between local government and NGOs. The key focus of the literature review is to identify a) the relationship types within the extant literature; b) to examine the forces driving the relations; and c) to examine the implications of the relations. The review indicates that there is extensive research interest in the many aspects of the relationships between central government and NGO culminating into several typologies of such relations. There is also extensive body of literature about the drivers of these relations between central government and NGOs. However, these studies largely concentrate on the central government and its relationship with NGOs. This leaves a significant research gap especially within the developing country context and most especially within the African context. This gap forms the key aim of this thesis. This chapter therefore provided the basis for establishing the research problem and for outlining the focus of this study.

The second section of the chapter provides an overview of the New Institutional Theory focussing upon DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983) classification of isomorphic forces as the theoretical lens. They argued that organisations within an institutional field are driven by the three isomorphic forces of coercive, normative and mimetic. This was adopted as the framework for analysing the nature of the forces acting within the institutional field of decentralised local governance. In terms of the role of the chapter as part of the whole thesis, it contributes to outlining the key research gap being addressed by the thesis. It also provides the background to the thesis, setting it within the context of studies in the field. It provides the foundation on which this thesis is able to relate and connect with previous studies.

Chapter 3 of the thesis is devoted to the methodology and the philosophical foundations of the study. This study adopts a subjectivist approach to studying social phenomena and is guided by nominalist ontology, anti-positivist epistemology and idiographic methodology (Burell and Morgan 1979) It is an interpretive case study. Adopting this paradigm enabled the researcher to carry out this study relying upon the inter-
subjectivities of both the researcher and the subjects taking the context of the study into consideration (Angen 2000). The relations between local government and NGOs are social relations, meanings of which can largely be conceived socially adopting social and contextual meanings derived by the actors and the researchers. These relations, the driving forces behind them and their results are all defined by several inter-subjective perceptions and idiosyncrasies.

In line with this research orientation, the study adopts an idiographic methodology applying semi-structured interviews, documentary reviews, observations and mini focus group discussions as the key methods for data collection. The data was analysed first by transcribing the interviews and focus discussion tapes, establishing themes based upon leads from the literature, theory and finally emergent themes from the data. This chapter was useful in providing both a philosophical and methodological bases for the research. This is in line with the qualitative research evaluation criteria suggesting that, the choice of appropriate methodology is important to ensuring research quality and robustness (Dixon-Woods et al. 2004; Silverman 2005; Tracy 2010). It presents the evaluation of the research process and outputs in terms of the research quality assurance where Tracy’s (2010) eight “big-tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research is applied to validate the quality of the research process. The chapter also presents the evaluation of the ethical considerations and management as applied in the study. Additionally, it provides the framework for assessing the contribution to knowledge. Quite apart from these, the chapter also provides a reflection on the use of the New Institutional Theory.

Chapter 4 introduces the context of the study. It provides background to both the political and developmental context of Ghana. It also overviewes the current local government system and highlights the decentralisation reform and how it is structured and practiced in Ghana. This chapter presents an overview of the poverty reduction programmes in Ghana such as the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty [LEAP]; National Youth Employment Programme [NYEP], now the Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship Development Agency [GYEEAD]; Microfinance and Small Loans Scheme [MASLOC]; the School Feeding Programme [SFP]; and National Health Insurance Scheme [NHIS]. The chapter concludes that these programmes are decentralised to local government areas but strictly controlled from the national level. They are also laden with corruption, heavily politicised and remain very unsustainable.
Since these are not managed by local governments; NGOs are hardly involved in their design, implementation and evaluation. The chapter also presents both the relations between central government and local government and relations between central government and NGOs in Ghana. It presents the relations between local government and NGOs in Ghana. This chapter establishes that the relations between central government and local governments have important implications for the relations between local government and NGOs. This is so because local government lacks autonomy and consequently the agency to relate to NGOs on their own terms. It is also significant to note that this chapter establishes that even though the local government law, Act 462 mandates local government to lead the process of engagement with NGOs, this appears not to happen in ways that will provide avenues for effective synergy building. This chapter provides a basis for analysing the relations between local government and NGOs as it provides the inter-organisational context within which both local governments and NGOs work.

Chapter 5 of the study presented results on the nature of the relations between local government and NGOs in Ghana. This was meant to respond to the research gap identified in the literature relative to the little interest in studying the relations between local government and NGOs. Overwhelmingly, research interest concentrates on the relations between central government and NGOs with the implicit assumption that the relations at that level may be mimicked at the local level. However, the derivative typologies describe what has been largely a macro level typology without reflecting the micro level exigencies. As argued by Gidron et al. (1992) and Mercer (1999) the nature of the relation between governments and NGOs differ depending upon the level of government in question. The argument is that the relations between local government and NGOs are far more complex and intricate than what pertains at the national level. In view of this, efforts to study the relations at the national level may not capture the situation at the local level. It is in this vain that this study proposed to study and contribute to the literature and debate on relations between governments and NGOs.

This gap is sought to be filled by this study when it provides a novel typology for classifying the relations between local government and NGOs. In proposing these typologies, the study examined the relations between local government and NGOs in various poverty reduction programmes implemented in the case study regions and districts. This chapter proposed four typologies namely superficial and suspicious
cordiality; convenient and cautious partnerships; tokenistic collaboration; and friendly foes relations.

Chapter 6 of the thesis presents the findings of the study on the forces driving the relations between local government and NGOs. This chapter is guided by the tenets of the New Institutional Theory, particularly DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983) classification of isomorphic forces. This chapter identifies and classifies the forces driving the relations between local government and NGOs into coercive, normative and mimetic. However, contrary to the DiMaggio and Powell’s classification, this study distills these forces into negative, positive, neutral or negative and positive. This type of classification of the force extends our understanding of DiMaggio and Powell’s work and provides the impetus for further research into how these forces shape the relations between local government and NGO. The study also distills these forces into micro-level, meso-level and macro level forces. Again, these classification had not been previously done and presents a novel classification of the forces driving the relations.

Chapter 7 examines the implications of the relations between local government and NGOs on poverty reduction programme implementation. The chapter establishes that the relations between local government and NGOs have both positive and negative implications for poverty reduction programme implementation. The chapter unveils both actual and potential implications of the relations.

Chapter 8 presents the discussions and interpretation of the research findings and results. It connects the study to previous studies and presents the reflections of the researcher. The chapter also discusses the interconnectivities of the entire thesis and indicates the key practical and theoretical insights of the study. In effect therefore, this chapter presents a synthesis of the novel contributions of the study to extend our understanding of the subject matter and theoretical implications of the subject. It begins with separate synthesis of each research question and concludes with an overall synthesis.

Chapter 9 provides a summary of the study and draws a conclusion. In this chapter also, the contribution to knowledge is summarised to include the following: empirical demonstration of relationships between NGOs and local government; a novel classification of local government and NGO relations; an extension of our understanding of forces driving relations between local government and NGOs; a novel application of the New Institutional Theory as a theoretical lens to understand the relations between local government and NGOs; a novel classification of the nature of
influence of the isomorphic forces; and a novel exposition of both negative and positive implications of the relations for poverty reduction programme implementation. Quite apart from these, the chapter also provides policy recommendations for enhancing the outcomes of the relations between local government and NGOs.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter introduces the thesis, setting out the background and outlines the problem statement. It presents the research context and a summary of the nine chapters within the thesis outline section. The chapter outlines five research gaps that form the justification for the study. These justifications include the fact that research into the relations between governments and NGOs have focussed largely on central government. This way, typologies of the relations have been largely on the relations between central government and NGO with less research emphasis on the relations at the local government level. Again, research into the relations between local government and NGOs is largely skewed towards the relations between local government and NGOs in the developed world contexts with less interest in the developing country context. However, with the rise of decentralisation and NGO in many developing country contexts due to the effect of New Public Management, more avenues now exist for the interface between local government and NGOs which require much research efforts. Quite apart from that, research has not addressed more adequately the drivers of the relations between local government and NGOs; as more emphasis is placed on the drivers at the central government level. Also, although research into the relations has been less prolific, reliance upon New Institutional Theory to understand such relations has been even less prolific.

In view of this, this study adopts New Institutional Theory perspectives to understand the relations between the two actors. Finally, the study identifies that not a lot of research has been conducted into unveiling, on a holistic bases the implications of the relations for poverty reduction programme implementation. Research into this has been largely focussed upon the economic implications without adequate attention to management, social and cultural implications. This study intimates that not a lot is known about the relationships between local government and NGOs in Ghana and many parts of African and the developing world and seeks to provide answers to questions
bordering on the nature of relations, the forces shaping those relationships and the impact such relations can make to poverty reduction programme implementation. The next chapter present a review of relevant literature on the phenomena under investigation to serve as a link between this study and previous studies and provide a basis for contribution to knowledge.
2. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND NGO RELATIONS: A CRITICAL OVERVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature with the view to identifying the limitations inherent and demarcates the zones for the contribution of this study to the existing literature. Specifically, the chapter seeks to review the conceptual literature with the view to following the debate on local government and NGO relations to identify the research gaps for this study to plug into. In other words, the aim is to map out what is not fully discussed in the literature to provide a basis for this study (Locke and Golden-Biddle 1997; Boote and Beile 2005). Further, it examines the implications of the relations between local government and NGOs on poverty reduction programme implementation. Finally, it examines New Institutional Theory as an analytical lens for studying the drivers of the relations between local government and NGOs.

The chapter is divided into two broad parts. The first part examines the conceptual literature. It begins with a conceptual clarification of and choice of “relationship” as opposed to “partnership” in the study. This is followed by a discussion of the literature on decentralisation and how it impacts on poverty reduction. It then examines the relations between government and NGOs highlighting the types of relations discussed in the literature. The chapter provides a conceptual classification of the dominant relationship typologies. It then addresses the drivers of the relations between government and NGOs. This first part also discusses the literature on local government and NGO relations and their drivers. It concludes with a discussion of the implications of the relations between local government and NGOs for poverty reduction programme implementation. The key arguments in this first part is that, although the extant literature is replete with various classifications frameworks for analysing the relations between government and NGOs, the same cannot be said about the relations between local government and NGOs. As a result, there are limited attempts at providing analytical frameworks for analysing the relations at the local levels, a research gap which this study attempts to contribute to addressing especially from a developing country perspective.
The second part of the chapter presents a review of the theoretical literature. This part overviews the New Institutional Theory, specifically the isomorphic forces as espoused by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) as the lens for opening the black box of the relations between local government and NGOs. The argument being built is that the relations between local government and NGOs are driven by several forces which can be distilled along the lines of the three isomorphic forces.

2.1 Partnerships or Relationships: Conceptual Choice and Clarity

Although many studies have christened the interaction between the state/government and NGOs as partnerships, this study shies away from such a characterisation of their interfaces. Instead, in this study, preference is given to and use is made of such interfaces as relationships. The meaning of partnerships has been lost in a maze as both academics and governments jostle to make it mean what they think (Wettenhall 2003). The use and meaning of partnerships is then problematic as it is used to mean virtually everything including relations between government and the private sector even if such relations may not be partnerships (Stephenson 1991; Brinkerhoff 2002; Wettenhall 2003; Wettenhall 2005; Hodge and Greve 2010). One striking definition of partnership which supports our claim of avoiding its use is one provided by Brinkerhoff (2002:21):

*Partnership is a dynamic relationship among diverse actors, based on mutually agreed objectives, pursued through a shared understanding of the most rational division of labour based on the respective comparative advantages of each partner. Partnership encompasses mutual influence, with a careful balance between synergy and respective autonomy, which incorporates mutual respect, equal participation in decision making, mutual accountability and transparency.*

The quote suggests that partnership may just be one form of relations that may exist between actors and does not provide specificity. This supports the view that lack of conceptual clarity and unanimity abound in the field (McLoughlin 2011). Although these arguments about specificity of the concept is debatable [since most social science concepts may have context and discipline specific meanings and since many analysts
may indicate the meaning they assign to the concept], the case being made advances the point here about why this study avoids the use of *Partnerships* in favour of *relationships*. The argument here is that if partnership is adopted to mean a form of agreement to work together, such cannot encounter scenarios of competition. The use of *relationships* offers better conceptual flexibility without compromising the meanings so intended to be conveyed. The Oxford Online Dictionary (2012) defines *relations* as “the way in which two or more people or groups feel about and behave towards each other.” Consequently, in this thesis, relation is conceptualised as both “mental” conception and perception and actual engagement or non-engagement between two or more actors – in this case local government and its agencies and NGOs. Relationship conveys a neutral connotation (Batley and Rose 2011). Lastly, perhaps, for NGOs to play their monitoring role on the state effectively (Mercer 1999), it may be appropriate not to have NGO go in bed with local government as this may weaken their ‘negotiation’ power in that stead. Consequently, the use of *partnership* is avoided as this may connote NGOs ‘bedding’ with government.

Before going further to examine government and NGO relations, the next subsection provides the conceptual background to the relations between government and NGOs. It argues that relations between government and for that matter local government and NGOs results from the New Public Management (NPM) discourse and that both Public-Private-Partnerships (PPPs) and decentralisation are elements of the NPM.

2.2 From Public Administration to New Public Management (NPM): The Changing Nature of Public Administration

The frontiers of the state have been expanding as a result of demands by citizens for more responsive governments. As the state expands to absorb the increasing demands, it has become very unwieldy culminating in less responsiveness. This has necessitated calls for change in the orientation of public administration. Gray and Jenkins (1995:76) had argued that “traditional theories and practices of public administration are under attack from reform agendas and appear driven by what, on the surface at least, seem to be common ideologies and strategies”. The reform efforts have been championed by the advocates of rolling back the state and marketisation of the practices of public administration.
The need for change to make public administration more effective, efficient and economical (Richards and Smith 2002) resulted in the introduction of the concept of NPM. Whereas there has been a shift from traditional public administration to NPM as the panacea to the many problems of the public sector, some scholars still hold their faith in the old paradigm creating two schools of thoughts. The pro-public administration advocates have argued variously on why the paradigm shift must not be made to stand. The NPM was seriously criticised for refusing to acknowledge the difference between the public and private sectors, indicating that a shift from bureaucratic public administration to the entrepreneurial management conflicted with the nature of democratic governance (Riccucci 2001). It is also said to change the balance of power between the state and the private sector. However, Riccucci (2001) intimates that some pro-NPM advocates argue that the old public administration has lost both its moral and intellectual authority and that it was unable to “mount a sound, meaningful challenge to revisionist thought” (172). At the very basic level, public administration had been criticised as dead to sensitivity of the public culminating in the need to have a more dynamic form of public administration.

The rise of NPM, it is argued, comes along with four other trends in the field of public administration namely a reduction in the expansion of government; a move towards private sector involvement in public service provision; more involvement of information technology in public service delivery; and more commitment to supranational development paradigm (Hood 1991). Its doctrinal exposé includes a couple of features identified by Hood (1991) such as hands-on professional management of public sector organisations, performance management, results orientation, disaggregation of the state sector, greater competition in the public sector, adoption of private sector management practices and prudence in resource management. Two key resulting elements of the NPM are privatisation and decentralisation, which Gruening (2001:2) has classified as undisputed (identified by most observers) elements. The next subsection discusses Privatisation and Public-Private Partnerships as features of the NPM.
2.2.1 Privatisation and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) as NPM Reforms

The global surge of interest in privatisation has been underpinned by the poor performance of state institutions (Boycko et al. 1996) and the powerful NPM movement that swept across both the developed and developing worlds. Whereas the reasons for privatisation have been varied including political preferences; hard budget constraints; legal origin; and stock market liquidity (Bortolotti and Pinotti 2008) the efficiency factor has been a major argument. The argument has centred on how privatisation will improve efficiency (Dunleavy and Hood 1994; Hood 1991; Denhardt and Denhardt 2000). The private sector is believed to come along with more efficient practices (Hoehn 2011) that will transform public management. However, within the privatisation discourse, public-private partnerships have been a very popular model than the complete takeover of stake institutions by the private sector. Public-Private-Partnerships, it is believed will ensure that government maintains some control while reaping the ideals of private sector management practices (Bovaird and Tizard 2009). Heymans and Schur (1999:608) defined PPPs as “a contractual relationship between the government and a private sector operator to share and divide responsibilities and risks in delivering a service or developing infrastructure”. However, some writers have described PPPs as a gymnastic of words arguing that PPPs are more subtle way to describe contracting-out and privatisation (Hodge and Greve 2007). Although Davies and Hentschke (2006) agree that PPPs are like contracting-out, they disagree that it is the same as privatisation. But whatever the conception, PPPs relate to the collaboration of two agencies – public and private for their mutual benefits. The concept of public-private-partnerships (PPPs) became a popular variant of privatisation in the 1990s. Hitherto, public agencies often ‘minded their business’, concentrating on accomplishing their targets while ignoring others who pursued their businesses as well (Bovaird and Tizard 2009). However, this trend has changed and government agencies are increasingly turning to the other actors for service provision (Klijn 2008). The reasons may include the increasing demand for public services coupled with an increased demand for effectiveness in the delivery of these services (Weihe 2008) which has thrown up the challenge for public sector agencies to strike relations with other stakeholders to push the agenda of/for development. PPPs have therefore emerged as a key strategy to enhancing the performance of public agencies.
Although often taken for granted, the meaning of PPPs have varied depending on the context of usage. However, its fundamental basis relates to relations between agencies in the public and the private sectors (Hodge and Greve 2007; McQuaid and Scherrer 2010; Malone 2005; Jamali 2004; Heymans and Schur 1999). These relations are often voluntary and therefore based upon the mutual interest and benefits of the partners. As a result, several types of such arrangements exist and their forms depend on the exigencies of the partnership (Jamali 2004; Bovaird and Tizard 2009). In the extant literature, the tendency has been a concentration on private-for-profit sector in the discussion of PPPs. However, the Private in the concept can be interpreted to have two meanings, that is private-for-profit and private-not-for-profit (Blau and Rabrenovic 1991; Bovaird and Tizard 2009). This study focusses on the private-not-for-profit and its relations with local government.

2.2.2 Decentralisation as NPM Reform

Decentralisation has been described as an undisputed attribute of NPM (Gruening 2001) and has attracted worldwide acceptance and adoption (Uchimura and Jütting 2009). Whether territorial or functional (Hulme and Turner 1997), political, administrative or fiscal, the key essence of decentralisation has been to improve participation at local levels so as to enhance performance and increase efficiency of state institutions. As a reform measure, decentralisation has been investigated on various fronts with the view to ascertaining how it impacts on various sectors of any particular state. The role, and failures, of decentralisation in many aspects of governance, development and service delivery have been noted (Joshi 2013; Ribot 1999; Nkrumah 2000; Crook 2003; Ouedraogo 2003; Smoke 2003; Johnson 2003; Dethier 2004). The debate over whether decentralisation impacts positively on poverty reduction especially in developing country contexts has gone on for over three decades. In the next sections, decentralisation and its impacts on poverty reduction are discussed.

2.3 Decentralisation and Poverty Reduction

In this subsection, the impact of decentralisation on poverty reduction is explored. The normative literature argues that decentralisation should lead to poverty reduction and
the arguments are grounded in the fact that decentralisation enlarges the spheres of participation and consequently enhances the effectiveness of poverty policy and programme implementation. However, evidence from recent works challenges the assertion that decentralization will result in poverty reduction per se. What has been found suggests that decentralization is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for poverty reduction. For decentralization to result in poverty reduction, several other variables must be present.

2.3.1 Why decentralisation should Facilitate Poverty Reduction

As a critical challenge to the world, poverty has become a very fluid human condition to handle. As it persists, mechanisms are being sought to combat it at all fronts. Decentralisation has been broadly investigated and reported as one of such mechanisms that aids poverty reduction. Decentralisation should facilitate poverty reduction as it probably helps to i) echo the voices of the poor; ii) improve their access to and the quality of public services; and iii) reduce their vulnerability. It is argued that an effective devolution of powers will provide avenues for the poor to actively participate, decide and lobby for their interests (Jütting et al. 2005). Decentralisation provides space for people to participate in local development, ensure a more efficient allocation of resources, enhance local resource mobilisation and improve accountability. It enhances the capacity of governments for more effective poverty reduction strategies (Salazar 2007).

Decentralisation is also said to bring about a greater measure of accountability and responsiveness leading to lower transaction costs; mobilisation of communities, and strengthening of social capital (Katsiaouni 2003). Katsiaouni (2003) intimates that accountability will strive better under a decentralised system; and that transparency will be enhanced when communities participate and are involved. This argument seeks to indicate that local resources will be better managed and put to good use – uses that will likely respond to the needs of poor communities (Katsiaouni 2003). However, these arguments assume that local government is altruistic and that there are no manipulations of the governance systems and that the elite capture espoused by Johnson (2003) is absent. The interest of the local elites is often too strong and often does not allow natural development of the principles of public interest (Johnson 2003).
Other arguments on the suitability of decentralisation for poverty reduction stem from access to local and appropriate information on the contextual settings. Decentralisation is appropriate for poverty reduction as local governments are assumed to have better information and higher incentives than the central government to design and implement policies that respond to local needs and preferences. Decentralisation is also considered a means to achieve good governance in terms of a high level of public participation, accountability of public officials and low corruption, which is a crucial condition for poverty alleviation (Steiner 2007). Steiner (2007) further distils five variables of decentralization considered vital elements in poverty reduction. The variables – participation, responsibility for service provision, revenue-raising power, judicial power and regional autonomy – are considered key in engendering voice and power, efficiency, income and reduced vulnerability; which themselves are key ingredients in poverty reduction.

Decentralisation is also said to lead to improvement in the efficiency and appropriateness of public services, better governance, and an empowered local citizenry as citizens get to actively participate in the development process better articulating local priorities and ensuring that programmes are appropriate to local needs. It also stimulates both downward and horizontal accountability (Francis and James 2003). In spite of these arguments on how decentralization enhances poverty reduction, not much exist to illustrate the claim. Questions remain why this does not happen and the reasons are explored in the next subsection.

2.3.2 Why Decentralisation does not lead to Poverty Reduction

The arguments that decentralisation leads or should lead to poverty reduction is increasingly getting weaker under intense scrutiny. Smoke (2003) had argued that countries had approached decentralisation from different perspectives and depending on whether the concept benefits a particular actor or not influences their evaluation of the decentralisation phenomenon; and that, often, the basis for evaluation have been anecdotal. This may lead to an exaggerated assessment either positively or negatively. It appears that the evaluation of the positive impact of decentralisation on poverty reduction stems occasionally from an emotional chorus of activists of the phenomenon.
Crawford’s (2008) version is that many of the evaluators have relied on secondary data which often do not give an empirical picture on the ground.

Several other reasons have been advanced to support the argument that decentralisation does not necessarily lead to poverty reduction. The issue of capacity in the design and implementation of policies can be considered as one of those arguments (Jütting et al. 2005). It can be two folds – the capacity of the staff of the decentralized agencies to enact and implement qualitative policies which then determine the impact that such policies can make on the citizenry; and the capacity of the local populations to provide the critical scrutiny required to drive the staff towards formulating and implementing effective policies likely to reduce poverty. Katsiaouni (2003) had explained that in the case of many African countries although decentralisation is enshrined in their constitutions, weak implementation capacities of institutions and a corrupt centre had rendered the outcome of decentralization contestable – arguing, it may or it may not turn out positive for poverty reduction. He concludes that decentralization has not had a considerable impact on poverty. The argument is that decentralisation may culminate in more pro-poor interventions which will not have any motivations to empower and deepen accountability (Crook 2003). ODI (2008) argues that decentralisation in developing countries is faced with critical challenges including inconsistent legal regimes, lack of capacity for effective implementation, constraints and insufficient budgets, and a mismatch between economic prospects and local accountability mechanisms.

In addition, several other factors are said to also account for the low impact of decentralisation on poverty reduction including low levels of information about local government affairs, limited human capital and financial resources, restricted local autonomy, corruption and patronage, high administrative costs related with decentralisation and low downward accountability (Steiner 2007). Weak local accountability mechanisms contribute to a weakening of the decentralisation phenomenon. Often, central governments will transfer resources for local activity or will legally empower decentralized bodies to exact taxes for local activity and these will often serve as the resource basket out of which programmes will be implemented. However, weak accountability has been identified as contributing to the inability of decentralisation to make the desired impact on poverty reduction. For instance, Salazar (2007) states that after more than two decades of decentralisation, the Mexican
decentralisation programme is yet to deliver the promise that decentralised governments are more responsive to the needs of the poor and will consequently enhance the possibilities for improving the well-being of the people. He argues that although these bodies are closer to local populations, weak accountability mechanisms are undermining the capacity of decentralisation to ensure equitable service provision. This point has also been asserted by Johnson (2003:3) that decentralisation per se will not “produce systems that are more effective or more accountable to local needs and interests”. He called for active participation, fiscal and political support, the presence of active political competition and economic transformations as the key variables to affect the extent of impact on poverty reduction.

It appears that decentralisation has failed to make the needed impact on poverty reduction. With regards to the nearness and strategic proximity of local government to ensure local participation, Todaro and Smith (2006) have expressed scepticism about the commitment of local governments when they despond that genuine participation is often not in the interest of national or local government officials and other elites. In fact, the poor are often the exploited as local elites take advantage and capture power for their own good at the expense of the poor (Johnson 2003). Salazar’s (2007) argument is that proximity to local populations is not a guarantee that poverty reduction will be enhanced but that the locals must have the capacity to “police” the system and ensure accountability. Local governments have only become administrative hubs of the central government and their initiatives are restrained by the existing governmental relations (Domfeh and Bawole 2009; Bawole 2006). This seems to justify the argument by Crook (2003) that the extent of their impact and the magnitude of their inclination to the poor are largely determined by the intergovernmental relations and the extent of commitment of the central political authorities to poverty reduction. He concludes that the effectiveness of local government is constrained due to political interference.

Although many researchers have romanticized decentralisation and its impact on poverty reduction, Francis and James (2003) are emphatic that in spite of the craze about the phenomenon in sub-Saharan African countries, there are no significant development performance improvements at the local level. In a study of two districts in Ghana, Crawford (2008) also makes the point forcefully that although decentralization has enhanced some elements of governance in Ghana; it has not enhanced the fortunes of Ghanaians in terms of poverty reduction.
So far the normative literature linking decentralisation to poverty reduction has been seriously challenged and the emerging evidences suggest that there is a very weak link, if any, between decentralisation and poverty reduction. The rhetoric of decentralization culminating into poverty reduction has failed the test of evidence. The next section investigates whether options exist to improve the impact of decentralization on poverty reduction.

2.3.3 Enhancing the Impact of Decentralisation on Poverty Reduction

In view of the above, there is the need for an assessment of conditions under which decentralisation will improve poverty reduction. This stems from the fact that, although many scholars have questioned the link between decentralisation and poverty reduction, they have most often indicated however that decentralisation may have some value for poverty reduction (Crawford 2008). Most of these scholars have offered what they consider to be the conditions under which decentralisation will enhance poverty reduction.

Reviewing previous works on the condition for pro-poor decentralisation, Crawford (2008:240) has catalogued the various conditions under which the scholars argue pro-poor decentralisation is likely to occur. These include broadly, political factors, administrative factors and fiscal factors. In more specific terms, these include engagements of civil society organisations, enhanced participation of citizens, improved accountability by actors, donor support in opening up the spaces and public discourse on poverty as preconditions for making decentralisation pro-poor (Crawford 2008). Although Crawford singles out central government commitment – a recurring condition in his review as essential – it is important to note that this commitment in not natural, and depending on the meaning or use to which the particular government wants to make of decentralisation, it may or may not come. Governments’ commitment towards the implementation of decentralisation is often low and even when legal powers, functions and tasks have been assigned, adequate administrative, human and financial resources do not accompany such responsibilities (OECD 2001). So if central government commitment does not come naturally, how else can decentralisation respond to the needs of the poor? Crawford (2008) provides a hint but expresses scepticism about it.
He states that perhaps pressure from non-state actors will enhance poverty reduction under decentralisation. However, in the review of poverty reduction under decentralisation, the emphasis is often on local state actors rather than the collective of both local state actors and the non-state actors.

This oversight perhaps emanates from the conception of decentralisation. The conception of what constitute decentralisation must be looked at again. Incidentally this has been done in the many definitions of the concept. The definitions highlight five elements that are often transferred such as power, formal authority, responsibility, functions and resources. Depending on the context of the definition, the receiving authority is some sort of lower national government (Dubois and Fattore 2009).

It is important to acknowledge that if decentralisation is looked at from the perspectives that the receiving authority is sub-national government; then suffice is to say that decentralisation will seldom make any significant impact on poverty reduction in most developing countries (Moser 1998). The reasons include what has been discussed in the previous subsection. But decentralisation has been defined broadly by Rondinelli and Cheema (1983:64) as:

‘...the transfer of planning, decision-making, or administrative authority from central government to its field organisations, local administrative units, semi-autonomous and parastatal organisations, local governments or non-governmental organisations’.

This broad definition indicates among other things that once the process of decentralisation takes place, the actors within the decentralised space can include various actors. Bonfiglioli (2003) seems to be stating this point when he avers that local governance entails the vertical transfer of responsibilities and resources from central to local government, as well as the development of horizontal networks between local governments and local non-state actors. Decentralisation may enhance poverty reduction when external actors such as NGOs are brought into the equation. This is because they can connect poor and marginalized people to a lobbyist pool, reduce cost of political action and help them reconceptualise their destinies (Johnson 2001). Dethier (2004) on his part has indicated that pro-poor growth will require three factors – absence of corruption, strong capacity in policy formulation and implementation and an
alignment of the interest of political elites to those of the poor. But whereas corruption has been known to be a major problem for most developing countries as they struggle or pretend to struggle unsuccessfully to reduce it, capacity of the state institutions especially at the local levels for policy development and implementation has been very inadequate. Further, it has been demonstrated that the interest of political elites seldom coincides with that of the poor. What often bridges the gap and helps to promote these conditions include the existence of a strong civil society committed to the interest of poor people.

NGOs can become good partners to decentralised agencies to promote poverty reduction. This strength lies in the ‘watchdog’ role that each partner will play on the other; the joint development and implementation of poverty reduction programmes; and the advantage of mutual complementarities in resource mobilisation and management. Helmich (1999) opined that DAC governments and multinational agencies accept that NGOs can exert pressure on governments in the south to become more committed to poverty reduction. This point is collaborated by the UNECA (2002) when it posits that poverty reduction will be improved by the participation of all stakeholders, including the NGOs, CBOs, local communities and the private sector.

### 2.4 Central Government and NGO Relations

Governments and NGO relations have a long history but these keep evolving in many countries (Milbourne and Murray 2011). More now than ever before, the relations between government and NGOs are inevitable. Globally, NGOs have forged several complex networks of relations with governments (Gary 1996; Fisher 1997) and these relationships have oscillated variously depending on the posture of the NGO sector and the orientation of the government of the day. The relations have often produced a multi-tone containing harmony and discord, can be overt or covert and can be either good or bad (Najam 2000). Although NGOs had very little influence about three decades ago, they now influence conventional state domains (Celia 2002; Batley and Rose 2011). Garon (2003) reports that in Japan, for instance, NGOs and the state were less intimate by 1900, but each sought to rely on the other as a partner for accomplishing their respective goals thereafter, creating a situation of mutuality.
Until the 1970s, many governments related to NGOs on the basis of their emergency efforts but this changed in the 1980s when the developmental prowess of the NGO sector was more recognised. This change resulted from the shortcomings of governments to reach the poor which NGOs were doing rather better; and the enormity of challenges of service delivery and poverty reduction on the state necessitating the need for collaborators (Smillie 1999). The role of NGOs in various aspects of development has been acknowledged and policy level acceptance has been widespread in many jurisdictions (Batley 2006). However, these policy commitments and elaborate inculcation of NGOs roles into national programmes have suffered from implementation hiccups as a result of historical inertia, “policy unreliability and legal instability” (Batley 2006:243). Whereas policy statements about governments’ commitment to relate to NGOs are often easy to pronounce, the weakest link has been working that out at the implementing stage “where the history of distrust and rivalry frustrates policy intent” (Batley 2006:250).

Although these two actors are often considered allies, there have been occasions in many jurisdictions where the relations have gone sour. Consequently, both government and NGOs have had feelings of apprehension about each other. Their relations and attitudes towards each other have often oscillated between “benign neglect and alright hostility” (Edwards and Hulme 1992:16). The relations are noted to have inherent challenges and Edwards and Hulme (1992) have contended that a successful relationship requires an acceptance of the challenges inherent; an admission of the important role of persons; a recognition that without donors, NGO may not be able to influence governments and a willingness to allow governments to claim credit for success of the joint endeavours.

2.4.1 Types of Government and NGO Relations

This subsection outlines a variant of relationship typologies that can exist between the government and NGOs. Extensive scholarly work exists on the classification of the types of relationships that can exist between the state and NGOs. McLoughlin (2011) has grouped these into dual and multi-dimensional classification. This study goes further to classify these into five types – these are the binary [what McLoughlin calls
dualist] classification, the binary continuous, multi-dimensional (McLoughlin 2011) classification, the multi-layer classifications, the continuous classification and the others.

The first type of classification is the binary classifications which assume the relations between government and NGO to be “either/or”, indicating that the relations can assume one of two types. Coston’s (1998) first layer classification for instance intimates that government either accepts or resists institutional pluralism. The second classification has been termed “Binary Continuous” which is in the form of “from/to” with implied in-betweens which are not stated. These in-betweens are implied because “from-to” signify a range of possible positions in-between the two extremes. Maxwell and Riddell’s (1998) “strong-weak” relations classification imply that such relations could be strong, week or lean towards strong or weak relations. Other classifications categorised in the “binary continuous” classification are Farrington and Bebbington’s (1993) “formal–informal” and Lewis’(2003) active – dependent classifications. Bratton’s (1989) classification of Control – autonomy and Jalali (2008) antagonistic – collaborative classifications are the other typologies of the binary continuous classifications. The third classification is the “continuous” classification which represents those relations classified explicitly into a continuum. This type of classification indicates that there are two extremes with clearly stated in-betweens. Among these are Kuhnle and Selle’s (1992:78) second layer classification of “integrated dependence – separate dependence – integrated autonomy – separate autonomy” and Najam (2000) “cooperation – co-optation – complementarity – confrontation” classification. The fourth classification is the multi-dimensional (McLoughlin 2011) classification which identifies more than one different relationship. Gidron et al.’s (1992) “government dominant model; third-sector dominant model; dual model and collaborative model” as well as Young’s (2000) “Supplements; Complements and Adversaries” classifications fall within the multi-dimensional classifications. The fifth classification is the multi-layered classification in which relations are classified in more than one layer. Coston’s (1998) government acceptance and government resistance of pluralism forms the first layer binary classification; and contracting-third party-Cooperation – complementarity- collaboration; and repression, rivalry and competition form the second layer of continuous classification. As shown in table 1, the classification of Kuhnle and Selle (1992) and Najam (2000) both falls within the multi-layered classifications.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of classification</th>
<th>Author[s]</th>
<th>Nature of classification</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Binary                 | Coston (1998) | Coston’s first layer of classification  
Government acceptance of pluralism OR government resistance to pluralism. |
| Binary                 | Maxwell and Riddell, (1998) | • strong–weak |
| Continuous             | Farrington and Bebbington,(1993) | • formal–informal |
|                       | Lewis      | • active – dependent |
|                       | Bratton (1989) | • Control – autonomy |
|                       | Jalali (2008) | • Antagonistic – collaborative |
| Continuous             | Kuhnle and Selle (1992:78) | • second layer classification of “integrated dependence – separate dependence – integrated autonomy – separate autonomy” |
|                       | Najam (2000) | • “cooperation – co-optation – complementarity – confrontation” classification |
|                       | Commuri (1995) | • “supportive - facilitative – neutral - regulative - repressive |
|                       | Fisher (1997) | • repressing NGOs - ignoring them - co-opting - taking advantage of them - collaborative – autonomous partnership |
| Multi-dimensional      | Gidron et al. (1992) | • government dominant model  
• third-sector dominant model  
• dual model  
• collaborative model |
|                       | Young (2000) | • Supplements  
• Complements  
• Adversaries |
Government acceptance of pluralism-government resistance to pluralism.  
Second layer of classification – Continuous  
• Acceptance of pluralism – contracting-third party-  
Cooperation – complementarity- collaboration  
• Resistance to pluralism – repression, rivalry and competition |
• Dependence – Independence  
Second layer of classification – Continuous  
Integrated Dependence - Separate Dependence- Integrated Autonomy - Separate Autonomy |
|                       | Najam (2000) | First layer of classification – Binary  
• Similar- Dissimilar  
Second layer of classification – Continuous  
• Cooperation-co-optation-complementarity -confrontation, |

Source: Author Construct, 2013.
There exist many other variants of discrete relations identified in various case studies by authors in the field. Although these are not classified and therefore not reported here, it is important to acknowledge that they all constitute the webs that render the relations between government and NGOs rather complex (Najam 2000). The wide array of classification can perhaps lead to one conclusion: that both NGOs and the state assume “multiple identities” depending on several factors (Thomas et al. 2010:360).

These typologies have been criticised as presenting only entry level understanding of the complex relations between government and NGOs; capturing only static view of the relations (McLoughlin 2011), being straight-jacketed and not amenable to generalisation (Proulx et al. 2007). However, these criticisms appear to ignore the very fact that these typologies cover a very complex myriad of relations about fast changing social systems in different political, social and economic environments. In as much as this study associates with the criticisms, it is important to understand that the discourse on typologies inform “development thought, development practice and development policy” in diverse ways (Ebrahim 2003:11). One limitation identified is that these typologies have been propounded using central government and NGO relations and ignore the relations at the local government levels. And in that regard, ignores the peculiarities of lower level influences on the relations.

In this section, the major typologies of government and NGO relations are identified and a classification regime established for analysing them. In the next section, the drivers of government and NGO relations are discussed.

2.4.2 Drivers of Government and NGO Relations

In the previous section, the typologies of government and NGO relations as chronicled in the extant literature were discussed. In this section, drivers of government and NGO relations are discussed. “Drivers” are used to denote both facilitating and constraining forces to the relations.

The drivers of government and NGO relations are as varied as the governments and the NGOs and can be predicated on several driving or constraining forces. These include organisational forms and motivations of actors; the organisational milieu and culture; history and nature of organisations and their relations (McLoughlin 2011). Also
important are the structure of government; the legal and policy regimes; the role of
external agents; resource reasons; and the efficiency, economy and effectiveness
arguments.

2.4.2.1 Government’s Structure as Driver of Government and NGOs Relations

Governments can be unitary or federal (Suberu 2010); centralised or decentralised
(Hutchcroft 2001); or military or civilian (Burk 2002) The nature of government can
have implication for the relations. For instance, civilian and multiparty regimes may
appear friendlier than military regimes. Similarly, military and one party authoritarian
regimes are rather hostile towards NGOs (Bratton 1989; Heurlin 2010). The
development strategy of government such as with liberal regimes also encourage NGO
spaces; and the administrative capacities of the state all work to influence the state’s
attitudes towards NGOs (Bratton 1989) This is because, ultimately the space to be
allowed NGOs is more a “political considerations rather than by any calculation of the
contribution of NGOs to economic and social development” (Bratton 1989:576).

The rolling back the state arguments that culminated from the emergence of the new
public management and its many attributes saw the worldwide introduction of
decentralisation (Uchimura and Jütting 2009) as a key aspect (Gruening 2001) of NPM.
Whereas the meaning, purpose and impact of decentralisation on nations continue to be
debated, it is important to acknowledge that decentralisation has changed the
architecture of governance. Because it has been narrowly conceptualised in many
scholarly work – denoting that power is transferred from a national to a local
government (Dubois and Fattore 2009) – it fails to provide broader frame for analysis.
However, decentralisation should entail transfer of responsibilities into decentralised
space to be acted upon by both state and non-state actors (Rondinelli and Cheema 1983).

This broader conception of decentralisation indicates among other things that once the
process of decentralisation takes place, the actors within the decentralised space can
include various actors. Local governance entails the vertical transfer of responsibilities
and resources from central to local government, as well as the development of
horizontal networks between local governments and local non-state actors Bonfiglioli
Bonfiglioli (2003). Conceptualised broadly thus suggest that decentralisation establishes
relations between government and other non-state actors including NGOs. The argument being advanced here then is that a broader conception of decentralisation drives the agency giving out power [in this case government] and the agencies receiving the power [in this case, local government, NGOs etc] into two forms of relations – both de jure and de facto relations. De jure relations emanate from established institutions such as legal regimes and de facto from practice (Daron and Robinson 2006). Many aspects of these in many developing countries have been largely influenced by external pressures within the international governance framework [see for stance the Human Development Report, 1990, for the authoritative argument for the expansion of inclusive governance]. Some aspects of the nuanced arguments on these are elaborated upon in the other drivers discussed in the other subsections of this section.

2.4.2.2 Neo-liberal Ethos as Driver of Government and NGOs Relations

Neoliberalism has taken international discourse on state power hostage for a considerable length of time. As an ideology, it seeks to loosen the grip of the state on or even free the several actors operating within it. It encompasses both economic and political spheres (Jessop 2002). Economically, neoliberalism is the “belief that open, competitive, and unregulated markets, liberated from all forms of state interference, represent the optimal mechanism for economic development” (Brenner and Theodore 2002:350). Politically,

“it seeks to roll back “normal” [or routine] forms of state intervention associated with the mixed economy and.... It also involves enhanced state intervention to roll forward new forms of governance [including state intervention] that are purportedly more suited to a market-driven....A shift also occurs from government to market forces and partnership-based forms of governance, reflecting the neoliberal belief in the probability, if not inevitability, of state failure and/or the need to involve relevant stakeholders in supply-side policies” (Jessop 2002:454).

It is partly due to the above that neoliberal governmentality has found considerable space in global economic and political discourse (Ferguson 2002). It is important to note the role of multi-national, supranational organisation and NGOs in the global
architecture of neo-liberalism (Shivji 2007). This influence has been so pervasive that, critiques have had reason to doubt the genuineness of the enthusiasm (Petras 1999; Tembo 2003; Shivji 2007).

The neoliberal agenda has been profusely generous to the civil society sector and to the NGOs specifically to the extent of nearly replacing the state with NGOs (Kamat 2004). The impressive [debatable] record of the NGOs and their continuous integration, their prowess of better direct service delivery to the poor and marginalised, their ability for better distribution of multilateral and bilateral aid, their ability to develop capacities of people to be self-reliant and their ability to better build local sustainable systems have attracted favourable attitude of the donor agencies towards them (Zaidi 1999; Snively and Desai 2001b; Snively and Desai 2001a). NGOs have been considered excellent alternatives for salvaging poor countries from their predatory leaders (Gill 1997). With the grip of neoliberalism on the state, and with increased funding, NGOs are enabled to pursue their agenda of development. It is alleged that the neoliberalists have succeeded in pushing their agenda of imperial domination using the NGOs as “their ideological foot soldiers” (Shivji 2007:41). NGOs have become “transmission belts” for pushing foreign agendas (Tembo 2003:529). In very strong and unsavoury terms, Petras (1999) accuses NGOs of lacking the locus to hold themselves as advocates of the poor but cronies of neo-liberal and imperial powers feeding fact on tax monies collected by overseas countries and used as vehicles to give legitimacy to western dominance (Petras 1999). Whiles some elements of neoliberal domination may be sought through the promotion of NGO activities, there are credible reasons to think that some NGOs are morally motivated. This point is buttressed by the fact that most of the huge NGOs emerged during emergencies and war times (Helmich 1999).

With all the global forces behind them, NGOs have succeeded in opening up policy spaces in many countries and have consequently become power brokers in development thought, practice and policy especially in developing countries. In some developing countries, the week capacity of the state to renew itself has seen NGOs emerge quite strongly to assert themselves becoming indispensable partners and in some cases at the threat of replacing states (Karim 2008). Probably, what gave more impetus to the drive by the neoliberalists were the excruciating debts that almost collapsed many developing
countries culminating in the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programmes [SAPs]. SAP came along with a basket of IMF/World Bank interventions including reduction of state’s presence; removal of subsidies; and liberalisation of the markets (Riddell 1992). The state was considered wasteful and therefore, more avenues were created for NGOs and other non-state agencies to step-up their game and take up the space being squeezed out of states. Perhaps an effective strategy to realise this was among other things to: 1) increased funding to NGOs to take up many roles hitherto performed by the state; and 2) adopt NGO identified issues as bases of conditionalities for states (Nelson 2006). Also, NGOs dependence on the aid system for survival provided an even perfect wind into the sails of the donor community (Townsend et al. 2004). For many developing countries then, the struggle has been between accepting and rejecting the role of NGOs. Whereas many states recognise the role of NGOs in development, accepting this fact technically weakens the moral mandate of the state; rejecting this fact sets states on collision course with NGO which make development to suffer (Bratton 1989). In many cases however, the desire to pull down as much aid as possible has either motivated a favourable attitude or compelled one to be hostile to the other.

2.4.2.3 Legal Forces as Driver of Government and NGOs Relations

Regulations constitute key tools used by governments to proscribe or encourage NGOs to operate (Elbayar 2005; Batley 2006) Legal and policy framework can become a very important tool in carving the relations between government and NGOs. In many countries, the commonest legal relation between government and NGO is in the form of the requirement for NGOs to register with a government ministry or body for a certificate to operate or recognition or both (Elbayar 2005; Barr et al. 2005; Jalali 2008). With the coercive and policy making powers, the state certainly could and does define the operational zones and purview of NGOs (Mayhew 2005; Batley 2006; Jalali 2008). In many jurisdictions, especially in developing countries where the coercive powers of the state can be brutally used, this can seriously influence the relations between the two actors. Often, when NGOs become a thorn in the flesh of dictatorial regimes, they enact anti-NGO laws to clamp down on their activities; or using those same laws, they provide the conducive milieu within which NGO activities can flourish (Mayhew 2005; Elbayar 2005; Batley 2006; Jalali 2008; Nega and Milofsky 2011).
Many countries have constitutional provisions that guarantee associational freedoms. Ironically, the drivers of the constitutional provision for the promotion of associational life are international legal frameworks such as international conventions and national constitutions (Mayhew 2005). Mayhew (2005) for instance reports that the regulatory framework in Asia has both legal and institutional limitation and facilitation; and that while many legal regimes seek to facilitate NGO work, “licensing and operational legislation heavily regulates and controls NGO activities.” (2005:734). In many jurisdictions, the constitutional provisions sharply contradict the associational laws in operation sparking conflicts between government and NGOs (White 1999; Mayhew 2005). The resistance of the NGO sector towards these rules and regulations constitute significant aspects of the defining state and NGO relations (Nega and Milofsky 2011). Perhaps, what makes the state resort to these forms of regulations is the threat to its survival and legitimacy (Elbayar 2005; Nega and Milofsky 2011).

2.4.2.4 The Resource Factor as a Driver of Government and NGOs Relations

Financial resource reasons are often important driver for the relations between government and NGOs. There are two aspects of this – the endogenous driver and exogenous driver. Endogenous drivers exist where the prospects of attracting funding from government or NGOs will stimulate each to want a relations; or where the lack of prospects will diminish the desire to relate. Bigger and well-resourced NGOs are reported to wield a lot of power and are able to influence government policy (McLoughlin 2011). NGOs are also able to draw on states for funding for their programmes especially where states are favourably disposed to NGOs (Taylor 2002). Exogenous drivers constitute those reasons motivating a relationship due to the ability of a partner to attract financial resources from external donors. Bratton (1989) intimates that, the relationship between government and NGOs is also predicated on whether NGO resources from international sources are additional or subtraction from states international inflows. He argues that where NGO activities are likely to results in a shift in international resource flows into the state [from the state to NGOs], the relationship could turn sour. NGOs sourcing their funding from external donors may attract the wrath of governments especially if they oppose government (Clark 1995). The role of donors infuses lots of steam into the relations as their resources probably provide grounds for the capacity of NGOs (White 1999).
The neoliberal favour for NGOs and NGO programmes have seen them rake in significant amounts of financial resources for development. Consequently, although governments often are able to attract their own donor funding, where relating to the other partner has the potential or otherwise to attract funding from third party organisations both governments and NGO prefer to get into relations. Where each finds collaboration to be in its best survival interest, it makes itself available for collaboration and vice versa. In many developed countries, NGOs receive funding from the state and this provides basis for relating to states. This dependency paves way for collaboration between the two sectors and NGOs are willing to accept interference in the form of demands for accountability from the state. However, the same NGOs are often opposed to similar demands by states/government in developing countries alleging that this is undue interference (Tvedt 1998). In some cases, participation of NGOs in government programmes are adopted as a means of co-opting and controlling them rather than the hitherto legal forms (Mercer 1999).

2.4.2.5 Nature of Activities as Driver of Government and NGOs Relations

The nature of activities engaged in by NGOs can drive the relations it engages in with the state. Often, humanitarian and welfare NGOs do not inflame and attract negative attitudes from government, its agencies and activists as they are often considered to be in better relations with the state; especially if these programmes support and complements governments’ programmes (Sen 1999). On the contrary, advocacy NGOs and think-tanks engaged in evaluating and critiquing government policy; and embark upon programmes meant to ensure that citizens hold duty bearers to account for their stewardships have often attracted negative reactions and relations from governments (Sen 1999; Parks 2008; Nabacwa 2010). In such instances, if NGOs draw their funding from such governments, they may lose it (Parks 2008; Nabacwa 2010). Bratton (1989) catalogues factors that might drive the relations such as the scope of NGO activities, the location of such activities, and the nature of the activities. He argues that NGOs engaged in volatile segments of a country and perceived to be recipe for conflict can attract the venom of the state; so will also be the attitude of government to NGOs whose activities are in areas considered by government as having the tendency to stir up dissent such as civil rights activism (Bratton 1989). Consequently, the nature of activities, source of funding and the size of operations of NGOs are important
determinants of the nature of relations they have with government (Wu and Chan 2012). NGOs are not passive victims of government monitoring and control. They resist and negotiate these pressures setting terrains far from being uni-dimensional (Wu and Chan 2012).

The initial euphoria that characterised the hype of NGO related development had been grounded in the argument that NGOs are more efficient, effective and economical than the state. These arguments which were trump card by the neoliberals saw the increase in the support for NGO led development intervention in many developing countries. However, this narrative has since changed and NGOs have been noted to be as less efficient, less effective and less economical as state and state agencies (Edwards and Hulme 1996).

2.5 Local Government and NGO Relations

In the subsection above, a macro-level discussion of the relations between the government and NGOs was done. In this subsection, the relations between the local government and NGOs are explored. As can be gleaned from the previous subsection, there is a great deal of interest among researchers in the relation between the state and NGOs. However, this has not been the case with the relations of the local government and the NGOs. Perhaps, the low level of interest is informed by the assumption that the nature and drivers of the relations at the national level of mimicked at the local level.

Local government and NGOs have very different organisational forms but exhibit very similar characteristics on a number of fronts. Their existence within the same operational space provides lots of grounds for functional overlaps and invasion of jurisdictions. Further, the extent of growth in the NGO arena across the globe and intense interest in the role of the local government provides a fertile ground for some forms of relations (Snavely and Desai 2001b). Operating within the decentralised space creates more grounds for local government and NGOs to interact and devolution of power to one possibly creates power relations with the other (Nkrumah 2000; Snavely and Desai 2001b; Hickey and Mohan 2005). The architecture of regulations, at least as it now relates to definition of boundaries of engagement for NGOs changes with decentralisation (Kolehmainen-Aitken 2000). As the NGO sector widens its scope and local government assumes more responsibility, increasing grounds may now exist for
their interfaces within a wide range of policy discourse (Snavely and Desai 2001a). The relationship between local government and NGOs can be crucial for planning and public service provision (Osborne et al. 2008). Grødeland (2008) has asserted that contrary to the arguments that NGOs and local governments have a very complex relationship, local governments in the South Eastern European countries of Serbia, Bosnia and Macedonia rather showed a cordial and positive relationships with NGOs in the region albeit few reservations.

2.5.1 Drivers of Local Government and NGO Relations

This subsection discusses the drivers of the relations between local government and NGOs to provide background and help to establish the limitations in the literature. Operating within the same space and coupled with the expansion of the welfare state, local government and NGOs should be working even closer. However, the interplay of several factors influences how these relations are forged. These include weak capacity of local governments which lessens their desire to work with NGOs; the lack of desire or capacity of local governments to work with NGOs; divergent agendas; NGOs fear of repression by local government; NGOs lack of focus and lack of results; politicisation of NGOs with dodgy interests; NGOs tendency to stir up dissent against local government; and local governments’ view of NGOs as opponents rather than collaborators (Snavely and Desai 2001b; Snavely and Desai 2001a; Grødeland 2008). In a study of the Hungarian system, Osborne et al. (2008) found that local government does doubt the capability of young NGOs and when they try to work with them, the local government often dictate the terms of engagement and often though not explicitly stated, funded NGOs cannot campaign on issues that hurt local political interest. They intimate further that for small NGOs, even when they have had some influence on local policy, this is often not acknowledged and the NGOs prefer to use their network or working behind the scene to make impact rather than to be seen seeking credit of making impact. Success for local NGOs relationship with local government depends on the “links” with local power brokers but that it was also important to cultivate trust of the power brokers about what the NGO was capable of executing (Osborne et al. 2008).

On the contrary, several factors combine to positively influence the relations. Grødeland (2008) observes that local government consider NGOs to represent a positive
phenomenon; assist or collaborate with local government; and that they achieve results. As a result, local governments often prescribe a couple of roles for NGOs. These are citizens’ representation, civil society promotion, advocacy and watch-dogs on local government. They also expect local government to provide services and assist local government. However, NGOs in the South Eastern European countries had a generally negative assessment of local government. The NGOs consider the local government officials as not trustworthy since they often do not fulfil their words. They are considered “selfish and sceptical” (Grødeland 2008:925), evasive and corrupt and claiming credit where it is not due them. They are also said to “lack initiative and will, are indifferent and lack qualification” (Grødeland 2008). They are also accused of not appropriating monies meant for local NGOs for them. The study found that richer NGOs received positive attitude from local government; NGOs engaged in service provision received favourable attitude from local government than those in advocacy; whereas the age of the NGO exuded mixed attitude depending on specific country context. He concludes that as a heterogeneous group, several factors including NGO scope, budget size, and age affected the attitude of local government towards NGOs in South-Eastern Europe.

The relationship between NGOs and local government can also be influenced by the relative power positions of the respective actors. Bar-Nir and Gal (2011) establish that both local government and NGOs rely on their sources of power to dictate the trend of their relations with each other. When a particular entity perceives or is perceived to have coercive, reward, legitimate, expert or reference power, they tend to influence the relations and determine what the other party does. The use of power in various forms in the relationship exemplifies the isomorphic tendencies described by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and this is consistent with Grødeland (2008) findings that the wealth, age and size of the NGOs influenced the attitude of the local government towards it. This is so because the level of power demonstrated by each partner is a function of their size, wealth and age especially on the part of NGOs. An important aspect of power is the financial resources possessed by an actor. It is important to note that other reasons such as expertise, financial resourcefulness and efficiency account for the desire for the actors to relate (Struyk 2002).

In some developed countries, local governments engage NGOs to provide services to the local communities with the view to maximising efficiency, increasing transparency
and make way for increased monitoring in service delivery (Struyk 2002). In many developing countries however, NGOs receive rather limited funding from local government. They are known to attract lots of funding from external donor agencies and many of them can be significantly resourced. They bring along new techniques, information and contacts (Nogueira 1995). However, irrespective of their power, there is an on-going negotiation and legitimacy redefinations which are occasionally laden with “daily crises, leadership struggles, and competition for resources” (Nogueira 1995:66).

Whereas some work has been done on the relations between local government and NGOs, the area appears under researched especially within the developing world and most especially within the African context. The context of local governance in Africa and for that matter, Ghana differs markedly and need special investigation to provide the insights on how local government and NGOs relate. Unlike their developed country counterparts, many governments and states in the developing world do not devolve powers to local government. The central government stringently controls the local government in many respects including financial, regulatory, administrative and personnel. Quite apart from that, many local governments are functionally and structurally inept and tend to rely on the central government for directives paving way for the central government to keep its grips on their activities (Domfeh and Bawole 2009; Bawole 2006). In this regard, the context of local governance in Africa and many developing country contexts differ and require special research focus. Although decentralisations as modelled by the World Bank for developing countries has sought to expand the powers and influence of local governments and local citizens, the impact of this on the independence of the local government remain minimal. In this subsection, the dynamics of local government and NGO relations are discussed. The subsection establishes that peculiarities of these relations across developed and developing country contexts require that perspectives from the developing African contexts are introduced into the debate.
2.5.2 NGO and Local Government Relations: Any Typologies?

Whereas models and theoretical classification frameworks abound for government and NGO relations in the extant literature, the same cannot be said about local government and NGO relations. Scholars who have ventured into studying the relations between local government and NGOs have only succeeded in presenting discrete relations without attempting to classify them into the kind of typologies or frameworks espoused by their counterparts studying government and NGO relations. It appears the assumption is that relations between government and NGOs will be replicated at the local level. However, as has been demonstrated earlier, the relations may differ depending upon the level of government. Few exceptions exist in the literature though. These include Guogis et al.’s (2008) six dimensional classification of institutionalization, intensity, functionality, mutual trust, resource dependence and distribution of power. Guogis et al (2008) adopts a multi-dimensional approach to classify the typologies of relations between local government and NGOs in Lithuania. Their study espoused six attributes - institutionalization, intensity, functionality, mutual trust, resource dependence and power distribution, which they have argued have enhancing implications for local democracy in Lithuania. The study argues that the extent of institutionalisation of the relations; the intensity of their engagement; the functionality of the relations; the extent of resource dependence; and the level of trust between local government and NGOs define the level of democratisation within Lithuanian local governments.

Another exception is Osborne et al (2005) three dimensional classification of status quo approach; feedback approach; and alternative paradigm approach. They conclude that NGOs can make impact on local government arena in one of three ways: solving problems by providing alternatives or innovating within existing policy paradigm, what is termed the “status quo approach”; providing essential feedback on local government services and local needs described as “the feedback approach”; or creating own policies and programmes as alternatives for local government programmes also termed as “alternatives paradigm approach” (Osborne et al. 2008). In view of the limited research interest in studying the nature of relations between local government and NGOs, this study seeks to contribute to expanding the frontier of knowledge and to provide further bases for future research.
2.5.3 Local Government and NGO Relations: Implications for Poverty Reduction

The frontiers of the relations between local government and NGOs should serve the interest of both parties and the activities they are engaged in. In this regard, the strengths of each party in the relations and what they bring on board the relations is of interest. As has been noted earlier, the capacity of both local government and NGOs to raise social capital for prosecuting the agenda of development has also been noted. Nonetheless, questions have been raised about the capacity of decentralised local government agencies to improve the conditions of the local people and reduce poverty (Hickey and Mohan 2005; Crawford 2008). Evidence suggests that, decentralisation has not had a significant impact on poverty reduction (Crawford 2008). Equally, recent critical assessments of the sustainability of NGO programmes in poverty reduction have brought to the fore more questions than answers. In this regard, the relations between the two actors could be used as conduit to improving poverty reduction programme implementation.

The relationships have been in various forms, with NGOs acting as complementary to development assistance, as supplements and sometimes as critics and watchdogs. Several arguments have been made on why local government and NGOs should relate in their bid to fight poverty. Among such arguments are those underlying the Sector-Wide Approach [SWAp] initiatives, which argue that since poverty is a multi-dimensional concept and requires the wide ranging initiatives to combat it, development assistance should ensure synergy and should consequently ensure that all significant donor support are consistent with the overall development strategy of the country concerned. This, it is argued will increase pro-poor impacts, inclusiveness and quality of allocation of resources (Bonfiglioli 2003). The caution is that this might lead to clashes between SWAp and decentralisation because SWAp calls for central control of funding which is intrinsically opposed by the tenets of decentralisation (Bonfiglioli 2003).

Another reason is that NGO and state relations are said to have positive benefits as they each rely on the strengths of the other partner to counter their weaknesses (Hulme and Turner 1997). This may be transferable to the NGO and local government relations. On his part, Tandon (1991) argues that the complex nature of poverty and development requires a genuine partnership between NGOs and the government to work with mutual respect, acceptance of autonomy, independence, and pluralism of NGO opinions and
positions. However, the reciprocal distrust and jealousy appears to be ingrained as government fears that NGOs will erode their political power or even threaten national security (Fowler 1992), whereas NGOs mistrust the motivation of the government and its officials (Clark 1995). Ullah and Routray (2007) have asserted that the current need is to involve governmental organisation and NGO as partners of poverty reduction process, not only to counter balance the situation but also to ensure higher and visible outputs.

Bottom-up approaches to development which have been pushed as alternatives to the traditional top-down models assume that local people are capacitated to push their demands and preferences up the policy making scales. However, in many developing countries where these approaches are most desired [as a result of the lack of capacity to monitor executive policies developed without the inputs of local people], the capacity of local people to drive the processes is severely constrained. To ensure the success of bottom-up approaches to development interventions, surrogates of local people must be present to act as proxies for them. In this respect, the role of NGOs in pushing the agenda of development at the grassroots levels serves the interest of local people in ensuring that pro-poor interventions are channelled into national policies (Nogueira 1995).

Although collaborative approach to poverty reduction is ideal, it is said to have constraints that minimize the benefits thereof. It is therefore important to note that attempts by local government and NGOs to forge any relations for poverty reduction must be within a framework of clear targets. However, what has remained less investigated has been the relationship between the local government and NGOs and how that plays into poverty reduction within a decentralized environment. Research has focused largely on central government and its relationship with NGOs creating a knowledge gap on the relations at the local level.

2.6 Inter-Organisational Relations (IORs)

This second part of the chapter focuses on an exploration of inter-organisation relations discourse and the theoretical choice considered appropriate for analysing the relations between NGOs and local government. The study relies on New Institutional Theory [NIT] to help provide insights into understanding the relations and the nuances thereof.
Organisations interrelate and interact with other organisations within ecology of organisations getting influenced and influencing others in return. Within organisational studies literature, this phenomenon is referred to as Inter-Organisational Relations [IORs] (Oliver 1990). Within the IORs literature, the relations between two organisations has been characterised as dyads (Isett and Provan 2005) or bilateral relations (Oliver and Ebers 1998), but between more than two organisations, this has been referred to as network relations (Oliver and Ebers 1998). On the face value, the essence of IORs looks not far-fetched as the popular assumption is that organisations come together to maximise their efficiency. Flowing from this assumption, IORs have been said to be sought owing to the following reasons “combining resources, sharing knowledge, increasing speed to market, and gaining access to foreign markets, cost minimization, risk sharing, and learning” (Barringer and Harrison 2000:367). However, there are more to IORs than just for efficiency and profit motives. Synthesising the reasons for IORs, Oliver (Oliver 1990), identified six factors that might propel organisations to engage in IORs as necessity, asymmetry, reciprocity, efficiency, stability and legitimacy. Although presented as discreet factors, these may interact and occur simultaneously to influence an organisation’s decision to enter into IORs. The decision to enter into IORs is deliberate (Oliver 1990). It is also argued that the lack of sufficient internal expertise for accomplishing organisational requirements may prompts organisations to engage in IORs (Newell and Swan 2000). However, the stories for IORs are not always positive, as the failure rates could be very high but the interest in IORs is still high and rising (Barringer and Harrison 2000; Langfield-Smith 2009). If IORs were for the mutual benefits of the actors, they should work to ensuring that such relations survive. However, this is often not the case.

2.6.1 Types of Inter-Organisational Relations

The purpose of the relations between organisations will define the type of IORs to adopt in any given situation. This is because, not all IORs are suited for all sectors and all relations. The extant literature is replete with descriptions of the varied forms of IORs, which Oliver and Ebers (1998) argue helps to present the broad nature of the subject matter but equally disaggregates the area and prevents it from consolidation. Writing on knowledge production networks, Newell and Swan (2000) have indicated that there are
differing networks suited for differing purposes. While admitting that networks can facilitate positive sum gains, they acknowledge the difficulties involved in IORs. IORs types could be trade associations, voluntary agency federations, joint ventures, outsourcing, strategic alliances, joint programmes, corporate-financial interlocks and agency-sponsored linkages (Oliver 1990:248; Langfield-Smith 2009). In between the extremes of mergers and arm’s length markets are trade associations, joint ventures and corporate-financial interlocks which are said to be voluntary. Between the extremes of mandated interagency integration and agency autonomy are voluntary interagency federations, joint programs, and linkages between an agency and a critical resource supplier or sponsor (Oliver 1990:248).

2.6.2 Antecedents of Inter-Organisational Relations

IORs are said to be voluntary and organisations should get engaged at will. However, several antecedent factors often stimulate the formation of IORs. These include immaterial resources, material resources, dependence, network position, resource munificence, goal congruence, market constraints, stability, conflict, organizational density, asset specificity, trust, and opportunism (Oliver and Ebers 1998). The argument that IORs are voluntary is far-fetched as certain elements within IORs do not make them completely voluntary. The role of power and resource endowment, regulation and the craving for legitimacy by organisations often takes away the voluntary elements of IORs. In this light, Shaw (2003:110) has asserted that the success of IORs depend on “trust, flexibility, understanding, balance of power, shared mission, compatibility, communication, and commitment”. All of these characteristics are interrelated and support each other, leading to collaborations that may be deemed successful because the partners stay the course, overcome obstacles, and achieve objectives. Inter-organisational relations are not always altruistic involving collaborative relations to yield mutual benefits but can be laden with mistrust and lack of confidence among the parties which can thwart an otherwise healthy relationship, especially where one partner intends to benefit more than it has invested in the relationship (Milbourne and Murray 2011). Good relationships are possible with mutual interest but it can be illusive when there is lack of commitment by one party (Clark 1995).
2.6.3 Theories of Inter-Organisational Relations

Several theories have been used in analysing inter-organisational relationships. Among the theories are resource dependence, network, institutional, political power, strategy exchange, transaction cost, contingency, decision making, population ecology, industrial organization, agency, bargaining, evolutionary, structuration, labour law and industrial marketing (Oliver and Ebers 1998:556). These theories have been applied in analysing various aspects of IORs. Although the most prevalent theories include resource dependency, network and institutional theories, the most central theories in terms of their connectivity to other theories in the field are resource dependency, network and political power theories (Oliver and Ebers 1998). The institutional theory has also been identified as central theory in macro organisation theory (Suddaby 2010). For the purposes of this study however the New Institutional Theory [NIT] is adopted as the analytical lens as it allows for both micro and macro level analyses.

2.6.4 New Institutional Theory [NIT]

Although the institutional theory has been less popular in its application than resource dependency, network and political power theories (Oliver and Ebers 1998), institutional theory has been applied in understanding organisational change processes (Kondra and Hinings 1998). Institutional theory [IT] deals with how organisations get stability and social order. It relates to the “processes by which structures, including schemas, rules, norms, and routines, become established as authoritative guidelines for social behaviour processes” (Scott 2005:2). Institutional theory seeks to explain how organisations fall through or otherwise within an environment of similar organisations. Rules and requirement abound in the ecology of organisations, and only organisations that conform to the game plan get the backing of others in the ecology in the form of support and legitimacy (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). This process makes organisations become more and more like others in the organisational field, a phenomenon referred to as isomorphism by DiMaggio and Powell (1983). In addition to being considered as a cultural theory driving the transmission of rituals and roles, new institutionalism has a political core point where public sector agencies are drivers and trigger of institutionalisation (Frumkin and Galaskiewicz 2004).
Within New Institutional Theory, the concept of isomorphism – the process of homogenisation among organisations in the field is central (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) state that contrary to what earlier studies sought to portray, organisations are becoming more and more homogenous than differentiated both in form and practices. In other words, organisations will eventually conform to pressures within the organisational field to act in similar ways as other organisations. Conformity has been explained to mean both compliance and convergence (Ashworth et al. 2009). Ashworth et al (2009) have explained compliance as the movement of organisations eventually towards the source of pressure. Convergence on the other hand denotes the level of resemblance among organisations.

Contrary to what traditional literature argues, organisations are not always pursuing efficiency paths but also look for ways to accommodate external pressures (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Frumkin and Galaskiewicz 2004; Ashworth et al. 2009) as this will enhance their legitimacy (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Fernandez-Alles et al. 2006). Organisations change their internal characteristics to respond to dictates within its external environment (Ashworth et al. 2009). But the question that remains is what drives this motivation for change and are the drivers of such change internal or external to the organisation?

Whereas several factors have been identified as the driving force, Frumkin and Galaskiewicz (2004) assert that government agencies constitute the most powerful drivers of this change. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) classify the isomorphic force within the organisational fields into three as coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphism. Thus, organisations conform to coercive, normative and mimetic pressures that surround them (Ashworth et al. 2009). Deephouse’s (1996) findings support earlier findings that organisational isomorphism increases organisational legitimacy and that regulators and the public view more isomorphic organisations as more legitimate. In other words, organisations become isomorphic in exchange for societal recognition also known as legitimacy. Legitimacy is therefore cultivated by organisations and is affected by several variables. Factors that determine legitimacy include age, size, performance, employee participation, quality improvement and the use of work teams (Deephouse 1996; Fernandez-Alles et al. 2006). The three formulations of isomorphic pressures consisting of coercive, mimetic and normative (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) are discussed in the next subsections.
2.6.4.1 Coercive Isomorphism

As organisations attempt to receive recognition and legitimacy, as well as maintain relations with other organisations, most organisations may be subjected to mounting informal or formal pressures. These pressures constitute coercive isomorphism, which is manifested in various forms, could be overt or covert and may include the use of force, persuasion or mere invitations to belong to a group. Coercive isomorphism is driven by several factors. One such factor is the influence from a paternal organisation on which an organisation depends for resource replenishing (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Mizruchi and Fein 1999). This form of isomorphic pressure is congruent with the tenets of the Resource Dependency Theory (Mizruchi and Fein 1999) which intimates that in the bid to maintain the continuous flow of organisational resources, organisations may get glued to other organisations considered more resourceful.

Another factor that drives coercive isomorphism is the cultural milieu of the organisation in question. Forces within an organisation’s cultural milieu can exert pressure on it to respond in the affirmative to such pressures if it must be considered a team organisation and if it must become legitimate (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Mizruchi and Fein 1999). Caemmerer and Marck (2009) report that public sector agency that relates and interacts with private sector organisations were pressured to conform to standards and practices of these private sector organisations. They also report that due to the resource link between the public organisations in their study and the government, these organisations had to respond to “changing policies and pressures to improve public services” (Caemmerer and Marck 2009:2) as well as public opinion that provided a measure of the quality of the services they provide. Within the web of signals, organisations get caught in ambiguous remits and strategies. They become uncertain on how to deal with rising expectations and contradicting demands of their stakeholders (Caemmerer and Marck 2009). Coercive isomorphism seems more prominent when one actor controls more critical resources or wields formal authority (Phillips et al. 2000) as in the case of the relationship between central government that control national resources and a local government that receives funding allocations; and as in the case of a regulatory agency and its regulated agencies. Coercive isomorphism has a wide ranging applicability and explains the behaviour private, NGOs, state agencies.
2.6.4.2 Mimetic Isomorphism

As organisations relate to others in a field, they are not only influenced by power and resources, they occasionally face uncertainties which are resolved by looking up to the best practices as the surest way to minimise these uncertainties (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Radaelli 2000). Mimetic isomorphism then is the situation where organisations imitate the performance, structures and practices of other organisations in an attempt to improve their own performance or resolve their uncertainties (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Caemmerer and Marck 2009). Organisations may mimic their networked peers, bigger organisations, successful organisations, or mimic organisations based on the authority of legitimacy-based groups (Barreto and Baden-Fuller 2006). Barreto and Baden-Fuller (2006) have indicated that legitimacy providers provide legitimacy-based groups for organisations during their uncertainty moments to enable them select their mimicry orientations.

The legitimacy-based groups are the authoritative classification by the legitimacy providers out of which the organisation in a quandary of uncertainty selects to mimic so as to attain legitimacy (Barreto and Baden-Fuller 2006). However, these legitimacy providers, identified to include regulatory and public endorsements with the media serving as the avenue for the public’s endorsement (Barreto and Baden-Fuller 2006) have been reported to lead the institutions mimicking to commit strategic blunders (Deephouse 1996). Caemmerer and Marck (2009) have argued that the response to coercive isomorphic pressures results in ambiguous and uncertain outcomes which then stimulate mimicry of behaviours across sectors – public and private. The implication has been that in an attempt to respond to coercive isomorphic pressures, institutions get uncertain on which strategic choices to make, thereby warranting mimicry which consequently results in strategic blunders. Organisations have often wandered off their own value orientations and time tested practices in search of legitimacy-based groupings endorsed by legitimacy providers (Barreto and Baden-Fuller 2006). Consequently, in search of legitimacy, organisations are coerced to mimic.
2.6.4.3 Normative Isomorphism

Organisational fields are not dominated by only institutional reactions and interrelationships but also present are professions whose activities include the reinforcement of professional norms, principles, and practices. Indeed, the extent to which institutional dynamism plays out is also influenced by professionalization within the institutional field. Professionals define the conditions and methods of their work, virtually subjecting their membership to both coercive and mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Mizruchi and Fein 1999).

2.6.5 The Relevance of New Institutional Theory

The adoption of the NIT in this study is justified by a number of reasons. First, it helps to explain the complex nature of the relations between local government and NGOs. For instance, Tvedt (2002) asserts that there is a huge network of actors with varied relationships within the NGO arena and that often research results reflects the preferences of the influences within the network. The NGO sector portrays complex relationships - NGO employees, NGOs, their donor organizations, government agencies as well as NGO consultants all belong to a network and must be understood within that context. The sources of NGO resources, the need to rally broader allies into programme implementation influence what NGOs do and how they report their results (Tvedt 2002; Blau and Rabrenovic 1991). NGOs, whether small or big, northern or southern, national or international belong to a super-system which defines how each appropriates in its fields of endeavours and how well it speaks the language of the system (Tvedt 2002). Such complex web of relations can receive illumination from the applications of the NIT to explain the forces acting within such institutional fields.

In addition, local governments are also engaged in a web of relations and influences with central government and their constituencies. Such relations coupled with their mandate to carry out development within prescribed rules set by central governments throw out a complex mix of influences that can to be analysed by NIT to enhance understanding of the complex relations. The NIT may help to analyse such complex web of relationships and the inherent dynamics and dependencies between well-resourced and less resourced organizations; more powerful and less powerful
organisations; and regulatory and regulated organisations. These elements are captured by the tenets of the isomorphic pressures of organizations in a field as captured by the NIT and may prove useful in explaining the relationships between NGOs and local governments.

Another justification for the use of the New Institutional Theory in this research is that thus far, not a lot of studies have been conducted on the relations between local government and NGOs using the New Institutional Theory. Using the New Institutional Theory as a theoretical lens to understand the drivers of the relations and the nature of the drivers would significantly enhance our understanding of the application of New Institutional Theory in studying relations between local governments and NGOs.

2.7 The Connect between Literature and Research Questions

From the foregoing discussions, it is obvious that although there is a significant interest in many aspects of the relations between government and NGOs, the literature is limited to the extent that it conspicuously ignores the relations at the local government level (See e.g: Batley 2006; Batley and Rose 2010; Batley and McLoughlin 2010; Batley and Rose 2011; McLoughlin 2011; Thomas et al. 2010; Struyk 2002; Sansom 2006; Sansom 2011; Opoku-Mensah 2007b; Opoku-Mensah 2007a; Elbayar 2005; Brinkerhoff 2002; Brinkerhoff 2003; Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2002). Although a significant amount of the research examines government and NGO relations in service delivery in developing country contexts, these studies fail to acknowledge that as a result of the decentralisation reform in many of these countries, local government has contributed to changing the architecture of governance. These changes that result from decentralisation have implications for governance and the relations between the decentralised agencies and NGOs. However, as clearly indicated in this review, very little research attention is given to the relations between local government and NGOs. As a result of this limitation in the literature, the nature of the relations between local government and NGOs has been largely black-boxed. It is in view of this that the first research question of this study – [H]ow do local government and NGOs relate in Ghana? - is considered appropriate.
Governments and NGOs are driven by certain factors which constitute the rationale and motivations for their relations. These forces have been analysed and discussed in the literature relying on some frameworks and theories. Isomorphism has been presented as forces that drive and shape the relations between organisations within an institutional field (See e.g: DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Mizruchi and Fein 1999; Frumkin and Galaskiewicz 2004; Barreto and Baden-Fuller 2006; Caemmerer and Marck 2009). So far, only limited amount of research evidence exist on the use of New Institutional Theory to understand how these relations are driven and shaped. Ramanath’s (2009) work on the limits of isomorphism remains one of the exceptions. However, the analysis is on central government and NGO relations. The limitation in the literature then is that so far, there is no test of the New Institutional Theory framework of isomorphism in the relations between local government and NGOs. This study applies the isomorphism as an analytical framework to understand the forces that drive and shape the relations between local government and NGOs. In this regard, the second research question – [W]hat forces drive the relationships between local government and NGO and how do these forces shape the relations? – is considered appropriate.

Finally, the extant literature espouses largely economic and efficiency arguments as rationales for the relations between government and NGOs. In other words, the arguments suggest that relations between government and NGOs yield efficiency and economy gains. However, the larger literature on inter-organisational relations avers that these are only part of the whole. The argument from this body of literature is that organisations engage in relations for several reasons, many of which have nothing to do with economy and efficiency. But the literature is limited on detailed analysis of these non-economic and efficiency reasons driving the relations between government and NGOs for service delivery. Further and since research is limited on the implications for local government and NGOs, the third research question - [H]ow do the nature and forces of the relations influence poverty reduction programme implementation in Ghana? – is formulated to guide the enquiry into this aspect of the study.
2.8 Conclusion

This chapter sought to engage with the research community on the phenomenon of local government and NGO relations. It adopted a new approach in classifying the existing typologies of the relations between government and NGOs and concludes that whereas there is significant interest in studying the relations at the central government level, there is rather a limited research focus on the relations at the local level. This results in very limited relationship typologies of the relations at the local level. Adopting a new classification framework, the chapter identifies and classifies the existing typologies into five – binary, binary continuous, continuous, multi-dimensional and multi-layered. However, no such classifications are available for analysing the relations between local government and NGOs. This was considered an important gap in the literature which this study has attempted to contribute to addressing.

The chapter examines the implication of the relations between local government and NGOs for programme implementation. The chapter also discusses the theoretical framework – the New Institutional Theory – as the theoretical lens for studying the relations. This focuses largely on the forces driving the relations between local government and NGOs. It narrows down to the three isomorphic pressures and examines how these drive inter-organisational relations. The three isomorphic forces of coercive, mimetic and normative drive and shape the relations between organisations operating within an institutional field into becoming homogenous and similar in several of their elements. These were outlined as bases for assessing the relations between local government and NGOs and to determine the extent to which these forces drive, shape and influence the relations between local government and NGOs in Ghana. This chapter argues that this theory is suitable for analysing the relations between local government and NGOs because it offers a dynamic way of studying both internal and external pressures and influences that drive organisations to relate to each other.
3. THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research process of the study in terms of the underlying philosophical research paradigms, methodology and the associated data gathering and analysis techniques. It begins with the philosophical foundations of the research, proceeds to examine the research approach and the data collection regimes adopted. The study adopts a subjectivist approach to studying social phenomena and is guided by nominalist ontology, anti-positivist epistemology and idiographic methodology. It adopts an interpretive paradigm. Adopting this paradigm enabled the researcher to carry out this study relying upon the inter-subjectivities of both the researcher and the subjects taking into consideration the context of the study and meanings made.

The relations between local government and NGOs are social relations, meanings of which can largely be conceived socially adopting social and contextual meanings derived by the actors and the researchers. These relations, the driving forces behind them and their results are all defined by several inter-subjective perceptions and idiosyncrasies and this chapter argues that the approaches adopted are suited for this kind of studies. In line with this research orientation, the chapter presented an idiographic methodology outlining semi-structured interviews, documentary reviews, observations and mini focus group discussions as the key methods adopted for data collection. This chapter is useful in providing both a philosophical and methodological bases for the research. This is in line with the qualitative research evaluation criteria suggesting that, the choice of appropriate methodology is important to ensuring research quality and robustness. It also provided the framework for assessing the contribution to knowledge.

3.1 Philosophical Foundation of the Research

The debate over knowledge generation has traditionally been a philosophical enterprise with several paradigms. The nature and results of an enquiry is influenced by the paradigm orientation of the enquirer. Guba and Lincoln (1994:32) intimate that an inquiry paradigm relates to the underlying believes that guide a researchers’
perspectives of what he studies. The paradigm influences their orientation. These orientations then determine the ontological, epistemological and methodological position of the researcher.

3.1.1 Subjectivist-Objectivist Dimensions: the Nature of Social Science Assumptions

The study of social science is approached from two opposing perspectives - the subjectivism and the objectivism. Within these, the subjectivist dimensions is characterised by nominalist as opposed to the realist ontology. Ontology relates to what exist and the nature of that reality which can be studied. Nominalist ontology argues that social science phenomena are internal to human conception - its reality exists due to the human constructed ideas (Burell and Morgan 1979; Chua 1986). Realist ontology, however argues that social science phenomena exist without human conception of it and is external and independent of human construction of it. Consequently, ontologically, reality can be physical reality or socially constructed reality (Burell and Morgan 1979; Chua 1986).

Research practice is significantly influenced by the ontological debates of nominalism and realism leading to two epistemological extremes of positivist and anti-positivist epistemological orientations. Epistemology relates to the nature of knowledge about the reality or phenomenon under study. In other words, it relates to “what and how we can know about” what exist (Grix 2004). Positivist epistemology leans largely towards natural science approaches. Its key tenets include that there is “an objective reality” which the researcher must find rather than “create or interpret” (Wicks and Freeman 1998:125). Positivist “[R]esearchers stand as neutral observers, using scientific techniques that allow them to get beyond human biases so that they can make contact with “reality” and document facts” (Wicks and Freeman 1998:125). To be scientific enough, therefore, studies should “describe” rather than “prescribe” that which is discovered (Wicks and Freeman 1998:125). Anti-positivists argue on the contrary that the scientist is not a neutral observer but an active co-creator of knowledge. In this regard therefore, human nature is not deterministic but voluntaristic. In other words, the activities of man are not completely determined by his environment but independent and free-willed. Depending on which of these becomes the orientation of a researcher, there is the need for appropriate methodological choices to meet the quality criteria of
the orientation. Burell and Morgan (1979) espouse the ideographic-nomothetic methodological dichotomy. These relate to the methodological approaches adopted by scientists in their bid to ‘create’ knowledge. They have indicated that subjectivist approaches such as interpretive research adopts ideographic methodologies while objectivist approaches rely on nomothetic methodologies. Ideographic debates hold that by understanding their subjects, social researchers are able to understand the world (Burell and Morgan 1979). The key is “looking for the uniqueness in individual cases” (Åsberg et al. 2011:410) and getting to understand “nature and characteristics” of the subject (Burell and Morgan 1979:6) through qualitative techniques. The nomothetic approach relies upon quantitative techniques preferring to adopt systematic natural science approaches (Burell and Morgan 1979). This dichotomy is represented in figure 1 with the four elements of each dimension.

**Figure 1: The Nature of Social Science - The Subjective-Objective Dimensions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The subjectivist approach to social science</th>
<th>The objectiveist approach to social science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominalism</td>
<td>Ontology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-positivism</td>
<td>Epistemology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntarism</td>
<td>Human nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideographic</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Burell and Morgan (1979:3)
3.1.2 Social Theory and Research Paradigms

Analysing social theory can be done within four paradigms espoused by Burell and Morgan (1979). These paradigms serve as rallying points for a group of researchers. The paradigm orientations of Burell and Morgan (1979) take on a more liberal stance as compared to the position of Kuhn (Gioia and Pitre 1990). The perspectives of Burell and Morgan (1983) have been organised into a matrix framework comprising four elements of functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist and structuralist paradigms. These paradigms represent distinguishing features of scholarly lines of thought and methods of operations within social science (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Gioia and Pitre 1990). Functionalist perspectives advocate objectivist, natural science-like approaches to social science which view supports the maintenance of the status quo (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Gioia and Pitre 1990). Its foundation is in “sociological positivism” (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:26). The interpretive paradigm on the other hand seeks to subjectively understand the social world, arguing that a natural science view of the world is inadequate in understanding social reality. Meanings made of the world are not independent of the persons making them (Lee 1991). Social scientists subjectively create knowledge with their subjects and cannot be neutral to that process (Lee 1991; Burell and Morgan 1979).

The radical humanist paradigm has a lot of common features with the interpretive paradigm except that it assumes a position that seeks a radical overhaul of existing social structures. Radical humanists argue that the “ideological superstructures” significantly influence man’s actions (Burell and Morgan 1979:32). They seek to challenge and radically change these so as to liberate man from ideological imprisonment. The radical structuralists share the objectivist foundation but argue for radical change. Their key emphases include an emphasis on inbuilt radical changes within structural relationships. The four paradigms are bounded as represented in figure 2.
3.2 The Choice and Appropriateness of the Interpretive Paradigm

Whereas this study could have been carried out using any of the four paradigms, a choice is made to adopt an interpretive enquiry. Adopting this paradigm enables the research to be carried out relying upon the inter-subjectivities of both the researcher and the subjects taking the context of the study and meanings made of these into consideration (Angen 2000). This study adopts a subjectivist approach to study the phenomenon as this is a social system phenomenon. In this regard, the study adopts nominalist ontology since the phenomenon under investigation is interpreted and is humanly constructed. The phenomenon and the meanings made of it are socially constructed. Epistemologically, this study believes that the researcher is an active participant of the research process and co-creates knowledge with the research subjects. His influence on the research process is significant and cannot therefore be an external neutral observer of independently existing facts. In effect therefore, the results of the study are not deterministic but the choices of the researcher have significant implications for what knowledge gets created and shared. These are then appropriate to the use of the ideographic methodologies of qualitative case studies relying on interviews of key informants who are experts in their field, documentary reviews of authoritative agencies and organisations, focus group discussions and the subjective
interpretation of researcher observations. The relations between local government and NGOs are social relations, meanings of which can largely be conceived socially adopting social and contextual meanings derived by the actors and the researcher. These relations, the driving forces behind them and their results are all defined by several inter-subjective perceptions and idiosyncrasies. For instance, why one local government agencies perceives NGOs positively and reacted favourably than another is based upon several intervening variables which are subjectively interpreted.

3.3 The Research Approach

Conducting academic research can be from several perspectives – qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods research. Although the researcher has a certain level of freedom to select which of these to adopt, the nature of the study largely influences the choice and shapes the study (Silverman 2005). This study will adopt a qualitative approach.

3.3.1 Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative research comprises a broad range of research methods that are often contrasted with quantitative methods. Its foundations are often criticised by quantitative positivists as lacking ‘science’ (Berg 2004). In other words, qualitative research is said to be less robust, lacks generalizability, lacks reliability, lacks evidence and validity, lacks transparency and objectivity and therefore laden with personal values and idiosyncrasies of researchers (Grix 2004; Denzin et al. 2006; Tracy 2010). However, qualitative research presents a buffet of noted qualities that quantitative research may lack. For instance, qualitative research takes on board context, understands processes, subjects’ circumstance and experiences, complexities of situations, emotional circumstances of participants, values and cultures within which the study occurs. It generates richer data and can provide important outcomes with smaller samples (Maxwell 2005; Denzin et al. 2006; Brown 2010). Creswell (2003) elucidates that qualitative research investigates problems of society within their natural environments.
This study is conducted qualitatively for a number of reasons. The first reason is that the study intends to study the phenomenon under a natural setting (Creswell 2003). The study into the relations between local government and NGOs will have to be conducted in the environment within which these agencies operate and that can be better conducted through a qualitative enquiry. Secondly, a study that seeks to unravel the key influences and the outcomes of local government and NGO relations will require the use of qualitative data collection instruments that allow for in-depth investigation into the nuances of the relations. In-depth interviews as the key data collection instruments are appropriate for collecting qualitative data suitable for qualitative research (Crouch and McKenzie 2006). Thirdly, the study intends to solicit information from experts and senior level local government and NGO officials whose number constitutes a small N-size considered appropriate for qualitative research (Crouch and McKenzie 2006; Gerring 2007). Fourthly, the study of these relations and their impacts throws out a complex mix of elements, the inter-relationships which require an approach that is capable of explaining these complexities. However, quantitative research has been found to be inadequate in handling complexities (Gummesson 2006) as it tends to hold some variables constant instead of allowing all to react. Further, whereas qualitative research has been considered inappropriate for policy research, this has been increasingly adopted in evidence-based policy research and is playing critical roles in policy studies in recent times (Denyer and Tranfield 2006).

3.3.2 Case Study Research Strategy

In qualitative research, there are several traditions and strategies that can be adopted. These include case study, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, biographical, historical, participatory and clinical strategies (Denzin and Lincoln 1995; Creswell 2003). This researcher chooses the multiple case-study research tradition. As intimated by Yin (Yin 2009), case study research is considered appropriate if the study investigates “how” and “why” questions; when the phenomenon under investigation is not under the direct influence of the researcher; and when a real-life context is the subject of investigation. Again, the case study is appropriate because, it allows for an in-depth investigation of a phenomenon. The practical aspect of the appropriateness of the case study lies in the 3-year duration of the PhD enterprise which makes it practically impossible for all 216 local government agencies and the large numbers of
NGOs to be studied. Additionally, the concomitant costs of doing such a large scale study will be so enormous and certainly will be beyond the limits of funds available for this research. The study adopted a multiple case study research design using two regions in northern Ghana as the purposive case. Creswell (Creswell 1998) had indicated that qualitative cases can be selected purposively based upon their unusual character. In this study, the two selected regions depict unusually high levels of poverty in spite of the unusually high presence of NGOs and the operation of decentralisation for over two decades. These factors make the choice of the regions the most appropriate for an investigation such as this.

3.4 Sampling of Case Study Organisations

The study adopts a purposive sampling regime in selecting the case-study organisations. Two regions were selected from the three northern regions in Ghana. The regions in the north of Ghana were selected for a number of reasons: 1) they are the most poverty endemic regions (GSS 2008), and 2) they host the largest concentration of NGOs in Ghana. Since this study is about relations between local government and NGOs, it was considered appropriate to select regions with the highest concentration of NGOs to investigate how they relate to the local government. The two regions were therefore selected purposively as a result of their incidence of poverty and the numbers of NGOs operating there.

In Ghana, local government areas are classified as metropolitan, municipal or district assemblies depending on population and other variables. Five districts in two of the sample regions were selected as sample districts comprising 1 Metropolitan, 2 Municipal and 2 District Assemblies. In each of the local government agencies, the following officers were selected due to their position in the decision making structure of the agency for interview: District Chief Executive [DCE the political head and chairman of the Executive Committee of the assembly]; District Coordinating Director [DCD administrative/bureaucratic head]; the Planning Officer [in charge of planning and programming] and the Social Welfare Officer/NGO Liaison Officer. In effect, twenty officers were earmarked to be sampled purposively from the local government agencies.

In Ghana, NGOs are classified as follows: community-based; national; national with International affiliation; or international operating locally. In each local government
area, one of each category of NGOs was earmarked to be selected. In effect therefore, 4 NGOs were to be selected from each local government area totalling 20 NGOs in all. Within each NGO, 2 officers were meant to be selected. These will be the head of the NGO in the district or CEO and the officer in charge of programmes or projects. These officers were to be selected as a result of their positions in making decisions relating to engagement with local government. In addition to the above, two officers each were to be selected from two national agencies responsible for oversight monitoring and control of the activities of local government. These officers were to be selected purposively for interviews. The table 2 presents the planned sample distribution before fieldwork commenced.

Table 2: Organisation and Interviewee Sample Distribution before fieldwork

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. of Sampled Org.</th>
<th>Interviewees sampled</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDPC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLGRD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-based NGO</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National NGO</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National NGO with affiliates</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International NGO operating locally</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author Construct, 2013

3.5 The Fieldwork

The fieldwork in Ghana took place in two phases – between August and November 2011 and between June and August 2012. Prior to the fieldwork in Ghana, both ethical clearance and fieldwork approval were sought from the University of Manchester. The strategy developed for accomplishing the fieldwork included applying for clearance from the Ghana Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. The approval was given with a requirement to submit a copy of the thesis to the Chief Director of the Ministry upon completion. The strategy for entry into the Ministry and ensuring a quick
response was to rely on a former classmate who worked in the Ministry as an Assistant Director 2B.

The fieldwork started with a trip from Accra, the capital of Ghana to the study area. The researcher drove in his private car to facilitate movement within the two regions of the study. On the first instance, a round trip was made to four of the five districts to enlist the agencies and seek their consent to participate in the study. The fifth district was reached by telephone. This first trip was to seek the consent of the study organisations and to enlist individual participants within these organisations. Letters were delivered to these institutions personally. This facilitated contact with heads of these institutions some of who were also being sought for interview. For ethical purposes, all case-study organisations and persons were anonymised and pseudonyms used in reference to them. The local government agencies were pre-selected before the fieldwork. However, the NGOs were selected during the first visit to the study area. Two approaches were adopted in selecting the NGOs for the study. The first approach was the use of the list of NGOs obtained from an umbrella organisation for NGOs in the three Northern Regions. This list was used to identify the various categories of NGOs. Out of the groupings, contacts were made to these organisations based upon the convenience of their location, their classification and initial response to the request to participate in the study. NGOs were approached continuously until the desired number was obtained.

3.6 Sample Inclusion Criteria

At the organisational level, two categories of organisations were involved – local government agencies, national agency responsible for planning and NGOs. The primary inclusion criterion for local government agencies was that the agency must be in one of the two sampled regions. The criteria for the NGOs were that the NGO must be operating in the sampled districts.

At the individual respondent level, the criteria for inclusion were that the respondent must be a worker for a sampled organisation. However, because this study was mainly an ‘elite’ study, secondary inclusion criteria were adopted. This criterion was that an employee must be of a certain stature in the organisation to qualify to be included in the study. For local government agencies, occupants of the following position were
included in the study: Metropolitan/Municipal/District Chief Executive, the Metropolitan/Municipal/District Coordinating Director, Metropolitan/Municipal/District Planning Officer and Metropolitan /Municipal/District Social Welfare Officer. For NGO respondents, head of the NGO and one other officer who are project managers, finance officers or other senior level managers in the organisation constituted the sample.

3.7 Sampling Methods

The study was therefore conducted largely by the purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling “…refers to selecting participants who serve a specific purpose consistent with a study’s main objective.” (Collingridge and Gantt 2008:391; Abrams 2010). Specifically, the study adopts the criterion sampling where sampling is based upon the individuals’ experience of the phenomenon under investigation (Teddlie and Yu 2007; Collingridge and Gantt 2008; Abrams 2010). The sampling of the respondents both in the local government and NGOs as well as in the national institutions was based upon their position and by virtue of that are experienced in the issues relating to the relations between the agencies under investigation. As a qualitative piece, this study’s sampling regime did not seek to meet representativeness (Abrams 2010) but it was meant to provide diverse insights and therefore respondents were selected be virtue of the fact that they occupy certain privilege positions. As a result, judgement about who was positioned to provide the needed information was made (Abrams 2010) before the fieldwork started.

3.8 Sampling of Respondents

Before commencing fieldwork, a sample regime had been prepared. However, this sample had to be increased to 35 when it emerged (Teddlie and Yu 2007; Abrams 2010) from the initial contacts that some agencies needed to be included in the organisations earmarked. It became clear during the initial stages of the fieldwork that three local government agencies would be important for the purposes of the study and had to be included. These agencies are education, health and agriculture. Table 3 presents the sample of respondents before and during fieldwork.
Table 3: Sample before and during Fieldwork

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of respondent</th>
<th>No. sampled before fieldwork</th>
<th>Actual No of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief Executives</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinating Directors</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Planning Officers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Welfare Officers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors of Education</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors of Health</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors of Agriculture</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO Directors</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDPC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLGRD</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
<td><strong>51 [79.7%]</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author Construct, 2013

It is significant to note that the inclusion of directors of Education, Health and Agriculture was an emergent sampling regime adopted (Teddlie and Yu 2007; Abrams 2010). The initial sample before the fieldwork did not include these respondents. However, after the fieldwork in the first two districts, it became clear that these officers needed to be part of the sample. This realisation stemmed from the fact that the local government agencies [what is known as central administration] acted largely as administrative and coordinating bodies with issues related to most aspects of poverty reduction performed by education, agriculture, health etc departments.

These directors represented organisations whose mandate included pursuing developmental activities considered to be in consonance with poverty reduction in the districts. Secondly, they were engaged with various NGOs in different ways in the delivery of their programmes. Consequently, when the respondents from the first two district assemblies were interviewed, it emerged (Teddlie and Yu 2007; Abrams 2010) that the representatives of these organisations should be included in the study.

During the fieldwork, it became extremely difficult to reach the Chief Executives for interviews even though in all the districts, they cleared the research to be conducted in their districts. Although they had offered several appointments for interviews, they cancelled them on the excuse of other engagements. In three of the districts, it was becoming evident that the persistence for interviews became a form of harassment which was considered unethical. Although not explicit stated, their attitude was
interpreted to suggest their unwillingness to participate or the inappropriateness of the timing for their participation in the research. In concert with the advice of Etherington, (2007:614) “[T]o negotiate research decisions transparently with participants, and to balance our own needs with those of participants and agencies involved” a decision was taken to abandon the pursuits. The decision was taken after a careful consideration of the data that will be ‘missing’ should they be excluded. Although DCEs are the political heads of the local government and wield a lot of power over how a local government agency relates with NGOs, a number of factors ensured that their exclusion did not negatively affect the scientific quality of the study (Emanuel et al. 2004). The first is that the DCE acts only as figure head and often does not take any decision without active consultation with the DCD and the Planning Officer. Second, the current crop of DCEs had only been in office for a little over a year. Consequently, their knowledge about the relations between the local government and NGOs were rather limited. This point was confirmed by the interview with one of the DCEs. The sampling of coordinating directors and the planning officers, who are in charge of general administration and planning functions respectively was considered appropriate subject selection to guarantee scientific quality (Emanuel et al. 2004). It is also instructive to note that the officials of MLGRD did not avail themselves for interview and directed that the NDPC was the appropriate agency to interview. In view of this, the NDPC which had been previously sampled for the study was included.

Within the NGOs, once an NGO was selected, the head was automatically sampled for interview. Although it was planned that a second person from the NGOs were to constitute a FGD, it became obvious after the first two districts that this was not possible. The main reason was the unavailability of the respondents and the lack of an appropriate and convenient time for all participants. In the end, mini FGDs or group interviews were held.

3.9 Data Collection

Several data collection methods were used in gathering data for the study. These included face-to-face semi-structured interviews, informal discussions with respondents and other staff, mini focus group discussions, documentary reviews and participant observations.
3.9.1 Interview of Respondents

Interviews are considered core to qualitative research (Myers and Newman 2007) so this purely qualitative study relied on this data collection strategy. Different variants of this strategy were adopted. The study adopted largely semi-structured in-depth interviews. Although there was a set of interview questions, these only acted as a guide and each interview took a very different trend and style (Myers and Newman 2007).

In six of the cases, the interviews were group interviews [two respondents] rather than one-on-one. The principal respondents suggested that another participant takes part because they are also engaged in the subject matter of the study. Group interviews, where two or more participants are interviewed at the same time are appropriate interview regimes and when the situations arose for this, it was welcome. A number of reasons informed the acceptance of the proposal for additional participants. These included the rich insights that could be brought to bear on the interviewing process and the duty to be flexible within justifiable limits for sustenance of trust between the researcher and the respondents.

3.9.2 Focus Group Discussions [FGDs]

Focus group discussions are an appropriate data collection strategy in qualitative research due to its ability to generate spontaneous and insightful rich research data emanating from the interaction among participants (Kitzinger 1995; Wong 2008). FGDs are better able to rake in data that would hitherto be difficult to generate in one-on-one interviews (Kitzinger 1994; Kitzinger 1995).

The study was designed with an intention to have five focus group discussions, each in each district with at least twelve participants in a group. However, on reaching the field, it was realised that getting participants was difficult. Although head of NGOs that participated in the study approved the participation of their organisations and have subsequently granted interviews themselves in line with the request made to the organisation, it was impossible to convene a focus discussion as all officers sampled to participate in the FGDs indicated their inability to participate in the discussion. After almost three months of negotiation, it was considered that in line with the ethical burden to avoid stress and discomfort to participants, it was decided that other forms of access
be used. The eventual strategy was to adopt group interviews with participants from the same organisation. In this regard, six group interviews were held as indicated in the section on interview of respondents.

3.9.3 Documentary Reviews

Local government and NGOs generate lots of reports and organisational documents which give account of what they do and how they relate to other organisations. In this regard, district medium term development plans of the districts were reviewed. The websites of the districts were also accessed for relevant information. On the part of the NGOs, annual reports, project reports and organisational profiles were reviewed. These documents provided a lot of insights into the activities of the organisations and indicated the extent of engagement between their organisations and other organisations. Also the local governments generate and build several documents in the process of their work. These include policy, programme and performance and annual review documents. Some of these documents were provided by the local government agencies when they were requested.

3.9.4 Participant Observation

Since this study had an interpretive perspective, it was important for the researcher to play his part in the process of co-creating knowledge. In this regard, particular attention was paid to actions and activities of respondents and case organisations. The researcher participated in a dissemination workshop where one NGO had met the Executive Committee\(^1\) of one of the local government agencies to discuss findings of studies it had undertaken on some aspects of local government. The researcher also noted the participation of social welfare officer in a meeting of an NGO and met some officers of NGOs in the premises of local government agencies or premises and noted the provision of accommodation by local government agency to NGOs. Other key observations were that the researcher found reports prepared by NGOs and addressed to the local

---

1 The Executive Committee of the District Assembly is responsible for the performance of the executive and administrative functions of the District Assembly. It consists of not more than one-third of the total number of the members of the Assembly elected by the members from among themselves [Act 462:V -3466]
government agencies within the premises of these NGOs; a confirmation that some NGOs prepared and reported on their programmes to the local government agencies.

3.10 Access Negotiation

Access to the sampled regions, districts and organisations was ethically negotiated. Prior to the start of the fieldwork, a letter was written to the Chief Director of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development in Accra, Ghana. The approval letter was copied to the two regional ministers in the regions of the study. The letter informs the Regional Ministers about the research and urged the ministers to offer any assistance necessary for the effective conduct of the study. Letters were sent to the sample districts asking for permission to conduct the research in their districts. As advised by (Tracy 2013), it is not enough to gain access from institutional gatekeepers; but that respondents must be prepared and willing to give their time and stories. To achieve this, the letters indicated the personalities sampled for interviews. Permission was granted in all the five districts and the respective officers informed by copies of the letter to them. Once this was accomplished, the individual officers were contacted personally to confirm their acceptance and arrange interview dates that were convenient to them.

A similar strategy was used for access into the sampled NGOs. A list of NGOs was obtained from the Northern Network for Development. This list had contact details and areas of operation for Community-Based Organisations and some National NGOs in the three Northern Regions. It did not contain the information on all national and international NGOs operating in the three Northern Regions. In two of the districts, locating NGOs was pretty easy as their bill boards could be seen as one drove through town. In the remaining districts, identifying the NGOs and their location was done through the district assemblies. Once identified and enlisted, a letter was sent to the head of the organisation to request for permission to study the organisation, request for audience with the head of the organisation and a request to have other officers participate in a FGD. The officers were then directly contacted to seek their consent.
3.11 Interview Transcription

Important elements of quality in qualitative research include rigour and trustworthiness in the data analysis process. One way to achieve this is through transparency in the research process. Interview transcripts form a crucial part of qualitative research (Oliver et al. 2005; Witcher 2010). Transcription of interview transcripts can be natural or denatural. Natural transcription involves the verbatim reproduction of an interview with every utterance including stutters, pauses, mannerism and other nonverbal cues all captured. Denaturalism, is a transcription approach where non-standard accents are eliminated (Oliver et al. 2005).

To ensure the integrity of the data collected, transcription was done using denaturalism, however, since the interviews were taped recorded into computer-compatible formats, the files were kept and resorted to whenever the naturalism orientation was sought. In essence, the approach adopted was a hybrid of the two orientations (Oliver et al. 2005). Each interview was transcribed and stored up with the identical code as the original sound file. The transcription was done following the question and answer format.

3.12 Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study is broken into four parts. The first part took place during the fieldwork. Tape recorded interviews were played several times after each day of fieldwork and before the next day’s fieldwork begun. Tracy’s (Tracy 2013) advice for researchers to read and listen to the data repeatedly was heeded so as to get immersed in the data. This strategy was useful in three ways – first, it helped to address the loopholes in earlier interviews by ensuring that questions which could have been asked were asked in subsequent interviews; second, it provided the opportunity for immediate follow-ups while the researcher was within the district and made it possible for clarification to be sought; and finally it provided an opportunity for identifying key themes very early in the interviewing process to help focus future interviews and assisted in the eventual themes adopted in the analysis of the data. Themes established in the literature were very useful in guiding the development of similar or alternative themes. In effect, data analysis was done iteratively with each stage feeding into the subsequent stage and being illuminated by the previous stage.
The second part of the analysis was the transcription of the recorded interviews into text transcripts. This was done with the assistance of an assistant – whose role was limited to listening to some of the interviews and typing them out. He was made to sign a confidentiality form which precluded him from divulging any information that comes to his attention as a result of that assignment. These transcripts were read repeatedly to establish themed for the analyses. However, during fieldwork, a couple of themes had emerged from the data which were noted to assist the analyses. Under each research objective and question, a number of dominant themes that emerged were adopted as a basis for analysing the data. Once the themes were identified, the researcher engaged the data on a constant basis to reflect on the interview transcripts and the documents collected to identify responses that supported each theme. During the transcription stage, the dominant themes that had emerged during the repeated playing of the interview tapes were maintained, altered or earmarked for change. However, it was considered too early yet for any changes to be made to the themes.

The third stage of the data analysis was to code the transcripts in three major codes – according to three key themes. These are the three research objectives/questions – the three research objectives are matched to the three research questions. This first level coding identified responses that related to and matched the three research questions. These were coded as R1, R2 and R3 to match research questions one to three respectively. The second level of coding is within the established broader codes. Here, codes are built around the themes developed. The number of codes per research question was not determined until after closure was reached for each research question. Closure was determined after several reading and listening of the data did not indicate any new insights for a new theme.

The analysis relating to research question one [R1] was done drawing on Tracy’s (2013) metaphor analysis. Here, metaphors such as friendly-foes, suspicious cordiality, tokenistic collaboration, cautious and convenient partnerships were adopted as the themes. The analyses for research questions two and three [R2 and R3] were done adopting the exemplar and vignettes approach espoused by Tracy (2013). Exemplars are those important recurring issues that typify a theme while vignettes are pieced-together constructions that illustrate a point (Tracy 2013). In both cases, caution was taken to use them to consolidate an overarching point and not when they constitute isolated incidences (Tracy 2013). For any piece to merit use to disprove a point however, it should constitute an outlier.
In effect therefore, the data analysis was done adopting the integrated approach (Bradley et al. 2007). It adopted the framework approach as described by Catherine et al (2000). Their framework approach outlines five stages of data analysis of familiarisation and emersion into the data, identification of the thematic framework, indexing the data based upon the themes, charting and rearranging data through abstraction and synthesis and mapping and interpretation (Catherine et al. 2000:116). However, before this rather inductive process was adopted, a flexible deductive frame had been formulated from the literature on some of the research questions (Bradley et al. 2007). Following these approaches, themes and taxonomies have been developed to represent the conceptual domains of the phenomena of the relations (Bradley et al. 2007). It is important to note that reflexivity – the act of continuous and iterative reading and listening to the data with a reflective consideration for self, subjects and context to provide transparency in the data analysis process – was significantly used (Emanuel et al. 2004). Reflexivity is consistent with the interpretive paradigm as it considers the reflections of the researcher in the analysis and interpretation of the research outputs and results.

3.12.1 Computer-Aided Analysis

No computer-based qualitative software was used in the data analyses even though the researcher booked and participated in a webinar on the use of Nvivo. While the researcher considered the software to be very useful to facilitate data analysis, a number of shortcomings prevented its use. The first and most important was that the software was considered too structured to be adopted for the kind of unstructured data being dealt with. Second, as a result of the first reason, it probably will require too much time investment which might prove not useful for the entire write-up. The third reason was Nvivo will only aid in organising the data in patterns that will make the analyses and interpretation easier but will not do the analyses and interpretation of the data. This way, the researcher considered the benefits to be accrued to be far less than the time and cost investment. The frustration with the software is consistent with some reservations expressed about its inability to provide the kind of robust retrievals researchers expect from it (Welsh 2002). Consequently, the idea of using the software was abandoned and a manual approach adopted.
3.13 Quality Assurance

Ensuring quality in research is a sine qua non in academia but quality in qualitative research is quite contentious as it comes with multiple measures. To demonstrate that a research piece merits the attention of the academia requires a justification that it meets minimum quality standards. In that regard, efforts have been made to inhale the elements of quality in qualitative research into this thesis. Arguments about what constitutes quality in qualitative research have been discussed under the theme of validity espoused differently under numerous qualitative research traditions. Validity simply means credibility (Creswell and Miller 2000). To ensure qualitative research meets quality standards, several elements have been proposed including: a) worthy topic, b) rich rigor, c) sincerity, d) credibility, e) resonance, f) significant contribution, g) ethics, and h) meaningful coherence (Tracy 2010:839). In other jurisdictions, triangulation, structural corroboration and referential adequacy have been proposed as guarantees for quality assurance (Eisner 1997).

Quality assurance measures which rely on methodological approaches have been termed transactional validity by Cho and Trent (2006). They argue that credibility and for that matter quality can be achieved when certain “techniques, methods, and/or strategies” are adopted in the research process (Cho and Trent 2006:322). Validity could be transactional or transformational (Cho and Trent 2006:321); transactional when there is a continuous interface between the researcher, the research participants and the data to enhance the accuracy of findings; and transformational when a research piece exudes outcomes that change existing social systems.

In addition, qualitative researchers have been advised to ascertain whether qualitative research approach is appropriate for their topic (Silverman 2005) and whether the questions being investigated are worthwhile (Creswell 2003). Dixon-Woods et al (2004:224) have outlined a couple of questions that should guide the assessment of qualitative research as:

- Are the research questions clear? Are the research questions suited to qualitative inquiry?
- Are the sampling, data collection and analysis clearly described? Are the sampling, data collection and analysis appropriate to the research question?
- Are the claims made...
supported by sufficient evidence? Are the data, interpretations, and conclusions clearly integrated? And does the paper make a useful contribution?

This study did due diligence to the research process and methods by ensuring that appropriate philosophical and methodological orientations and techniques are adopted. Also, the researcher kept a constant interface with the research participants and the data to ensure that the findings are accurate.

On their part, Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007:28) have argued thus:

*The challenge of interview data is best mitigated by data collection approaches that limit bias. A key approach is using numerous and highly knowledgeable informants who view the focal phenomena from diverse perspectives. These informants can include organizational actors from different hierarchical levels...*

This study has applied several of the elements in carrying out this study and these have been applied in evaluating the quality of this thesis in chapter 9. For instance, the study relied upon top management of the sampled organisations who are experts in their own rights and have extensive knowledge acquired through several years of work.

Table 4 presents a framework for assessing research quality developed by Tracy (2010) and applies it in evaluating the quality of the research process and outputs.
### Table 4: Tracy (2010) Eight “Big-Tent” Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria for quality [end goal]</th>
<th>Tracy’s Indicators of Quality</th>
<th>Thesis Quality Assurance strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Worthy topic:** The topic of the research is | • Relevant  
• Timely  
• Significant  
• Interesting | The topic of the research was considered worthy because:  
• It was relevant to the context of Ghana and the developing world; and timely as the hope of decentralisation in poverty reduction is waning and NGOs are gradually losing their appeal, a topic that investigates their relations and drivers of such relations may serve to provide impetus for renewed development policy strategies.  
• It interrogates a “taken for granted assumptions” (Tracy 2010) about relations between local government and NGOs as they are assumed to mimic relations between central government and NGOs. |
| **Rich rigour:** The study uses sufficient, abundant, appropriate, and complex | • Theoretical constructs  
• Data and time in the field  
• Sample[s]  
• Context[s]  
• Data collection and analysis processes | Rigour was ensured in a number of ways such as the following:  
• This thesis appropriated the Neo Institutional Theory as a theoretical lens  
• The researcher spent four months for the initial data collection and an additional two months for follow up. This gave enough time for in-depth interviews and contextual appreciation of the milieu of the case study context.  
• Sample selection was carefully done taking into consideration the respondents’ background and experience.  
• Data collection and analysis took place almost simultaneously and reflectively. Transcription was done with a hybrid denaturalism (Oliver et al. 2005).  
• Data analysis was done reflectively with constant engagement of the data. |
| **Sincerity:** The study is characterized by | • Self-reflexivity about subjective values, biases, and inclinations of the researcher [s]  
• Transparency about the | Sincerity was ensured in a number of ways such as the following:  
• This researcher has disclosed his current and past occupational background as well as the choice of an interpretive philosophical orientation which are likely to influence the choices of research strategies and analyses.  
• The researcher has also clearly spelt out the methods, procedures and samples for the study. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria for quality [end goal]</th>
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<th>Thesis Quality Assurance strategy</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>methods and challenges</td>
<td>It has also clearly indicated the challenges that were encountered during the data collection stages and during the write-up stages of the thesis. For instance, the researcher acknowledged the challenges of getting access to the DCEs and the inability to rely on data analysis software.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility :</td>
<td>Credibility was ensured in a number of ways such as the following:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The research is marked by</td>
<td>• The study has demonstrated and corroborated the evidence through multiple sources of data by providing excerpts of interviews and documentary material to buttress the points. In so doing, the researcher showed rather than just tell the evidence of the research.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The research credibility was also through the process of triangulation taking note of context and the influence of context on research outcomes.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The researcher’s previous experience working in an NGO and leading the interaction with local government agencies provided the opportunity for multivocality.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resonance:</td>
<td>• The research is generalisable through Transferability of the findings to contexts in many developing country contexts which exhibit similar contextual similarities to Ghana’s, making it possible to apply the findings to different contexts (Tracy 2010).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant contribution:</td>
<td>The research provides a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge in a number of ways illustrated in subsection 9.3.3 of chapter nine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The research provides a significant contribution</td>
<td>Ethical:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The research considers</td>
<td>The research considered all ethical issues that had implication for the quality of output and impacts on participants. This is treated in the subsection on the evaluation of the ethical consideration and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Thick description, concrete detail, explication of tacit [non-textual] knowledge, and showing rather than telling
- Triangulation or crystallization
- Multivocality
- Member reflections

- Aesthetic, evocative representation
- Naturalistic generalizations
- Transferable findings

- Conceptually/theoretically
- Practically
- Morally
- Methodologically
- Heuristically

- Procedural ethics [such as human subjects]
### Criteria for quality [end goal]

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Thesis Quality Assurance strategy</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Situational and culturally specific ethics&lt;br&gt;• Relational ethics&lt;br&gt;• Exiting ethics [leaving the scene and sharing the research]</td>
<td>management.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

### Meaningful coherence:

| Meaningful coherence: | Achieves what it purports to be about<br>Uses methods and procedures that fit its stated goals<br>Meaningfully interconnects literature, research questions, findings, and interpretations with each other | Meaningful coherence is achieved in this study as:<br>• It delivers on the stated research objectives and questions.<br>• It selected and applied the appropriate methodologies.<br>• It also connects the research questions to the literature, the methods, the findings and the discussions. |

Source: Author Construct, 2013 from Tracy (2010)

#### 3.14 Rigour through Triangulation

Triangulation was adopted as a way of validating data collected and meanings made by respondents of their relations with others. Multiple data sources were used – from respondents, official documents, observations and focus discussions. These were done at two levels 1) interview responses were checked against official documents obtained from the organisations especially the local government and 2) some interview responses were validated when similar organisations were being interviewed. The essence of this practice was to provide opportunity to establish convergence especially where the issue at stake was considered thorny. For instance when local government accused NGOs of fomenting troubles in communities against them, the question was put to the NGOs
many of who confirmed the statement but denied that they fomented trouble. In the
view of NGOs, they provided information that should make communities able to hold
duty bearers to account for resources entrusted to their care. Although triangulation has
been criticised as seeking objectivity through convergence (Angen 2000), its application
was not merely to indicate convergence, but also to indicate that subjects make
meanings from within their context which must be understood when analysing data.

3.15 Ethical Consideration and Negotiation

This study was conducted with regard for all ethical rules applicable in the University of
Manchester. Ethical clearance was sought and obtained from the University Ethics
Committee through the Faculty Ethics Committee. This process included a justification
that this was a worthy piece of research and that the methods are appropriate and
justified.

3.16 Confidentiality and Anonymity

As part of the ethics of research, the researcher was required to demonstrate due care for
the confidentiality, anonymity and safety of all respondents and organisations
participating in the study. This was ensured through the anonymisation of all
respondents and their organisations through the use of codes and identifiers. Data
collected is also protected from external parties and stored in private and protected
storage devices. During the course of the research, a number of respondents indicated
that their identity could be disclosed but this was declined to conform to the principle of
confidentiality and anonymity.

3.17 Informed Consent and Voluntariness

This required the provision of adequate background information to all respondents and
to seek their informed consent before they participate in the study. It also required that
participants be informed of all their rights and be provided with the right to withdraw at
any point without giving any reasons. They could request for the information they had
volunteered be destroyed if they changed their minds after the study. Before fieldwork, the researcher sought and obtained clearance from the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, the supervising ministry for the local government bodies and by implication all NGOs that worked within the jurisdiction of the ministry. In addition, permission and clearance was sought and obtained from all local government agencies and NGOs before they got enlisted to participate in the study. In line with individual rights of informed consent, the permission and informed consent of all participants were individually sought and obtained. In line with respect for participants and avoidance of stress or discomfort to respondents, the DCEs who showed little interest in participating in the research were left out. This did not however affect the quality of the research as DCDs and Planning Officers were considered more knowledgeable in the subject matter than the DCEs. All participants were provided with participant information sheets and made to sign the consent forms to indicate their consent to participate in the study.

3.18 Evaluation of the Ethical Considerations and Management

This study was conducted according to all the research protocols and all appropriate ethical considerations for PhD dissertations in the University of Manchester. The procedures meet the procedural, situational and culturally specific ethics, relational and existing ethical rules advocated by Tracy (2010) as criteria for ensuring qualitative research quality. The research met all procedural requirements for the research both at the University level and at the participating organisation level. As indicated in this chapter, all participating individuals and organisations were accorded the right ethical consideration. All the human subjects were appropriately informed about why they were selected to participate in the study and offered sufficient information about the study, its objectives and purpose. Informed consent was sought and obtained before each participant was allowed to participate. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time and request information provided to be destroyed without the need to provide reasons. Subjects were also assured of confidentiality and anonymity and all responses consequently anonymised. Stress and distress was avoided by making sure that interviews and other engagements were scheduled to meet the preferences of the subjects. These ethical assurances meet the criteria outlined by Tracy (2010).
3.19 Framework for Evaluating Contribution to Knowledge

One of the critical requirements for the award of a PhD is its original contribution to knowledge. Although this has been described as lacking specificity, scholars have provided insights into what constitutes contribution to knowledge. Phillips and Pugh (2010) cautions that ‘original contribution’ should not be interpreted narrowly to mean “an enormous breakthrough that has the subject rocketing on its foundation…” (p.41). They report a couple of ways to evaluate original contribution to knowledge. The figure 3 presents a summary of the framework for assessing contribution to knowledge.

**Figure 3: Framework for Evaluating Original Contribution to Knowledge**

1. Carrying out empirical work that hasn't been done before;
2. Making a synthesis that hasn't been done before;
3. Using already known materials but with a new interpretation;
4. Trying out something in Britain that has been previously only been done abroad;
5. Taking a particular technique and applying it in a new area;
6. Bringing new evidence to bear on an old issue;
7. Being cross-disciplinary and using different methodologies;
8. Looking at areas that people in the discipline haven’t looked at before;
9. Adding to knowledge in a way that hasn't been done before.

**Source: Extract from Phillips and Pugh (2010:69-70)**

Other criteria for assessing the contribution to knowledge include development of concepts; generation of theory; drawing of specific implications; and contribution of rich insight (Walsham 1995; Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007). Contribution to knowledge is also assessed on the basis of whether a study’s findings “extend, transform, or complicate a body of knowledge, theory, or practice in new and important ways” (Tracy 2013). A push in the frontiers of knowledge and the application of theory is considered significant contribution but conceptual development is even preferred as it is deemed to be more significant contribution (Tracy 2013). Tracy (2013) also argues that research that arouses the inquisitiveness of the research community to take interest in and conduct further investigation is heuristically significant. Significant contribution could also be claimed from catalytic validity where a research piece shuffles the hornet…
nest and awaken stakeholders to a certain reality and causes action (Tracy 2013). The generation of new data, the reorganization of previous knowledge and a combination of these could also be said to constitute contribution to knowledge (Morris 2011). Adopting many of the elements of these frameworks, the study’s contribution to knowledge is outlined in chapter 9 under subsection 9.3.

3.20 Evaluation of the Choice of Theoretical Lens

Although this study initially started off with the view to using the chaos theory as the analytical lens, this was changed after further readings and encountering of other theories. The reason for the adoption of chaos theory was borne from the perception that the relations between local government and NGOs are chaotic and without obvious patterns in the nature described as non-lineal (Murphy 1996; Guo et al. 2009). Although chaos theory now has wide applicability in the social sciences and organisational studies, this study later decided against its use. One of the reasons for the abandonment of the theory was because, two other theories – Resource Dependency and Institutional Theory - were considered more appropriate. However, upon further readings, Resource Dependency Theory was later dropped for the New Institutional Theory. This was based upon the view that both theories deal with some common elements as well as key differences. Both theories are concerned with organisational relations between actors in which actors’ behaviours are shaped by various forces from within the external environment. The similarities as well as the differences together provided reasons why the resource dependency theory was abandoned. The similarities outlined meant that, using the two theories will be superfluous. On the other hand, the two theories have some differences – whereas resource dependency theory argues from a position of resources as means of exerting influence, the New Institutional Theory goes beyond that to articulate that other variables such as norms of professionals and imitation tendencies during uncertainties also drive the relations (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Hillman et al. 2009; Hessels and Terjesen 2010) In view of this, the study decided to adopt only the New Institutional Theory as the theoretical lens and framework.

This study adopted New Institutional Theory as the theoretical lens for analysis. Institutional Theory [IT] deals with how organisations get stability and social order. It relates to the “processes by which structures, including schemas, rules, norms, and
routines, become established as authoritative guidelines for social behaviour processes” (Scott 2005:2). Within the framework of the IT, forces that drive and shape interaction between organisations within a field have been distilled. This study specifically adopted DiMaggio and Powell (1983) classification of isomorphic forces into coercive, mimetic and normative forces for the analysis. The theory was useful in a number of ways:

1. The theory states that organisations relate to others not only for efficiency purposes but for many other reasons including legitimacy, uncertainty and other influences. This gave impetus for the study’s desire to identify forces beyond efficiency and economy reasons into other socio-cultural and political reasons driving the relations. This study confirms that several reasons drive local government and NGOs to relate.

2. The theory is also appropriate for this work because it anticipates and analyses complex driving forces operating between organisations. This made it suitable for use in analysing the relations between local government and NGOs.

3. The theory provided a framework for classifying the forces that drive and shape the relations between local government and NGOs. In this respect, it was useful in the identification of the seventeen forces that drive the relations between local government and NGOs in Ghana. The framework was used in classifying the forces into coercive, mimetic or normative forces. These helped to analyse why the two agencies may want to relate in a given situation. In line with DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983) arguments, the identified forces are not clearly refined discrete forces but overlap in some instances and operate alongside other forces.

The theory was however not appropriate is analysing the other aspects of the study. For instance, the theory was not appropriate for analysing the typologies of the relations. This was done relying on the insights drawn from the framework built from the literature. Table 5 summarises the research questions and the methods adopted in answering them.
Table 5: Research Questions and the Methodological Approaches Adopted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Methodological Approach Adopted</th>
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</table>
| ● How do local government and NGOs relate in Ghana?                                | ● The main methodological approach to answering this question was through the interview of the respondents.  
● The strategy was to find out from the interviewees how they viewed and interpreted their relations with each other.  
● Since this was an interpretive study, a lot of attention was paid to observations of the behaviour of actors as well as what they said during the interviews.  
● The interviews were framed around the findings and research themes developed from the literature review.  
● These were adopted as the starting point until new themes emerged. |
| ● What forces drive the relationships between local government and NGO and how do these forces shape the relations? | ● The main methodological approach to answering this question was through the interview of respondents and documentary reviews.  
● The interviews were framed around the three isomorphic forces of coercive, mimetic and normative.  
● The analysis of the data sought to find out not only the forces driving the relations but also how these forces shape the relations.  
● The forces were isolated into those that facilitated and those that constrained the relations. |
| 3. How are the relations influencing the implementation of poverty reduction policies at the local level? | ● The main methodological approach to answering this question was through the review of the reports, project documents and webpages of the sample organisations.  
● In the process, two areas were of interest – national programmes that were implemented at the local level and programmes implemented by local government and NGOs.  
● The former category of programmes are LEAP, NYEP [GYEEA], MASLOC, School Feeding, Capitation Grant and NHIS.  
● The latter category of programmes were categorised into five broad areas of emphasis including advocacy, monitoring and evaluation; food security, agricultural and environmental programmes; capacity building for decentralisation; water, sanitation, hygiene and health; and cash transfers and income poverty reduction programmes.  
● Even though the interviews also provided additional information on answering this question, the review of the documents was the key source of information. |

Source: Author Construct, 2013
3.21 Conclusion

This chapter examined and presented the philosophical and methodological orientations adopted for this research. The study adopts a subjectivist approach to studying social phenomena and is guided by nominalist ontology, anti-positivist epistemology and idiographic methodology. This study adopts an interpretive paradigm. Adopting this paradigm enabled the researcher to carry out this study relying upon the inter-subjectivities of both the researcher and the subjects taking the context of the study and meanings made of these into consideration. The relations between local government and NGOs are social relations, meanings of which can largely be conceived socially adopting social and contextual meanings derived by the actors and the researchers. These relations, the driving forces behind them and their results are all defined by several inter-subjective perceptions and idiosyncrasies and this chapter argues that the approaches adopted are suited for this kind of studies.

In line with this research orientation, the chapter presented an idiographic methodology outlining semi-structured interviews, documentary reviews, observations and mini focus group discussions as the key methods adopted for data collection. This chapter was useful in providing both a philosophical and methodological bases for the research. This is in line with the qualitative research evaluation criteria suggesting that, the choice of appropriate methodology is important to ensuring research quality and robustness. It also provided the framework for assessing the contribution to knowledge.
4. CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH SETTING

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the political and developmental context of Ghana, providing backgrounds of Ghana’s current development. It presents an overview of the poverty reduction programmes in Ghana such as the LEAP, NYEP [GYEEDA], MASLOC, School Feeding and NHIS. It sought to present and discuss briefly how these programmes which could have provided the platforms for engagements between local government and NGOs are run and controlled from the top. The chapter also states that these poverty reduction programmes are heavily politicised and remain very unsustainable. Since these are not managed by local governments, NGOs are hardly involved in their design, implementation and evaluation. The chapter also presents the current local government system highlighting the decentralisation reform and how it is structured and practiced in Ghana. It discusses both the relations between central government and local government and relations between local government and NGOs in Ghana. This chapter establishes that the relations between central government and local governments have important implications for the relations between local government and NGOs and provides a basis for analysing the relations between local government and NGOs as it provides the inter-organisational context within which local governments work.

4.1 The Country Context of Ghana

This section presents the country context of Ghana. It examines the development context and Ghana’s poverty situation along with the poverty reduction efforts of Ghana. Ghana is located in Western Africa sharing its western border with Ivory Coast, the eastern border with Togo, the northern border with Burkina Faso and is bordered to the south with the gulf of guinea. Ghana is a former British colony but obtained its independence in March 1957, the first African country south of the Sahara to obtain independence. Ghana’s political history is tainted with several military interventions after the first president Dr. Kwame Nkrumah was overthrown in a US CIA supported coup of 1966 (Moore 2006). Ghana has subsequently made two other attempts at
multiparty democracy but these attempts again came under the subversion of the military in 1972 and 1981. Since 1993 however, Ghana’s democracy has stabilised with successful changes in governments between two major political parties. Ghana operates a presidential democracy with an elected parliament and independent judiciary. Since the inception of the fourth Republic in 1993, Ghana has been described as beacon of hope for Africa’s democratic journey. In spite of gains made in the nearly two decades of unbroken democratic rule, governance challenges remain (Aryeetey and Kanbur 2008:20) and systemic institutional failures and sporadic threat to the political stability remain worrying. It is worthwhile to indicate however, that, the democratic dispensation has created a very fertile ground for the nurturing and testing of a number of democratic principles. In this regard and for the purposes of this study, two elements are significant - reforms for deepening decentralisation and civil society pluralism.

Ghana is a developing country recently classified as lower middle income country (World Bank 2013). Agriculture is a major socioeconomic activity in Ghana employing 42% of employed labour force. This percentage is higher for rural population as 69.4% in rural Ghana are employed in agriculture (GSS 2013) which yields about 40% of the gross domestic product, and about 40% of foreign currencies acquired through exports. Ghana is largely agricultural but is dominated by few cash crops and peasant farming heavily dependent on nature (Namara et al. 2011). The agricultural sector is also beset with a number of institutional and structural challenges. As a result, agricultural production has generally been low (Aryeetey and Kanbur 2008). Ghana’s population is about 24.6 million by the 2010 population and housing census from 18.9 million from the 2000 census (GSS 2013). The annual population growth rate is 2.5% and a doubling rate of 28 years. This implies that at current growth rate, Ghana’s population should double every 28 years. Since population has several implications for development, it is significant to note that Ghana’s population growth is quite high and largely youthful with high but declining dependency ratio (GSS 2013). The male population constitutes 48.5% with the female population at 51.5% (GSS 2008). Educational attainment is very low in Ghana as about 31% of the adult population had never been to school and another 17% attempting school but never got the most basic certificate. Cumulatively therefore, about 48% of adult Ghanaians do not have any education (GSS 2008). This situation is worsened when the 39% of those who attended only Middle School and Junior High School (GSS 2008) are added. Figure 4 presents the map of Ghana showing the case study regions.
Figure 4: The Map of Ghana Showing Location of Study Regions

Source: Ghanaweb.com
4.2 The Development Context of the Case Study Regions

The Northern and Upper East Regions occupy a significant portion of the Savannah Region of Ghana. This region suffers acutely compared with other regions of Ghana. The dominant theme in most of the assessments of the state of development in the North confirms that a monolithic approach to understanding the dynamics of the situation will be defective (Tsikata and Seini 2004). Reasons for the state of development of the three northern regions have remained hotly contested (Shepherd et al. 2005). Southerners have often accused northern elites for failing to go back to the north to contribute to its development. They have also accused the elites from the region of refusing to invest in the area (Shepherd et al. 2005). Such arguments however, tend to oversimplify the development challenges facing the north. The development challenges in the north have transcended generations and could possibly not be handled by such oversimplified solutions. The causes of the situation could best be described as multi-faceted and multi-dimensional. Geography, politics, economics, and social-cultural factors are combining to keep the north in the state of relative underdevelopment compared to others parts of Ghana. Some analysts have attributed the situation to SAP policies and the liberal economic policies adopted during the period of structural adjustment (Plange 1979).

Geography has been said to be responsible largely for the state of development in the North of Ghana. The north is predominantly Sahara grassland with long dry seasons of about four months of rain. This makes agricultural production and productivity very low. Agricultural production is largely food crop and largely subsistence. This drives many of the young and active members of towns and villages to southern Ghana (van der Geest 2011). Occupationally, food crop farmers are the poorest group in Ghana. Incidentally, the savannah zone which coincides with the three northern regions is dominantly food crop production zone. Soil fertility and erratic rainfall pattern contributed in making the agro-ecological conditions precarious for farming; and this has often driven migration down south (van der Geest 2011). This underscores the endemic poverty in the three northern regions (GSS 2008). Compared with the north, southern Ghana is better endowed with natural resources, experiences two rainy seasons which support the cultivation of many cash crops. Consequently, poverty is lower in this part of Ghana than in the north (GSS 2008). However, some scholars have rejected this naturalistic argument referring to it as a fallacy (Plange 1979).
Following from the above, investments into the regions by both private and public sectors have been constrained as returns on such investments have often been in doubt. Consequently, the stimuli that often come along such investments in terms of jobs and infrastructure development have been comparatively underdeveloped. The cost of doing business has been higher and constitutes a disincentive to business people investing in the north. The British colonial government is reported to have discouraged the commercial production of cotton, rice and groundnuts by restricting market access and turning the northern males into labour gangs for the south (Plange 1979).

The development context of the north is also occasionally attributed to political neglect and marginalisation. National policy and commitment of the political elites in pre and post independent Ghana has been one of lip servicing. In recent history, the two major political parties in Ghana, the NPP and the NDC have both played on the emotions of the north and taken the north for granted (Fox et al. 2011).

Historically and in recent past, Northern Ghana has been engulfed in deadly and devastating ethnic conflicts some of which have claimed many lives. The most devastating of all the conflicts was the 1994 one which is reported to have claimed thousands of lives and displaced many thousand others (Tsikata and Seini 2004). Other negative aspects of these ethnic conflicts are that they have significantly stalled development in the north. Development workers, civil and public servants have often deserted the area for fear of losing their lives. In the process, many development activities have come to a stop during conflicts - schools, hospitals, economic activities have all stopped. Large amounts of state resources have been channelled to providing security and stopping the conflicts instead of channelling these into development. These recurring conflicts have contributed largely to worsening the development stagnation of the north. Although there is relative peace in the region, the continuous threats to the peace and the frequent outbreaks have become scars for the area and are further affecting the development prospect of the region very negatively.
4.3 Poverty Reduction in Ghana

For the purposes of this study, poverty reduction involves a comprehensive programme aimed at enhancing and improving the capacity of citizens to meet their needs and capacitate them to progressively rely less and less on external agents for basic needs. Poverty can be reduced through both ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ programmes. ‘Soft’ poverty reduction programmes include those programmes of a short term nature and target families directly. ‘Hard’ poverty reduction programmes are longer term and target larger communities as a whole. These may include road, school and hospital infrastructure.

Ghana’s efforts at reducing poverty have been a long journey. Indeed, Ghana is said to have been the first country in the world to have put together a development plan (Vordzorgbe and Caiquo 2001), two clear decades before Britain adopted this as a standard policy across its colonies (Green 1965). Ghana’s [then Gold Coast] preparation of the 10 year development plan set the tone for massive investment to develop Ghana and provide the basis for poverty reduction. Ghana’s poverty reduction efforts saw the development of the following development plans as catalyst to enhance poverty reduction: the First Ten Year Development Plan [which was condensed into a Five-year Plan 1951-1956]; the Consolidation Development Plan 1957-1959; the Second Development Plan 1959-1964; the Seven-Year Development Plan 1963/64-1969/70; the Two-Year Development Plan 1968-69-1969/70; the One-Year Development Plan July 1970-June 1971; the Five Year Development Plan 1975/76-1979/80; the Economic Recovery Program 1984-1986; the National Development Policy Framework: Long-Term Development Objectives [Ghana-Vision 2020]; Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy 2001-2003; Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003-2005; Growth and Poverty Reduction strategy [GPRS II], 2006 – 2009; and Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda, 2010-2013.

In recent times, Ghana has been touted as the first country likely to meet target one A of the Millennium Development Goals [MDGs] – to half the number of people of living in extreme poverty. The statistics on Ghana’s progress on poverty reduction makes significant interest. Between 1991 and 2006, Ghana’s poverty declined from 51.7 to 28.5%. However, the data suggests an acutely lopsided progress. The three Northern Regions of Northern, Upper East and Upper West continue to be the poorest. In the Northern Region, poverty declined from 63.4 to 52.2% within the same period. This
situation was worse in the Upper east Region as poverty reduced from 88.4 to 70.5% within the same time span. This picture is even worst in the Upper West Region as poverty actually increased from 66.9 to 87.9 within the same period (Aryeetey et al. 2009). In effect, the gains of poverty reduction cannot be celebrated across Ghana. Also, this raises the critical questions of what accounts for the decline in other parts of Ghana and why the three northern regions have become a peculiar problem. This situation probably accounts for the massive invasion of development NGOs into the north.

The varied inequalities in Ghana have been attributed to several factors but are said to be resulting from both colonial and post-colonial legacies (Aryeetey et al. 2009). Climatic factors have been reported to be responsible for this state of poverty in that part of Ghana as the area experiences only one short rainy season as compared to other parts of Ghana with two rainy seasons annually. As a result of this, farmers in the area are able to cultivate only food crops and once a year. Since food crop farmers also happen to be the poorest among the occupational groups in Ghana and since only food crops are cultivated in the three northern regions and since food crop farming is the major occupation for the three northern regions, it stand to explain why poverty is endemic in the three northern regions. Between 1991 and 2006, poverty incidence among food crop farmers decreased from 68 to 46% but within the same period, the incidence decreased from 64 to 24% among cash crop farmers (GSS 2008). In recent years, government’s commitment to poverty reduction has been questioned as poverty expenditure keeps decreasing. Between 2006 and 2008 for instance, total poverty expenditure as percentage of total Government spending declined from 34.56% to 22.3%. ‘Hard’ poverty reduction programmes continue to receive the highest spending as education and health received 41.24% and 19.5% in 2007 respectively. In 2008, the two sectors received 47.24 and 18.05% respectively. Rural electrification, rural water and feeder roads had expenditures in the ranges of 1.57 and 7.23% in 2007; and 1.36 and 5.04% in 2008. If items considered significantly important for rural upgrades and directly benefiting the poor continue to receive decreasing funding from government budgets, the poverty situation might worsen and take Ghana off the course to attaining the MDGs (NDPC 2010).
4.4 State Social Interventions and Support Schemes

The economically disadvantaged and marginalised groups that have been unable to cope with life’s demands and have been unable to respond to the generic policy conditions to escape poverty have had to be provided with schemes that specifically target them. During the past two decades, especially in the last decade, the state has initiated a couple of programmes in this direction. The most notable ones include the School Feeding Programme; Education Capitation Grant for basic school; the National Health Insurance Scheme; the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty [LEAP]; the National Youth Employment Programme; the Integrated Agriculture Support Programme including fertilizer subsidies; and the Microfinance and Small Loan Centre Schemes. Although these programmes are decentralised and managed from the district level, central government and central state agencies still kept strong hands on them making their management from the local level purely rhetoric. Since these are still managed from the centre, it has been difficult to have local actors make inputs into their activities.

4.4.1 Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty [LEAP]

Although Ghana is said to have made significant progress in reducing poverty, regional and occupational disparities still persist (GSS 2008). For reasons of incapacity, several families are still unable to meet their daily basic needs. Consequently, the National Social Protection Strategy was developed as an avenue to roll out some of the tenets of the GPRS II. Ghana designed its social protection strategy focusing on LEAP, which is based on the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy II [GPRS II] of the country. The Programme’s main components are conditional and unconditional cash transfers to orphans and vulnerable children [OVC], the elderly above 65 years old and the disabled. The Programme, run by the Social Welfare Department, is under the coordination of the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare. Beneficiaries receive bi-monthly cash transfers of between 8 and 15 Cedis. It also provides free health insurance registration for beneficiaries through the National Health Insurance scheme. A variant of this programme is the Emergency LEAP, which is administered to recipients during disasters. As at 2010, the programme has been rolled out in 83 out of the 216 districts in Ghana (NDPC 2011). Although this programme is considered appropriate for mitigating the hash condition of the extreme poor, it is faced with a number of challenges
including irregular payment to beneficiaries; the poorly resourced and poorly motivated Social Welfare Department to manage the programme; and of course the politicisation of the programme.

4.4.2 The National Youth Employment Programme [NYEP]

The National Youth Employment Programme [NYEP] now Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship Development Agency [GYEEDA] was introduced in 2006 to provide employment to Ghana’s youth, between the ages of 18 and 35 years. Youth unemployment has been a major challenge to several Ghana Governments and in recent times, has become a very topical political campaign issue. The youth unemployment rate was estimated at 6%, double the national unemployment rate of 3% at the last Ghana Living Standards Survey, [GLSS5] (GSS 2008). The NYEP was therefore introduced to provide training and employment to some 500,000 youth in various skills. It was modelled after the Skills Training and Employment Placement Programme [STEPP]. The programme has several modules including community education teaching assistants, agro-business, health extension workers, internship, waste and sanitation, community protection, trades and vocation and ICT. Although this has been advocated as a tool for poverty reduction, its suitability as a poverty reduction strategy has been questioned. It is not considered a valuable poverty reduction strategy as it is not cost effective as compared to many other public works options (Coulombe et al. 2009). This programme is urban biased (Coulombe et al. 2009) whereas poverty in Ghana is largely a rural phenomenon (GSS 2008). The strongest aspect of the programme is the skill development component. However, the majority of the employees are put on the programme only on a short-term basis and are required to exit and make way for new entrants. The programme suffers from sustainability as funding for it has been a major challenge. Governments also appear to be using it as a buffer for employing its coups of unemployed youth who are unable to find any jobs. It is known that most of the employees who were engaged by the previous government have been exited. The most convenient explanation has been that the programme was meant to serve only as a short-term avenue. However, employees by this government have stayed in the programme since 2008 and have not been exited. In 2013, a report of a ministerial committee established that nearly a billion Cedis has been misapplied by this agency in connivance with private sector organisations.
4.4.3 School Feeding Programme [SFP]

Government sponsored School Feeding Programmes have become almost ubiquitous whether in the developing or developed world even though their effectiveness has remained in doubt (Alderman and Bundy 2011). Although Alderman and Bundy (2011) have doubted the claims that School Feeding Programmes increase enrolment and attendance, improves nutritional status of school children and contribute to better learning, they have asserted that, they constitute a key income transfer meant to support poorer families. School feeding has a long history in Ghana dating back to the 1950s (WFP 2007) but on a limited scale. In addition to the Catholic Relief Services and World Food Programme (WFP) school feeding schemes that have existed for several years, the Ghana Government introduced a government sponsored and managed school feeding programme in 2005. The programme seeks to reduce hunger and malnutrition; increase school enrolment, attendance and retention; and boost domestic food production (WFP 2007). In the longer term, the programme is expected to be a poverty, hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity reduction programme (WFP 2007). The programme was designed to procure farm produce from local farmers and thereby serve as a ready market so as to boost local agricultural production and improve incomes of local farmers. However, the management of this programme has been extremely poor as it has been subjected to intense political patronage. The programme is managed at the district level by the District Implementation Committee which is chaired by the District Chief Executive, the political head of the district. Key Non-Governmental partners in this programme include Catholic Relief Services [CRS], Social Enterprise Development Organisation [SEND Foundation], International Centre for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development [IFDC], and Ghana Agriculture Initiative Network [GAIN]. The extreme political disposition of the programme has rendered its impacts as a poverty reduction programme very ineffective.

4.4.4 Capitation Grant

Fees grant in aid has become a popular enrolment enhancement strategy in many developing countries. It is also considered a key poverty reduction strategy that allows the state to absorb school fees of basic education pupils. This way, poor parents are encouraged to send their children to school. In Ghana, Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education [FCUBE] is provided for under Clause 25 [1] [a] of the 1992
Constitution of Ghana. This strategy is considered to have a human development and sustainable development imperatives for the development of Ghana. The Ghana Government instituted the Capitation Grant in 2004/5 to take over the cost of education in public basic schools in Ghana. The grant covers items including provision of teaching and learning materials; school management costs; community and school relationship management programme costs; support to needy pupils; in-service training; minor repairs and payment of sports and culture levies (Akyeampong 2011).

Although reports and studies indicate that capitation grant has contributed to improvements in enrolment figures, a number of issues remain with the policy including: 1) lack of transparent management system at school levels, 2) the irregular and sporadic manner in which funds are disbursed creating management challenges for school heads, 3) the low levels of the grant making it difficult for effective school management, and 4) the politicisation of the policy among other challenges (Akyeampong 2011). These challenges have created annual complains from heads of basic schools. The ministry of education and Ghana education service manage this programme and the district education offices act as implementing agencies at the grassroots.

4.4.5 National Health Insurance Scheme [NHIS]

The National Health Insurance Scheme was established in 2003 through the promulgation of the National Health Insurance Act, 2003, Act 650 and the accompanying legislative instrument L.I 1809. This is considered by many, as one of the most significant policy initiatives in recent history of Ghana as a result of the potential impact it will have on the poor. The key essence of this policy instrument is to replace the hitherto cash upfront system of health care provision with the hope that this improves access to health care to most of the poor rural populations who had difficulties to pay for upfront services. So far, over 18 million Ghanaians are registered on the scheme but about 8 million are active card bearers (NHIA 2010). Within this scheme, there is provision for the indigents so that citizens who are unable to pay due to their extreme poverty situations will be provided with health care free of charge. In attempt at meeting the MDG 4 and 5, free maternal health care was introduced in 2008 to provide free ante-natal and health care to all pregnant women. Since its establishment, the health insurance system has faced major challenges the prime one being the politicisation and the political rancour from the two major political parties. Although the
programme is managed through the district mutual health insurance schemes, these are almost completely run without recourse to other agencies.

4.4.6 Microfinance and Small Loans Centre [MASLOC]

The MASLOC was established in 2006 as part of the GPRS II agenda to reduce poverty. The programme is designed to administer micro and small-scale credit facilities to economically marginalised and productive poor to enhance poverty reduction. The funds to be administered are provided by the state and its development partners (MASLOC 2012). The loans have tenure of between 12 and 24 months with an interest rate of 20%. This is at least 5 percentage points lower than credits from the banking sector and at least 10 percentage points lower than other commercial credit facilities. The target population is supposed to be low income and economically marginalised segment of the population. However, this fund hardly gets to the poor as it has been hugely politicised. Since its inception, the fund has suffered seriously from being able to recover loans granted as beneficiaries consider them as rewards for political patronage (MASLOC 2012). During the fieldwork, a district manager of MASLOC was met in the office of a DCE, where a list of loan applicants was being discussed. Party officials and DCE’s wield so much influence in the enlistment of applicants and often have to approve the list of applicants before disbursements are made. MASLOC therefore has significant amounts of money they are unable to recover. The modus operandi of the fund makes it extremely difficult for the staff to apply due process and diligence in recruiting beneficiaries. Other challenges include corruption by the staffs of MASLOC itself who take advantage of the political orientation of the programme for their own interest.

4.5 Ghana’s Local Government System

Ghana is a unitary state divided into ten administrative regions and 216 local government units referred to in Ghana as Metropolitan, Municipal or District Assemblies. The classification is based largely on the size of the population even though in recent years, political expediency has driven the desire to create local governmental areas.
With a history of Native Authorities who prior to colonisation had existed as independent traditional authorities centred around chiefs (Ahwoi 2010), Ghana’s local government system has undergone the most drastic of reforms. The colonial annexation of Native authorities into the British colonial administration culminated in the creation of elected Municipal Councils in the three coastal towns of Accra, Cape Coast and Sekondi-Tarkoradi and later Kumasi through the Municipal Councils Ordinance in 1859. These Councils were basically in charge of public health and maintenance of peace and order (Ahwoi 2010). These attempts through the history had seen the promulgation of several legal instruments such as the Municipal Councils Ordinance of 1859; Native Jurisdiction Ordinance of 1878; Native Jurisdiction Ordinance of 1883; Native Administration Ordinance of 1927; Native Treasuries Ordinance of 1936; Native Administrative Treasuries Ordinance of 1939; and the Native Authority Ordinance of 1944. There has also been several commissions of enquiry established in the past to investigate into aspects of local governance and to propose for governments’ adoption ways to strengthen local government in Ghana including notable ones like the Watson Commission Report of 1949; the Coussey Committee Report of 1949; the Greenwood Commission of 1956; and after independence, the Mills-Odoi Commission Report of 1967; and the Siriboe Commission Report of 1968 and many more. The significance of these and many of the attempts at reorganising the local governance system indicates Ghana’s desire to have a governance system that is hinged upon the transfer of some powers and functions to local populations through local government systems.

4.6 The Current Local Government and Decentralised System in Ghana

The chequered history of local government as described above was due partly to the equally chequered history of Ghana’s political history. What has been characteristic of the political history of Ghana has been the tumultuous and short-term nature of governments since independence until the inception of the 1992 Constitution. Almost every government made an attempt to modify the local government system in some way and these attempts often start with trying to legalise it through the constitution or the passage of legislative instruments. The most endearing reform measure so far has been the PNDC reforms in 1988 which started through the passage of the PNDC Law 207. Upon the inception of the 1992 Constitution, this law was replaced by the Local Government Act of 1993, Act 462, which derives its powers from the chapter 20 of the 1992 Constitution.
This new local government system is a four-tier metropolitan and three-tier municipal and district assembly system under a regional coordinating body. There are ten regional coordinating councils and 216 metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies [MMDAs]. Metropolitan assemblies are established for areas with a population in excess of 250,000. Municipal assemblies are established for areas with a population in excess of 95,000 in a single township and district assemblies are established for areas with a population in excess of 75,000. The MMDAs are composed of seventy per cent elected members and thirty per cent appointed by the president in consultation with recognised interest groups and chiefs in the district. This requirement has however, not been the case as political parties often reserve the thirty per cent quota for their grassroots political advocates. In recent history however, the consideration for creating new districts have been politically motivated to win votes. As a result of this, demands for new districts have become one of the items on the request list of chiefs when politicians visit their towns. In fact, the choice of district capitals has sparked ethnic and communal violence in some parts of Ghana.

The sub-structures include the sub-metropolitan assemblies which are divisions of the metropolitan area into further units for ease of administration. The sub-metropolitan areas are higher in status than the rest of the sub-structures. Below these structures are the town councils operating under the sub-metropolitan; the zonal councils under the municipalities and urban/town/area councils operating under the districts. The unit committees are the base structures and consist of ten elected members and not more than five selected on behalf of the president by the Chief Executive.

The powers and functions of local government have been broadened under the current decentralised system. They have been assigned both political and administrative authority and in pursuance of those powers, they have been assigned deliberative, legislative and executive functions. They are given the omnibus responsibility of the “overall development” of their areas and are to be in charge of preparing development plans, budgets and be in charge of virtually every aspect of development in their areas. They are required to develop strategies to mobilise resources; promote and support productive activities and social development; development of infrastructure; and development, improvement and management of human settlements.
Within these contexts, local government are deemed to own development in their jurisdictions and must mobilised all partners to achieve these purposes. The contrast however, is that these functions are supported only with 7.5% of national revenue shared among the assemblies. The figure 5 illustrates the structure of the current local government system in Ghana.

**Figure 5: Structure of the Current Local Government System**

At the top of the structure is the Regional Coordinating Council [RCC] which is mandated to coordinate and harmonise the activities of the districts within its jurisdiction. The RCC has no assembly and technically, is therefore not a policy making body. The MMDA, which is headed by a Chief Executive, is mandated to formulate local policy and ensure overall development of the district. To ensure effective administration, lower level structures are established - sub-metropolitan and town councils for metropolitan assemblies; and zonal and urban/town/area councils for municipal and district assemblies respectively. At the lowest level of the structure is the unit committee.
This structure does not take into consideration the place of the decentralised departments which have been designated as organs of the local government except that their heads are non-voting members of the assembly. The decentralised departments include district offices of some MDAs who are managed and controlled from their head offices in Accra. These include agriculture, works, physical planning, social welfare and community development, trade, finance, education, youth and sports, health, disaster prevention and natural resource conservation.

Technically speaking, local governments have become appendages of the executive arm of government and only serve to further the course of their actions (Fox et al. 2011). Local governments have essentially become administrative hubs for playing out national politics at the local level (Domfeh and Bawole 2009). Local government in Ghana has lost the moral high grounds required to push the agenda of development. This results from the political and the elite capture that exist at that level. Several constraining factors are at play but the most important relates to the patronage and the paternalistic public administration system in Ghana. To worsen the case, the constitutional and legal web built around the local government make them effectively powerless in pushing the frontiers of development. As indicated in the next section, the myriad of relations between the central executive and the local government and the winner takes all political system operated in Ghana delivers local government to the executive for devouring.

4.7 Central and Local Government Relations in Ghana

To understand the forces which either facilitate or constrain the relationship existing between local government and NGOs, it would be important to understand the nature of the relationship between local government and the central government in Ghana. An understanding of these relations would facilitate an understanding of some of the forces that can facilitate or constrain the local government’s relation with NGOs. This section reviews those relationships and how they have been shaped in the past. Section 10 [6] [a] of the Local Government Act of 1993, Act 462 states that in the performance of its functions, local government “is subject to the general guidance and direction of the President on matters of national policy” In view of this, their operations and many of their activities are directed by central government or they follow guidelines developed
by national institutions. Within the conceptualisation of decentralisation as transfer of power from the centre to the local for functional delivery of services, the framework for the relationship between the two institutions is determined. A number of the strands in the relationship require discussions.

4.7.1 Legislative Relations

The relationship between central government and local government in Ghana can be found in the powers assigned to the central government to regulate the powers, functions and activities of local government. Article 240 [2][a] of the 1992 constitution for instance confers powers on parliament to enact laws for the transfer of responsibilities and resources to local government. The relationship between local government and central government is extensively regulated by laws determined largely by the central government. In this regard, the central government gets to control the activities of local government. Among the laws regulating the local government are the Local Government Act of 1993, Act 462; the District Assemblies’ Common Fund Act of 1993, Act 455; the National Development Planning [Systems] Act of 1994, Act 480; the Local Government Service Act of 2003, Act 656; and Security and Intelligence Agencies Act of 1996, Act 526. The legislative relationships also follow from the powers of the parliament to approve bye laws made by the local government.

4.7.2 Executive Relations

The relationship between local government and central government also extends to executive relations. Local government agencies have been given some executive power. However, Article 58 [1] of the 1992 constitution vests all executive authority in the president and that all executive powers shall be exercised on his behalf. The exercise of some of these powers includes the creation of new districts and the dissolution of existing one. Districts could also be merged and can be re-demarcated if conditions so demand.

The appointment of political heads of the districts [District Chief Executives] is done by the president. Before 2008, local legislators who have to endorse the nomination could reject the president’s nominee. In 2009 however, this law was flouted when a rejected
nominee was maintained who became the DCE. So technically speaking, the presidents’
powers have rendered the power of the local assembly members to decide on who
becomes their DCE useless. Administrative officers in the local government are
appointed at the national level and posted to the various district assemblies. Their
remuneration, promotion, transfer and development are all managed from the Office of
the Head of the Civil Service, which reports to the office of the president. Recently, this
institution has been replaced by the Local Government Service Secretariat.

4.7.3 Financial Relations

The financial relationship between local and central government is one of the key
influence areas where the central government has demonstrated great control. This is
manifested in a number of ways. The first relates to the limited powers of the local
government to raise tax revenues. Rates and fees charged by the local governments are
regulated by legislative instruments and guidelines developed by the ministry of local
government and approved by the minister of local government [Sections 34 and 96 [11]
of Act 462]. Section 88 of the Act 462 limits the amount of loans local government can
secure from within Ghana to 20 million Cedis beyond which they must seek approval
from ministers of local government and finance. The constitution also establishes the
District Assemblies’ Common Fund as the key source of funding to the local
government. The fund is to be resourced with not less than 7.5% of the all national
revenue which will be distributed to the local government on the basis of a formula to
be approved by parliament. On several counts, the funding for local governments’
programmes is directed from the national level. Some areas like education, roads and
health infrastructure are funded mostly from national institutions.

4.7.4 Development and Economic Planning and Budgeting Relations

Established as planning and budgeting agencies, local governments relate to the centre
in a number of ways. The District Development Planning Coordinating Units form the
base structure for the planning system in Ghana and are in-charge of developing
development plans for the harmonisation of the National Development Planning
Commission [NDPC]. Within the framework of the National Development Planning
[Systems] Act of 1994, Act 480, the NDPC regularly issues instructions in the form of
guidelines to the local government agencies for their planning and budget development as well as for the monitoring of their activities. The planning system is said to be bottom-up and assemblies are required to own their plans. However, the politics of plan development and their implementation raise key issues of ownership.

4.8 Decentralisation and Poverty Reduction in Ghana

For over two decades, Ghana has implemented decentralisation and local government in its current form. Ghana’s efforts at poverty reduction are often carved within a decentralised democratic environment. Although poverty reduction has often been centrally planned in Ghana, decentralisation and democracy are considered the key pillars to achieving reduced poverty rates. The government policy statement states:

*The Government of Ghana aims to create wealth by transforming the nature of the economy to achieve growth, accelerated poverty reduction and the protection of the vulnerable and excluded within a decentralized, democratic environment.*, [GPRS II: xx]

The government considers *accelerated decentralisation* as key to poverty reduction. It is within this context that national development blueprints are mimicked at the local government level to capture the local semblance of the blueprints. Studies conducted in Ghana reveal that decentralisation has not had the kind of impact it should. Decentralisation has increased electoral participation but this has not translated into poverty reduction (Crawford 2008). Although poverty has reduced generally in Ghana from 51.7% in 1991 to 28.5% in 2006, the incidence of poverty is some parts of Ghana has reduced marginally and in some cases, increased (GSS 2008; Aryeetey et al. 2009). The rhetoric of decentralisation for poverty reduction is waning and the hopes of actors are reducing. If decentralisation was a panacea to reducing poverty, the levels of poverty trends across Ghana would have been uniform or with only marginal differences across Ghana. It is important to note however, that with a multi-dimensional concept like poverty, care must be taken not to discount the impact of decentralisation.
4.9 The Emergence of NGOs in Ghana

Like their counterparts in many parts of the world, NGOs in Ghana are not recent phenomenon. Indeed, they “have deep indigenous histories and roots” (Salamon and Anheier 1997:20). Before and during the colonial period in Ghana’s history, village development and welfare organisations provided social amenities for the communities and performed important administrative roles within the communities (Denkabe 1996; Salamon and Anheier 1997). Organisations such as the Asafo companies had unique roles in providing community labour and responding to common community problems and served as checks on chiefs preventing them from abusing their powers (Simensen 1974) and sometimes provided counter-checks and opposition to state structures (Mawdsley et al. 2005). In the traditional Ghanaian society, medicine, midwifery, apprenticeship, communal farming and many more were done on the basis of non-profit. What is clear has been that the nature of NGOs during the precolonial and colonial Ghana had different forms and agenda as compared to their recent counterparts (Salamon and Anheier 1997).

The rise of NGO work in recent times in Ghana dates back to early and mid 1980s when efforts were made to salvage the Ghanaian economy from grievous decline of the late 70s (Opoku-Mensah 2007b). Their numbers have subsequently increased since then as a result of space created by the declining state economic and social welfare services within those crises years (Denkabe 1996); the increased development assistance to Ghana to address the crises (Atingdui 1995; Clarke 1998); and government policy of rural development as a strategy for national development (Atingdui 1995).

Emerging as traditionally varied and diverse both in form and in their activities, the form of NGOs as local organisations providing communal services has changed significantly. Changing societal dynamics reduced the importance of the traditional forms but the increasing evangelisation saw more church-based NGOs and later other religious forms of NGOs made entries into the equation. Most of these played key roles in the number of religious educational and health institutions which have contributed significantly to the development of especially rural Ghana (Atingdui 1995; Denkabe 1996). The NGO sector in Ghana has seen significant growth and now encompasses a broad spectrum of organisations operating in diverse areas (Fisher 1997). Although the type of activity engaged in by sampled NGOs did not constitute criteria for their
selection, it is worthwhile to note that the activity profile of the NGOs sampled varied markedly. NGO activities in Northern Ghana vary markedly and overlap but can be classified into three broad themes namely: provision of welfare services; capacity building; and advocacy (Nikoi 2008). In sum therefore, the activity spectrum of NGOs in northern Ghana range from voluntary welfarism and neutral humanitarianism to political advocacy (Goodhand 1999).

4.10 NGO and Government Relations in Ghana

Globally, NGOs have forged several complex networks of relations with governments (Gary 1996; Fisher 1997) and these relationships have oscillated variously depending on the posture of the NGO sector and the orientation of government of the day. In Ghana, NGOs have been viewed as supporting Ghana’s agenda for development (Gary 1996). In this light, government and NGO relations have oscillated positively or negatively depending on whether NGOs are playing this identified role satisfactorily or not. In the word of Atingdui (1995:18) “This relationship evolved gradually from mutual coexistence and independence during the colonial period to a brief period of conflict during the PNDC regime and now to recognition, even partial incorporation, by the state and the international donor community.”. The struggle for national independence was given a lot of impetus by nationalist activities some of which acted as protest and advocacy groups. The role for NGOs to support national development increased as independence brought alone with increased demand for services considered to be arduous for the young Ghana state to provide alone. This provided the platform for Nkrumah to include especially the Church-led NGOs whose agenda also neatly tied into Nkrumah’s socialist orientations. Nkrumah went further to establish state-sponsored NGOs such as the Ghana Young Pioneer Movement and the Workers’ Brigade (Atingdui 1995).

This felicitation did not last as NGOs that became critical of government soon fell out with the Nkrumah government. More criticisms meant more crushing attitude from the government culminating in the lesser space for NGO activism (Whitfield 2003). After the demise of the Nkrumah government after the 1966 coup, the acrimony between NGOs and the state did not cease. Civil society groups which were brave to criticise the new military administration were immediately targeted. After Nkrumah however, the subsequent governments all had but short stays in power and therefore, their impact of
the nature of the relations has been overlooked. However, the PNDC set the stage for any neat analysis and uninterrupted term that gives analysts a good case study.

The PNDC era is also noted to have attempted severally to crush NGO work as long as it sought to criticise the activities on the state. The passage of the Religious Bodies Registration Law [PNDCL 221] which was seen as reprehensible within the religious sectors of the civil society (Oquaye 1995) became another milestone for rivalry between government and the NGOs. Since the fourth Republican era, the relations have improved gradually. The space for NGOs has increased gradually but more importantly NGOs are now a force to reckon with in Ghana’s political and developmental space. The attitude towards NGOs has improved during the 4th Republic albeit occasional slips. Although the PNDC and its leader had a negative attitude towards NGOs in the early days of their reign, this attitude changed gradually until they metamorphosed into a civilian regime (Atibil 2012). The period beyond 1992, marked perhaps, the most liberalised time in Ghana’s history for NGO work. The previously restrictive attitude changed for a more embracing one as the Constitution granted freedom of association (Atingdui 1995; Atibil 2012). NGOs were given key stakes in the development of poverty reduction strategy papers and their roles for its implementation identified and discussed in workshops.

4.11 The Regulatory Framework for Government and NGO Relations in Ghana

Several pieces of legislations and regulatory instruments exist in Ghana that define: (1) the status of NGOs and (2) their relations with government and other governmental bodies. The right to form and operate an NGO is enshrined in the 1992 Republican Constitution. Article 21[1] [e] of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana states:

All persons shall have the right to freedom of association, which shall include freedom to form or join trade unions or other associations, national or international, for the protection of their interest.

However, like all rights, the right to form and operate an NGO is also reasonably regulated. In this regard, the Companies Code of 1963, Act 173 of Ghana defines NGOs as private companies limited by guarantee. In section 10[1] of the Act, companies
limited by guarantee are not expected to do business for profit. In 1993, an NGO law which was to provide a more comprehensive framework for the activities of NGOs in Ghana was vehemently opposed by the coalition of NGOs and government was forced to abandon it in its draft form (National NGO Consultative Group 2000). Among others, the coalition argued that the bill when passed, will give government the right to interfere in NGO activities and stifle their independence. In place of this bill, the NGOs constituted a National Consultative Group to develop a national policy for strategic partnership with government. This document, developed in 2000 remains to be adopted by government although no reasons have been advanced by government.

In the meantime, a cabinet directive requires all NGOs to register with the Department of Social Welfare of the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare for a certificate of recognition. This directive has found expression in the laws of Ghana. They are required to renew such registrations annually upon the submission of activity reports and audited accounts (National NGO Consultative Group 2000). Other government ministries, agencies and departments also require NGOs to register with them if they intend to operate within their mandate and collaborate with them.

4.12 NGOs and Local government Relations in Ghana

The role and influence of NGOs in development policy and management in Ghana continue to widen across sectors and across time and space. Just as their influence continues to increase at the national level, NGOs have become significant and important stakeholders in local governance and local development administration. They work within the jurisdictions of local government agencies and are required to register with the District Department of Social Welfare; the sector decentralised agency and with the District Coordinating Council.

Section 10 [5] of Act 462 mandates the local government in the following words:

*A District Assembly shall co-ordinate, integrate and harmonise the execution of programmes and projects under approved development plans for the district, any and other development programmes promoted or carried out by Ministries, departments, public*
corporations and any other statutory bodies and \textit{non-governmental organisations in the district}. [Emphasis mine]

In Section 10 [6] [b] it continues to charge the local government to cooperate with NGOs as follows:

\textit{[6] Without prejudice to subsection 5, a District Assembly in the performance of its functions, [b] shall act in co-operation with the appropriate public corporation, statutory body or \textit{non-governmental organisation} which shall co-operate with a District Assembly. [Emphasis mine]}

Decentralisation has opened up more avenues for NGO work (Nkrumah 2000) and local government agencies are reported to be making more use of NGOs for service and collective goods delivery. Their roles are increasingly getting noted in social welfare, health, education, agriculture and infrastructure as well as in many other areas considered vital for sustenance of local communities (Ahwoi 2010).

Although NGOs are known to work within the local government areas, the nature of their relationship with them is taken for granted. Limited empirical studies exist to help define the nature of relations. National policy documents continue to urge MDAs and local government to work with NGOs in policy development and programme implementation. This is often taken for granted to be happening and making positive contributions to the development of Ghana. However, in most cases, no evidence of this collaboration exists to guide future relations and how to maximise their benefits. At best, reference is made to populist and sensational cosmetic relations that remain largely rhetoric. NGOs have become a smart way for government to shirk its responsible.

\textbf{4.13 Conclusion}

This chapter presented the political and developmental context of Ghana, providing backgrounds of Ghana’s current development. It presents an overview of the poverty reduction programmes in Ghana such as the, LEAP, NYEP [GYEEDA], MASLOC, School feeding and NHIS. The chapter concludes that although these programmes are decentralised to local government areas, they are strictly controlled from the national
levels. They are also heavily politicised and remain very unsustainable. Since these are not managed by local governments, NGOs are hardly involved in their design, implementation and evaluation. It overviews the current local government system and highlights the tenets of the decentralisation reform and how it is structured and practiced in Ghana. Ghana has practiced the current system of decentralisation for two and half decades but evidence suggests apart from electoral space and participation, it has not made the kind of impact it is expected especially on poverty reduction.

The chapter also presents both the relations between central government and local government and relations between local government and NGOs in Ghana. This chapter establishes that local governments in Ghana relate to central government in a number of ways – legislative, executive, administrative, financial, and even political – and that these relations have important implications for the relations between local government and NGOs. This is so because local government lacks autonomy and the agency to relate to NGOs on their own terms as the local government is so attached to the apron strings of central government. Local government and NGO relations have expanded under decentralisation and local governments are now increasing their reliance on NGOs for poverty reduction programme implementation. The chapter also provides a basis for analysing the relations between local government and NGOs as it provides the inter-organisational context within which local governments work.
5. EXAMINING THE NATURE OF NGO AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONS IN GHANA

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents results of the study relating to the first research question about the nature of the relations between local government and NGOs in Ghana. It first overviews some poverty reduction programme areas where both the local government and NGOs have ran programmes. These include advocacy, monitoring and evaluation; food security, agricultural and environmental programmes; capacity building for decentralisation; water, sanitation, hygiene and health; and cash transfers and income poverty reduction programmes. In addition, the chapter presents the typologies of relations distilled between local government and NGOs. In this regard, the following relations are established: superficial and suspicious cordiality; tokenistic collaboration; friendly foes; and convenient and cautious partnerships. The extant literature focuses largely on the relations between central government and NGOs and by so doing pays very little attention to the relations between local government and NGOs. Studies on local government and NGO relations are generally limited and the geographic spread on the limited studies appear to weigh so negatively against Africa. It is in this light that the typologies identified here can be useful for analysing the relations between local government and NGOs on a boarder context.

5.1 Local Government and NGO Interfaces: Some Evidence of Relations?

District Assemblies interface in many ways with the NGOs but several of these interfaces have been isolated incidences. Before presenting the results and findings of the nature of the relations, a summary of the most common programme areas for both actors are presented. These common programme areas cover in broad terms the poverty reduction initiatives pursued by the actors. These areas include advocacy, monitoring and evaluation; food security, agricultural and environmental programmes; capacity building for decentralisation; water, sanitation, hygiene and health; and cash transfers and income poverty reduction programmes.
Advocacy and Monitoring and Evaluation Programmes

A number of governance NGOs are engaged in advocacy and monitoring and evaluation programmes. They engage in advocacy to expand the participation of citizens in the programmes of the local government and to improve accountability of local government agencies. They have developed a somewhat standing relation with local government agencies in Ghana particularly in the three Northern Regions. Within their advocacy mandates, the NGOs run the Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation [PM&E] framework within which pro-poor policies are monitored as part of the process of gathering evidence for their advocacy programmes. “Making Decentralisation Work for the Poor” is one of such projects meant to assess some components of decentralisation in Ghana. This project entails the assessment of the use of components of the District Assemblies’ Common Fund [DACF], and how it is handled at the district level. This project served as a test for the willingness of the local government to open up for collaboration with advocacy NGOs. As a monitoring and evaluation project, “making decentralisation work for the poor”, serves to bring the work of the local government under scrutiny and so provides an ideal platform for interrogating the relationships that are fostered thereof.

The project collected data from 50 local governments covering various elements of the DACF such as the extent of participation of local community members in projects implemented under DACF; the extent of awareness within communities; the utilisation of 7% MPs share of the DACF and 2% share of the DACF for People with Disability [PWD]; and the extent to which the utilisation of these allocations conformed to the procurement law (SEND-Ghana 2010). The project makes very damming report about the utilisation of the DACF by local government agencies. The report states:

*Generally, the findings reveal that there has been non adherence to the guidelines for the utilisation of the DACF funds by MMDAs, particularly the 2% share of the fund for PWDs. The use of DACF money is not transparent, and frequently is decided without meaningful community participation. Access to information on and community participation in DACF projects have become very problematic to the extent that responsiveness of MMDAs to the local needs of citizenry has been affected (SEND-Ghana 2010).*
In establishing the extent of relations between the local government and NGOs, this study was interested in the problems encountered during the evaluation study as data was collected from the local government among others. The evaluation report revealed the nature of the relations existing between the local government and NGOs in the following terms:

The key challenge of this study was the difficulty in getting staff of the District Assemblies to provide information, particularly relating to financial data on allocations and disbursements of DACF, which slowed down the research process. Efforts to reach the DCEs yielded limited results as only 10 out of 50 responded to the survey. As a result, the perspectives of DCEs regarding issues peculiar to their role in the management of the DACF were not adequately captured (SEND-Ghana 2010).

This reveals some of the attitude of local government officials towards NGOs engaged in evaluating their programmes and activities.

5.1.2 Food Security, Agricultural and Environmental Programmes

Under food security, agriculture and environmental programmes, a number of NGOs and their relations with local government were examined. The relations revealed how both the local government and decentralised agencies were engaged by NGOs. The projects examined include the Community Initiative for Food Security [CIFS]. CIFS is a CIDA sponsored project to empower structures of decentralized local government, communities and civil society to support community-driven development to improve food security in Northern Ghana. In this regard, a number of interventions and how they engage the local government came up. Another donor funded programme is the Sustainable Poverty Reduction in Northern Ghana [SPRING]. The Sustainable Poverty Reduction in Northern Ghana [SPRING] project is meant to improved agricultural productivity and invests in long term capacity building and sustainable poverty reduction in Northern Ghana. It has economic, social and environmental components and aims to diversify crops, livestock production and improve land and other natural resources management. These projects were donor supported programmes implemented though the Local government. However, the donor had requirement for the inclusion of
NGOs in executing certain components of the projects. These are donor funded projects with requirement for including NGOs to perform specific tasks. Under such circumstances, the local government engages the NGOs and the relations between the two have been cordial. An NGO director confirms this when he avers thus:

We implemented the CIFS for 3 years in collaboration with the district assembly. CIDA was interested in decentralising every activity that they implement. They passed that one to the assembly, we sent in a proposal and we were selected. In the first year, they [district assembly] selected 15 communities, in the second year they selected 10 communities and another 10 in the third year. In these communities, we did community entry process, picking the activities with the communities and at the end, the community would come up with a community action plan that was now funded by CIDA. We also have the district food security network and I am the secretary to that network. When we meet to plan whatever interventions that should be implemented within the district, then we meet as a body and then we go through that one [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from YDRA].

For agencies working in the same area of food security, agriculture and environmental programmes, which are not sponsored by donor organisations, the relations are a bit different. For instance, a director of another NGO laments as follows:

Unfortunately, two weeks ago, I had a team who came for an interview and they asked to talk to the assembly. The planner there said he didn't know of my organisation which is just about 100 meters from their office. I reminded him of previous encounters, I don't know if there would be a change of mind because for the whole year, I can remember that I've not been invited for any assembly meeting, whether it's an oversight from the new planner there or whoever is concerned, I don't know [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from SDRA]
One of the agencies of local government responsible for programmes in the areas of food security, agriculture and environmental is the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) which NGOs working in the area have some cordial relations working with. A director of an NGO intimates as follows:

*By virtue of what we do which is food security, we are in the domain of what MOFA is supposed to be doing. We have a cordial working condition with them. I earlier indicated how we rope them in especially in veterinary services. In areas where we don’t have the expertise, we make sure that we collaborate with them. Most cases, they don’t have their men in those areas because we work in remote areas. When they are needed, we call on them and they also invite us for their meetings. I remember I did a presentation on the kind of work that we are doing on sustainable land management [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BTX].*

The sentiments expressed here are corroborated by the MOFA directors interviewed. What appears missing is the kind of relations which are forged based upon drawing resources and capacities together to leverage on their synergies. In as long as each operates in their zone and relates only on minor platforms and services each other when the need arises, there is cordiality.

### 5.1.3 Capacity Building for Decentralisation

One of the key poverty reduction strategies is the building of the capacity of poverty reduction institutions to enhance their ability to design, implement and evaluate poverty reduction programmes. Local government staffs play key roles in the design, implementation and evaluation of poverty reduction programmes. It is therefore important to assess how local government and NGOs interface in capacity building programme implementation. In this regard it is instructive to note that only one NGO in the sample was engaged with the local government in capacity building. An interview with a director of an NGO which was corroborated by officials of a local government is reported as stated thus:
I think that in almost all the districts, we work in partnership with the district assemblies. Their view of us is very positive. If you go to the eastern corridor of the northern region and mention our name, it's enough, they would tell you the rest of the story because they see us as complimenting their efforts. We've even been selected at the national level to build the capacities of the district assemblies by the local government secretariat in Accra. So, we train district assembly staff and assembly members and so on. We have a very good working relationship with the assemblies [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from SDC].

This happened to be one of the isolated cases of such a good relations with the local government. Largely, there were no relations built around capacity building programmes except in areas where each agency occasionally used staff from the other in the delivery of their programmes. In the case of this example, the force appears to have come from the national level – from the Local Government Secretariat. When local governments are not engaging NGOs on their own terms but on the terms of third parties, the relations appear cordial.

5.1.4 Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Health

Water, sanitation, hygiene and health are key developmental issues and constitute key components of the poverty dimensions in Ghana. These are within the Millennium Development Goals framework of development. Water, sanitation, hygiene and health therefore constitute key mandate areas of the local government in Ghana. This study investigated the relationships that can be fostered in the delivery of these essential services. In this regard, the programme of one dominant and active NGO in the water sector was reviewed. This sector is capital intensive and many local governments are almost always at the mercy of central government or NGOs who have the resources to engage in the provision of the infrastructure. Evidence suggests that local government are often required to provide logistics or minimal counterparts funds or provide community entry facilitation for such projects and since they are unable to mobilise the require resources or are not required to make very big contributions, they are almost always willing to relate well with NGO with the resources to provide such programmes. An NGO director remarked as follows:
In this district per say, we have been here for the past 22 years. We are into bore hole drilling; we are into training of water and sanitation team members, pump caretaker training, maintenance of water facilities so we have a lot of interventions in the district. Actually, we are working in almost all the districts in the Northern region. We deal with about 10 district assemblies who fully deal with water and sanitation issues. For the eastern corridors, we happen to be the biggest NGO in water and sanitation. If it is an international NGO, then World Vision comes first but if it is national NGOs, then we are the first [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from YCOC].

This is the extent of influence that the respondent organisation yields in the provision of key MDG related interventions. In the three northern regions, the availability of potable water is quite difficult with most areas without access during the dry season. In many areas, drinking water is collected from dugouts and ponds which also serve as drinking water sources for animals. These sources are often heavily polluted with human excreta, agro-chemicals and other domestic waste (Cobbina et al. 2010).

5.1.5 Cash Transfers and Income Poverty Reduction Programmes

Ghana currently implements a couple of income poverty reduction programmes. Notable among these are the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty [LEAP], Microfinance and Small Loans Centre [MASLOC], the Capitation Grant, the School Feeding Programme [SFP], Disability share of the DACF, and many other interventions. The LEAP is implemented at the local level by the Department of Social Welfare, which is a decentralised department of the local government. MASLOC is implemented through MASLOC regional and district offices that are supposed to be independent of the local government, but get pressure from local government officials on who should benefit. With the exception of DACF and the SFP which are being evaluated by one NGO, many of the other interventions hardly involve NGOs. A monitoring report by an NGO reveals that there is lack of cooperation from local government officials responsible for the implementation of the programmes. Officials were reluctant in responding to questionnaires and information regarding financial transfers was not
forthcoming. Access to this type of information was denied to officers monitoring the programme (SEND-Ghana 2010).

It is important to note that the limited relations in this area of the programming are as a result of central control of these programmes. Most of the income poverty programmes are either centrally controlled by government or by central government agencies so designated and located in Accra with decentralised units independent of the local government. In some cases, local government is given peripheral roles making them incapacitated in dealing directly with these programme managers. With the extent of poverty in the northern Ghana, it would be expected that income poverty programmes being implemented by government should attract the attention of NGOs. However, it appears that NGOs are shying away from these state income poverty reduction programmes. An NGO director re-echoes this sentiment:

_The realization is working but it is working in a different context. What can really cause eradication of poverty and better the lives of the people is not what they are doing. They are doing window dressing of the people’s needs. You go and mobilise a group of people, you give them money and walk away. That is not a sustainable approach. Most of the interventions that come are the poverty interventions of the country and it is partisanly politicized and they are not targeting the poor but party functionaries and I’m not talking about one party but all the parties. You can talk of MASLOC and for you to access it, it has to pass through a particular party person. With poverty alleviation funds, all of a sudden, you hear that the administration of the fund seem to be involved in party functionaries and that is even leading to the failure of this program that when people are able to access this facility, instead of investing the facility in a way that would bring sustainable income, they see it as benefits for patronizing somebody’s party and they know that they are not supposed to pay back because the party wouldn’t follow up for the money because they are party foot soldiers. The real people who are into small scale businesses who could make very good use of this money to grow their businesses wouldn’t get it_ [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TAA].
The evidence suggests that NGOs consider these income poverty reduction programmes as unsustainable. The argument is that since NGOs operate only for some time and leave, it is important to equip poor families with the capacity to sustain themselves. In the nutshell, apart from the evaluation of some of the programmes by SEND Ghana, there are hardly any relations in these programmes.

5.2 Typologies of Local Government and NGO Relations in Ghana

This section presents the forms of local government and NGO relations identified in Ghana. The analysis of the data relating to this objective and research question followed four themes identified in the data. These themes included the superficial and suspicious cordiality that characterize their relations; the tokenistic collaboration existing between them; the friendly-foes nature of their relations; and convenient and cautious partnerships whenever they strike partnerships. Although these were the dominant themes, there were traces of other themes not considered significant enough to stand alone. It is also important to note that although these constituted the key themes, there were exceptions to the rule and therefore the themes represent only general situations. Attempts have been made to indicate the exceptions to these generic typologies of the relations. At this point, it is important to state that since it is generally acceptable to described things by their predominant features, this study identifies the key and predominant features of the relations between local government and NGOs.

5.2.1 Superficial and Suspicious Cordiality

The results from the field indicate that the relations between local government and NGOs appear cordial. Local government and NGOs agree that there have been and continue to be engagements between the two actors. Officials of both actors recognised the important roles being played by the other. The cordiality entails getting invitations to programmes and meetings. Both actors get invited to commissioning of projects, are generally receptive to the other, are willing to offer some help to the other if it is within their comfort zone and to give recommendation when needed. Each party openly acknowledges the work of the other and are unwilling to openly criticise the other. A director of an NGO states:
It would have been difficult for us to accomplish our mandate because they create the platform for us. I can’t say that our cooperation is perfect but when we are going to have a program, it’s the assembly that actually does the mobilization. As per our arrangement, they do it for us in collaboration with the CBOs. Sometimes, they write the letter for us and distribute and when you have an invitation from the coordinating director, you are compelled to be part of it. Recommendations that we make through our interface meetings, if they don’t take it and work on them, the impact would not be realized. For example, through our lobbying process, we made a case for persons with disability and the guidelines were developed and a directive issued to the assembly to open account and form farm management committee and if they didn’t cooperate, it would have been difficult [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BSEND].

Local government and NGOs have cordial relations and work together on some programmes but these relations are often on very superficial and peripheral activities. Further, there are suspicions over the relations and each actor is careful in dealing with the other. A director reiterates this as follows:

So, there are some levels of mutual trust but sometimes, you have cause to be careful and that is why we have put some mechanisms in place to ensure that the resources that we give them are fully utilized [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BBIS].

However, this cordiality appears superficial and a window dressing phenomenon. The cordiality is only considered true when they both allow each other to operate in their ‘comfort’ zones. The actors think that the relation is not deepened enough but just for window dressing. In other words, the relations are not established on major activities and for key areas of concern. A director stresses the point as follows:

To a certain extent, honestly, I think that the relationship with the district assembly is just a sort of window dressing [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from YKAVI].
When pushed to provide a critical assessment of the extent of cordiality, it was made clear that both actors held significant reservation about the other. This undermines the trust and confidence between them, which is a vital ingredient of every relation. An NGO director states as follows:

_The NGOs are afraid of the seepage and the interruptions, the bureaucracies in the assembly system and NGOs can’t wait to deliver their deliverables to whoever is the donor in the slow pace of the assembly. The donor wants results and the speed with which they want the results, NGOs find the assemblies to be too slow because of the bureaucracy, the influence of partisan politics and because of the orientation of the people who benefit [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TAA]._

Trust and confidence are vital ingredients in every relation. The relations are also laden with suspicion. Both parties are curiously cautious and accuse the other party of not opening up well enough. One of the critical aspects of the suspicion relates to the failure of some NGOs to inform the local government about their activities in the district. They are accused of running programmes without the knowledge of the local government and only come to them when they face problems. This view was very widespread and one of the commonest resentment local governments had against NGOs. Local indigenous NGOs were guiltier of this accusation. These categories of NGOs were referred to as ‘recalcitrant’ ones. An NGO director confirms this in the following words:

_We share our activities with them but we tend to keep our financial information from them and I think that is where they wished they knew more. The whole issue of mistrust boils down to the issue of money and not the work that the other is doing. They feel that we ride in the flashiest of cars and live in the flashiest of homes and we also think that they are probably building a house in their various villages [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TKAVI]._
Each party accuses the other for not being transparent and accountable enough. Officials of the local government insist that this does not augur well for their planning and programme delivery. The areas of conflict relate basically to information sharing and transparency in financial matters. NGOs are unwilling to provide financial information to the local governments and local governments are accused of the same attitude. Local government has made the DACF a no-go area for NGOs who embark upon monitoring and advocacy programmes and need financial information to aid their work. They conclude that if there was nothing to hide, local government officials will not be so tight-lipped with financial information. NGOs also express frustration with some local government officials who fail to apply funds for intended purposes. An NGO director remarked thus:

*Sometimes, we are a bit hesitant to have 100% trust. You can fund a program for a community and the person decides not to run those programs as planned. We don’t have the staff who can be with them easily whenever. Sometimes, you can have the staff not doing the program as planned and the resources going into his pocket. We are vigilant to ensure that whatever we want to do in the communities with them, nobody takes advantage of your funds* [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BWV].

Local government is equally suspicious about some NGOs. NGOs are deemed to have different agendas some of which are anti-developmental. Some local NGOs owners especially are known to amass wealth using the cloaks of NGOism. Because of these behaviours, they prefer to keep away from the assembly. They only contact the assemblies when they confront challenges or need letters of recognition to assist them secure funding. Some local NGOs have parochial interest so they implement programmes which hardly make any impact on local community neither are they sustainable. A director of a local government agency laments thus:

*There are these NGOs, for the past 7-8 years they have not submitted their reports to us. We have followed them but they project to be doing well and if you’re doing well and you’re not submitting report, then how do we know it’s true….That is why I am saying some of them have ulterior motives. Those who are doing genuine
work open their doors to you when you go and monitor, that is why I gave examples of some of them [Fieldwork data: Interview transcript from BSW]

International NGOs seem to have a rather credible record with local government. They contact local government before they start interventions in districts, probably also because they provide funding support to local government and keep the local government abreast with their interventions. In view of this, local governments appear to be comfortable working with international NGOs which are more resourced. An NGO director intimated as follows:

_I think that sometimes, they lean towards the ones with lots of resources_ [Fieldwork data: Interview transcript from BWV].

This is confirmed by a statement from a director of a decentralised department thus:

_We are at the receiving end so how can we have problems with them? When they ask us to do this, we do it effectively. When they give us money, we account 100% back to them. NGOs want to give you money and see results so as soon as the results are coming, they don't have problems_ [Fieldwork data: Interview transcript from SED].

The decentralised agencies better relations with NGOs. The decentralised departments such as health, education and agriculture have even more credible and cordial relations with the international NGOs.

_When you say the assembly, you don’t mean the district assembly but it's collaborating departments, they play a major role because we don't have experts in the areas that we work in the health. All the interventions we are doing in the health sector is coming out by the ministry of health and all we do is provide the resources and work with them in the community as they go about doing their work. In the area of food security, it's MOFA which is also a wing of the_
assembly that does it. We don't actually go out to implement our programs but for a few special areas which we take lead role. About 90% of the things that we do is done by partners which include CBOs and local NGOs that we think have the capacity to deliver in some of the areas [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BWV].

NGOs consider local government as necessary evils and the hope is that in the future, there would be a breakthrough. Local government are becoming more receptive, responsive and more transparent to NGOs that they trust. They feel less enthused with local NGOs who ask for funding from the local government. This sentiment is echoed below:

We see them as the custodians of the place in terms of development and what we do is to complement their work. Any support that we need to reach that goal; we feel that they should give it to us. We expect them to give us a little money to top up what we have to reach out to the people. Sometimes, we see ourselves as NGOs being development partners to the assembly and that they see us as a separate entity. For now, there is no close collaboration but we want to see it. Somebody would say that who would play the lead role. Again, you that are seen as the overall authority should drive the process but it is not happening [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BTX].

They also have problems with NGOs which stir up dissent in the communities for local government. Suspicion undermines the capacity of each actor to deal with the other in a mutually transparent manner (Guogis et al. 2008). On the other hand, NGOs have questioned the commitment of local government in dealing with them. They expect local government to provide leadership and avenues for joint action and synergy.

I want them to bring us closer to them, find out more of what we are doing, see how they can support us because we are complementing their work. They must meet our needs so that we can reach the numerous people [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BTX].
The level of suspicion also affects the relations. Local governments have suspicions about NGOs and their motives. A director of local government reiterates this as follows:

*Have you seen that if you leave teaching and you go and join an NGO, you see that you become better off? Most of these NGOs are interested in making something. Anytime they come here, I tell them that you are using us to access your funds and you are not doing the work. I have some that I have refused to sign that is those getting their money from Global fund. Most NGOs are more interested in themselves and not the work [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TH]*

Although the views expressed by the respondents show that there is a certainly level of cordiality and openness toward each other, a deeper probing reveals a rather superficial and sometimes suspicious cordiality. The relations are cordial and each party views the other as a partner with who some relations may yield mutual benefits. However, there are serious levels of mutual mistrust hindering the relations that may be entered into for the sake of promoting and enhancing efforts at poverty reduction. The mistrusts and the reservations each party has probably threaten their ability to willingly deal with each other. In this regard, instead of refusing to relate with each other, they rather relate with each other superficially.

### 5.2.2 Tokenistic Collaboration

Local government and NGOs have worked together in various ways. Their collaboration has however been tokenistic. On a number of grounds, the two actors have been involved in the activities of the other. On limited scale, local government and NGOs have implemented joint programmes and collaborated on delivering some interventions. A director of an NGO stated thus:

*Usually, when our drilling team has to come and do the drilling, it's the assembly that provides accommodation for them which may sometimes last for over a month. They don't really provide financial resources but they collaborate with us in that sometimes they assist*
Also, only one case was found where local government contract NGOs to render services and no evidence of funding to NGOs by local government was found.

However, the involvement has been limited largely to cosmetic activities. NGOs are invited to participate in the preparation of medium term development plans but this is largely to meet guidelines of the NDPC. They participate in annual reviews of activities; they occasionally co-fund projects; NGOs get to use district assembly facilities such as meeting rooms and do not have to pay. Largely, there relations are limited to many of the tokenistic aspects of their relations. An NGO director explains thus:

\[\text{What I don’t see is the collaboration in terms of building synergy, having common approach and responding to common issues in a very holistic manner and collaborating at all angles and I wish that they would do better. If the CSOs or CBOs who partner with us would find more space within the assembly in terms of the collaboration to the extent that whatever resource we are providing could also be supplemented by the assembly or the assembly would see whatever they are bringing as part of resources that come into their district and mainstream that into their plans, then there wouldn’t be duplication of effort }\] [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TAA].

Evidence suggests that no synergies are sought and no pooling of resources together for maximum impact exists. In these respects, the international NGOs are better placed and are able to get the local government to counterpart their activities. In such instance, respondents indicate that local governments provide not more than 10% of the total project costs. Since local NGOs do not often have resources to lead projects like their international counterparts, their collaboration with both central administrative agencies of the local government and decentralised agencies have been on a limited scale. Rather than provide funding for programmes and projects, local NGOs, especially the community-based ones seek financial assistance and support from local government. They only show up at local government when they need support in the form of letters of support for grant applications or are submitting grand proposals for funds from the local
They consider the local government as a key source of funding for their programmes and will send grant application to them for funds to implement their activities. International NGOs are better collaborators as they get to participate in the development of the Medium-term Development plan preparation and consequently, are able to plug into its implementation better than their local counterparts. It is true however that, international NGOs also have reservations about the extent and quality of involvement and synergy building.

*I would wish that district assembly come up with a district development plan that would spell out clearly all that development practitioners including NGOs in the district would be doing to achieve things so that it would be more of complementing each other’s work. However, the assembly has a problem. You can go to the district and spend millions of dollars supporting people in the district, once those monies are not passed through the coffers of the assembly, they would always fail to acknowledge your contribution. In my years of working with them, I’ve realized that they only prefer development partners who mainstream their interventions including funds. In that case, you would have them writing very nice reports and talking about your contributions when you take their medium term development plan [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TAA].*

The involvement of NGOs in the preparation of the development plans of the districts lack rigour. The involvement of NGOs and other stakeholders is limited to a small segment and involves only information giving. It lacks a rigorous input solicitation from participants.

*It is quite difficult to get the assembly to mainstream whatever intervention that we bring into what they do because the district assembly at point seem to be fighting fire. They have their own development agenda, well worked development plans in a year but at the end of the year, when you go to do the assessment of what they’ve done in the year, you realize that most of the things that they’ve done are outside what they plan to do and that’s the issue*
that we have. Sometimes, the district assembly sees NGOs and other people who are intervening as foreigners who are rather helping the people but not seen as people who are helping in pushing their agenda [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TAA].

In districts where there are forums for local government, decentralised departments and NGOs to present their programmes, a lot of efforts are not made to follow-up to develop and concretise potential productive collaborations. Local government officials admit that they have not provided the much needed leadership in that direction but blame it on systemic challenges and the unwillingness of NGOs to demand. NGOs will prefer to have the district and its decentralised agencies spell out and communicate clearly what they consider NGOs to integrate into their programmes. This is considered ideal so as to get the NGOs mainstreamed into the local government programmes instead of the reverse. They prefer not to mainstream funding as that will present accountability and reporting requirement challenges for them. One way to encourage collaboration will be through the capturing of NGO activities in a special report if such activities do not find space in the annual programme of activities. What is informative however is that, some decentralised departments such as education has had considerable collaboration with NGOs leading to funding, training schemes and enrolment enhancement programmes being pursued with several education NGOs.

5.2.3 Friendly – Foes?

The relationship can generally be described as a friendly-foe relationship. Both parties accuse each other for creating problems for the other in the communities. NGO are more grass root and relate very closely to the communities. Their advocacy programmes are said to capaciticate local communities to hold duty bearers to account for their stewardship. In the process, community members are educated on their rights and responsibilities. This has been reported to have created problems for local government in some respects. Some of the NGOs are said to have misinformed locals who in turn make unrealistic demands on the local government. A local government official intimates as follows:
Yes. Most of them have social accountability forums. They go into the communities and say things that they don’t even know about or understand and they just incite the people in a way and they give us trouble. They tell the people wrong information and we have problems with them. Those are even reasons why we need to sit with them to know what they are doing so that they don’t create problems for us in the name of helping us [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TMPO].

This view was a common occurrence as many local government officials indicated their displeasure with the activities of NGOs, especially those engaged in advocacy activities.

NGO officers consider this accusation as indication of how effective their programmes have been. Their advocacy programmes are meant to ensure that communities are able to make appropriate demands on the local government for their due. For the NGOs, poverty will reduce significantly if local governments were appropriating the resources at their disposal judiciously. Many NGO officials believe that corruption, lack of accountability and transparency are to blame for the level of poverty and that one way to reduce poverty would be to ensure accountability and transparency. A director of an NGO said:

*If they accuse us of inciting communities and the communities hold them to account, it means that we are creating an impact because that’s essentially what we want to do. We don’t go telling communities to go and make trouble; we only ask that they should demand to understand how their affairs are being managed* [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BSEND].

Another director on NGO supports the stands thus:

*This information to us is pleasant news because that is our position. We are not inciting but building right consciousness and the people are asking of a very natural part of asking what is due them. If we are seen siding with the poor which we are, I don’t think that’s not welcome* [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TAA].
Local government also accuse NGOs for ‘spoiling’ local communities by lavishly doling out programmes and money to communities which discourages and kills self-help spirit. This is said to create a situation where communities always wait for some external agency to do something for them. Communities get confused with NGO interventions because they present different implementation requirements. A typical example cited during interviews relates to the requirement for communities to provide counter-part funding and that while some NGOs require communities to pay as a way of showing their commitment and owing the projects, other NGO do not require so these communities are unable to tell when they are required to pay or not. A local government official expresses frustration at what he terms “bad nuts” in the NGO field. He laments as follows:

Although, it is supposed to be a non-profit organisation, the resurgence of lots of NGOs in the north is not for nothing. People are now using it as a main source of employment and if you are into employment and it’s not for profit, at the end of the month, you must be paid. Though others are well meaning, there are others who have other motives other than alleviating the poverty of the people and the rural areas particularly in the north. My caution is that these few bad nuts should desist from their activities that go to mar the image of the well-intended ones. We need collaborators and NGOs. We don’t have enough to carry the burden of the socio-cultural development of our various assembly areas [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BMCD].

NGOs accuse local governments of creating an impression that the former are endowed with extensive resources and should appropriate these for local governments. Also, NGO accuse local governments for being wasteful and corrupt. They inflate project costs, connive with contractors to divert project items and do not supervise contractors to deliver the specification and designs of projects. This view from an NGO director clearly illustrates it all:

No. The district assembly is putting up a school, they tell you the school is costing over 70,000 Dollars or Cedis. I’ve heard them quote, not in this particular assembly, but in the news that they are
putting up a 3-classroom block for that amount and when we do it, the cost is in the region of 32-40,000. So when you hear such information and you go and see the structure, you ask yourself where the 30,000 went. You are telling yourself that 2 schools could be put up with the amount you are quoting. We had instances where we have advertised bids and people who work for the district assembly come and put up bids and we tell them that we don’t have money anywhere near that and they tell us that they can’t work with us. I think that the district assembly is wasteful and that goes for most public institutions. I think that they have a lot of square pegs in round holes but you can’t fault them so much because there are really some people who are working very hard and are committed to what is going on. I don’t think that I really trust them so much because we’ve had an instance where we are doing something, we needed water to be taken to a place, the dry season was terrible and they wanted us to write a document that said that they were partly funding that construction but they weren’t. We just needed two tankers of water but they wanted us to say that so that they could say in their document that they had pushed in this amount of money. We are working in many districts and I won’t mention any of the districts because we are being recorded [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from YKAVI].

Another director of an NGO supports the claim in the follow terms:

*I see a lot of rot in the assembly. When I say ‘rot’, I mean what comes from internally generated funds, the assemblies do their own thing and they just fall on the almighty common fund. There are some of the assemblies which derive so much from the internally generated funds but at the end of it all, most of it goes to personal aggrandizement of wealth. We have district finance officers who are changing cars and buying houses and they are amassing wealth. It is evident and I know that as you go on in your research, more people will tell you similar things. So, how do we trust them? It’s like the assembly is a mine field for people to go and gain wealth. They are*
not even looking at the total development of the assembly. To me, if not for NGOs, the rural communities would have been worse off. If it were left to the assembly alone to bring about development, I can’t picture how it would be like [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BSUDI].

These views were common among the NGOs about the extent of waste, corruption, ineptitude, and recklessness within the local government system. These were said to be responsible for the cold attitudes NGOs have towards local government, for which reason they are hesitant to relate to and engage them intimately to push the agenda of project and programme implementation. The local government officials were equally blunt about how guilty the NGOs are of these allegations. These define the behaviours of the actors and affect their relations. Although many respondents were not prepared to start discussing these issues, once the discussion went on upon deeper probing, these came out very forcefully.

5.2.4 Convenient and Cautious Partnerships

A number of relations forms were identified between local government and NGOs and a number of these had semblance of partnerships. Some advocacy NGOs help to monitor the implementation of pro-poor policies by the local government agencies. Although some these are not partnership per se by their definition, the extent of collaboration and engagements made them have semblance of partnerships. An NGO director had this to say:

*Our arrangement has been that we do monitoring of pro-poor policies. So, the collaboration is to the effect that we have agreed with the ministry of local government and the assemblies to monitor pro-poor policies and when I say pro-poor policies, I mean policies that are targeted at reducing poverty. We try to support the implementation of what government has come up with to ensure that the beneficiaries actually get those interventions and we can only do this through evidence-based advocacy or we can get the evidence when we monitor. So, we have a team that we call the district citizen*
To the extent that some local government agencies have agreed to engage the NGOs to monitor their activities, the relations are sometimes mutual. Local governments have partnered NGOs in water delivery, provision of school infrastructure, provision of public toilets and irrigation and other agricultural facilities. However, these engagements have often been on the bases where NGOs provide the chunk of the money with local government facilitating or providing only logistical support or providing minimal contribution. In instances where these partnerships have been tried, NGOs have been worried about the delays local governments can cause to the project delivery timelines. In the main, the most common form of partnerships have been on project or programme continuation, provision of technical staff to help deliver the projects for the NGOs where the NGOs lack the technical competence to do that. A director of an NGO emphasises the point clearly here:

*The assembly is very crucial. We work with communities in the districts and before we go there we have to work through the assembly, the community leaders and for most of the things that we are doing, I think that our collaboration with the assembly is what makes it work. We provide a few areas of support in health but if the assembly doesn’t do some of the things that they do like providing health facilities, nurses before we even come in, our work would not be able to achieve that. If you go to communities, the assembly has nice CHPS, clinics. When we come in to partner with these institutions, we do training for the nurses and so on* [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BWV].

NGOs prefer to deal and partner with decentralised agencies because they help to target their programmes; and they are a bit more responsive than the local government itself. Local government in Ghana has a more political than service orientation (Stewart 2000). This way, any partnership with local government is likely to be clouded in political gymnastics rather than enhance the service delivery profile of the NGOs. This explains why advocacy NGOs were found to deal more with the central local government
agencies while service NGOs deal more directly and better with decentralised departments.

As intimated earlier by one respondent, NGOs are afraid of the leakages, the disruptions and the delays in the assembly system because they have very strict deadlines and milestones for their deliverables and promises to their donors. Donor projects are time bound and there are strict reporting regimes. Owing to a number of reasons including external pressure on local government and delays in the releases on their funding, the responsiveness of local government is often too slow for the NGOs. Also, the influence of politics has rendered local government to behave somewhat like a “Father Christmas” and once a party is in power, it distributes the spoils to its support base. Some NGOs would not want to mainstream everything that they do into the assembly system because it would be too slow for their liking. Assemblies are accused of preferring to have NGOs transfer funds through the assembly system for project implementation if the two parties must collaborate.

Normally they want you to pay the money into their account but we are not always happy about that. Because if we pay into their account, how to get the project going- because they would now be signatory and if they don’t release funds then nothing will go on. And we as an NGO had already met with the community and agreed with them and gave them that assurance that we are going to source money from the assembly to support. Instead they asked us to pay our share of the money into their account, and then they would award the contract to a contractor. Maybe, midway, the contractor will be locked down because of lack of finances and the project will be finished halfway. So we refused and had to dig deep into our finances and do the project alone [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BTADO].

In view of the above and many of such instances, NGOs have often hesitated to enter into partnerships with the local government. As indicated earlier, in many cases, NGOs feel more comfortable dealing with the decentralised agencies than with the local government itself.

Local governments also have reservations with NGOs and consider NGOs to want to use them to secure funding but avoid working with them. They accuse NGOs of failing
to show what is contained in their budget. These reservations are known by some of the NGOs. An NGO confirms the reservations of local government against NGOs in the following words:

On the other hand, they have the same reservations about us that we have of them so I appreciate how they may also look at us sometimes. I think that it is a love-hate relationship that we have or a relationship of convenience where we don’t want to work with each other but we have to [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from YKAVI].

Although some semblance of partnerships have existed between these actors, the view of this director of NGO sums up the key issue outlined under this theme as follows:

I would say that it is a good relation because they always respond in terms of participation when we invite them and they also keep inviting us to participate in what they do. I would say that they openly acknowledge the work we do to better the lives of the people. What I don’t see is the collaboration in terms of building synergy, having common approach and responding to common issues in a very holistic manner and collaborating at all angles and I wish that they would do better [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TAA].

In as much as both actors accept that partnerships would enhance the delivery of their programmes and contribute to improving the impacts of their programmes, the mistrust and suspicions have made them very cautious and very hesitant in many cases from engaging more deeply with the other actor. It appears that in many instances, external factors and forces drive the process of engagement better and more strongly than individual organisations really want to.
5.3 Conclusion

This chapter has identified and distilled four typologies of relations between local government and NGOs based upon evidence of relations between the two actors. It began with a summation of the categories of projects which create interfaces between the actors and based upon behaviours of these actors, the typologies of relations are distilled.

NGO and local government relations in Ghana are crucial for sustained poverty reduction. It is significant to note that both NGOs and local government acknowledge the respective importance of the other actor and admit that they are unable to make the kind of impact they make without the role of the other partner. In spite of the key roles played by each actor in the success of the programmes of the other and the somewhat cordial relations that exist between the two actors, their relationships have been rather cosmetic.

Unlike the relationships between the central government and NGOs, local governments do not seek to repress; are not hostile to the NGOs but are equally not too integrated with the NGOs in Ghana. There is a significant distance and some level of cordiality. However, the relationship is marked by Superficial and Suspicious Cordiality. Although each actor values the other and considers the relations with the other as cordial, it is laden with superficiality and suspicion. There are ‘BUTS’ in their assessment of their relations. Following from the superficial and suspicious cordiality, the level of collaboration has been only Tokenistic. The collaboration between the actors is largely on peripheral issues including attendance of meetings, participating in programme review and validation sessions. Collaboration has rarely been on seeking significant resource sharing and synergy building. The relations are erratic and uncoordinated between the actors; most of these are not planned purposeful attempts at collaborations. These relations are therefore better described as default relations.

Although the two actors have pleasant comments for each other, their behaviour can be described as friendly foes. Each harbours some negative impressions about some aspects of their relations. NGOs stir up ‘trouble’ or hate attitude for local government; accuse them of displaying some elements of corruption and wastage of resources; and exhibit ‘bureaucratic’ tendencies and political gymnastics in their practices. Local government in turn accuse NGOs of parochialism, clandestine attitudes, implement unsustainable
projects and corruption. Collaboration between the actors can also be described as convenient or cautious partnerships. In other words, they will partner each other when there are not significant interests to protect. Excessive political manipulation, bureaucratic tendencies and the frequent changes in the leadership of the local governments account for the poor attitudes of NGOs towards local government. On the other hand, the failure of NGOs to mainstream their funds into local government coffers is the major reason for the cold attitude of local government towards NGOs.

It is important to note that the decentralised agencies appear more attractive to the NGOs when it comes to service delivery programmes. Decentralised agencies have a more positive image with the NGOs and are deemed to be more responsive than the local government. They are also more stable in terms of programmes and personalities within them. This way, NGOs feel that they can have more enduring and sustaining relations with them than the local government which suffer from more frequent changes in programmes and key personnel. This does not take away some of the ill feelings borne against the decentralised agencies themselves. They are accused of lacking initiative some times. The local government agencies are preferred by the NGOs that run governance and advocacy programmes but local advocacy NGOs are viewed more negatively than their foreign counterparts.
6. EXAMINING THE DRIVING FORCES IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND NGO RELATIONS IN GHANA

6.0 Introduction

This chapter addresses the second research question of the study which relates to the forces driving the relations between local government and NGOs and the nature of the forces. It unveils seventeen forces driving the relations between local government and NGOs in Ghana. These forces are legal requirements; difference in the development approach, donor regulations, the neo-liberal agenda, donor influence, legitimacy requirements, social and traditional forces, resource motivated reasons, counterpart funding requirements, capacity exchanges, personality cults, influence of central and local government relations, and project sustainability reasons. The chapter also presents the nature of the forces and their influence. While there are positive forces facilitating the relations, there are as well negative forces constraining the relations. However, there is one force that exhibit neutral effects while some exhibit both facilitating and constraining influence depending on who the actors are and their attitude.

6.1 The Driving Forces

In the remaining sections of this chapter, the findings relating to the research objective on the drivers and nature of the drivers on the relations are presented. The findings establish that although the literature argue that regulations drive the relations between organisations especially between state and non-state, this study finds that on the contrary, the law has very minimal influence on the relation between local government and NGOs. In addition, several other factors have been found to either negatively or positively influence the relations.
6.1.1 The Legal Requirements

Acting within the decentralised space, both Local government and NGOs play within the purview of the Local Government Act of Ghana, Act 462 of 1993. This Act defines roles and gives authority to the Local Government. It mandates the Local Government agencies to:

*co-ordinate, integrate and harmonise the execution of programmes and projects under approved development plans for the district, any and other development programmes promoted or carried out by Ministries, departments, public corporations and any other statutory bodies and non-governmental organisations* [emphasis mine] *in the district* [Section 10 (5) of Act 462].

The Local Government is not only tasked to *co-ordinate, integrate and harmonise* programmes, they are also required to:

*Act in co-operation with the appropriate public corporation, statutory body or non-governmental organisation* [emphasis mine] *which shall co-operate with a District Assembly.*

This mandate means that the local government is not supposed to only relate superficially to NGOs and other bodies but to ensure that their activities are integrated into the district’s programme of activities and of course into the national development agenda. This also means that NGO must work within the approved development plans of the local governments. However, the evidence gathered shows that the law does not influence desires to work together. Interview responses indicate that all the officials were not aware of this mandate in the law. Other factors seem to account for the reasons why local government and NGOs relate. A Planning Officer indicated that the local government is not under obligation to work with NGOs because the district assemblies are independent bodies.

NGOs are required to register with the Registrar General’s office to be legitimate operators in Ghana. By a cabinet directive, NGOs are also required to register with and be certificated by the Department of Social Welfare [DSW]. They are supposed to register with the sector ministry within whose jurisdiction it operates. At the district
level they are supposed to register with local government and/through the Department of Social Welfare. In spite of the above, the regulatory relations between the DSW and NGO are patchy as this is reduced to certification. Many NGOs maintain very little contact with the DSW except when to renew their certificates. They are also not forced by the law to relate to local government. They however blame the local government of failing to provide leadership to bring the parties into collaborating. A local government official intimates that:

Some of them come. Most of them don't even know that they are supposed to register with us and we need to tell them. There are some NGOs which are operating in the district that we don't even know of nor are we aware of their operations. As I am talking, we are supposed to have all NGOs register with us. We need to know their area of operation but we don't have and it is based on that that you can know that this one is not doing the right thing. But you hear their names and you don't even know where they are so how can you sanction them if you want to. I remember sometime they wanted some data on the NGOs in the district and we couldn't even locate them even though we heard their names. We need to go to where they are and find out what they are doing but we are always in the office [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from NDSW].

With situations such as these, both actors appear not to be under obligation to relate to each other. The New Institutional Theory postulates that legal requirements are one of the key driving forces that lead one institution to relate and stay in a relationship with another. It argues that state agencies and regulatory institutions rely on the law to coerce other agencies to relate with them. The requirement for registration and licensing, submission of reports and tax returns and many other regulatory encounters form major bases upon which the interaction between a governmental entity is defined with a non-governmental entity. However, contrary to this theoretical argument, the law does not seem to play a key part in the relationship between NGOs and local government in Ghana. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983) coercive isomorphism intimates that organisations adjust their operations to conform to the requirements of the law.
6.1.2 Donor Constraints [My Money, My Rules]

NGOs are funded by donors whose interests are defined and whose requirements for project execution can be so demanding and tight that, NGOs hardly have the flexibility to negotiate without losing the funding. Donor requirements include strict reporting formats, strict reporting times and strict project schedules. These requirements often give very minimal space to NGOs to relate to local government. NGOs are also required to stick to project locations, target population, project content once it has been approved. However, working with local government often requires that they make some concessions to accommodate the interest of the local government. In some instance, these concessions entail changing project locations, timelines, target communities and populations, and reporting regimes. These are however, predetermined before the projects are approved.

Also, one of the critical elements of these constraints to NGOs ability to engage the local government in project execution relates to the politicisation of development projects. Local governments are headed by political appointees whose allegiances and desires are to ensure that their parties maintain power. In this regard, NGO express the fear of getting eclipsed in the political cloud and being used for political capital by the politicians. NGOs are afraid of being labelled as belonging to one political party and have often guarded against being drawn into project politics. Donors are also reported to be very careful not to allow their projects to be turned into political projects.

*We had already gone into the assembly to discuss this thing [toilet construction] at the community level and we all took our roles. The community fulfilled theirs, we also did but the assembly expected us to pay the money into their accounts. We didn’t want to because our donors will not agree to that. It’s the assembly’s role to provide these infrastructures and we are only supplementing them. So if we have this chunk of money and they cannot release theirs, our donors will not support us taking the funds and paying it into some other account* [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BBDO].

On the other hand, local government also receives funding from donor agencies and the requirements of these funding agencies often dictate how the local government relates to the NGOs around such projects. Donor funding to local government often come in
equipment formats and in some cases prescription on consultants who must be engaged. In such circumstances, the local government would not be able to [if it even wanted to] engage the NGOs in the execution of such projects. Attempts at getting local government involved are resisted in projects are sometimes resisted. It is believed that NGOs are a panacea to the bureaucratic tendencies of local government and therefore, many donors would not approve certain levels of engagements even though they prefer to have some arms-length relations. These constrains have negative influence on the relations. Since donor funding forms a large chunk of the funds for NGOs, they are significantly influenced by these constrains.

6.1.3 The Neo-Liberal Agenda

The arguments about the push of the neo-liberals to dominate world affairs via multiple routes intimate that, donor agencies are seeking to influence governments and their programmes using civil society organisations and NGOs as conduits. This argument suggests that donors then would fund local government and NGO activities simultaneously but require local government to incorporate NGOs who are directed on the changes to seek within the relations. A regional manager of an international NGO reiterated this viewpoint when he said:

*So in terms of national policies, we are interested in the formulation of national policies that would benefit the majority of the poor who are at the lower level there. Our broader objective has to do with promoting the entire citizenry participation from the local level. In doing that, first one has to do with our advocacy role through our civil society partners who we support to build their capacity, build their technical skills in terms of advocacy skills and data collection and information gathering to be able to feed into national policy discourse and so at one level, that is the contribution that we make towards the pro-poor policies [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TAA].*

International NGOs push this agenda through various means. They are funded and they in turn fund civil society organisations at the local levels to start the process of
advocacy. The essence of this approach is to push an agenda using local activists to create local impact. The argument is that if you want to make impact, go down to the local level. This approach is laudable considering that Ghana purports to operate a bottom-up approach to development planning. Playing this out at the lower level, the official said:

The idea is that we want to promote that interaction with the government units and the other civil society organizations. In as much as we work with the district assemblies, our main focus with the district assembly is to promote civil society participation. We intend doing that by making the district assemblies aware of the relevance of the civil society through the sub district structures. We think that if they are able to operationalise the sub district structures very well, they would be in a way publicising civil society participation in the issues of the district assembly. Our focus area in relationship with the district assembly is the area, zonal and town council [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BBIS].

The desire to make impact and open up the governance spaces at the local levels is encouraging especially the international NGOs to relate and try to influence the local government so they can push their neo-liberal agenda. Further, NGOs seek changes in the status quo of the local governments and push programmes that will entice local government to open up through their relations with them.

6.1.4 Donor Influence [Dancing to my Tunes]

Donors define what schemes of funding portfolios there are for NGOs to secure. NGO activities have gradually moved from provision of welfare services to capacity building and now focussing more on advocacy (Nikoi 2008). This shift from voluntary welfarism and neutral humanitarianism to political advocacy (Goodhand 1999) has been largely directed by donor interest over the years. In this regard, call for project proposals have succeeded in directing the activities of NGOs from service provision to advocacy. At the local levels, these advocacy programmes focus on influencing local policy institutions with the local government as a key one. They also seek to hold duty bearers
to account for their stewardships. These bring NGOs and local government into contact with each other with some occasional confrontational postures. It is within these influences that local NGOs are directed to work with local governments as a way of either ensuring that their programmes are congruent or keeping a check on their activities or both. Donor organisations have occasionally designed programmes of support to local government but with components of it for NGOs. In this regard, local governments are under obligation to work with NGOs and vice versa. A planning officer intimated as follows:

_We have some projects that come with those things. CIDA is sponsoring a project on food security for a local government and wants the training aspect, to go to NGOs. They often want NGOs to be involved in the implementation of certain aspects of their projects especially with the water and sanitation projects. I think the essence is to have the NGOs play a watchdog role in the implementation_ [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TMPO].

Many donor agencies require evidence of collaboration with district assemblies for NGOs to qualify for grant applications. This way, NGOs are obligated to collaborate with district assemblies so as to be able to show evidence and more importantly to secure letters of endorsement for grant proposals. This point is emphasised by a director of an NGO thus:

_Most donors would also want to see how you are involved with the communities and the state actors in your program. They want to see how you can mainstream them and so maybe somehow it does_ [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BSEND]

Usually, once these proposals get approved, NGOs are required to work closely with the local government to implement them. However, the evidence suggests that some of the NGOs often do not show up when proposal get approved until they need sponsor letters again. Donor influence in circumstances such as these influences the relations positively.
6.1.5 Counterpart Funding and Sustainability Requirements

The new agenda in project funding is to ensure sustainability of projects through counterpart funding from not only the NGOs but also from communities and local government agencies. In this regard, donor agencies are requesting NGOs bidding for projects to secure the legitimacy and financial and resource commitment of local government agencies in support of the projects. These requirements are encouraging the NGOs to enter into working relations with local governments so as to easily secure these commitments when they need to. It is important to note that, these counterpart funding expectations extend into the need to guarantee the sustainability of the NGO interventions. NGOs use local government as a back-up to their exit strategies. A director of an International NGO states as follows:

*By our programs, we decide to go that way because we come just to stay for a short while and for sustainability of our programs, we think that we should go that way. So right from our donors and the whole partnership of our organisation is going in for that. Every donor is looking at the sustainability of what you are doing and we have a life span for any development programs and the maximum is 15 years. Apart from the lifespan issue, we are just a staff of about 5 people and we can't do it ourselves. So, it's more appropriate to work with the district assembly. Our donors are happy with that. When we started work here, we were given accommodation, we didn't have our own office and so we were right at the seat of the administration. Anytime, our donors came, they were so happy about that. We moved eventually but they provided the place we are now, it's part of the assembly’s plot* [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BWV].

However, NGOs are not enthused with the lack of forthrightness of the local government in providing counterpart funding. This forthrightness is explained by the financial constraints and controls local government encounter with their relations with central government. One of the NGO directors’ opined as follows:
We had already gone into the assembly to discuss this thing [toilet construction] at the community level and we all took our roles. The community fulfilled theirs, we also did but the assembly expected us to pay the money into their accounts [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BBDO].

Another key requirement that drives especially NGOs to relate to local government in the implementation of their projects has to do with the sustainability of their projects.

Yes because some of the donors ask of collaborations when they come on their monitoring rounds. They always seek to find your relationship with the government and for that matter, the assembly. No donor will give you resources when they find out that you have nothing to do with the government because the donor knows that he can’t continue supporting forever. The donor realizes that you need to bring the government in for sustainable development or to achieve success. It’s one of the pre-requisite from the donors and we have no choice than to work with the assembly. Besides, how do you achieve sustainable development if you do it alone? [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BSUDI].

A number of sustainability dimensions were identified such as policy, institutional, social and environmental sustainability. Policy sustainability seeks to ensure that NGO projects fits into the government overall development policy and must be supported by local government expressed through a letter of support. Institutional sustainability seeks to ensure that any projects embarked upon by the NGOs fall within the mandate of a state or local government agency so to ensure that its survival after the exit of the NGO is guaranteed. Social sustainability is to ensure that projects do not offend local communities and their sensitivities as well as their cultures. Environmental sustainability seeks to ensure that projects by NGOs are not going to be environmentally damaging. Some donor agencies require that local governments gazette projects as guarantee that the overall impact of the project will be beneficial. It is important to note that donor agencies also demand in some cases to have NGOs represented on local government projects for these same reasons. Local government are however impressed
with the extent of counterpart funding support they receive from NGOs in fulfilling their mandate of overall development to their citizenry.

6.1.6 Legitimacy Requirements and Guarantees

Legitimacy requirements are key requirements and image boosting devices used by both actors to enhance their image and attract favourable disposition from their partners. NGOs attain lots of legitimacy when they work with local government. Donor organisations rely on local government as agencies on the ground to convince themselves in part that the NGOs they are funding actually operate within a particular geographical district. In this regard, NGOs often require testimonial letters and letter of collaboration from the local government as key ingredient for grant proposal submission.

Yes. Especially if your NGO is able to appear in their reports. Sometimes, you receive calls for funds because a donor was reviewing the reports and saw that this NGO is in water and sanitation so you receive funds, training or you get calls to some meetings that in turn lead you to do more. So we all struggle to get into their reports. We are thinking of funding their review meetings so that we bear the cost of the workshop and that is one way of getting into their good books. We crave that platform and the level of exposure that they can give us [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from YKAVI].

Projects are more likely to get funded if NGOs can demonstrate that the projects are within the developmental priorities of the local government and have been approved by a particular local government. Evidence of such is often a letter from the local government to the prospective donor expressing support for the project. Donor agencies therefore rely on local government as legitimacy providers.

What we do is if we want to source funding and we take a covering or commitment letter and those are the things that we are now doing..... Yes. I remember before xxx came to support, they asked for a letter from the assembly to indicate that this is an organisation
that they know and this is an organisation that we think that if you support them, we would collaborate with them. I remember I was sending a proposal to CIDA and one of the conditions was that the assembly should provide a letter to indicate that what I’m going to do here, they are aware and are ready to lend their support. It is the same with DANIDA. There’s this project that I implemented in Chiana and Chuchuliga for the UNDP small ground program, there’s that condition as well [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from NSUDEV].

For the local government, the legitimacy of working with NGOs shows that the local government is participatory enough and responding to the needs of local populations who are often represented by the NGOs. Local governments that have extensive relationships with NGOs receive more donor support and donor projects than their counterparts especially if these projects are seen to be pushing the neo-liberal agenda of expanding the influence of civil society and local populations. Also, central government commends favourably local government when they are able to demonstrate that they have very cordial and fruitful working relationships with NGOs.

6.1.7 Differences in the Development Approach

Differences in the development approach adopted by local government and NGOs also influence their relations. Development approach can be bottom-up or top-down. Whereas NGOs adopt largely a demand driven bottom-up approach to programme design and implementation, the local government adopts a supply side top-down approach where they respond to the programmes of the central government. In some cases, these do not correspond to the demands and aspirations of the local people. This way, NGOs are unable to collaborate as this would cause a deviation from their mandate. An NGO director states:

Most of the time, when you pick the district assembly medium development plan, the content is not demand driven issues. They are more about responding to national level policy, dialogue or document. What government decides to do for Ghana becomes our
plans but in terms of customizing these themes to reflect the aspirations of the people in the local area, there’s always a huge failure and gap and for that matter, a lot of national level interventions are given much more priority over things that should be done at the local level and that is where our challenge is. The vertically upwards accountability is much stronger in the work of the assembly than the downward accountability. The DCE would want the minister to see him responding well to the policy document of the national level or the ministry but to what extent does that address the needs of the people of that area? [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TAA].

Local government are controlled in a number of ways by the central government. Central government programmes are directly pushed down to the local government and they have become largely “administrative hubs” lacking the independence to push demand driven initiatives. They push largely “hard” poverty reduction programmes some of which are not in tuned with the aspirations of the local people. The argument is often made that the development programmes in the local government area is driven by the medium-term development plan of the local government, which is developed together with local stakeholders. However, the processes leading to the development of these documents are not entirely inclusive and the inputs of the local populations are often not well represented. These differences therefore influence the relations negatively.

6.1.8 Social and Traditional Forces [the Landlord must Welcome You]

The relations are also very much motivated by social and cultural issues within the operational zones of the NGOs. Traditionally, the local governments are referred to as the “landlords”, so custom demands that NGOs entering their jurisdictions first call on them and have their “permission” to enter the district. Local governments find the practice where some NGOs enter and operate in their district without their knowledge rather abhorrent for a number of reasons: 1) that it does not allow them to have the accurate records of NGOs working in the district, 2) that it does not allow them to capture the work of these NGOs in their plans and therefore encourage duplication of
programmes, 3) that it is a sign of lack of respect for the local government structures, and 4) that it is a sign that NGOs have something to hide and often are those that create trouble by inciting community members against the local government. However, a couple of these concerns may not be tenable. For instance, evidence suggests that even NGOs who often work with the local government do not get their programmes captured in the local government programmes and reports.

What appears to be a critical issue relates to appropriate community entry and engagement and the role of the local government in that scheme. NGOs are considered visitors and need some legitimacy to engage the communities. Consequently, they need to be introduced by local government and legitimised to operate in the communities. Again, NGOs may encounter problems with communities in the course of their work and local governments are called upon to mediate in such circumstances. As a result, NGOs often consider it appropriate to engage with the local government and to have them properly introduced to communities they engage with. This explains why NGOs often invite local government officials when new projects are to be launched and when projects are getting commissioned. Other times, it is meant to provide the blessing of the local government on the projects so executed.

_Apart from the obligation and the desire, there are also the social issues. If you have conflict in the community and you go in alone to the community, who do you refer those things to? You come back to the assembly. There are several cases where you want to drill a borehole and the communities are struggling amongst themselves as to where it should go while you are doing assessment based on practical data and technical issues but they won’t understand. It gets to a stage where you need to get the assembly’s intervention_ [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from YCOC].

The social and traditional forces appear to drive International NGOs more as they are reported to be the ones who most often come to the local government before they begin their interventions. This might also be as a result of the mimicry effect within the International NGO community as well as the legitimacy effects of seeking to appear politically correct to the local government and within the community of NGOs.
6.1.9 Resource Motivated Reasons

Working together can provide some resource advantages either in the form of synergy and costs savings or the advantages of stronger resource mobilisation capacities. Also, relations with NGOs have provided some advantages in terms of offloading some of their mandate to NGOs for execution. So local governments and their decentralised departments recognise the role NGOs play in providing resources for developments in the districts. A district director of education intimated:

They give us a lot of funding to organise workshops, seminars and meetings for school children, teachers and the parents. The most important thing is that here in the North, particularly in this district, there's a huge problem with teachers. They [NGOs] have trained their own teachers and have posted them to selected schools. Also, they give us furniture, stationery, infrastructure and so on. Sometimes, they build some schools for us. ........When they give us money, we account 100% back to them. NGOs want to give you money and see results so as soon as the results are coming, they don't have problems [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from SED].

The local government perceives the NGOs as having lots of money and should either contribute to funding the assemblies’ projects or not ask them for funding. This perception is aptly captured by an NGO director as follows:

Also, they have a perception that when you are doing this program, you have so much money with you and therefore if you want them to go to the communities to participate in something, you must fuel their vehicle and put monies into their hands before they go. When you show them the budget, the enthusiasm is gone. They don't come or they send a junior officer who cannot take any action on their behalf. I had that experience in the past government [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from YBBS].
Although some NGOs expect local government to provide resource for their interventions, for most of them, legitimacy issues are their primary concern. However, for local and smaller national NGOs, the local government is considered a source of funding and so they expect the local government to fund their activities. When they are unsuccessful in accessing funds from the local government, they complain and accuse the local government of insensitivity to the plight of NGOs and to the plight of citizens they represent. Bigger national NGOs and the International NGOs however, recognised the financial constraints of some local governments and therefore do not hope to get any funding from them. An NGO official intimates:

There are some areas that we see some constraints here and there. The common fund comes and all areas are coming to get theirs and it’s like the assembly's own revenue generation is not all that good enough. Sometimes, they want to do it but they are constrained

[Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BWV].

What is often required by these categories of NGOs is logistical support for their programmes. Local government is endowed with diverse logistics that NGOs often require in the delivery of their programmes.

Usually, when our drilling team has to come and do the drilling, it's the assembly that provides accommodation for them which may sometimes last for over a month. They don't really provide financial resources when we partner in that sometimes they pave the way, moving with us to the communities when the need arises and so on

[Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BWV].

In some of the local government areas, office accommodation for most NGOs is provided by the local government free of charge. In other areas, shortages of specific skills have driven either partner to rely on the other for support in terms of human resources. The fling here is that NGOs often are given consulting jobs when local government requires their skills. However, when NGOs require the skills of local government officials, they find it difficult to accept when local government officials ask for money. Three arguments are often advanced: 1) that these officers have been paid
for by government to serve the communities and so should not expect additional income for their services; 2) that the jobs NGOs do are technically the local government’s job and so when they perform their job, they do not deserve additional payment; and 3) that local government should be contributing to NGO projects either in cash or in-kind as part of their contribution/counterpart fund for these project to demonstrate their commitment to the success of the projects.

Although these are sound arguments, it is important for NGOs to demonstrate that they have not budgeted for such services rendered and that when local government official deliver them free of charge, the NGOs are not going to keep those budget lines as free money and misapply them.

6.1.10 Personality Cult

The drivers for the relations are not only non-person but also person related. The impact of personalities in the relations has been considered important. In both types of organisations, the persons in leadership positions matter in driving the process of the relations. The educational background of the political head of the local government is said to play a key role in the support that NGOs received from local government. This is said to influence the level of appreciation that they have for the work of NGOs. Some of the NGOs believe that it may be unrealistic to assume that whole departments will offer every support needed to get the relation going. A director of an NGO reiterates this point in the following quote:

What I have come to realise is that it [relation] is driven by the person in charge. If the personality in charge understands the activity of NGOs then you realise that the person is much more forthcoming in helping out. ....the best thing to do is that when you identify a couple of people who have such an understanding, you deal with them more often than the broader group. At the education office, for instance, I know of a couple of people who understand what we are doing so I deal with them rather than the entire group [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from YKAVI].
Personalities here did not only refer to top echelons of the local government but also people who are considered power wielders in the corridors of power. Key among these are political activists and their role in facilitating or constraining the relations.

Just a young boy could be a factor behind the DCE’s position to do anything probably because of his political affiliation or links up there and if you want things to be done, you must pass things through that person. There are also women who matter so much that if you want things to be done, you must go to them. There are some districts where the coordinating director is more powerful than the DCE. To take all on the blanket of structure and power flow, you would be making a big mistake [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BSEND].

NGOs perceived to be flirting with some political parties are often identified as political opponents and flagged for blacklisting by the party in power. NGO staff who had previously held political positions or worked closely with a political party are clear targets for blacklisting if the party they so worked closely with leaves power. While this provided reasons why some local governments either related or not related with some NGOs, it provided a reason why level-headed NGOs have been quite sceptical in engaging so profusely with local governments.

Immediately you come, they see you as belonging to party A or B and we don’t want to be part of it. There are some basic necessities that irrespective of who is in power, you need to provide and you don’t need to use this to win political points. The people are entitled to those basic necessities. But some NGO are being perceived as belonging to one political party or the other. If you allow them, they would use you. We need to redefine the parameters that you put before the people before we come there. We want to unite the people and not divide them. One assembly man came and asked us to work in his area, then we overheard him say that their party is bringing development, we denied it. When you talk about politics, it derails the issue of development, so much as we can, we try to discourage that attitude [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BTX].
The argument is that when you involve the local government in projects, they are often quick to lay claim to those projects and use them for political campaign. This is said to have negative implication for the NGOs and their relations with local communities. Communities with strong affiliation with some political parties are likely to refuse to patronise the programmes of NGOs seen to be politically linked to opposing parties.

6.1.11 Results Motivated Reasons

Results motivated reasons have also been responsible for the relations. The nature of the projects and activities of the actors also made it necessary to engage each other to enhance the success of the activities. A local government official intimated as follows:

“We are just accepting them because we realise that we cannot do everything. That is our mandate but of course, it is beyond our reach so there's no contribution which should be underrated. So, their presence is being appreciated by us but without them, we would still exist. I am not dreaming of a day that we would not have any collaborators or any assistance from anywhere” [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BMCD].

NGOs cannot afford to be overly controversial towards local government as this could negatively affect the success of their programmes. This was particularly true for NGOs engaged in governance and community empowerment activities. The views from the decentralised agencies make this point even more forcefully as some of them claim the input from NGOs are key to their success. A director of education joyfully intimates:

“As of today, apart from the schools that were in existence before I came as well as the 20 wing schools, they [NGOs] have opened 31 schools more. The best thing that we can talk about is that they are going to look for their own teachers and pay them. So, they have given us the opportunity of interviewing teachers and coming out with the best to post them to the schools. From there, they would take over their training, salary and what is even most important is that as time goes on, they are going to select some of the teachers,
especially the hardworking ones, and send them to training colleges to further their training to become professional teachers [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from SED).

This sentiment confirms the almost overwhelming response that neither party is able to make any significant progress in its mandate without the other party. In some instances however, some NGOs claimed that working with the local government slows down activities and creates challenges for timely execution of projects. They have however designed ways of minimising the impacts of such delays. An NGO director recounts as follows:

Sometimes, their response is a little bit slow with all the bureaucracy so sometimes, you end up doing some things before you go and follow up on the channels which is wrong but if I have sent a document that needs to be signed, for instance, if we need to put up rain water harvester, the funding is in and the document has not been signed, and I have a window of the raining season to harvest the water, I have to go ahead and build the tank and then later go and get the MOU signed and so on [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from YKAVI].

Some of the decentralised agencies mostly rely on NGOs to achieve results. NGOs provided funding, motorbikes, books, infrastructure, training and many other forms of support to enable them deliver their mandate. The support has contributed to improving attainments of mandates and other performance indicators.

6.1.12 Capacity Exchanges

Other forces driving the relation are the desires to make use of the capacities of each other. There are human resource capacity variations between local government and NGOs. In some areas, local government and its decentralised agencies are more capacitatiated than NGOs. In other areas however, the NGOs have more capacity in terms of human resources than the local government. Local governments have contracted NGOs to deliver capacity building and training programmes for their staff, and have
contracted them to perform certain functions including the development of community action plans for local communities. A local government official recollects as follows:

_They helped the assembly a lot in the formation of associations and business groups and educated the people on the need to pay revenue and it was so helpful. They trained the assembly staff, most business entities and even now, most of their training materials are still what we use. Some of their trainings are even more professional that even what our employers do for us. My first training with them really gave me insight as to what I should do as an officer in the field that I was to work. They took us for a 5-day program and I’ve never regretted that. It really pushed me up. They build capacities for the staff and even the communities in which we live [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from NDPO]._

NGOs on the other hand have relied on local government and their decentralised agencies to provide technical services to the beneficiary communities of these NGOs. The decentralised agencies were noted to provide more of these services to NGOs. MOFA and Ghana Health Service were the most used in this way.

_When you invite them for programs especially as facilitators, you are very comfortable because some of them have been in the business for 15 years and so on. I think that one of their biggest strength which they may not be recognising now is their human resource [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from YKAVI]._

For reasons of capacity, both NGOs and local government rely on each other to enhance their performance and where it was clear to them that the other party had the capacity, they took advantage of it.

**6.1.13 Influence of Central and Local Government Relations**

As indicated in chapter four, central government and local government relate in a number of ways – legislative, executive, financial and development and economic planning and budgeting relations. These relations carve and define the behaviour of
local government towards NGOs. One critical aspect of this is the development planning and budgeting relations and its influence on local government reporting on activities of NGOs operating in their districts. The NDPC prescribes guidelines for the development of the medium-term development plans of local government. These guidelines do not make provision for reporting on the development interventions of NGOs. This was identified as one of the key reasons why local government do not capture activities of NGOs both in their development plans and in their annual implementation reports.

The second critical point to note is the requirement that local governments report on funds provided by central government and their internally generated funds. This way, no allowance if made for reporting on the activities of NGOs and other development partners whose activities are not directly funded from funds of the local government. An officer from national regulatory agency had this to say:

*There is a reason for that. Assemblies are given ‘X’ amount of money and then they also generate ‘Y’ amount of money. They use the ‘X’ plus the ‘Y’ to implement those programmes and we ask them to report on funds that have been given to them, or generated, that is where the problem is coming from. If we ask them to report comprehensively including everything that happened in their districts, then they will go beyond their own expenses on those areas and report on everything. If you use our APR, they will tell you activities that they’ve used their own resources to do and the ones that they’ve also got support from others to do. So, it will depend on the type of report that they actually generated and the type of instructions that they’ve been given to prepare. So yes, we’re under-reporting the things that are going on* [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from APC].

So the influence of the relations between local government and central government and its agencies has serious implications for the relations between local government and NGOs. What makes the situation worse is the nature of politics and patronage system in the local government in Ghana which actually prevents local governments from
developing the level of independence that is needed to stimulate local ingenuity to take the lead in crafting relations with local NGOs.

6.1.14 Project Institutional Sustainability Concerns

The other reasons why local governments relate to NGOs border on sustainability of projects. Most NGOs enter communities for specified period and may move out sometimes. Also, funds for NGO projects have time limits and such projects have to be decommissioned once their time duration ends. However, most projects must continue long after their funds are exhausted. To ensure that projects do not wither along with their funds, there is the need for the principles of project institutional sustainability to be applied. Institutional sustainability is ensured when a project fits well into the mandate of a national or local institution (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith 1992).

NGOs acknowledge that they do not work perpetually in communities and their funds meant for project get exhausted. For this reason, there is the need to engage local government and its decentralised agencies to ensure that projects are left in their care to ensure their sustainability. An NGO director avers as follows:

As NGOs, sometimes we have life spans and to ensure sustainable development, we need to involve the assembly. Whether you like it or not, you must involve the assembly in your interventions otherwise, they won’t be sustainable. Now, in the event that you move out, it’s the assembly which sustains it [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BSUDI].

In some other respects, the sustainability of projects requires that decentralised agencies provide staff to man projects developed and implemented by NGOs. For instance, schools built by NGOs are staffed by Ghana Education Service. Consequently, NGOs are motivated to relate to local government and its decentralised agencies if they anticipate eliciting their support in staffing and managing those projects.
6.1.15 Types of Poverty Reduction Programmes

The study revealed that there are different focuses for the two actors on poverty reduction. The ‘soft’ or short term and the ‘hard’ or long term poverty reduction programmes. This different focuses have created divergence in the extent of collaboration among the actors. ‘Soft’ or short term poverty reduction programmes constitute those programmes meant to address poverty directly, fast and timely. These constitute social safety nets meant to provide relief to poor families whose capacity to respond to longer term poverty reduction programmes are either constrained or cannot be held for long for the maturity of longer term programmes. ‘Soft’ or short term poverty reduction programmes include “income transfers through cash, food related transfer programs, prices subsidies, human capital related social safety nets, public works programs, and micro credit and informal insurance programs” (Babu 2003:2). Short-term poverty reduction has been referred to as poverty alleviation. Long term poverty reduction also known as ‘hard’ poverty reduction relates to that which seeks to address poverty in more holistic and strategic ways. These include infrastructural provision such as providing school building, roads, water and dams for agricultural purposes, and health facilities.

In recent times, many of the local governments are focusing on hard or long-term poverty reduction mechanisms while NGOs focus mostly on soft or short-term programmes. The reasons why most NGOs are engaged in these soft programmes include the high capital requirements for these long term projects and the unwillingness of some donors to enter into the funding of such hard projects. So depending on the type of programme under consideration, it might drive the two actors into relating to each other or otherwise. When soft programmes are under consideration, and both actors happen to be pursuing the same agenda, it becomes easier for them to relate and vice versa. However, a critical observation is that many of the long-term poverty reduction programmes hardly qualify as such and may not be long term after all. The level of quality of the long-term projects is so compromised that, many roads, school building, dam projects are destroyed shortly after their construction. The phenomenon of awarding contracts to local political activists with demands on them to “repatriate” some of the contract sum into local party coffers seriously hampers the quality of poverty reduction development projects. For them to qualify as long-term investments in poverty reduction, the quality of these projects needs to be revisited.
When you look at the assembly’s branding, their paraphernalia and so on, you see calendars with buildings, you don’t see any human being in front of the building, that should tell you the thinking of our assemblies. Is it not going to be human beings that are going to use them, so where are the human beings. Our assemblies think that development is all about providing buildings. It’s not just our assemblies; it’s the way we think. So, at the end of the day, when you ask a politician what he achieved in his time, he’ll tell you that he built a school and other infrastructures and for him, that is development. If you ask how many people are going to be better than their parents, they have no clue. If you ask how many children could survive the things that their colleagues couldn’t, they have no clue because it’s just not something that worries them. You see children on the streets, competing with vehicles to sell iced water and our politicians can drive by and say that all is well with this country, certainly not! All the cases of armed robbery that we’re recording is a symptom that as a people we have failed to prepare the next generation and until we wake up, we’re sitting on a time bomb [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BKIDS].

**6.1.16 Political and Elite Capture**

For fear of political and elite capture, NGOs have often resisted the temptation to work too closely with local governments. Local politicians, in their bid to improve their ratings in communities for electoral fortunes often want to take advantage of the largesse of NGO projects. NGOs which are perceived to be doing well are courted by these local politicians and even the local government as an institution. Local NGOs desirous of attracting funding from local government are also known to court local politicians. However, many well established NGOs are cautious when dealing with politicians as their relations could lead to their capture and subsequent branding as belonging to the political party of the said politicians. Once branded as political, NGOs may receive very cold reception from other political parties and even individuals in
communities who belong to opposing parties. An NGO director avers that when the politicians capture an NGO, anywhere you go:

> they see you as belonging to party A or B and we don’t want to be part of it. .....Some NGO are being perceived as belonging to one political party or the other. If you allow them, they would use you. We need to redefine the parameters that you put before the people before we come there [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BTX].

The fortunes of NGOs can be seriously hampered if they are identified as sympathising with one political party or another. An NGO director lamented on how his continuous success in winning programmes in the district during the era of the previous government predisposed him to being tagged as belonging to the party in power.

> Because we always win the contract for the HIV/AIDS activity, another director [allegedly] told the DCE that I am an NPP supporter and since it is NDC government, they should not give the contract to me. I said that the DCE didn't do well because you can't tell by my face which party I belong to. The former DCE was an NPP member and we were winning the contract. We won the contract because we implemented the CIFS very well. In the 15 districts, our district was number one and we were implementing those activities. The DCE should have done some investigations to find out whether I am in NPP or not [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from YDRA].

The fear of the repercussions for being branded politically aligned has served as a disincentive for relating to local government. NGOs are therefore very careful when they are invited to communities by politicians and local power brokers. In some instance, NGO feel obliged to openly dispel the notion that they are “brought” by some local politician.
6.1.17 Influence of Associational Groups and Forums

The role of associations had influence on whether or not these actors related to each other. It is significant to note that in two districts, NGOs had forums where they interacted with each other and with the local government agencies. These forums were referred to as development actors’ forums. In these forums, the local government and NGOs present their development and action plans. Some NGOs have funded these forums and have provided some avenues for the agencies to discuss common programmes and the locations of these projects. These have served as forums for disseminating ideas and practices within the development arena. It is however important to note that these have had minimal impacts on the extent of the relations because they have been largely voluntary and patronised by mainly the international NGOs. Also, these forums do not have mechanisms for reporting and follow-up and probably serve largely impressionistic purposes.

6.2 The Nature of the Forces

Seventeen forces have been identified to drive the relations between local government and NGOs. The forces can be positive, negative or neutral. Positive forces facilitate the relations and draw the organisations together. Negative forces constrain the relations and draw the organisations apart. Neutral forces are supposed to be positive or negative but have remained dormant and therefore do not exert any influence on the actors. There are other forces which exhibit both positive and negative effects depending on the behaviour of the actors within these organisations. The forces can have isolated influence acting on the actors during the consideration for a specific project or they can have combine influence to reduce the desire of the actors to relate.

6.2.1 Neutral Forces

Out of the seventeen forces, one was identified to be neutral in its influence. This neutral force – legal requirement- did not appear to have any influence on whether the two actors will relate or not. Although the Local Government Act of 1993, Act 462 mandates the local government to engage NGOs, the local government officials did not know about the existence of this section of the law. NGOs also showed ignorance of
this portion of the law that requires local government to relate with them. Secondly, although NGOs are required to register with local government and DSW, this was not considered useful as NGOs treated it with contempt and the agencies do not appear to have the capacity or the willingness to activate the sanctions for defaults. In the end, NGOs only registered for other external factors such as funding requirements.

6.2.2 Negative Forces

Four of the forces are negative, constraining the relations. Negative forces constrain the relations between local government and NGOs. The negative forces are differences in the development approach, donor regulations, the influence of central and local government relations and political and elite capture.

6.2.3 Positive Forces

There are ten positive forces facilitating the relations between local government and NGOs. These are the neo-liberal agenda, donor influence, legitimacy requirement, social and traditional forces, resource and results motivated reasons, counterpart funding requirements, capacity exchanges, project sustainability and associational influence. These forces work to facilitate and promote the desire of the actors to relate to each other in their activities.

6.2.4 Both Positive and Negative Forces

Other forces have both facilitating and constraining influence depending on the actors and the nature of the project under consideration. Personalities could facilitate or constrain the relations depending on their posture and their background and the type of poverty reduction programme being pursued. In table 6, a summary of these forces and the nature of their influence on the relations are provided.
Table 6: Classification of the Forces Driving the Relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Driving Forces of the relations</th>
<th>Constraining [Negative]/Facilitating [Positive]</th>
<th>Summary of Nature of Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Legal requirements</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Although the law requires local government to engage NGOs, local government officials do not know about this requirement and are not influence by it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences in the development Approach</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>The two actors approach development from two opposing positions – top-down for local government and bottom-up for NGOs which prevents them engaging themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donor Regulations [my money, my rules]</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Donor regulations relating to how their funds are used constrains the ability of NGOs especially to relate to local government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neo-liberal Agenda</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Neo-liberal ideas of spreading democracy and empowering local citizens drives NGOs especially to relate to local government to facilitate access for local citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donor Influence [dancing to my tunes]</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Donors design funds to direct local government and NGOs when they want them to work together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy Requirements and Guarantees</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>The desire to attract favourable image from partners and others influences their desire to relate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and Traditional Forces</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>NGOs prefer to work with local government as this helps them to do appropriate community entry into their communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Motivated Reasons</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Both local government and NGOs have been motivated by resource reasons to relate to each other to enhance their ability to raise more resources for their mandate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results Motivated Reasons</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Both actors agree that achieving their mandate is rather difficult without the inputs of the other. The desire to improve the delivery of their programmes positively influences their willingness to relate to each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterpart Funding Requirement</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>To raise funds to counterpart donor funds, NGOs especially engage local government to support their proposals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity Exchanges</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Depending on the area of operation, either local government and its agencies or NGOs may have more capacity especially with human resources. The actors rely on each other to facilitate their programming by exchanging personnel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality Cults</td>
<td>Positive/Negative</td>
<td>The role of key personalities in the local government and its agencies is significant to facilitate or constrain the relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Central and Local Government Relations</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Central government’s control over local government including regulations for their operation has constrained the ability of local government to relate to NGOs in some cases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving Forces of the relations</td>
<td>Constraining [Negative]/Facilitating [Positive]</td>
<td>Summary of Nature of Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Sustainability reasons</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>The desire to sustain projects after NGOs have pulled out of communities often encourages them to relate to local government and its agencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Poverty Reduction programme</td>
<td>Positive/Negative</td>
<td>Local government prefer to run long-term ‘hard’ poverty reduction programmes compared to NGOs who prefer to run short-term ‘soft’ programmes and until the focus of their activities coincides, it remains pretty difficult to get a proper fit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political and Elite Capture</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>NGO association with local politicians gets them branded as belonging to the political party and frustrates their relations with opposing parties. The fear of getting branded as political party surrogates acts as a disincentive to relate to local government and local politicians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Associational groups and forums</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Associations of NGOs and local government and their meeting forums disseminate development ideas, practices and norms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author Construct, 2013

6.3 Conclusion

The objective of this chapter is to identify the forces that drive and shape the relations between local government and NGOs in Ghana. It began with a short introduction which was followed by a discussion of the seventeen themes identified as the driving forces for the relations. These forces are legal requirements; difference in the development approach, donor regulations, the neo-liberal agenda, donor influence, legitimacy requirements, social and traditional forces, resource motivated reasons, counterpart funding requirements, capacity exchanges, personality cults, influence of central and local government relations, and project sustainability reasons.

These forces have been classified according to the nature of their influence. While there are positive forces facilitating the relations, there are as well negative forces constraining the relations. However, there is one force that exhibit neutral effects while some exhibit both facilitating and constraining influence depending on who the actors are and their attitude. The relations between local government and NGOs are not
predicated upon only economic and efficiency rationales, they are predicated upon a multitude of forces which either drive or constrain the relations. It is important therefore not to assume that local governments and NGOs would relate only to enhance their capacities to efficiency. As has been amply illustrated in the forces identified, these forces could as well be social, political, personal and organisational. What is required then is a multidimensional perspective to viewing the relations.
7. EXAMINING THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE RELATIONS FOR POVERTY REDUCTION PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION IN GHANA

7.0 Introduction

The previous chapter examined the forces that drive the relations between local government and NGOs and the nature of these forces. It provided a complex web of forces acting on the actors influencing whether to relate or not and in what ways they should relate. This chapter presents an analysis of the implication of the relationships for the implementation of poverty reduction programmes in Ghana. It addresses the third research question which seeks to investigate the implications of the relations between local government and NGOs for poverty reduction programme implementation. In this chapter, although reference may be made to specific poverty reduction programmes and how they have been implemented, it will largely be based upon generic assessments of the implications of the relations as perceived by the actors. In this regard, the chapter will concentrate efforts at examining whether the actors consider the relations to have facilitated the general milieu of improving poverty reduction programme implementation and in what respects. In the process, a distillation of the implications – both positive and negative – is presented.

These implications include potential for improvements in citizens’ participation and engagement; a tendency for improved transparency and accountability; effects of programme monitoring results and outcomes on performance of actors; financial and project support; the tendency for the actors to fall for the dependency syndrome and abdicate their mandate; synergies of capacity exchanges; information availability and sharing; better access to communities; dilution of politics of development and balancing the act; equitable distribution of development projects; fungibility or resource reallocation; and pro-poor targeting and mainstreaming.

7.1 Implications of the Relations to Poverty Reduction Programme Implementation

In this section, the implications of the relations between the actors for poverty reduction programme implementation are presented.
7.1.1 Citizens’ Participation and Engagement

One of the important implications of the relations is that, it provides space for citizen participation in programmes of both actors. Local government have had to create avenues for community participation in their programmes due to the advocacy functions performed by NGOs. Communities have been encouraged to participate in programmes implemented by local government as a result of the governance programmes of many NGOs. These programmes seek to stimulate the civic consciousness of the population and encourage them to hold duty bearers to account for their stewardship. Although citizen participation in governance and development programmes is a challenging task, it has become a key strategy for ensuring accountability and promoting better state-community relations. In this study, the relations have contributed to enhancing the participation of communities in local government activities. Local government officials are both excited and averse to the idea of citizens’ participation in their programmes – excited when NGOs facilitate and ensure improved participation when they need participation and averse when participation is considered to be causing trouble for them. A local government official states thus:

*Oh, yes. NGOs whip up the interest of communities to ensure popular participation, in particular in our programmes especially where we want the people to be involved as much as possible in decision making [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BMPO].*

Gradually, more and more NGOs are getting engaged in the “rights-based” approaches to development and advocating for the rights of communities. These advocacy NGOs are showing lots of interest in the work of local governments. A local government official emphasises this point when he states:

*Apart from advocating, the reorientation of the people about some traditional practices that are currently inhibiting the progress of the girl-child and generally being sources of conflict in the municipality. There are those that are there to ensure that the intervention that the government seeks to ensure or provide the people, the people actually demands and get them. It's like they stand as a police for community members. They make sure that the assembly keeps its*
promises to the people. The recent orientation is how the public sector is delivering on its mandate [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from YMCD].

Community participation is also evident in the work of the decentralised departments. In education, agriculture and health, communities are actively participating more and more in the activities of the agencies as a result of the interventions of the NGOs. Girl-child education is reported to have improved in all the districts as a result of NGO interventions. NGOs are contributing to reducing the issue of betrothal and drop-out rates of girls in schools. Besides, they have motivated girls to stay in school by giving them food rations, bicycles, scholarships and other school materials.

NGO have also advocated for the inclusion of minority and vulnerable and excluded groups into the local decision making processes. This facilitates pro-poor targeting and programming. This is especially important as women and people of disability are typically excluded from poverty programming and targeting. An NGO director states as follows:

We know general exclusion of vulnerable groups like women from decision making process, lack of common platform to bring together all stake holders using the community core touch methodology which is a way of fostering the relationship between duty bearers so that they can be able to account to the people and what they are supposed to do by involving the community to be part from the planning up to the implementation right to the evaluation level. At a certain level, it is good to bring together so that they would tell the society what they have brought in, the community members can now ask them questions which they would reply and at the end, the community would be satisfied with what has been done [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TAMA].

The advocacy activities of NGOs have also created some level of active participation of the communities in the activities of the local government. A local government official indicates that some communities have now taken keen interest in how much revenue the local government collects and therefore assisting in the collection of revenues. He states:
Some of the people have even come, now that farming is at it's peak and people are harvesting, it's like people are now asking how they can help to collect revenue because they've seen that they are performing poorly here and a lot of things are happening within their communities which should bring a lot of revenue. They are coming in with their own people to be collectors of their own assembly because they now see what the assembly is doing [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from YMCD].

Generally speaking, the relations between local government and NGOs have contributed to the opening up of avenues for participation and engagement of local communities. For poverty programme implementation, this is important for ensuring sustainability of programmes. Although the extent of engagement is still at the rudimentary levels, the role of the civil society and NGOs has been useful in expanding the frontiers of participation.

7.1.2 Transparency and Accountability

The relations between local government and NGOs have implications for transparency and accountability mechanism of both actors. The evidence suggests that both actors are not satisfied with the level of transparency and accountability of the other party. This is evident in the level of suspicion that characterised their relations. Although the desired levels of accountability and transparency are yet to be realised, currently, both actors consider this as a key part of their relations. They both advocate that improving the relations depend on how transparent they are with each other both in their operations and in the course of their relations. Improved transparency and accountability has the tendency to increase the trust between local government agencies and NGOs. An NGO director stated as follows:

Some NGOs may not but as far as we are concerned, we trust them and if you ask the districts that we operate in, they would tell you that they have confidence in us. If you follow the system, then the trust would be built. In the beginning, it was not easy getting the information because they felt that you would use it as witch hunting
but along the way, they realized that we were supporting them and making things clearer in the communities and they were happy because their key staff could not go to the community and do the work that we were doing and because of that they are open to us [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TAMA].

Transparency and accountability may be important in ensuring that both actors make the right use of their resources. The lack of transparency affects the use of the resources of both actors as misapplication and corruption may lead to the beneficiaries being denied their due in programmes. With the kind of suspicion clouding their relations, more engagement would ensure that they play watch-dog roles over each other. Transparency and accountability is getting improved as more and more community members and groups get to engage with the local government and NGOs. NGOs do not only advocate for inclusion, they also advocate for the communities to hold local government officials accountable for the power and resources at their disposal. These have put some responsibilities on the local government officials to be a bit more accountable. A local government official states thus:

In conscientising the people to hold the assembly accountable to whatever resources are allocated for development, day in day out, they try to find out what we are doing and so on. The software aspect of letting the people understand their rights and demand it as well as responsibilities and so it injects more potency into their analysis of issues because they are more informed and so it raises our output or effort [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from NDPO].

Field results indicate that the local governments are responding to the challenge of transparency and accountability and providing more information on some of their activities – local revenue mobilisation and the use of DACF allocations. They are also more willing to involve local communities in some of their activities and are becoming more open to NGOs. A local government official states as follows:

Even here in the assembly, if you go down there you'll see a notice board that has been placed there concerning our revenue performance and that idea came about from the NGO platform. They
were saying that they should know how much we were generating from the various town councils and so now it's published there every month. So, whoever comes to the community goes to the table and sees how they are performing and when they come and we tell them we don't have funds, they would appreciate that [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from YMCD].

It is important to note that the inability of both the local government and the department of social welfare to register and keep track of the activities of the NGOs seriously affect accountability of these NGOs. Although NGOs claim to report to their donors, three key reasons make it necessary for the oversight of the local government and department of social welfare to be taken seriously. The first is that some of these NGOs are legitimised by local governments through letters of support for grants applications. Second, just as community members are vulnerable in dealing with local government, so they are with NGOs. This requires a counterbalance power to keep an eye on the activities of these NGO to ensure that communities are not short-changed. Third, if NGOs and local government must work together, it is important for local government to ensure that there is no fungibility on the part of NGOs. However, local governments have some challenges keeping the NGOs in check. A local government official intimates thus:

\begin{quote}
So it became a very big challenge for the department because the moment they are given the certificate, they think that is the end of it and it was very difficult for the department to follow to know what they are doing because as I said some of them end up having ulterior motives. The moment they get their certificate and start writing to their donors and getting funds, they don’t want you to even come closer at all to know what they are doing and so it was a very big challenge [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BDSW].
\end{quote}

In effect therefore, the relations have some implications for transparency and accountability in the implementation of poverty reduction programmes of the agencies. The more relations they have with each other, the better the transparency and accountability that are likely to be witnessed in their operations and perhaps better poverty reduction programme implementation.
7.1.3 Effects of Programme Monitoring Results and Outcomes

Both local government and NGOs are aware that they are being observed by the other party. Local government and its agencies scrutinise the activities of NGO although they lack the capacity to do this effectively. One of the key ways by which local government does this is through their lower level structures such the town/area/zonal councils and the assembly members. Health assistants and community health nurse; extension officers and teachers all serve as good avenues for monitoring the activities of NGOs within the communities.

NGOs are well aware that although local governments appreciate their contribution in development, they remain critical of their activities and can get them blacklisted when their activities are considered nefarious or injurious to the citizenry. Also, if there are complaints about NGOs and their activities, it can spark investigation from the local government and the Department of Social Welfare. A director of DSW had this to say:

Yeah, we even closed down some residential homes for children in this region, one in this municipality and then the other one in the next district. The reason was because they were not living up to expectation. They were not meeting the minimum required standard. The one that was closed down in this municipality was housing 24 children in 2 rooms and there was no enough ventilation for these children and an orphan died in that home and it was not reported [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BDSW].

Negative reports and perception has the tendency to affect the ability of NGOs to secure the legitimacy of local government to assist them secure project funds for their activities.

On the part of local government, they receive some inputs from NGOs in the form of monitoring results carried out by NGOs. In some cases these indict local government of wrongdoing in the implementation of their programmes. However, NGOs recognised that a confrontational posture will not help to get the kind of response and the kind of change they anticipate to get from the local government. The approach is to adopt a persuasive approach to facilitate change in the behaviour of local government officials. An NGO director pours out as follows:
If you look at our monitoring reports, they are centred on the assemblies; they show that they don’t adhere to the guidelines of the district assembly common fund. So it goes to say that things are not done well sometimes. They give reasons why certain things are not going right. So we engage with them for them to see the way it’s supposed to be done and follow that. We also discuss our challenges with them and we try to improve on them [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BSEND].

Monitoring reports from both sides is rather useful in ensuring that the actors play their roles well. As indicated by a local government official, monitoring puts them on their toes. Local government officials appear to be getting used to the role of NGOs and consider their inputs as useful in reaching out to the local communities. A local government official opines:

*It’s their right and when that opportunity comes, you get to explain the issues of the assembly better. When that sort of engagement is not there, there’s always suspicion. I had an occasion to explain something to somebody. When they see you using the official vehicle, they feel that the fuel you put into the vehicle has no limit and the assembly is always filling the tank. What we do in the office is that every officer is assigned 5 gallons in a week so that it would help you move from your house to the workplace. If you want to do anything outside that, you would have to buy your own fuel* [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from NDPO].

Clearly then, both local government and NGOs consider that monitoring of their programmes is a valuable source of information about their performance. This feedback is ideal for improving the performance of the actors in their programming and programme delivery. The disbursement of the DACF relating to disability and the school feeding programme, for instance are receiving feedback from NGOs meant to improve their delivery.
7.1.4 Financial and Project Support

Although the relations between the actors did not significantly involve financial collaborations, there were isolated incidences where local government and its agencies received some financial support from NGOs. Project supports in non-monetary forms were reported to be on higher level than financial support. In this regard, some local government agencies reported that their ability to meet their mandate depended largely on the project support they received from NGOs. A director of a decentralised department had this to say:

As at today, apart from the schools that were in existence before I came as well as the 20 wing schools, they have opened 31 schools more. The best thing that we can talk about is that they are going to look for their own teachers and pay them. So, they have given us the opportunity of interviewing teachers and coming out with the best to post them to the schools. From there, they would take over their training, salary and what is even most important is that as time goes on, they are going to select some of the teachers, especially the hardworking ones, and send them to training colleges to further their training to become professional teachers [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from SED].

Local government and its agencies have received a great deal of support in project support. In many cases, the support is not given to the agencies to manage but is directly administered by the NGOs themselves with some logistical support from the local government. A director of NGO stated as follows:

What they do with us sometimes is that we probably may tell them that we want to put up a school in this area, they would tell us that they have funds designated to put up a school in that area so why don’t we move it to another area where they do not have funding to put up the school. In trying to collaborate, we are able to leverage our resources [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from YKAVI].
The experiences of NGOs and local government agencies indicate that the relations contributed to ensuring that there were exchanges of support in each other’s strategies. Local governments are unable to roll-out their activities detailed in their medium term plans due to financial constraints and are always relieved to get NGOs contribute to solving the problem. A local government official confirms this in the following extract:

*Most of the projects that we have in the medium term plan, the assembly cannot finance them and they help us do that so when they are part of the process, they buy into the plan and they finance implementation of those projects. Actually, we have a very good relationship with most of the NGOs* [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TMPO].

Both local government and NGOs value the kind of team work they are engaged in and that their ability to make an impact depends upon how well they manage their teamwork with each other. The relations have actual and potential implications for the implementation of the poverty reduction programmes. This is particularly so as local governments and their agencies rely mainly on the DACF and budgetary releases which are highly irregular and inadequate for funding capital projects. Financial and project support from NGOs is also important as many local government hardly generate adequate IGF to supplement what they receive from the DACF. In this regard, the role of NGOs in attracting donor funds and partnering local government in the implementation of poverty reduction programmes is both potentially and actually significant. On their part, NGOs receive support in diverse ways in the implementation of their programmes from local government and its agencies. These are mainly logistic and non-financial support but the NGOs consider these important in their programme planning and delivery.

### 7.1.5 Dependency Syndrome and Mandate Conundrum

The relations between the two actors have created vulnerabilities and dependency syndromes. Local government and in many instances their agencies rely on the activities of NGO to help fulfil their mandate creating a situation of dependency. The more resourceful NGOs provide resources [mostly in kind but also cash] to support the local government and its agencies. However, the smaller community-based NGOs often seek
resource support from local government. This situation creates a mandate problem as local government expects NGOs to support in the delivery of its mandate and sometimes the local government agencies get near the abdication of mandate in hope that NGOs will perform them. Also, some of the local government agencies especially education and health services have become so dependent on NGOs interventions and support that they are unable to deliver some of their mandates without such support.

This makes the local government agencies vulnerable to the dictates of some NGOs which may prevent the agencies from performing the oversight responsibilities they are mandated to do. In response to a question on the extent to which mandates could be achieved without NGO interventions, a director of one of the local government agencies responded as follow:

\textit{It would have been tough. NGOs support us seriously. Without them, some of our activities would not be carried out. NGOs help a lot even with printing books and with capacity building. They pumped a lot of money into this senior literacy acceleration program and even monitoring, they support financially with monitoring, HIV and even peace education [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TED].}

In such a situation as described by the director, local government and its agencies may be compromising on their responsibilities of providing oversight over NGOs and their activities. If the local government and its agencies become so dependent on the benevolence of NGOs, how can they regulate and monitor the activities of these benefactors? This was evident in some of the responses of the officials of local government and its agencies. One director remarked as follows:

\textit{We are at the receiving end so how can we have problems with them? When they ask us to do this, we do it effectively. When they give us money, we account 100% back to them. NGOs want to give you money and see results so as soon as the results are coming, they don't have problems} [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from SED].

With this view, local government and its agencies may not be able to exact accountability from NGOs. It is therefore not surprising when many local government
agencies complain that they are unable to hold NGOs to account and regulate their activities. However, this vulnerability is not widespread as some of the local government agencies appear strong willed. For instance, another director indicates the following:

*Anytime they come here, I tell them that you are using us to access your funds and you are not doing the work. I have some that I have refused to sign that is those getting their money from Global fund. Most NGOs are more interested in themselves and not the work*  
[Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TH].

The capacity of the local government agencies to insist on their mandate and ensure that the NGOs work to fit into their schemes is necessary to establish standards. The local government official continues:

*None of them go to the radio stations without informing us. We are always particular about the figures that they mention there. I always tell them to come to me when they want any figures and not to take it from anywhere even if it’s Accra National Capital) because we gave the figure to Accra*  
[Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TH].

On the part of the NGOs, the local and smaller NGOs also have capacity and mandate problems to the extent that, they basically rely on local government and its agencies for funding and personnel for their activities. In this respect, they are so dependent on local government that their ability to assert themselves as independent actors and to monitor local government is compromised. This also creates problems for the NGOs as they end up being labelled as belonging to a particular party. An NGO director laments thus:

*When anything comes and you put up proposals, they would just ignore you because they think that we were inciting the people against them*  
[Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from YBBS].

Although the relations are useful in strengthening and enhancing the capacities if these agencies are to improve the delivery of their mandates, it has the tendency to erode the mandate of both institutions if the relations create dependencies that weaken the capacity of the actors to act independently.
7.1.6 Synergies of Capacity Exchanges

Both local government and NGOs have benefited from each other to enhance their capacities for programme delivery. In areas where local government lacks capacity, the relations enabled them to leverage their capacity by relying on NGOs to enhance their performance. In a small number of cases local government agencies relied upon NGOs to lead communities to develop their community development actions plans which were fed into the district medium-term development plans. A local government official states thus:

*There's an NGO which is now running most of our programs for us. They are doing most of our training programs, the development of the area and zonal council plans and they are the one who facilitated all that. They have a program that they are supposed to run this week on the use of ICT. Our collaboration is very strong and I've not had cause to complain* [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from YMCD].

For many of the NGOs also, the local government and its agencies provided leverage in human resource capacity to address their capacity challenges. An NGO director intimated as follows:

*So far, I think that we have had good support from the district assembly not financial wise but it has always been in the soft skills which they have made available by sending people to observe what is going on. Most of our trainings, we try to use them as facilitators for our training sessions* [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from YKAVI].

The capacity exchanges happen mainly between decentralised local government agencies and NGOs. This is as a result of the fact that these decentralised agencies are staffed with technical people who often understand the development challenges confronting their sector. An NGO director confirms this in the following statement:
When you say the assembly, you don't mean the district assembly but it's collaborating departments, they play a major role because we don't have experts in the areas that we work in the health. All the interventions we are doing in the health sector is coming out by the ministry of health and all we do is provide the resources and work with them in the community as they go about doing their work. In the area of food security, it's MOFA which is also a wing of the assembly that does it [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BWV].

Similar to the above, another NGO director confirms this when he avers that:

By virtue of what we do which is food security, we are in the domain of what MOFA is supposed to be doing. We have a cordial working condition with them. I earlier indicated how we rope them in especially in veterinary services. In areas where we don’t have the expertise, we make sure that we collaborate with them. In most cases, they don’t have their men in those areas because we work in remote areas. When they are needed, we call on them [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BTX].

The capacity exchanges contribute to some cost savings as these organisations often do not provide their services at commercial rates. This contributes to reducing cost of implementing projects. Quite apart from that, it is important to note that the relations also contribute to expediting programme implementation. Since both actors are often within the same or neighbouring districts, it is much easier to secure the services of their counterparts in the other organisations than will be to attract personnel from far away. Poverty is multidimensional and efforts from all actors within a programme area would contribute to enhancing the capacities of the agencies in achieving programme goals.

7.1.7 Information Availability and Sharing

One of the ways in which the relationship has shaped poverty reduction programme implementation relates to the sharing of information between both actors. Although local government has been criticised by NGOs for their unwillingness to offer
information on their operations especially financial information, it is important to mention that they still constitute the repository of significant amount of information about the district. Local government and their decentralised agencies generate demographic, health, water and sanitation, economic and employment, educational and other social data important to the NGOs in designing and implementing their interventions. This data sources are available and often provide the basis on which baseline studies are conducted. Also, they provide baseline for assessing NGO programmes and their impact. An NGO director reiterates this point:

First of all, when we came in, trying to get some base line information on some of the areas that we would be working with, the planning department of the assembly played a very key role [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BWV].

On the other hand, NGOs are capable of interrogating the data available at the local government. This is because, in some instances, the data is so old it does not provide realistic views of the situation on the ground. In such circumstances, NGOs have provided current and updated data to augment the work of the assemblies. A local government official had this to say:

Some NGOs have assisted us especially in data management. We went around all the communities and prepared community action plan and picked data from every community and the software was given to us to install that data [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from NDPO].

NGOs through their action research and participatory monitoring and evaluation programmes are able to bring to the fore useful information for development planning and management. They demonstrate better capacity to collect such primary information through their grass root presence. Their weakness however, is that their data is rather of a narrow scope and lack coverage. An NGO director illustrates the point when he avers thus:

...we have reports and findings through our own research. We give the district assembly the information. We also understand the terrain
of poverty and so we are able to come out with some kind of research and give it to them. We are able to analyse policies and identify that some policies don’t have action plans or legal backing, they are less resourced in terms of budget allocation and so we tell them what they can do to make use of the policies well. Recently, we went to undertake non-formal education policy analysis and there were many factors that we looked at. We go into communities that the education service can’t go. We can’t do without each other. We also monitor what budget goes into poverty reduction and so on [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from SDEP].

On a more practical level, NGOs are able to access very deprive and difficult to access communities and are able to collect information on conditions of communities which they feed to local governments for their interventions and data gathering purposes. An NGO director states:

We go to visit communities and we see children sitting on bare floors in schools and we can’t do all. When we come back with this information from the field, we meet with the district coordinating director, the DCE, the planning officer and we try to talk on behalf of the communities. There are other times when we realised that wind storms were taking off school structures and we had been involved in piloting a program that had to do with disaster risk reduction for the past 2 years and as part of this project, we have worked with a few pilot communities and have done hazard assessment including the wind storms. We advocated that government structures that they give out to contractors to build, they should make tree planting as part of it. We have seen schools that have been protected by the trees around. When we presented this, the assembly accepted it and we are still closely monitoring how it is being done [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BWV].

Information sharing is certainly very vital for enhancing poverty reduction programme implementation and the relation between the two actors is contributing to providing information to enhance their programme implementation. This is not to suggest that all is well with information sharing among the actors. When the information needed relates
to financial matters such as costs of projects, budgetary allocations, disbursement of funds among others, both actors have been reported to be very reluctant to divulge such information.

7.1.8 Better Access to Communities

The relations between local government and NGOs give NGOs better access to communities for their interventions. This is particularly so for International NGOs who operate in these areas. The local government through established structures such as town/zonal/area councils have representatives and offices in many communities. These representatives include the Assembly members and town/zonal/area council chairmen and secretaries. These structures and representatives make access to these communities much easier for local government agencies. Also, many of the decentralised agencies have field officers stationed in many of these communities. For instance, district agricultural development unit has extension officers in many communities; Ghana Health Service has Community Health Nurses stationed in their CHPS compounds; and Ghana Education Service has many teachers in many rural communities. As a result, access to these communities is much easier. Quite apart from this, the traditional authorities also have some relations with local government as they get marginally consulted in the selection of 30% of local representatives into the assembly. Overall, these make local government have better access to these communities than NGOs. In this regard, the relations between NGOs and local government have provided ease of access to communities and enhanced programme implementation time. An NGO director makes the point succinctly as follows:

We work with communities in the districts and before we go there we have to work through the assembly. In terms of legitimacy, if you aren't given the go ahead to operate in a district by the assembly, you can't just come in. Wherever we go and the district assembly introduces us to the chiefs and the people as their partner, when we move in anywhere, we know that we have the backing of the government authorities. As the government agency responsible for this district, the assembly has the authority to see which NGO, by virtue of its assessment of the NGO, is worth working in the district and those that aren't qualified based on
Community entry is a very important aspect of NGO work and often, success of their interventions are dependent upon how well they engage the communities upon their first contact. The relations with local government facilitate community entry strategies for NGOs. What NGOs are careful about relates to the tendency of local politicians to politicise their relations when they are used by NGOs as conduits for community entry. An NGO director reiterates the point when he states:

Yes. Some NGO are being perceived as belonging to one political party or the other. If you allow them, they would use you. We need to redefine the parameters that you put before the people before we come there. We want to unite the people and not divide them.

Politics in Ghana can get so murky even in local communities and NGOs identified as belonging to a particular political party can have serious consequences for its programme implementation. However, when well-managed, the relations could provide very good access to communities and facilitate NGO work. The other aspect of the point is that NGOs are able to adopt their community entry strategies to enhance the participation of local communities in the local governments’ programmes.

### 7.1.9 Dilution of Politics of Development and Balancing the Act

Local government either consciously or unconsciously has been drawn into national partisan politics even though the Constitution of Ghana had tried to insulate it from same. The appointment of the 30% assembly members and most importantly the nomination/appointment of the DCE to be confirmed by the assembly have tended to drag the local government into intense politics. Governments appoint their party men whose preoccupation is to project the party for electoral victory. In the process, development projects have become a conduit for attracting attention and votes. To this end, the distribution of development projects has often been based upon the political
leanings of communities. As a result, some communities known to be anti-government of the day often lose out in development projects. A Planning Officer lamented as follows:

*I was in the regional planning coordinating unit, in our monitoring rounds, we realised that most projects were abandoned because the politician decided that these projects should be taken to community A instead of B. However, all the feasibilities studies showed that it is viable to do the projects in community B. There was a particular instance that we encountered this processing machine which was captured to be a particular location but the location has changed. It was captured in a community where there’s electricity to power this plant but because of political reasons best known to the DCE, he decided to put the machine in a different community but it was abandoned because there was no electricity for more than 2 years. You identify your development issues, prioritise with the people, come out with the program of activities, do your costing and all but implementation is a very major challenge.* [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from SDPO].

Concerns such as these sometimes demonstrated the frustration of the technical officers engaged in various aspects of development interventions within the assemblies. Consequently, development interventions have been largely driven by political and elite capture to the detriment of communities which are less represented in the power brokerage. The fear of capture by the local political elites and local government officials is expressed in the following sentiment of an NGO director:

*The political connotation and the partisan influence make a lot of people sceptical about leaving their resources for the assembly to implement the programs because it would not go the way that you want it to be done but would be influenced by this political expediency* [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TAA].

However, NGOs have tended to be largely driven by need established by either their own assessment or assessments by other organisations. This way, NGOs contribute to
diluting the tension of politics of development and infuse some equity in the process. Playing political gymnastics with development projects has caused the failure of some projects in some districts. This practice was reported as a common phenomenon and is said to be on-going especially when elections draw closer. This does not only lead to lopsided distribution of development interventions but also the poorest segments of society fail to get a fair share of development until they dance to the tune of the government in power by voting for them. NGOs on the other hand may not be driven by these political considerations and may act fairly; relying on needs assessments as the bases to locate development interventions.

7.1.10 Equitable Distribution of Development Projects

The above situation culminates in the equitable distribution of development projects across the local government areas. NGOs who relate with the local government and able to know the communities where local government is planning to or actually cites their projects often locate their projects in other communities which have not been allocated projects. An NGO director emphasises this point as follows:

*When the district assemblies receive their common fund, they are already stretched resource-wise. What they do with us sometimes is that we probably may tell them that we want to put up a school in this area, they would tell us that they have funds designated to put up a school in that area so why don’t we move it to another area where they do not have funding to put up the school* [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from YKAVI].

This facilitates the equitable distribution of resources to the extent that some communities that are very remote only get development projects from NGO interventions. To achieve this, many NGOs locate their offices in district or regional capitals but actually implement their programmes in poorer districts or towns which lack basic development interventions. A Planning officer reiterates this in the following words:
Most of the NGOs are here but they don’t work here. They should come to the assembly. Even if you don’t intend to work with us but you want our district to be your base, let us have your records because they would be a day that we can run to you for help [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TMPO].

The relations then play some role in ensuring that development is not largely lopsided. NGO officials especially penetrate rural settings and often draw the attention of the local government and its agencies to the conditions in some of these rural areas.

7.1.11 Fungibility and Resource Reallocation

The relations between local government and NGOs can result in fungibility or resource reallocations into unplanned and unbudgeted items, thereby creating less value for such resources. “Fungibility occurs if the recipient government, as a result of the receipt of foreign aid, reduces its own spending in the targeted sector and transfers its now released funds to other sectors of the budget” (Cashel-Cordo and Craig 1990). Fungibility or resource reallocation occurs when entities receive funds or projects and redirect their own funds into other expenditure areas. When the relations between local government and NGOs engenders resource engagements and transfers, it has the potential to result in the transfer of resources of the entity receiving the funds into otherwise not prioritised budgeted activities. When resource engagements are not long-term and strategic but sporadic and engaged in at short notice, budgeted funds risk being channelled to other activities hitherto not prioritised at best or can get misapplied or mismanaged. An NGO director intimated as follows:

I don’t think that I really trust them so much because we’ve had an instance where we are doing something, we needed water to be taken to a place, the dry season was terrible and they wanted us to write a document that said that they were partly funding that construction but they weren’t. We just needed two tankers of water but they wanted us to say that so that they could say in their document that they had pushed in this amount of money. We are working in many districts and I won’t mention any of the districts
because we are being recorded [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TKAVI].

Local government are actually sometimes held to ransom by NGOs as they are “forced” to provide resources to counterpart fund NGO projects. A Planning officer lamented as follows:

There are some that when it comes especially to the monetary aspect, there are certain things that they would hide from you. An NGO is given money to support in the execution of a project, then they ask us to pay a certain amount meanwhile in the agreement, the assembly has no component of paying but because some other NGOs have components for the assembly to pay, they would also hide under that cover and ask the assembly to pay. You look at it, the man is bring 7,000 and I’m bringing 3,000 but the man is going to do a project that cost 10,000 and he’s bringing 7,000, why don’t I just add the rest? Although you would know that what he is saying is doubtful but because he is helping you, you go along with it and the MOU is not between you and them [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from NDPO].

In instances as depicted above, funds may be reallocated to unbudgeted items, misapplied or even embezzled. With NGOs getting their funds mainly from donors overseas, and failing sometimes to open up for monitoring by local government and the Department of Social Welfare, it may be possible to speculate that funds “gained” from relating to local government may end up in projects and activities with little or no benefit to their beneficiaries. Local governments were accused of investing in political projects not captured in their medium-term development plans. This way, if NGOs come along with funds for projects in a local government area, it may release resources of local governments for investing in political projects. A Planning officer lamented as follows:

Politics has always been and will always be a problem especially when it comes to implementing projects. They think that the people would trust them based on what they are able to show physically. So,
you budget for certain things and they go out and make promises and tell you that you must implement those things when they are not in the plan. You must do it because he’s the head. They don’t see things with the technical eye that we use to look at things [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from TMCD].

The difficulty with this is that in many cases, these projects are not properly conceived and often fail or get abandoned when there is change of government. Also, “freed” resources may become candidates for corruption.

7.1.12 Pro-poor Targeting and Mainstreaming

Results showed that, the relations has implications for pro-poor targeting and mainstreaming of poverty reduction programmes into the medium-term development plans of the local government agencies. In the isolated cases where NGOs are invited to participate in the preparation of the medium-term development plans, they have contributed to enhancing pro-poor targeting and mainstreaming of poverty reduction interventions. Also, NGOs advocacy programmes have drawn attention to important but neglected development sectors that required more pro-poor interventions. Development planning has been largely desk executed with minimal inputs from local communities. Assembly members are also rarely involved except with approving the documents. This way the role played by NGOs is useful. NGOs have provided the backstopping in terms of providing inputs for the development of medium term development plans and interrogating its implementation. A director of an NGO had this to say:

So, let’s test it. Let’s go to the assembly, look for three assembly men and ask them to tell us of their role in the development of the medium term plan. Let’s see whether they can be specific about their role. This is because the assembly men, who are the representatives of the local people, don’t even go to the unit level or even the communities. I mean we understand that there are issues of capacity but you don’t need capacity to say whether you need a school structure instead of a bore hole or a toilet and that should come from the people. Sometimes, it’s time consuming but it’s worth the
effort when people can say that this is what we want because that is what they would own [Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from BKIDS].

It is significant to note that although NGOs representation is suspect in some instance, in these particular cases, they provide very useful checks on the local government systems. They also contribute to advocating for local communities and ensure that the attention of local government is drawn to the plight of communities.

7.2 Conclusion

This chapter addressed the third objective and research question of the thesis related to the implication of the relations between local government and NGOs for poverty reduction programme implementation. In this chapter, a number of implications of the relations between the actors for poverty reduction programme implementation were identified. The chapter identifies both positive and negative implications of the relations. These implications include potential for improvements in citizens’ participation and engagement; a tendency for improved transparency and accountability; effects of programme monitoring results and outcomes on performance of actors; financial and project support; the tendency for the actors to fall for the dependency syndrome and abdicate their mandate; synergies of capacity exchanges; information availability and sharing; better access to communities; dilution of politics of development and balancing the act; equitable distribution of development projects; fungibility or resource reallocation; and pro-poor targeting and mainstreaming. These implications provide the key notes that must be worked upon if the relations between local government and NGOs must bring some benefits and enhance the results and outcomes of such relations.
8. INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

8.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the implications of the relations between local government and NGOs for poverty reduction programme implementation were distilled. This chapter seeks to discuss and synthesise the findings from the three research questions of this study and to provide a connection into the extant literature. This chapter is also meant to provide a basis for synthesising the contribution to knowledge discussed in the next chapter. The chapter is divided into four parts- the first discusses the typologies of the relations as outlined in chapter five; the second section discusses the driving forces and their fit within the New Institutional Theory highlighting the fresh insights unveiled by this study; the third presents the discussions and reflections over the implications of the typologies and the drivers for poverty reduction programme implementation; and the last section draws out the linkages and builds a simplified interconnectedness of the three research questions and the findings from the study.

The chapter establishes that the relations are complex with multifaceted amoebic forms. With such complex relations, this study adopted a multi-dimensional approach to propose four typological themes for analysing them. These relations are underpinned by the paucity of trust and the concomitant paradoxical pretences. The chapter also establishes that unlike previous studies that identified isomorphic forces positively influencing the relations between organisations, the forces identified as driving the relations between local government and NGOs are positive, negative, neutral and both positive and negative. Whereas positive relations were to be desired due to their implications for programme implementation, they may not be ideal for the watchdog roles of the actors. In view of this, negative relations may be useful in ensuring enhanced watchdog roles of one actor over the other.
8.1 Nature of Relations between Local Government and NGOs

The relations between government and NGOs have received significant scholarly attention culminating in several typologies. However, the nature of the relation between local government and NGOs are rarely studied with the kind of enthusiasm that characterised the former. This study sought to be one of the few exceptions and consequently focussed on examining the relations between local government and NGOs. The first objective of the study consequently investigated the nature of the relations and identified four typologies of the relations. The relations reveal complex strands. The nature of the relations between local government and NGOs are complex and very difficult for neat categorisation and generalisation. This is contrary to the claims of (Grødeland 2008) that the relations are less complex than being portrayed. Grødeland study did not actually attempt a classification of the relations. It merely described the isolated incidences of reactions of NGOs and local government towards each other. Such a description fails to provide an analytical framework for examining these relations in future studies.

With few studies attempting a typology of the relations, this study classified the various typologies of government and NGO relations. The classification in table 1 in chapter two provided a framework for the typology of relations developed in this study. The findings suggest that the relations between the actors are varied and therefore multi-dimensional. This attempt at providing a typology of the relations between local government and NGOs is quite novel and extends the discussions in the literature which hitherto had failed to focus on lower level relations.

This study views the relations as complex with multifaceted amoebic forms. With such complex relations, this study adopted a multi-dimensional approach to propose four typological themes for analysing them. NGO and local government relations in Ghana are crucial for sustained poverty reduction. It is significant to note that both NGOs and local government acknowledge the respective importance of the other actor and admit that they are unable to make the kind of impact they are making without the role of the other partner. In spite of the key roles played by each actor in the success of the programmes of the other and the somewhat cordial relations that exist between the two actors, their relationships have been rather cosmetic. Unlike the relationships between the central government and NGOs, local governments do not seek to repress (Coston 1998; Fisher 1997; Snavely and Desai 2001a; Grødeland 2008), are not hostile to the
NGOs but are equally not too integrated with the NGOs in Ghana. There is some level of cordiality but also significant distance. However, the relationship is marked by Superficial and Suspicious Cordiality. Although each actor values the other and considers the relations with the other as cordial, it is laden with superficiality and suspicion.

Following from the superficial and suspicious cordiality, the level of collaboration has been only Tokenistic. The collaboration between the actors is largely on peripheral issues including attendance of meetings, participating in programme review and validation sessions and assisting each other with resources that can easily be dispensed off without problems. Collaboration has rarely been on seeking significant resource sharing and synergy building. The relations are erratic and uncoordinated between the actors; most of these are not planned purposeful attempts at collaborations. These relations are therefore better described as default relations.

Although the two actors have pleasant comments for each other, their behaviour can be described as friendly foes. There are mutual mistrusts and each agency feels some negative impressions about some aspects of their relationships. NGOs stir up ‘trouble’ or hate attitude for local government; accuse them of displaying some elements of corruption and wastage of resources; and exhibit ‘bureaucratic’ tendencies and political gymnastics in their practices. Local governments in turn accuse NGOs of parochialism, clandestine attitudes, implement unsustainable projects and corruption. These make attempt at partnership extremely difficult and can therefore be described as convenient or cautious partnerships. In other words, they will partner each other when there are no significant interests to protect. Excessive political manipulation, bureaucratic tendencies and the frequent changes in the leadership of the local governments account for the poor attitudes of NGOs towards local government. On the other hand, the failure of NGOs to mainstream their funds into local government coffers is the major reason for the cold attitude of local government towards NGOs.

It is important to note that the decentralised agencies appear more attractive to the NGOs when it comes to service delivery programmes. Decentralised agencies have a more positive image with the NGOs and are deemed to be more responsive than the local government agencies. They are also more stable in terms of programmes and personalities within them. This way, NGOs feel they can have a more enduring and sustaining relationship with them than the local government which suffers from more
frequent changes in programmes and key personnel. This does not take away some of
the ill feelings borne against the decentralised agencies themselves. They are accused of
lacking initiative some times. The local government agencies are preferred by the NGOs
that run governance and advocacy programmes but local advocacy NGOs are viewed
more negatively than their foreign counterparts. What is instructive is that NGOs
recognise the role of politicians in the perpetration of corrupt practices within the local
government and their agencies. Local government and their agencies also have doubts
about the altruism and egalitarianism of NGOs. These suspicions and counter suspicions
have had several implications for the relations and how the actors have pursued their
poverty reduction programme implementation.

The relations between these organisations are predicated upon trust and the level of
transparency that each of the actors is prepared to trade-in in the relations. The results of
the study show that there are critical concerns over trust between the agencies.
Proclaimed cordiality appears stronger than lived cordiality. Evidence suggests that the
nature of relations is sketchy and superficial. Both actors appear comfortable with arms-
length relations that ensure each maintains dominance over some functional space. In
reality therefore, both NGOs and local government perceive each other with some level
of suspicion. Much as suspicion prevents entangled relations which may proof
beneficial for synergy building and enhanced programme implementation, this study
takes the view that this is useful in a number of ways. First, the level of suspicion
should serve to heighten the level of monitoring that they each take on the performance
of the other. Second, the level of suspicion should send signals to the agencies to desire
to improve upon their performance. Third, it should also provide the impetus to spur the
agencies to be more transparent with each other. Fourth, it should make each partner
more critical in reviewing proposals to engage in joint programmes. These
notwithstanding, the outcomes of the suspicion and arm-length relations prevent
synergy building and the leveraging of partnerships and effective collaboration. It also
creates waste and duplication of efforts while impeding the progress towards
accelerated poverty reduction.

The level of trust and suspicion reduces the desire for the actors to relate and this
explains why the forces that drive the relations from external actors are more powerful
than the internal forces as explained in the next section. In other words, the suspicion
and the low level of trust weaken the desire to relate more closely which implies that for
more positive relations, forces external must drive the process. This is significant for
local policy implementation and government’s proclaimed commitment to incorporating civil society and other non-state actors in development management at the district levels. The outcomes of the relations between local government and NGOs may be meaningful only if the relations go deeper and more engaging either in terms of monitoring and advocacy or in terms of joint programme implementation and synergy building. What must be noted is whether when the relations become more engaging, elements of collusion between local government and NGOs officials may not occur? If this were to occur, the citizens should be the losers. Obviously, if the actors only relate on convenience, it implies among other things that they will not engage each other on important projects where the gains may be enduring.

A healthy relation also has implications for the speed at which the agencies will deliver their programmes. Since NGOs are noted to be fast and more flexible – qualities considered virtues, a healthy relation with local government would have a negative effect on the speed of delivery of NGOs. Local government and its agencies are noted to be slow, bureaucratic and dependent on the central government for direction, funding and action. These agencies are also said to be subject to the clutches of political elites and party apparatchiks who prefer to colour the programmes of these agencies with party colours. A healthy relation between the two actors then will have the tendency to isomorphise the NGOs into becoming more and more like local governments and their agencies if the force drawing them towards becomes more intense that what NGOs can exert. This aspect of the discussion in treated in the next subsection.

Healthy relations also has tendency of getting the NGOs to meddle in local politics. This has been identified to be counter-productive as local politicians have the penchant to label NGOs intricately relating to the local government and especially local politicians as belonging to a particular political divide. It may therefore not be in the interest of poverty reduction and sustainable relations to have NGOs and local government engage in entangled relations which may appear too close for comfort. Perhaps a good conclusion to this section is captured in the quote “...NGOs may exhibit ‘multiple identities’— selective collaboration, gap-filling and posing alternatives—in the course of their interactions with the….” (Thomas et al. 2010:368) local government.
8.2 Drivers of the Relations between Local Government and NGOs: A New Institutional Theory Perspective

In this subsection, the drivers of the relations between local government and NGOs are discussed. Two dimensions of the drivers are discussed – the drivers and the nature of the drivers.

Structures, norms and cultures shape the way organisations function within an institutional field. Adopting the new institutional framework, this study investigated the drivers that shape both the internal and external functioning of the local government and NGOs and what drives these two actors to relate to each other. The study identifies a complex mix of seventeen forces which drive the relations. The first column of the table outlines the forces identified as drivers of the relations between local government and NGOs in Ghana. The second column indicates the nature of the force and the third column presents a summary of the forces and their fit within the three classifications of New Institutional Theory isomorphic forces. Table 7 summarises the forces, the nature of their influence and their fit within the NIT perspectives as espoused by DiMaggio and Powell (1983).
Table 7: Summary of the Classification of Driving Forces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of force driving the relations</th>
<th>Nature of influence</th>
<th>Summary of Nature of Influence and classification within DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983) classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Legal requirements</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Although the law requires local government to engage NGOs, both actors hardly take interest in this. Dormant coercive isomorphic force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences in the development Approach</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>The two actors approach development from two opposing positions – top-down for local government and bottom-up for NGOs. Negative normative/mimetic isomorphic forces acting against the relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neo-liberal Agenda</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Neo-liberal ideas of spreading democracy and empowering local citizens drive NGOs especially to relate to local government to facilitate access for local citizens. Positive mimetic and coercive force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donor Regulations</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Donor regulations constrain the ability of NGOs especially to relate to local government. Negative coercive isomorphic force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donor Influence</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Donors design funds to direct local government and NGOs to relate. Positive coercive isomorphic force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy Requirements and Guarantees</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>The desire to attract favourable image from partners and others influences their desire to relate. Positive coercive isomorphic force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and Traditional Forces</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>NGOs prefer to work with local government as this helps them to do appropriate community entry into their communities. Positive mimetic and coercive force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Reasons Motivated</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Both local government and NGOs have been motivated by resource reasons to relate to each other to enhance their ability to raise more resources for their mandate. Positive coercive isomorphic force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results Reasons Motivated</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Both actors relate to each other to improve their ability to deliver their mandates. Positive coercive isomorphic force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterpart Funding Requirement</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>NGOs relate to local government to raise counterpart funds for projects. Positive coercive isomorphic force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of force driving the relations</td>
<td>Nature of influence</td>
<td>Summary of Nature of Influence and classification within DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983) classification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity Exchanges</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>The actors rely on each other’s capacity to facilitate their programme delivery. Positive normative/coercive isomorphic forces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality Cults</td>
<td>Positive/Negative</td>
<td>The behaviour and attitudes of personalities in both agencies facilitate or constrain the relations. Positive and negative normative isomorphic force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Central and Local Government Relations</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Central government’s control over local government including regulations for their operation has constrained the ability of local government to relate to NGOs. Negative coercive isomorphic force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project reasons</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>The desire to sustain projects after NGOs have pulled out of communities encourages them to relate to local government and its agencies. Positive mimetic and coercive isomorphic force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Poverty Reduction programme</td>
<td>Positive/Negative</td>
<td>Local government prefer to run ‘hard’ poverty reduction programmes compared to NGOs who prefer to run ‘soft’ programmes and until the focus of their activities coincides, it remains pretty difficult to get a proper fit. Positive/negative normative and mimetic force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political and Elite Capture</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>NGO who associate with local politicians get branded as belonging to the political party and frustrates their relations with opposing parties. The fear of getting branded as political party surrogates acts as a disincentive to relate to local government and local politicians. Negative normative force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Associational groups and forums</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Associations of NGOs and local government and their meeting forums disseminate development ideas, practices and norms. Positive normative force.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Author Construct, 2013
The forces that drive the relations between NGOs and local governments act in various ways to influence the relations – positive, negative, neutral or both positive and negative depending on the behaviour of the actors. The forces constrain, facilitate, are neutral or can both constrain and facilitate the relations between local government and NGOs in Ghana.

8.2.1 Positive Forces

The results show that there are ten forces that pull the two actors towards each other to relate. These include donor influence; legitimacy requirements and guarantees; social and traditional forces, resource motivated reasons; results motivated reasons; counterpart funding requirement; capacity exchanges; project sustainability reasons; and influence of associations. The positive forces drive the actors into becoming similar in goals and consequently facilitate positive relations. In terms of development programme implementation, positive relations should facilitate the enhancement of programme delivery.

Isomorphic pressures pull organisations to be like other organisation in the sense of having them to replicate their behaviour, align with their goals and fit their programmes into theirs (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). This is consistent with Frumkin and Galaskiewicz (2004) findings that coercive forces made NGOs and for profit organisation become more bureaucratic through more departmentalisation and more formalisation. It is important to note that in spite of obvious isomorphic forces pulling both categories of organisation towards each other, there was more resistance among NGOs than among local government to fall in line with the pressure of forces.

This was explained by the fact that the isomorphic forces that acted on the NGOs from outside the field of the forces were stronger than within the field. In other words, the pressure from local government and government regulations were less intense than forces from NGO donors and the other forces such as personal and desire for survival. Also, in districts where there are reported presence of NGO and local government platforms for discussions of development interventions, it was seen that more favourable and better fitting of programmes were evident. Also, in districts where there
were NGO coalitions, there were evidence of more positive relations with the local government.

Generally, local governments are more willing to relate to international NGOs which are also more financially endowed. The local government and its agencies are attracted by the financial wherewithal of these NGOs and therefore relate to them more positively. The image that these NGOs carry also attracts the local government and its agencies to relate positively to the international NGOs. The implication is that local government and its agencies are under the coercive force of not regulations but of resources exemplified in financial, human resources and legitimacy. The influence of the coercive forces appears to have a far greater influence on the relations than the other two forces. NGOs engaged in capital intensive programmes like water and sanitation facilities provision are able to pull local government to respond and relate to them in the implementation of such initiatives. Although in many cases, these relations do not imply resource transfer from the NGOs to the local government, there are often more intimate relations and these NGOs are accorded more respect than local NGOs by local government.

There appears to be some indications that when these organisations relate very cordially, they could collude to exploit the system. This indication is picked up from the reason why local governments would still support NGOs to secure donor funding when they know these NGOs have not been transparent enough. This finding requires more work to substantiate. However, the view that when organisations become more similar to their peers by the isomorphic pressures they may collude for their interest appears to have been ignored by earlier institutional researchers. Such an oversight may have resulted from the analysis of institutional fields in a vacuum without regard to their service provision function or the basis of their presence within the institutional field. Negotiations within the field are probably more in the interest of other factors than for the desire to achieve efficiency in the operations of the actors.
8.2.2 Negative Forces

In view of the advantages of working together, it would have been expected that the two agencies would strive to become more and more similar (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) and therefore work together but that was not to be in all situations. Some forces act to keep the actors from striking positive relations. These include differences in the development approach; donor regulations; the influence of central and local government relations; and threat of political and elite capture. These forces drive the actors towards different directions against the dictates of isomorphism. While this may be considered detrimental to the delivery of the programmes of the actors, such forces penetrate differences in their hegemonies which should be useful in keeping them as watchdogs over each other. Such orientations may be required to prevent collusions among the actors which may be detrimental to their beneficiaries. It also demonstrates the importance of agency in the organisations and that the organisations are not passive but active agents who negotiate their presence within organisational fields. The presence of these forces are contrary to findings from the work of DiMaggio and Powell (1983) that organisations within a field are pulled towards becoming more and more alike in structures, norms and culture.

8.2.3 Neutral Forces

Legal frameworks constitute a significant measure of control used by government and governmental agencies to control NGOs (Jalali 2008; Barr et al. 2005; Elbayar 2005). Laws on registration, specification of what areas of operation NGOs can engage in and what sources of funds they can attract and received are many of the ways in which government and governmental agencies rely on to exert influence and control over NGOs and their operation. As reported in chapter six of this study, the influence of the legal regime is minimal and in some cases rather neutral. The freedom to form and operate an NGO in Ghana coupled with the extensive freedom and laissez-fair attitude shown by local government in getting NGOs to register with them and failure to monitor their activities and provide leadership for engaging with NGOs has contributed to neutralising the influence of the legal requirement on the relation between the two actors. NGOs that cared to register did so purely because donor agencies sometimes require these certificates of registration to enable NGOs qualify for grants. In other
words, the law and cabinet requirement for NGOs to register with government and government agencies; and the requirement of the Local Government Act of 1993, Act 462 remain dormant with minimal influence if at all.

8.2.4 Both Negative and Positive Forces

Some forces also exhibit both positive and negative influences depending on the behaviour of the actors. Personality cults and nature of the poverty reduction programme are two factors that can be either positive or negative. The background of the key personalities such as their education background, political affiliation, and previous work experiences may all contribute to influencing whether they act positively or otherwise towards the relations between their agency and the other agency. This suggests that for effective relations, the capacities of the key personalities in both organisations require upgrades.

8.3 Type of Isomorphic Forces

Drawing on New Institutional Theory and particularly on DiMaggio and Powell (1983) types of isomorphic forces, this subsection discusses the classifications of the forces driving the relations into the three categorisation. As acknowledged by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), this is far from a neat and discrete categorisation.

8.3.1 Coercive Isomorphism

Of the forces identified in chapter six, eight of the forces are coercive in nature. They range from regulations, legitimacy requirement and guarantees, resources and results motivated reasons, counterpart funding, social and traditional forces, and the influence of central government on local government. These are consistent with arguments that power, resources, regulations among others drive one organisation, usually the less endowed one to relate with another usually the more endowed one (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Mizruchi and Fein 1999; Phillips et al. 2000; Caemmerer and Marck 2009). The factors showing coercive forces were the most dominant among the factors.
However, the findings of this study differ very significantly as the study went further to isolate the forces into positive, negative, neutral and positive/negative forces. This extends the frontiers of earlier studies which only indicated that “organisational characteristics are modified in the direction of compatibility with environmental characteristics” (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:149). This study shows that forces negative to and outside the field may actually be stronger and pull organisations away from acting within the field. This also suggests, consistent with earlier studies that organisations in a field are not passive reactors to the forces operating within the field but are active negotiators who take on board internal, external and extra-external factors.

8.3.2 Normative Isomorphism

The study also reveals the presence of normative isomorphism in the relations between local government and NGOs. The normative isomorphic forces identified in the relations include differences in the development approach, capacity exchanges, personality cults, political and elites capture and influence of associational groups. Normative isomorphism is driven by educational and professional background and influences (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Mizruchi and Fein 1999; Phillips et al. 2000; Caemmerer and Marck 2009). The norms within which NGO staffs operate and the prevailing professional ethos within the NGOs circles drive NGOs towards certain practices and programmes. The prevailing focus on participatory and inclusive development for instance is typically responsible for the bottom-up development approach adopted by NGOs. Since the professional ethos within NGOs differ from those within local government agencies, professionals in these agencies differ markedly in their approaches to development management and programme delivery. The coercive influence of professional standards and industry benchmarks serve to drive NGOs to relating to local government as this promotes their agenda for influencing policy and holding duty bearers accountable. Local politicians and civil servants are also influenced by their training and general orders which influence how they relate to NGOs. For instance, local politicians are often constrained by self and party interest to the extent that decisions to relate to NGOs are influenced by the political capital to be gained from the relations.
8.3.3 Mimetic Isomorphism

The study also reveals mimetic forces driving the relations. Mimetic isomorphic forces operate to drive organisations in states of uncertainty to mimic the structures, norms and culture of more powerful organisations within the field (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Mizruchi and Fein 1999; Phillips et al. 2000; Caemmerer and Marck 2009). Uncertainty is normal to organisations but results from multiple factors including results of actions taken by organisations as a result of coercive pressures which are throwing out unexpected consequences. In this study, the mimetic forces include the difference in the development approach; social and traditional forces; and project sustainability factors. Many NGOs adopt the bottom-up approach to development due to the influence of legitimacy providers and because other NGOs operate such development approach. Also, due to the adoption of certainly community entry strategies, NGOs rely of chiefs and other traditional leaders as their node of community entry in tuned with the practices of the development actors. This approach is thought to signal the community embeddedness of the NGOs.

8.4 Levels of Operating Forces

The forces driving the relations can also be classified into three broad categories – micro-level forces; meso or organisational level forces and macro or field level forces. Micro level forces operate within units of organisations and can be the most basic forces in operation within an organisation. Meso or organisational level forces are forces that operate between the actors drawing them to relate or not. Macro or field level forces are forces that operate between third party organisations and the actors which either push them to relate or pull them from relating (Jeurissen 2005).

8.4.1 Micro-Level Forces

Each of the two types of organisations has a couple of forces that were internal and drove their desire to relate to the other organisation. Both NGOs and local government were driven to relate by the orientation of the personalities and officials who led them.
The influence of these officials is considered a local level force and therefore micro in nature.

8.4.2 Meso (Organisational) Level Forces

Meso or organisational level forces operate at the organisational level to drive the agency concerned into relating to the other. Both NGOs and local government were driven to relate by resource and results motivated reasons, capacity exchanges, type of poverty reduction programme and project sustainability reasons. These forces operated basically from within the agencies and were the direct results of organisational level reasoning although they could have external or hidden forces driving and reinforcing these reasons.

8.4.3 Macro (Field) Level Forces

Field level forces are those forces that operate outside the organisational space but have significant power to drive the relations between local government and NGOs. The forces identified in this category include legal requirements, donor regulation and influence, legitimacy requirements, social and traditional forces, counterpart funding requirement, influence of central and local government relations, political and elite capture and the influence of associational groups.

8.4.4 Implications of the Levels of Operating Forces for the Relations

The classification of the level of forces indicates that more field level forces are in operation and drive the relations than meso/organisational and micro-level forces. The implication of this is that the relations are largely driven by forces outside the control of the personalities within the organisations or forces within the organisations themselves. This is consistent with the points made earlier that coercive isomorphic forces are the most dominant among the forces driving the relations between local government and NGOs. This means that although organisations may have agency in determining whether or not they relate to the other, that agency appears to be very weak as forces
operating within the organisations themselves are both few and less dominant in their strength. Also, since neither of these organisations depends on the other for direct funding and since local government is not fully appropriating the laws regulating their relations with NGOs, the external forces provide more impetus for the relations than the forces acting between the two agencies. This view was also aptly captured by one of the respondents of the study in the following terms:

*I think that it is a love-hate relationship that we have or a relationship of convenience where we don’t want to work with each other but we have to*

[Fieldwork Data: Interview transcript from YKAVI].

This statement confirms the extent of influence of macro level forces on the relations.

8.5 Implications for Poverty Reduction Programme Implementation in Ghana

The implications of the relations for poverty reduction programme implementation may be areas of concern which actors should normally consider in the determination of whether they are willing or not to relate to the other party. Poverty reduction programme implementation is a diverse and multidimensional process and the role of the actors should provide avenues for leveraging their shortcomings and build synergies. The discussion on the implications of the relationship between local government and NGOs has been themed into three:

8.5.1 Transparency, Accountability and Due Diligence

Citizens’ participation, information availability and sharing contribute to improving transparency and accountability in the relations between the actors and their key stakeholders. Citizens’ participation is considered a dodgy deal for development actors even though a well-informed citizenry and their participation in poverty reduction interventions are useful for enhancing their successes. The enhancement of the relations with regards to information sharing should advance the capacity of the NGOs in their community mobilisation and capacity building and advocacy programmes. Enhanced information sharing should contribute to improving the accuracy of information available to the NGOs and improve the accuracy of information passed on to local
community members and consequently reduce the suspicion over NGOs inciting community members against local governments. Citizen participation and information sharing between and among the actors should also enhance participations and improve the quality of local policies and poverty reduction programmes; their implementation and evaluation. However, due to the marginal nature in which these implications are addressed by the actors, due diligence is not properly done which prevents the actors from fully harnessing the benefits of the relations for poverty programme implementation.

Again, the relations appear to nurture a dependency syndrome where no single party can function without the other but mostly that some local government agencies felt so dependent on NGOs that their support was very important for the delivery of their programmes. Both local government and NGOs perceive development to belong to the local government and expect NGOs to be making a contribution to help the local government realise the developmental goals of the local government. The implication of this perception is that the local government agencies especially feel very vulnerable towards some of the NGOs. The view is that NGOs “struggle” to attract project funds and are entitled to their use. It is therefore considered a favour if local government and its agencies receive support from NGOs. If local government agencies feel this way, they may not perceive monitoring of NGOs as a mandate they should cherish.

8.5.2 Programme Management and Delivery

The second theme under the implications of the relations for poverty reduction programme implementation relates to programme management and delivery. Whereas the relations provide financial and project support, exchanges on capacities and provide better access to communities, and the programme monitoring results and outcomes should provide impetus for enhanced programme delivery, external influences and organisational as well as personal idiosyncrasies were at play to prevent the realisation of the benefits of the relations. The fear of fungibility of funds, the dependency of some of the agencies on NGOs to fulfil their mandates coupled with the fear of NGOs to work with local government and its agencies least they are tagged political have all prevented the relations that could better enhance poverty reduction programme delivery. In line with the governments drive towards composite budgeting, the relations between NGOs
and local government should serve as a conduit for enhanced programme implementation resulting from more beneficial relations.

8.5.3 The Politics of Development

The relations between the actors also have implications for the politics of development. Ghana’s local and national politics are so sharply divided and political actors both at the national level and the local levels are so entrenched that, development is prosecuted largely with lots of political considerations. The presence of NGOs and their relations with the local government provides vital information to ensure that they balance out in the distribution of development projects. This ensures some equity in the distribution of development. Advocacy by NGOs have also contributed to mainstreaming poverty reduction into local policy and contributing to improve pro-poor targeting.

8.6. Establishing the Linkages

The nature of the relations between local government and NGOs; the drivers of the relations; and the implications of these relations for the implementation of poverty reduction programme in Ghana are intricately related and intertwined. As indicated in the figure 6, a number of factors and forces drive and influence the way local government and NGOs relate to each other.

The figure depicts a distillation of forces driving the relations, which exhibit positive, negative, neutral or both positive and negative isomorphic pressures of coercive, mimetic or normative or a combination of these forces. The influence of such complex reaction of forces culminates in four typologies of relations which have a number of implications for poverty reduction programme implementation. These forces either exude and/or shape the nature of the relations - distilled into the four typologies. The nature of the relations [typologies] then influences the way programmes of the action are implemented.

In view of the dynamic and complex driving forces and nature of the relations, the implication for poverty reduction programme implementation become indeterminate and contingent on the behaviour of the actors. Although both actors acknowledge that
they find the relations useful for their programmes they don't avail themselves to take advantage of the relations. To this end, the relations though generally positive, have not had a significant impact on poverty reduction programme implementation save to provide generally cosmetic, rhetorical and arms-length appeasement for the actors. For more enduring impact, the identified minimal impacts and avenues for potential impact must be explored further. Since it is established that external forces act more strongly on the actors than the mutual forces acting between them, it might take external actors and forces to drive the process. The linkages between the research questions are illustrated on figure 6.
Figure 6: Interrelations of the three Research Questions of the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of force driving the relations</th>
<th>Nature of Influence and classification within DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) classification</th>
<th>Nature of relations</th>
<th>Implications of the Relations for Poverty Reduction Prog. Implement.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Legal requirements</td>
<td>Dormant coercive isomorphic pressure</td>
<td>Tokenistic Collaboration</td>
<td>Citizens’ participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donor Influence</td>
<td>Positive isomorphic force.</td>
<td>Superficial and Suspicious Cordiality</td>
<td>Transparency and Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy Requirements and Guarantees</td>
<td>Positive coercive isomorphic force.</td>
<td>Convenient and Cautious Partnerships</td>
<td>Effects of programme monitoring results and outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and Traditional Forces</td>
<td>Positive mimetic coercive isomorphic force.</td>
<td>Friendly foes?</td>
<td>Financial and Project Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Motivated Reasons</td>
<td>Positive coercive isomorphic force.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dependency Syndrome/Mandate conundrum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results Motivated Reasons</td>
<td>Positive coercive isomorphic force.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Synergies of Capacity Exchanges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterpart Funding Requirement</td>
<td>Positive coercive isomorphic force.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Information Availability and Sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity Exchanges</td>
<td>Positive normative/coercive isomorphic forces.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Better Access to Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Sustainability reasons</td>
<td>Positive mimetic isomorphic force.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dilution of politics of development and balancing the Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Associational groups and forums</td>
<td>Normative</td>
<td></td>
<td>Equitable distribution of Development Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences in the development Approach</td>
<td>Negative normative/mimetic isomorphic forces acting against the relations.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fungibility or resource reallocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donor Regulations</td>
<td>Negative coercive isomorphic force.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pro-poor targeting and Mainstreaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political and Elite Capture</td>
<td>Negative normative force.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Central and Local Government Relations</td>
<td>Negative coercive isomorphic force.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality Cults</td>
<td>Positive/negative normative isomorphic force.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Poverty Reduction programme</td>
<td>Positive/negative normative/mimetic force.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author Construct, 2013
8.7 Conclusion

This chapter provides the discussions and reflections of the researcher and connects the thesis to the extant literature indicating the insights that this study brings. The relations types indicate that there are problems of trust between the agencies as mutual suspicion is very evident. The chapter also establishes that although each of the actors acknowledges the importance of the other, they prefer to act alone unless it is convenient for their cause or on peripheral issues. The exception is this case is when external actors compel them.

The chapter also discusses the drivers and concludes that unlike previous studies that identified isomorphic forces positively influencing the relations between organisations, the forces identified as driving the relations between local government and NGOs are positive, negative, neutral and both positive and negative. Whereas positive relations were to be desired due to their implications for programme implementation, caution is sounded as there could arise situations in which the actors may collude. In view of this, negative relations may be useful in ensuring enhanced watchdog roles of one actor over the other. This study also classifies these forces into micro, meso and macro level forces. It establishes that the macro forces were more dominant in driving and shaping the relations between local government and NGOs. Although the chapter indicates that the two actors have agency and participate in the negotiation of spaces within the relations, their influence was less dominant.

The chapter concludes by identifying a number of implications of the relations and the drivers for the implementation of poverty reduction programmes. Whereas some of these implications are actual, some remain potential and are dependent upon the behaviours of the actors within the relations. In the next chapter, this study is summarised, evaluated, policy implications drawn and suggestion for future research outlined.
9. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

9.0 Introduction

This study investigates the nature, driving forces and the implications of the relations between local government and NGOs for poverty reduction programme implementation in Ghana. This goal was framed into three research questions. These research questions were meant to address the limitations in the literature. The limitations identified in the extant literature is that studies on relations between government and NGOs had focussed largely on central government and NGOs assuming in the greater part that the relations at the local government level mimic the central government level. However, research has suggested that the level of government in question exudes different relations. This study has proposed a new typology of relations which contributes to addressing the limitation in the literature. In addition, studies on the driving forces for the relations have also focussed on forces driving central government and NGOs relations. These studies have hitherto focussed mainly on the efficiency and economy factors. Also, understanding these forces have not previously been studied using NIT perspectives. This study unveils these forces with NIT as the analytical lens and establishes that, unlike previous studies which argue that isomorphic forces pulled organisations into homogeneity, forces that drive the relations between local government and NGOs in Ghana are positive, negative or a combination of these. This study therefore opens up a new discussion which suggests that isomorphism, as popularised by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) should be re-examined.

This chapter presents the summary and conclusions of the study. It begins by summarising the earlier chapters indicating their scope of coverage and their contribution to the attainment of the overall goal of the study. Next, it presents a summary if the key findings of this study and proceeds to outline the contribution to knowledge. The chapter also presents the policy recommendations and suggestions for future research and finally, it presents the author’s reflection on the entire PhD process. The reflections highlights the social and educational background of the researcher, the professional development and experiences gained during the PhD study, the research outputs to be made from the PhD thesis once it is completed, the publications in peer-reviewed journals during the PhD study and the conferences attended.
9.1 Summary of the Study

In addressing the research goal and responding to the demands of the research questions, the study is organised into nine chapters dealing with the conception, the methods, results, findings, conclusions and suggestions for further research. This section summarises the nine chapters which together addressed the research questions.

Chapter one introduces the thesis, setting out the background and outlining the problem statement. The chapter outlines five research gaps that form the justification for the study. These gaps were framed into three research questions. It presents the research context and a summary of the focus of the nine chapters within the thesis outline section.

Chapter two of the study was segmented into two major sections. The first section reviewed the literature on the relationship between government and NGOs and the relationship between local government and NGOs. The key focus of these was to identify a) the relationship types within the extant literature and b) to examine the forces driving the relations. The review indicates that there is extensive research interest in the many aspects of the relationships between central government and NGO culminating into several typologies of such relations. There is also extensive body of literature about the drivers of these relations between central government and NGOs. These studies largely concentrate on the central government and its relationship with NGOs. However, interest in studying the relations between local government and NGOs appear very minimal. This leaves a significant research gap because not much is known about the nature of the relations at the local government level. Secondly, the studies appear developed country biased, black boxing the developing country context and most especially the African context. These gaps form the aim of the first research question. This chapter therefore provided the basis for establishing aspects of the research problem and for outlining the focus of this study.

The second section of the chapter overviews the New Institutional Theory focussing upon DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983) classification of isomorphic forces as the theoretical lens. They argued that organisations within an institutional field are driven by the three isomorphic forces of coercive, normative and mimetic. This was adopted as the framework for analysing the nature of the forces acting within the institutional field of decentralised local poverty reduction programme implementation.
In terms of the role of the chapter as part of the whole thesis, it contributes to outlining the key research gap being addressed by the thesis. It also provides the background to the thesis, setting it within the context of studies in the field. It provides the foundation on which this thesis is able to relate and connect with previous studies.

Chapter three of the thesis is devoted to the methodology and the philosophical foundations of the study. This study adopts a subjectivist approach to studying social phenomena and is guided by nominalist ontology, anti-positivist epistemology and idiographic methodology (Burell and Morgan 1979). This study adopts an interpretive paradigm. Adopting this paradigm enabled the researcher to carry out this study relying upon the inter-subjectivities of both the researcher and the subjects taking the context of the study and meanings made by actors of the research into consideration (Angen 2000). The relations between local government and NGOs are social relations, meanings of which can largely be conceived socially adopting social and contextual meanings derived by the actors and the researchers. These relations, the driving forces behind them and their results are all defined by several inter-subjective perceptions and idiosyncrasies.

In line with this research orientation, the study adopts an idiographic methodology applying semi-structured interviews, documentary reviews, observations and mini focus group discussions as the key methods for data collection. The data was analysed first by transcribing the interviews and focus discussion tapes, establishing themes based upon leads from the literature, theory and emergent themes from the data. This chapter was useful in providing both a philosophical and methodological bases for the research. This is in line with the qualitative research evaluation criteria suggesting that, the choice of appropriate methodology is important to ensuring research quality and robustness (Dixon-Woods et al. 2004; Silverman 2005; Tracy 2010). It also provided the framework for assessing the contribution to knowledge.

Chapter four introduces the political and developmental context of Ghana, providing backgrounds of Ghana’s current development. It also overviews the current local government system and highlights the decentralisation reform and how it is structured and practiced in Ghana. This chapter presents an overview of the poverty reduction programmes in Ghana such as the LEAP, NYEP [GYEEDA], MASLOC, School Feeding, Capitation Grant and NHIS. The chapter concludes that these programmes are decentralised to local government areas but strictly controlled from the national level.
They are also heavily politicised and remain very unsustainable. Since these are not managed by local governments, NGOs are hardly involved in their design, implementation and evaluation. The chapter also presents both the relations between central government and local government and central government and NGOs. It also examines the relations between local government and NGOs in Ghana. This chapter establishes that the relations between central government and local governments have important implications for the relations between local government and NGOs. This is so because local government lacks autonomy and the agency to relate to NGOs on their own terms. It is also significant to note that this chapter establishes that even though the local government law mandates local government to lead the process of engagement between local government and NGOs, this appears not to happen in ways that will provide avenues for effective synergy building. This chapter provides a basis for analysing the relations between local government and NGOs as it provides the inter-organisational context within both NGOs and local governments work.

Chapter five of the study presented results in relations to the nature of the relations between local government and NGOs. This was meant to respond to the research gap identified in the literature relative to the little interest in studying the relations between local government and NGOs. Overwhelmingly, research interest concentrates on the relations between central government and NGOs with the implicit assumption that the relations at that level may be mimicked at the local level. As a result, the derivative typologies describe what has been largely a macro level typology without reflecting the micro level exigencies. As argued by Gidron et al. (1992) and Mercer,(1999) the nature of the relation between governments and NGOs differ depending upon the level of government in question. The argument is that the relations between local government and NGOs are far more complex and intricate than what pertains at the national level. In view of this, efforts to study the relations at the national level may not capture the situation at the local level. It is in this regard that this study proposed to study and contribute to the literature and debate on relations between governments and NGOs.

This chapter distilled various typologies of the relations between central government and NGO but very little had been found concerning the relations between local government and NGOs. This gap was sought to be filled by this study when it provided a novel typology for classifying the relations between local government and NGOs. In proposing these typologies, the study examined the relations between local government and NGOs in various poverty reduction programmes implemented in the case study
regions and districts. This chapter proposed four typologies namely superficial and suspicious cordiality; convenient and cautious partnerships; tokenistic collaboration; and friendly foes relations. These were distilled relying on a multidimensional approach to classifying relations between local government and NGOs. These typologies reveal that the relations between local government and NGOs are far more complex and dynamic than some studies postulate. With these complexities, it is not enough to assume that they mimic the relations between central government and NGOs.

Chapter six of the thesis presents the findings of the study on the forces driving the relations between local government and NGOs in Ghana. This chapter is guided by the new institutional theory, particularly DiMaggio and Powell (1983) classification of isomorphic forces. This chapter identifies seventeen forces and classifies the forces into coercive, normative and mimetic. However, contrary to the DiMaggio and Powell (1983) classification, this study distils these forces into negative, positive, neutral or negative and positive forces. This type of classification of the forces extends our understanding of DiMaggio and Powell (1983) work and provides the impetus for further research into how these forces shape the relations between local government and NGOs. The study also distils these forces into micro-level, meso-level and macro level forces. Again, these classification had not been previosuly done and presents a novel classification of the forces driving the relations.

Chapter seven examines the implications of the relations between local government and NGOs indicating both the value and challenges of the relations. The chapter establishes that the relations between local government and NGOs have both positive and negative implications for poverty reduction programme implementation. The chapter unveils both actual and potential implications of the relations.

Chapter eight presents the discussions and interpretation of the research findings. It connects the study to previous studies and presents the reflections of the researcher. The chapter also unveils the interconnectivities of the entire thesis and indicates the key practical and theoretical insights of the study. In effect therefore, this chapter presents a synthesis of the novel contributions of the study to extend our understating of the subject matter and theoretical implications of the subject. It begins with separate synthesis of each research question and concludes with an overall synthesis.

The last chapter, nine, summarises the study, provides a summary of the key findings and provides the contribution to knowledge.
### 9.2 Summary of Key Findings

As outlined and discussed in chapter eight, a number of important findings have emerged from this study. These are summarised in table 8.

**Table 8: Research Findings at a Glance and by Research Question.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Key findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• How do local government and NGOs relate in Ghana?</td>
<td>• Contrary to earlier studies, the findings of this study reveal complex relations between local government and NGOs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Local Governments do not seek to repress NGOs but see them as “helpers” in accomplishing their mandate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The level of trust between local governments and NGO is very low and affects their relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Relations are not simply on binary typology but multi-dimensional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Complex mix of relations characterised as:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Superficial and Suspicious Cordiality;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Tokenistic collaboration;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- friendly foes; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- convenient and cautious partnerships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What forces drive the relationships between local government and NGOs and how do these forces shape the relations?</td>
<td>Complex mix of seventeen forces including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Economic and efficiency, social, cultural, organisational, personality, political among other forces drive the relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Forces are not only positive driving organisations into homogenisation within an institutional field as espoused by DiMaggio and Powell but the forces are also negative constraining homogenisation, defying the positive homogeneity thesis of NIT advocates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Positive relations are ideal for enhancing programme deliveries but may frustrate quick delivery of programmes and may be exploited by the actors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Negative forces constrain the relations and prevent synergy building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Negative forces constrain the relations but may contribute to enhancing the watchdog roles of the actors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The forces operate at different levels of the institutional field: micro-meso-macro levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• External forces are rather stronger than the micro and meso level forces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How are the relations influencing the implementation of poverty reduction</td>
<td>The implications of the relations are also multi-faceted. They include complex influences including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Enhanced accountability and transparency in project management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Citizens’ participation and engagement;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tendency for improved transparency and accountability;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>Key findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| policies at the local level? | • Effects of programme monitoring results and outcomes on performance of actors;  
• Financial and project support;  
• The tendency for the actors to fall for the dependency syndrome and abdicate their mandate;  
• Synergies of capacity exchanges;  
• Information availability and sharing;  
• better access to communities;  
• Dilution of politics of development and balancing the act;  
• Equitable distribution of development projects;  
• Fungibility or resource reallocation; and  
• Pro-poor targeting and mainstreaming. |

Source: Author Construct, 2013

9.3 Evaluation of Contribution to Knowledge

This section applies the framework for contribution to knowledge outlined in pages 101-102 under section 3.19 of chapter three to outline the contribution to knowledge of this study. This study identifies with the statement by (Burell and Morgan 1979:5) that “… growth of knowledge is essentially a cumulative process in which new insights are added to existing stock of knowledge…” and outlines the new insights brought to bear on the discourse on local government and NGO relations. The contribution to knowledge of this study includes: an empirical demonstration of relationships between NGOs and local government; a novel typology of local government and NGO relations; a novel application of the new-institutional theory as a theoretical lens to understand the relations between local government and NGOs; a novel classification of the nature of influence of the isomorphic forces; and new insights on the implications of the relations for poverty reduction programme implementation.

9.3.1 Empirical Demonstration of Relationships between Local Government and NGOs

One of the additions of this study to the discourse on inter-organisational relations is an empirical investigation of the relations between local government and NGOs in a developing country context. Hitherto, investigation into the relations between
governments and NGOs had concentrated at the national level. Empirical studies on the relations between local government and NGOs in Ghana has not been previously conducted and on that basis this study contributes to knowledge in line with the criterion that contribution to knowledge can be made by “Carrying out empirical work that hasn't been done before” (Phillips and Pugh 2010:69-70).

9.3.2 New Insights on the Typology of Local Government and NGO Relations

Thus far, the literature on the typologies of relations between government and NGOs has been largely focussed upon central government relations with NGOs. This study pushes the frontiers of this further with a novel classification of local government and NGO relations in Ghana which might form a basis for analysing such relations across the developing world and specifically the Africa region. These typologies constitute one of the few attempts at classifying the relations between local government and NGOs especially within the African context and more particularly in Ghana. The usefulness of the typology is that it provides a guide to both researchers and development practitioners on how to proceed in investigating relations between the actors in other contexts. Also and more importantly, the typology of relations developed may be useful to development practitioners and advocates in the design and implementation of their development interventions to make them more successful. According to Phillips and Pugh (2010:69-70) “making a synthesis that hasn't been done before” constitutes contribution to knowledge; and since this type of typology has previously not been done, this constitutes contribution to knowledge.

9.3.3 An Extension of Understanding of Forces Driving Relations between Local Government and NGOs

Hitherto, studies into forces driving relations between government and NGOs have been largely concentrated at the central government level. To this end, emphasis was put on the forces driving central government and NGOs relations. In a limited number of studies where attempts were made to study these forces at the local level, no logical and coherent identification and discussion of the forces were undertaken. This study, focussing on the relations between local government and NGOs, has succeeded in
identifying the forces driving these relations. This extends our understanding on the discourse at lower levels of government which had rarely been undertaken in the past. As discussed in chapter six, several forces drive the relations between local government and NGOs, the articulation of which bring new insights into this field.

9.3.4 The Application of the New Institutional Theory as Theoretical Lens to understand the Relations between Local Government and NGOs

This study also applies New Institutional Theory as an analytical lens to understanding the relations between local government and NGOs. Whereas the few studies carried out in this field do not apply the theory to understand the relations between local government and NGOs, this study goes beyond an empirical investigation into applying this theory, which is novel in this field. Further, this study provides critical insights into the application of DiMaggio and Powell (1983) three isomorphic forces into analysing the relations between local government and NGOs.

9.3.5 Classification of the Nature of Influence of the Isomorphic Forces

Another novel contribution of this study is the extension of the classification of DiMaggio and Powell (1983) isomorphic forces. Whereas DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argued that the forces are pulling the organisations into becoming more and more similar, this study establishes that some forces also pull the organisations apart and prevent them from achieving congruence in goals, structures, projects and methods. This study identifies positive, negative, neutral and both positive and negative forces which pull organisations in different direction facilitating or constraining the relations between local government and NGOs. These findings are new in the application of the New Institutional Theory in the study of relations between local government and NGOS. This study has broadened and deepened our understanding on the nature of the isomorphic forces and the fact that they do not only drive organisations in institutional field towards each other but could also drive them apart and prevent them from relating to each other.
9.3.6 New Insights on Implications of the Relations for Poverty Reduction Programme Implementation

Another contribution relates to a careful distillation of the implications of these relations for poverty reduction programme implementation which hitherto, had not been so articulated. This study finds that, the relations between the two agencies would have both positive and negative implications which had not been previously identified in studies.

This study unveils the implications of the relations to poverty reduction programme implementation by identifying the actual benefits and challenges of the relations between local government and NGOs. It also unveils the potential dangers of positive relations between the two actors – the potential for the actors to collude and engage in acts that might be detrimental to the programmes and their beneficiaries. This study takes the view that although positive relations may inure to the benefits of programme implementation, perfectly fitting positive relations may prevent the actors from performing their watchdog roles and compromise their vigilance on the other actors. This view which requires further investigation to consolidate the argument, have not previously been articulated and is considered novel as far as this study’s findings are concerned.

Another aspect of the study that brings in new insights relates to the distillation of the implications of a negative relation. Thus, negative relations prevent the actors from exploiting the advantages of synergy building and resource pooling. However, an even more insightful aspect of the relations is the potential benefits of negative relations between the actors. Negative implications have the tendency to improve the watchdog roles played by each actor on the other.

9.4 Context Specific Policy and Management Recommendations

In view of the foregoing discussions about the nature, driving forces and implications of the relations for poverty reduction policy implementation, a number of issues are thrown out for consideration. The recommendations are discussed with the view that they do not constitute quick-fixes to solve the challenges inherent in the relations.
9.4.1 Review of the Decentralisation Law

The role of NGOs in development management is acknowledged worldwide but in Ghana, this role still receives lip service. In many instances, local governments just like other state agencies are urged to work with NGOs and other civil society organisations. However, the enabling legal framework does not exist to define the parameters of such injunctions. In that regard and since local government as well as the NGOs are not always altruistic, working together would not come along naturally. It is as a result of this that this study takes the view that the law that requires local government to work with NGOs and other civil society organisations needs review to establish a clear and coherent framework for the discharge of this mandate. In addition, there is the need for a legislative instrument to give meaning to the aspects of the law that requires both agencies to perform certain functions. Although the decentralisation system in Ghana is undergoing some review, these aspects of the law do not appear to have been considered. Consequently, it would be appropriate to review the law to incorporate concrete measures to enhance the relations and clarify what their implications will be. However, laws and legal instruments do not automatically guarantee implementation success. In Ghana, there are some laws that never get applied and utilised. In view of this, a call for review of the law to incorporate mechanisms for enhancing the relations may not necessarily lead to enhanced relations. Nonetheless, a law in this direction will provide a framework for actors interested in pushing the frontiers of the relations between local government and NGOs to have bases for their action.

9.4.2 Prescriptive Regulation from the NDPC

Local governments receive lots of directives from the NDPC in the form of guidelines and therefore these guidelines will be very good conduits to influence the local government to establish relationship frameworks for enhancing the relationship between them and NGOs. In Ghana, the NDPC provides guidelines on the development of the medium-term development plans; monitoring and evaluation plans, annual progress reports, and the training of officers of the local government to perform specific functions from time to time. In this regard, NDPC should seriously consider fashioning out guidelines that require local government to report on the activities of NGOs.
enhance this, NDPC should also provide guidelines for NGOs on how to report their activities to local government. These would ensure that pressure is brought to bear on each actor to execute their mandate and perform their responsibilities.

It is important to note however that development actors prefer to have stronger and more independent local governments capable of determining their own course of development with little external influence as possible. As a result, the call has been to move more towards devolution in Ghana. To have the NDPC continue to increase its grip on local governments with more prescriptive regulations and guidelines will defeat the desire to move towards devolution. But local government in developing countries such as Ghana lack lots of critical skills and resources which make them largely incapable of dealing with the development challenges confronting them. Guidelines in this regard may then provide these local government agencies the needed support to leverage their incapacities. In the longer term when the local governments in Ghana have enhanced their capacities, the ideal will be to have endogenous strategies including local policy guidelines, for enhancing their relations with NGOs.

### 9.4.3 Legal Framework on NGOs

Although there are a number of legislations in Ghana such as the companies’ code, the local government act, and cabinet regulations, these are so scattered and uncoordinated that, they hardly constitute a legal reference point for regulating NGO activities. This way, NGOs have often operated with little or no regulations and oversights. An attempt over two decades ago was frustrated by protest from NGOs. However, in the interest of NGOs and other CSOs, the state needs to promulgate a law that will protect NGOs, public interest and the public. In this regard, the self-regulation policy being promoted by NGOs is considered a worthwhile venture. However, self-regulation is largely voluntary and may not be as effective as state sponsored regulation. One way to enhance state regulation is through a legal framework and a regulatory agency or Czar, independent of government control to regulate and keep NGOs in check. Like exist elsewhere such as the UK, such a body will have a non-political, independent but quasi-judicial mandate to regulate the NGO sector. To dispel the suspicions from NGOs about government using the agency as a whip master, NGOs could be asked to provide the framework for instituting and operating it with jointly developed guidelines and
regulations. Although the performance of many state agencies has been rather low, a number of independent agencies have discharged their duties well. With the right powers and right calibre of staff, the agency should be able to play a critical oversight role on NGOs to ensure they discharge their duties as they are mandated to.

9.4.4 Donor Driven Prescriptions

Although a weak tool in respect of its implementation, donor agencies can drive the process of improved relations between local government and NGOs by ensuring that programme support and funding to both NGOs and local government require them to work with each other. This thesis does not support the co-optation and take-over of roles; however, it proposes a more transparent regime of reporting and counter evaluation of programmes of each partner by the other. The role of donor agencies in shaping and driving the relations between the two actors is significant as long as donor support in terms of funds and technical support are concerned and this should be used to drive the relations. This would be an example of a coercive macro-level force. A number of challenges are likely to make this rather difficult to achieve. The first relates to the fact that many of the donor agencies that fund NGO activities lack critical local knowledge and often make their judgements based upon generic country information. In addition, not all donor agencies are able to drive NGO activities using their programmes. In many cases, NGOs drive donor agencies into their line of activities. As a result of these, donor agencies may be incapable of actually leading and setting the agenda for NGOs in terms of their relations with NGOs. Also important is the view that donor agencies hardly push local interest but largely their own preferences. To leave local agenda setting for external donor agencies may therefore not be ideal for local development in its entirety.

9.4.5 Leadership from Local Government and its Agencies

Local government and its agencies need to assert their authority as agents of the state and make use of the powers at their disposal to provide institutional leadership. Institutional leadership is considered vital and the NGOs have expressed the desire to have the local government provide it. Leadership in this respect should lead to both
voluntary and non-voluntary compliance and should give indications of punitive sanctions against non-compliance. What is important to note is that local governments are constrained in a number of ways to provide this. Apart from shortage of critical skills, the influence of politics may also negatively affect the capacity of local government to provide leadership. Leadership may not come naturally and must be demanded by other actors. If NGOs are really interested in the competence of leadership at the level of local government, they must be prepared to support leadership development at that level. Perhaps, NGOs, just like local governments are paying lip service and will resist local government attempts at getting them to align their activities. If NGOs have been able to thwart initiatives by central government at regulating their activities, they may just apply the same tactics to prevent local government from providing the leadership needed to push the agenda of the relations. These notwithstanding, leadership from local government should contribute to enhancing the relations and push further the frontiers of poverty reduction.

9.4.6 NGO Coalitions

The responsibility to facilitate an enhanced relation with local government could also be championed by NGOs and their coalitions. The assumption here is that the NGOs will be willing to relate to the local government and therefore will use their networks and coalitions to demand that local government opens up to them. What might facilitate this situation is the use of sector coalitions such as NGOs in Health, NGOs in Water and Sanitation, NGOs in Educations among others. It is important to note that such coalitions already exist and what must be done is for them to demand two things: 1) that local government provide avenues for their members to participate in their programmes and 2) that their members agree to provide avenues for local government to participate in their programmes. Whereas the altruistic motives of some NGOs may be doubted and they cannot therefore be trusted to push this, it will be in their interest to champion this for a number of reasons – 1) that doing so will enhance their relations with local government and provide more opportunities for securing donor project funds, 2) that their own networks will be strengthened and 3) that they will present a stronger unified voice in their relations with local government. These coalitions should provide
synergies among the NGOs themselves and between them and local governments for enhancing poverty reduction programme implementation.

9.4.7 District and Regional Development Forums

One of the platforms to enhance the relations between local government and NGOs is the formation of district and regional development forums. This is likely to yield more results and provide more impetus for development especially with the introduction of the composite budgeting system being piloted in some parts of Ghana. The composite budgeting allows the state to budget along district lines and to transfer all resources for local government and all the decentralised agencies to a composite account managed by the local government. Consequently, all agencies in the district will draw their budgets from the composite account and activities to be implemented will have to have been captured in the budget. This provides a unique opportunity for the maximum utilisation of the harmonised district development plan and annual programme of activities. Since all the agencies will often meet for budget preparation, hearings and approvals, this platform could be used to rally all NGOs operating within the district to participate. Although this may be a very useful platform, what has been lacking in development management in Ghana is not the institution of such platforms per se. It is actually their effective operationalisation that has become problematic. Local governments are mandated to provide such platforms to discuss development plans during their preparation. However, in many cases such platforms have failed to serve their purpose. Some areas have made very good use of such platforms and their experiences could become cases for sharing. In the cases where these have been effective, both local government and NGOs have shown keen interest in making them work. NGOs have relished funding such meetings because it opens up avenues for them to better engage with local governments. One way of making the actors interested in these could be through mandating and popularising such engagements.
9.4.8 Institutional Oversight for NGO Activities

Within the decentralised system in Ghana, the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) has the oversight responsibility over NGOs and their operations. However, the local government also operates a parallel system of oversight with NGO desk officers within the district planning coordinating units performing the same or similar functions like the DSW. This arrangement does not adequately respond and capture the realities on the ground as it creates conflicts. The Department of Social Welfare could be revamped to perform this role which they have failed to perform due to resource constraints and lack of focus. The DSW should also be equipped to provide backstopping for NGOs and coordinate the relations between the local government and NGOs. The outfit should ensure that non-state actors are kept abreast with the development and programmes of the NGOs. It should receive, evaluate and analyse NGO activities and reports and provide information on the activities of NGOs in the district. It is important to have the department prepare periodic reports of the work of NGOs in the districts and have these reports feed into the development framework of the local government. It is rather strange that while the DSW suffers from inadequate resources and qualified personnel due to neglect by both central and local governments, the local government creates a parallel system to duplicate the functions and dissipate the little resources available. If the DSW will get the right support and funding as well as committed staff, they might be able to provide the critical oversight needed for ensuring that NGOs deliver on their mandate and facilitate the relations between local government and NGOs for sustainable poverty reduction.

9.4.9 Collaborative Medium-Term Development Plan Design, Implementation and Evaluation

Although there is some semblance of collaborative development of medium-term development plans, this was found to be only cosmetic and requires an overhaul. This process should be properly instituted and enforced. The NDPC should deploy its agents to assist in driving the process in a nation-wide programme and to broaden the scope of the participants to include all categories of NGOs and civil society organisations. Although the cycle for the preparation of the development plan is long enough, the
process does not start until the plan end of date is reached. To be effective, the process should be continuous and iterative and must include not only preparation, but also implementation and evaluation. These must be made participatory in the real sense of the word. There should be a deliberate process to engage all the stakeholders and encourage the participation of the local people using traditional institutional leaders such as chiefs and opinion leaders. Outputs should also be subject to discussions especially in the media. Radio programmes should be held to discuss the activities of NGOs and civil society organisations. What probably frustrates this process is the lack of interest by central government. Whereas local governments are encouraged to engage with NGOs, central government has failed to make space for NGOs in many of the poverty reduction programmes run from the top, especially in their operationalisation and implementation. Central government should show commitment by ensuring that poverty reduction programmes run from the top have specific outlines for the involvement of NGOs as a way of motivating local government to do same.

9.4.10 Enhancing the Watchdog Roles

One of the ways of enhancing poverty reduction would be to ensure that the watchdog roles played by each partner in the relation are strengthened. This study takes the view that to achieve accelerated poverty reduction, the two actors must deepen their understanding of their roles and responsibilities in ensuring that they do not just deliver their respective mandates but also keep watch over the other party. As has been argued earlier, a perfect relation may not be in the interest of the beneficiaries of the programmes of these agencies as that might exude collusion among the actors to the detriment of programme beneficiaries. In this regard, this study maintains that while each agency maintains a consciously negotiated relation with the other, it also keeps a monitoring and watchdog posture with the view to keeping the other agency on its toes. But as indicated, a certain framework for working this out is required and the laws, regulations and a legislative instrument should facilitate this. It is important not to assume that these agencies are going to be on the neck of each other making sure each delivers its mandates. An important consideration is what they gain or lose in keeping an eye on the each other. If any or both of the actors gain from playing those roles well, they will be motivated to continue. However, if they can make gains, for instance, from
mutual deliberate oversights, they may just swing in the direction of benefits and keep a blind eye. It is in this regard that third party roles in ensuring that there are no compromises become important. Third parties such as citizens and citizen groups should moderate the performance of these roles and keep an eye on the two actors from possible collusion.

9.5 Implications for Further Research

This study makes some findings and analyses that require further research enquiries and validations to provide concrete contribution to both theory and practice.

While this study makes a novel contribution into examining the relations between local government and NGOs in Ghana and relates this to what may happen in other African context and developing world generally, it is important to note that more studies are required in unveiling the nature of the relations, the drivers and their implications for poverty reduction. This study has delved into the complexities of the relations but as one of the few studies, it is anticipated that it would stimulate interest in the field. This is particularly important so as to inform development policy and practice to enhance the impacts that can be made on reducing poverty.

In view of the peculiarity of local government in developing countries and the dependence of NGOs on donor agencies in the global north, how do relations between local government and NGOs differ across the development divide? Studies into the nature and typologies of the relations remain largely focussed upon the central government and its relations with NGOs in many developed country contexts. In view of this, much is still not known about typologies of relations within the developing country contexts. Although this study has ventured into identifying some relationship typologies, the area still requires studies from other parts of the developing world to extend our knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of the relations.

Previous studies led by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) had distilled three forces acting to draw organisations in an institutional field to move towards convergence on various institutional elements. Till date, there appears not to have been other views suggesting that the forces could actually drive these institutions apart from each other. There is the
need for further research in this area to confirm or disprove the assertions made by this study about the opposing forces which could act within the institutional field.

9.6 Reflections on the PhD Process

9.6.1 Researcher’s Background and Role

In interpretative research, the characteristics and background of the researcher are important elements because a piece of research can only be as good as the researcher (Angen 2000). Since the researcher is the medium for perceiving his research, interpretive researchers are required to self-disclose their background and past experiences that may influence their thought processes and the conduct of the research endeavour (Krefting 1991).

As an interpretive researcher therefore, it is acknowledge that my background, knowledge, experiences and even aspirations affect the generation of knowledge and therefore, I feel obligated to disclose my background. The knowledge generated will not only be meanings of what the subjects make of their interpretation, but also the meanings that the researcher makes of the interaction between the respondents and himself.

For many people, education has been a right and not a privilege. However, for me, education was neither a right nor a privilege, it was fate and accidental. Born to a rural farmer in the remote village of Adjentriwa over 12 km from Yeji, the capital of the Pru district of the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana, education was purely accidental. My father had five wives and my mother was the forth in terms of seniority. Although my father was not lucky to have had so many children in comparison with his peers, I was the eight of eleven surviving children. As fate had it, none of my elder and younger siblings were educated. I happen to be the only one of the immediate and extended family to have been sent to School. Since my father’s village did not have a school, I have had to be ridden to school in Yeji and left there alone with people I did not know and did not even understand their language.

In spite of the challenging and arduous tasks of footing to the village every weekend to fetch weekly supply of food rations, and in spite of the challenging and poor nature of
rural schools, I was able to weave through the sieve to attend University and attain a degree, the first of its kind in my immediate and extended family. The road to the start of the PhD studies in the University of Manchester had been serpentine; going through education by instalment oscillating between work and school. The award of a PhD would crown several years of toils in the bid to attain higher heights in education. This would serve as inspiration to many of my kith and kin especially the younger generation to strive to reach higher heights in their pursuits of educational attainment.

The researcher is Ghanaian and has resided in Ghana throughout his life with occasional short visits outside of Ghana. He had all his education in Ghana with a diploma, bachelors and a master of philosophy degree in Public Administration from the University of Ghana in 1999, 2003 and 2006 respectively. He had earlier had three years training as a teacher. Before taking a lecturer position at the Department of Public Administration and Health Services Management at the University of Ghana Business School in 2008, he had taught at all levels of Ghana’s educational system. Before embarking on the PhD studies, he had taught Management of NGOs, Democracy and Policy Making, Public Sector HRM to undergraduate level students and Organisational Development to Masters level students. He also worked as Assistant Projects Manager and later as Projects Manager in a national NGO based in Accra and with programmes in four regions in Ghana. In this position, the research undertook community needs diagnosis and designed projects and developed project proposals for funding to implement them. He coordinated donor relations and managed the NGOs relations with other stakeholders especially the local government. In this role, the researcher came into constant contact with local government. This part of his role coupled with his teaching of NGO management was important in influencing his choice of this topic for investigation. Analyses in this research are therefore based upon the interviews, focus group discussions, documentary reviews and observations but with interpretations and reflections from the background, experience and the research orientation of the researcher.

9.6.2 Professional Development and Experience

The PhD in the University of Manchester has contributed significantly to my professional development and experience in diverse ways. I have been exposed to
several research platforms and in the process I have met and interacted with many distinguished scholars many of who have become mentors in my career. In addition, the study in University of Manchester offered me the opportunity to teach on the MSc programme and to encounter students from many parts of the world. I have also reviewed manuscripts for many journals including the International Journal of Public Administration and the journal of Community Development. The PhD process has contributed significantly to immersing me into the theoretical jungle and in the process has exposed me to several theories. I have also been exposed to several philosophical perspectives especially in organisational studies, public administration and development studies. I have received significant theoretical and philosophical insights which would be very useful in future academic life. Other aspects of professional achievement during this period of my study are outlined below.

9.6.3 Peer-Review Publications

The PhD endeavour has contributed significantly to my professional development in many ways including my visibility in the academia. Since joining the University of Manchester, my writing skills have significantly improved which has consequently upped the number of my publications in peer-reviewed journals. The PhD output has generated a number of potential papers to be completed in the next few months. These papers are being targeted at the top tier journals in the fields of public administration, organisational studies and development studies. The following papers are being prepared from the thesis for publications in peer-review journals:

1. Marriage of the unwilling? Examining the relations between local government and NGOs in developing countries,
2. Isomorphic forces in action? New Institutional Theory view of local government and NGO relations in developing countries.
3. Nature, driving forces and implications of the relations between local government and NGOs in developing countries.
4. For better or for worse? An enquiry into the implications of the relations between local government and NGOs for poverty reduction programme implementation in developing countries.
5. Isomorphism? Which one? Negative or positive? A critique of the influence of isomorphism in organisational homogenisation.

Since enrolling in the PhD programme in 2010, I have put the skills acquired to use in publishing nine articles in peer-reviewed journals. These articles will enhance my profile within my University in Ghana and contribute to my promotion from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer on my return. Please see appendix 1 for the full list of the articles. I have also attended three conferences and participated in a number of skills training programmes both within the University of Manchester and outside. Please see appendix 2 for a list of conferences attended.

9.6.4 Challenges

Undertaking the PhD studies in the University of Manchester came along with some personal, family and financial challenges. First and foremost, at the time of admission, my wife had just delivered our third and only girl child. The baby was just three months old when I had to leave the family behind. The stress of thinking about how the wife was going to handle these children alone in my absence was really challenging. Combining the thoughts of the family with initial PhD frustrations compounded my stress. These necessitated my frequent visits to Ghana to ensure keep the family unit together.

Another major challenge encountered was finance. At the beginning of the PhD studentship, I was a self-funding student. The first semester of the programme was so distressing as most of the time was spend thinking about how to raise the next direct debit for the tuition fees. I had to keep doing some consultancies for clients back in Ghana to raise money to pay the fees. It was very refreshing when in the second semester, the Ghana Education fund offered to sponsor my studies. Since funding was secured, I turned down requests for paid work to make time for the thesis writing. This has resulted in the break in link with clients who normally offered training and consultancies. In effect therefore, the desire to acquire a PhD has led to the loss of many clients for extension service.
9.7 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter summarises the thesis by providing a chapter overview of each of the chapters. It outlines and summarises the contribution to knowledge of this thesis. The chapter also presents the implications of the study for research, policy and practice and makes some specific policy recommendation for enhancing the implications of the relations between local government and NGOs.

9.8 General Overall Conclusion

This study sought to investigate the nature, driving forces and the implications of the relations between local government and NGOs for poverty reduction programme implementation in Ghana. Hitherto, studies on relations between government and NGOs had focussed largely on central government and NGOs assuming in the greater part that the relations at the local government level mimic the central government level. However, research has suggested that the levels of government have significant implications for the nature of the relations that exist within a particular jurisdiction. It is suggested that local government level conditions are peculiar and more complex and subsequently have different implications for the nature of the relations forged between local government and NGOs. Further, studies into local government and NGO relations have focussed largely on developed country contexts. However, local governments in developing country contexts are less autonomous than their developed country counterparts; and NGOs in developing countries depend largely on northern donor agencies for their funds. These relations with the respective “parent” organisations have implications for the relations between the agencies themselves. In addition, studies on the driving forces for the relations have also focussed on forces driving central government and NGOs relations. Quite apart from that, the implications of the relations between local government and NGOs have received little research attention. The study therefore set out to unveil the relations between local government and NGOs within the Ghanaian context as case study of the relations in developing country context. This way the study sought to address the limitations in the literature and provide an avenue to open up the discussions on the relations at the local level.

To achieve the goals of the study, it relies on empirical evidence gathered from five districts in two regions in Northern Ghana. Ghana was chosen because the researcher
hails from Ghana but also that after over twenty years of the implementation of the decentralisation and local governance in Ghana; and the high presence of NGOs, poverty is still high. Meanwhile, governments have often urged the two agencies to work together but no evidence exist on what past relations have been and what the implications of such relations have been for poverty reduction programme implementation. To analyse the nature of the relations, interviews are conducted and a number of poverty reduction intervention areas were selected. Out of these, a number of programmes implemented within each of the intervention areas are reviewed to establish the nature of the relations. The study establishes that the relations between local government and NGOs are complex and can be classified within one of four typologies- superficial and suspicious cordiality, tokenistic collaboration, friendly foes and convenient and cautious partnerships. This represents one of the few attempts at typologising the relations between local government and NGOs and constitutes a novel classification scheme.

The study also unveils the driving forces that drive the relations adopting the tenets of new institutionalism and the three isomorphic forces as the analytic lens. The forces driving the relations include legal requirements; donor constraints [my money, my rules]; neo-liberal agenda; donor influence [dancing to my tunes]; counterpart funding and project sustainability requirements; legitimacy requirements and guarantees; differences in the development approach; social and traditional forces [the landlord must welcome you]; resource motivated reasons; personality cult; results motivated reasons; capacity exchanges; influence of central and local government relations; project institutional sustainability concerns; types [forms] of poverty reduction programmes; political and elite capture; and influence of associational groups and forums.

While a number of the forces are positive and drive the agencies towards becoming more and more alike in their programmes and strategies, other forces drive the agencies away from becoming similar. In other words, several forces constrain the relations. This finding of the study contradicts the earlier expositions that forces within the institutional field drive organisations towards becoming more similar. These constraining forces have been termed negative isomorphic forces. Some forces also showed neutral influence while others exhibited more than one type of influence. The study also identified micro, meso and macro-level forces indicating that the forces act on different
levels in their influence on the organisations. These types of analyses had not previously been articulated in this way. This study therefore extends understanding beyond what has been previously articulated.

Further, the study distils implications of the relations for poverty reduction programme implementation. Previous studies have looked at the economic and efficiency implications of the relations between governments and NGOs. Many of these however, are focussed on central government and largely on economy and efficiency. This study examines the economic and efficiency factors but also management and implementation, political and socio-cultural implications of the relations between local government and NGOs. These implications include potential for improvements in citizens’ participation and engagement; a tendency for improved transparency and accountability; effects of programme monitoring results and outcomes on performance of actors; financial and project support; the tendency for the actors to fall for the dependency syndrome and abdicate their mandate; synergies of capacity exchanges; information availability and sharing; better access to communities; dilution of politics of development and balancing the act; equitable distribution of development projects; fungibility or resource reallocation; and pro-poor targeting and mainstreaming. However, due to the nature of the relations - superficial and suspicious cordiality, tokenistic collaboration, friendly foes and convenient and cautious partnerships – many of the positive implications are potentials or largely unrealised rather than actual realised implications. It is also argued that although the relations appear cordial, it has not had a significant boost to poverty reduction programme implementation and the reasons could be summed up in the statement:

I think that it is a love-hate relationship that we have or a relationship of convenience where we don’t want to work with each other but we have to [Interview transcript from YKAVI].
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M3 - 10.1017/S0022278X00007722.


UNECA (2002). Local Governance for Poverty Reduction in Africa: Post-Maputo Follow-up Framework. UNDP.


APPENDIX 1: ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN PEER-REVIEWED JOURNALS SINCE ENROLLING IN THE PHD PROGRAMME

1. **Bawole, J. N.; F. Hossain, K. A. Domfeh, H. Bukari and F. N. Sanyare**


APPENDIX 2: CONFERENCE ATTENDED DURING THE COURSE OF THE PHD

1. **Bawole, N. Justice and Hossain Farhad [?] Isomorphic Forces in Action? Neo-Institutional Theory View of Local Government and NGO Relations in Ghana, Presented at the XVII IRSPM 2013 conference, under the theme “Public sector responses to global crisis: New challenges for politics and public management” held in Prague, the Czech Republic, 10-12 April, 2013.**


# APPENDIX 3: SKILLS TRAINING ATTENDED

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