

# Challenges toward ngos in poverty alleviation politics essay



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It remains unquestionable in international relations that institutions fosters cooperation among states, individuals and groups, and enhances stability hence a peaceful environment.

It quiet evidence to conclude that NGOs have indeed played a crucial roles in poverty alleviation in Sub-Saharan Africa, from the analyses seen in the previous chapter.

However, it has been noted that NGOs faced series of challenges in their work. In this work, notwithstanding researcher set to explore the challenges faced by NGOs toward poverty alleviation.

To actualize this objective, researcher hereby identify thematic areas that shall be explore in highlighting the various forms of NGO works as it is their work that demonstrate their roles and its attendant challenges such as Administrative, and Domestic Challenges, not oblivious however of the fact that these various facets of challenges do have different outlooks such as Advocacy, Humanitarian, Microfinance, Empowerment, Capacity Building and Development works, under which their roles have been categorized.

In order to better comprehend the evidences that researcher shall later submit as critical challenges facing the works of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOS) in the fight against poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa, it will be academically prudent to attempt an explanation of the concept of NGOs vis-à-vis the various forms of interpretations it may take, though it should not be overemphasized. It is worth noting that the types of NGOs, some of which may have national characteristics like the Sierra Leone Red Cross society, Lutheran World Federation in Liberia and others with

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international features otherwise called INGOs such as Save the Children, Catholic Relief services (CRS), OXFARM, Medicines San Frontiers (MSF), International community of the Red Society (ICRC), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Action Aid, and others because of its geographical location, like those NGOs found in the north, known as Northern NGOs (NNGOs), like World Health Organisation (WHO) and World Food Programme (WFP) and those established in third world countries with national and local characteristics known as Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and other form of Grass root support organisation like Caritas Sierra Leone, The Hunger Project-Ghana, Human Watch Dog called southern NGOs. Again for the purpose of this work, we shall focus on NGOs that are not strict-sense one hundred percent natively owned but one with international and/or Regional characteristics/ or national features in as much as it is a non-state actor.

Also, several forms of NGOs do exist, but for the purposes of this work, researcher shall limit the analysis exclusively to the following forms: Advocacy, Development and Humanitarian, production, they include; (microfinance, empowerment and capacity building) forms of NGO works and roles.

NGOs with advocacy outlook are those organizations whose core mission and vision statements exclusively center on public sensitization and awareness raising programmes, with the desire to effect change within existing status quo that may not be serving the nationals very well or in areas that voice of the poor are not heard and in countries where there is poor governance and bureaucracy is an order of the day. Their works are but not limited to

Governance issues such as electioneering processes, Democracy, Rule of  
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Law, Human Rights as in the case of Save the Children, Peace and Conflict, Gender like 50/50 Group in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia , Literacy and numeracy, as this was evidence in Sierra Leone during 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections, which all registered NGOs in the country had at least two representatives, and were granted the franchise to serve as election “ watch dogs”, though with limitations etc.

Humanitarian NGOs as the name implies, targets the development of the human being and focuses on thematic areas such as health, education, agriculture and environmental issues, relief services, through the provision of food and non-food items, medical, during emergency and conflicts periods. Such NGOs are usually within destitute areas and work with classes of people such as Refugees/Internally displaced persons, as ascribed to Caritas role during the conflict in Sierra Leone etc.

The other category of NGO is the Development based group which handles issues such as reconstruction/Rehabilitation-(of roads, houses, schools, hospital), Micro credit facilities, Capacity building through training/education, empowerment programmes with priority placed on women and marginalized youths this is also evidence by THP-Ghana and Net Work Movement Justice and Development (NMJD Sierra Leone), as it has been discussed in the previous chapter etc. It is important to note that none of these forms of NGO group is an exclusive government entity although some may work to compliment and criticize the government of the day when it falls short of its manifesto.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE CHALLENGES**

On the challenges facing NGOs therefore, we have called this Administrative barriers or challenges. Within the administrative wing of NGOs, there are several obstacles they face as major challenges to their work. These forms of challenges are intra as they focus on issues such as Recruitment/staffing, Salaries, Training and source of funding. The strength of any institution depended upon the kind of administration that governs and controls that institution. The challenge with recruitment may arise from the availability of the required expertise thus sometimes left with the option of recruiting ' technically illiterate' officers and this may often pose some problems. For example, an NGO handling Peace and Conflict Resolution runs the risk of fuelling the conflict if a non-expert in conflict resolution is employed to handle a mediation process. This usually boils down to misperceptions which is very crucial in the negotiation process.

For instance, in Sierra Leone, during the peak of the war, there was a need for " negotiations" as it was called a " peace talk" between the government and the war factions, and the first " Lome Peace Accord" failed due to the incompetence of the peace mediators, those from civil society movement. " We will fail in this talk once we don't have those who could lobby with the rebel commander Foday Sankoh, in seeing reasons why they need to lay their arms and get out of the bush" said they Late Deputy Army Chief of Staff Sam Hingha Norman, in an interview with Standard Times Press. They reason behind Deputy Army Chief of Staff Statements was probably they incompetencies that he was in the representatives from civil society groups.

Also, some NGOs are constrained with a skeleton staff to cover a huge operational area, but because of budgetary constraints, only a limited number of staff are employed most times leaving the work undone and unsupervised thereby leaving the beneficiaries unsatisfied. This takes us to the salaries question which to a large extent serves as a strong determinant for recruitment. Most NGOs would usually have sensitive projects and what attracts most workers towards an NGO is the salary structure.

Like in Sub-Saharan Africa, this is a big challenge for NGOs as on a monthly basis, NGOs are losing staff to other NGOs who can pay fat salaries and also lead to redundancy of staffs. In Sierra Leone for example, one could see that Caritas Sierra Leone was unable to cover the whole country with its humanitarian and development aids; this is because their source of funding is so small and many staffs have to resign and took up job with CRS and other UN agencies. On Training, like administrators would always emphasize, in-service training is key for a team ready for success, but this is a major challenge for most NGOs.

The essence of in-service training is to keep the workers abreast with contemporary trends in their field of work. Otherwise known as building the capacity of the staff, most recruits would leave one NGO for the other when one fails to provide such facilities. From a cross examination on the shift of NGOs workers from one NGO to another, it was estimated that, within 2000-2003, up 40% of NGOs workers were making a cross-over. It has been generally observed that many NGOs lacked the expertise in dealing with certain technical and expertise activities. The lack of expertise often left most NGOs malfunction. In African countries, governments are often

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dominated by urban elites that are disconnected from rural issues and promote food policies that benefit urban populations over the rest of the country. NGOs themselves in these countries may employ urban staff and have difficulty reaching rural areas where food production occurs.

However, what is key to all these challenges is the required funding to carry out the project, but it is significant to note that, this aspect isn't really, or should not be a major challenge for an effective NGO work especially the Southern NGOs and INNGOs because since it is an International NGO, its source(s) of funding is externally solicited and not so much a challenge in the field, but became challenging for those at the administrative level. It is beyond the operational scope in conceptualizing it as a major challenge. In general, the expectations of beneficiaries are very high and NGOs do not often have all the necessary funds to respond to all their needs.

### **DOMESTIC/POLICY CHALLENGES:**

The Admin sector is more or less an intra office issues, (within the NGO as a unit), but the Domestic /Policy challenges look at issues such as national legislations i. e. the legal provisions guaranteeing the operational guidelines of NGOs, government monitoring of NGOs, domestic perceptions of NGOs and its workers, (Partiality Vs impartiality question), Sovereignty question and Tradition.

Generally, every nation has its laid down rules guiding the operations of NGOs, but often times some of the provisions in such national NGO policies/legislations, are not usually favorable for the smooth running of the NGO and sometimes become impossible for their registration as in the case

Ethiopian NGOs who were denied access in 2003 from registering their NGOs, for their implementation. As a rule, the licenses of NGOs are renewed annually, thus where a government sees the activities of an NGOs as critical and having the potential of undermining its security, political future, they rules might be strictly followed and sometimes twisted thus seriously inhibiting the smooth operation of the work of such NGOs. As a result, the credibility of the work of the NGO is questioned because of compromise by dancing to the tune of the government of the day. Also, Local authorities serve as stumbling blocks when NGOs refuse to give them bribes. Local authorities, especially in Africa, always think there should be special packages for them even though these are not included in the budget lines.

For example, an NGO focusing on shelter programmes like reconstructions may want to go by their base-line surveys in determining where to start their building projects based on the needs assessments survey, but often times, the government because of strategic political reasons may forced such NGOs to re-direct the projects to their strong-holds. This is a major challenge because project management have had to cope with ' doctoring' reports to their donors stating why the projects took place in a different location sometimes even assuming that the project indeed took place at the desired location when in actual fact it never.

Traditionally, Liberal Democracy, which is a strong tool NGOs uses today to push forward their plans, will never succeed in black African countries, even where NGOs may have received national ' go ahead' to carry out their project, NGOs especially those focusing on mass/community sensitization on issues like for example Gender equality, freedom, democracy, rule of law, <https://assignbuster.com/challenges-toward-ngos-in-poverty-alleviation-politics-essay/>



human rights violations but prominent among all is NGOs campaigning against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Sub-Saharan Africa countries like Guinea, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and many more have often seen themselves clashing with the traditional dictates of their recipient communities. For example, how do you expect an African King/Paramount Chief who is elected only by a few (Chiefdom councilors) to allow an NGO sensitize his community on a universal adult suffrage (franchise) which would allow every grown adult to vote for their King instead of just a few. Thus such Kings/Chiefs will do everything possible to forestall the works of such NGO. This is to say that Liberal democracy cannot be achieved as tradition and custom of the people are very strong in third world countries like black Africa.

In Sierra Leone, April 2008, for example, witnessed a conflict between stakeholders and the media, as four journalists were detained by secret societies women “sowe’s” in Sierra Leone which was allegedly reported that these female journalists broadcasted a programme in the radio concerning Female Genital mutilation and also a campaign against the practice, which these “sowe’s” was as undermining the cultural heritage of the land and tradition of the land. But the truth after all was that, it was a certain Human Right NGO that aired a programme on zero tolerance on FGM, the repercussion, however caused massive riots in the region. The end result was that, this NGO registration was withheld on the basis that it violated the “Law of the Land”, which is the Customary Law.

Also, many are now having a negative perception about NGOs advocating for rights of a child. African societies have the tradition that the child has no rights over a parent, and in certain conditions where the child happens to misbehave, <https://assignbuster.com/challenges-toward-ngos-in-poverty-alleviation-politics-essay/>

a punishment will be levied on the child. But human right activists are opposing it. African parents are been taking to court for beating their children, they are fine, or sometimes imprisoned. This has caused many street kids and children in Africa especially countries that have experienced war and it has added the burden on NGOs funding. Since many African parent now asked their children out of home to go to the human right activists for parental upbringing.

Moreover, Perception matters very much in any circumstances. Sub-Saharan Africa for example is a continent synonymous with poverty, corruption deceitfulness. It is no secret therefore that those NGO workers are among the highest paid people, thus the public perception towards them is not only out of admiration but contempt because they own the biggest /nice houses, fine cars, and many live flamboyant live etc. The recipient communities see these NGO workers as rogues building their wealth from stolen

Humanitarian/Relief items meant for the destitute. Most times, NGO workers face stiff resentment from the community people because of the allegation of impartial dispensation of their duties as relief workers paid to serve all without cheating. This impartiality problem is a key challenge facing NGO work because of the likelihood of non-cooperation and sabotage on the part of the recipient community. This usually leads to insecurity of the workers.

The term Sovereignty in political Science refers to a politically defined jurisdiction usually attributed to a state and has autonomy as its core principle. In this paper, I will narrow down the understanding of sovereignty to mean both geographical/political boundaries but within a state. Like

mentioned earlier, as a result of the baseline surveys/impact assessments  
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and needs assessment of NGOs, they even before commencing operation identify a community where their operations will be based. They usually have strong mandates not to go beyond such a District or Province, but forgetting the fact that they are all “ One People in one Country”. For example an NGO rendering health services to a particular community crippled by “ Malaria”, is limited not to go beyond their District/Province of operation even where the nearby/neighbouring communities might be seriously suffering from the diseases.

This is a major challenge because at the end of it all, the Mission statement and Vision of such an NGO in eradicating Malaria might as well be described as efforts in vain since movement of the people remains inevitable. Also, Ethnic divisions often impact the production and distribution of food. Many post-colonial countries have borders designed by the former colonizing power that divide ethnic groups and place rivals within the same state. And corruption often is the single largest governance issue that separates people for the food and solid policies they need to fully enjoy their basic human rights.

NGOs confront sovereignty issues over intervention and supplying food. Often conflicts have not been resolved and current or former combatants may try and raid the food relief and refugees and internally displaced people may be far from home and in areas dominated by rival ethnic groups.