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INTERNATIONAL NGOS IN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE PROMOTION OF CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO QUALITY EDUCATION: THE CASE OF AWUTU-SENYA DISTRICT OF GHANA.

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DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that with the exception of references used, for which due acknowledgement has been made, this dissertation is the result of my own research under the supervision of Dr. Cathrine Brun at the Department of Geography, Norwegian University of Science and Technology.

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Dr. Cathrine Brun

May, 2013

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my dear father Kwaku-Sarfo Kantanka and lovely mother Lucy Anim-Manu.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ABSTRACT

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in recent times have become prominent in the developmental agenda of most deprived societies across the globe. Through the adoption of rights and participatory mechanisms in their development work, NGOs are able to help state authorities to facilitate their development policies. In their quest to reduce poverty and inequality, NGOs initiate and implement certain projects in specific areas within various deprived communities. One such area is the promotion of children's right to quality education through the execution of educational projects. This study therefore identifies and critically examines the impacts of Plan International's educational projects on children's rights to quality education in the Awutu-Senya District of Ghana. Qualitative research methodology was used for data collection and analysis. Both the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were used to get the perspectives of officials of the NGO and 23 members of the beneficiary communities which included children, their parents and teachers. The theoretical framework used for this study was the alternative development theory with specific emphasis on the rights-based approach to development. The general findings of this study suggested that most of the children in the NGOs assisted communities have witnessed improvements in the quality of their educational system, especially in the area of learning environment and service delivery. The children are now being provided with the necessary skills and tools to make them productive and facilitate the socio-economic development of their community. However, few problems bothering on over-expectations on the NGO, inadequate funds for scholarships, apathy on the part of some members of the beneficiary communities and the inability of local government to fulfill their obligations were recorded in the course of this study.

ACRONYMS

GES	Ghana Education Service
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
HDI	Human Development Index
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
MOE	Ministry of Education
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
ROC	Rights of the Child Club
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The challenges of this world especially encountered by people living in the Global South have been well documented in various literatures. These problems invariably include diverse forms of deprivations usually of socio-economic, political and environmental nature. Development theorists have therefore been devising paradigms that would help address these problems affecting the human agency in developing countries. This stems from the fact that development is considered an important aspect of the quest to rid the world of all forms of deprivations whether it is persistent poverty, inequalities, human rights abuses, deteriorating environmental conditions and social exclusion.

Development, according to Sen (1999) is a means to achieving freedom. It also involves a process of dealing with the "gap between unprecedented opulence and remarkable deprivation" (Sen, 2001 cited in Greig et al., 2007:5). Thus in order to achieve development all significant sources of "unfreedoms" such as extreme poverty, inequalities and social exclusion needs to be removed from the fabric of society. But Sen (1999) is also quick to caution that the removal of all major unfreedoms alone will not be enough to achieve development unless this can be done within the context of the relationship between individual freedoms and the power of social influence. Therefore to effectively deal with underdevelopment is to perceive individual freedoms as the concern of the entire society (Sen, 1999).

On the other hand, Pieterse (2010) regards development as a reaction to the predicaments of progress. Thus development since the 19th century has been dealing with the problems associated with progress. He further argues that development itself is embedded with crisis due to its apparent failure to effectively deal with the problems of societies notably poorer nations across the globe. Hence, understanding development means being aware of the crisis of development. Pieterse (2010:1) posits that "development knowledge is crisis knowledge".

It is these predicaments associated with development which is manifested in the persistent poverty, deprivations and inequalities evident in various parts of the world. According to Easterly (2006 cited in Greig et al., 2007:7) notwithstanding the huge amount of financial aid channeled to poor countries for the purpose of achieving development, there is still considerable

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levels of underdevelopment across the globe. The World Bank (2007) reports that a significant number of the world's population is poor, with an estimated 1.4 billion people living in extreme poverty. The UN (2010) corroborates this point by indicating that poverty is responsible for the demise of over 25,000 children everyday all over the world.

For Greig et al., (2007) these failures of development efforts have significantly altered the thinking, policies and approaches of development strategists. A typical example is the introduction of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) in 2000 by world leaders aimed at halving global poverty by 2015 (Greig et al., 2007; UN, 2010). These new development strategies for some observers require substantial levels of cooperation between rich and poor nations in order for it to realize its potential. The quest for development is therefore an essential way for the removal of unfreedoms and various sources of deprivation within poorer societies across the globe.

One of such sources of deprivation is the lack of access to quality education by most children in developing countries across the globe. It is this inability of most children in developing countries to get access to better education that impedes the fulfillment of their right to quality education which is enshrined in the in the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC,1989). According to UN CRC (1989) children have the right to quality education and that this and other rights of children need to be protected and promoted in all circumstances. Thus due to the high levels of poverty and underdevelopment most of the world's poorest populations do not have access to quality education. And this is a serious development concern well documented (Hanushek, 1995). According to UNICEF (2008) the lack of children's access to quality education is responsible for the low enrollment rate in most developing countries across the globe.

It is these kinds of development challenges that usually occasion civil society groups and other voluntary organizations such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to intervene and work in rural and deprived communities to help alleviate the plight of ordinary people. NGOs here refer to organizations that are separate from government agency engaged in activities that will help the public (Opoku-Mensah, 2007; Salamon and Anheier 1996). Some International NGOs therefore seek to achieve development in deprived communities through the promotion of children's right to quality education. In their quest to achieve this they usually initiate and

execute various educational projects in such communities with the support of donor agencies and local authorities. This they presume is in tandem with the vision of the UNCRC (1989) which regards the promotion of children's right to quality education as one of the essential ways of reducing child poverty.

It also constitutes an integral part of the rights-based approach to development currently being used by NGOs in their development efforts. The rights-based approach to development is a conceptual framework for achieving human development through integrating the principles of human rights into the policies, plans and processes of development (OHCHR, 2006; VeneKlasen et al., 2004). The rights-based approach essentially advocates for more participation of children in the development discourse through protecting their human rights and non-discrimination against them (Ansell, 2005). And this can only be realized if children are well educated and are able to understand their own issues better. Some international NGOs across the globe use the platform of promoting children's right to quality education as a means of realizing community development.

A typical example of such an International NGO that adopts these rights and participatory mechanisms is Plan International, which is a child centered NGO that seeks to reduce child poverty through promoting children's right to quality education and health care. In their interventions in various deprived communities across the globe Plan International pursue development through the promotion of children's right to quality education. It is against this background that this study sought to investigate more on the issue of NGOs pursuing development and poverty reduction through the promotion of children's right to quality education. Specifically this research was concerned with exploring how promoting children's right to quality education helps the children to gain the relevant skills and understanding to enhance their capabilities to make them more productive members of the community to facilitate poverty reduction and rapid socio-economic development. It must be emphasize here that this study focuses on children's rights to quality education in two ways namely their right to quality education itself and education on rights. By right to quality education I refer to access to better academic knowledge and learning. The latter which is education on rights relates to the general understanding of education as providing the means to inform and make individuals aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens of a country.

For the purpose of this study emphasis is placed on the educational projects undertaken by Plan International in the Awutu-Senya District located in the Central Region of Ghana. The choice of Awutu-Senya District in Ghana stems from the fact that according to the Ghana Living Standard Survey 5 (GLSS, 2008) it is one of the poorest areas in the Southern part of Ghana. And as such have witnessed numerous interventions from international NGOs with respect to promoting children's right to quality education. The study therefore seeks to identify how such educational projects undertaken by the NGO to promote children's right to quality education empowers children to participate actively in the development processes of their communities in Ghana.

1.2 Globalization, Development and NGOs

Many observers have asserted that globalization has resulted in the rapid interconnection of people, culture, trade and investment across the globe. Development theorist on the other hand have emphasized on the role of development in ensuring social change. This is exemplified in the various development theories such as modernization, neoliberalisn and alternative development theories which were all meant to devise appropriate ways to ensuring social change in poor societies across the globe. The nexus between development and globalization is therefore depicted in the impact of globalization on the process of social change especially in the everyday lives of the world's poorest populations. Greig et al., (2007) also observes that this relationship has become more evident since "most commentators acknowledge that globalization has introduced new questions into the field of development studies" (Greig et al., 2007:162).

According to Giddens (1990) the process of globalization has intensified social relations across the globe even to the extent that that the happenings in one location are influenced by events occurring elsewhere and vice versa. So therefore the manifestation of the globalization process on the local lives of people heightens the relationship that exists between development and globalization. This perspective has resulted on the specific emphasis on development and globalization from below in recent discourse on development (Rigg, 2007). A typical example of this relationship is the recent increases in the number of NGOs operating across the globe.

NGO's are private organizations that are established mainly not to generate and distribute profits, whose activities normally involves some significant amount of voluntary participation and being separate from government agency (Salamon and Anheier 1996). These are characteristics that collectively distinguish NGO's from other organizations in society. According to Riddell (2007) there are two kinds of NGOs namely; International or Northern NGOs and Southern NGOs. International or Northern NGOs are NGOs that emerge from developed countries operating globally. Southern NGOs are those that originate from developing countries or the Global South (Riddell, 2007).

Particularly, the relationship between development and globalization is manifested in the increasing number of International NGOs operating globally. Rigg (2007) asserts that the globalist's threshold has been altered in a way with the realization that globalization has empowered local structures and the everyday life rather than eradicating it. This is because globalization "operates at all scales and that the process is not erasing the local but operating at the local scale" (Rigg, 2007:11). Globalization therefore, can play a significant role in transforming, enhancing and improving the lives of local people whilst in return the people can participate, respond and contribute to the globalization process (Rigg, 2007). He further emphasizes that the process of globalization has empowered and improved local structures and the lives of local people through the creation of spaces for grassroots mobilization and initiatives which is often under the auspices of NGOs. NGOs are therefore crucial not only in relation to their developmental contributions in societies but also play very important political roles in communities as they foster democratic consolidation and social capital (Rigg, 2007).

Additionally, Clark (1991) observes that NGOs have become more diverse, credible and innovative in contemporary times than they used to be. Through their grass root initiatives in developing countries across the globe they have managed to earn the trust of the people living in such areas in a manner in which local governments even find it difficult to replicate. On the other hand getting the acceptance and support of the populace in Western countries have provided NGOs with more financial incentives and capabilities to engage actively in developmental activities across the globe (Clark, 1991).

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reports that the number of NGOs increased from 1,600 in 1980 to 2,500 in 1990 in its 24 member nations. Also, the

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) identified 50,000 NGOs operating within the voluntary sector globally in 1993. The Union of International Associations in the year 2001 discovered 52,000 such groups globally. Apart from the increase in numbers, these organizations are also expanding in size with some international NGOs employing thousands of professional supported by annual budgets approaching $500 million (van Tujil, 1999; Kellow, 1991; Independent Sector, 2001 cited in Doh & Teegan, 2003:3).

Closely related to the above factor, as international NGOs move they also bring with them globalized ideas through the adoption of rights and participatory mechanisms in their development work in deprived communities across the globe. This scenario is exemplified in Hannerz (1996) assertion that as people and organizations move, so do their meanings too move, so therefore territories cannot limit the flow of ideas and initiatives between people and organizations. This perspective is also for instance, linked to both how international NGOs working in the area of children empowerment incorporates the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in their development work as well as the usual emphasis on the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in more general rights-based discourses.

Furthermore, in discussing development and NGOs within the context of globalization another issue worth noting is the nexus between neoliberal governance policies and the globalized spaces it directly or indirectly creates for the proliferation of NGO initiatives. According to Bondi and Laurie (2005) the specific emphasis on "rolling back" the role of especially the welfare state in favor of more privatization, a free market economy, decentralization and deregulation tends to create globalized spaces for charitable and philanthropic initiatives often supported by NGOs. This is because neoliberalism characterized by its process of privatization, free market economy and deregulation reduces the role of the state in some aspects of society (Bondi & Laurie, 2005: 397). This decline in the role of the state in some countries due to the adoption of neoliberal governance policies creates avenues for NGOs to engage more actively in welfare service delivery.

Currently, NGOs globally are engaged in activities aimed at mobilizing and empowering the weak, poor and vulnerable in the community to defend their rights, advocate for better conditions of living for people, protesting internationally for debt cancellations and protecting the environment. Even though NGOs across the globe use different mechanisms and approaches,

they collectively have a common view on the inadequacies of mainstream development methods (Clark, 1991). Thus even though the globalization process for some might have resulted in deepening inequalities and social exclusion, the process itself opens up spaces for development-based organizations to intervene in the activities of deplorable communities across the globe.

These trends highlighted above present both interesting and testing times for international NGOs in their development work. They have assumed greater responsibilities in the area of development than they initially had, as they are now actively engaged on the mainstream development stage. Considerable amount of resource is now at their disposal and they also have the ability to influence those who control enormous resources. Indeed the era of globalization has opened up avenues for NGOs across the globe.

The challenging role of NGOs in a globalised world set the tone for a further discussion on the specific issue of international NGOs engaged in the processes of development. Specifically the subsequent chapters of this study focus on Plan International which is an NGO with a global focus and currently operating in Ghana to promote children's right to quality education. Particular attention will be centered on the impact of Plan's educational projects on children empowerment and ability to engage actively in the development of their communities.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In order for NGOs to effectively complement the efforts of local governments in deprived communities where they normally operate, they depend on donor support in the form of funds. Most of these funds from donor agencies in support of NGOs interventions often exceed the annual total payment made through the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Greig et al., 2007). Notwithstanding the massive increase in development funds and the huge amount of financial assistance solicited by these international NGOs through donor support there are still high levels of underdevelopment, inequality and poverty across the globe especially in the Global South (Greig et al., 2007; Rigg, 2007).

The question here is that; what accounts for this persistent poverty, underdevelopment and inequalities in spite of the numerous interventions of international NGOs across the globe?

Hence, the main thrust of this study is to do with an identification of how an NGO's activity of promoting children's right to quality education in Ghana, helps children to acquire the necessary skills and understanding to develop their capabilities to make them more useful members of the community to facilitate poverty reduction and social change.

The study is also concerned with identifying how rural communities in Ghana maximize the benefits of educational projects undertaken by International NGOs in their communities. Special attention will be focused on the perspectives of members of the beneficiary communities notably children, their parents and teachers about such development strategies in Ghana.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is based on the rights-based approach to development which essentially incorporates human rights principles into the process of development work (OHCHR, 2006). As asserted by VeneKlasen et al., (2004:1) the combination of human rights and development "brings different strengths and visions" to the process of achieving social change. Thus for the purpose of this study specific attention is focused on an international NGO seeking to achieve development through the promotion of children's right to quality education. So therefore, the information emanating from this research can be useful to communities learning how to deal with development assistance as well as international agencies and donor institutions. It will also be helpful to international NGOs who harbor the ambition of operating in Ghana.

In addition, this thesis identifies the nature and impacts of educational projects undertaken by an NGO to promote children's right to quality education based on the perspectives of beneficiary community members. This work will therefore add to the existing literature on the activities of international NGOs in Ghana. It will also be a useful source of information for the Government of Ghana, the media and other Child-based organizations currently working in Ghana.

Finally the findings of this study can be a useful reference point for future research in the area of development studies in Ghana. The conclusions and recommendations generated by this study if given the necessary attention can also benefit both Ghanaian researchers and international agencies presently operating in Ghana.

1.5 General Objective

The main objective of this study is to identify the impacts of Plan International's educational projects on children's right to quality education in the Awutu-Senya District of Ghana.

1.6 Research Questions

The main research questions of this study are as follows:

1. What is the nature of educational projects undertaken by the NGO to promote children's right to quality education?
2. How do children, their parents and teachers perceive such projects in promoting children's right to quality education?
3. How has the promotion of children's right to quality education empowered them to participate in their community?
4. What are the challenges associated with promoting children's right to education by the NGO?

1.7 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into six chapters. Chapter One presents an introduction and overview of the study. It also contains the statement of the problem, significance of the study, its objective and the research questions of the study.

Chapter Two presents the reader with the background information of the study area. Particularly it consists of the country profile of Ghana, policies for children and information on both the educational and NGOs sector in the country. It also presents a brief background of Plan International and the specific site where data was collected.

The third Chapter discusses the main theoretical framework used for this study. It examines the alternative development theory and its related concepts such as the rights-based approach to development. On the specific concept of the rights-based approach, the chapter explores its basic

components which consist of rights, participation and empowerment. It then concludes with a discussion of how the right-based approach would help in the analysis of the study.

In Chapter Four, the methodology used for this study is presented and discussed. It subsequently justifies the methods used to collect data for this study and how data were analyzed.

The Chapter Five presents and analyzes data collected for the study. The perspectives of officials of Plan Ghana and members of the beneficiary community are presented and discussed with reference to the theoretical framework of the study which is the right-based approach to development. The main aim of this chapter is to provide answers to the research questions of this study.

Chapter Six concludes the study with a summary of the main findings. Based on these results and findings recommendations are made for future research on the subject matter.

CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND AND STUDY AREA

In this chapter I present an overview of Ghana and the specific setting where this study was conducted. This will entail a short description of the country, its socio-economic dimensions, policies on children and the NGO sector. This is then followed by a description of the Awutu-Senya District which was the specific social setting where the study was conducted in Ghana. The background of the NGO is also discussed.

2.1 GHANA: Profile and Demographic Characteristics

Ghana is a country located in West Africa. It has a total population of an estimated 24,223,431 people. Males constitute about 11,801,661 representing 48.7% of the total population whilst females are approximately 12,421,770 which represent 51.3% of the total population of Ghana (Ghana Statistical Services, 2011). According to the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS, 2011) between 2000 and 2010, the total population of Ghana increased by 28%.

The country is a Lower-Middle Income Economy with an average 27% of its population living on less than $1.25 per day as at 2011. Ghana's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is about $90.0 billion with a Per-Capita Income of $3.520 (IMF, 2012). The affluent mineral reserves of Ghana underpin its position as one of the major producers of Gold in the world. Other major sources of foreign exchange for Ghana includes cocoa, crude oil, natural gas, timber, manganese, diamond, bauxite and electricity.

In spite of the abundance of natural resources Ghana still remains a developing nation. The country also has a youth unemployment rate of 25%. By 2007, about 28.5% of the country's population was living below the poverty line. By the end of 2011, Ghana's total external debt had exceeded $7.6 billion (Bank of Ghana, 2011). Ghana is ranked 135 out of the 187 countries in the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI), with an HDI indicator of 0.541 (Human Development Index, 2011).

Figure 1: Map of Ghana

Source: www.mapsofworld.com

2.2.1 Education

Ghana has an adult literacy rate of 65% with males constituting 71.7% whilst females account for 58.3%. The Ministry of Education (MoE) has the mandate to coordinate the educational system in Ghana. It is therefore required to initiate and implement educational policies and monitor the educational system in Ghana. The primary aim of the Ministry is to provide quality education for all Ghanaians in order for them to obtain the relevant skills that will make them productive and enhance their capabilities to facilitate poverty reduction and promote accelerated socio-economic growth of the country (MoE, 2011).

Ghana's educational system comprises of Basic Education sector (Kindergarten + 6 year Primary Education + 3 years Junior High School), Senior High School (3 years), Technical and Vocational Education, and Tertiary Education (Training College, Polytechnics and Universities). Additionally, there is also the Non-formal Education System that handles issues relating to adult education in Ghana. With respect to supervision; the Ghana Education Service (GES) is responsible for the categories of Basic Education, Junior High School, Technical and Vocational Institutes.

According to the GES Basic Education Policy Framework (2012), Kindergarten Education is in two stages and it is open to children between 4-5 years, with a focus on play methods in the

process of teaching and learning. Primary Education which is in six stages emphasizes on skills acquisition and citizenship education. The 3 year Junior High School on the other hand introduces children to technical knowledge and skills (GES, 2012). The Government of Ghana launched its Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) programme in 1996 to improve access to education and retention of all children in the Basic Education Programme. According to UNICEF (2008) Ghana has one of the highest school enrollments in Africa with 95% of the children in school. But there are still about 470,000 children who are still out of school in Ghana due to corruption coupled with inadequate educational facilities and lack of teachers (UNICEF, 2008).

2.2.2 Child-based Laws, Policies and Institutions in Ghana

On the 5th of February 1990, Ghana ratified the UN CRC after its adoption by the United Nations General Assembly. Since states that have ratified the UNCRC are required to report on its practices and performance in relation to the implementation of the provisions of the convention, the government of Ghana has submitted three periodic reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. In 1992, the first report was submitted, whilst the second and third reports were submitted in 1995 and 2005 respectively.

Additionally, the 1992 Constitution of Ghana has made provisions for the rights of children to be protected. Particularly, Article 28(2) of the constitution stipulates that children and young person's should be protected against "exposure to physical and moral hazards that constitutes a threat to their health, education or development" (Ghana Constitution, 1992). The parliament of Ghana also passed the Children's Act (560) in 1998 to protect the rights of children. The Children's Act (560) is the law that prescribes the civil, political, economic and social rights of children. It is in line with the provisions of the Children's Act (560) that policies are initiated for children in Ghana. Other policies and legislations relating to children in Ghana includes the Juvenile Justice Act 2003 (Act 653), the Human Trafficking Act (694) enacted in 2005 and the Gender and Children's Policy initiated in 2002.

With respect to institutions for children, the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs has the mandate to coordinate, monitor and review policies relating to women and children in Ghana. Apart from the Ministry, there is also the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit of the

Ghana Police Service who are responsible for enforcing the laws relating to the protection of children's rights in Ghana. They also protect women and children who are victims of abuse and violence (UNICEF, Ghana Report, 2009).

In recent times, the government of Ghana has also initiated programmes to protect the welfare of children and to further increase enrollment rates in schools which currently stand at 95% (UNICEF, 2008). These include the School Feeding Programme initiated in 2004 to provide free food for children in basic schools and the Education Capitation Grant introduced in 2005 to waive tuition fees for children in schools within deprived communities. There is also the Free Metro Mass Transport System for school children.

Despite the introduction of these policies and laws by the government, the country still faces enormous challenges with respect to protecting the rights and welfare of children. Some of these challenges include physical abuse of children, high infant mortality rate, low literacy rate and extreme child poverty (HDI, 2011). Indeed the government of Ghana recognizes that their effort alone is not enough to address the development challenges facing the country. It therefore welcomes the various interventions from both local and international NGOs in rural and deprived communities in Ghana. The government supports NGOs through providing them with tax exemptions and other forms of relief to facilitate their projects in local communities in Ghana (Opoku-Mensah, 2007). It is within this Ghanaian context that this thesis attempts to identify the development impacts of NGOs educational projects with specific emphasis on an NGO promoting children's right to quality education. Following from this perspective I will attempt to deal with the specific NGO sector in Ghana in order to set the tone for an in depth discussion of the topic considered in this study.

2.2.3 NGOs in Ghana

In recent decades NGOs have assumed prominent roles in the development agenda of most societies. In various countries across the globe NGOs are actively engaged in activities aimed at achieving social change and Ghana is not an exception to this. Ghana just like many other developing countries has become the hub of different NGOs who are undertaking various projects in deprived communities across the country (Porter, 2003). These NGOs include

international and other locally based organizations that typify the country's "traditional cultures, colonial past" and socio-economic development (Atingdui et al., 1998: 158).

In Ghana, NGOs are described as independent civil society organizations registered voluntarily under law to pursue activities that will help the public (Opoku-Mensah, 2007). NGOs in Ghana are also regarded as issues-oriented organizations independent from the state but are engaged in activities that support government interventions in national development (Whitfield, 2010).

In retrospect, Atingdui et al., (1998) observes that the origins of NGOs in Ghana dates back to the pre-colonial era where village associations, market women associations, craft unions, churches and other Islamic welfare organizations were engaged in philanthropic and charitable activities. In the course of time these local and international NGOs have gradually become key strategic partners of the local government in the development of rural communities in the country (Porter, 2003).

Over the years the number of NGOs working in Ghana has increased. According to Opoku-Mensah (2007) the proliferation in the number of NGOs and their prominence in Ghana can be attributed to the NGO friendly policies initiated and implemented by various governments in Ghana during and after the period of independence. Particularly, various policies such as the enactment of tax and other exemptions laws for NGOs has helped most of them to consolidate their presence as key development partners in Ghanaian societies (Opoku-Mensah, 2007). These factors have served as a catalyst for NGOs to further enhance their activities and assist local authorities in undertaking development projects in deprived communities in Ghana.

According to Whitfield (2010) the major sources of funding of NGOs in Ghana comes from the United States and Germany, followed by the Nordic countries, then Holland and Canada. Thus, virtually all NGOs in Ghana depend on foreign donor support (Whitfield, 2010). Currently, most of the interventions of NGOs in Ghana are located in the Northern part of the country which is considered to be the poorest area in Ghana. However, NGOs also work in the South "where there are pockets of intense poverty" (Porter, 2003:133). It is therefore within this context that this study attempts to identify the development impact of an aspect of NGOs projects in rural Ghana. The next section presents background information of Plan International which is the NGO whose activities is the focus of attention of this study.

2.2.4 Plan International, Ghana

Plan International is an example of "International or Northern" NGO whose development projects are very prominent in various developing countries across the globe. According to Plan (2012) Plan is a child centered international NGO founded in 1937. Presently they are operating in the Americas, Africa, and Asia. The NGO works with about 84 million children and 174 million people in 90,131 communities around the world. In 2012, Plan raised €363 million through sponsorships and €153 million from grants respectively. In Africa alone they are working in 24 countries. The main goal of Plan International is to promote child rights to end child poverty across the globe. In order to achieve this aim Plan works with children, communities, civil society and governments to guarantee the protection of children's right through promoting quality primary health care services, and education for all children (Plan, 2012).

In Ghana, Plan International works in deprived communities within five regions namely the Northern Region, Upper West Region, Central Region, Eastern region and the Volta region (see, Figure.1). Their activities in rural communities within these regions are coordinated by Programme Units established across the country. These Programme Units are located in places like Tumu, Wa, Bawjiase, Mankessim, Asesewa and Volta. Plan Ghana's main areas of activity include promoting of quality basic education for all children, better health for children, creating awareness about child rights and ensuring food security for children in Ghana.

2.3 The Specific Study Area: Awutu-Senya District

The Awutu-Senya District is one of the 20 districts located in the Central Region of Ghana. The District was created in 2008 by an Executive Instrument (EI). The capital of the district is Awutu- Breku. Some of the communities located in the Awutu-Senya District include Bawjiase, Awutu-Breku, Kasoa, Jei Krodua, Mfafo, Mangoase, Senya, Aberful Samsamso, Obrachire, Ofaso, Ofadaa, Bontrase, Ayensuoko, Kaemebre, Fianko, Pepease, Mankomeda, Okwabena and Dankwah.

Most of the inhabitants in the Awutu-Senya District belong to the *Fante* ethnic group who come from the Central Region of Ghana. However, there are also quite a number of people from other ethnic groups in Ghana who are living and working in these communities. The most common language spoken by the people in the district is the *Fante* Language due to the predominance of the *Fante's* in the communities. But English is the official language of instruction in the schools located in the communities.

The occupation of the inhabitants in the district includes farming, fishing, hunting, petty trading, teaching, food vending and artisans. Most of the women in the communities are petty traders who sell items ranging from vegetables, food stuffs, cosmetics and others. Notably, most of the adult males in the community are farmers. It is interesting to note that, out of the 21,584 males 15 years and older living in the district 10,451 are employed whilst 924 are unemployed. On the other hand 13,486 out of a total of 24,336 females 15 years and older are employed whilst 1,092 are unemployed (GSS, 2012)

2.3.1 Education

With regards to education in the Awutu-Senya District, according to the Ministry of Education (2006) by the 2005/2006 academic year there were about 222 public Basic Schools (Nursery/Crèche, Kindergarten, Primary School and Junior High School) in the district. At the same time the area had a total 338 private Basic Schools. Enrollment in public schools was about 33,976 pupils whilst 13,490 pupils were enrolled in private basic schools (GES, 2006).

Additionally, as at the 2005/2006 academic year, the district had a total of 910 trained teachers (433 males and 477 females) and 289 untrained teachers (182 males and 107 females) respectively. The teacher to pupil ratio in the Awutu-Senya District is 33pupils to 1 teacher. The breakdown is as follows; Crèche/nursery 67 to 1, Kindergarten 38 to 1, Primary schools 40 to 1 and Junior High School 20 to 1 (GES, 2006).

2.3.2 Field Work Site

Data was collected in the communities of Mangoase and Jei-Krodua within the Awutu-Senya District of Ghana. These are communities that have witnessed numerous interventions from Plan International aimed at promoting children rights to quality education in the area. Officials of

Plan refer to these communities as *Plan assisted communities*. Specifically, the St. Patrick's Anglican Primary and Junior High School (JHS) in Mangoase-Krodua was the main focus of attention.

The St. Patrick's Anglican Primary and Junior High School (JHS) have continuously received assistance from Plan International since, 2002. According to Plan officials in the district, in 2002 they constructed a Rain Water Catchment system, fully furnished Pre-School and a toilet facility for the school. Additionally, in 2006 the NGO also handed-over a Library and newly built Six-unit Classroom block for the Primary section of the school.

The St. Patrick's Anglican Primary and Junior High School (JHS) is the only public school in the Mangoase-Krodua communities and other surrounding villages. The school located in the middle of the Krodua village comprises of the Nursery, Kindergarten, Primary school and a Junior High School. The total number of pupils in the Primary school is 612 and the Junior High School has 317 pupils. Additionally, the Primary school has 22 teachers whilst the JHS employs 24 teaching staff. The school currently boasts of a 12 unit class room block for the Primary school, 6-unit class room block for the JHS as well as the Kindergarten complex.

The subjects taught in the school include English, Mathematics, Religious and Moral Education, Integrated Science, Physical Education, Ghanaian Language, ICT and Social Studies. The school also has two play grounds which include a football field in front of the Primary school block and a kindergarten play facility adjacent the kindergarten complex. Apart from the children from Mangoase and Krodua who attend the school, a significant number of children also commute from nearby villages such as Papase and New Ntonkrowa to attend the school.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CONCEPTS

This chapter presents and discusses the theoretical framework and concepts used for this study. It also deals with a definition of a child, children's rights and quality education. The main theory underlying this research which is the alternative development theory and its related concepts such as the rights-based approach to development is also discussed extensively in this chapter. Additionally the chapter also presents a review of related studies on the subject matter under consideration in this study.

3.1 Definition of a "Child"

This study defines a child in accordance with the United Nations 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which refers to a child as every human being below the age of eighteen (UNCRC, 1989). However, it must be pointed out that there is a lack of universal agreement as to who constitutes a child as there are variations across different continents, countries and regions about the composition of childhood and adulthood. For instance, in most South Asian countries such as Nepal children are defined as every human being below 16 years (Nepal Children's Act, 1992).

In spite of these variations with the definition of a child, several governments have widely accepted and ratified the UN 1989 Convention, and the definition is applicable in such jurisdictions. The countries that have ratified the UNCRC 1989 have also integrated the definition into their domestic laws. For example, the 1992 Constitution of Ghana also defines a child as any person below the age of eighteen years. In the same vein, both the Children's Act of Ghana (1998) and the 1999 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) also defines the child in accordance with 1989 UN Convention. So therefore, the adoption the UNCRC 1989 definition for the purpose of this study is justified as the definition is already applicable and familiar with the specific national setting under consideration in this research which is Ghana.

3.2 "Rights of the Child" contextualized

The Oxford Dictionary (2003) defines rights as a moral or legal claim to have something. It is these rights or legal claim to entitlement that is enshrined in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948). The preamble of UDHR emphasizes that human rights is the inalienable rights to which all human beings are inherently entitled. Thus the existence of fundamental human rights which every human is inherently entitled to affords a person the freedom to achieve independence, dignity and respect. The children's right for instance, is one of the important aspects of the international human rights regime.

The UNCRC 1989 is the international human rights instrument that sets out the civil, political, economic, educational, health and cultural rights of children. Countries that ratify this convention are legally bound to comply with it. The compliance of this treaty is monitored by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The CRC emphasizes that the rights of the child are to be protected in all circumstances.

Safeguarding and promoting the rights of children also constitutes an integral part of the rights-based approach to development. The rights-based approach to development focuses on achieving human development through integrating the principles of human rights into the policies, plans and processes of development (OHCHR, 2006). It is promoted by international development agencies and NGOs. The proponents of the rights-based approach to development in line with the provisions of the UNCRC (1989) essentially advocates for more participation of children in the development discourse, children empowerment and protection of their human rights. Thus children who constitute about 40% of the Third World population should be regarded as active agents of change, who have rights and have a say in the development of their society (Ansell, 2005). The subsequent chapters of this study will therefore draw on the UNCRC (1989) conception of children's right to further interrogate the topic under consideration.

3.3 Defining "Quality Education"

According to UNESCO (2000:Goal 6) "a quality education is one that satisfies basic learning needs, and enriches the lives of learners and their overall experience of living" (UNESCO, 2000,

Goal 6 and paragraph 43). Quality education in this regard is considered as an outcome of the learning process. Quality education is therefore crucial for the future well being of the society. Human rights education is also an integral part of quality education due to its contribution to the development of the individual's well being (UNESCO, 2000).

On the other hand Fantini (1980:325) defines quality education as one that "increases the capacity of a person to control his/her own fate". And this he observes is the common denominator of the level of quality education a person is able to access. So therefore according to Fantini (1980) in order to enable one to develop his/her future potential, the education system must be able to provide the person with the necessary skills, identify and develop his/her talent, enhance the capacity of the person to perform important and different roles in society and increase his/her self-esteem (Fantini, 1980).

From the above definitions, education is therefore regarded as the means by which an individual can develop their full potential and contribute to the development of their society. It is this crucial role that education plays in society that obviously requires that need for it to be quality. This study will therefore draw on these definitions of quality education in the subsequent sections of this study. Thus quality education in this study refers to, an education that fulfills basic learning needs and enhances the capacity of learners to develop their future potentials (Fantini, 1980; UNESCO, 2000)

3.4 Alternative Development Theory

The alternative development theory is regarded as a critique of the mainstream development approaches which emphasized on an economic growth model for reducing poverty and achieving social change. For Pieterse (2010) alternative development theory can be seen as concerned with local development rather than the state and market. Thus alternative development focuses on exploring alternative ways and "redefining the goals of development" (Pieterse, 2010:84). This view of alternative development focuses on making local communities self-sufficient, encouraging participation of people in decision making processes, empowering marginalized groups and ensuring the sustainable use of local resources (Friedmann, 1992).

In general, alternative development emphasizes human agency through the process of mobilizing people's capacity in order to achieve social change. This attention on agency depicts the people-centered approach to development that often entails some form of participation on the part of the local people through the creation of avenues for people to develop their potential (Friedmann, 1992). Alternative development thus centers on the promotion of bottom-up strategies which include both political and institutional reforms (Pieterse, 2010).

The dissatisfaction with the development approaches of the 1970's which resulted in the shifting of attention towards alternative means of development presented what Nerfin (1977 as cited in Pieterse, 2010:85) refers to as the "terrain of the third system or citizens politics". It is this third system that emphasizes on ensuring that the needs of the people are satisfied and that an atmosphere of self reliance is nurtured among local people (Pieterse, 2010).

The advocates of alternative development theory argue that development should not only be concerned with achieving economic growth or the commodities of life but also must focus on exploring avenues for attaining human development. Amartya Sen belongs to this school of thought and suggests that in order to achieve development, emphasis should be focused on the removal of all sources of "unfreedoms" such as extreme poverty, inequalities and social exclusion (Sen, 1999). He further elucidates that these sources of unfreedoms can also be removed through the expansion of an of individual's capabilities (Sen, 2012)

Capability for Sen (2012) refers to a set of achievable important functionings. Here development involves an evaluation of one's ability to achieve a variety of valuable functionings in life. "Functionings" for Sen (2012) refers to the various things an individual is able to do or achieve in life. The capability of a person thus involves a combination of the various things he or she can achieve (Sen, 2012:320). Development in this regard is a process of expanding people's capabilities and freedoms. These key capabilities include nutrition, health, literacy, self respect and political participation.

But Sen (1999) is also quick to caution that the removal of all major unfreedoms alone will not be enough to achieve development unless this can be done within the context of the relationship between individual freedoms and the power of social influence. Therefore to effectively deal with underdevelopment is to perceive individual freedoms as the concern of the entire society

(Sen, 1999). It is therefore not surprising that NGOs have increasingly been associated with alternative development considering their activities in local communities and the nature of their relationship with the people in such areas. According to Clark (1991) based on their grass root initiatives in communities they have managed to earn the trust of the people living in such areas in a manner in which local governments even find it difficult to replicate. Pieterse (2010) also argues that NGOs have now become major stakeholders in development cooperation. With alternative development specific attention is focused on local development and other grassroots initiatives. Thus development is better achieved when the local people are involved in their own development through the support of NGOs (Mohan, 2008)

It is this quest for an alternative development with NGOs as its main agents that has energized donor agencies and rich nations to channel enormous amounts of funds in support of NGOs projects in deprived communities across the globe over the last decade. The reference to alternative development theory for the purpose of this study is thus justified, since NGOs are believed to be providing alternative platforms to development. NGOs in their development work are assumed to emphasize the human agency, work with the poor, weak and vulnerable in the society. The people-centered approaches supposedly being adopted by NGOs in their operations presume that issues with development and inequalities should be tackled from the perspectives of the local people rather than the state or government level (Pieterse, 2010).

However, in discussing the alternative development theory within the context of NGOs, another issue worth noting is the approaches used by NGOs which has consistently become part of the alternative development process in recent times. A typical example is the rights-based approach to development which emphasizes "rights", "participation" and "empowerment".

Specifically in dealing with the alternative development theory, this study takes a critical look at the rights-based approach to development and explores how it can help facilitate the analysis of this study. The adoption of the rights-based approach for the purposes of this study stems from the current emphasis on securing the access of vulnerable groups like children to their rights through participatory mechanisms as means of attaining social change. Such an approach, I argue here will further enhance the discourse on the issue of NGOs achieving development through focusing on people. The rights-based approach thus makes Amartya Sen's ideas on capability much more operational within the context of this study. Accordingly, in discussing the rights-

based approach, education which is considered a key capability by Sen (2012) is being pursued by children through an NGO adopting rights and participatory mechanisms in their development work.

3.4.1 Rights-based Approach to Development

Due to the growing levels of poverty, inequality and social exclusion in most countries across the globe, the attention of development actors is gradually shifting towards exploring effective and alternative ways of addressing these challenges associated with development. The rights-based approach to development is considered as one such way of achieving development. VeneKlasen et al., (2004:1) asserts that the combination of human rights and development "brings different strengths and visions" to the process of achieving social change.

According to UN Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR, 2006) the rights-based approach to development is "a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protection of human rights" (OHCHR, 2006:12). The Commission further emphasizes that the rights-based approach focuses on achieving human development based on incorporating the principles of human rights into policies, plans and processes of development (OHCHR, 2006). It is promoted by various development actors such as international development agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations and other Community-based Organizations. Thus in recent times, more human rights and development organizations in the course of their workings adopts participatory methods which seeks to engage people to exercise their rights and this is considered as one of the essential ways of addressing the problems of poverty, inequality and social exclusion (Ansell, 2005). For Leys (as cited in Mohan & Stokke, 2010:247) these trends reflects a move away from the main stream development theories towards specific emphasis on "development studies" or practice.

The rights-based approach basically incorporates the concepts of *rights, participation* and *empowerment* into the process of achieving development and through their combination open up spaces for the poor and marginalized to participate in the decision making process on issues that affects them in society (VeneKlasen et al., 2004).

Rights

Rights are understood in various ways. According to Theis (2003) fundamental to the issue of rights is the relationship between *right holders* and *duty bearers. Right holders* comprises of individuals who possesses equal rights whilst *duty bearers* includes state authorities responsible for ensuring the protection of individuals human rights. The state is thus expected to open up spaces for other duty bearers such as NGOs, international donor agencies and parents to fulfill their responsibilities towards right holders. NGOs and international agencies are also supposed to ensure their interventions and policies are based on international human rights standards (Theis, 2003). Mikkelsen (2005) corroborates this assertion by emphasizing that the rights-based approach is particularly concerned with supporting *duty bearers* to fulfill their obligations and empowering *right holders* to exercise their rights.

On the other hand, VeneKlasen et al. (2004) argues that the hallmark of effective development practices is the specific attention on people and their social realities. This they argue is what has been conspicuously missing in the approaches used by human rights and other development groups in their daily workings in deprived communities. The rights-based approach therefore depicts rights as a political process whereby individuals express their need for better conditions of living from the state (VeneKlasen et. al., 2004). The rights-based approach thus seeks to go beyond "what the law says" and consider the pursuit of individual rights as a social struggle that relates to the experiences of people. Thus even though Children's Acts in various developing countries across the globe specifies the rights of children, NGOs seek to go beyond this and initiate developments projects that will address the needs of children, promote their rights and provide them with the freedom to achieve their full future potential.

Whose rights counts

In the discussion of the rights-based approach according to VeneKlasen et al. (2004) one of the important issues worth noting is the question of; whose rights are the most important in the community? Thus this question borders on the kind of power relations in existence in different societies. It therefore requires organizations working in the area of rights and development to critically examine certain dominant forces that prevents some section of the society from exercising their rights whilst favoring others VeneKlasen et al. (2004). Thus in spite of the

inherent nature of rights as described by the international human rights regime its claim is not an easy task as it is shaped by certain institutional arrangements and forces in society. This notion reflects the political contexts within which rights are negotiated at the grassroots or local stage.

Participation

Participation is an integral part of the development process. According to Mohan (2008) participation is a process of involving local people in their own development. Here participation involves local people assisting public and non-governmental organizations in planning their projects through providing them with essential information about their social challenges. Mikkelsen (2005) asserts that this form of participation requires the creation of a supportive atmosphere to help people to develop their potential.

For Agarwal (2001) participation is having a voice and influence in the process of decisions making. This means that participation provides the platform for the marginalized and underprivileged in society to actively take part in the decision making process. The impact of participation is therefore measured by its capacity to improve equality, empowerment and environmental sustainability (Uphoff, 1991 cited in Agarwal, 2001:1624). Effective participation is therefore a means of empowering the disadvantaged in society (Agarwal, 2001; Friedmann, 1992).

Agarwal (2001) further elucidates that there are different levels of participation and this includes nominal, passive, consultative, activity-specific and active-interactive level of participation. *Nominal participation* involves participation by membership in the group. *Passive participation* refers to being passive members in the group with no say in decision making process. *Consultative participation* is being asked for an opinion on specific matters with no influence on decisions. *Activity-specific* participation involves being asked to perform only special tasks. *Active-interactive participation* is being able to have a voice and influence in the decision making process. Ensuring an effective participation would entail negotiating through these different levels of participation to the highest level which is active-interactive participation (Agarwal, 2001:1624).

On the other hand VeneKlasen et al., (2004:5) argues that, for others participation is only seen as a way to enhance "projects performance" instead of a process of stimulating people's awareness

and encouraging them to take part in decision making processes. Other critiques towards participation relate to its perceived failure to fully appreciate the issues of power relations usually resulting in the privileging of elites in society rather the marginalized (Lund, 2007; Mohan, 2008). Understanding this aspect of participation is essential to building effective right-based change strategies. In a nutshell VeneKlasen et al., (2004) suggest that participation should involve any process that seeks to achieve development and rights fulfillments through the inclusion of marginalized groups as major actors in the decision making process.

With respect to children participation, Lund (2007) defines it as a process that involves;

"listening to children, giving them space to articulate their own concerns and to enable children to participate in planning, monitoring and evaluation of activities within and outside the family" (Lund, 2007:136)

The above definition implies that participation involves paying attention to children and providing them the opportunity to express their opinions on issues pertaining to their well being in both the family and community.

So therefore in pursuance of these various forms of participation highlighted above, specific attention has to be focused on a critical analysis of the political and social context within which power is negotiated in the community and the challenges associated with these relations of power. This is crucial especially in the process of enhancing the capabilities of marginalized and vulnerable groups in society. Since NGOs supposedly work with the poor who are often marginalized in the society, they are believed to ensure participation through mobilizing these groups to have a voice in decision making process. This study will therefore draw on these approaches to identify how children in the community are provided the opportunity to voice their concerns and engage actively in the decision of processes within and outside their household through the projects undertaken by the NGO.

Empowerment

According to Mohan and Stokke (2010:248) empowerment is mainly concerned with the "collective mobilization of marginalized groups against the disempowering activities of both the state and the market". Empowerment therefore is aimed at institutional reforms to encourage

state authorities and other powerful forces in society to open up spaces for marginalized groups to participate in the development process (Mohan & Stokke, 2010). Additionally, these empowerment processes are supposed to create avenues for the marginalized in society to enhance their capabilities so as to deal with the problems affecting their lives and transform the various kinds of power relations embedded in the social structure (VeneKlasen et al., 2004).

On the other hand, the World Bank (2002) defines empowerment as the process of enhancing "the assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affects their lives (World Bank, 2002:11). This definition presupposes that, empowerment can be achieved through improving people's freedom and access to essential capabilities such as information, education, better health care, accountability and improved access to local resources (Sen, 2012).

Moreover, empowerment for Friedmann (1992) connotes four kinds of power namely social, economic, political and psychological powers. In order to achieve empowerment all of them must be mobilized. Social power involves the ability of an individual to access the basic needs of life. Economic power is the ability to attain economic growth. Political power on the other hand refers to the ability to participate in decision making process. Psychological power is an individual's command over his/her thoughts exhibited through self-confidence. Empowerment is therefore concerned with enhancing the ability of individuals to maximize the benefits of the opportunities available to them without any fear or hindrance from external forces (Friedmann, 1992).

However, VeneKlasen et al. (2004) observes that achieving empowerment is not a simple task, since the empowerment process seeks to alter existing entrenched power dynamics in society. It is therefore an agonizing and difficult process. These powerful influences include *visible forms of power* and *hidden forces of power*. Visible forms of power include government laws and policies that inhibit and discriminate against the participation of vulnerable and marginalized groups. On other hand hidden forces of power are usually silent power which normally usually favors the privileged in society. This form of power is of a profoundly psychological nature usually invoking a feeling of inferiority and unworthiness among the less privileged in society. Both forms of power generate some level of bias and sideline some sections of society and prevent the issues relating to them from gaining prominence in the public discourse (VeneKlasen

et al., 2004). Thus in order to achieve empowerment there is the need to be aware of these different dimensions of power and deal with its associated challenges. Here empowerment can be secured through cultivating new forms of power relations characterized by key principles such as "solidarity, equity and common good" (VeneKlasen et al, 2004:9).

Thus from the above it can be realized that the main purpose of empowerment is to reduce poverty and inequality through enhancing the capability of marginalized and vulnerable groups in society. NGOs through their grassroots initiatives and working with the poor and marginalized in communities are believed to incorporate the empowerment approach to help alleviate the plight of the people. With reference to this study, the concept of empowerment relates to how children's access to quality education enhances their ability to participate in decision making processes, play active roles in the community, reduce poverty and ensure community development.

3.4.2 Implications of the Right-based Approach to the Analysis of this Study

The adoption of the rights-based approach to development for the purposes of this study will enable the researcher to take a critical look at the particular social context under consideration in this study, so as to identify the inherent issues that prevent vulnerable and marginalized groups like children from fulfilling their rights. This is because, it is perceived that such obstacles to participation and fulfillment of rights inhibit children's ability to develop their future potentials which would in turn reduce poverty and ensure social change. Specific attention will be focused on the problems confronted by the NGO in the process of promoting children's right to quality education in the community.

Secondly, the rights-based approach will also facilitate an understanding of how rights, participation and empowerment are relevant for expanding the capabilities of children. In this case, the approach will help show to how the adoption of rights and participatory mechanisms increases children access to quality education and provides them with the freedom to confront the challenges they face in society.

Moreover, the rights-based approach will aid an appreciation of the various rights and participatory tools adopted by international NGOs in their development work. These rights and participatory approaches relates to how an NGO promotes children's right to quality education in

Ghana. In this case emphasis is focused on exploring the particular educational projects undertaken by the NGO to promote children's right to quality education. The adoption of such an approach additionally, will also enable an understanding of how the use of rights and participatory tools in development efforts helps vulnerable and marginalized groups like children to enhance their capabilities, so as to be able to engage vigorously in the decision making processes that concerns their well being.

Closely related to above, the use of the rights-based approach in the analysis of this study will help in the identification of the long term contributions of providing children's access to quality education. The reason being that once children are able to get access quality education, it is believed that it will enable them to arouse their critical consciousness and their ability to influence the decision making processes in society. Particularly, emphasis will be placed on how such approaches empower children with the essential tools to achieve their future potential and reduce child poverty thereby encouraging an accelerated socio-economic growth of their community.

Finally, the use of the rights-based approach in this study will assist me to explore how children are empowered to participate in the development process of their community through the promotion of their right to quality education. This is because empowerment and participation are perceived to be rooted in the rights and participatory mechanisms adopted by NGOs to enable vulnerable groups like children to effectively participate in decision making process and exercise their rights in the society. This approach will also to some extent provide an indication as to how children are provided with the necessary tools to realize their potential to be able to facilitate social change and development.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology used for this study. It therefore begins with a presentation of the research design of the study. It is then followed by the field work process which includes informed consent, sampling technique and the profile of the research participants. With this study being qualitative due to the explorative nature of the research questions and the predominant focus on the perspectives of informants, data collection methods such as observations, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews were employed in this research. Secondary sources of data were also used. Additionally, the chapter also presents a discussion on accessibility and gate keeping and ethical issues. The chapter then concludes with a presentation on how data was transcribed and analyzed together with the limitations associated with the research process. The research was conducted between 15th June and 17th August, 2011 in Ghana.

4.1 Research Design

With respect to research design since the focus of this study is on a case associated with the impacts of educational projects undertaking by an international NGO in the Awutu-Senya District in Ghana, the case study design is deemed appropriate in this regard. As Matthews and Ross (2010:128) observes, a case study design enables a research project to be "explored in detail and great depth" since the subject of the case may be a person, organization or a situation in a country. The case study design therefore facilitates the collection of relevant data that helps the researcher to address his/her research questions. It thus presents a holistic analysis of a social phenomenon and its peculiar features within the context of its social setting (Matthews & Ross, 2010). Yin (1989) corroborates this assertion by elucidating that the case study allows the researcher to investigate a phenomenon within its real life context.

According to Bryman, (2008) the case study design is also most appropriate when the research is situated in and concerned with a particular community or an organization. He further argues that the case study design allows for a rigorous examination of the social setting, research participants and the subject matter under consideration (Bryman, 2008). Stake (1995 cited in

Bryman, 2008:52) also observes that the case study design enables the researcher to comprehensively identify the inherent complexities and characteristics of the natural setting.

Hence in the process of understanding the impacts of an NGO's educational projects on children children's right to quality education in Ghana, the Awutu-Senya District was selected as the case study. The adoption of the case study design enabled me to explore in detail the impact of the NGO's interventions on the children in the community. Finally, taking into consideration the nature of this research topic, the case study design presented the most appropriate way of understanding the real life situation of rural children, how they exercise their right to quality education and the impact of the NGO's interventions on the exercise of such rights in the community.

4.2 The Field Work Process

4.2.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent is an important aspect of the process of undertaking research. It is a way of ensuring that research participants understand what they are agreeing to participate in and the potential implications of the research for them. This is ensured when the researcher provides the participants with pertinent and adequate information about the research in order for them to decide whether or not to participate in the research (Matthews & Ross, 2010). It also avails the researcher the opportunity to justify the need for such a study. Mathew and Ross (2010) further argue that informed consent allows participants to freely participate in the research and they can withdraw from the study at anytime.

According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) informed consent can be in the form of *written* or *oral consent*. With respect to *written consent* a person is presented with a written document containing all the relevant information about the research, what the researcher intends to achieve and the implications of the research for the participant. *Oral consent* on the other hand involves the researcher providing the person with verbal information for the purposes of obtaining their consent whilst the person in return verbally consents to take part in the research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

In the course of this study of which children and their parents, teachers and officials of an NGO were the participants, different informed consent was sought before interviews were conducted. Before proceeding to the community I sought the consent of the Awutu-Senya District Directorate of Education and Plan Ghana in order to have access to the schools they assisted in the district. Additionally, in keeping with local traditions in Ghana I had to also seek the consent of parents and teachers before speaking to the children in the school. Accordingly, written consent was obtained from the District Directorate of Education and Plan Ghana whilst oral consent was sought from the head of school, teachers, parents and pupils. The reason why the adults and children gave oral consent to participate in the research was that most of the parents were illiterates who could not read whilst some of the teachers, children and other educated parents were apprehensive at signing any form of agreement due to the prevalent skepticism among Ghanaians on such matters.

4.2.2 Sampling Technique

Sampling for the purpose of this study was based on purposive sampling. According to Mathews and Ross (2010) in purposive sampling informants and cases are chosen based on characteristics and experiences that relates directly with the research questions or field of interest. Therefore, key informants for this research were made up of residents of the NGO's beneficiary communities notably children and their parents, head of school, teachers and officials of the NGO in the Awutu Senya District of Ghana. The criteria for selecting the research participants was based on the participant's knowledge of the activities of the NGO, their relationship with the NGO and years spent in the community with reference to when the NGO started working in the community. This is because I wanted to interview people within the community who had knowledge of the activities of the NGO and have previously witnessed and benefited from their interventions.

Additionally, through snow ball sampling (Bryman, 2008), I managed to select the children, teachers and parents for the research in two communities. But the children and teachers were selected from one school which is attended by children in the two communities chosen. This process entailed soliciting the assistance of prominent and knowledgeable individuals within the community to discover research participants who were well acquainted with the subject matter under consideration. The adoption of such a technique was crucial as it made it possible to select

key informants to address the research questions under consideration in the research. However, the difficulty with employing such a sampling technique was that it provided the tendency for the selection of a sample with similar features. But it must be emphasized here that adequate measures were put in place to deal with such deficiencies by ensuring that participants with different demographic characteristics were represented. I therefore decided to identify more than one network of people in order to be able to get differences in participants and opinions which would in a way make the sample representative.

4.3 Profile of Research Participants

This part of the study presents the profile of the participants of this research. The reason for the adoption of such an approach stems from the fact that according to Mathews and Ross (2010:169) demographic variables such age, gender, level of education, ethnicity, occupation and other social cultural norms shapes the experiences and perceptions of research participants. As a result of this I present an overview of the background of my research participants.

4.3.1 Age and Gender

For the purposes of this study eight school pupils (four boys and four girls) were selected from a sample of children from the ages of 8 to 15 years.

With regards to the adult participants notably the parents, six females and four males were selected. The reason for the selection of more females was due to the fact that most of the women in the community were single parents. The ages of the parents who were interviewed ranged from 30 to 55 years. Out of the 10 parents six of them had their children interviewed. Two officials of the NGO who were male and within the same age range were also selected for this study.

On the other hand five teachers whose ages ranged from 25 to 57 years including the headmistress of the local school composed of three females and two males were selected to for interview and focus group discussions. The teachers were selected based on the years spent in the local schools with specific emphasis on those who were present when the NGO initially came to support the school and children in the community.

4.3.2 Occupation and Level of Education of Adult Participants

The occupation of the adult participants included teachers, artisans, petty traders, fish mongers, farmers, a hunter as well as single mothers who were largely unemployed. Their level of education ranged from the Basic Education to the University level whilst most of them were uneducated. Particularly, both the Programmes Manager of the NGO and the headmistress of the school had obtained University Degrees.

4.4 Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods for the purpose of this qualitative research included observations, field notes, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. Additionally, secondary sources of data were also used in this research. The combination of these different data collection methods according to Matthews and Ross (2010) enable the researcher to get a holistic picture of the subject matter under consideration. Also, for Limb and Dywer (2001), these qualitative research approaches helps researchers to understand life experiences and the collective meanings of the everyday lives of people. In this research the combination of the various qualitative research methods enabled me to get a vivid account of participants on the impacts of the NGO's educational activities on children in the community.

4.4.1 Observations

According to Matthews and Ross (2010) it is difficult to perceive a qualitative research devoid of observation as a medium of data collection. This is because so long as people remain the focus of research, there will be observation. Observation involves the use of the human senses such as "sight, touch, smell, hearing and taste" to collect data (Mathews and Ross, 2010:255). It therefore represents one of the main avenues for collecting information about our natural settings or real world.

In this research my role as a researcher could be described as *observer-as-participant* as posited by Gold (1958 as cited in Bryman, 2008:411). With this type of observation the researcher mostly plays the role of an interviewer and not as a complete participant. Thus there is an element of observation but less participation in the social setting (Bryman, 2008). By this

approach, I was able to observe my research participants and interview the children during their mid morning and lunch time breaks when the boys were playing soccer on a grassless pitch in front of the classroom blocks and the girls were enjoying the seesaw at school's play ground located in front of the kindergarten complex. The children and their teachers were also observed during other extracurricular activities like Physical Education (P.E), dance and cultural rehearsals and other informal meetings such as "clubs and association" meetings. The process of observation enabled me to corroborate some of the impressions and perspectives I gathered from the research participants during later interviews.

4.4.2 Field Notes

Taking of field notes was a primary feature of the field work I undertook as part of this research. As Bryman (2008) observes due to the fallibility of the human memory, it is important to take notes of information gathered through observation in the research process. Such field notes basically contain concise and accurate accounts of events and experiences as well as the researcher's reflection of such events (Bryman, 2008).

In the course of my field work, I took brief notes of my observation of the research participants notably the children and their teachers when I visited the school assisted by the NGO in the Awutu-Senya District. Similarly, in my interactions with the headmistress, parents and officials of the NGO in the community field notes were also taken. The field notes I took also enabled me to get a holistic picture of the research setting and the experiences of the people in the community. It also afforded me the opportunity to meticulously present and document my encounters on the field and thereby making it easier to refer to such information in the future.

4.4.3 Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

Focus group discussion is a qualitative data collection technique which makes use of group interviews rather than single interviews with the aid of a facilitator. Focus group discussion enables the researcher to interview groups of people who share a common affinity to the topic under consideration (Matthews & Ross, 2010). It also affords the researcher the chance to solicit the varied opinions and explore the different perspectives and experiences of participants on the same topic. For the purpose of this study I was the facilitator of two separate focus group discussions which involved a group of ten parents and four teachers respectively.

With regards to the focus group discussions with the ten parents which were made up of six females and four males, it took place in the house of my gate keeper who was also the *Community Support Volunteer* or local liaison officer for the NGO and it lasted for about an hour. The other one conducted with teachers (two males and two females) at the staff common room only lasted for about forty-five minutes. These focus group discussions sought to get participants perspectives on the NGO's activities of promoting children's right to quality education and how it empowers children to participate in the development of their community.

I must concede here that even though, at some point in the discussions some participants sought to monopolize the process, I managed to avoid such a situation and gave other participants opportunity to also express their opinions. The focus group discussions I conducted enabled me to delve deep into the research topic and get in depth perspectives and different opinions of the research participants.

4.4.4 Semi-structured Interviews

As a result of the nature of the research questions under consideration qualitative interviews was used to gather data for this research. In research, interviews enable the interviewer to get the experiences and views of the person being interviewed through a dialogue (Matthews & Ross, 2010). Since the aim of this study was to investigate the impact of an international NGO's activity in a community, semi-structured interviews were used to gather data. During the field work I conducted interviews with the children; headmistress of the NGO's assisted school and the Programme Support Manager of Plan International in the Awutu-Senya District. The use of semi-structured interviews helped me to explore the views, feelings and perspectives of the research participants on the research topic.

Some of the topics covered during the interview process were the informant's knowledge of the NGO, their perception of the NGO's educational activity of promoting children rights and its impact on the children. Particularly, questions bothered on how the NGOs educational projects empower children to participate in the decision making processes in the community.

The use of semi-structured interview also enabled the informants to freely express themselves during the interview process. Similarly, the adoption of semi- structured interviews facilitated the interview process through the use of an interview guide (see Appendix A & B) that served as

prompts to cover the research topic. The use of an interview guide when interviewing informants ensures flexibility of follow-up questions that may arise in the course of interviewing and create room for easy responses to these questions (Bryman, 2008).

In addition semi-structured interviews allowed for interviews to be conducted face to face with the informants. And the use of face to face interviews gave me the freedom to ask questions in various ways and an opportunity for follow-up questions. The qualitative methodology through the conduct of interviews also provided the opportunity of using an audio tape recorder. The use of a tape recorder in the interview process served an ideal way of storing data for future reference and facilitated the conduct of interviews. This method of data collection is more appropriate than the use of questionnaires for instance, which does not create room for further clarifications by interviewer and freedom for informants to express an opinion about the research topic.

4.4.5 Secondary Sources of Data

Secondary sources of data were also used for this research. This refers to data already collected and documented in books, progress reports, annual reports, financial records, electronic formats and other relevant medium which are normally stored in libraries and archives (Bryman, 2008).The secondary sources of data for the purpose of this study were obtained from official documents of Plan International, Ghana Education Service as well as other relevant agencies. Other sources of data included books, articles, journals and news paper publications which relates to the topic under consideration. Finally, other relevant and credible online sources such as web pages and websites were also accessed to derive data and for later analysis of this paper.

4.4.6 Issues with Language

Taking into cognizance the fact that Ghana is the hub of different mix of ethnic groups and traditions, the nation is similarly embedded with different local languages. Hence, even though *English* is the official language of Ghana, the second dominant language spoken in the Awutu-Senya District which was the focus of my research is the *Fante* language. The *Fante* language is the language spoken by the *Fante* ethnic group who live in the Central Region of Ghana. It is however interesting to know that the *Fante* language is one the three dialects of the *Akan*

language. Thus the *Fante* language bears semblance to the group of *Akan* languages spoken by the *Akan* ethnic group in Ghana as they are all mutually intelligible.

Therefore, since most of the participants in the community spoke *Fante* language, I was able to understand them because I hail from the Akan ethnic group of Ghana. This ease of language and communication made it possible to conduct interviews with most of the informants who could not speak nor understand the *English* language. Particularly, the focus group discussions with the parents and interviews with some of the children were conducted in the *Fante* language.

However, with respect to the schools, since *English* is the language of instruction I managed to conduct the interview with the headmistress and some of the children in *English* language. The focus group discussions with the teachers were also in the *English* language. Similarly, the interviews conducted with the officials of the NGO were also in the *English* language. The choice of language made it possible to easily communicate with the research participants, but made it very tedious to transcribe interviews conducted in the local language. This is because I had to later translate interviews conducted in the local language into English before finally transcribing.

4.5 Accessibility and Gate Keepers

Bryman (2008) identifies accessibility to the social setting as one of the challenging aspects of the research process. This usually involves the difficulties encountered by researchers in their quest at gaining contact with the research participants. However, one of the mechanisms for alleviating such obstacles is soliciting the help of a gate keeper. According to Hamersley and Atkinson (2007:50) a gate keeper is a person who possesses "some sociological knowledge about the setting". They further posits that such persons "have the power to open up or block access" to that setting (Hamersley & Atkinson, 2007:50). The gate keeper therefore facilitates the researcher's access to the social setting or research group.

In the course of my field work getting initial access to the study setting was not easy. This is because the people in the community were initially adamant and skeptical at divulging information to someone they considered as a "stranger". But as Bryman (2008) observes, since

building relationships is an integral part of gaining access to the study setting, I decided to adopt such an approach.

What I did then was to first visit the Head Office of Plan International, Ghana in Accra to explain my research interest to their Programme Support Manager. After a series of discussions and becoming too aware of my research, the manager then directed me to the Central Regional Programmes Manager of Plan Ghana to smoothen my access to one of their assisted communities in the Awutu-Senya District. Upon meeting the Regional Programmes manager at Winneba, a town located in the Central Region of Ghana, he gave me the contact of one of their *Community Support Volunteers* in the Awutu-Senya District who became my gate keeper. The *Community Support Volunteer* is the local representative of the NGO in its assisted community.

The *Community Support Volunteer* therefore had a very good rapport with the head of the NGO's assisted school in the community and the parents whose children have benefited from the NGO. The gate keeper who doubled as a key informant helped me to become acquainted with the study settings. I also used the opportunity to observe the social setting and the livelihoods of the inhabitants in the communities. After visiting the community for sometime the gate keeper then finally scheduled meetings with all the informants in the schools and community for me to conduct my focus group discussions and interviews.

I must emphasize that the gate keeper was available in every step of my field work to guide me in the process of accessing the key informants of whom he was already familiar with. I always knew that he still possessed the power to restrict or create more access to other research participants. I therefore made sure I conducted my research within the scope of the briefing he had given me regarding some of the dynamics of the study setting.

4.6 Ethical Issues and Confidentiality

In doing research one has to consider ethical issues. According to Burnham et al., (2008) research needs to be sensitive to the rights of participants. This research project therefore considered the needs and concerns of participants so as to ensure their safety and protect their

dignity and privacy. Subsequently, informant consent was sought from participants before data was collected.

With regards to confidentiality, in order to avoid the identification of research participants information recorded were kept confidential. According to Kvale and Brinkman (2009) confidentiality refers to the prevention of disclosure of data that will reveal the identity of participants. Therefore, attempts were made to keep the identities and records of participants confidential and not accessible to any third party. Assurances were given to each participant that their identity will be protected and their accounts will be kept confidential.

In seeking to protect the identity of participants, I made attempts not to record the names of the respondents so as to keep them anonymous. Hence pseudonyms were used for the purpose of analysis of this study to represent the informants and protect their identity. Finally, guided by the need for confidentiality and respect for ethical principles all interview records and data collected were kept safely.

4.6.1 Interviewing Children and Addressing the Issue of Power Relations

Power is one of the key issues of concern in the area of qualitative research due to its predominantly interactive nature. Power according to the Oxford Dictionary (2003) refers to the ability or capacity to do something. Thus in various in forms of interactions between people those who possesses the ability to influence the other wields power (VeneKlasen et al., 2004). It is this ability that power endows people that makes it a critical issue of concern when undertaking a qualitative research which involves a lot of interactions between the researcher and his/her participants. It is therefore essential to consider the issues that create unequal power relations when undertaking a research so as to collect unbiased data and to be able to arrive at credible conclusions.

Specifically in research with children, Lee (2001) observes that age is a critical issue of concern. This is because children have been regarded as incapable and immature people whose perspectives are of no value. He further elucidates that their age has been used as a yardstick of their immaturity and incompetence. As a critique of this notion Lee (2001) argues that this process provides the tendency to allocate power based on ones "age" and level of "maturity" in society (Lee, 2001:9). Hence, adulthood with its perceived accompanying sense of maturity and

competence possesses significant influence in the society. But as Ansell (2005) observes children are integral part of the society and that they should be given the opportunity to participate in society. This is because children are social actors and have a stake in their own development (Ansell, 2005). Murray (2005) also emphasizes that children are key participants in the development of their childhood and thus should therefore be given the opportunity to participate in decision making on issues bothering their welfare. What this argument connotes is that it is important to overcome the issues of power distances when researching the perspectives of children.

Corsaro and Molinari (2008) assert that, in order to overcome the issue of unequal power relations, the researcher needs to assume the role of an "atypical or less powerful adult". This refers to an adult who pretend to be a child in order to make children prominent in the research process. Thus this also entails pretending to be an "incompetent adult who the children see as one of their own" (Corsaro & Molinari, 2008:240).

For the purposes of dealing with the issue of power differences between myself and the children participants in the course of this study I assumed the role of an *incompetent adult* (Corsaro & Molinari, 2008). So in order to establish equal relations with the children and other research participants even though initially they referred to me as "Sir", I later indulged on them to call me just "Sarfo". The children were thus comfortable in referring to me as such throughout the research process. In addition during lunch time I ate with the children in the same canteen. Also during Physical Education (PE) periods, I played soccer with some of the children. Immersing myself with the daily activities of the children helped me to gain their trust and respect. These developments helped towards addressing the issue of power imbalances between me and the young participants. It subsequently paved the way for me to freely conduct interviews with them as by now the participants were now comfortable and familiar with me as a researcher.

4.7 Transcription

The use of audio-recorders in the interview process in qualitative research presents the researcher the challenge of later transcribing such interviews for the purpose of future data analysis. According to Bryman (2008) the reason why qualitative researchers record and transcribe

interviews is that their emphasis is on "not just what people say but also in the way that they say it". It also prevents the tendency to glossing over salient issues during the interview process (Bryman, 2008:451).

Transcription refers to the process of transforming oral language into a written form. It also involves translating oral language to another language in a written format (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Heritage (1984 as cited in Bryman, 2008:45) argues that transcribing avails the researcher an opportunity to critically examine the accounts of informants. It also enables data to be scrutinized by other researchers. However, Bryman (2008) is quick to point out that in spite of the usefulness of transcribing interview records, it is also a difficult process as it consumes a lot of time.

During the interviews and focus group discussions I used a tape recorder to record my discussions with the informants. I therefore had to swiftly transcribe these interviews recorded in order not to forget most of the essential aspects of my encounter with the informants. In the process of transcribing recorded data gathered from my interviews and focus group discussions with informants, I encountered some difficulties of translating interviews and focus group discussions conducted in the *Fante* language to *English* before finally documenting those accounts in a written format. It was a very time consuming process. Quite apart from that, even transcribing interviews conducted with the headmistress, teachers and officials of the NGO in *English* language was not an easy task.

It is interesting to note that after the process of transcription I was amazed at the enormous amount of data I had assembled in the course of my field work. I therefore had to later meticulously read through all these vast amount of information in order to identify the essential accounts that will aid the analysis of my study.

4.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is a continuous process. In this study data analysis was done throughout the research process. Mathews and Ross (2010) posits that data analysis is the process of describing and interpreting data in relation to the research questions under

consideration in the study. Therefore in the course of the interviews and observation of the children, teachers and parents I took some notes which were very essential to addressing the research questions of this study.

For the purpose of this research thematic analysis was used to analyze and interpret data. Thematic analysis is one of the most widespread approaches to analyzing qualitative data. Mathews and Ross (2010: 373) defines thematic analysis as "the process of working with raw data to identify and interpret key ideas or themes". It also involves examining the data to identify the relationships between them in order to address the specific research questions (Mathews & Ross, 2010).

The adoption of thematic analysis helped me to examine the perspectives of the participants and observations gathered in the social setting. It also enabled me to address the specific research questions and subject matter under consideration in the study.

4.9 Challenges and Limitations of the Study

The sample for this research is purposive and therefore makes it difficult to generalize the findings of this research beyond its population. Also, considering the fact that I had only two months at my disposal to collect data during the summer holidays, this is a limited time frame taking into account the amount of data that I had to collect. Similarly, it was not easy to schedule interview appointment with all major stakeholders in the community that I sought to study in Ghana. Additionally issues relating to bureaucracy and confidentiality also served as impediments for an effective and thorough research.

Another challenge was identifying the impacts of the NGO's educational projects from the perspectives of the children in the course of my interviews with them. Due to the fact that most of the children were relatively young when the NGO first intervened in the community, it was a bit difficult for them to efficiently express their opinions on the matter. However, it must be noted that these obstacles did not completely prevent them from telling me what they perceive to be their experiences in the community in relation to the NGO's educational activities.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents an analysis and discussion of findings emanating from the field work process. It primarily examines the perspectives and experiences of research participants in relation to the research questions and theoretical framework used for this study. First, I seek to understand the nature of educational projects undertaken by the NGO to promote children's right to quality education from the perspective of officials of the NGO and members of its assisted communities. After that, I will present and discuss the perspectives of key informants notably children and their parents and teachers about what they perceive to be the impacts of the NGO's activity promoting children's right to quality education. Then I will draw on the rights-based approach to analyze and interpret the accounts of the research participants. The aim of the analysis is to provide answers to the research questions of this study.

5.1 The Nature of the NGO's Educational Projects

The research revealed that within the Awutu-Senya District, Plan has instituted some educational projects aimed at promoting children's right to quality education. These projects include a Pre-school Construction with Play equipments and Furniture (2002), Rain Water Catchment System (2002), Primary School Construction, Furniture (60 to 120 dual-desks) and Latrines (2006) as well as the Construction of a Bore Hole in 2008 for one of the schools in the district to improve teaching and learning. According to officials of Plan in the district, currently their activities are spread across 126 communities with a current case-load of about 10, 939 children.

Concerning the issue of how they initiate their projects, an official of Plan indicated that: "*wherever we go we work with the poorest of the poor. So when we go to any district, the first thing we do is to contact the District Assembly for them to give us the profile of the most vulnerable and deplorable communities and then based on that we move there. We make these communities aware of what we do and encourage them to apply for our projects*".

Figure 2: Plan Ghana's educational projects in the Awutu-Senya District (Source: Photos taken from field trip, July, 2012).

Figure 2 above shows from upper-left to bottom-right; the Six-unit Primary School Block, Kindergarten Complex, Toilet Facility and Rain-water Catchment System constructed by Plan Ghana for the St. Patrick Anglican Basic School in the Mangoase-Krodua community.

Apart from the physical infrastructure constructed by the NGO in some of the deprived communities within the Awutu-Senya District, I also identified some other forms of activities introduced by the NGO to promote children's right to quality education. Some of these initiatives were the establishment of a child rights-based association known as the Rights of the Child Club (ROC) in most of its assisted communities to provide the platform for children to learn about their rights and responsibilities to enable them play active roles in the socio-cultural and economic development of their communities. According to the Ghana News Agency (2008) ten ROC's were inaugurated by officials of Plan Ghana at Mangoase-Krodua in the Awutu-Senya District of Ghana in August, 2008.

In addition, the study discovered that the NGO also award scholarships to some of the children in the basic schools they assist in the district. It must be emphasized here that, by scholarship I refer to funds provided by the NGO to support the feeding of the children in school, some stationery and cost of registration for the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) which is not

covered by the Free Compulsory Basic Education (FCUBE) programme initiated by the government of Ghana in 1996.

Moreover, my findings revealed that Plan also organizes capacity building exercises such as training workshops and seminars for School Management Committees (SMC's) and Parent Teacher Association (PTA's) of the schools they assist in the communities as a way of improving the quality of teaching and learning. These seminars are organized in conjunction with the Ghana Education Service who usually provides resource personnel to facilitate these workshops.

It must be emphasized here that these interventions of the NGO were identified based on my observations and interviews I conducted with officials of Plan Ghana and the members of its beneficiary communities. The next part of this study presents further analysis and discussions of the accounts of officials of Plan Ghana to throw more light on the nature of educational projects they undertake and their motivation for undertaken such educational projects.

5.2 Motivation of Plan for Undertaken such Educational Projects

In order to understand the motivation of Plan for undertaking such educational projects, it was crucial to identify the perspectives of their officials within the Awutu-Senya District on the specific subject matter. This part of the thesis also presents an evaluation of the perspectives of the officials of the NGO on their educational projects initiated to promote children's right to quality education in the district with reference to the theoretical framework used in this study which is the rights-based approach to development which emphasizes rights, participation and empowerment.

5.2.1 Children's Right to Quality Education

As Chapter Three sections 3.2 of this study has shown, in discussing issues relating to the rights of children, the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child cannot be overlooked. This is because it is the international convention that legally stipulates the rights of the child. The UNCRC 1989 emphasizes that the rights of the child are to be safeguarded and promoted in all circumstances. So with respect to the question on his organization's motivation for promoting

children's right to quality education, the Programme Unit Manager of Plan International in the Awutu-Senya District stated that:

"Because, Plan International is a child centered community development organization, children are at the center of everything that we do. We therefore work to ensure that children especially those from rural and poor communities have access to their rights and have a voice in their own development. And one of the ways this can be achieved is to promote children's rights to quality education. We do this by providing educational infrastructure and better learning materials for the schools in our assisted communities".

The accounts of the official of Plan above shows that from the NGO's perspective, children's right to quality education relates to the ability of children to exercise their right to have access to and study in a secure and conducive teaching and learning environment. Thus the NGO official admitted that in order to ensure that children's right to quality education are secured they have to provide the school within the community with the needed infrastructure to make the school environment conducive for effective teaching and learning. By so doing, the long term benefit for the community is that children will be provided with the necessary skills and understanding to be able to fulfill their future potential and empowered to actively engage in the socio-economic development of their communities.

It also underscores the rights-based approaches currently being used by NGOs in their development efforts and the important roles NGOs have assumed in the development agenda of deprived communities (VeneKlasen et al., 2004). It implies that NGOs through promoting children's rights to quality education in a way helps to mobilize these children who are usually marginalized in the society to have a stake in the development of their communities (Ansell, 2005). It also shows that in their workings in deprived communities, NGOs support the initiatives of local authorities as it has been witnessed in the case of the Awutu-Senya District where Plan is supporting public schools in the communities with the provision of educational infrastructure, equipments and other materials to facilitate teaching and learning.

5.2.2 Participation

Participation for Mohan (2008) is a process of involving people in their own development. This presupposes that soliciting the opinions of members of the beneficiary community about their needs before implementing such projects enhances the ability of the vulnerable and marginalized to participate in the society. So in response to the question on what criteria they use to select beneficiary communities, the Programme Support Manager of Plan in the district indicated that: "*we allow the communities themselves to come to PLAN Ghana's offices and request for the projects. After their demands we make an assessment and ensure that there is indeed the exact developmental gap or such facility is missing and needed in such communities*".

He further elucidates that in the implementation of the project itself: "*the community has a contribution such as the provision of sand, stone, water and labor which is about 20% of the cost of the project be it classroom or a toilet facility*". These responses underline the significance of participation in the process of addressing the issues of poverty and social exclusion. This shows that the approach used by the NGO is in accordance with the theoretical framework of this study which suggests that mobilizing individuals to have a voice and influence in the decision making process on issues concerning their lives represent one of the means of reducing poverty and inequalities.

In addition, the Community Support Volunteer of the NGO also supported these remarks by saying that: "*I usually interact with the children in the community to find out the issues affecting their well being, so that we as an NGO will know the areas to focus on in our future interventions in the community*".

These perspectives presented above epitomizes children participation as a process that involves paying attention to children and giving them a voice in the decision making process on issues concerning their interests in the society (Lund, 2007). To some extent the NGO recognizes that children know their situation better and that should be considered as social actors who have a stake in the happenings within their social contexts (Ansell, 2005). Murray (2005) also emphasizes that children are key participants in the development of their childhood and thus should therefore be given the opportunity to participate in the decision making process on issues bothering their welfare.

5.2.3 Empowerment

For Friedmann (1992) empowerment is the ability of individuals to maximize the benefits of the opportunities available to them without any fear or hindrance from external forces. This definition of empowerment is supported by the NGO's belief that providing children access to quality education presents them with an array of opportunities that will empower them to take action on issues that affects their conditions of living. In response to the question of why the specific attention of the NGO on children's right to quality education, an official of the NGO stated that: "*we believe that by promoting children's right to quality education, children will have the confidence to get involved in the community development processes*".

Thus the assertion of the NGO official shows that, the NGO considers empowerment as a means to an end where the enhancement of people's assets and capabilities is the ultimate aim. Thus such a condition is in tandem with the context within which the concept of empowerment is used in this study, which specifies that providing the poor and marginalized with access some kind of opportunities will in the long run help them to confront the problems that affect their conditions of living in the community (World Bank, 2002). Specifically by promoting children's right to quality education through the implementation of educational projects in the community, they are being provided with the opportunity to have access to the necessary skills and tools that will make them productive and enhance their capabilities to facilitate poverty reduction and promote rapid social change. By capabilities, I refer to the things a person is able to do in life which in this case relates to education of children (Sen, 2012).

In addition, the Community Support Volunteer of the NGO in the community also corroborated the accounts of the Unit Manager by stating that:

"In order to ensure effective teaching and learning both the parents and teachers have a major role to play, so what we do basically is that we provide the School Management Committees (SMC) and Parent Teachers Association (PTA) with some kind of education on school governance. The teachers are also provided with capacity building exercises to improve their service delivery in the schools".

Looking at the above perspectives of the officials of the NGO, it can be realized that they perceive empowerment as a long term impact of their interventions within the community's

educational system. Thus their understanding of children empowerment reveal that in order to provide children with the freedom to achieve their future potential, there is the need to address the challenges in the community that mitigate against children's ability to maximize the benefits of the opportunities they can access (VeneKlasen et al, 2004). Hence, the NGO officials in the district believe that by promoting children's right to quality education through the provision of educational infrastructure and organizing capacity building exercises for care givers, the children will be provided with the necessary skills that will enhance their capabilities to facilitate the development of their community.

These perspectives of officials of the Plan on the nature of activities they undertake to promote children's rights to quality education underlines the alternative paths pursued by NGOs to achieve development. As Pieterse (2010) observes alternative development is regarded as concerned with local development rather than the state and market oriented approaches to development. Thus based on the perspectives of the NGO officials it can be emphasized that the mechanisms they use in their workings in rural and impoverished communities in Ghana focuses on exploring alternative ways and "redefining the goals of development" (Pieterse, 2010:84).

5.2.4 General Challenges and Problems

The projects undertaken by Plan within the district are not without its challenges and setbacks. In their quest to promote children's right to quality education in the Awutu-Senya District, Plan encounters a variety of problems and challenges that impedes the smooth running of their activities. Some of the problems include the lack of funds, apathy on the part of some of the members of the community as well as issues of bureaucracy and partnering with government. However, the major problem identified to be affecting the NGO's operations had to do with over expectations on the part of the people. In his submission the Unit Manager of Plan in the district lamented that: "*Mainly high expectations are our main challenge in the district. The inhabitants in the assisted communities have high expectations of us. They think we can provide everything*".

Additionally, the NGO official further complained that: "*in the infrastructure that we build, usually some of the communities are unable to fulfill their 20% cost of the project contributions, so they need to fall on the local government and assembly to provide them with it, which at times they are not able to do and this delays project completion*"

Notwithstanding these challenges highlighted above, according to Plan Officials in the district the humanitarian nature of their interventions sustains their development work. One official stated that in order to deal with the problem of over expectation they make the people aware that they: *"are not the major duty bearers, we rather complement the efforts of government"*. According to the officials of the NGO, their organization is currently seeking to extend its interventions to other deprived communities within the district whilst exploring the possibility of providing computers and other ICT equipments to its already assisted schools to facilitate the teaching and learning of information communication technology in the schools within the Awutu-Senya District of Ghana.

5.3 Perceptions of Key Informants on the NGO's Activity of Promoting Children's Right to Quality Education.

The findings of this study revealed that promoting children's right to quality education in deprived communities through the execution of educational projects is one of such platforms through which some international NGOs participate in the process of development and social change especially in rural communities. From my interviews with key informants, it was apparent that promoting children's right to quality education has also become an important aspect of the process of empowering the marginalized and vulnerable groups like children to have a say in the issues affecting their lives and also to fulfill their future potentials. These findings emanated from my interactions with children and adults in some of Plan assisted communities within the Awutu-Senya District of Ghana. Below is a description of views of some children on their rights to quality education based on the research questions and theoretical framework used for this study.

5.3.1 Views of Children on their Rights to Quality Education

For the purposes of understanding the views of children on their right to quality education, I asked a 12 year old girl who is a member of the Rights of the Child Club, what she knew about children's right to quality education in an interview. The girl responded by stating that: *"children's right to quality education is when we have the chance to go to school and learn"*.

Another 13 year old boy indicated that: *"right to quality education is the opportunity to learn in a nice classroom with good teachers and learning materials"*.

Based on the above descriptions of the children on their right to quality education it was evident that they had some knowledge about their rights. This stemmed from the fact that even though child rights are not talked about generally in Ghana, the establishment of the *Rights of the Child Club* by the NGO in its assisted communities and schools have provided the children with the opportunity to learn about their rights.

However, interestingly the children perceived rights as a *privilege* rather than something they are legally and inherently entitled to through the specific reference to the words "chance" and "opportunity" in their accounts. Thus most of the children understood rights as something which is the preserve of the powerful and rich in society. And that it can only be attained through membership of a family, school or society since they depended on the support of their parents, teachers and other family members. These perspectives showed that even though some children had some form of knowledge about their rights, they did not fully appreciate the provisions of the 1989 UNCRC and other international human rights provisions.

Notwithstanding, most of the children agreed that safeguarding and promoting their rights to quality education is essential in order for them to fulfill their future potential and help their families. One 13 year old boy indicated that: "*my ambition is to go to school and learn hard so that I can get a good job in the future to help my family"*.

In addition, a 12 year old girl also supported the point above by stating that: "*I want to go to school to become a nurse so that I can take care of people"*. These perspectives highlighted above showed that children's views on their right to quality education relates to the ability of such rights to help them attain future employment and improve their standard of living.

According to most of the children, the interventions of the NGO in the community with respect to the provision of educational infrastructure such as classroom blocks, furniture, play facilities, supply of stationeries as well as the creation of a friendly learning atmosphere will help them to realize their future potential. Additionally, the establishment of the *Child Rights Club* by the NGO according a 13 year old girl:

"...helps us to educate and inform ourselves with the assistance of our teachers on our rights and responsibilities as children and members of the community".

The quotations above implies that through the rights-based and people centered mechanisms adopted by the NGO in the rural communities they are able to some extent have positive impacts on the living conditions of their beneficiary communities. Promoting children's rights to quality education thus signifies a way of enhancing the capability and empowering marginalized groups like children to assume their roles as social actors and participate in the decision making process affecting their childhood (Ansell, 2005; Friedmann, 1992). Development is thus being achieved through providing the children with the freedom to obtain quality education which according to Sen (2012) is a key capability in life. Sen (1999) argues that development is not only about securing the commodities of life but also entails exploring avenues for people to attain the freedom to realize their potentials. Hence in order to realize development the children need to achieve various sets of indispensable capabilities in life which includes education.

5.3.2 Views of Adults (parents and teachers) on Children's Rights to Quality Education

To appreciate the perspectives of adult participants on issues relating to children's right to quality education; some questions were posed to both parents and teachers through focus group discussions on the subject matter.

On the specific question on their understanding of children's rights and whether it is equal or unequal with adults rights, the responses of the adult participants depicted a protectionist view that children are the responsibility of parents, people who are not capable of deciding what's is best for them and so adult have to decide what is appropriate for their children's interest (Lee, 2001). It also illustrates the nature of power relations existent in the community. For instance, one of the parents (a 36 year old male artisan) retorted that;

"Yes, children have rights but that does not mean that they have the same rights as parents. If we and the children have the same rights they will not even respect us in the house. Then they might as well have to cater for themselves which is not possible".

The above perspective is revealing as it indicates that even though adults in the community appreciated the need for children to exercise their rights, they also had a protectionist view of

such rights. Most of the adults I interviewed believed that children are incapable of deciding what is best for their interest because they are immature and naïve. Nearly all of them emphasized that in spite of children being inherently entitled to their rights, they are not the same as adult's rights. Hence, within the context of this study, the nature of power relations embedded in the community is typified in the assertions of adult participants on the issue of equality of children's right with adult rights. To some extent the adults perceived their rights as the most important in the society. It shows that adults wield the most power and influence in the society as they make most of the decisions in their households and community in general. Thus, the preceding account of parents have shown that they possess power which privileges them over their children's in the society thereby invoking a feeling of inferiority and unworthiness among the children who are in this case the less privileged in the society (VeneKlasen et al.,2004).

However, on the particular issue of children's right to quality education they all agreed that it has to be protected and promoted. Some of the adults gave opinions of what they perceived to be some of the efforts that the NGO in the community is making to help children adequately secure their rights to quality education in the community. In response to the question of what the NGO is doing to promote children's rights to quality education in a focus group discussion, one of the parents (a 44 year old female trader) stated that:

"Ok initially our kids were not attending school due to the lack of classrooms and furniture in the school, but when the NGO built the classroom block for the school, we the parents are now encouraged to send our children to school".

In addition a female teacher in one of the NGO's assisted schools in the district also remarked that:

"Through the Rights of the Child Club established by the NGO, we the teachers make the children aware of their rights such as their basic rights to education. Normally, we educate the children on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Children's Act, Millennium Development Goals, Juvenile Justice Act as well as the Child Trafficking Act".

In a nutshell, the views of both children and adults about their perspectives on children's right to quality education were presented separately in order to get the different opinions of both groups of people on the topic. From the above perspectives it can be emphasized that the NGO through

its grass root initiatives and the adoption of rights and participatory methods is able to some extent intervene in the activities of the communities by creating awareness of children's rights and the need to safeguard and promote such rights.

5.4 Perceptions of Key Informants on the Impacts of the NGO's Educational Projects

Development paradigms have been devised over the years aimed at reducing poverty, inequalities and achieving social change. This stems from the fact that development is regarded by many as an essential way of addressing the problems of underdevelopment. Alternative development paradigms such as the rights-based approach which emphasizes on the human agency as the focus of development is one such way through which development can be achieved. Thus within the context of the rights-based approach, the poor and marginalized are considered to be crucial to achieving social change (VeneKlasen et al., 2004; Mohan & Stokke, 2010). It is therefore not surprising that NGOs who usually employs rights and participatory methods in their workings with poor people in rural communities have received considerable attention and recognition in recent times.

These assertions are reflected in my interactions with children and adults in some of Plan Ghana's assisted communities within the Awutu-Senya District of Ghana. Particularly it is manifested in the perspectives of key informants on the impacts of the NGO's educational projects on children's right to quality education. Below is a description of the views of some children and adults in the Awutu-Senya District on what they perceive to be the impacts of Plan's educational projects in the district. Their views on the impacts of the NGOs educational projects are discussed within the context of participation and empowerment.

5.4.1 Participation

Views of children on participation

As previous discussions in Chapter Three of this study has shown, participation is an integral part of the development process. Children participation involves children being able to have a voice and influence in the decision making processes within and outside their household (Lund, 2007). Effective participation therefore is a means of empowering the disadvantaged in society

(Agarwal, 2001; Friedmann, 1992). So therefore the ability to mobilize marginalized groups like children to actively engage in their social world as actors is considered as one of the impacts of the approaches adopted by NGOs in their development efforts in deprived communities.

Following from this, in order to get the views of children on how the educational projects undertaken by the NGO enhances their ability to participate; I asked a 13 year old boy whether he knew the NGO in an interview. The boy responded that: *"I don't really know who they are. What I know is that they come with people from abroad to help us the kids in the community. They also give our parents money to support our education"*.

From the above interaction with the 13 year old pupil from one of the NGO's assisted communities it can be realized that even though he is aware of the activities of the NGO in the community he did not know much about their status whether a government agency or a non-governmental organization. According to an 11 year old girl: *"I don't care who they are, so long as they provide exercise books, pencils, pens and bags for us I am happy"*.

It was evident that the children in the community were not too conscious of the institutional framework of Plan but they were obviously aware of some of their interventions in the community. However, it is interesting to note that by the end of my interview with the children they had become aware of the locus of Plan. For some of them even though they had heard the word NGO before they did not know what it stood for.

So on the question of how the educational projects undertaken by the NGO enhance their ability to participate a 14 year old girl responded in an interview that: *"because of the improvement in the conditions at the school, I am now doing well in my studies. Now if my mother doesn't understand something she asks for my opinion"*.

Another 15 year old boy responded that: *"the ROC also organizes clean up exercises in the community and we are now actively involved in communal labour"*.

The perspectives of both the 14 year old girl and 15 year old boy presented above highlights the impacts of rights and participatory methods currently being used by international NGOs in their development work. Particularly, the quotation from the 15 year old who is a member of the ROC shows that the children are now being involved in their own development through their

engagement in community activities (Mohan, 2008). As Lund (2007) observes participation implies the ability to have a voice in the process of decisions making. Through assisting children to secure access to their right to quality education they are now able to express their opinions on issues that affect their welfare in society. This kind of participation is witnessed in the account of the 14 year old girl presented above whose opinion is now solicited by her mother due to her improved academic performance in school. What this means is that participation provides the platform for the marginalized and underprivileged in society to actively take part in the decision making process.

Views of adults (parents and teachers) on children's participation

Participation is an important aspect of the right-based approaches adopted by NGOs in their quest to achieve social change (VeneKlasen et. al., 2004). As previous discussions in the Chapter Three of this study has alluded to, promoting children's right to quality education in deprived communities represents one such way of encouraging vulnerable groups to engage in the decision making processes of their communities. It has also become an integral feature of the process of helping children in deprived communities to fulfilling their future potentials.

Consequently, one of the main concerns of this study was to identify the perspectives of adults on the impacts of educational projects undertaken by Plan International on children's participation in the community. Particularly, I wanted to find out from them how the NGOs activity of promoting children's right to quality education enhances the children's ability to participate in community affairs. Through the use of participatory data collection methods such as focus-group discussions, I managed to get the opinions and perspectives of my adult research participants (parents and teachers) on the subject matter.

In my interaction with some of the adult participants, I discovered that since the implementation of the educational projects by the NGO, some children to an extent now have a say and influence the decision making process in their households. As one parent who is also a teacher indicated: "*since I realized that my children are now serious with their studies due to the improvement in the educational infrastructure in the school, I now talk to them on matters relating to their interest in the family*".

Another assertion by a parent also intensifies our understanding of the situation. According to her: "*initially the sanitation condition in our home was bad, but one day after my daughter returned from an ROC meeting she educated me about the importance of good hygiene, which was the topic they discussed in the meeting. Since then I try to keep my house neat to avoid another embarrassment from my child* ".

These assertions shows how children are increasingly being mobilized and capacitated to influence and take part in the decisions making processes on issues affecting their interest. The first account of the parent who now consults his children on household matters can be described as belonging to the *consultative level of participation*, where the children are now being asked for an opinion on specific matters with no influence on decisions (Agarwal, 2001). The latter account of the parent with respect to the issues of sanitation in the household rather reflects the *active-interactive participation*, where her daughter was able to have a voice and influence in the way sanitation conditions has to be in the home (Agarwal, 2001). Thus through the provision of better and quality educational infrastructure, children are able to secure access to better education thereby affording them with the necessary tools and skills to have a voice in their household and community in general. These interventions are also able to stimulate their critical consciousness so as to be able to influence the decision making processes that concerns their interest in the community (VeneKlasen et al, 2004).

On the other hand, the quotations above from some of the adults in the community show that the education of children may potentially alter the power dynamics in the community. In other words through the increasing participation of children in the decision making processes in their household, they will be able to deal with the influence and control of adults in the community. This is exemplified in the concession of parents that, improvements in the teaching and learning environment in the school coupled with their children's academic progression has made them involve their children more in the decision making processes within the family.

5.4.2 Empowerment

As previously been stated in Chapter Three, according to the World Bank (2002) empowerment is a process of expanding the asset and capacity of people to participate and have control over the issues that affect their lives. Empowerment here involves providing the poor with access to a

wide variety of opportunities and resources that will enable them to confront the problems of poverty, social exclusion and inequalities. These assets and resources include housing, quality education and better health care. Friedmann (1992) also corroborates this assertion by emphasizing that empowerment is concerned with enhancing the ability of an individual to maximize the benefits of the opportunities available to them without any hindrance from external forces.

Consequently for the purpose of this study, members of the NGO beneficiary communities were also interviewed so as to find out how the NGO's activities of promoting children's right to quality education helps to empower the children in the community to overcome their daily challenges and actively engage in the process of community development. This aspect of the study therefore presents and discusses the perspectives of both children and adult participants on this subject matter. Then again the findings from the interviews are also discussed within the theoretical framework used in this study.

Views of children on their empowerment

In seeking to understand the views of children on the impact of the NGO's educational project on their empowerment, I interviewed a 14 year old girl on the subject matter. In her response she intimated that: "*personally, Plan has assisted me by providing scholarship for me to study. I now hope to complete school and get a good job in the future*".

In addition a 15 year old boy who is a member of the Child Rights Club in the community also stated that:

"The Child Rights Club has given me the confidence to study hard and it has also made me learn about my rights. As a club we have been able to talk to the other children in the community to be aware of their rights and respect other people's rights".

The accounts presented here show the significance of NGOs in expanding the capabilities and freedom of the vulnerable in society. It implies that securing children access to quality education provides them with the opportunity to develop their potential and confront the problems affecting their wellbeing. Development in this regard is a process that focuses on exploring avenues for attaining the freedom of people to realize their potentials (Sen, 1999). This situation is also

tandem with the World Bank (2002) view of empowerment as the process of expanding the asset and capacity of people to participate and have control over the issues that affect their lives. Thus my findings suggest that in the process of the NGO initiating and implementing their educational projects such as the provision of scholarships, learning materials, building of infrastructure and providing children with education on their rights, the children are empowered with both assets and capabilities.

Hence, it is fair to point here that to some extent the approaches used by the NGO provide the freedom for children to realize their potential and exercise their rights (Agarwal, 2001; Friedmann, 1992). These empowerment processes in this way creates the necessary platform for the children who were hither to marginalize in society to enhance their capabilities to be able to deal with the problems affecting their lives.

Views of adults on children empowerment

In seeking to explore the perspectives of adult participants on issues relating to the impact of the NGO's activity on children empowerment, I asked both parents and teachers some questions in separate focus group discussions on the subject matter. Apart from that, through a semi-structured interview I also managed to get the opinion of the headmistress of St. Patrick Anglican Basic School in the Awutu-Senya District on the same topic.

On the specific question of what has been the impact of the NGO's educational projects on children empowerment in a focus group discussion, one of the parents (a 42 year old trader) responded that:

"Formerly our kids were loitering about and not frequently attending school due to the lack of classrooms and furniture in the only public school in the community. But when Plan built the new classroom block and provided furniture for the school, we the parents are now encouraged to send our children to the school".

From the above quotation it is evident that providing children's access to quality education through the execution of educational projects has been able to help the children to increase their attendance in school. This perspective is in line with Friedmann (1992) definition of empowerment, which refers to enhancing the ability of an individual to maximize the benefits of

the opportunities available to them. Thus providing children access to better educational infrastructure endows the children with a number of opportunities that will empower them to confront the problems they encounter in their daily lives. Empowerment within this context is aimed at poverty reduction, dealing with inequality and improving the standard of living of the poor in society (World Bank, 2002).

Another parent also remarked that: *"the NGOs educational projects have provided our children with the ability to study hard and strengthened our belief in them that they can succeed in life"*. This response to the impacts of the educational projects undertaken by the NGO shows the level of empowerment being experienced in the lives of the children in the community. One of the parents is also quoted as saying that: *"since my son joined the ROC in school, he now believes in himself and I think it has given him the power to act in a different way both in the house and within the community"*. By acting differently the parent refers to attitudinal changes witnessed in the community like the decrease in the number of kids who loiter about during school hours due to their willingness to attend school daily and the confidence derived from the knowledge they have acquired on their rights as members of the club. These assertions from parents to some extent reflect their perception about the impacts of the NGOs interventions on the educational system in the community.

Furthermore, the headmistress of one of the NGO's assisted schools in the district also narrated that:

"Ok, when I first came here in the year 2000 in terms of classroom we were just having a pavilion not even with walls and the children were even carrying their chairs and stools to the school. The enrollment was not encouraging as we were having a total population of 315 pupils. A lot of things have changed due to the projects from Plan. Now everybody wants to come to the school. Now we are having over 754 pupils, the Kindergarten section alone now has 146 kids. Currently we have over 45 pupils per each class. Some of the kids from nearby communities and villages have enrolled in our schools whilst more parents want to get their kids in school. In terms of academic performance formerly it was around 50% but now average performance per class in the basic school is around 75%".

The quotation above is quite long but revealing. It shows that that the NGO plays an important role in the development of the community within which they operate. Thus with respect to the study area through the promotion of children's right to quality education, children who were hither to marginalized, are now being provided with the opportunity and freedom to realize their future potential and engage actively in the community. Through these empowerment mechanisms children are now gradually being provided with "the assets and capabilities to "participate in" and have control over the issues that affect their lives (World Bank, 2002: 11).

5.4.3 General challenges and problems

Notwithstanding the various impacts of the NGOs projects highlighted by the members of the beneficiary community, some problems were also reported by my informants. Some of these problems included the inadequacy of funds allocated for some of the NGO's interventions in the community and other unmet promises. According to one parent:

"The main problem is to do with the scholarship as the money they allocate for us is sometimes not enough. It does not really sustain the kids for the whole term. So if you are not doing some job that can help you, it is difficult to assist the child. We would be happy if Plan could increase it for us".

However, some of the participants notably teachers indicated that perhaps the lack of government interventions in the community has also contributed to their over reliance on the NGO, thereby putting pressure on the NGO to provide for the community. One female teacher in the community indicated to me that:

"The local government is not really doing its part as most of the developments we have had in this community comes from the Plan. Now there is a lot of pressure on the NGO because most of us in the community think that they can provide for our needs due to some of the things they have already done for the community".

In order to find solutions to these problems that members of the beneficiary community are confronted with in the course of the NGO undertaking their activities of promoting children's right to quality education, some of the participants suggested that the local government should also be active in the development agenda of the community and cooperate more with the NGO in

the community so as to provide their children with the quality education they deserve in order for them to become responsible, active and prominent citizens in the future.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This chapter presents a summary of the findings and conclusions emerging from this thesis. First, I revisit and address the specific research questions posed earlier in this study and then finally provide recommendations for future research.

6.1 The Nature of Educational Projects Undertaken by the NGO to Promote Children's Right to Quality Education

The study has clearly shown the nature of educational projects undertaken by the NGO to promote children's right to quality education in the Awutu-Senya District. The study discovered that the NGO has instituted certain projects and initiatives such as the construction of educational infrastructure, provision of scholarships, organizing capacity building exercises for care givers and creating awareness about children's rights in the community. My respondents from the NGO demonstrated that with respect to educational infrastructure by the year 2006, they had constructed a six-unit classroom block with furniture of about 60 to 120 dual-desks, a three-unit pre-school facility with play equipments, a toilet facility and constructed a rain-water catchment system for one of the deprived schools within the Mangoase-Krodua communities.

In terms of capacity building exercises for care givers, evidence from this study suggest that in order to enhance teaching and learning in their assisted schools, the NGO organizes training workshops and seminars for School Management Committees (SMC) and Parent Teacher Associations (PTA). The officials of Plan even intimated in one instance that they realized that in most of the schools, the kindergarten attendants are not well trained so they provide them with the requisite training through the support of the Ghana Education Service. The informants from the NGO stressed that all these efforts are geared towards promoting children's right to quality education so as open spaces for children to fulfill their future potential.

Concerning awareness creation on children's right to quality education this study identified that the NGO has set up an association known as the *Rights of the Child Club*. The purpose of this club is to create avenues for children to learn about their rights and responsibilities to enable them play active roles in the socio-cultural and economic development of their communities.

These educational projects are further confirmed by the members of the NGO's beneficiary community in my interactions with them. Thus most of them also perceived the nature of educational projects undertaken by the NGO within the context of educational infrastructure, capacity building programmes for care givers, provision of scholarships for pupils and awareness creation about children's rights. In all the interviews I conducted, it was evident that the respondents were aware of the kind of interventions the NGO was making within the educational sector of the community. It is these interventions that have been highlighted above. So therefore, I am justified to conclude here that the NGO undertakes a variety of educational projects in the Awutu-Senya District with aim of achieving development through the promotion of children's right to quality education.

6.2 Perceptions of children, their parents and teachers on such projects in promoting children's right to quality education

As previous discussions in Section 3.2 have shown the UNCRC 1989 is the international human rights instrument that sets out the rights of children. The findings of this study have revealed that promoting children's right to quality education also constitutes one of the right-based approaches to development. The proponents of the rights-based approach in line with Amartya Sen's perspectives on development essentially advocates for the protection children's rights, encourage more participation of children in the development discourse and non-discrimination against them. My respondents from the NGO therefore revealed that it is the desire to help children fulfill their rights that motivates them to initiate educational projects in the community.

Thus, from the preceding discussions of this study it is apparent that, it is due to the motivation of the NGO to promote children's right to quality education that obviously occasions such educational projects. Basically the officials of the NGO perceive that by securing children's right to quality education through the execution of educational projects, it will endow the children with the freedom to learn and to be taught in a conducive environment. Consequently, the children will be provided with the needed skills and tools that will enhance their capability to facilitate poverty reduction and promote an accelerated community development.

Significantly, the members of the beneficiary community were in agreement with these assertions. The study identified that even though adult participants were skeptical about the specific issue of equality of children's rights with adult rights, they however agreed that promoting children's right to quality education is essential to providing them with the requisite skills and understanding to make them capable and productive members of the society. They perceived the interventions of the NGO with respect to promoting children's right to quality education as a direct consequence on the future of their children. My discussions with the children themselves also revealed that through the NGO's activity of promoting their right to quality education, they will have the opportunity to be able to fulfill their future and academic potentials. The study has therefore shown clearly that indeed promoting children's right to quality education has become a significant feature of the approaches adopted by NGOs in their development efforts.

6.3 Impacts of the NGOs Educational Projects on Children in the Community

In terms of impacts it is clear that to some extent the NGO's activities in the Awutu-Senya District has contributed towards promoting children's right to quality education and enhancing the prospect of community development. In other words through the adoption of rights and participatory approaches in their development work, the NGO has been able to create a supportive environment for vulnerable and marginalized groups like children to exercise their rights and actively engage in the decision making processes of their community, thereby enhancing the possibility for development to occur in the community. This is manifested in the way the NGO is promoting children's right to quality education in the beneficiary communities and the changes experienced in the everyday lives of the children. Most of my informants from the beneficiary community indicated since the NGO intervened in the community, they have witnessed improvements in the school infrastructure and the way children conduct their affairs within the community.

Such changes notably include the alteration of the community's inherent power dynamics through children participation in the decision making processes within their households and the improvements in the standard of education they access in the community. Accordingly, within

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the context of this study the level of development of the NGO's assisted communities within the Awutu-Senya District of Ghana is measured by the extent to which children are able to secure access to their rights to quality education and how it helps children to confront the issues of poverty, social exclusion and inequalities that often inhibits their ability to exercise their inalienable rights enshrined in the international human rights instruments and their national constitution.

Accordingly from the preceding discussions, it can be emphasized that the measures put in place by the NGO to promote children's right to quality education, to some extent enhances their capacity to participate in community decision making processes and attain considerable empowerment. Thus, through the NGO's educational projects the children are being provided the opportunity to acquire the necessary skills that would help them to arouse their critical consciousness and to be able to engage vigorously in community affairs. This in a way helps to address the development challenges such as poverty, social exclusion and inequality confronted by children in deprived communities within the Awutu-Senya District of Ghana.

In a nutshell, it can be emphasized that NGOs have now assumed prominent roles in the developmental agenda through their frequent engagement in community development projects. Through their grass root initiatives such as helping various marginalized groups in society to stimulate their awareness and examine the challenges they are confronted with in their everyday lives, they have manage to earn the trust of such groups in a manner in which local governments find it difficult to replicate.

6.4 General Challenges Associated with the NGO's Educational Projects

In spite of the impacts of the NGO's interventions in the community, some problems were also identified in the process of undertaking such educational projects. Some of these problems include high expectations on the NGO, lack of funds, apathy on the part of members of the beneficiary communities and issues of government bureaucracy which causes delay of projects. These problems informants agreed affect the smooth progress of projects in the community. However, the research discovered that the main problem had to do with the high level of dependency and over expectation on the NGO by the beneficiary communities. The officials of

the NGO were of the opinion that most of the members of its assisted communities at times think that their organization can provide everything for them and ignore their roles as supportive agents of the local government in their development efforts.

On the other hand, some of the members of the beneficiary community were also of the view that at times the funds allocated for some of the interventions such as scholarships for the pupils in the community were inadequate. Others respondents notably the teachers also alluded to the fact that probably the lack of government interventions in the community has also contributed to their over reliance on the NGO, thereby putting pressure on the NGO to provide for the community.

6.5 Concluding Remarks

From the above perspectives it can be emphasized that notwithstanding these challenges, there is abundant evidence to show that the educational projects undertaken by Plan within the Awutu-Senya District has to some extent empowered children to participate in the development processes of their community. Most of the children within the beneficiary communities have witnessed improvements in the quality of education they receive and are now being educated on their rights and responsibilities. Additionally, they have been empowered to engage actively in the decision making processes on issues confronting their interest as social actors in the community. They are now able to learn in a child friendly school environment thereby providing them with the opportunity to gain the necessary skills and tools that will make them capable and productive to engage in decision making processes and facilitate an accelerated socio-economic development of their community.

However, there is the need to caution here that, the ultimate responsibility to promote children's rights in any form should not be solely left in the hands of NGOs. Consequently, there is the need for the state not to shirk its responsibility towards its citizens but rather through its apparatus supports the interventions of NGOs through a more robust collaborative initiatives that would further stimulate the quest to secure children's rights to quality education and enhance the prospect of both community and national development.

6.6 Recommendations for Future Research

I must concede here that this study predominantly focus on a specific aspect of an international NGO's activity within a district in Ghana. Thus this study was concerned with identifying the impacts of Plan International's educational project on children's right to quality education in the Awutu-Senya District of Ghana. In reality, it must be emphasized here that Plan pursues numerous projects in relation to the promotion of children's rights in general and not just their rights to quality education. Thus in Ghana, Plan development work covers areas relating to children's right to quality education, better health, food security and awareness creation of child rights in over 6 regions.

It is therefore recommended that in order to holistically address the issues of children's rights in general, perhaps future research will not only look at specific aspects of the NGO's activity such as promoting children's right to quality education but rather focus more on children's right in general. This I argue would enable a better appreciation of the issues concerning the larger impacts of NGOs interventions in relation to promoting children's right in Ghana. The need for a further holistic research has become more obvious in recent times due to the growing significance of NGOs in the development agenda of many deprived societies.

Additionally, with rights and participatory methods currently featuring prominently in the development work of NGOs a more general approach to the understanding of their impacts on community development through the promotion of children's rights as a whole will provide further concise and in depth perspectives on the issue. Also the focus of previous and current research on NGOs activity in specific aspects of children rights usually occasions smaller samples. I therefore fervently believe that the adoption of a more thorough and general approach to the issue of children's rights in future research could avail the opportunity to access a more expansive sample. It will also facilitate an in depth appraisal of the ways in which NGOs activities of promoting children's right to quality education and other equally important rights can impact on children empowerment and participation in their community development processes in Ghana. I have a strong conviction that there are more areas to be explored within the context of research of this nature taking into account the various types of NGOs involved in various kinds of community development programmes in Ghana.

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INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS

Appendix A: Interview Guide for Officials of the NGO

Basic Information

Age:

Gender:

Level of education:

Years spent in the organization:

Current Position:

1. What is children's right to quality education from an organizational perspective?
2. Why the specific attention on children's rights to quality education?
3. What is the nature of projects undertaken by your organization to promote children's right to quality education?
4. What is the motivation and rationale for these educational projects?
5. How are these projects initiated?
6. What criteria does your organization use to select beneficiary communities?
7. How long has your organization been in the community?
8. When did these project start?
9. How is the relationship between your organization and the beneficiary communities?
10. How has your organization's projects benefited the communities?
11. What are some of the challenges faced by your organization in the course of implementing these projects?

Appendix B: Interview Guide for Children Participants

Basic Information

Age:

Gender:

Name of school

Class:

1. What do you know about your right to quality education?
2. Do you think children have right to quality education? Why or why not?
3. Can you tell me about it?
4. What do you know about Plan Ghana?
5. What is the nature of educational projects they undertake in your school?
6. What is the level of your involvement in the NGOs educational activities in the community?
7. Are you a member of the Rights of the Child Club? If yes
   What is the nature of the activities that you do?

   Where do you conduct your activities?

   What impact has the formation of the ROC has on you the kids of the community?

   What are some of the challenges you face as a group?
8. What is the relationship between the children in the community and the NGO?
9. What impact has the NGOs educational projects had on you?
10. Are you able to participate in decision making at home or community?

Appendix C: Focus Group Moderators Guide for Adult Participants (Parents and Teachers)

I. INTRODUCTION

-Purpose of the discussions

-Disclosure: (1) Oral Consent (2) Audio Recording   (3) Notes Taking

-Procedures:

(1) One person talks at a time (2) Be honest   (3) There are no right or wrong answers to the questions.

-Participant Introductions:

-Gender -Age -Number of children -Level of Education -Occupation

II   MAIN QUESTIONS

1. What is your understanding of children's rights?
2. Do children have the same rights as adults?
3. What is children's right to quality education from your perspective?
4. What do you know about Plan Ghana?
5. What is the nature of educational projects they undertake in the community to promote children's right to quality education?
6. What is the level of your involvement in these projects?
7. What was the situation before they intervened in the community?
8. What has been the impact of their educational projects on children in the community? How has these projects promoted the children's right to quality education?
9. What are some of the challenges associated with the implementation of these educational projects by the NGO? What do you think should be done?

III   CONCLUSION: Any additional comments. Thank you for joining the discussions.