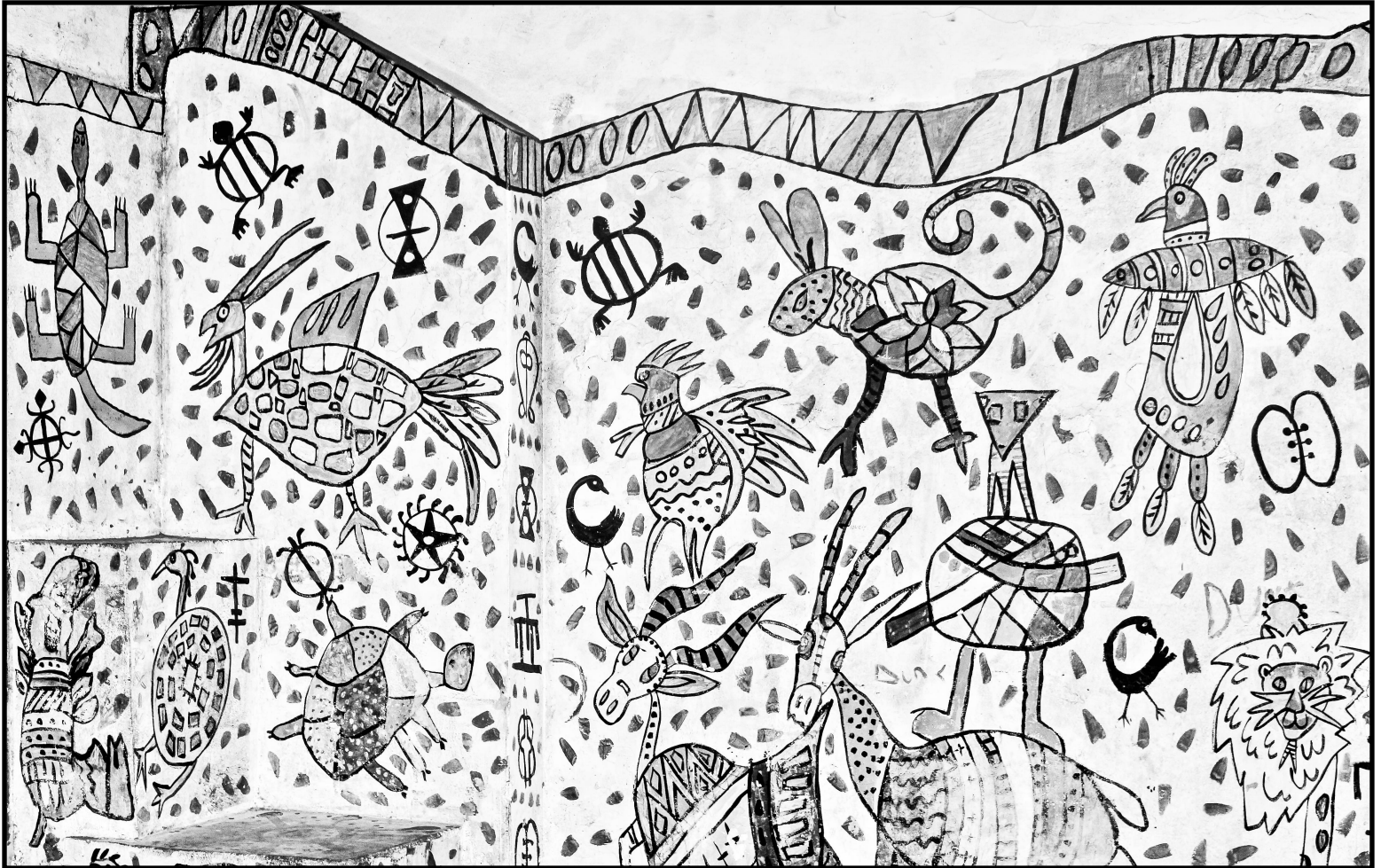


GRASSROOTS FUTURES



IDENTIFYING LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OPPORTUNITIES
WITH WOMEN'S/GIRLS EMPOWERMENT
GRASSROOTS NGOS IN GHANA

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GRASSROOTS NGOS IN GHANA

by

Asia Clarke

Submitted to OCAD University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Design in Strategic Foresight & Innovation.

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ABSTRACT

This research seeks to discover what impact foresight methods combined with participatory action research workshops might have in uncovering issues that contribute to organizational and financial sustainability challenges for women and girls empowerment grassroots non-governmental organizations in developing countries. By specifically focusing on grassroots non-governmental organizations mandated to empower African women and girls in the context of Ghana, this process is intended to identify and address present and potential future sustainability challenges. Ultimately proposed is a process to enable organizations to shift towards foresight-informed approaches to strategic planning that creates effective, sustainable, and innovative strategies.

Keywords:

Financial Sustainability, Organizational Sustainability, Women's Empowerment, Girls Empowerment, Sustainable Development, International Development, Gender Equity, Grassroots NGOs, Ghana

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To Crossroads International, thank you for supporting me to undertake this mutually beneficial research project, for connecting me with key partners and networks that contributed greatly to this research. To Pro-Link Ghana, DUNK, and all individual experts interviewed - thank you for sharing your experiences as real change making organizations in Ghana.

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Alice Coles

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Sew Your Future (SYF) Volunteer, DUNK

Cynthia Nimo-Ampredu

Executive Director, Human Rights Advocacy Centre

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Founder, Engage Initiative / Former Executive Director, Pro-Link Ghana

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Consultant, UNFPA / Former Project Officer, Crossroads International

DEDICATION

To Norris Phills and Robert Clarke. May the work that I am called to do allow the healing of the many versions of you.

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INTRODUCTION

Motivations

Women's work and contributions to society have historically been undervalued, especially the underpaid, unpaid, and forced labour of women across the globe. Opportunities to address the disproportionate effect that gendered poverty has on women and girls are inextricably linked to the grassroots non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working to improve the lived realities of marginalized women. The oppression of women is a systemic challenge - a challenge that reinforced by social conditioning in education, social norms, and cultural practices.

I have decided that this challenge is my call to action. This is the problem that I want to work on solving in my life. I hope to work collaboratively on innovative, foresight-inspired ways to identify and improve opportunities for socio-economic equality for women and girls in developing economies, specifically in Africa and the Caribbean. This major research project is my first take on addressing African women and girl's empowerment using strategic foresight tools at the grassroots level.

In 2016 I made my first trip to Accra, Ghana, through a volunteer mandate with Crossroads International, a Canadian non-profit organization. I became the Women's Entrepreneurship Advisor at Pro-Link Ghana, where I facilitated a pilot Women's Entrepreneurship Program on business development for the Obrapa Women's Group. Pro-Link Ghana is an organization that supports vulnerable women and girls across Ghana by offering public health, agriculture, social, and economic empowerment programs. The Women's Entrepreneurship Program I facilitated focused on creative enterprise development opportunities for the Obrapa Women's Group. This group, which currently consists of 15 women aged 18 - 40, is considered a 'key population' because of the women's vulnerability to extreme poverty and sex work. This program is now part of Pro-Link Ghana's economic empowerment mandate to support and empower women to use practical skills to alleviate poverty. Through this role, I witnessed how women in developing countries are economically left behind as the country develops. The technological advancements we enjoy in Canada and other developed nations, which enable and foster entrepreneurship and empowerment are not equitably available to women in developing contexts.

When I first stepped off the plane in Ghana, I did not know what to expect. I knew I would be working on women's economic empowerment through jewelry and creative arts, which seemed like an exciting challenge. As a woman-identified entrepreneur and jewelry designer in Toronto, I felt I was at least partially equipped to address the challenges that young creative women in Ghana were facing. But as any adventure will teach you, this initial trip turned out to be so much more. After two years in the field, and through the pursuit of this master's degree, I can testify that my eyes have opened wider. I have become better equipped to articulate the systems of oppression and identify creative opportunities for resilience. The shift I have felt is a sensation that is hard to explain. It feels like I am present at the front of each moment, so deep inside myself and entirely outside of myself at the same time. I use my lived experience, my emotional intelligence, and my analytical skills to create a clearer understanding of the context through this Major Research Project (MRP). It is with curiosity and dedication that I approach this research, a fate-felt and inspiring process that I am excited to share with the world.

Problem Space

Global Affairs Canada (GAC) introduced its Feminist International Assistance (FIA) Policy in 2017 (GAC, 2018), which underscored its commitment to improving the effectiveness of international assistance. The FIA Policy, within the context of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of gender equality, is part of a global recognition of the pivotal role that gender equality plays in alleviating global poverty (UN, 2018). Over the past 30 years, women's empowerment initiatives have become the focus of donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), global financial institutions, and influential western governments (Cornwall, 2016). However, evidence of the efficacy and potential for long-term sustainability of women's empowerment programs has been noted as a gap in the research literature (Buvinic & Furst-Nichols, 2014; Cornwall 2016).

GAC has been funding Canadian-based volunteer cooperation agency Crossroads International, to work in partnership with grassroots NGOs in Ghana to advance equality for women and girls (Crossroads International, 2018). Since 2016, I have volunteered through Crossroads International on mandates to empower marginalized women and girls. To complete the participatory action research workshops for this MRP, I worked with two of Crossroads International's strategic grassroots partners in Ghana including:

- Pro-Link Ghana is an NGO that empowers and advocates for disadvantaged persons (especially women and girls) by upholding their human rights, improving their access to healthcare and education, and enhancing their socio-economic status (Pro-Link Ghana, 2018). Pro-Link Ghana began official operations in 2000. For over 15 years, Pro-link has worked in partnership with key stakeholders (including Ghana Health Service, Social Welfare, and other local government Institutions), as well as international development partners (including USAID, Global Fund, DIFD, Plan International, and Global Affairs Canada). Pro-Link Ghana has district offices in seven regions in Ghana, including the Ashanti, Central, Eastern, Greater Accra, Volta, Northern and Western regions. Pro-Link Ghana runs a Women’s Entrepreneurship Program for women aged 18 to 40 who live in Accra, Ghana. Through this program, Pro-Link Ghana aims to use creative arts-based enterprise development to advocate for and empower disadvantaged women and girls (Pro-Link Ghana, 2018).
- DUNK (Developing Unity, Nurturing Knowledge) is a youth-led, community-based, NGO that creates sports-enabled safe spaces for at-risk women and children ages 8-19 living in the most deprived communities of Accra, Ghana. DUNK is a registered as a charity NGO with the Registrar General, Department of Social Welfare and the Ghana Education Service. Started as a social movement in 2010, its objective was to productively occupy the time of children from the Jamestown and Nima communities. Today, DUNK offers a basketball program, after school support, a playmakers club, and a women’s empowerment program. Although DUNK aims to serve any marginalized and under-served youth, DUNK targets gender equality through a girls basketball program as well as a women’s empowerment program called Sew Your Future (SYF). The SYF program targets young mothers in the Jamestown community and equips them with sewing, educational, and entrepreneurial skills. The SYF program also has volunteers to assist with childcare for SYF participants, and DUNK solicits dedicated donors to provide scholarships for the youth of SYF participants (DUNK, 2018).

While each organization has been recognized for its work in advancing gender equality, each organization has challenges ensuring the long-term sustainability of its organizations. My observations, and the research in this MRP, confirm that the sustainability of grassroots NGOs are threatened by the decreasing support of donor organizations from developed nations and corporations. In response to these changes, grassroots NGOs can use strategic foresight tools and methods to uncover new sustainability models. Strategic foresight tools and techniques can enable grassroots NGOs to foresee roadblocks and ideate organizational and financial sustainability options to remain economically viable and relevant in the future.

Grassroots NGOs sustainability encompasses more than pursuing grant proposals, fundraising opportunities, or investment. Sustainability is as much about financial resource management as it is also about internal organizational processes and systems. Sustainability as a process involves different strategic, programmatic, financial, and social aspects that must be integrated to fulfill the mission of the NGO (Hailey, 2014). Over the past 20 years, international funding of NGOs has increased, specifically in the areas of emergency and humanitarian work. However, recent projections from the International NGO Training and Research Centre indicate that official aid for international NGOs will be reduced or restructured in the future - as has already been seen in Ireland, Netherlands, Australia, and Canada (Hailey, 2014). The projected change in official aid is partially attributed to changing political and ideological pressures, which have an impact on budget allocations for international development in donor countries (Hailey, 2014). For example, following the Brexit vote, a recent UK poll by ORB International indicated that seven in 10 Britons want to end Britain's commitment to spend 0.7 percent of GDP on foreign aid (Riley-Smith, 2016). This indicates that there is an increase in political disaffection amongst UK general public related to the use of tax money to support international development projects, especially at a time when there are significant local political changes occurring.

Similar sentiments have been identified in the political rhetoric of Canada's most recent election. In the run-up to Canada's 2019 Federal election, the Conservative Party leader Andrew Scheer announced that his party platform included a proposal to cut 25% of Canada's foreign aid spending (Gouett, 2019). This cut was intended to support the Canadian economy and focus international aid only on the most vulnerable countries. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has suggested that developed countries should commit 0.7% of their gross national income (GNI) for development assistance (Gouett, 2019).

In 2017, GAC announced the new Feminist International Assistance Policy, which describes how development aid funding will focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as the most effective way to challenge poverty and inequality (GAC, 2018). However, at that time, Canada was only contributing 0.264% of its GNI to development assistance, which ranked it fifteenth among OECD donors (Gouett, 2019; Zilio, 2017). The Feminist International Assistance Policy did not include plans to increase foreign aid to fund the new feminist policy objectives. This leads one to question: How can the objectives of this new policy be reached without an increase in dedicated aid? How much of a priority is the new policy if there is limited willingness to commit the OECD-suggested amount of monetary support? This is further troubling as systemic issues such as climate change may exacerbate gendered inequality in developing nations in the foreseeable future. To respond to this funding threat, I feel that it is of great importance to use strategic foresight to help grassroots NGOs prepare for the coming shift.

Research Question

How might women and girls empowerment grassroots NGOs in Ghana use a foresight-informed participatory action research process to identify challenges to and strategic opportunities for sustainability?

Supporting Questions:

How might a comprehensive Foresight Scan on the future of Ghana's and West Africa's economies help shape their organizations' future strategic plans?

How have various historical, social, political, economic, environmental, technological factors shaped current funding models of grassroots NGOs?

How might a strategic foresight-informed participatory action research process uncover new financial and organizational sustainability opportunities?

Research Outcome

The intended outcome of this research is the development of

1. A set of workshop tools adapted to support the development sustainability strategies for grassroots NGOs
2. A foresight-informed sustainability strategy formation process
3. Key recommendations for grassroots NGOs and donor organizations to strive for/ work towards organizational and financial sustainability

METHODOLOGY

Epistemology & Ontology

My proximity to African womanhood and Pan-African futures-thinking is the ontological root of this MRP. Fully aware of my self-identification in this process, I am personally invested in visioning pan-African futures and the evolving role of African women in it. Balancing my empathetic tendency in regards to this project with my role as a researcher, I acknowledge that the systemic challenges identified are related to a relationship of processes, the outcomes of which shape the lived experience of gendered expression, aspiration, and oppression.

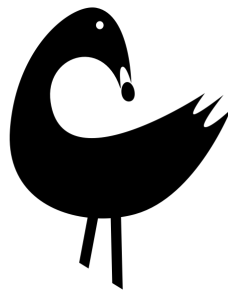
As a Strategic Foresight Practitioner and Design Researcher, I acquire and assemble knowledge about the world around us (signals and trends), and facilitate extrapolations of experience, interpretations, and knowledge of the future through participatory design approaches. I am particularly influenced by Johan Galtung's concept of Structural Violence in his seminal paper *Violence, Peace and Peace Research*, in which he outlines how structural violence and inequality may have a high survival capacity despite tremendous changes elsewhere (1969). In praxis, I worked with the theory of structural violence and inequality as an epistemological theory and a systems approach to sense-making after primary research data was collected. Furthermore, I was influenced by epistemologies that centre participatory approaches to knowledge creation, such as Paulo Friere's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) in which he outlines the rationale for including the learner/student as a co-creator of knowledge. My MRP uses these concepts to explore how co-creating knowledge with grassroots NGOs can support the anticipation and sustainable management of the systemic challenges. The research within this MRP was designed to inform and train grassroots NGO members of foresight methods, while simultaneously providing opportunities to co-create sustainability strategies. The participatory action research workshops introduced participants to the concept and use of long-term foresight tools in strategic planning, while acknowledging their expertise on the present and future contexts in which they are creating.

Constructing African Futures Together: A Foresight-informed Participatory Approach

To create new visions of the future from varied perspectives, the voices of inhabitants of that particular future must be centred in the design approach. Though Ghana is a growing African economy that boasts a diverse population of national tribes, as well as African and non-African ex-pats, the Eurocentric/Western mindset has had a significant influence on the citizens via the education system (Nyamnjoh, 2012). This research focus of this MRP was partly inspired by the work of former SFI graduate Pupul Bisht whose major research project aimed to use participatory foresight methods derived from a non-western practice of future creation and storytelling. In her research, Bisht asks, “How do different cultures tell stories about the future differently and how can we bring out some of those marginalized expressions as a way of both balancing as well as challenging some of the hegemonic ideas that colonize our understanding of what the future might look like?” (Founder, 2019).

Ghanaian culture has its own cultural method for thinking about the future, exemplified in the Adinkra symbol and concept of “Sankofa” from the Akan tribe. Sankofa symbolizes the Akan people’s quest for knowledge with the implication that the quest is based on critical examination and intelligent and patient investigation. (Berea College, 2019). Sankofa literally translates to “go back and seek it”, and is based on a mythical bird with its feet firmly planted forward with its head turned backward, indicating that the past should always serve as a guide for planning the future (Berea College, 2019).

Figure 1. Adinkra Symbol “Sankofa”



(Image Credit: ‘Sankofa/Past Experience’ by L.E. Quist from the Noun Project)

Having previously lived in Ghana, I entered the SFI program with a preliminary understanding of Ghana and the historical cultural context. As a student, I was particularly intrigued by the way that foresight methods and practices drew upon this very same Sankofa concept: examining the past in order to extrapolate patterns and clues that can point towards what the future might be. While the foresight method used in this research was developed at a Western institution by a non-African/non-Ghanaian, I felt that the connection to the Sankofa concept served as a link between Western and non-Western cultural ideologies in the foresight process. Furthermore, by virtue of the Ghanaian heritage of participants of the participatory action research workshops, this project created space to meaningfully centre and prioritize non-Western voices in the foresight process through the use of a cultural concept that was familiar to them.

Methods & Technique

In this research, participatory design is used to support the creation of options that confront participants' current conceptions of their place in their preferred futures. The foresight method used in this study was originally developed by James Dator at the Hawaii Research Center for Futures Studies of the Political Science Department at the University of Hawaii. The development and use of the four alternative futures model (growth, transform, collapse, and discipline) is usually within the context of helping an organization or community plan for and move towards its preferred future (Dator, 2009). In his article *Alternative Futures at the Manoa School*, Dator outlines the components of a future visioning process. These are:

1. Appreciating the Past
2. Understanding the present
3. Forecasting aspects of the futures
4. Experiencing alternative futures
5. Envisioning the futures
6. Creating the futures
7. Institutionalizing futures research

According to Dator, no step in this process should be omitted (Dator, 2009). For the purposes of, and given the limitations of this project, I adjusted the scope of each component to allow for greater emphasis on the components two, three, four, and five as part of the interview and participatory research sections that involved research participants. In order to address each of these necessary components of the future visioning process, I completed the following:

Appreciating the past

In order to achieve component one ‘appreciating the past’, I completed secondary research to inform my writing of the accompanying literature review. This secondary research included reviewing news publications, blogs, and academic journals. Reading and synthesizing the research literature was practiced throughout the Major Research Project process, and informed the research questions, interviews, and workshop outlines. It also supported my own ability to facilitate the conversations in interviews and workshops because I had gained a better understanding of the historical-cultural context of Ghana, and Sub-Saharan Africa by proxy. Altogether, the secondary research that examined the past and present context served to me to identify relevant insights and solutions that later became key findings in the research.

Understanding the Present

In order to complete component two ‘understanding the present’, I completed expert interviews with leaders in the grassroots women and girls empowerment movement in Ghana, including high-level representatives at DUNK and Pro-Link Ghana. During these interviews, I asked questions to ascertain the current context of the international development space in Ghana in relation their organizations. Through these interviews, I learned about the challenges that organizations experienced as barriers to becoming being more self-sufficient and sustainable. The interview process was useful to not only understand their organizations’ rationale for coming into existence, but to ascertain their preparedness for potential future threats. This interview process also served to point out strategies organizations’ used in the past to gain financial resources and the extent to which they believe that these may have to change.

Expert interview participants were identified and selected through the literature review process and network connections I had made during my previous trips to Ghana. Having worked in this field myself in the years prior to my start in the Strategic Foresight and Innovation (SFI) program, I was able to meet and connect with various professionals and leaders in the field, gaining their confidence and trust through the process. The expert interviewees' range of experience in the grassroots NGO sector in Ghana provided valuable insights on the systemic aspects of grassroots NGO sustainability.

Forecasting Aspects of the Future

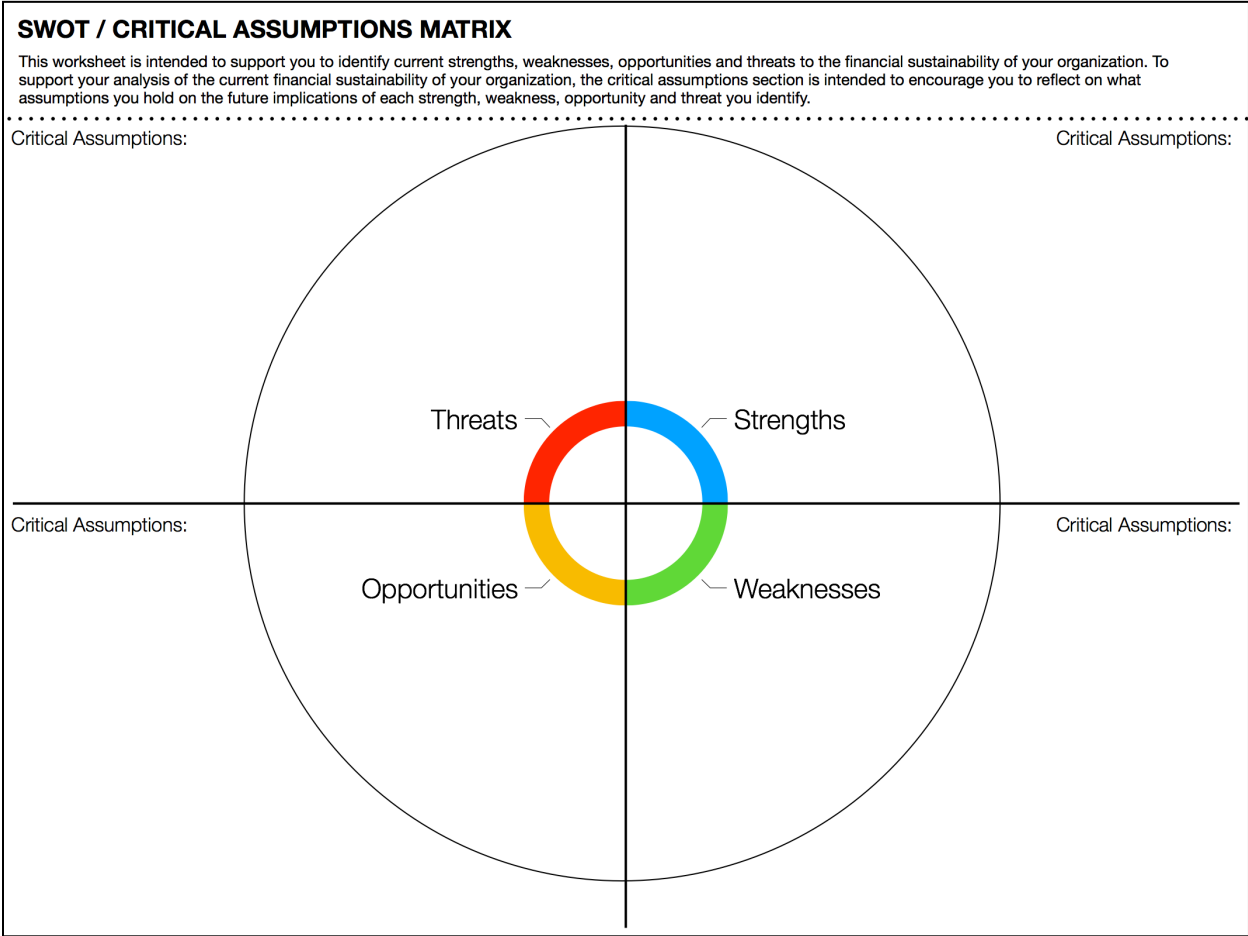
To complete component three 'forecasting aspects of the future', I researched a comprehensive Foresight Scan, which I then compiled into a future trends report and disseminated to research participants. This forecast included inferences from data compiled by respected global agencies and local news outlets, such as the United Nations, World Bank, My Joy Online, and Ghana Web. News reports and data from these sources supported me to make a trend report with detailed information about the current trajectory of Ghana and how they may impact the future. The objective of the Foresight Scan was to help guide the discussion about the present socio-political landscape of Ghana and draw connections to their grassroots NGO's potential future.

Experiencing Alternative Futures

To complete component four 'experiencing alternative futures', I facilitated a SWOT / Critical Assumptions participatory action research workshop. This workshop used a SWOT (strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis tool that was adapted to examine participants' critical assumptions about the current and future strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to their organizations. Examining 'critical assumptions' refers to the practice of engaging in an objective analysis of an aspect or issue that is assumed to be true. By examining critical assumptions, workshop participants ideated alternative ways to approach the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of their organization. Participants were engaged in a discussion about the changing function and purpose of their organizations as it related to their SWOT analysis, which is how they experienced alternative futures. This workshop was used to understand: 1) the current and future functions that their organizations serve in the lives of beneficiaries in the context of

Ghana; 2) the areas of current and future challenges and organizational instability that they need to address; and 3) the critical assumptions participants are making with regards to their organizations' view of their organizations present and future needs, as well as their beneficiaries needs. This workshop helped direct conversations around questioning presumptions each organization made about the future and to explore different perspectives. This workshop also encouraged open dialogue about their organizations' preparedness for alternative futures given their current capabilities. The participants' thoughts and ideas were recorded on post-it notes and placed into each applicable category in the chart.

Fig. 2. SWOT / Critical Assumptions Matrix







Envisioning the futures

To complete component five 'envisioning the futures', I adapted James Dator's Four Generic Futures Scenarios model. This workshop was also intended to be

inspired by the Foresight Scan discussion. For this workshop, I created a Four Generic Futures Scenarios tool to assist with the sustainability strategy formation process by creating a chart with the following headings:

Fig. 3. Four Generic Futures Scenarios Workshop Guide

Four Generic Futures Scenarios Workshop Guide			
Four Generic Futures Scenario method (Dator, 2009) encourages participants to consider four future perspectives that can be represented by phases on four classic growth curves. Participants are invited to discuss what their organization will need to do to be relevant to stakeholders as well as financially sustainable in each scenario.			
In this future...	Foreign/International and Donor Aid is:	What are the features of this future?	What options might exist for our organization be more financially sustainable?
	Commercialized	Political: Economic: Social: Technological: Legal: Environment:	
	Unnecessary / Significantly Reduced	Political: Economic: Social: Technological: Legal: Environment:	
	Regulated	Political: Economic: Social: Technological: Legal: Environment:	
	Localized	Political: Economic: Social: Technological: Legal: Environment:	

During my facilitation, I outlined what each future circumstance could mean for each organization’s main income source: foreign/international donor aid. I did this by indicating in the second column “Foreign/International and Donor Aid is...” and then following it with a general term that may characterize the new reality of that future. I also added the PESTLE analysis (political, economic, social, technological, legal, environment) framework to this tool to encourage workshop participants to take a systemic approach to envision this future. When using this tool, I requested participants to imagine Ghana in the year 2040 and to envision what could be completely new in this future with regards to the way that international aid is

disseminated. As I led participants through the final column in the adapted Four Generic Future Scenarios tool which asked them “What options might exist for our organization to be more financially sustainable?”. Participants then discussed what options there may be to ensure their organizations remain relevant and financially sustainable. Participants had to shift the purpose and mandate of their organizations to address the imagined needs and pressures of each future. Thoughts and ideas were recorded on post-it notes and put into each applicable category in the chart.

Creating the Futures

To complete component six ‘creating the futures’, I analyzed the participatory action research workshop findings and synthesized each team’s set of workshops. The findings from the workshops, combined with the literature review and the foresight scan helped to inform the strategic opportunities identified to support grassroots NGOs to achieve sustainability. I also offer a set of notable considerations that are intended to address different stakeholders in the international development sector to acknowledge their roles in the shaping of grassroots NGOs futures.

Institutionalizing Futures Research

To close this process, I completed component seven ‘Institutionalizing futures research’ as a set of considerations, limitations, and commentary on donor organizations’ role in supporting grassroots NGOs to be more sustainable. This section consists of lessons learned and limitations acknowledged that can enable an even more robust strategic learning opportunities for participants and facilitators who adopt this process in the future. To institutionalize this futures research project in the organizations engaged, the findings will be made available to each organization as a resource to inform their strategic planning in the future.

THE RESEARCHER'S JOURNEY

Global Affairs Canada (GAC) has been funding Canadian-based volunteer cooperation agency Crossroads International to work in capacity-building partnerships with grassroots NGOs DUNK and Pro-Link Ghana. In April 2019, I proposed this research project to Crossroads International as a potential opportunity to help build their partner organizations capacity for self-sufficiency and sustainability. In June of 2019, this proposal was accepted by Crossroads International, and my pre-departure process began.

Crossroads International supported this major research project because it is closely linked to its mandate of providing capacity-building support to gender-based grassroots NGOs in Ghana. Furthermore, this research is relevant to Crossroads International's vision for supporting grassroots NGOs to be sustainable and self-sufficient while supporting marginalized communities. As a researcher and international development professional who is passionate about and invested in gender equality, I am grateful to be supported by a like-minded organization.

This MRP research journey took place between September 3, 2019, and November 23, 2019. On September 3, 2019, I embarked on a field research trip to Accra, Ghana, to conduct primary research for this project. While awaiting the Research Ethics Board (REB) approval, I conducted desk research to develop the foresight scan and literature review. Being in the field while conducting desk research helped me to gain a deeper understanding of the current context of Ghana and guided my selection of experts from whom I would request interviews.

After receiving REB approval, I began outreach and scheduling interviews with grassroots NGOs to engage them as workshop participants or as expert interviewees. I also held meetings where I explained the premise of the research, interviews, and workshops before officially requesting participation. As my networks were primarily connected to Crossroads International's partner organizations, most research participants were connected to Crossroads International's partner organizations. However, some research participants were selected through my desk research and other network connections, which enriched the perspectives offered in this paper.

During September, October, and November 2019, I took my time to engage deeply with this research subject. I came to understand some of the nuanced and systemic barriers that grassroots organizations struggle within their daily operations. The bureaucracies of fundraising and the functional maintenance of grassroots NGOs were made more complicated by the perceived uncertainty of the future. In the face of this uncertainty, I was most inspired by the effort, care, and concern that the staff and volunteers have for their women and girl beneficiaries.

Upon my return to Canada on November 23, 2019, I completed the editing, synthesis, analysis, and arrangement of this document. Being back in Canada after the nearly three months of being in the field brought me back to a global perspective. I care deeply about this subject, but being far away from the field helped me to consider: Why should grassroots NGO sustainability in Africa this matter to us in Canada, or in any other western, wealthier country? Who else has the power to affect positive change in this system, and how can we mobilize them to act? I hope that this research reaches the eyes and conscience of the Canadian public and policymakers to help promote a better understanding of the lived reality of employees and volunteers of grassroots NGOs. They are working creatively and resourcefully with the changing circumstances, but there is no telling how long they can withstand the tide before they can no longer support the women and girls who depend on them.

APPRECIATING THE PAST: A Literature Review

To fully appreciate the state of grassroots NGO sustainability in Ghana, it is useful to understand the history of international involvement in Ghana, and the theories of development that shaped the current socio-economic relationship between developed donor countries and developing countries. For the sake of maintaining a reasonable scope, this analysis is limited to the Ghanaian context. This literature review also focuses on the role, function, and sustainability challenges of the grassroots non-governmental organization in developing countries such as Ghana.

History of International Involvement in Ghana

Historically referred to as the Ashanti Kingdom, present-day Ghana sits on the Atlantic Ocean and borders Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso. As of 2018, Ghana has a population of about 29.6 million (World Bank, 2019). Indigenous to Ghana are several ethnic groups, including but not restricted to the Akan, Ashanti, Ga, Fante, Ewe, and Hausa peoples (Ghana Web, 2019).

Before colonial contact, the geographical area now referred to as Ghana was known to be resource-rich, with gold and fisheries as its main inter-continental export. Upon colonial conquests by the Portuguese, Dutch, and English explorers beginning in the late 15th century, Ghana became known as the Gold Coast. The opening up of the slave trade in the 16th century suddenly expanded the demand for slaves in the Americas, and trade in slaves soon overshadowed gold as the principal export of the area. The west coast of Africa became the principal source of slaves for the plantations of the Americas, with African peoples being captured en-masse from the interior of the continent and shipped from European-built trading posts on Ghana's coast such as Ussher Fort, Elmina Castle, and Cape Coast Castle (Ghana Web, 2019).

The transatlantic slave trade and the globalized economic system it supported persisted well into the 20th century. The slave trade in Ghana continued despite the beginning of the abolitionist movements in the 1700s, the banning of slave imports to

the USA in 1807, and the passing of the British Slavery Abolition Act in 1833 (Hallett, 1980). This neatly coincided with the beginning of the industrial revolution, in which technological advancements in manufacturing and production, combined with free African labour, threatened to undermine the burgeoning middle class of Europeans and European-descendants living in the Americas and Europe (Ghana Web, 2019).

During the centuries of colonial rule in West Africa, British, Portuguese, and Dutch forces fought over the control of key economic posts in the Gold Coast colony. Following the abolition of slavery in 1833, Britain launched a series of military interventions against the Ashanti and Fante local governments to maintain and gain additional control of the land. In 1874, the British proclaimed the Gold Coast to be an official colony of the British Empire. In an attempt to make a further claim to the land, in 1896, a British military force invaded the Ashanti area. It overthrew the king, Asantehene Prempeh I (Hallett, 1980), exiling him to Seychelles. By 1902, European colonial invaders distinguished the boundaries between the Northern Territories and the surrounding French and German colonies of Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, and Togo. Up until this point, the Gold Coast crown colony consisted of three sections: the Colony (the coastal regions), Ashanti, and the Northern Territories. In 1902, the regions had become a single political unit under British Rule (Owusu-Ansah & McFarland, 1995).

Between the amalgamation of the Gold Coast as a crown colony in 1902 and the founding of modern Ghana in 1957, several constitutions were enacted by British colonial rulers. However, by the late 19th century and into the 20th century, an increasing number of Africans within European colonies had begun protesting the non-traditional and arbitrarily set up political systems. In 1920, the National Congress of British West Africa, led by a foreign-educated Fante named Joseph E. Casely-Hayford, started to advocate for political reform in West Africa (Owusu-Ansah & McFarland, 1995). They called for elective representation, which resulted in amended constitutions in 1925, 1946, and 1951, each building up to increased African political representation in the Gold Coast colony. However, these constitutional changes did not grant full self-governance, and protests continued to signal social and political unrest (Owusu-Ansah & McFarland, 1995).

By the late 1940s and 1950s, and following the independence of British colonies in Southeast Asia, African leaders began to advocate for complete independence from British Rule. Constitutional changes in the 1940s and 1950s enabled the transition from colonial rule to self-governance, and eventually, a full multi-party parliamentary system

was installed. In 1947, the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) political party was founded by a group of men referred to nationally as “The Big Six,” consisting of academics, chiefs, and lawyers (Yidana, 2012). Their goal was to bring about Ghanaian independence from British colonial rule. The Big Six became targets of colonial military prosecution for their political activism against colonial rule. After differences between party founders, the charge for independence was led by the Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, who went on to found a new party called the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) in 1949. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah had pan-African, socialist, and nationalist political ideologies, as expressed in his political rhetoric in numerous writings and speeches. After winning the first democratic election in the Gold Coast colony in 1956, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah declared independence from British Rule on March 6, 1957 (Ghana Web, 2019). This made Ghana the first Sub-Saharan country to achieve independence from the British Empire.

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah aimed to support the economic growth of Ghana by turning Ghana into a manufacturing and industrialized country, away from economic over-reliance on mineral resource extraction and raw agricultural sectors that had dominated Ghana’s economy for centuries. However, he was also a controversial figure, having exiled many of his critics and political adversaries. Economic woes followed the election of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah as the volatile price of cocoa affected the country’s economic performance in the early 1960s (Yidana, 2012). In 1966, a military coup overthrew Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, and the Ghana Armed Forces held power until Ghana’s 1969 elections, which saw the Progress Party (PP) come into power, headed by Kofi Abreha Busia (Sherwood, 1999).

After 27 months, President Kofi Abreha Busia was also ousted in a military coup (Ghana Web, 2019). By this time, Ghana had accumulated \$580 million USD in medium- and long-term debts, an amount equal to 25% of the gross domestic product of 1969. In 1971, the \$580 million USD had been further inflated by \$72 million USD in accrued interest payments and \$296 million USD in short-term commercial credits. Within the country, an even more substantial internal debt-fuelled increased inflation (Yidana, 2012). This marked the beginning of Ghana’s lag in development due to international debt.

The 1970s and 1980s in Ghana were marked by economic instability due to global economic recessions, fluctuations in commodity prices (oil, gold, and cocoa), and additional successful coup attempts by succeeding governments. President Jerry Rawlings gained control in Ghana after a military coup in 1982. In 1983, President Jerry Rawlings authorized and adopted Structural Adjustment Plans (SAPs) as required by loan arrangements by the Bretton-Woods Institutes: the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (Brydon, 1999). This was following a steady decline of the economy from the preceding 25 years, in which industrial production dwindled at the same time as exchange rates made imported goods restrictively expensive. Before taking on the SAPs, Ghana was relatively debt-free, but Ghana also had virtually no capital or revenue. This era marks the beginning of debt dependency relationships with the IMF and World Bank that impeded economic progress (Sherwood, 1999; Ghana Web, 2019). After ten years in power, elections were held in January 1992, which saw President Rawlings solidify his leadership, bringing Ghana back to a multiparty democracy (Brydon, 1999).

Years of steady economic decline enabled corruption in the primary export industries. For example, Ghana's main export crop of cocoa was regularly being smuggled into Côte d'Ivoire for more profitable sales since the 1970s (Brydon, 1999). By the mid-1980s, severe drought and bush fires affected the production and availability of food in Ghana. The Economy Recovery Programme was used to encourage the production of goods, which could be traded abroad and to reform the public sector to become more resource-efficient (Fosu & Aryeetey, 2010). The efforts to make the public sector utilities more efficient ultimately resulted in the removal of subsidies, causing the prices of water, electricity, and fuel to rise. This provided an increase of revenue for local and national budgets but was insufficient to meet the needs to rehabilitate Ghana's industry and infrastructure (Fosu & Aryeetey, 2010; Brydon, 1999)

While the Economy Recovery Programme was successful in some regards, by the 1990s, Ghana was continuing to decline economically. The value of the Ghana national currency (Ghanaian Cedi) decreased dramatically from 1700 cedis equal to £1 British Pound in 1995 to 3400 cedis equal to £1 British pound in 1998 (Brydon, 1999). In 1999, all macroeconomic targets were off by substantial margins into the early 2000s (Fosu & Aryeetey, 2010). The purchasing power of the Ghana cedi was on a continued decline, showing that the terms and usage of the SAPs were not effective in bringing about positive economic change. Ghana's economic dependence on raw commodities combined with the inability to compete with developed nations in manufacturing was

the central factor underlying its debt crisis. As a result, the steady fall of global commodity prices from the 1980s served to increase the size of foreign debt payments, which could only be paid out of foreign earnings such as exports. As commodity producers across the world expanded production in order to pay debts, on the advice of the IMF and World Bank, commodity prices stayed low for over 20 years. This served to produce a debt trap that put Ghana into the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries group as designated by the IMF (Jubilee Debt Campaign, 2016).

The efficacy of the education system and the provision of social services also suffered during the introduction of SAPs in Ghana. Further lending by the IMF and World Bank to Ghana was conditional on the country's agreement to remove agricultural subsidies, to open up the national economy to global competition through deregulation and privatization, and to introduce 'cost-sharing' (charging users) for social services in the health, public, and education sectors. The high cost of social services gave rise to the necessity of non-governmental organizations that provide essential social services to help alleviate poverty (Laird, 2008).

In the mid-1990s, global economic justice movements called for the cancellation of debt to heavily indebted poor countries. This led to the creation and enhancement of two debt relief schemes run by the IMF and World Bank, the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative. These initiatives led to debt cancellation in a number of heavily indebted countries. As a result of this debt cancellation, Ghana's government external debt fell from \$6.6 billion in 2003 to \$2.3 billion in 2006 (Jubilee Debt Campaign, 2016). Significant improvements in education and healthcare followed, due to money being saved and invested, alongside good government policies, which enhanced basic service provisions.

In 2000, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) brought together key aspects of human development into a set of international goals and targets that were commonly accepted as a framework for measuring progress on development. These goals were accepted by 189 Member States of the United Nations (World Health Organization, 2015). Ghana adopted the MDGs in 2001 and incorporated them into official policy documents. The goals were intended to:

- Goal 1: Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty.
- Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education.
- Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women.
- Goal 4: Reduce child mortality.
- Goal 5: Improve maternal health.
- Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases.
- Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability.
- Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development.

The MDGs served as a framework for thematic areas that would be funded by international donors from the early 2000s onward. The number of NGOs operating in Sub-Saharan Africa rapidly expanded in the 1990s, and by 2002, NGOs were involved in 70% of World Bank funded projects (Laird, 2008). This trend was witnessed in Ghana as there were just ten registered NGOs in 1960, but by 1990 there were 350, rising to 3,000 by 2004 (Adam, 2004). It is noted that by the 1990s, donors and NGOs contributed more monies to expenditure on poverty alleviation and development at the district level in Ghana than local government agencies (Laird, 2008). Between 2000 and 2015, the MDGs served as an important political and policy reference point for the assessment of progress towards meeting some of Ghana's key development challenges (Arhin, 2016; Government of Ghana, 2015).

However, the improvements did not reduce the need for NGOs to provide social services in Ghana. Following the cancellation of Ghana's debt and the strengthening of Ghana's economy, some nationalized targets of the MDGs were achieved. By 2015, Ghana reached the targets of halving extreme poverty, achieving universal primary education and gender parity in primary schools, and halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water (Government of Ghana, 2015). However, slow progress was made towards reducing under-five and child mortality, reducing maternal mortality, achieving an equal share of women in wage employment in non-agriculture sectors and women's involvement in governance, and reversal of the loss of environmental resources (Government of Ghana, 2015).

In 2010, Ghana's recalculation of its gross domestic product (GDP) led to an overnight graduation from being a poor country to a lower-middle-income country (LMIC) with a per capita income of about \$1,300 USD (Moss & Majerowicz, 2012).

Ghana's qualification as LMIC shifted the country's position in the international aid system. As a result, the relationship between Ghana and its bilateral and multilateral donors and development partners began gradually shifting in notable ways. Markedly, the implications of LMIC qualification have included reductions and withdrawal of budgets from several of Ghana's traditional international donors. For example, traditional donors, which had been instrumental in supporting NGOs in the performance of their roles, cut their funding for their operations in Ghana, such as DFID (Department for International Development - UK) and CORDAID (Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid - Netherlands). DFID indicated that it would reduce the level of general support for the country from £36 million in 2010/11 to around £10 million in 2014/15 (Arhin, 2016).

In September 2015, the UN General Assembly formally adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as successors to the MDGs that aim to end hunger and poverty, protect the earth, and promote holistic prosperity by 2030. For Ghana, the SDGs were adopted and came into effect in January 2016, and aimed to foster economic growth, ensure social inclusion, and protect the environment. The SDGs were, however, adopted at the same time as the decrease in international donor funding due to Ghana's graduation to the LMIC group of countries (Arhin, 2016).

Fig. 4. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



Furthermore, at the same time that funding resources began to decline for NGOs in Ghana, the government entered into another structural adjustment agreement with the IMF. In April 2015, the IMF approved a three-year Extended Credit Facility arrangement with Ghana, which aimed to restore debt sustainability and macroeconomic stability in the country to foster a return to high growth and job creation, while protecting social spending. (Twumasi-Baffour, 2019; International Monetary Fund, 2016). The program was ultimately extended in 2018 for an additional year, ending on April 2, 2019. As it stands, IMF representatives conducted an End-Of-Mission consultation in Ghana, stating:

“Ghana’s macroeconomic outlook remains favorable, supported by strong activity in the extractive industry and a safer banking system... After the successful completion of the program with the IMF, the authorities’ policies have remained prudent and maintained macroeconomic stability. Nevertheless, implementation of the 2019 budget has been challenging, owing to lower than expected revenues, frontloading of spending on some government flagship programs, and unexpected security outlays reflecting emerging security challenges...” (International Monetary Fund, 2019).

As indicated, there are both promising and skeptical signs for the overall future economic outlook of Ghana. For example, in its World Economic Outlook, the IMF has forecasted that Ghana will be the fastest growing economy in the world this year with a projected growth rate of 8.8% (Deutsche Welle, 2019). However, the Ghanaian national currency has depreciated by about 10% since the beginning of 2019, and there has been a rise in public debt, which is projected to be at about 63% by year-end (International Monetary Fund, 2019). Fiscal performance for the first half of 2019 showed an overall budget deficit (on a cash basis) of 3.3% of GDP higher than the target of 2.9% of GDP. This is because the revenue shortfalls of 1.6% of GDP was higher than expenditure cuts of 1% of GDP (World Bank, 2019).

In 2019 Ghanaian president Nana Akufo-Addo presented the Ghana Beyond Aid policy, which aims to support Ghana to become an aid-free country by 2020. The policy provides a reference point for development partners to channel development assistance to specific critical sectors:

“It is important to highlight that the vision of attaining a ‘Ghana Beyond Aid’ is not aimed at isolating Ghana from the comity of nations and development partnerships. Ghana Beyond Aid is not anti-aid or aid rejection. It is rather about being more efficient and effective in how we mobilize and use our resources. It requires that we set our development priorities right so that our creative energies and resources, including aid, can all be deployed to fast-track our economic transition from an underdeveloped country to a confident and self-reliant nation.” (Government of Ghana, 2019).

The policy outlines a reform strategy that aims to reach macroeconomic stability, higher public resource mobilization, greater efficiency in the use of all public resources, anti-corruption, improved public infrastructure, and land accessibility, and creating a robust financial sector for higher domestic private savings (Government of Ghana, 2019). Other areas of focus included:

- foreign private portfolio investment,
- a more supportive private sector environment,
- export promotion and import substitution,
- building technological capabilities,
- creating strong social partnership among government business and labour for social and economic development,
- more strategic mobilization and use of aid

(Government of Ghana, 2019).

These are important policy reforms; however, implementation is unclear, and indications in research show Ghana may be struggling to ensure all Ghanaians benefit equally from political and economic progress. (Löwe, Agbe Tembo & Buffardi, 2016).

The decrease in donor resources in the context of the uncertain economic future of Ghana has severe implications for grassroots NGOs’ revenue mobilization in Ghana. The overall aim of many grassroots NGOs in Ghana is to provide access to essential social services, services that historically have not been adequately provided by a government-funded social safety net. The historical legacy of the relationship between

Ghana, colonial countries, and the Bretton Woods institutes (IMF and World Bank) has had both positive and negative effects on the current economy of Ghana.

Ghana's aspiration to be a country beyond aid has prompted an exit of valuable international aid resources for NGOs. This results in increased competition for grassroots NGOs who wish to access the limited funding available. However, as this research project will show, this is not entirely negative. Threats in the current donor funding landscape can be embraced as an opportunity for reflection and foresight-informed strategic planning. Foresight-informed strategic planning methods can be used to identify opportunity areas for reducing dependence on traditional funding sources. These methods can ultimately encourage innovative approaches that allow for long-term organizational and financial sustainability for grassroots and non-grassroots NGOs.

Theories of Development

This section outlines the main aspects of the Modernization, Dependency, World-systems, and Globalization theories of development. Widely regarded as the main theoretical approaches to understanding the trajectories of developing countries, the following theoretical perspectives provide a deeper understanding of the social and economic policies that result in uneven economic development between countries. By tracing the history of the 'feminization' of international development projects, this section also sets the stage for the focus on women's and girls' empowerment as a widespread development objective for developing countries.

The term development can be understood as a social condition within a nation, in which the authentic needs of its population are satisfied by the rational and sustainable use of natural resources and systems (Reyes, 2001). The authentic needs of a country's population are specific to the socio-cultural fabric of that particular nation, and should be met through the sustainable use of natural resources and systems. In modern development contexts, the sustainable use of a country's natural resources is enabled by both internally- and externally-sourced cultural technologies. The socio-economic outputs of harnessed natural resources and systems are meant to enable basic services to be provided to a country's citizenry; namely education, housing, healthcare, and nutrition. Furthermore, the function of the economy should inform and be informed by a country's culture and traditions to uphold a social framework that will provide stability for continued growth and development.

Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation (1943) outlined five goals as a hierarchy of basic human needs. These needs are: physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). The extent to which a country has set the foundation for its citizenry to achieve the aforementioned goals of the hierarchy of needs can be seen to reflect its level of development. Economically, this means that there are industries, employment opportunities, balanced distribution of wealth, and the satisfaction of at least the physiological and safety needs of a country's population. The relationship between a country's government and its citizenry hinge upon the range, efficacy, and quality of social benefits provided. The four main theories of development offer theoretical explanations to interpret how countries endeavour to meet the needs of its citizenry within the context of the global economy.

Modernization

According to the modernization theory, it is assumed that modern societies have better social safety nets, education, and economic productivity than non-modern societies. In modernized societies, institutions are differentiated from each other. This differentiation increases functional capacity, resulting in a well functioning political structure. Modernization has also been associated with the secularization of political culture. Secularism enables increased social equality in modern societies, which further enhance a society's political system (Reyes, 2001).

Modernization has been written about as a westernizing, homogenizing process for developing countries that is inevitable (Reyes, 2001). Modernization as a theory is related to the "Five Stages of Economic Growth" theory as developed by economist W.W. Rostow in 1961. The stages are as follows:

- Stage 1: Traditional Economy - characterized by a subsistent, agricultural based economy, this stage requires intensive labour and low levels of trading. The country's population is generally uneducated and therefore does not have a scientific perspective on the world and technology.
- Stage 2: Underdeveloped Economy - At this point, a country begins to develop manufacturing, and a more national/international, as opposed to regional, outlook.

- Stage 3: Developing Economy - A short period of intensive growth follows, in which industrialization begins to occur, and workers and institutions become concentrated around a new industry.
- Stage 4: Developed Economy - This stage is a time intensive process. As standards of living eventually rise, the use of technology increases and the national economy grows and diversifies.
- Stage 5: Post-Industrial Economy - In this stage a country's economy flourishes in a capitalist system, characterized by mass production and consumerism. At the time of writing, the United States of America and other Western European countries had been considered to achieve this stage. (Hunter, 2012, p. 54)

Criticism of the modernization theory of development lies in its assumption that development is a westernizing process, placing the American or European capitalist system as the ultimate goal of development. Rostow's Stages of Growth model, undoubtedly one of the most influential development theories of the twentieth century, was grounded in his fiercely anti-communist and right-wing political perspective. He modelled his theory after western capitalist countries, which had industrialized and urbanized, and promoted his development model in his position of power in the administration of President John F. Kennedy. Rostow promoted his development model as part of U.S. foreign policy with the intent to assist lower-income countries in the development process and simultaneously assert the United States' global influence (Jacobs, 2019).

Modernization also assumes that one of the problems facing developing countries is their inability to make productive investments at Stage 3, when the productivity of investments often relies on global economic factors. For an example in the Ghanaian context, cocoa has been a staple agricultural export in Ghana for over a century. During the introduction of the SAPs in Ghana, the global price of cocoa fell (Odutayo, 2015). This external influence caused the expected economic income from cocoa exports to decline, causing increased foreign debt and furthering Ghana's economic challenges. Furthermore, if the problem facing the developing country is a lack of productive investments and manufacturing abilities to enable the take-off and maturity phases of development, it is assumed that aid in the form of capital, technology, and expertise can become the solution. Whereas in reality, this does not take into account the disproportionate impacts that the global economic system has on a developing country. The aspiration for a westernized and modernized society may

encourage a country to pursue development that is unsustainable given its socio-cultural reality and unsuitable for its traditional values.

Dependency

The theory of dependency embodies four main points:

- 1) To develop an important internal effective demand in terms of domestic markets;
- 2) To recognize that the industrial sector is crucial to achieving better levels of national development, especially due to the fact that this sector, in comparison with the agricultural sector, can contribute more value-added to products;
- 3) To increase worker's income as a means of generating more aggregate demand in national market conditions;
- 4) To promote a more effective government role in order to reinforce national development conditions and to increase national standards of living

(Reyes, 2001, p.5)

The foundations of the theory of dependency emerged in the 1950s from the research of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) (Reyes, 2001). The theory of dependency combines elements from a neo-Marxist perspective with John Maynard Keynes' economic theory, which states that a government should endeavour to increase consumer demand in order to expand its economy while encouraging a country to embrace a socialist approach to development (Kholopov, 2017). The socialist approach to development theory aims to ensure that economic gains resulting from industrialization will more equitably impact the lives of a country's citizenry.

Central to this theory is the relationship between countries in a developing region. Core countries can be considered those which are experiencing economic growth driven by high demand, and periphery countries are considered to be those whose relationship to the core country has a direct impact on its economic growth (Kholopov, 2017). This relationship directly impacts the extent to which economic growth through manufacturing and industrialization is successful in periphery countries. Therefore, core countries with strong and insular economies tend to have a competitive advantage in a region. This competitive advantage tends to weaken the periphery country's economy. In order to combat this relative influence, a periphery country must

develop demand for homegrown products and services that allow for economic growth. This is why a socialist approach is important to the dependency theory - the extent to which a country can develop is directly in proportion to the government's promotion of, and the citizenry's participation in, the local industrialization process.

Criticisms of this theory question how prominent the role of government should be in the economy. Economists of different schools of thought may argue that increasing business growth, not consumer demand, will boost the economy. They agree the government has a role to play, but fiscal policy should target companies (Amadeo, 2019).

For an example in the Ghanaian context, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) elected in 2017 promised to establish a factory in each of the 216 districts in Ghana. Upon being elected, the government has allotted GH 465 million cedis for the commencement of the one-district-one-factory project. It has also released GH 256 million cedis for the revamping of 100 private commercially viable and distressed companies throughout the country (Nyavi, 2017). The ultimate goal of this government policy is to enhance Ghana's economy while creating job opportunities for citizens. On the other hand, a socialist critique of the dependency theory would argue that the government should take an even more proactive approach to protect the common welfare through state-owned industry and social services (Amadeo, 2019).

World-systems

The World-systems theory of development takes into account the impact of anthropology, history, political science, and urban planning on a country's development trajectory. This theory recognizes that worldwide conditions operate as determinant forces especially for small and underdeveloped nations and that the nation-state level of analysis is no longer the only useful category for studying development conditions, particularly in Third World countries (Reyes, 2001). Developed by sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein in 1974, the World-systems theory builds upon the dependency theory in that it recognizes the impact of periphery countries on periphery countries' economies. Wallerstein asserts that a nation's economic system can only be understood in relation to the world system in which the country is inextricably linked. The World-systems theory holds that the current world economic system disproportionately benefits some countries while exploiting others. The main characteristics of this theory are:

- Countries can be classified within a three-level hierarchy, consisting of core, periphery, and semi-periphery areas.
- The core countries dominate and exploit the peripheral countries for labour and raw materials.
- The peripheral countries are dependent on core countries for capital.
- The semi-peripheral countries share characteristics of both core and peripheral countries.
- This theory emphasizes the social structure of global inequality.

(Hurst, 2019)

The World-systems theory assumes that the most salient means of understanding development lies in the analysis of the social reality of a country or area, especially given the impact of an evolving global capitalist system. For example, traditional leaders are widely acknowledged as the custodians of ancestral land in Ghana. As Ghana develops and attracts foreign investors, private individuals and companies have had to negotiate with traditional leaders to access property and land for various types of development purposes (Asumadu, 2006). Negotiations between traditional leaders and private/corporate entities for land and real estate is an example of development happening within the social reality of Ghana. Drawing from the cultural history of Ghana, traditional leaders hold systemic power and therefore are actively shaping the future of Ghana. The World-systems theory acknowledges the strong link between social, political, and economic relationships within and between countries, by looking at the world as a set of interconnected relationships. Whereas the dependency and modernization theories make economic analysis primarily from the nation-state level, the World-systems theory also recognizes the influential role of transnational corporations, interconnected online world communities, and the speculative nature of the global stock market on developing economies.

Globalization

The theory of globalization states that the main modern elements for development interpretation are the cultural connections between countries. In this cultural communication, one of the most important factors is the increasing flexibility of technology to connect people around the world (Reyes, 2001). The cultural and economic globalization process has been happening for centuries and has resulted in the spread and connectedness of production, communication, and technologies

across the world. Globalization scholar Anthony Giddens (1990) has described globalization as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa”. Given the extension of economic, military, political, and ideological power from developed countries to developing countries and regions, globalization has powerful implications. Due to globalization, gradual changes in societies or countries become a reality as different social groups adapt themselves to current innovations, particularly in the areas of cultural communication (Etzioni, 1991).

The main aspects of the theory of globalization can be delineated as follows:

- A. To recognize that global communications systems are gaining an increasing importance every day, and through this process all nations are interacting much more frequently and easily, not only at the governmental level, but also within the citizenry;
- B. Even though the main communications systems are operating among the more developed nations, these mechanisms are also spreading in their use to less developed nations. This fact will increase the possibility that marginal groups in poor nations can communicate and interact within a global context using the new technology;
- C. The modern communications system implies structural and important modifications in the social, economic and cultural patterns of nations. In terms of the economic activities the new technological advances in communications are becoming more accessible to local and small business. This situation is creating a completely new environment for carrying out economic transactions, utilizing productive resources, equipment, trading products, and taking advantage of the “virtual monetary mechanisms”. From a cultural perspective, the new communication products are unifying patterns of communications around the world, at least in terms of economic transactions under the current conditions;
- D. The concept of minorities within particular nations is being affected by these new patterns of communications. Even though these minorities are not completely integrated into the new World-systems of communications, the powerful business and political elites in each country are a part of this interaction around the world. Ultimately, the business and political elite continue to be the decision makers in developing nations;

E. Cultural elements will dictate the forms of economic and social structure in each country. These social conditions are a result of the dominant cultural factors within the conditions of each nation.

(Reyes, 2001, p.7)

Similar to the World-systems theory, the globalization theory uses a global systemic perspective to development, as opposed to a strictly nation-state approach. Furthermore, both theories take into account the implications of current global socio-economic drivers, such as speculative financial markets, Internet connectivity, and communications systems. An example of globalization in the Ghanaian context is reflected in the increase of cybercrime due to the increased accessibility to global information systems. While internet connectivity is a global phenomenon that has improved the lives of people around the world, there are negative implications in the developing context of Ghana. The lack of adequate job opportunities has increasingly led to Ghanaian youth taking part in cybercrime schemes for income-generating purposes (Barfi, Nyagorme, & Yeboah, 2018).

There are similarities between the modernization and globalization theories, in that the spread of culture of developed countries across the globe results in a relative cultural hegemony over developing countries. Although the globalization process has been going on for centuries, modern globalization affects countries and regions in more complex ways, including most notably the threat to the autonomy of nation-states in the face of modern information communications systems. Globalization, as it intersects with modernization, can also be linked to the gradual diminishing of local culture, traditions, and language in Ghana. This is evident in the use of English as the official language of Ghana, and the possibility of French becoming the second official language. Since coming into office in 2017, President Akufo-Addo has been advocating for French to become the second official language of Ghana because it could increase international trade and cooperation between its French-speaking neighbours Togo, Ivory Coast, and Burkina Faso. However, this French language advocacy is happening at the same time that some of Ghana's 50 local languages may be at risk of extinction (Asiedu, 2019). The use of French and English as official languages of African countries shows the extent to which globalization created hegemonic power imbalances that continue to favour the culture and language former colonial powers.

Feminist Approach to Development

The gendered experience of poverty is well documented in academic literature and in the lived experiences of millions of women in developing countries worldwide. Having recognized the "invisibility" of women in the development process, the United Nations set aside the period of 1975 to 1985 as a decade for women's affairs (Debrah, 2013). During this period, many studies exposed the inequality in earnings as well as access to human rights, education, and economic opportunities due to discrimination in labour markets. The acknowledgement of these development realities gave rise to current concepts of the feminization of poverty and began the tide of addressing poverty through women's empowerment.

Efforts towards women's empowerment in global economies hinge upon addressing the social, economic, cultural, and educational barriers that continue to systemically produce gendered economic disparity. According to feminist groups, gender inequality is more pervasive in Africa than elsewhere. In most African societies, women rank below men in legal, social, and economic rights. The inequality is widespread in access to and control of resources, economic opportunities, power, and a political voice (Debrah, 2013). Some examples of economic barriers specific to African women include:

- In the workplace, women earn between 20% and 80% lower average wages than do males, depending on the country.
- With regards to micro-finance and women's economic empowerment, experimental evidence has shown that a small infusion of capital alone, as a loan or a grant, is not enough to grow subsistence-level, female-owned firms because women may be pressured to spend business earnings on other purposes.
- Many subsistence-level female firms operate in sectors that face more severe constraints to growth (i.e. agriculture of primary crops, which are vulnerable to weather-related threats as well as global market valuation).
- Many women become "necessity" entrepreneurs who turn to self-employment because there are limited other jobs available that offer wage employment.
- Capital constraints are one of the main reasons for the suboptimal size of female-owned firms compared with male-owned ones.
- Entrenched barriers, such as childcare responsibilities, domestic tasks (collection of water and firewood), and taking care of sick persons or the elderly stifle women's abilities to engage in paid market work.

(Debrah, 2013; Buvinić & Furst-Nichols, 2016)

Of all barriers noted, entrenched cultural barriers impact all efforts at economic empowerment for women in African societies. Many studies that investigated microlevel gender issues exposed disparities in earnings and the processes that gave rise to them, including inequalities in literacy, education, and discrimination in the labour market (Debrah, 2013). Until social norms change, young women in male-dominated sectors will continue to face discrimination and harassment. Changes to social norms will only happen if more women choose to work in those sectors, but the price may be high for pioneering women (Löwe, 2019).

Feminist work in development from the 1970s onward emphasized that empowerment is relational and that there is a complex reciprocal relationship between women's 'self-understanding' (Kabeer, 1994) and 'capacity for self-expression' (Sen, 1997) and their access to and control over material resources. That is to say, providing women with loans, business opportunities, and means to generate income may enable them to better manage their poverty. However, gender inequality is a deep structural bias, and providing resources and opportunities for empowerment may not transform the root causes of poverty. A shift in consciousness of women in developing contexts may also be necessary for women to gain a systemic understanding of their situations to collectively bring about lasting change (Cornwall, 2014).

Under the direction of the United Nation's SDGs, international development donor agencies, donor countries, and private companies have been funding women's empowerment initiatives as a development strategy to reduce poverty. The 'investment in women' narrative appears in policies from international donors and banks who are invited to 'invest in' rather than give charity to support women entrepreneurs and girls as agents of change, creating a 'business case' for women's empowerment (Cornwall, 2014). However, investment in the empowerment of women must take into account the relational and conceptual considerations of the women being empowered, as the aspirations of these women may uphold western notions of women's disempowerment.

The literature confirms this aspect of women's aspirations in relationship to women's empowerment in developing countries, especially in the context of Ghana. A recent research paper titled "*Creating opportunities for young women in Ghana's construction sector: What works?*" by Alexandra Löwe (2019) examined efforts to bring

women into the growing construction sector in Ghana. According to Löwe, considerable effort has been put into attracting young women into trades, but female participation in training courses such as painting, masonry, tiling, or electricals remains low: only between 2% and 6% of female trainees chose these types of courses (Löwe, 2019). Although initiatives had been put in place to address the lack of women in economically-lucrative professions, i.e. The Youth Inclusive Entrepreneurial Development Initiative for Employment (YIEDIE) and the Youth Forward Initiative, both in Ghana, social norms proved a complex challenge to overcome. Some of the practical barriers women in trades programs expressed in this study included:

- (1) Many young women worry about not being able to work when they become pregnant and while they recover from giving birth – at the very least, they require the financial planning skills to be able to save up for motherhood.
- (2) Young women need help thinking through how they can combine their chosen careers with their caring and social responsibilities.
- (3) Addressing the issue of sexual harassment and discrimination openly by providing gender and anti-harassment training at work to male co-workers and employers can help to create a safer space to explore these career opportunities.
- (4) It is a necessity to create a safe space where women can learn their trade before being subject to the teasing or harassment that comes with working with male colleagues. Women-only courses should focus on building confidence along with technical skills.
- (5) Efforts should be made to find professions in the sector's supply chains that offer viable careers without falling far outside the social norms of career choices for women.

(Löwe, 2019, p.5)

The changing of social norms in African societies has been an ongoing project of international development, regardless of the theory of development one uses to analyze the process. From colonialist imperialism to the current global capitalist system, the development of Africa has involved a balance of technological and infrastructural development assistance and educational capacity building of local populations. However, no particular emphasis was placed on promoting gender equality in developing countries until the rise of feminist perspectives on poverty began in the 1970s and 80s. This has influenced the tide of women's empowerment projects

in African societies. As gender inequality is considered a main feature of economic realities across Africa, it may take a considerable amount of time, perhaps generations, to change these social norms.

The Role of (Grassroots) NGOs in the Development Process

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have become increasingly important in the international aid community. NGOs often play the role of transforming private and corporate funding to humanitarian projects overseas. NGOs are can also recipients of official government funding from donor countries and development assistance organizations (i.e. USAID, Department for International Development/DFID, and the World Bank). The growth in direct funding to NGOs from donor countries and development assistance organization comes largely as a result of the idea that NGOs can be more efficient providers of humanitarian services and economic development aid than governments and corporations (McCoskey, 2009).

David Lewis and Nazneen Kanji in their book *Non-Governmental Organizations and Development* (2009) have argued that NGOs are high-profile actors in the field of international development. NGOs are currently active in a wide range of roles in development, including democracy building, conflict resolution, emergency response, human rights work, environmental protection, policy advocacy, and communications. NGOs are an extremely diverse group of organizations, playing different roles and taking on different forms across different country contexts (Lewis & Kanji, 2009). NGOs may be large or small, formal or informal, bureaucratic or flexible, and can be driven by a variety of motivations. Fundamentally, NGOs are considered organizations that are largely independent of government and characterized principally by humanitarian or cooperative, rather than commercial objectives (Arhin, 2016).

Grassroots NGOs are a subset of NGOs that provide services and support to local groups of marginalized and disadvantaged urban or rural communities and individuals. Grassroots NGOs are known to work directly with the most oppressed sections of society (Rajasekhar, 1999). Based on the approach and orientation of the grassroots NGO, it may be classified by the following distinctions:

- (I) Charity and welfare NGOs that focus on providing charity and welfare to marginalized and low-income communities;

(II) Development NGOs that focus on implementation of concrete development activities;

(III) Social action groups, which focus on mobilizing marginalized sections of society around human rights issues and issues of distribution of power and resources;

(IV) Empowerment NGOs that combine development initiatives with human rights objectives

(Rajasekhar, 1999, p.6)

As mentioned previously, NGOs have played diverse roles spanning across service provision, advocacy, and facilitation in Ghana. Generally, some NGOs play facilitation roles by being represented on various state committees charged with achieving the MDG and SDG targets of specific thematic areas such as health and education (Arhin, 2016). NGOs have also taken on the role of social service provisioning as a result of the Ghanaian government's inability to provide adequate healthcare and social safety nets to its citizenry (Bank, Del Ninno & Mills, 2015). This can be traced to the legacy of Structural Adjustment Plans that necessitated the tightening of government social spending in favour of investment in sectors perceived to be most beneficial to economic stabilization and growth. Whether NGO or grassroots NGO, the existence of these organizations highlight the necessity for capacity-building work to develop and strengthen civil society in developing countries. NGOs act as intermediaries or partners and play a bridging role that contributes to improved policy and practice for particular groups of people and communities. It is important to stress that a NGO is rarely confined to a single role (Arhin, 2016).

Organizational and Financial Aspects of NGO Sustainability

Globalization, migration, environmental changes, social inequality, and global economic power shifts are all trends that are creating a new landscape that may render old NGO business models ineffective or inadequate. The intersecting pressures of these trends affect the organizational and financial sustainability of donor-dependent grassroots NGOs in Africa. NGO sustainability could refer to a range of sustainability factors, such as social impact, environmental resource management, policy advocacy, or social capital. For the purpose of this project, the organizational and financial aspects of sustainability are examined as it pertains to the long-term economic viability of NGOs in the Ghanaian context.

Organizational sustainability is about equipping organizations with the structures and people necessary for success in changing contexts (Action Inclusion, 2018). This means having the change strategies, leadership, insights, and talent to address the unique challenges facing each organization. This could also relate to organizational structure and culture and to the creation of shared values that shape strategic decision making and reinforces beneficial practices.

Financial sustainability refers to the extent to which there is a balanced operational ability to maximize organizational value (most often characterized in terms of monetary or investor value) with the numerous constraints imposed by external pressures and stakeholders (Colbert & Kurucz, 2007). The driver for financial sustainability of any organization depends upon that organization's concept of financial sustainability. This could relate to, but is not limited to, the organization's current funding strategy, impact expenditures, donor relationships, and enterprising initiatives. An NGO can be considered financially sustainable if it is able to realize its mission over time and meet the needs of its key stakeholders, beneficiaries, and supporters.

Ultimately, how an organization's particular approach to sustainability is framed, interpreted, and discussed by its leaders and members will inevitably drive how it is put into practice (Colbert & Kurucz, 2007). The necessity of sustainable NGO models is incumbent given the forecasted and realized changes in the landscape - including pressures such as resource constraints and shifting global politics that were identified in the foresight scan in this study. The development of a diversified hybrid-resourcing strategy, whereby an organization is not dependent on one particularly funding stream, is therefore desirable for most NGOs (Hailey, 2014).

Case Studies: Sustainability Models for NGOs

Ensuring an NGO's financial sustainability is an ongoing activity. To identify long-term sustainability solutions for NGOs, it is crucial to examine a variety of funding models that have been successful in different contexts. NGOs may use different strategies in order to attain financial sustainability for their grassroots NGOs. Strategies outlined in this section include gift-based NGOs, direct official aid, social enterprise, contract project-based funding, and microcredit/micro-finance. However, there are benefits and consequences of the each resourcing strategy that NGOs choose to pursue.

Gift-based NGOs

The vast majority of NGOs, both large and small, are financed by a range of gifts and voluntary donations. Such gift-based funding strategies rely on one-off gifts, personal donations and legacies, community collections or special events, regular bank-based giving by standing order or direct debit, child sponsorship, or new approaches to web-based giving (e.g., Giving What We Can, GuideStar, JustGiving, etc.). Faith-based NGOs may also raise funds through a range of personal pledges, church collections, or zakat funding. Zakat funding refers to the form of philanthropy in which financially-able Muslims donate at least 2.5% of their accumulated wealth as a form of wealth transfer (Rehman & Pickup, 2018)

Significant giving is also generated by dedicated humanitarian appeals at the time of some extreme emergency or event, as seen at the time of the Haiti earthquake, the Asian Tsunami, or currently, the Ebola Outbreak in West Africa. One of the attractions of gift-based funding is that it may not have the conditions commonly attached to funds from official donors. Strategically it is important to ensure a balanced mix between “unrestricted” and “restricted” funds. Restricted funds are those that can only be used for specific purposes, which have been agreed to with a specific donor, while unrestricted funds are “free money” that can be used for any purpose that helps the NGO to achieve its mission. A financially sustainable NGO is one that can continue with its core work and meet its mission even if external donor funding is withdrawn. An over-dependence on restricted funds is an indicator of a potential lack of sustainability (Hailey, 2014).

Direct Official Aid

Direct official aid refers to receiving a proportion of income from official donors, such a DFID, USAID, or AusAid. These aided-NGOs are normally larger, high-profile NGOs with an established track record of working with official donors. A small proportion of these aided-NGOs also raise funds from other aid institutions such as UN agencies, the World Bank, and other development banks. Only a relatively small proportion of NGOs receive their funding through this channel. The continued reliance by some NGOs on such official funding raises questions about their sustainability. The reliability and predictability of such funding is at risk because of threats to budget cuts to development assistance in donor countries. Furthermore, direct official aid may impact an NGO’s identity and independence due to the onerous nature of the conditions attached to such funding. The transaction costs associated with servicing

such official aid funds (e.g., meeting due diligence criteria, tracking data, financial reporting, etc.) may also be a challenge for resource-limited NGOs who accept direct official aid (Hailey, 2014).

Enterprise-supported NGOs

Enterprise-supported NGOs generate a proportion of their income from enterprises or commercial ventures that they own and run. These can be self-standing commercial enterprises with clear profit-based business goals as exemplified by the subsidiary companies created to support BRAC (formerly Building Resources Across Communities), the major Bangladesh-based NGO. Enterprise-supported NGOs can also be complementary for-profit enterprises that also have developmental goals, such as Oxfam's High Street Shops, which stock a range of ethically sourced products from around the world. Enterprise-supported NGOs rely on a mix of gift and aid income; profits from their subsidiary enterprises typically make up only a relatively small proportion of total revenue.

A crucial element of the enterprise-supported strategies of such NGOs is that they commonly incorporate a developmental purpose with a profit-generating goal (Hailey, 2014). Enterprise-supported NGOs commonly partake in direct trading activities. Examples include Oxfam's High Street Shops and Practical Action's publishing business that supports development practitioners in developing countries through information dissemination in books and journals (Practical Action, 2011). These NGOs generate funds through the selling of products or services directly to consumers. Enterprise-supported NGOs can also partake in service-provision ventures in which an NGO sells a particular expertise. An example of an NGO that generates income from direct trading activities as well as service-provision ventures is the Bangladeshi-NGO BRAC. In 2013, only a third of BRAC's annual expenditure of \$545 million came from official donors. Much of its income is generated by the different enterprises it owns, including a bank, communications companies, and agricultural manufacturing businesses (Hailey, 2014). It is important to note that while enterprise-supported NGOs can create increased financial sustainability, NGOs must have the internal capacity and talent to capitalize on strategic opportunities for financial independence.

Social Enterprises

A small, but significant trend, is an NGO that evolves or incubates an autonomous social enterprise. Another trending version of this is one in which a

business, donor, and NGO work together to form new collaborative enterprises. There are several recent cases in which an existing development NGO transforms itself into a viable, market-driven social enterprise. The ambition is that the enterprise's future income will come from selling products or services, rather than relying on donor income or commissions. An example of this includes SolarAid's development of SunnyMoney.

SolarAid is an international charity that combats poverty and climate change by providing access to solar lights in some of the most remote regions of the world. In 2008, SolarAid developed the social enterprise SunnyMoney, which is now the largest seller and distributor of high-quality solar lights in Africa. SunnyMoney's business model enables the distribution of solar lights in rural off-grid communities, which have traditionally depended on costly, toxic kerosene for lighting. By building a sustainable market for solar products, SolarAid and SunnyMoney aim to completely eradicate the kerosene lamp from Africa (SunnyMoney, n.d). SunnyMoney's evolution into a social enterprise is partly driven by the desire for greater economic and market sustainability, and partly by the increasing dissatisfaction with the constraints inherent in the existing aided-NGO model.

It should be noted that there are concerns about this trend of NGOs evolving into social enterprises. It is argued that the drive for profitability inherent in such ventures undermines their humanitarian values and identity. Many believe that the way that social enterprises work is fundamentally different from the way NGOs work, with different values, goals, and resourcing strategies. (Hailey, 2014). While the attention to the social enterprise could be considered an innovative strategy and an important part of the sustainability of NGOs, many fear that it will gradually change the identity of NGOs, which could affect the different roles that NGOs play in the SDGs agenda (Arhin, 2016).

Contract-project based funding

Contract project-based funding refers to funding coming from donor organizations for a limited time period, on the basis of a project proposal with a limited and directed scope. This method of funding is based on the donor organization's control of the project funding in order to ensure that 100% of its donations flow directly into a project (Schmidt, 2019). While this is a viable and manageable source of funding, the disadvantages are that donors severely restrict the scope of action for a charity

organization with donations earmarked for specific projects. For example, FHI 360, in partnership with Pro-Link Ghana, funds project-based activities related to providing HIV prevention, care, and treatment services for key populations (Pro-Link Ghana, 2018). However, the project does not cover the healthcare costs of NGO staff in the field, which is problematic because NGO staff face health risks on the job, especially when supporting HIV/Aids affected communities. The STI clinics installed in marginalized communities are not intended to be permanent healthcare institutions, and contract project-based funding only supports their operations for a limited amount of time. In this circumstance, contract project-based funding provides money to carry out health services but does not invest in permanent health care locations or infrastructure.

Microfinance and Microcredit

Microfinance refers to the range of financial services targeted at individuals and small businesses that lack access to conventional banking and related services. Microcredit is a Microfinance service that refers to the lending of small amounts of money at low interest to new businesses in the developing world. Microfinance is a rapidly evolving area in the NGO funding sector. Microfinance has become the focus of much media and political interest as a way to expand options for poor people by offering more reliable financial services (Wykstra, 2019). This is well reflected in the microcredit interventions by the Bangladesh government in the work of the Grameen Bank. Grameen Bank was founded in 1983 with the goal of helping poor people in Bangladesh and around the world, by providing small loans to aid them in establishing their own businesses. The bank grew rapidly and received great acclaim as a solution to poverty, and economist Muhammad Yunus received the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for founding Grameen Bank (Hall, 2013).

However, some Indian Microfinance Institutions (MFIs), including Grameen Bank, have received negative political and media commentaries on the perceived exploitation of the poor. Critics say that Grameen Bank's business model has actually created a debt trap for some of the poor it tried to help. There are isolated reports that some lenders repeatedly harassed borrowers who then had been forced to sell their organs to pay back the loans (Hall, 2013). With this criticism of microcredit considered, there is still a great range of different non-profit MFIs with a sustainable, developmental focus. Formal figures suggest at least 10,000 operate globally. Most MFIs are registered as non-profits and designed to be self-sustainable. While a small proportion operates as

independent businesses, most are actively seeking external investment funding to grow their work.

New microcredit initiatives are being developed, linking traditional NGOs with new banking partners. This is exemplified in the way Barclays Bank works with UK-based NGOs, CARE, and PLAN. in a partnership to expand their Banking on Change program (Hailey, 2014). The Banking on Change program works with these NGOs by bringing together the independent interests and expertise of each partner by extending and developing access to basic financial services to marginalized communities. This example shows that there is potential for organizational innovation and hybridization partnerships between MFIs and NGOs to create sustainable economic opportunities for beneficiaries (Barclays, 2012).

The sustainability models in this section are examples of ways that grassroots NGOs have attempted to address social challenges within the modern-day capitalist system. As mentioned in the literature review, the rise of the NGO as a social service provider in Ghana coincided with the implementation of SAPs and the restructuring of the Ghanaian economy. Heavy reliance on direct official aid and gift-giving from private donors and institutions helped to create the sustainability challenges that many grassroots NGOs now face. However, social enterprise, contract project-based funding, and Microfinance initiatives have created opportunities for grassroots NGOs to innovate and pursue strategic partnerships to achieve their mission. Given the continued threats to sustainability, a grassroots NGO's success will increasingly rely upon the extent to which it successfully manages its resources and creates contingency plans, regardless of the funding source chosen. This is where a foresight-informed approach to identifying sustainability solutions for female empowerment grassroots NGOs in Ghana can be useful. By using strategic foresight and innovation tools and methods, the research within this MRP offers female-empowerment grassroots NGOs in Ghana the opportunity to identify creative solutions to their sustainability challenges.

UNDERSTANDING THE PRESENT: Expert Interview Insights

Building on international development ideology frameworks and documented strategies for building sustainable grassroots NGOs, I conducted in-person interviews with international development experts, grassroots NGO leaders, industry professionals, and grassroots NGO volunteers. The goal of these interviews was to understand their methods of strategic planning and perspectives on financial and organizational sustainability. Interviewees were chosen for a variety of reasons. Their proximity to grassroots NGOs, female empowerment programs, donor institutions, and international development initiatives made them ideally suitable for interviews. While not all interviewees were working professionals, I considered them to be experts because of their clear knowledge and understanding of their place in the international development system.

Individuals who are currently or formerly in leadership positions in grassroots NGOs, NGO network organizations, or donor organizations were engaged in expert interviews. Each participant was asked to participate in a semi-structured interview process. Participants' demographic information is summarized below:

- Six grassroots NGOs are represented in this primary research
- Five grassroots NGOs have programs directed to women and girls, and one grassroots NGO serves marginalized populations generally
- Nine experts were engaged in interviews (Two volunteers and seven full-time permanent professionals)
- Of the nine experts engaged in interviews, two are men and seven are women.
- Five experts are currently serving as grassroots NGO executive leaders
- NGOs represented have an average of 12 permanent staff (lowest has zero, highest has 43)
- NGOs represented have an average of 14 local and international volunteers (lowest has five, highest has 30)

- Average reported direct beneficiaries are 930 per year (lowest has 350, highest has 2000)
- Respondents noted that indirect beneficiaries are unaccounted for, but estimated to be in the thousands

In learning about the experiences of experts who work on the frontlines of grassroots NGOs, several key insights emerged. Interviewees identified several factors that influence the efficacy and quality of work that their organizations do to address the needs of marginalized groups they are mandated to support. These insights were instrumental in informing the key recommendations that support organizational and financial sustainability.

Expert Insight #1: Long-term strategic plans are undesirable given the variable rate of change in Ghana.

Long-term strategic planning (strategic plans longer than 5 years) was by and large deemed obsolete by respondents because of the increasing rate at which technology is evolving the lived realities of beneficiaries. Short-term strategic plans (one to three years) are most prevalent among respondents. Short-term strategic plans allow them to be adaptable, flexible, and dynamic in reaction to the social reality of Ghana. Some respondents stated they use short-term strategic plans because it is the 'trend.' They follow the lead of other NGO peers or strategic stakeholders, which influences their decision to do the same. For respondents whose organizations use five-year strategic plans, this duration was chosen to coincide with shifts in government representation following election cycles. Respondents cited that government change often results in unpredictable changes in the funding and service provision landscape for social services in Ghana. One respondent also noted that their five-year strategic plan correlates with the strategic plan of their most prominent donor organization. Respondents also noted that strategic plans are reviewed annually to look for opportunities to analyze and improve outcomes for successive years.

“Honestly, we chose 3-year strategic plans to follow the trends.”

- Expert Interview

The extent to which grassroots NGOs adhered to the content of their strategic plans relied upon internal and external factors. Internal factors included the capacity of grassroots NGO staff to achieve targets and the efficient use of donor funding. This concern is reflected in the recent literature that points to the challenge of financial mismanagement of donor funds by NGOs in developing countries (Manji & O’Coill, 2018).

Externally, the shifting focus of donor agencies is noted as a factor that affects an organization’s ability to adhere to strategic plans. Due to the rise of project-based funding, the donor-NGO relationship holds significant power in dictating how the strategic plan is achieved. Furthermore, donors have varying ways of funding projects. The ability to navigate this difference was referred to as ‘Donor Literacy’ by one respondent, cited as being a meaningful way to look at balancing the various needs and requirements of various donors to their organizations. Respondents mentioned that they work with a variety of donor organizations as implementing partners, including religious bodies, other larger NGOs, political parties, government, corporations, and civil society organizations. These relationships allow them to leverage the expertise of different organizations to build their capacity to support their beneficiaries.

Expert Insight #2: Grassroots NGOs are attempting to change their income-generating strategies with varying levels of success in response to the changing nature of international and local donor relationships.

By and large, respondents noted that donor funding is increasingly becoming an insecure funding source on which they are still highly dependent. The relationship between grassroots NGOs and their funders is a defining factor of the sustainability of their organization.

“Globally, donor interest is dwindling. So that can economically affect the income for projects. Every now and then you have budget cuts, especially from USAID.”

- Expert Interview

Several respondents noted that they were changing their strategic mission to access funding streams in other thematic areas (e.g., Climate change). One respondent

explicitly stated that they have adjusted their goals and are shifting away from only focusing on supporting vulnerable women and girls because they have become aware of new grant opportunities from donors in different intervention areas. This shows that some grassroots NGOs risk long-term impact on women and girl beneficiaries by changing the direction of focus for their organizations as they seek opportunities to sustain and grow. One respondent noted that if they are not focused, it is easy to shift their mission towards what donor funders think should be addressed. When, in fact, by being grassroots, NGOs are better informed of the needs of marginalized communities. Therefore, donor appetite shift is a possible threat to women's and girls' empowerment program funding in Ghana.

Another noted factor of influence is the changing geopolitical position of Ghana on the global stage. Ghana has achieved lower-middle-income country (LMIC) status, and as a result, the Ghana Beyond Aid policy is being adopted and implemented by the government. This status has signalled to international donor organizations that there is a dwindling need for foreign direct aid to Ghana. Therefore, fewer funding opportunities are available for NGOs. Respondents have reported having to downsize, let go of staff, close facilities, and end programs due to fewer funding opportunities over the past few years. Alongside this challenge, one respondent stated that the government of Ghana has not been upholding its promise to match foreign aid donations. Foreign aid donations often require counterpart local government funding to support social projects. This lack of counterpart local government funding further impedes access to funding opportunities for NGOs.

The highly competitive nature of the NGO donor-funding sector results in grassroots NGOs navigating possibilities of working together, but this has mixed consequences. Two respondents reported having project ideas stolen by other grassroots NGOs after attempting to collaborate to secure funding. It was also noted that competing NGOs have been accused of using unauthorized photo documentation to claim affiliation with successful projects.

Many respondents explained that their organizations had no internally-generated funds and relied heavily upon project-based funding for donors. The rise of project-based funding models from international donors has meant that donors only support specific aspects of grassroots NGO projects. However, donors may not always understand the social context of the grassroots NGO and how it relates to their budget needs. This reflects the lack of a holistic human rights approach to donor

funding. Respondents felt that the sanctioning of donor funds through project-based financing is related to the values of the donor. Designated budget rules from donor organizations dictate what percentage of a budget should be used for specific budget activities. When donors instruct budgets in this way, respondents felt that this shows that the donor does not understand the cultural and social reality of the demographics in which they are working. One respondent went as far as to accuse donors of engaging in human rights violations by restricting budget line items for transportation and health insurance for local staff and volunteers. Their grassroots NGO received project-based donor funding but were not allowed to use it to cover the health insurance needs of the project staff traveling and working in vulnerable areas.

“Are the implementers not human too?”

- Expert Interview

Unfortunately, the restriction of donor funds and control of budgets are a result of the perception that grassroots NGOs are mismanaging funding (Manji & O’Coill, 2018). One respondent noted that a potential future trend that may affect grassroots NGOs is a rumoured NGO bill to be rolled out by the government of Ghana. Many feel that this not yet released NGO bill may be used to further regulate NGOs in Ghana, due to allegations of NGO financial mismanagement. When discussing this issue, one respondent noted that this is why coaching and capacity building of grassroots NGOs is needed. It is not enough to send money alone, as some grassroots NGOs need financial management support.

It is clear from the interviews that grassroots NGOs aim to ensure that the relationship with their donors does not compromise their mission. Respondents noted that negotiation is critical when working with donors of any size. Grassroots NGOs need to be mindful of corporate interests that may seek to use impactful images and or take credit for the grassroots NGOs projects. One respondent noted that discernment is a significant skill when selecting which corporate donors to partner with to ensure the integrity of their projects is maintained.

One respondent stated that their NGO implemented a financial policy to safeguard its organizational integrity and sustainability. This policy, which is within the control of the organization, stipulates the conditions under which it would accept donor funding, namely ensuring a specific percentage of budgets for staff transportation and

salaries. At times, this financial policy was a disadvantage when encountering donors who would not fund the additional needs of staff. However, the NGO's leadership team felt it was needed to protect the human rights of its employees.

Having a diversity of funding streams was cited as a factor that enabled a grassroots NGO to be stable and sustainable. To diversify the sources of funding, grassroots NGOs solicited private donations that directly supported specific beneficiaries' needs in order to fund the work the grassroots NGOs were doing. Grassroots NGOs fostered the relationships with private donors by providing updates and reports on their program beneficiaries. For example, one private donor who provided a scholarship to the child of a woman beneficiary regularly received report cards to track the child's progress. Monitoring the child's progress is part of the relationship-building process between donors and grassroots NGOs, ensuring the transparency and efficacy of NGO programs.

Expert Insight #3: The misunderstanding of the *Comprehensive Sexuality Education* policy by Ghana's citizenry as a key example of a socio-cultural roadblock to development.

"Right now, Ghana is going through a very challenging situation when it comes to Comprehensive Sexuality Education. Because of our beliefs, everyone is asking: At what point do we introduce a child to this?"

- Expert Interview

The Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) policy was intended to be part of the new curricula for primary and secondary schools. Since its introduction in October 2019, it has triggered considerable opposition and outrage in the country. Members of the media, religious groups, civil society organizations, traditional leaders, politicians, influential individuals, as well as the public, have generally expressed disapproval of the policy (Ngula, 2019). This disapproval has been expressed on radio, television, and social media. The CSE policy has been noted as an issue that has disrupted the work of grassroots NGOs.

Respondents reported having to address the CSE policy to stakeholders and being requested to speak to the issue in public spaces (e.g. radio stations and press conferences). The CSE policy is linked to the value system of Ghanaian culture. Certain

sections of the citizenry disapprove strongly of the CSE policy, indicating that many people were not comfortable changing the way that children and youth learn about sexuality. While education is essential, the socio-political environment may not be favourable for the type of change that the government is attempting to implement. Furthermore, respondents noted that the government might not have effectively engaged the public during the policy formation process. As it is a culturally sensitive policy document, solutions need to include strategic stakeholder engagement to ensure citizenry buy-in.

Much of the CSE policy criticism is based upon the policy's perceived 'LGBTQ agenda' and the promotion of sexual contraception to youth. Ghana is a predominantly Christian and Islamic society that discourages premarital sex and non-binary gender identity or sexuality. However, one respondent noted that the CSE policy is crucial because of the increasing rate of teen pregnancy, HIV/AIDS risks to youth, and reported instances of child defilement. LGBTQ rights has been identified as an ongoing policy advocacy issue by several respondents. One respondent reported that CSE policy backlash threatened to undermine years of LGBTQ advocacy work their organization had been doing in Ghana. Conversations about the rights and social service needs of LGBTQ individuals are being eclipsed by anti-LGBTQ rhetoric, primarily from both Christian and Islamic leaders.

Expert Insight 4: The rise of climate change-related policy focus is perceived as a trend that is shifting donor funding away from women's and girls empowerment funding.

"Climate change is having a negative impact on our Agri-related projects"

- Expert Interview

Climate change is recognized globally as one of the most pressing social challenges of our time (Choi, 2019). Several respondents identified climate change and environmental degradation as having systemic effects on people in marginalized communities. However, the understanding of climate change varied. The abstract nature of climate change was noted as a barrier to creating effective strategies to address it. As climate change is often not directly attributed to acute pollution issues, it is difficult to address climate change through local initiatives adequately. However, the increase in funding for grassroots NGOs who are addressing environmental

degradation issues is causing grassroots NGOs to redirect or expand towards environmental projects.

“When it comes to climate change programming, I have no idea what we should do. Where would we begin? What would interventions look like? What does climate change even look like? I understand climate change and women’s empowerment as intersectional, and that climate change affects women in particular ways. But it’s not something I am particularly well versed on, and I can see that grassroots organizations are not well versed on this as well.”

- Expert Interview

Furthermore, one respondent noted that they were wary of the possibility that climate change as a policy issue that may redirect focus away from women’s empowerment. Climate change threatens to disproportionately affect women and girls in developing countries due to the gendered reality of poverty. In order to combat this, some grassroots NGOs have attempted to create climate change programs or initiatives that directly impact marginalized women, especially in the agriculture sector. Using an intersectionality lens, an increase in funding for addressing climate change could still lead to women’s empowerment. However, if for example contract project-based is funding is strictly tied to climate change objectives, it could be difficult for grassroots NGOs to use funding to address the needs of women who are affected by climate change - even if there is a systemic connection. This is another example of funding opportunities potentially causing grassroots NGOs to shift their mission to access funding opportunities.

Expert Insight #5: Gender norms embedded in the mindset and aspirations of program beneficiaries can impact program outcomes and efficiency.

“One of the young women in the program is now pregnant. We try to tell them to wait, but I think she is happy to be pregnant.”

- Expert Interview

As it pertains to their efforts in promoting women’s and girl’s empowerment, several social factors impact the efficacy of grassroots NGO programs. Several respondents noted that the education level of women in their programs had a major

impact on the effectiveness of that intervention. Many respondents indicated that their adult female beneficiaries had only accessed primary education. Education levels also impact the transition period that beneficiaries need to graduate from their programs to independence in accessing informal or formal market opportunities. Learning a skill or accessing healthcare was noted as often being insufficient to produce long-term women's empowerment. Many women beneficiaries are unemployed or informally employed in stereotypical industries facing a decline because of over-saturation (an example is illegal overfishing practices off the coast of Ghana).

“The empowerment of women goes in different aspects. Empowerment in their health, in their rights, and empowerment in their socio-economic issues. They all go together.”

- Expert Interviews

Most respondents stated that the most visible and immediate impact of their programs is the assertiveness and confidence of their women and girl beneficiaries. Through programs offered by these grassroots NGOs, women and girls become more aware of their human rights and rights under Ghanaian law. Through basic education and vocational skills education programs, women also become better equipped to access economic opportunities. While these organizations recognize the importance of empowering women and girls through different interventions, some respondents often did not consider themselves or their organizations as feminist. This might be attributed to the negative connotation that ‘feminism’ has in patriarchal and traditional societies such as Ghana.

Studies show that women who receive more education are more likely to wait longer to have children and are more likely to have fewer children (United Nations, 2015). Youth pregnancy and having multiple children is linked to factors that reinforce gendered poverty. However, respondents said that many of their marginalized and vulnerable women beneficiaries were happy to be pregnant regardless of having limited economic resources. Children are perceived as a source of social wealth in Ghanaian society. From this observation, it is clear that there are ideological differences between grassroots NGOs' missions and the aspiration of women and girl beneficiaries.

An indirect financial challenge that was identified by respondents is the financial pressures that women beneficiaries face, which can act as a barrier for women to

succeed in their programs. If a woman beneficiary is not making an income while attending a program, that woman may have to leave the program to generate revenue for her family. Social relationships between women, their partners, and their children can also affect a woman's dedication to the program. This can become a barrier to women who wish to learn employable skills that can help elevate them from poverty. However, attempts to address this challenge are not without complexity. For example, a grassroots NGO may wish to encourage women to participate by offering childcare services, but then childcare becomes an added program expense for resource-strapped NGOs. If a grassroots NGO attempts to offer more than a small transportation or food allowance, they risk creating an unsustainable dependency relationship with their beneficiaries. Grassroots NGOs with limited resources have the unique job of creating holistic programs that take into account the complex challenges their beneficiaries face.

Expert Insight #6: Grassroots NGOs may not be adequately prepared for impacts associated with technological advancements in Ghana.

The growth of the use and availability of digital technologies in Ghana has also had an impact on grassroots NGOs. Several respondents stated that dissemination of information via social media has both helped and hindered citizen access to human rights. For example, sharing educational resources through WhatsApp groups is common practice, however WhatsApp groups are also used to share politically-charged misinformation. Social media use differs in the Ghanaian context from the Canadian context. For example, the widespread use of WhatsApp groups is more common than the use of Facebook and Twitter for local information dissemination. One respondent reported to be in more than 50 WhatsApp groups with hundreds of members.

However, technological barriers are still pervasive in Ghana. Respondents reported that the unreliability of electricity had impacted the efficacy of the work their organization does. When the power goes out at their office, their computer and WIFI access is halted, making it almost impossible for them to get work done. One respondent noted that the manufacturing sector in Ghana is also negatively affected by the unreliability of electricity, which affects the productivity of Ghana's whole economy.

“We know we are vulnerable to cyber attacks. Sometimes the staff don’t know what they are opening and then there is a virus in our whole system.”

- Expert Interview

While technology is more widespread, the effective use of technology is not democratized. Several respondents reported that staff members were often not as digitally literate as their international volunteers. Technological capacity building of NGO staff is crucial, as the effective use of technology by NGO staff was identified as a common non-financial challenge.

Respondents identified cybercrime as a potential future sustainability threat to grassroots NGOs. Over the years, some grassroots NGOs in this study have collected a considerable amount of sensitive information regarding the health data and vulnerable populations in Ghana. There are questions as to whether these grassroots NGOs are adequately prepared to address the threat of cybercrime in their organizations. However, accessing additional funding to address this organizational threat can become another hurdle for grassroots NGOs.

Expert Insight #7: Local and international volunteers are a valuable asset to resource-limited grassroots NGOs that requires careful management.

“We have a good group now, but what happens when they (volunteers) leave?... There was one international volunteer, and she was great and very motivated. Then one day, all of a sudden, she left and disappeared. So that was very difficult.”

- Expert Interview

The availability and provision of local and international volunteers is key to the efficacy of grassroots NGO programs and projects. All respondents reported that their organizations rely heavily on the goodwill and time of local and international volunteers to implement their programs. Volunteers are a valuable human resource whose presence with organizations enables programs to function on limited resources.

The overall high regard given to foreign volunteers because of their perceived expertise leads to foreign volunteers playing elevated roles at grassroots NGOs. For

example, in several grassroots NGOs, the international volunteers were relied upon to undertake capacity building and training of local staff in finance, monitoring and evaluation, and program development. As a result, these volunteers were acknowledged as experts, creating a power dynamic linked to their perceived expertise. Foreign volunteers placed in positions of authority may not take into account the possibility that their skillsets may be better suited for the countries of their origin rather than the Ghanaian context. Furthermore, international volunteers were regarded as assets because they could be more likely to access global networks for fundraising and sponsorship. This perception could also create an imbalanced power dynamic linked to the value of their potential resource networks.

The interaction between local and foreign volunteers was noted as typically peaceful and amicable. However, respondents noted some challenges. Firstly, language barriers may exist between international volunteers and local staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries - even if everyone has a working knowledge of the English language. This is because interpretation, connotation, and cadence of English may change even between communities in Ghana.

Secondly, the socio-economic status of international volunteers often differs significantly from that of local volunteers. One reason cited by respondents is the socio-economic legacy implied by the racial difference between international volunteers and locals. International volunteers typically receive a living stipend for the duration of their volunteer mandate, whereas local volunteers give their time and receive no stipend at all. This could be perceived as an equity issue that reflects unequal compensation for similar work between local and international volunteers. An example where this is most evident is that international volunteers have access to health insurance and transportation allowances where local volunteers do not. There is also awareness that international volunteers often have world-views and value systems that are different from local communities. Simply sharing ideas may have both positive and negative effects on the lives of organization staff and beneficiaries with whom they interact. Despite these challenges, respondents observed that international and local volunteers alike are united by their collective vision for social and economic progress in their area of focus.

Related to the topic of volunteerism is the issue of financial un-sustainability within NGOs, which results in underpaid or unpaid work of employed staff. Respondents reported that several times during their tenure at these organizations,

they were unable to pay staff adequately at the end of the month. However, because of the dedication and persistence of staff, they still reported to work while awaiting back pay.

Respondents noted that the western perception of illegal immigration and general xenophobia towards Africans has negatively impacted international capacity-building opportunities for their grassroots NGO staff. Global volunteerism has typically meant that volunteers from western countries (the global north) come into developing nations (the global south) to impart knowledge and capacity building. However, volunteers from the global south do not have the same opportunity to travel to the global north to access reciprocal capacity-building opportunities. This is due to the increased strictness of Canadian, European Union, or American policies with regards to issuing travel visas to local grassroots NGO staff and Africans in general.

Control over the types of professional volunteers and the level of expertise of volunteers recruited varies between organizations. Some organizations are highly selective about the local and international volunteers that they allow into their organizations. Others have a greater need and therefore employ less scrutiny over the volunteer selection process. However, this process may be undergoing a change due to recent scandals involving international volunteers. For example, Oxfam has been targeted for investigations after allegations that the charity covered up a sex scandal involving senior aid workers in Haiti. Oxfam had allowed three men to resign and sacked four for gross misconduct after they were found to have hosted sex parties involving Haitian prostitutes (Yorke, 2018). One respondent stated that as a result of the international volunteer abuse scandal in Haiti, all international and local volunteers are now required to have vulnerable sector checks. As a result, there is heightened attention on the importance of screening local and international volunteers as they may have ulterior motivations for working with vulnerable populations.

One respondent noted that their organization is putting effort in grooming outstanding program beneficiaries and local volunteers to step into leadership roles in the future. These individuals are ideal for recruitment because they are typically dedicated local community members who are aware of the socio-cultural aspects of specific communities. This was noted as a step towards increasing organizational sustainability as the expertise shared through capacity building remains in the targeted community.

Expert Insight #8: The political reality in Ghana may be a roadblock to grassroots NGOs' long-term sustainability.

“Politically and legally we have no control, but socially we have some control. So we are always finding ways to balance.”

- Expert Interview

A recurring theme among respondents is the challenge of political reality of Ghana. All respondents reported being concerned about political risks to their organizations as a result of the actions of the Ghanaian government. Some of these challenges include:

- Lack of location security (e.g., a grassroots NGO facility located on government property)
- Complementary social services not provided by the government to supplement the work of grassroots NGOs
- Corruption scandals that have impacted the level of citizen satisfaction with the government of Ghana. The impacts of corruption in Ghana includes the undermining of good governance and the rule of law, the erosion of confidence and trust in the public sector, the threatening of fair economic competition, and the discouragement of international investment and trade (Adjei, 2019).
- New taxes introduced that impact the most marginalized and low-income citizens of Ghana disproportionately
- Foreign companies (i.e., Chinese and Western corporations) are perceived to be receiving preferential treatment over Ghanaian companies
- Issues in the financial sector, exemplified by the many Microfinance banks that were recently closed in Ghana (Ibrahim, 2019).

The most apparent theme that respondents identified was that distinct socio-economic groups in Ghanaian society have diverse visions for how they should address the country's challenges. Respondents' overall discontent with the *Ghana Beyond Aid* policy exemplifies this. Given that there is a lack of an adequate social safety net, respondents overall believe that Ghana is not at a stage where foreign aid is not a necessity. Ghana's LMIC designation, combined with the *Ghana Beyond Aid* policy, is signalling to international donors that the need for development aid is

decreasing in Ghana. However, respondents whose grassroots NGOs are closest to the varied needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized populations argue that the demand for development aid is increasing. The projected growth of Ghana's population, combined with the lack of employment opportunities in the formal sector, could lead to an increase in economic disparity. This disparity will continue to disproportionately affect women and girls who receive less education, work in less profitable sectors, and bear most of the responsibility of family care.

Another noted political challenge is the inability of Ghana's governments to focus on long-term projects after transitions of power. Respondents indicated that when elections take place and new political parties take over, the programs, budget allocations, and policies of the previous governments may be stopped or significantly reduced. When this impacts social services and programs, it may directly affect the efficacy of grassroots NGOs that work in partnership with the government. For example, one respondent noted that one political party in power pledged to fund social service provisions in Ghana in cooperation with a large international donor. When a new political party came into power, this funding was canceled. Transitions of political parties in power are, therefore, a threat to long-term projects that require political cooperation between oppositional parties. The unpredictable impact of political party transition was cited as a reason why some grassroots NGOs neglected to do long-term strategic planning.

Expert Insight #9: Navigating development through traditional leadership systems and socio-cultural norms is key to sustainable development.

"The chiefs and queens play a very major role in terms of bringing change. People look to them to espouse the values of the society."

- Expert Interview

Instead of being seen solely as hurdles to progress, respondents noted both the contrasting and complementary aspects of religion and culture as tools for development. Respondents recognized that certain socio-cultural norms have negatively impacted beneficiaries (especially women and girls) and have taken it upon their organizations to change these norms. However, respondents noted the importance of working within social structures to achieve this change in an impactful and meaningful way. Working within social structures is especially crucial for

strategically engaging the public on sensitive cultural issues. For example, the controversial Comprehensive Sexuality Education policy and the negative publicity surrounding it was referred to by several respondents as an example of a lack of strategic public engagement on the topic of sexual education in schools. The political ideology of cultural and political leaders was noted as a crucial aspect of the ability for human rights issues to be clearly understood by the general public.

Respondents also noted that religious and cultural leaders are widely regarded as the gatekeepers to progress in marginalized communities. Included in these leadership roles are local chiefs, imams, and pastors who have the respect and dedication of the community. These leaders are widely respected by beneficiaries and have therefore been regarded by grassroots NGOs as strategic agents of change in communities. Respondents reported working with religious and cultural leaders to facilitate human rights training, disseminate information about the work of grassroots NGOs in their community, and as advocacy partners.

“As a grassroots NGO, it is crucial to operate within the social and cultural context of the people there. But if there are social and cultural norms that will negatively affect the work that you do, especially with regards to health, it is your responsibility to try to change those behaviours. That should be part of your work, so that attitudes and beliefs that are negatively impacting your work can be changed.”

- Expert Interview

Respondents surveyed recognized their role in changing culturally accepted attitudes and practices that serve to disempower marginalized populations. These culturally accepted attitudes often resulted in forms of discrimination that negatively affected their beneficiaries, as well as the efficacy of their interventions and programs. Respondents realized that their grassroots NGOs interventions would not be effective if they did not involve communities through an educational process, and that this process takes time and dedicated effort. They understood that working incrementally within the social structure is a more effective way of creating lasting social change.

It is especially important for grassroots NGOs that wish to advocate for populations of people who fall outside of social norms to use a human rights approach to create social change. One respondent noted that training traditional chiefs and

religious leaders on human rights changed the perception of these leaders' roles in protecting LGBTQ community members from attacks and violence. They were also trained on the importance of creating safe spaces that uphold the human rights of female sex workers, although sex work in Ghana is illegal. Respondents reported that their grassroots NGOs also worked closely with law enforcement, healthcare professionals, and political leaders to address the personal biases of persons in power.

FORECASTING ASPECTS OF THE FUTURE: A Foresight Scan

Introduction

A comprehensive foresight scan was created to support workshop participants as they considered the wider trends currently impacting the socio-economic reality of Ghana. Workshop participants were employees or volunteers of DUNK and Pro-Link Ghana. Participants were recruited via email outreach to the organization's executives to respect the authority of the organizations' executives and to ensure that the discussion could take place during work hours.

This foresight scan includes signals of change identified using a STEEPV (social, technological, ecological, economic, political, and values) approach. These signals were then sorted into themes and then used as part of the strategy formation process. These themes were developed through desk research conducted throughout the year prior to the start of this research project, and were refined through the expert interview process. Being in the field, having conversations with locals, and listening to local media helped me to distill this foresight scan to note the signals acutely affecting Ghanaian society.

Each theme is formatted for easy reading, with a short introduction that outlines the current state and potential future impact of that trend. The signals are news articles organized as bullet-pointed information found in local and international media outlets. The set of departure questions at the end of each trend was used to help guide the conversations. Departure questions can be understood as taking a 'so what?' approach to the information offered in the foresight scan. This type of inquiry was used to help make the information relatable and to encourage workshop participants to draw potential systemic connections between each trend and their grassroots NGO.

The trends are not ranked by presumed level of importance or urgency. This foresight scan is intended to be an informative, neutral, and concise document that allows workshop participants to make critical analysis and draw conclusions for

themselves. The ultimate goal of the foresight scan is to provide workshop participants with local and international aspects to consider for the 'Envisioning the Future' and 'Creating the Future' processes.

The Dragon and the Lion: China in Africa

Over the past 20 years, China has become a key player in the development of African nations. (Chen & Nord, 2018). The processes and practices employed by Chinese government to invest in the African continent are markedly different from western countries. Whereas foreign investment from the USA and countries in the EU has traditionally taken a development aid approach, the presence of Chinese state and privately-owned multinational companies has grown in Africa (Melber, 2013). They have left a major footprint in the energy, telecommunications, and the construction sectors in a growing number of African countries. China has recently become the region's largest creditor, accounting for 14% of Sub-Saharan Africa's total debt stock (Schneidman & Wiegert, 2018). However, successful outcomes of China's relationship are not always consistent between African countries with unsustainable debt risk, environmental damage, and labour violations cited as concerns (Jayaram, Kassiri & Yuan Sun, 2017).

Signals

- Chinese multi-billion-dollar financing to African countries often funds large projects, backed by the host country's tax revenues. Many Chinese-financed projects in Africa are in fact loans from Chinese banks to promote Chinese exports (Lu, 2019).
- Chinese software and online service giants have been increasing their footprints in Africa's internet and e-commerce sector. For example, Tecno, a Chinese manufacturer of low-cost smartphones, has gained increasing market share in Africa and now has 25% of the continent's smartphone market (Bright & Liao, 2019).
- China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) plans to deliver trillions of dollars in infrastructure financing to Asia, Europe, and Africa (Hurley, Morris & Portelance, 2017)
- The current lending and financing practices of Chinese government and corporations under the BRI may raise the risk of debt distress for some low-income borrower countries that wish to access this infrastructure funding opportunity (Hurley, Morris & Portelance, 2017).

- China is also a large source of construction financing; these contributions have supported many of Africa's most ambitious infrastructure developments in recent years (Jayaram, Kassiri, Yuan Sun, 2017).
- There have been instances of labour and environmental violations by Chinese-owned businesses (Jayaram, Kassiri & Yuan Sun, 2017). These range from inhumane working conditions to illegal extraction of natural resources, including timber and fish.

Departure Questions

- What are social attitudes that you have witnessed with regards to increasing Chinese investment in Ghana?
- How might the investment capital coming from China into the country impact your beneficiaries? How might it benefit or disadvantage your organization?

Population Growth & The Future of Work

While predictions of population growth in Europe, Asia, and the Americas are projected to become stable, predictions for the African continent show a marked increase (Turner, 2019). By 2030, Africa will be home to more than a quarter of the world's population under 25, who will make up 60% of the continent's total population (Samans & Zahidi, 2017). This has implications for the future of work in Africa. As this surge of young people join the formal and informal labour market, the pressure to provide quality jobs will escalate. Today and for the foreseeable future, Africa's labour market is characterized by the informal sector, which is a default option for a large majority of unemployed youth and women (African Development Bank, 2017). The current lack of economic opportunities and the projected population growth will have far reaching socio-economic implications for the African continent and regions beyond.

Signals

- Future growth in Africa is likely to be underpinned by factors including the most rapid urbanization rate in the world and by 2034, will have a larger working-age population than either China or India (Bugin, Chironga, Desvaux, Ermias, Jacobson, Kassiri, Leke, Lund, Wamelen & Zouaoui, 2016).

- The World Economic Forum estimates that 15 to 20 million young people will join the African workforce every year for the next two decades. Africa's working-age population is projected to increase from 705 million in 2018 to almost 1 billion by 2030 (African Development Bank, 2017).
- Ghana's urban population has more than tripled in the last 30 years, rising from 4 million to nearly 14 million people in 2014, outpacing rural population growth. All of Ghana's regions are experiencing a steady migration from rural areas towards cities (World Bank, 2015).
- Across the continent, there is widespread frustration among young people over limited economic opportunities, growing corruption, rising unemployment, and limited opportunities for political participation. This growing frustration has prompted many to leave their homes and migrate to Europe, often embarking on dangerous journeys (Schwikowski, 2017).
- As Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automation affects the future of work in various industries such as service, healthcare, and agriculture, the growing African workforce may become increasingly marginalized, as many jobs will be easily done by machines (Turner, 2019).

Departure Questions

- Based on conversations you have had, what jobs and careers do your beneficiaries wish to be doing in the future?
- Will any current jobs at your organization be disrupted by increased technological abilities?

Global & Local Environmental Pressures

Over the past three decades, global climate change has escalated, with the most negative effects impacting the world's poorest regions (The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2014). Climate change is characterized by an increased frequency of extreme weather occurrences, due to increasing atmospheric and sea temperatures, as well as an increase in sea levels. This has particularly important implications for Ghana, where weak urban planning regimes are implicated in haphazard urban growth across cities like Accra and Kumasi (Cobbinah, Asibey, Opoku-Gyamfi & Peprah, 2019). Environmentally-unfriendly human activities on sea and land are also exacerbating the effects of climate change in Ghana. Plastic waste,

over-fishing, poor municipal development, uncontrolled urban developments, deteriorating environmental urban quality, insufficient infrastructure, and intense human activities on the urban landscape are all challenges facing environmental sustainability in Ghana.

Signals

- *Galamsey*, a local Ghanaian term for illegal mining, is destroying Ghana's water bodies, vegetation, and arable lands and Ghana's government has increased measures to end this practice (Shaban, 2017,).
- Chinese nationals working with Ghanaian companies have been implicated as culprits in the illegal mining sector (Bird & Burrows, 2017).
- Destructive industrial fishing practices locally termed as *saiko* is considered an organized corporate crime happening in Ghana's coastal regions. With the majority of the *saiko* catch consisting of juvenile fish, Ghana's fish populations may dwindle (Hodal, 2019).
- With an overwhelming majority of all food and non-food items produced and consumed in Ghana being packaged in plastic, concerns have been raised about the environmental implications of poor recycling and waste management practices (Adu-Boahen, Adu-Boahen, Atampugre, Antwi, Osman, Osei, Mensah, 2014; Smith-Asante, 2019). The environmental implications include sea pollution, gutter and lagoon clogging, and air pollution due to burning plastic waste (Smith-Asante, 2019).
- There have been reported increasing cases of encroachment on areas vulnerable to floods in Ghana's cities which has resulted in the destruction of properties and loss of life following heavy rains and flooding (Cobbinah, Asibey, Opoku-Gyamfi & Peprah, 2019).
- Research has shown that smoke and exhaust from oil refineries and factories in Ghana release large amounts of carbon dioxide, which depletes the quality of air. Furthermore, many people in Ghana depend solely on the combustion of wood, charcoal, and diesel as a supply of power, energy, and cooking. These practices also release toxic carbon dioxide into the atmosphere (Chasant, 2019).

Departure Questions

- How might climate change in Ghana affect your organization?
- How might pollution impact the lives of your beneficiaries? How might your organization have to shift to address this?

The Risk & Promise of the Digital Revolution

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is described as an era/movement/trend in which physical, digital, and biological technologies converge (Schulze, 2019). The fourth industrial revolution has already begun as technological revolution that has fundamentally altered the way we relate, live, and work with each other. Most exemplified by the interconnectedness of billions of people via mobile devices with unprecedented processing power, our access to knowledge about ourselves and the world is expanding. These possibilities will be multiplied by emerging technology breakthroughs in fields such as AI, robotics, the Internet of Things, autonomous vehicles, 3D printing, nanotechnology, biotechnology, materials science, energy storage, and quantum computing (Schwab, 2016). This will no doubt lead to a range of potential socio-economic impacts in Ghana, resulting in significant changes to labour markets, new occupations, ways of working, skills requirements, and tools to enhance workers' capabilities. The term *digital leapfrogging* has been coined to characterize the tendency for African countries to skip whole steps in the technological advancement process (Ramirez, 2018). While the potential to transform Africa is high, technology is also considered one of the main reasons why incomes have stagnated, or even decreased in high-income countries (Desmond, Fine, Manyika, Sjatil, Tadjedine, Tilman & Tacke, 2019). African countries' abilities to adjust and thrive with the projected increase in demand for highly skilled workers and the decrease in demand for workers with less education and lower skills, remains to be seen.

Signals

- Smartphone penetration rates have already surpassed 30% globally (Preimesberger, 2017). Three-quarters of the population of the African continent, approximately 747 million people, have a SIM connection (Radcliffe, 2018).
- For many Ghanaian citizens, Mobile Money Transfer is the only way they can get access to banking services. Mobile Money Transfer is a rapid and secure financial transaction whereby a sender sends money from their bank, credit/debit card or own mobile phone money account to another mobile money account (Whitehouse, 2019).
- Google Artificial Intelligence Laboratory is now open in Ghana. The goal of this Google-run Lab is to enable innovation in machine learning and AI aimed to identify new social, technological, economic solutions and create new markets (Asemota, 2018).

- Online commercial scams and fraud, also known as *sakawa* are common in Ghana. The proliferation of this fraudulent activity has been facilitated by online social media platforms, and impacted by the lack of viable career opportunities in Ghana (Rubinsztein-Dunlop, Robinson & Dredge, 2019). Foreign companies report being contacted by an unknown Ghanaian firm claiming to belong to a governmental procurement entity and are lured into paying a series of fees to register or have their products qualify for sales in Ghana (GAN, 2016). The threat of internet scams has also impeded international e-commerce expansion into developing countries like Ghana (Ryan, 2019).
- Cyber Security is a risk for governments, private companies, corporations, and non-governmental organizations in a variety of industries and markets. The World Wide Worx survey found that a staggering 77% of IT decision-makers were concerned with the risks inherent in outdated software systems (von Buddenbrock, 2019).
- Blockchain is an open, distributed ledger that can record transactions between two parties efficiently and in a verifiable and permanent way (Iraki, 2018). Blockchain is a controversial technology that can be used to either hide corruption or increase confident collaboration and financial accountability (Iraki, 2018).
- Ghana's Ministry of Health has signed a Letter of Intent with a drone company to offer drone-enabled supply chain solutions in Ghana that will ensure secure, reliable, and timely deliveries of essential health care products to hospitals and other health facilities (Kelland, 2019). Drones are also currently being used in Ghana for agricultural pest and disease control, which can improve crop yields and agricultural profits (Kimani, 2019).

Departure Questions

- How might AI, machine learning, and automation affect your organization?
- Is your organization vulnerable to cybercrime? Why or why not?

Political (In)Stability & Corruption

Ghana is considered to be one of the more stable countries in West Africa, attracting considerable attention through foreign direct investment and increased levels of tourism (BBC News, 2018). However, Ghana's debt stock is on the rise and financial corruption continues to affect public infrastructure, judicial processes, natural resource management, commodity prices, tax revenues, and inflation (Boham & Asamoah,

2011). Current and former governments have been accused of engaging in unethical financial transactions, gift taking, and nepotism that negatively impact the democratic perception of the government by Ghanaian citizens (Ghana Web, 2019).

Signals

- News sources have accused President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo's government of corruption (GAN Integrity, 2016). After having campaigned in 2016 on reducing corruption in government, a recent exposé outlined how the Nana Akufo-Addo led-government conspired to bend the law for Power Distribution Services Ghana Limited (PDS) in order to procure government contracts for his family members (Ghana Web, 2019).
- Research has shown a connection between scarce human and financial resources in the judicial system and the common practice of underpaying judges has negatively affected the integrity of the judicial system. This scarcity of resources has resulted in high levels of bribery and extortion within the courts (Rahman, 2018).
- Police in Ghana have a history of using excessive force, making arbitrary arrests, detaining suspects for extended periods, and taking bribes. Public news outlets have accused police of incompetence and inability to adequately respond to reports of abuses. Instances have been reported that persons in need have been requested to pay for police transportation and other operating expenses. Police have also been accused of extorting money by acting as private debt collectors or collecting bribes at checkpoints (Rahman, 2018).
- Ghana's economy must expand to accommodate the rising debt stock. This can be done by investing in sectors that would increase financial resources in the future. If the debt stock is not managed wisely, this debt may impact negatively on the country Debt-to-GDP ratio causing inflation and economic destabilization (Afolabi, 2019).

Departure Questions

- How have political changes affected your organization in the past? What areas is your organization are vulnerable to political, social, or economic challenges?
- How might high-level Debt-to-GDP fluctuations affect the work your organization does? How might this affect your beneficiaries?

Addressing Gender Equality Barriers

The Ghanaian government has undertaken a number of key initiatives to contribute to women's empowerment over the last 20 years. More recently, the Ghanaian government has signalled its dedication to women's empowerment with the Gender and Development Initiative for Africa (GADIA) to promote gender equality (Duho, 2017). Furthermore, President Nana-Addo was appointed the African Union Gender Champion for 2017 (Kwawukume, 2017). Despite this, the government has also recently enacted economic policies that are risk factors for the increase of financial instability and gender barriers for women and girls. For example, the recent increases in the debt stock can cause commodity inflation. Commodity inflation can negatively impact the economic stability of persons experiencing poverty, a demographic that is overrepresented by women and girls. In addition, despite governmental efforts to empower women and girls, the prevalence of sexual violence against girls and women persists in Ghana (Youth Advocates Ghana, 2019).

Signals

- Data from the United Nations show that of the 1 billion young people, including 600 million adolescent girls, that will enter the workforce in the next decade, more than 90% of those living in developing countries will work in the informal sector, where low or no pay, abuse, and exploitation are common (Muhwezi, 2018).
- Social attitudes still place responsibility of rape avoidance on potential female victims. Representatives in the highest office on gender rights view rape as something girls and women can avoid. In 2017, Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection, Otiko Djaba, advised girls to dress decently to avoid being raped (Osei, 2017).
- Girls continue to experience less access to education in Ghana due to socio-economic factors including poverty, gender discrimination, menstruation, and adolescent pregnancy. Although there is virtual gender parity in enrolment at primary and junior high school (JHS), the national gender ratio for completion of senior high school (SHS) is estimated at 67.5% – that is, two girls for every three boys complete SHS. This figure only improved by 0.44 of a percentage point between 2003 and 2008 (Camfed Ghana, 2012).
- Many of the African countries that are projected to see the largest growth in the population of women of reproductive age over the next 15 years are the same countries where the unmet need for contraception is high. Limited economic

outcomes are also linked to young motherhood. African countries will be especially challenged to increase access to family planning resources in the coming years since the number of women in need of family planning will continue to grow (United Nations, 2015).

Departure Questions

- How does your organization meet the needs of women and girls in your community? How do you see this need evolving in the future?
- What social attitudes or norms that affirm gender roles have you witnessed?

Borderless Africa & Diaspora Return

The year 2019 has been named the “Year of Return” for peoples of African descent, celebrating the cumulative resilience of all the victims of the Trans Atlantic slave trade, which began 400 years ago. African peoples were displaced through the world in North America, South America, the Caribbean, Europe, and Asia (Year of Return, 2019). At this same time, the African Union is implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area, intended to encourage economic activity and tourism between African countries (Cloete, 2019). This has implications for the creation of continental markets and diaspora investment activities, as well as the sharing of cultural assets with a Pan-African perspective with all peoples of African descent.

Signals

- The African Union (AU) is promoting the idea of a borderless continent in which its 1.2 billion people can move freely between nations. In the past, many African countries had visa restrictions that made travel increasingly difficult or prohibitive (Madowo, 2018). As a result of AU negotiations, Namibia, Mauritius, Ghana, Rwanda, Benin, and Kenya have all loosened travel restrictions for other African nationals, and now either grant a visa on arrival or allow for visits of up to 90 days with just a passport.
- The African Development Bank is also encouraging the concept of borderless Africa as a foundation of a future continental market to accelerate growth and allow Africa to be more competitive in global trade and value chains (Pityana, 2019). It would also allow industries to develop across borders, creating economies of scale for investors as they look at wider integrated markets.

- The Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is expected to increase in Intra-African trade to about 52% by 2022 (Cloete, 2019). The AfCFTA will be facilitated by digitalization as e-commerce transactions across Africa are estimated to reach about \$75 billion USD by 2025. According to the International Trade Center, digitization should be a priority for the economic development of the African continent, but it must be done without compromising the privacy of data and cyber security (International Trade Centre, 2015).
- People across the African diaspora are flocking to Ghana. The country's tourism authority expects 500,000 visitors this year, up from 350,000 in 2018. It is estimated that 45,000 tourists will seek their ancestral roots, a 42% increase from last year. The tourism authority expects the country to earn in \$925 million USD in 2019 (Egbejule, 2019).
- ESSENCE Magazine's Full Circle Festival organized for December 2019 in Ghana will offer an experience targeting African diaspora populations. This shows that African nations are being increasingly acknowledged as global destinations by highlighting their critical roles as ancestral, cultural, and commercial epicentres for African diaspora populations (Essence, 2019).

Departure Questions

- As more people move to or visit Ghana's cities, how might local populations interact with newcomers?
- What industries do you think will benefit from free-trade agreements, and what industries do you think are the most vulnerable?

Foresight Scan Group Discussion Reflection

Following dissemination of the Foresight Scan document, participants were given 30 minutes to review and discuss the signals and trends. I was interested in discovering participants' views on the issues raised in the scan and relied upon the departure questions to prompt conversation. Given that we only had about 30 minutes to discuss the scan, we focused on trends that were of most interest to participants.

One of the most prominent factors of discussion was the relationship between Ghana and China as a driving force of change in their society that they witnessed on a daily basis. Some participants believed that Chinese investors are doing well in Ghana because they are working with Ghana's government and private entities on the ground. This was compared to their perception that western countries send financial support without on-the-ground expertise to help guide projects to success, which enables corruption. Some workshop participants were generally wary of the growing influence of Chinese investment in Ghana, given the documented human rights abuses and environmental degradation practices of Chinese companies in Ghana.

Another critical topic that arose from the Foresight Scan conversations was the role of journalists in Ghana and the dissemination of information to the public. This issue was brought up when workshop participants noted that Ghanaians gain much of their information from radio, local television, and WhatsApp groups. Their general impression is that media outlets have been used to sensationalize national scandals, but many times conversations about resolutions are inadequate. The Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) policy was noted as an example of media sensationalization of an issue that would affect the future of Ghanaians. This same issue was raised in several expert interviews (as pointed out in the expert interview insights section).

Overall, this scan document achieved the goal of identifying trends and sparking conversation about the systemic nature of potential future trends that may affect Ghana's development. An interesting outcome of this foresight scan discussion was that I became aware of other signals, trends, and stories that participants knew which my scan had not uncovered. One particular example is the ways in which traditional fetish priests support *sakawa* (cybercrime) through paid rituals (Rubinsztein-Dunlop, Robinson & Dredge, 2019). A fetish priest is someone who serves as a mediator between the spirit world and the living world, and they support *sakawa* by taking

payment to perform rituals intended to increase a persons probability of benefitting from cybercrime efforts.

The biggest challenge was helping participants tie the signals and trends back to their lived realities and the day-to-day operations of their grassroots NGOs. Most participants could acknowledge that these trends may affect their lives, but had never considered exactly how and to what extent they should be prepared for the implications of the trends considered. When repeating this part of the process in the future, I will dedicate more time to this discussion, which can allow participants to further consider the impact of these trends on the future lives of their beneficiaries, and how that may shift the purpose and function of their organizations.

EXPERIENCING ALTERNATIVE FUTURES: SWOT/Critical Assumptions Workshop

Workshop Introduction

The SWOT/Critical Assumptions workshop was intended to support grassroots NGOs to engage in critical thought about their organization. By designing a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis workshop adapted to identify critical assumptions, workshop participants engaged in dialogue that took an alternative approach to assumed truths. I engaged participants with questions like: How can a strength also be a weakness? What about this threat can actually strengthen your organization? What are the threats of this opportunity?

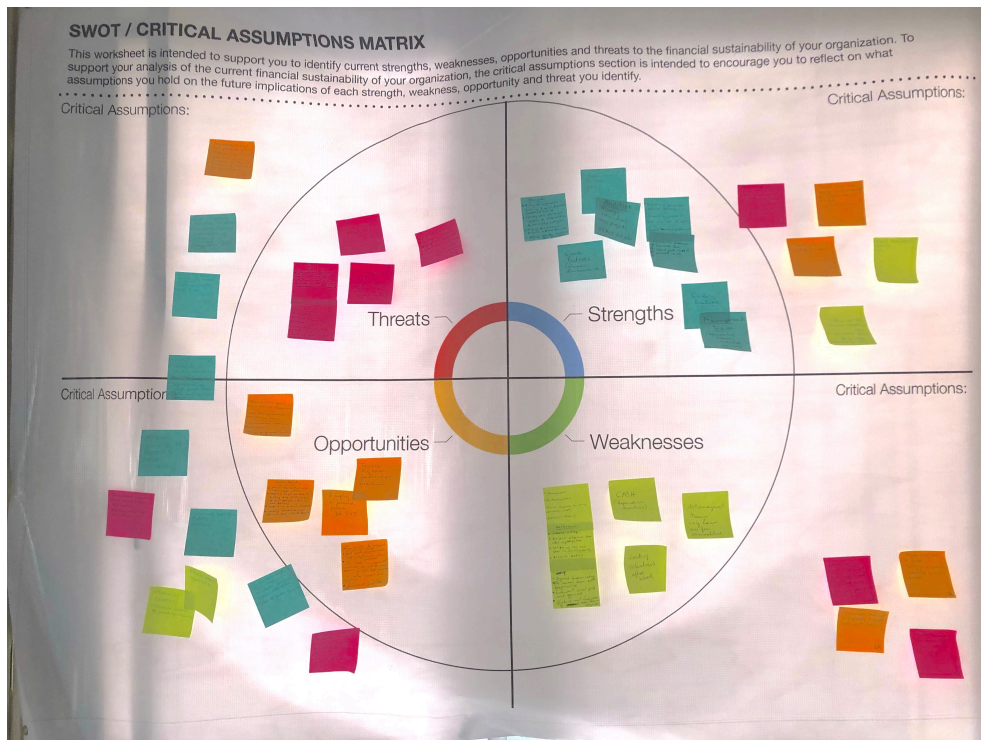
This workshop aimed to encourage participants to take an alternative view of the current and future strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to their organizations. Participants engaged in discussion about the function and purpose of their organizations and ideated alternative ways to approach the issues their organizations faced. This part of the process was also intended to help identify key areas of concern for organizational sustainability and to ideate possible solutions to these concerns.

Workshop participants were employees or volunteers of DUNK and Pro-Link Ghana. Participants were recruited via email outreach to the organization's executives to respect the authority of the organizations' executives and to ensure that workshops could take place during work hours. The organizations' executives carefully selected participants based on their availability, expertise, and connection to the female empowerment programs of their organizations.

Fig. 5. Pro-Link Ghana's SWOT/Critical Assumptions Workshop Findings



Fig.6.DUNK's SWOT/Critical Assumptions Workshop Findings



SWOT/Critical Assumptions Workshop Findings

As part of this research, I aimed to support grassroots NGOs to engage in preliminary critical thought about the current state of their organization. This participatory action workshop aimed to work in groups of three or more staff members at DUNK and Pro-Link Ghana who are interested in contributing to the organization's strategic planning process. These workshops aimed to understand:

- 1) the functions their current organizations serve in the lives of marginalized populations in Ghana (namely women and girls);
- 2) where each organization needs support growing/strengthening the organization or addressing challenges and points of instability within the organization; and
- 3) exploring critical assumptions of participant's future view of the needs of their organizations and their beneficiaries.

Strengths

Each organization identified strengths associated with their staff capacity to achieve results for their beneficiaries, in spite of their organizational challenges. Namely, strengths were noted in their management teams, their partnerships, and the public perception of their organizations. Pro-Link Ghana's team also recognized the advantage of having a gender balance of employees in their organization and having organizational representation in several regions in Ghana.

When identifying the critical assumptions of their strengths, both teams were able to identify threats, weaknesses, and opportunities. For example, DUNK's team noted that although all of their paid staff act as 'jack of all trades,' their individual capacity is limited. Multi-tasking and quick decision-making of over-worked staff may result in mistakes and miscommunication. Furthermore, due to limited funding for staff salaries, their organization becomes over-reliant on unpaid volunteers. This is a challenge because both local and international volunteers are not as reliable in the long-term as paid staff are. DUNK's team also noted that while public perception of their organization is positive, they had challenges connecting with some youth in their communities. This may be attributed to the use of basketball as a sport for youth empowerment. At the organizations founding, it was assumed that that basketball was the preferred sport for youth in the communities they serve. However, many youth expressed that their preferred sport was intact football/soccer. The mismatch of youth desire and program offering became a challenge that DUNK has had to overcome

through community engagement strategies involving local parents and schools.

Pro-Link Ghana's team noted that they make critical assumptions about the accuracy of the data that they use to support their needs analysis. Student researchers and corporations provide some of the data they use for baseline studies, while government statistics provide other information. Participants noted that in their work, they made the assumption that health data coming from government and private sources is unbiased and up to date. They noted that they believed that some health data they use may actually be improperly collected or years behind what is happening on the ground today. This distrust of data sources was noted as a weakness. Connected to the strength of Pro-Link Ghana offices in several districts, they saw these strategic offices as opportunities to look for new intervention areas in those districts. Working in communities allows their organization to attain a grassroots understanding of a specific community's needs.

Weaknesses

DUNK's team identified weaknesses associated with being understaffed due to funding. However, Pro-Link Ghana's team identified weaknesses related to the capacity of the current staff to meet the changing needs of the organization. Both organizations noted their over-reliance on donor funding as a weakness that affects their organization's ability to be sustainable. Both organizations also emphasized the lack of access to capacity-building opportunities for staff as a weakness for their organizations. This is also connected to the availability of funding, as there are limited financial resources to up-skill existing staff.

When identifying critical assumptions of weaknesses, DUNK's team only identified further threats to their organization. These threats included internal organizational challenges, such as the loss of human capital they experience when knowledgeable local and international volunteers leave DUNK. Often, volunteers are not available to meet the needs of the organization as full-time staff might. Another unrelated threat identified is the gender stereotypes in Ghanaian society that affects girls' access to programs. For example, gender roles in communities may necessitate that girls take on care responsibilities of their families, which prohibits their participation in DUNK's girl-focused programs.

The critical assumptions associated with Pro-Link Ghana's identified weaknesses included some opportunity spaces. For example, as the organization expands into new climate change projects, opportunities exist for them to increase advocacy for the health and wellbeing needs of Pro-Link staff. Expanding Pro-Link Ghana's reach into new districts could become an income-generating activity. Regional offices can be used to generate income, when not being used for programs, in order to address the need for creative approaches to funding. However, several threats associated with weaknesses were also identified. When Pro-Link Ghana applies for international donor funding opportunities, often, the proposed budget may be less than what is received. The increasing prevalence of contract project-based funding has meant that donors dictate budget line items. These budget line items often do not take into account the health insurance needs of staff working in vulnerable areas. This threat is exacerbated by the fact that accessing health services can be expensive and can be more costly than a Pro-Link Ghana staff member's monthly salary.

Opportunities

Partnerships and collaborations were the most discussed opportunity spaces for both organizations. Both DUNK and Pro-Link Ghana noted the opportunities associated with impacting the lives of marginalized and underserved populations, especially women and girls. They both aim to empower youth to reach their full potential and to empower women to start and expand businesses. Each organization intended to broaden the impact of its programming into other at-risk communities. Participating staff of each NGO believes that their services and capacity to affect positive change in communities is needed around the country.

DUNK's team primarily identified threats associated with these opportunities. Partnering and collaborating with other grassroots NGOs may not always result positively. Their team noted that competition between grassroots NGOs might lead to unsavoury behaviours, such as the stealing of ideas, uneven distribution of work, and lack of accountability.

Pro-Link Ghana's team primarily identified weaknesses associated with the opportunities identified. Pro-Link Ghana's team identified the availability of climate change-associated international donor funding as an opportunity for their organization to expand. However, a weakness identified is that staff is not adequately prepared to address climate change. Pro-Link Ghana staff may not have the experience necessary

to take advantage of climate change opportunities, and they lack capacity building and training opportunities that could help them to ideate innovative programs to address climate change. They also noted that due to non-profit status, there are limited resources to send staff for up-skilling/training to learn how to benefit from new opportunities.

Threats

Each organization identified threats associated with working in at-risk communities. Threats range from personal health threats such as violence and pollution to proximity to risk-associated activities. Gaining the trust of community members was also noted as a threat for both organizations because beneficiaries are often suspicious of NGOs that enter their communities. Other threats identified were associated with operating with at-risk funding sources. Political instability, global trends, and cuts to international aid were noted as challenges that affect their organizations' ability to become sustainable.

However, each organization was able to note opportunities, strengths, and weaknesses associated with threats. Both organizations recognized that their history of successfully dealing with the challenges of working in at-risk communities made them experts. Pro-Link Ghana also noted that enabling stakeholders to bear witness to the realities of the communities they live in serves as a strong motivator for stakeholder and donor support.

DUNK's team identified strengths associated with the threat of at-risk funding sources, which included creative resource usage and a diverse portfolio of donors. DUNK has recently begun partnering with GAME, a well established and European-based organization that funds (GAME, 2019). DUNK's team saw an opportunity for their organization to positively impact their image by association with GAME and to reach new private donors in Europe. However, they also identified a set of weaknesses connected to their organizational threats. The lack of capacity-building workshops and material resources for staff due to limited funds also affects the successful implementation of programs.

Workshop Reflection

The SWOT/Critical Assumptions workshop was especially useful to help DUNK and Pro-Link Ghana teams to think critically about the current state of their organizations. This SWOT/Critical Assumptions workshop was meant to support each organization to consider what aspects impacted both their organizational sustainability, but aspects of their financial sustainability stood out prominently in discussions. Asking workshop participants to engage in discussion that looked for opportunities in threats, and strengths in weaknesses enabled a perspective shift and therefore an alternative experience of the issues raised.

Participants noted that they had used the SWOT analysis tool before in different contexts within their organizations. However, they had never thought critically about the assumptions they made about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of their organization. By assessing the critical assumptions of each quadrant of the SWOT, each organization was able to create an even more comprehensive list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to their organization. The critical assumptions also supported their organizations to think systemically about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. I asked participants what they assumed about their noted strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Participants followed the implications of each point and noted additional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that they had previously overlooked. Participants appreciated the overall value of this exercise; they stated that the workshop encouraged innovative thought and helped to identify new opportunity areas for organizational sustainability and growth.

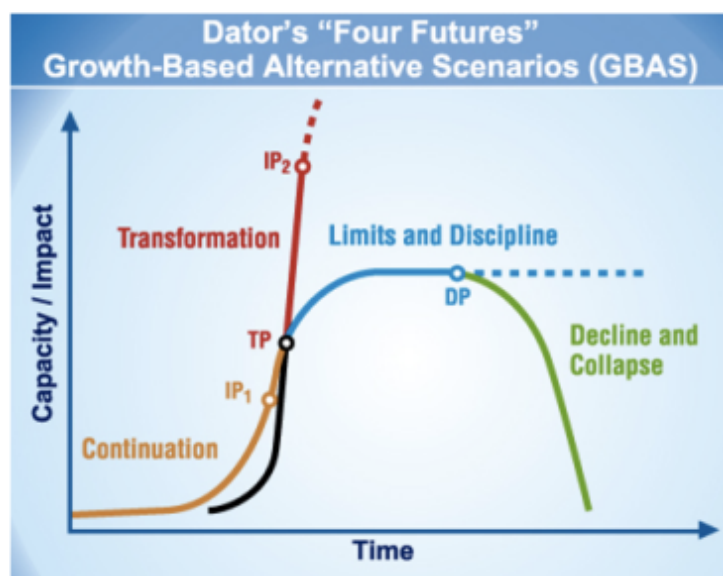
ENVISIONING THE FUTURES: Four Generic Futures Scenarios Workshop

Workshop Introduction

For this workshop, I adapted the Jim Dator's Four Generic Futures (Dator, 2009) method. Dator's model observes that all our narratives (stories, scenarios) on social change issues can be classified into four recurring groups of images, stories, or policies regarding effects of that change (Foresight University, 2019). These four future narratives can be represented by phases on four classic growth curves, as follows:

- Continuation (business as usual, more of the status quo growth)
- Limits and Discipline (behaviours to adapt to growing internal or environmental limits)
- Decline and Collapse (system degradation or failure modes as crisis emerges)
- Transformation (new technology, business, or social factors that change the game)

Fig. 7. Dator's "Four Futures" Model



(Foresight University, 2019)

To support the future sustainability strategy formation process, I developed a tool based on the Dator's model that included a PESTLE (political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental) analysis (see fig. 2). I followed with prompting questions that explored future financial sustainability opportunities. Using a PESTLE analysis helped to create a more vibrant description of the possible future setting that their organization might experience. This future is set in the year 2040, although the defined year was not as important as understanding that this scenario is set in the not-so-distant future, in a period where significant change could happen.

Below I will discuss ideas, outcomes, and findings from the way each organization used the tool to identify financial sustainability options in different future scenarios that they designed. I summarized in bullet-point form some of the notes jotted down on sticky notes that illustrated the opinions and perceptions that developed through the use of the tool. As the findings illustrate, DUNK and Pro-Link Ghana had varied visions for the growth, transformation, discipline, and collapse scenarios in Ghana. However, both organizations were successfully able to use the tool to develop futures that were specific to the context of their organizations.

DUNK's Four Generic Futures Scenarios Workshop Findings

Fig. 8. Documentation of DUNK's Four Generic Futures Scenarios Workshop Findings

Four Generic Futures Scenarios Workshop Guide			
Four Generic Futures Scenario method (Dator, 2009) encourages participants to consider four future perspectives that can be represented by phases on four classic growth curves. Participants are invited to discuss what their organization will need to do to be relevant to stakeholders as well as financially sustainable in each scenario.			
In this future...	Foreign/International and Donor Aid is:	What are the features of this future?	What options might exist for our organization be more financially sustainable?
	Commercialized	Political: Economic: Social: Technological: Legal: Environment:	
	Unnecessary / Significantly Reduced	Political: Economic: Social: Technological: Legal: Environment:	
	Regulated	Political: Economic: Social: Technological: Legal: Environment:	
	Localized	Political: Economic: Social: Technological: Legal: Environment:	

Growth

DUNK's team imagined the growth scenario as related to the current geographic circumstance of the Jamestown community, the site of their largest location. Their grown scenario reflected their idea that the Jamestown community is currently in a dismal state and might be getting worse. Some of the features of their growth scenario included:

- The unemployment rate is going to increase because there are more students graduating and fewer jobs created, in part due to a of lack of foreign investment
- Lack of entrepreneurial skills due to easy access to cybercrime and online betting companies
- Pollution, environmental degradation, and waste management problems
- Increased gap between rich and poor, leading to increased unemployment and cybercrime
- Political bias and unrest may result as Ghana's population grows, more constituencies and ministerial positions will have to be created. This can result in more money in ministerial administration vs. social program implementation

Their potential options for financial sustainability in this growth scenario included:

- DUNK can leverage its experience by creating paid educational tools to train community workers of other organizations on relevant social issues. This can result in financial income opportunities for its members/employees.
- DUNK can expand its service offerings into renting and commercializing facilities when they are not being used for programming.

Transform

DUNK's team came up with a transform scenario, which saw Ghana become a manufacturing powerhouse with an accountable and transparent government. Local human capital became more reliable and powerful. Some of the features of their transform scenario included:

- All foreign investments/business are owned and managed by skilled and well-educated locals
- Access to good and quality education through increased technology is available in schools

- Democracy improves as transparency and accountability in the political system increases
- Technology enables public voting on government policies in real-time
- Gender equal educational facilities are created with enough resources to serve the specific needs of female youth

Their potential options for sustainability included, but were not limited to:

- DUNK can start a corporate youth league in partnership with the NBA as a social enterprise.
- DUNK can partner with government sports departments to train young athletes and issue diplomas as an training institute to sports education graduates
- DUNK can leverage its internal expertise and networks to become a paid sponsored ambassador organization affiliated with renowned sports organizations.

Discipline

DUNK's team imagined a discipline scenario whereby a technology-enabled surveillance system in Ghana led to a digital dictatorship. The government would strictly regulate all sectors. However, corruption would persist. Similar to the growth scenario, resources would continue to be unevenly distributed in society. Other features of this future included:

- Improved government policies to regulate international, labour law, waste management, education, taxes, infrastructure, and investment profit margins
- Rampant price inflation due to corruption
- Institutions/individuals must use fake invoices for projects and services in response to strict government policies aimed at controlling corruption
- Technology-enabled monitoring of individuals and corporations
- Apps for documenting citizenship, statistics and census will be more reliable

Their potential option for sustainability resulted in an entire shift of the purpose of their organization:

- DUNK will start a social enterprise by launching an app that acts as a support-systems software to compare and contrast invoices and prices to help fight corruption

Collapse

DUNK's team imagined a collapse scenario in which Ghana returned to traditional communal ways of being and relating to one another. Cash would become less valuable, and barter systems would become most prevalent. This scenario was also defined by environmental degradation that led to resource scarcity and class warfare. Some of the features they noted included:

- Values given in order of priority (cash vs. resources)
- Reinforcement of community labour and equal sharing of harvest
- Re-establishment of community tribunals and structure for community representation (chief system)
- Dictatorship from the rich elites working with the military to hoard and protect resources
- Damaged and depleted resources (e.g., water bodies due to mining, etc.)
- Social implications due to a scarcity mindset, such as community violence and theft

In this scenario, the purpose of their organization also shifted notably. To remain sustainable, their organization could:

- DUNK would use their spaces/resources as an barter market/information centres when not being used as youth recreational centres
- DUNK can use sports to educate people on learning to share, working together, and managing resources

Pro-Link Ghana's Four Generic Futures Scenarios Workshop

Fig. 9. Documentation of Pro-Link Ghana's Four Generic Futures Scenarios Workshop Findings

Four Generic Futures Scenarios Workshop Guide
 Four Generic Futures Scenario method (Dator, 2009) encourages participants to consider four future perspectives that can be represented by phases on four classic growth curves. Participants are invited to discuss what their organization will need to do to be relevant to stakeholders as well as financially sustainable in each scenario.

In this future...	Foreign/International and Donor Aid is:	What are the features of this future?	What options might exist for our organization be more financially sustainable?
Growth	Commercialized	Political: Economic: Social: Technological: Legal: Environment:	
Transform	Unnecessary / Significantly Reduced	Political: Economic: Social: Technological: Legal: Environment:	
Discipline	Regulated	Political: Economic: Social: Technological: Legal: Environment:	
Collapse	Localized	Political: Economic: Social: Technological: Legal: Environment:	

Growth

Pro-Link Ghana's team also created a growth scenario that reflected their perception that the future of Ghana is not wholly optimistic. Their growth scenario centred on the shifting role of tradition in Ghanaian society. Some features included:

- Breakdown of the relevance on traditional leaders and chief system; democracy breaks down traditional systems of power
- Limitations on the extraction of some raw materials by governments to preserve resources for future generations
- Continued raw mineral exports from Ghana (such as bauxite/aluminium) through international deals with foreign governments such as China
- Selfish attitudes and nepotism continues

In this scenario, Pro-Link's team brainstormed only one option for sustainability:

- Pro-Link Ghana's current income generating projects in the agricultural sector become consistent, sustainable, grow and scale given the governments efforts on resource preservation

Transform

Pro-Link Ghana's transform scenario envisioned a strong economy and political stability that benefitted from inter-continental cooperation. The features of this future included:

- African Union countries work together to advocate for better commodity prices
- High valuation of locally-made products
- Value local business leaders in Ghana
- Begin manufacturing projects in Ghana
- Women's groups begin to advocate for human rights
- A strong third political party apart from two main parties
- Ghanaians become active in ways that result in actual change

In this scenario, their potential options for sustainability include:

- Pro-Link Ghana enters into the real estate market for consistent residual income
- Pro-Link Ghana can invest in profit-generating agriculture projects as a social enterprise

Discipline

Pro-Link Ghana's team created a discipline scenario characterized by foreign independence and a government that integrated traditional leaders into high leadership positions. Traditional leaders in top leadership positions would help to regulate society as per historic cultural values.

- Traditional leaders become stronger leaders in Ghana because they are recognized as more powerful than parliamentary government
- Traditional leaders fight against cybercrime
- Foreign independence with a well-structured insular economy

In this scenario, their organization shifted towards social enterprises with a cultural focus. Their options for sustainability include:

- Pro-Link can open for-profit traditional wellness centres/spas in certain districts that support their grassroots mission of community empowerment
- Pro-Link will have to adapt and work with traditional leaders as governing powers over the actions of their grassroots missions in communities

Collapse

Pro-Link Ghana's team created a collapse scenario characterized by the cascading impacts of climate change and natural disasters. These natural disasters destroy already fragile infrastructure and cause mass mortality. Interestingly, similar to the discipline scenario, traditional leaders would again assume an increasingly important role in their society. Other features of this future included:

- Loss of internet leads to manual ways of doing things, and oral storytelling regains influence
- Government instability leads to another military coup, which is carried out in collaboration with traditional leaders
- Rising sea levels destroy much of Accra and homes become unlivable
- Lives lost/mortality rate increases due to widespread destruction and disease

In this scenario, Pro-Link Ghana's team assumed that their organization might cease to exist, given the severity of loss of infrastructure and human resources in Ghana.

Workshops Reflection

This workshop was the most eye-opening part of this project for me. I was encouraged to see that workshop participants were really engaging with their vision of the future and the role of their organization in it. Participants gave feedback that this workshop was their favourite and most useful experience in the workshop process because it engaged their imagination and helped them to envision the long-term future of Ghanaian society. Some of the futures were harder to envision without having comparison to another country in that perceived future. For example, when we were envisioning the discipline future, DUNK's team likened the circumstance they imagined to the current circumstance of Zimbabwe and North Korea, where dictatorships have destabilized the country. Sometimes a future scenario was simply too uncomfortable to envision. For example, Pro-Link Ghana had a difficult time envisioning a collapse scenario of Ghana and were reluctant to develop a financial sustainability strategy for that future. In all, I am proud and inspired by the outcome of this workshop as the financial sustainability options developed are strategies that can be adapted for the current context of these organizations. The tool achieved the outcome that it was intended for, and I feel strongly that it can be refined and edited to meet the sustainability ideation needs of organizations in other contexts.

CREATING THE FUTURES: Strategic Opportunities for Sustainability

Strategic Opportunities

By synthesizing the financial sustainability strategies ideated through the research process, I have developed a set of strategic opportunities that grassroots NGOs Pro-Link Ghana and DUNK can pursue. These strategic opportunities draw from the literature review and foresight scan, as well as the sustainability opportunities ideated in the workshops. These key recommendations are intended to support grassroots NGOs to increase their capacity for organizational and financial sustainability.

1. Opportunities for Diversifying Revenue Streams

This report has identified reduced donor funding as a trend that may negatively impact female empowerment grassroots NGOs in Ghana. Therefore it is crucial for your grassroots NGO to ways to develop alternative and diversified streams of income. Private donors, investment projects, and multiple uses of organization facilities are some examples of ways to creatively use resources you already have.

- **Investing in Agribusiness:** Investing in region-specific agricultural projects can be an income-generating opportunity that also employs and empowers women in communities. This investment can support your organization to become an enterprise-supported grassroots NGO or shift your organization's focus into a social enterprise that empowers women and girls.
- **Optimizing the use of your facility:** The physical location of your grassroots NGO can become a financial resource by renting your spaces outside of operation hours. You can use this revenue-generating opportunity to further empower women and girls by renting space at a low cost to women entrepreneurs through a women's community market.
- **Creating trademarked educational tools and program models:** As grassroots NGOs working directly with marginalized women, girls, and their families, your organization has valuable first-hand knowledge and expertise. Your organization can leverage its experience by creating paid educational tools, programs, and

social change models. This can be done in partnership with local and international educational and development institutions, such as University of Ghana, Dr. Monk Social Development Organization, and the Olinga Foundation for Human Development.

- **Identify potential income opportunities with new development partners:** More research and investigation should be conducted to better understand Ghana's growing relationship with China as a development partner. Rather than only viewing this relationship with disregard, grassroots NGOs should aim to network, build relationships, and understand the motivations of Chinese companies who work in the communities they serve. Opportunities may exist for your grassroots NGO to build social enterprise partnerships that advocate for the social benefits of the communities you work in.
- **Leverage Ghana's cultural assets:** Ghana is quickly rising as a tourist destination for peoples of the African diaspora, especially given 2019's Year of Return festivities. Opportunities may exist for grassroots NGOs to design community immersion experiences, similar to Airbnb's E experiences or Tastemakers Africa's Locally Guided Tours. Grassroots NGOs can also open for-profit traditional wellness centres and spas that educate and empower patrons on health-enhancing practices native to Ghana. These for-profit businesses can primarily employ women, and can also be marketed as an income-generating enterprise that supports their overall mission of women and girls empowerment.
- **Develop a brand identity for your grassroots NGO:** Your grassroots NGO does essential and meaningful work. Marketing that works efficiently and effectively can distinguish your grassroots NGO from others, and encourage a range of partnership opportunities. An example of a grassroots NGO with a solid brand identity is Free The Youth Ghana, a social enterprise in Ghana that sells merchandise to raise funds for youth empowerment programs in Ghana. Their strong brand identity has helped them to gain financially-empowering partnerships with companies such as Nike and Daily Paper.

Key Considerations:

- Capitalizing on new opportunities may require hiring individuals or volunteers with expertise in social enterprise, business management, and partnership building skills.
- Before embarking on a new income-generating activity, your organization must engage in a thorough needs assessment to ascertain what skills and

competencies are within your organization, and which you may need to develop and/or acquire suitable talent.

2. Opportunities for Careful Collaboration

Concerns about collaborating with other grassroots NGOs were raised in the expert interviews and workshops. These concerns centre on the risk of sharing proposals, ideas, and projects with other grassroots NGOs who can appropriate these ideas for their own gain. Funding streams are becoming more limited, which can result in greater competition between grassroots NGOs. While collaborating can be an effective way to ensure that beneficiary needs are being met, grassroots NGOs should protect their ideas from being exploited. Some opportunities to address this challenge include:

- Create a set of non-disclosure agreements that can be used to legally protect your grassroots NGO's intellectual property when working with other NGOs. Sample non-disclosure agreements can be found online at lawdepot.ca or template.net.
- Build trusting relationships with like-minded grassroots NGOs over time by sharing resources and information. Be explicit about your challenges and successes so that your organizations can learn from each other. When possible, engage in training and team-building opportunities between organizations in your sector in order to build collaborative solutions outside of silos.
- When responding to requests for proposals (RFPs), some RFPs assign individuals within their organizations to support grassroots NGOs with the application process. Endeavour to build a relationship with those individuals where applicable, informing them of the potential partnership between your organizations prior to the application deadline. This may ensure that other grassroots NGOs who appropriate ideas can be flagged during the application review process.

3. Opportunities for Operational Improvement within Grassroots NGOs

Organizational sustainability goes hand-in-hand with financial sustainability, as exemplified by testimonies from the expert interviews and workshops. The organizational issues identified in this research process were linked to internal and external factors, including a lack of long-term planning, political instability, staff capacity, donor funding restrictions, and health concerns. These issues ultimately affected the efficacy of the women and girls empowerment programs that grassroots

NGOs offered. To address this, I have suggested a few opportunities to improve the operational capacity of grassroots NGOs, including:

- **Using foresight to build strategy:** Grassroots NGOs can build a strategic planning process that has embedded foresight and innovation processes focused on understanding and preparing for future obstacles. The foresight tools in this research study are useful for this purpose, and other similar resources are available at teachthefuture.org.
- **Protecting Employees with a Donor Financial Policy:** Grassroots NGOs can develop a financial policy in order to protect the rights of your workers. Use this financial policy to negotiate and advocate for your most valuable asset: your human resources. This could include a dedicated percentage of funds that go towards staff health care, transportation, and capacity building needs.
- **Prioritize knowledge transfer between employees and volunteers:** While local and international volunteers are valuable assets, they can become a weakness to grassroots NGOs who rely too heavily on their unpaid labour. Considerable effort should be put into ensuring that grassroots NGO staff are able to sustain their key operations without volunteers. This will require efficient knowledge transfer, which can be supported by written and oral manuals, train-the-trainer models, and an increase in the time allocated strictly for capacity building opportunities for permanent staff.

4. Opportunities for Lasting Community Impact

- **Collaborate with traditional community leaders:** This research project has identified that local Ghanaian communities look towards their traditional and cultural leaders to adopt their social values. As many grassroots NGOs are attempting to create social change, partnering with such leaders can ensure that changes are widely accepted.
- **Ensure language barriers do not impede clear communication:** Language barriers proved to be a factor in the success of the workshops and interviews. Engaging beneficiaries and communities in the strategy formation process can ensure that messages shared and clearly understood.
- **Create culturally accessible educational tools:** As many capacity-building tools originate from western models of development, it is recommended that grassroots NGOs adjust tools and resources to local cultures and facilitate with local representatives. It is recommended to consult with and engage stakeholders and beneficiaries and communities in the strategy formation

process to understand the most effective way to communicate key information. By using language, imagery, and communication tools that are culturally relevant, grassroots NGOs can ensure that important information shared is clearly understood by all.

- **Design context-specific empowerment programs for women and girls:** Empowering women and girls should take into account their aspirations and goals from a non-judgmental perspective. Grassroots NGOs should work to empower girls and women in whatever context is meaningful to them. This may mean negotiating perspectives on what 'empowerment' is. For example, is education more empowering than finding a viable work opportunity? Is wealth experienced in monetary terms, or is wealth experienced in having children? Programs should enable women and girls to live the lives they want to live while enhancing their access to health, human rights, and economic opportunities.

INSTITUTIONALIZING THE RESEARCH: Considerations, Limitations, and The Bigger Picture

Process Considerations

Managing my expectations as a facilitator

In my original MRP proposal, I intended to do a six-phase research project with grassroots NGOs DUNK, Pro-Link Ghana, and WILDAF (Women in Law and Development Africa). I chose each of these organizations for several reasons. Firstly, because of their connection to Crossroads International, I was able to connect quickly, personally, and directly with each organization's executive director. Secondly, each organization was well regarded for its programs that empower women and girls in a variety of contexts. This original project plan required six hours over three days (two-hour workshops per day) from each organization to complete the primary research.

After speaking with executive directors at each organization, I realized that they did not have the availability required to complete the research as planned. WILDAF was understaffed and was therefore unable to participate in the workshops (although their National Programs Coordinator, Melody Darkey, did complete an expert interview). To compromise, I amended the workshops to be a four-hour time commitment on one day. I decided to cut the 2x2 Critical Uncertainties workshop that was initially intended to support participants to think through each strategy created in the Four Generic Futures Scenarios workshop. The 2x2 Critical Uncertainties workshop was designed to assess whether the strategies ideated in previous workshops are tenable and to discover how strategies might have to shift in changing circumstances. The purpose of this workshop was to flesh out the strategies developed. Through this experience, I learned that grassroots NGOs need to be persuaded and motivated to take part in these workshops if they had never done something like this before. In future workshops, I will request that organizations allow workshop participants to attend a full day of workshops. I feel it is crucial to use the 2x2 Critical Uncertainties workshop to

develop even more robust and precise strategies for long-term organizational and financial sustainability.

Testing Beforehand

As the researcher, I realized that the tools I developed may not be easy to understand for participants unfamiliar with futures-thinking exercises. In order to investigate the potential efficacy of the Four Generic Futures Scenarios tool, I first completed a workshop run-through with four colleagues. This test run was intended for me to identify strategies to best support participants to understand the utility and value of the workshop. I recruited four friends to test this workshop. We decided to pretend we were employees of Pro-Link Ghana, and we used the Four Generic Futures Scenarios tool to imagine a "transform" scenario in Ghana. Our test trial yielded the following ideas and options:

What are the features of this future?

- *Ghana's government becomes socialist and restructure the economy for the benefit of local populations*
- *AI becomes more prominent in Ghana, as is exemplified by a surveillance system that monitors and cracks down on public and private corruption*
- *An affirmative action bill leads to a female-run government and more women in positions of power*
- *Plastic waste becomes a valuable resource which is turned into high-quality building materials, manufactured in Ghana*
- *Ghana's economy improves due to new manufacturing sector resulting in strengthened local currency*
- *The ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) implements a regional currency that becomes stronger than the American dollar and Euro*
- *West African nations tax high on exports, increasing government financial resources*
- *A strong economy leads to open access to credit for Ghanaian entrepreneurs, and local businesses begin to flourish*
- *Current youth rejection and skepticism of Christian and Islam religions results in renaissance of traditional religion*

What options might exist for our organization to be more financially sustainable?

- *Taxpayers would fund our grassroots NGO as a social service provided by the government*
- *We would start women's empowerment programs that enabled access to international markets and created lucrative income-generating opportunities for women*
- *Successful alumni would engage in a 'pay it back' model to help further support the organization through mentorship, volunteering, and taking on leadership roles*

I used this test run to show participants an example of how the Four Generic Futures Scenarios tool is to be used for scenario and strategy formation ideation. It proved to be useful in supporting participants to use the tool for scenario generation. For example, during the Four Generic Futures Scenarios workshop completed with DUNK, participants initially had trouble understanding the concept behind the tool and how to use it. I believe the challenges they faced with comprehending how the tool worked was in part due to the academic language I used to explain the tool (which is connected to the language and cultural barriers listed in the limitations section). Since I had saved the sticky notes from the test trial I did, I was able to show them a concrete example of how the tool worked to support scenario ideation. This enabled the workshop to begin to flow as participants attained a greater understanding through the use of an example. One could argue that this example could have swayed the answers of participants when ideating their transform scenarios. However, providing an example was also crucial for supporting participants to comprehend how the tool functions.

Creating a Safe Space for Critical Thought

In this research process, creating a safe space for critical thought consisted of physical and non-physical components. A primary physical component of safe space was the location of the workshops outside of the typical work environment. As the executive director permitted each workshop participant to attend on paid work time, participants were not exposed to financial hardships by participating. By ensuring that the workshops took place outside of their typical offices, participants were less distracted by their daily work tasks. Being outside of their typical offices also enabled participants to answer more honestly and candidly, as the presence of other employees did not influence them.

Informed consent forms were signed in a face-to-face meeting with the expert interviewees and the workshop participants to ensure that they agreed to participate in the study. The information was collected as part of the consent form as a means of keeping in touch to share the final report. In the interviews and workshops, the participants' names were recorded. However, when I digitally coded the workshop, participants were not personally identified. This was to ensure that any sensitive information given could not be directly attributed to any individual and to protect the identity of research participants.

Workshop tools were provided, such as pens, pencils, and most importantly - sticky notes! The workshop tools were also printed on 5 ft. X 4.5 ft. canvasses to ensure participants could read the workshop prompts clearly. Workshops were also catered, and drinks were provided. I wanted to ensure that workshop participants felt as comfortable as possible in the space.

As the facilitator, I had to be sure to enable safe space through my actions and my words. Some workshop participants and expert interviewees did not use English as their first language. Therefore I was sure to speak clearly and slowly when explaining concepts. I had to balance between directing the workshop to follow the prompts and categories of the tool and allowing conversations to be organic and open-ended. Generally, I had to be sure not to use any judgmental language. I will also note that politeness and patience in Ghana are seen as valuable personal virtues. The flexibility of my time as a facilitator was also an important consideration, as both workshops started later and ended later than I had initially planned.

The feedback from the workshop and interviews was generally positive. Questions, prompts, and the workshop tools were regarded as successful at inspiring critical thought and self-reflection. Encouraging workshop participants to consider what they thought about the future of Ghana was a challenging yet eye-opening experience for them. Participants noted that since colonization, their societal vision of Ghana had been closely tied to western and European economic models that encouraged democracy. However, these aspirations do not match the social reality of Ghana, given the prominence of traditional cultural systems that have been in place for generations.

As a facilitator, I approached the workshops with a confident and open-minded attitude. I was aware that workshop participants might not be familiar with foresight workshop tools and methods. Therefore I made careful consideration to explain terms and give examples to establish a shared understanding of concepts to support participants to ideate clear and concise answers. In the SWOT workshop, I explained identifying critical assumptions as the practice of engaging in an objective analysis of an aspect or issue that is assumed to be true. Participants requested a more detailed explanation of what a critical assumption is. The other example I gave was to view critical assumptions as the beneficial or challenging impacts associated with a point made within the SWOT quadrants. While this explanation was not the same meaning as critical assumptions, it did produce the results for which I was looking.

As the facilitator, I guided participants through each quadrant of the SWOT chart in order to identify critical assumptions. Talking through each section created an opportunity for participants to discuss their lived experiences as employees and volunteers of these organizations, which led to more in-depth data collection and analysis. This workshop was especially useful for participants to examine their grassroots NGOs' organizational sustainability and financial sustainability. Issues around human resources and external environmental factors were always linked back to financial circumstances and constraints, showing that there is an interdependent relationship between the organizational and financial sustainability of grassroots NGOs.

Trends and signals outlined in the scan did connect to aspects of the scenarios that participants created. For example, in DUNK's collapse scenario, local and global environmental pressures were identified as key features of that future. Another example is Pro-Link's growth scenario, in which political instability and corruption is a main factor in the current trajectory of Ghana's development. However, both groups did not create scenarios with a great amount of detail explaining exactly how the trends will affect their grassroots NGOs. This may show that participants needed more time to review the foresight scan to gain more inspiration. This could also mean that that participants could not engage deeply enough with the foresight scan due to its nature as a written document. In future applications, as the facilitator, I may opt to send the Foresight Scan to participants for review a few days before the workshop or choose a more creative and engaging mode of sharing this information with participants.

As this workshop was time-limited, the use of the PESTLE analysis within the Four Generic Futures Scenarios tool was limited in supporting the creation of a more systemic approach to scenario creation. As the facilitator, I was responsible for regrouping the discussions as they became more imaginative. I encouraged participants to be critical and intentional about their conversation to identify which scenario their speculations were referencing. Workshop participants were eager and open to thinking about the future as an 'out of the box' mental practice that could enable them to think about the future of their organizations. Some of the financial sustainability options fell within the typical NGO funding models referenced in the literature review. However, I found it most interesting when participants completely changed the mission of their organization, given the scenario that they had created together. This may indicate that participants felt that their organization's mission would no longer be an essential mission to pursue, given the socio-economic reality of Ghana in that scenario.

The Four Generic Futures Scenarios workshop proved to be a fascinating workshop for participants. They were very engaged and voiced many thoughts and concerns regarding their own position as citizens of Ghana. By anchoring each of the four future scenarios in what it might mean for the future of international development aid, participants had a critical starting point from which to begin to visualize that future. Participants noted that without rooting this tool in the future reality of international donor aid, they would have had a harder time visualizing themselves and their organizations in that future scenario. The overall intended purpose of the workshops was successful in that it generated creative thought and critical thinking of the future. Also, the potential sustainability strategies that each organization developed had either been a previous abstract idea or not previously considered. The scenarios workshop enabled participants to envision their organization within an alternate and plausible future and develop financial strategies that turned challenges into opportunities.

Limitations

This research study on innovation systems in established organizations was empirical in nature, and aimed to explore the practitioner perspective on innovation in grassroots NGOs. As a primary research study carried out by one individual researcher (myself) I recognize that there are gaps in the research that will need to be built upon in future studies. Limitations of the study are identified below.

1. Researcher Bias

As a volunteer with Crossroads International, I am aware that organizations surveyed may have been careful with responses if they felt the answers may jeopardize their relationship with Crossroads International.

On a personal level, although I am a woman of African and Caribbean decent, I am also a Canadian citizen who did not grow up in Ghana. I acknowledge that my access to a Western education system influenced the way I see, and therefore, my experiential interpretation of the ways that future trends may affect the Ghanaian context is limited. My connection to my Canadian identity afforded me access to these organizations in ways that showed me the reality of my privilege. It should be stated that as the researcher, I had to be constantly conscious about the ways my own identity as a non-religious intersectional feminist who is critical of capitalism differed from the identities of workshop participants. Their perspectives on societal power dynamics may differ from mine, and I put forth my best effort to be mindfully neutral and non-judgmental when I perceived those differences.

2. Research Participants Sample Size

This research study was limited to participating partner organizations associated with Crossroads International. Therefore research results may have differed if grassroots organizations outside of Crossroads International partnerships were included. Participatory action research workshop participants had varying levels of lived, educational, and professional experiences, as well as varying definitions of sustainability. Furthermore, as the study's scope was focused on female empowerment grassroots non-governmental organizations, it is recommended that future studies explore different targeted sectors to determine whether the tools and processes support the ideation of sustainability options.

3. Research Participants Roles

The research participants in this study were personally selected from my networks as a former Crossroads International volunteer, therefore this research was limited to individuals with selected roles within organizations. This included managing directors, accountants, program leads, coordinating staff, and volunteers. No direct beneficiaries of these organizations were included in this research study and therefore findings do not reflect the direct lived experience of marginalized women and girls.

4. Geographic Location

The interviews and participatory action research workshops were limited to female empowerment grassroots NGOs based in Accra, Ghana. Accra is the capital city of Ghana, a populous urban centre with a mix of regional tribes and international cultures. While the selection process for grassroots NGOs was originally intended for Ghanaian organizations, the majority of research participants were based in the greater Accra area. Therefore, perspectives of rural grassroots NGOs were not included in the research study.

5. Time Constraints

As I arrived in Ghana on September 3, 2019, any networking and outreach for the purposes of recruitment took place within the span of one month. This research project was also incumbent upon the receipt of the Research Ethics Board approval, which was received at the end of August, 2019. In order to be able to present my research at the SFI Innovation Forum in December 2019, I would have to complete my first draft by the beginning of November, 2019. Therefore, all workshops and interviews were limited to the months of September and October, 2019.

6. Language and Cultural Barriers

One noted limitation in the interviews was the language barriers between the interviewees and me, as the facilitator. Although we all had a command of the English language, the perception of the questions was influenced by the cultural context of the words chosen. Therefore, the perception of the question often affected the understanding of the question and the depth of answers given. It is noted that many respondents had limited answers for the final question, which asked them to reflect on trends that they think may affect their organizations in the future. These answers may have been influenced by their place in the arrangement of questions, however it did indicate that many organizations lacked a sense of the long-term impacts that macro and micro socio-economic and technological trends that may impact their organizations or beneficiaries. While respondents were very aware that trends could have major impacts for their organizations, exactly how the trends would affect them and their beneficiaries remained speculative. However, one respondent noted that whatever the trend, the need to promote and protect human rights will remain a necessity which will forever create meaningful work for their organization.

The Bigger Picture - Engaging Donors in the Sustainability Process

Grassroots NGOs in developing contexts occupy a critical space of service provision, and community support serves to improve the lived experiences of individuals living in marginalized communities. While it is important to note that these organizations can do more to become organizationally and financially sustainable, it is essential to note that these NGOs are highly vulnerable to global trends and systemic factors outside of their control. It is therefore imperative that donor countries, agencies, private supporters, and governments advocate for policies that mitigate the impact of these risks on grassroots NGOs.

A key finding from this research project is the concern that donor organizations may not have a clear understanding of the lived reality of employees in grassroots NGOs. These grassroots NGO employees are working every day to enable the positive change in their communities, and some risk their lives and health to do so. The rise of donor organizations use of contract project-based model for funding, while arguably a more efficient way to manage funds, may impact the human rights of grassroots NGO employees. By limiting the use of funds strictly to project deliverables, the healthcare and livelihood needs of the individuals carrying out the work may not be adequately considered. It is not enough to send funding and volunteers to grassroots NGOs for specific, time-bound projects with strict deliverables and outcomes. Grassroots NGOs need donors and supporters who take a holistic approach to community development and support grassroots NGO employees as well as the communities they serve.

This research has implicated global trends in the financial strain that women and girls empowerment grassroots NGOs may face as climate change becomes a top funding priority. This is not to say that climate change is not worthy of being a top funding priority, as it is one of the most pressing systemic challenges of our time. On the contrary, interviewees and workshop participants acknowledged that climate change would have a significant impact on the lives of marginalized communities, especially women and girls, in a variety of ways. However, as climate change becomes a funding priority, this could mean that funding opportunities for gender equality projects may decrease. Some global indicators have noted that gender equality has improved since feminist approaches to development began in the 1980s, but there is still much work to do (United Nations, 2010). Donor organizations and governments must continue supporting the goal of gender equality in the face of climate change.

Donor organizations supporting grassroots NGOs may need to send educational and capacity-building support to ensure that women and girls empowerment programs are taking into account the environmental impacts of their interventions. This way, both goals can be addressed through a systemic approach.

Grassroots NGOs will continue to play an essential role in developing contexts in the future. However, the limited resources, staff capacity, continually changing circumstances, political environments, and immediacy of their communities' needs make long-term planning obsolete. Participants of this research project found it crucial and necessary to consider the long-term futures of their organizations in the context of Ghana but had never thought about the future beyond 3- or 5-year strategic plans. This foresight process is not intended to help organizations make long-term strategic plans, but it is intended to support grassroots NGOs to consider the future long-term impacts of external trends on their organizations. By ideating financial sustainability options for the future, participants successfully used their imaginations to identify options, which could be adapted for the present. Futures thinking can be abstract, but if a process is developed to make the futures plausible and grounded in present realities, useful creative solutions can be ideated. I hope that I can refine this process through further testing and research in order to offer this foresight-informed sustainability strategy formation process to other grassroots NGOs and donor organizations to engage them in future visualization. I believe that in order to create change, individuals and organizations must engage in visualizing the futures they wish to inhabit.

CONCLUSION

“The trend seems to be one of developing greater independence and resilience through diversifying income sources and a willingness to explore more entrepreneurial routes to financial sustainability. NGOs will need to think strategically about their financial models and adopt strategies that will help them maintain their independence and still be sustainable. This trend will have major implications for NGOs in terms of their identity, values and culture”

(Hailey, 2014).

The changing relationship between international and local donors and grassroots NGOs is changing. Fundraising is becoming more challenging for grassroots NGOs, at the same time that global environmental pressures present greater challenges for vulnerable communities. Working with grassroots NGOs, I have experienced first hand how the work they do changes the lives of beneficiaries. Many grassroots NGOs are miracle workers - advocating, change-making, healing, and fighting for people who are being left behind as Ghana “develops”.

Women and girls are among the most vulnerable to changing economic, environmental, and political realities. As social safety nets fail to meet their needs, grassroots NGOs may be relied upon even more to support women and girls. I designed this process to help grassroots NGOs to remain sustainable because I foresee that women and girls in Ghana, and in developing contexts around the world, will need them.

This MRP set out to understand the opportunities for organizational and financial sustainability that exist for grassroots NGOs mandated to empower women and girls. Can foresight support grassroots NGOs to develop new strategies for sustainability? Through my research, I show that the answer is yes. Enabling safe space for foresight-informed participatory action research grassroots NGOs can result in creative ideation of sustainability options.

These tools and this process are meant to be adapted for different contexts. Although they are tools that originated in a Western context, they have value in that they are specifically designed to support grassroots NGOs to consider the future. One

respondent of the workshops mentioned to me that since they are face-to-face with pressing issues and trying to stay afloat, they rarely have time to think about the future. This process also showed how thinking about the future can have implications for the present. The sustainability strategies developed in the Four Generic Futures Scenarios method were strategies that Pro-Link Ghana and DUNK could implement in the near future to help their organizations survive and thrive.

While further testing of the tools and process is required to confirm results, as the sample size was small, feedback from workshop participants was promising. Participants felt that it was important to take time aside of their conventional workdays to think about the future impacts of the current reality of Ghana. This research, while also contributing to the research literature on gendered poverty, grassroots NGOs and women's/girls empowerment, helped grassroots NGOs to imagine the future and place themselves within it. This process became a way for participants to engage in critical thought, redefining their organizations through an imaginative and participatory process.

Many world cultures have for centuries perpetuated the myth of female inferiority or restricted women and girls to delegated roles. The resulting inequity is only exacerbated by the impacts of modern capitalism, globalization and colonialism. I believe that although time will expose new threats and opportunities to human kind, empowering the women and girls should remain one of the most important goals of development. Not just because of the need for restorative justice, but because the possibility of transformative innovation and collective evolution may lay in the untapped potential of women and girls in developing contexts. Overall, I hope that this research inspires and normalizes the use of long-term futures thinking for grassroots NGOs who wish to see women and girls truly empowered in the future.

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APPENDIX A: Recruitment Blurb for Participatory Action Research Workshops

Asia Clarke, MDes Candidate
OCAD University, Strategic Foresight & Innovation Program

Dear Senior Team at (name of organization)

My name is Asia Clarke, and for my Masters thesis at OCAD University, I am exploring challenges and opportunities to long-term financial sustainability for female empowerment organizations in Ghana. I want to understand how we can apply the principles of strategic foresight and participatory action research to identify development needs of organizations that are mandated to empower women and girls. Specifically, my research project aims to uncover new insights into the current and future financial challenges faced by organizations invested in empowering generations of women and girls, so that the impacts of these challenges can be appreciated and mitigated.

This research will require a minimum of three employees from your organization to take part in two 2-hour workshops in the month of October 2019. The workshops will identify your organization's development needs and future assumptions, as well as explore possible sustainability solutions through research-informed future scenarios. The workshops will take place in-person, however, accommodations may be made to include those who are remotely located and interested in participating. Possible benefits to your organization includes increased awareness of your organizations' opportunities for financial stability, a heightened appreciation for the work that your organizations does to support women and girls, and an increased clarity about organizational weaknesses (specifically in fiscal health, stakeholder management, and long-term planning).

This study has been reviewed and cleared by the OCAD University Research Ethics Board. Please be informed that all research data will be kept confidential by the researcher (myself) and any sensitive disclosures will be destroyed after the research project has ended. Key insights from the research will be made available to you through the final research report in December 2019.

If your organization is interested in exploratory approaches to creating opportunities for long-term financial sustainability, please respond via email at [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response as we move toward scheduling the aforementioned workshops.

Sincerely,

Asia Clarke

APPENDIX B: Recruitment Blurb for Expert Interviews

Asia Clarke, MDes Candidate
OCAD University, Strategic Foresight & Innovation Program

To whom it may concern,

My name is Asia Clarke, and for my Masters thesis at OCAD University, I am exploring challenges and opportunities to long-term organizational sustainability for female empowerment organizations in Ghana. My research project is being supported by Canadian non-governmental organization Crossroads International. I want to understand how we can apply the principles of futures thinking and participatory action research to identify development needs of organizations that are mandated to empower women and girls. Specifically, my research project aims to uncover new insights into the current and future financial challenges faced by organizations invested in empowering generations of women and girls, so that the impacts of these challenges can be appreciated and mitigated.

You have been identified as a potential expert in this field due to your experience working within the international development sector in Ghana. This research will require a between 45-60 minutes of your time to discuss your observations about organizational sustainability in the context of Ghana. We will discuss development needs, future funding model assumptions, as well as explore possible sustainability solutions. The interview may take place over the phone or in-person, given your availability. Possible benefits to you may include increased awareness of your organizations' opportunities for financial stability, a heightened appreciation for the work that your organizations does to support women and girls, and an increased clarity about organizational weaknesses (specifically in fiscal health, stakeholder management, and long-term planning).

This study has been reviewed and cleared by the OCAD University Research Ethics Board. Please be informed that all research data will be kept confidential by the researchers Asia Clarke and Sarah Trantum, and all associated raw research data will be destroyed after the research project has ended. Key insights from the research will be made available to you through the final research report in December 2019.

If you or your organization is interested in participating in this interview, exploratory approaches to creating opportunities for long-term organizational sustainability, please respond via email at [REDACTED]. No individuals or organizations are obligated to participate in this research study. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response as we move toward scheduling the aforementioned workshops.

Sincerely,
Asia Clarke

APPENDIX C: Consent Form for Workshop

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Date: _____

Project Title: The Future of African Women’s Empowerment
A Foresight and Strategy Framework Research Project

<p>Principal Investigator: Asia Clarke, Graduate Student Strategic Foresight & Innovation OCAD University [REDACTED]</p>	<p>Faculty Supervisor: Sarah Trnum, Assistant Professor Social Innovation Design Faculty of Design OCAD University strnum@faculty.ocadu.ca</p>
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INVITATION

You are invited to participate in a study that involves research. This research seeks to discover what impact Foresight Methods and Participatory Action Research might have in uncovering issues that contribute to organizational sustainability challenges. This research also aims to identify potential strategic opportunities for organizations mandated to empower African women and girls, specifically in the context of Ghana. The intended outcome of this research is the development of an Organizational Sustainability Foresight Process to help inform NGO/grassroots organizational long-term strategy and identify investment opportunities with diversified impacts.

WHAT’S INVOLVED

As a participant, you will be asked to complete two participatory action research workshops with exercises that prompt you to reflect on your organization’s current assumptions and development needs, as well as possible long-term sustainability challenges and solutions. Each workshop should take about two hours and two to three weeks will

be allowed in-between each workshop. In total, the workshops will use six hours of your time over the course of three weeks.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS

Possible benefits to participants include increased awareness of their organizations' opportunities for organizational and financial stability, a heightened appreciation for the work that their organizations do to support women and girls, and an increased clarity about organizational weaknesses (specifically in fiscal health, stakeholder management, and long-term planning). However, there may be risks involved in participating in the research project that arise may bring to light problems in the participant's workplace, which could result in conflict between the participant and their organization. Depending on how this hypothetical conflict unfolds, there is a possibility that they may feel uncomfortable returning to work, they may experience backlash for comments made during the workshop, or they may choose to end their employment with the organization. There may also be risks associated with participation including the use of tools, prompts, or questions that may bring up trauma associated with workplace stress. The workshops could provide participants with questions to initiate and facilitate important conversations with their co-workers about the future of their organizations. Furthermore, they may bring to awareness unhealthy dynamics within the workplace that participants were not previously aware of and may not feel equipped to handle. In order to mitigate any associated risks, participants will be asked not to disclose any current financial data of the organization that is not public data (ie. yearly financial reports published online can be discussed, but any financial information not publicly disclosed should not be discussed). All participants will be instructed that they do not have to answer any questions that make them feel uncomfortable, they are under no obligation to participate in the interviews, and they may withdraw their consent to participate at any time during the conversation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information you provide is considered confidential; your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study. As the workshop will be done in a group setting, a limited level of confidentiality can be expected. You are asked not to discuss conversations or findings from the workshops with people who are not invited to attend the workshops. Should you be unable to participate the the workshop, worksheets designed to extract similar information can be provided to you upon request. Data collected during this study will be stored on a secured, password protected and encrypt-

ed on OCAD University GoogleDrive, accessed through a password protected laptop, on a secured and private wifi connection until the end of the study period (December 31, 2019). The physical worksheets will be kept in a locked file storage within the researcher's locked apartment until the end of the study period (December 31, 2019). Access to this data will be restricted to Asia Clarke. At the end of the study period, all digital files will be deleted and all physical files shredded.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time, or to request withdrawal of your data (prior to data analysis internal deadline on November 15, 2019), and you may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

Results of this study may be published in reports, professional and scholarly journals, students theses, and/or presentations to conferences and colloquia. In any publication, data will be presented in aggregate forms. Quotations from interviews or surveys will not be attributed to you without your permission.

Feedback about this study will be available at its completion, estimated to be November 30, 2019. All participants will be emailed a link to the final report upon completion of the term on December 31, 2019.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact the Principal Investigator Asia Clarke or the Faculty Supervisor Sarah Trantum using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at OCAD University [file number: 101610]. If you have any comments or concerns, please contact the Research Ethics Office through cpineda@ocadu.ca

CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

APPENDIX D: Consent Form for Expert Interviews

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Date: _____

Project Title: The Future of African Women’s Empowerment
A Foresight and Strategy Framework Research Project

Principal Investigator: Asia Clarke, Graduate Student Strategic Foresight & Innovation OCAD University [REDACTED]	Faculty Supervisor: Sarah Trnum, Assistant Professor Social Innovation Design Faculty of Design OCAD University stranum@faculty.ocadu.ca
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INVITATION

You are invited to participate in a study that involves research. This research seeks to discover what impact Foresight Methods and Participatory Action Research might have in uncovering issues that contribute to financial sustainability challenges, as well as potential strategic opportunities for organizations mandated to empower African women and girls, specifically in the context of Ghana. The intended outcome of this research is the development of a Financial Sustainability Foresight Framework to help inform NGO/ grassroots organizational long-term strategy and identify investment opportunities with diversified impacts.

WHAT’S INVOLVED

As an expert in the subject, you will be asked to participate in a 60-90 minute semi-structured one-on-one interview with the researcher. The interview questions will include reflections on your experience in the international development sector, as well as your insights into challenges faced by organizations mandated to empower women and girls in the Ghanaian or African context.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS

Possible benefits to participants include increased awareness of their organizations' opportunities for financial stability, a heightened appreciation for the work that their organizations do to support women and girls, and an increased clarity about organizational weaknesses (specifically in fiscal health, stakeholder management, and long-term planning). The workshops could provide participants with questions to initiate and facilitate important conversations with their co-workers about the future of their organizations. There may also be risks associated with participation including the use of tools, prompts, or questions that may bring up trauma associated with workplace stress. Furthermore, they may bring to awareness unhealthy dynamics within the workplace that participants were not previously aware of and may not feel equipped to handle. Measures have been taken by the researcher, to the best of her ability to ensure all responses be made confidential and that each workshop creates a safe and comfortable environment for participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information you provide is considered confidential; your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study. Data collected during this study will be stored on a secured, password protected GoogleDrive, accessed through a password protected laptop, on a secured and private wifi connection until the end of the study period (December 31, 2019). The physical worksheets will be kept in a locked file storage within the researcher's locked apartment until the end of the study period (December 31, 2019). Access to this data will be restricted to Asia Clarke. At the end of the study period, all digital files will be deleted and all physical files shredded.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time, or to request withdrawal of your data (prior to data analysis on November 15, 2019), and you may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

Results of this study may be published in reports, professional and scholarly journals, students theses, and/or presentations to conferences and colloquia. In any publication, data will be presented in aggregate forms. Quotations from interviews or surveys will not be attributed to you without your permission.

Feedback about this study will be available at its completion, estimated to be November 30, 2019. All participants will be emailed a link to the final report upon completion of the study.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact the Principal Investigator Asia Clarke or the Faculty Supervisor Sarah Trantum using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at OCAD University [File no. 101610]. If you have any comments or concerns, please contact the Research Ethics Office through cpineda@ocadu.ca.

CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

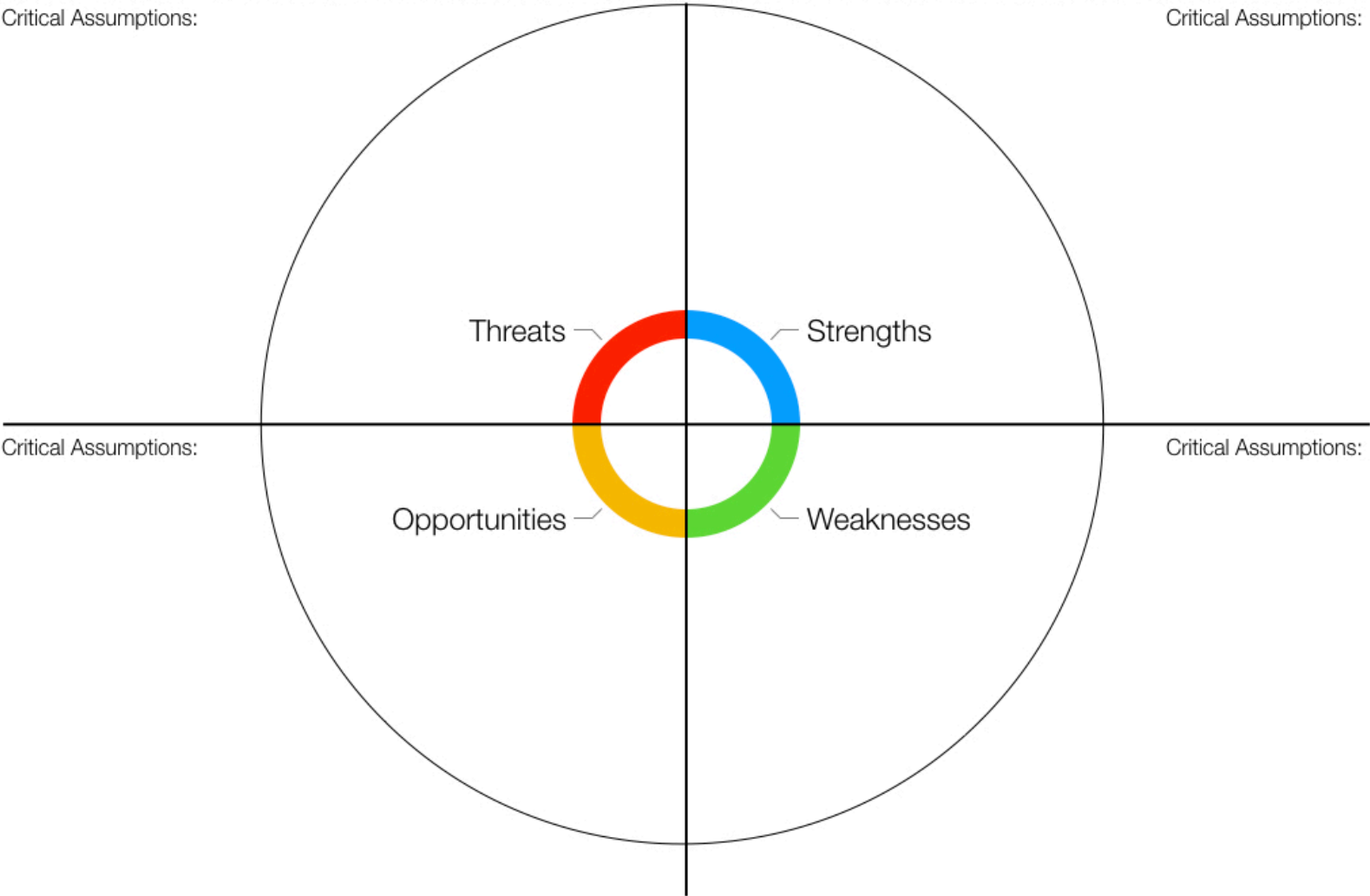
APPENDIX E: Worksheet Template – SWOT/Critical Assumptions Workshop

SWOT / CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS MATRIX

This worksheet is intended to support you to identify current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the financial sustainability of your organization. To support your analysis of the current financial sustainability of your organization, the critical assumptions section is intended to encourage you to reflect on what assumptions you hold on the future implications of each strength, weakness, opportunity and threat you identify.

Critical Assumptions:





Critical Assumptions:



APPENDIX F: Worksheet Template – Four Generic Futures Scenarios Workshop

Four Generic Futures Scenarios Workshop Guide

Four Generic Futures Scenario method (Dator, 2009) encourages participants to consider four future perspectives that can be represented by phases on four classic growth curves. Participants are invited to discuss what their organization will need to do to be relevant to stakeholders as well as financially sustainable in each scenario.

In this future...	Foreign/International and Donor Aid is:	What are the features of this future?	What options might exist for our organization be more financially sustainable?
 Growth	Commercialized	Political: Economic: Social: Technological: Legal: Environment:	
 Transform	Unnecessary / Significantly Reduced	Political: Economic: Social: Technological: Legal: Environment:	
 Discipline	Regulated	Political: Economic: Social: Technological: Legal: Environment:	
 Collapse	Localized	Political: Economic: Social: Technological: Legal: Environment:	

APPENDIX G: Expert Interview Questions

Expert Interview Questions/Flow (Open-Ended)

Thank you so much for making the time to speak to me today. I would like to spend the next 60-90 minutes learning about your experience working in grassroots NGOs that rely on international aid, donor funding or grant awards. The format will be a semi-structured open-ended question interview, which means that I have designed a set of questions that allows for flexibility to spend more time on some topics vs. others depending on where our conversation takes us.

Given that we are talking about financial sustainability and potentially the current fiscal health of your organization, there is a chance that we may talk about information that is sensitive or confidential. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not feel comfortable answering and can say 'Pass' when/if that is the case. We can also end the interview at any point, so please let me know if you would like to do so, and there will be no penalty involved. In terms of the data collected and recorded, I can guarantee that I am the only person with access to the raw data and I will not disclose any identifiable information based on this interview. If at any point you decide that you do not want some or any of the data collected today to inform the study, please let me know before November 15, 2019, and it will be destroyed.

- If you currently or previously worked for / with a grassroots NGO in Africa, can you please disclose the relative size of your organization (how many employees, how many locations, how many beneficiaries impacted)?
- Who is the main stakeholder / beneficiary of your organization? And what is the intended impact your organization aims to make in their lives?
 - Age range, sex, income level, etc.
- With or without disclosing the organization you worked for in the past, what has been your experience working in grassroots NGOs in Africa?
 - Give specific examples related to fiscal health or financial sustainability
 - Who funded your organization / how was cashflow ensured
- What aspects of the financial stability / instability were within the control of your organization and which were not? Why?
- What was the typical duration of your strategic plans (yearly? 2-year or 3-year plans?)
 - What was the purpose for choosing this duration of planning?
- What Social, Political, Technological or Legal hurdles or challenges did your organization face that affected its financial sustainability?

- Were there any trends, events, or news that have disrupted your organization in the past? If Yes, please describe the event and the impact it had on your organization.
- Do you imagine any trends, events, or news that may affect your organization future? If Yes, please describe the potential trend, event or news and the future impact it might have on your organization.