

# Contributions of Healthcare Ngos In Ghana : A Look At Partnerships

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## ABSTRACT

### Article Info

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Non-Governmental Organizations are global actors in today's world and play a vital role in the provision of goods and services in varied contexts. They have made and continue to make important contributions in serving marginalized, poor people and people in conflict and war areas at the local, national, and international levels. This research aims to mainly address one of the most important key issues of Health Non-Governmental Organizations running in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. It discusses the partnerships of Non-Governmental Organizations, in any forms, varieties of its work, encounters in the conduct of their work. Its main aim is to establish if partnerships influences performance of Non-Governmental Organizations. Questionnaires were used to collect data from 40 Non-Governmental Agencies in the Greater Accra Region. Quantitative assessment of data and descriptive statistics was performed. From the study, all respondents believed they qualified for partnerships of any kind are absolutely sure they are a partnership potential for or to others. Results also show a maximum of respondents (83.5%) strongly believe that partnerships influence performance, 84.5% also established that having partnerships makes it easier to reach more people in need.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are institutions, organizations or cooperate bodies which are created by individuals or institutions to solve social issues (Aldashev & Vallino, 2019; Around et al., 2019; World Bank, 2010). They are not mostly government funded, mostly politically neutral, have multiple sources of funding and are not profit making. Non-governmental organizations are mostly constituted to solve complex social issues which are mostly overlooked by authorities. Their work is

mostly related to helping the deprived and marginalized of society through provision of some reliefs through advocacy, checking government or state institutions, implementing projects, and influencing public policies among others (Dietrich & Simone, 2010; Foo, 2018; World Bank, 2010).

Non-governmental organization can be community based, international, national, multilateral, bilateral and unilateral. Most multilateral and bilateral NGOs are established and funded by governments or cooperate bodies for the main purpose of carrying corporate and social responsibilities, and so their

operations are tightly influenced and controlled by government (Around et al., 2019; Guillaumont et al., 2018). It is difficult to regard such government-funded organizations as NGOs, giving the basic meaning of the definition so far. Defining organizations as non-governmental organization is centered solely on how the organization defines itself. Non-governmental organizations can also be described as self-governing, non-profit and formal organizations which are international, national and local by operations (Around et al., 2019; Brass et al., 2018; World Health Organization, 2001).

It suffices to say that although the activities of international NGOs in the developing regions of the world have gained extensive attention in literature, the contributions of indigenous civil society organizations (CSOs) have gone largely unnoticed and given significantly less attention. Factually, there are several of such local NGOs and other CSOs making positive contributions within their respective communities, but are not recognized beyond their borders. A unique feature characteristic of these local NGOs, which is not that prominent in their international counterparts, is their capacity to tap local human, cultural and physical resources to respond rapidly and creatively to problems (Arhin et al., 2018; Badu & Parker, 1994). The flexibility with which these local NGOs are able to perform their activities under changing socio-economic settings is an added strength that makes probing into their roles in sustainable development in the developing world crucial (Badu & Parker, 1994).

Recently, countless researchers have acknowledged quite an important transformation in the governance of sustainability issues. At this point, 'governance' denotes the general structure of management mechanisms in society, in which the customary direction of government from top to bottom steering is just one among several governance possibilities. Customarily, it is known that Government Organizations are tasked with the obligation of assigning and dealing with the matters of sustainability. However, lately, civil society

organizations have been actively involved in and progressively engaged in their portion of duty. By doing so, they have unfastened up the policy field to participants from other divisions of society (Dubbink, W. 2003).

One of such language of change is the initiation of the notion of "partnership", which has now turned out to be a real buzzword in modern times. There are several explanations for cross-cooperative social and academic interests; cooperation among participants from unlike fields of society, which began to emerge in the mid-1990s. First, efforts to seek global sustainable development and promote health were decisively on the political scheme of the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The idea of sustainable development itself stresses the necessity to achieve social equity, health and economic wealth with each other, where responsibility and resources must be apportioned to different social ranges. The Alliance is in two ways connected to sustainable development. Firstly, it is debated that the involvedness of sustainability issues needs the full participation of all areas of society to address them, and non-governmental organizations do not exclude these areas.

### 1.1 Objectives

1. To examine the existence of partnerships with Non-Governmental Organizations
2. To assess if NGOs partnership have an influence on their performance

### 1.2 Research questions

These ensuing questions were modelled to guide the achievement of the objectives of the study:

1. Are there any partnerships existing among Non-Governmental Organizations
2. Does partnership potential have any influence on the performance of local NGOs in health service delivery?

### 1.3 Justification of study

The distribute of health services in developing countries such as Ghana is a major challenge, given the proportion of citizenry under poverty and the problems related to government expenditure and corruption. In an inefficient democratic system of governance, it is a common problem for political leaders to not take the needs of its citizens seriously whereas major corrupt officials loot the public purse to the detriment of others and to the negligence of relevant social interventions. Health care service delivery is one key aspect that has suffered much negligence in terms of government policy implementation and program executions. Unfortunately, the poverty-stricken households and the marginalized in society suffer most, despite their already worse plights. Some of these reasons are the basis for the existence of local and international NGOs occupied with the issues of the medical facility provision. Many of them rely on foreign donations in order to successfully carry out their projects, mostly in rural settings of developing countries like Ghana. It is doubtless that their ability to attract foreign and local investments and partnerships depend on their preparedness and readiness, both as institutions and also as organizations working within the scope of government policies

## II. THE THEORY OF PARTNERSHIPS

The word “partnership” deals with various notions and acts. It is used to define a variation of relationship in numerous circumstances and locations. Dealing with Partnerships, there are a number of underlying concepts about its definition. Firstly partnerships comprise both development and delivery of a strategy or a set of projects or operations, although each actor may not be equally involved in all stages. Secondly in public-private partnerships the public sector does not chase only commercial goals.

McQuaid, R.W assessed again that Partnership involves co-operation, meaning, “to work or act

together” and in a public policy can be defined as co-operation between people or organizations in the public or private sector for mutual benefit (Holland, 2012). Harding (2002) sets out a similar general definition of ‘private public partnership’ as “any action which relies on the agreement of actors in the public and private sectors and which also contributes in some way to improving the quality of life”. Bailey (2014) provides a working definition of private-public partnership in urban regeneration as “the mobilization of a coalition of interests drawn from more than one sector in order to prepare and oversee an agreed strategy for common goal.

Taking an economic development perspective, Sellgren (1990) defines partnership as a scheme with involvement or funding from more than one agency. Bennett and Krebs (1994) similarly stress the joint objectives of the bodies and defines partnership as co-operation between actors where they agree to work together towards a specified economic development objective for shared success A political tenet’s (Fusheini, 2016) reveals that there is a positive relationship between entities and their input and output based on support they receive.

Partnerships can be well-thought-out as an answer to the partial problem-solving capacity of governments and other stakeholders responsible for providing any kind of development, whether to the rich or poor in a country. A good think of forming any kind of beneficial partnerships helps in:

- Policy development
- Implementation
- General dissemination of knowledge
- Facilitating quick and effective solutions to problems
- Making new polices and deepening old ones

The potential for partnership for local NGOs cannot be overemphasized as crucial in recent times considering the increasing need for support for improved health delivery in local communities in

Ghana. Bello Bravo and Amoa Mensa (2019) documented how an indigenous Ghanaian cocoa sector SME partnered with a Ghanaian NGO to resolve challenges related to certification and other legal requirements which led to its success in operating in Ghana. This is one example of many partnerships that have yielded good returns for local enterprises in Ghana. However, the developing and dynamic landscape in Ghana presents several challenges to the growth of NGOs and to their effective support to the Ghanaian economy (Arhin et al., 2018). From lessons drawn on detailed qualitative interrogations with some Ghanaian NGOs, Arhin (2016) contended that the anticipated functions of most NGOs in Ghana in promoting the grounds of development are actually affected by the improbability of income generation and ways of funding; changes in functioning ability; and changing NGO identity.

In recent times, studies have revealed that at least 70% of NGOs in Ghana obtain their funding from overseas aids and support from Ghana's bilateral and multilateral partners (Arhin et al., 2015). Another study undertaken in 2017 found that the magnitude of external donor funding was about 90% of the overall finances of NGOs in three separate Ghanaian regions (i.e. Upper West, Northern and Greater Accra) (Arhin, 2016). Such findings have thrown light on the issue of donor funding but little is said about the ability of indigenous NGOs and how much they are able to get in the form of support from such kinds of donations. Another question is about whether or not they have the institutional structures to access such financial supports, taking into account the complex nature of funding agreements and requirements from international donors. Although several research works are focusing on how NGOs are performing, less is being done about understanding the challenges faced by indigenous NGOs and what they need in order to operate successfully. A comprehensive assessment of their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) is lacking in

literature. This study therefore seeks to address the problem of lack of information on the contribution of local NGOs and also assess their functions and challenges in the provision of health aids in Ghana.

Most development NGOs operate in a likely to be resource scarce situation, and institutionally complex Operational NGOs, particularly those working in health areas of the world, may face difficult operating conditions in terms of access to partnerships, dangers to staff and problems with gaining accurate information (Fowler 2015). For some NGOs, a key aspect of their operations relates to the relationships that they may form with other NGOs either as funders or, as is more commonly described these days, as 'partners'. (Carroll, 2009) NGOs may face difficulties reconciling the recipient role – which implies having a partnership potential, and the partner role, which implies equality and solidarity. At the same time, NNGOs may face challenges to their own legitimacy as difficult questions are increasingly asked of the NGO's relationship by both partners and their supporters. Since development and performance work often involves not an individual, there will always be interrelations in the environment of work.

## 2.1 Relationships and partnerships.

The NGOs working in the Ghanaian health sector, which are agents for distribution of health-aid resources, do not only come with funds for operation, but have their policies and as well decide which health issues to handle and which to ignore. A number of these NGOs and their donor organizations most often have significant influence on the health system in developing countries in which they operate due to the assistance they provide in satisfying what should have been done by governments; and their influence can neither be regarded clearly as positive nor negative, especially when they carry a political implications (Cook et al., 2017; Harrison, 2017; Nolte and McKee, 2003). The lack of resources for health sector in Ghana has created a gigantic gap which is being occupied by many Non-Governmental

Organizations. Nonetheless, these organizations are working and complementing the Government's efforts in the process of health delivery. The partnering of NGOs and government in introducing and executing various health programs gives hope of improvement as health delivery in most part of Ghana is not encouraging.

According to the Millennium Development Goals Report (2015) total development assistance to developing countries directed to health care was more than US\$22 billion. Nonetheless, such amount remains insignificant as many health sectors of African states are still struggling to meet their baseline objectives (Michaela & Weber, 2007; Millennium Development Goals Report, 2018). The relevance of a strong, functional and vibrant health system in African countries is key to the development of the region. This is because a healthy nation is a wealthy nation, in the sense that there's an increasing need for healthy people to drive development in a sustainable manner. The provision and availability of better health facilities in Africa and the delivery of quality health services is a fundamental vision in the right direction for the sustainable development of Africa and other developing nations, and the part played by NGOs cannot be overemphasized in aligning government policies to the health requests of the local people and the general public (Africa Sustainable Development Report, 2018; Around et al., 2019; Cook et al., 2017).

## 2.2 Partnership and Effectiveness

Recent evaluations and supports by some authors have confirmed the struggling worries of people trying to draw link a relationship between partnership and the execution of tasks. Traditionally, NGOs have work in partnership alongside government and non-state companies. Lately, the second includes more worldwide corporations (Boström & Tamm Hallström 2019). The degree of relationship among the diverse groups varies depending on the nature of inventiveness, the

accessibility of human and financial resources, and the probable gains that could be attained (McLoughlin 2019), comprising financial benefits. To a large degree, cooperation also depends on the agenda, self-interests, and beliefs (Söderbaum 2019).

One of the little assessments undertaken existed on the database of the Social Development Index of the International Institute of Social Studies of the Erasmus University, Rotterdam (<http://www.indsocdev.org/>). It explored the relationships between Government assistant, civil society, and development results. The writers maintain that donor assistance is contradictory to the development of civil society development. The effort on social consistency is measured frail, with the reason that not all NGO obtain equivalent funding, when they lack support, project execution is found to be poor.

In alternative assessment, Dreher et al. in a study (2012) of the Kiel Institute of World Economy (2012) analyzes the distribution of aid, related impacts and efficiency of Swedish NGOs when they operate independently compared to other agencies, interventions Government and cooperation with programs. The author is not satisfied with the idea of whether NGOs can outperform other organizations in terms of allocation between recipients. This is important because the amount of NGO assistance to donor countries to other local NGOs greatly affects their production.

## III. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Population and Sampling

A study population involves a huge collection or gathering of persons that is the main concentration of a study. According to Lin (2017), population includes all the elements that satisfies the requirements for addition in a research study.. Stratified sampling was used to collect data. Stratified sampling involves the grouping of members of the population into relatively

homogeneous groups before sampling. Stratifying factors which already existed were selected to represent different characteristics of people within the NGO community. From every NGO the researcher selected the most experienced among them to answer the questions. The most experienced people were selected based on their rank and years of service, and also due to their understanding of the topic and their willingness to offer the desired facts about the intended research. This method was chosen based on its advantages to produce effective results.

### 3.2 Sampling and data collection.

Cross-sectional data were collected from twenty-five (40) local NGOs working in the health sector of Ghana. Using structured questionnaires administered by face-to-face mode. 10 Purposively sampled respondents who were in top administrative positions of each selected local NGOs took part in the data collection process, totaling three-hundred and seventy-five (400).

This study followed a qualitative design and the main focus was to find out what specific opinions employees of NGOs have on partnering and partnerships on health service delivery with either international NGOs and/or government of Ghana. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected using structured questionnaire containing closed ended questions. Kuter and Yilmaz (2001) define a questionnaire as a method for the elicitation, recording and collecting of information. Kothari (2003) argues that questionnaires generate data in a very systematic and ordered fashion.

The questionnaire used for data collection was pre-tested to determine whether questions and directions are clear to subjects and whether they understand what is required from them. This enabled the researcher to fine tune the questionnaire for objectivity and efficiency of the process.

### 3.3 Data analysis

Data were organized using statistical package for social scientists (SPSS, version 19) and results were presented in Tables and Figures.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Out of the 400 issued questionnaires, 375 questionnaires representing 93.7% of the total questionnaires distributed were returned fully completed, while 25 questionnaires were not returned representing 6.5% of the total questions distributed to the respondents. It can be inferred that the response rate was good. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) a response rate of 70% and over is excellent for analysis and reporting on the opinion of the entire population.

**Table 1** Response Rate

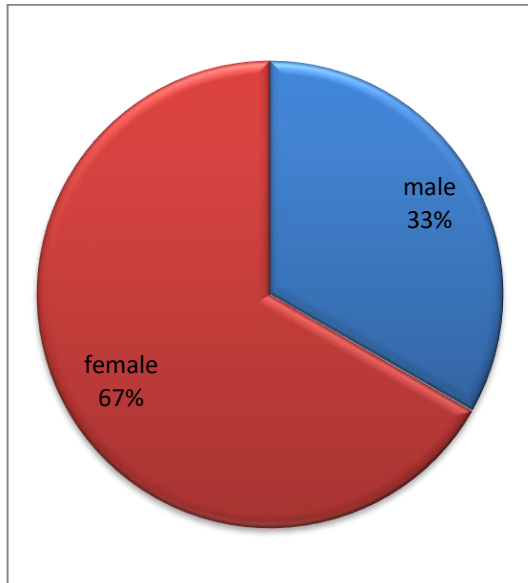
Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Filled in questionnaires	375	93.7
Unreturned	25	6.5

### 4.1 Gender of respondents

Results of the study on table 2 below show the gender of the respondents. Based on the study majority of respondents were female (67%) and fell between 30 and 40 years of age with males of 33%.

**Table 2** Gender of respondents

	Frequency	Percentage%	Cumulative percentage
Male	125	33	33
Female	250	67	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>90</b>

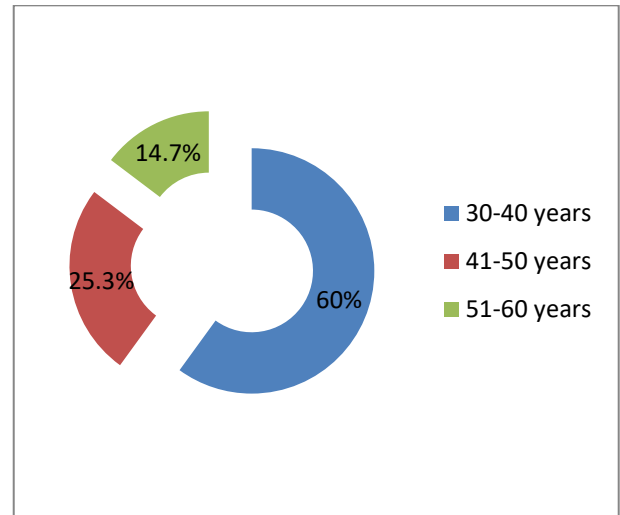


**Figure 1.** Gender of respondents

Majority of respondents were female and the sharp gender difference among the managers of local NGOs engaged in this study reflects the gender landscape within the working class in Ghana (Awumbila, 2006). Generally, more women are found in managerial positions in Ghana’s NGOs than men. With regards to their level of education, it is clear that most of these Organizations have educated and efficient employees

**4.2 Age Category**

Figure 2 below provides the distribution of respondents’ ages. Out of the 375 participants, 225 (60%) were between the ages of 30-40 and it was highest of the age groups which ranged between 30years to 60 and above. This is followed by 41-35 representing 25.3% of total respondents, and lastly 51-60 years, representing 14.7 %. From the results can be seen that most people in the Organizations were young.



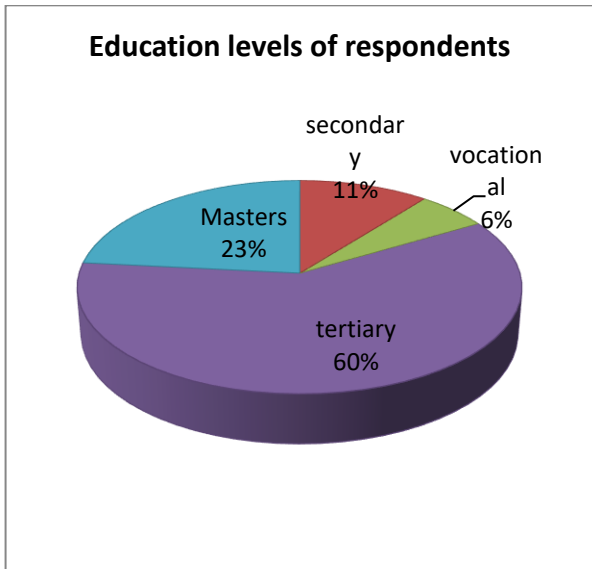
**Figure 2.** Age distribution of Respondents

**4.3 Education Level**

Table 2 Education level of respondents

Letter name	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary	40	11
Vocational	22	6
Tertiary	225	60
Masters	88	23

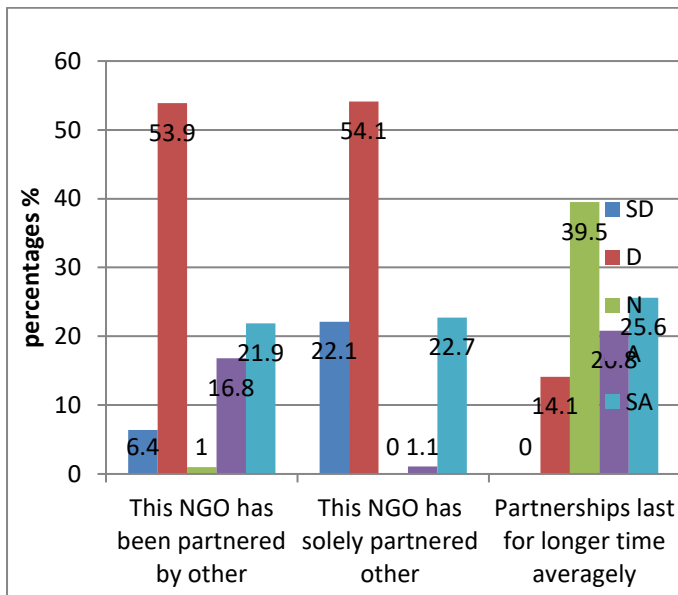
With respect to level of education, 40 (11%) had up to secondary school education, 22 (6%) had vocational training, 225 (60%) were university graduates with their first degree which was the highest and the remaining 88 (23.4%) have their master’s degree, the second largest of respondents.



**Figure 3.** Education level of respondents

#### 4.4 Partnerships and NGO Performance

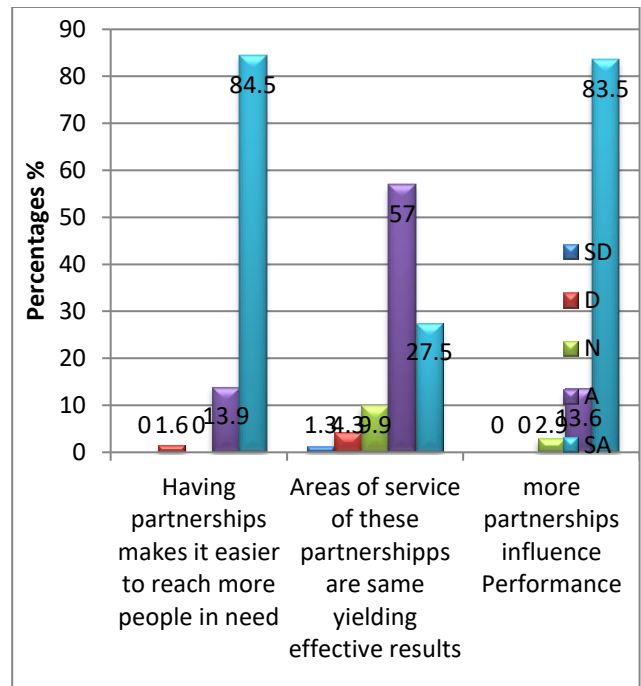
The respondents were asked to indicate whether they strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree or strongly agree to the statements in the questionnaire. Below is a descriptive evidence of their responses. The figures show the frequency percentages of the respondents' responses measuring partnerships and NGO performance.



**Figure 4.** Responses (a)

From their responses all 375 NGOs (100%) are absolutely sure they are a partnership potential for or to others, none disagreed to the statement. Even

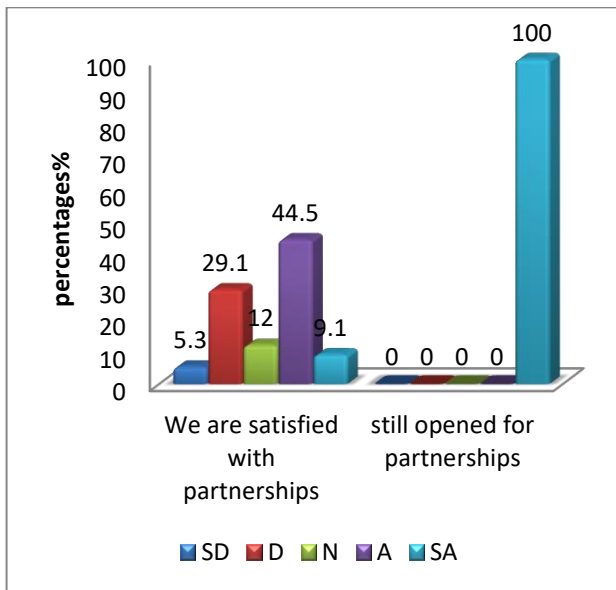
though they all strongly agreed to have partnership potentials, 53.9% disagreed to the statement “This NGO has been partnered by any institution”, 6.4% strongly disagreed, 1% was neutral in their response. 16.8% agreed and 21.9% strongly agreed.



**Figure 5.** Responses (b)

With the statement “The areas of service of such partnerships are the same which yields effective results’, 57% and 27.5% agreed and strongly agreed, giving a total of 84.5 % of positive response. Results also show a maximum of respondents (83.5%) of total respondents strongly agreed that partnerships influence performance, 13.6 %agreed and remaining 2.9% were neutral in their response. 84.5% also strongly agreed to the assertion that having partnerships makes it easier to reach more people in need, 13.9% agreed and remaining 1.6% disagreed





Similarly, on the statement of the NGO still available for partnerships, just as they all strongly agreed they potential partnership Organization, all 375, presenting 100% of total respondents again strongly agreed to this statement.

Partnership potential was found to have a significant influence on the performance of local health service delivery NGOs. From multiple regression results, 34.9% increase in NGO performance was possible with a unit improvement in their partnership potential. The relevance of partnership potential cannot be overemphasized because it is a key means of leveraging one's resources and strengths and covering up weaknesses with the strengths of others (Besley & Ghatak, 2017).

Public private partnerships have been the subject matter in the development sector for the past two decades now and it is one of the means by which NGOs are administered in the midst of scarce resources (Anagal, 2014; Citrin et al., 2018)

## V. CONCLUSIONS

Local NGOs functioning in the health sector in Ghana were assessed in this study. Their current status and challenges were investigated and how these influenced their potential for partnerships and

sustained operation were ascertained. The potential of health service delivery NGOs in Ghana to partner with other organizations was found to positively influence their performances and that to a larger extent, the performance enhancement was higher when at the same time, and NGOs ensured that their entities were officially registered or authenticated by government.

### 5.1 Building blocks of the NGO's health system.

It's important to recognize the importance and role of NGOs in the health sector. About 206 public private service organizations and 600 NGOs are engaged in health services provision. For a long time, the international and local NGOs have endeavored to fill the gaps that have been oft-cited for the public sector. These are mainly the lack of physical, financial, social and geographical access to the health care facilities, poor distribution of resources among various regions of the country, unavailability of health care partners, poor quality of services at government health facilities and most importantly legitimization issues. Working with NGOs besides offering financial benefits, represents a more attractive incentive which is the transfer of technical knowledge between partners. More so, health planning becomes far more participatory and consultative, with the inputs of all partners (Iram, 2017) Most of the respondents from the government sector and the donor community emphasized the importance of NGOs at macro and micro levels of the health systems giving a boost to the public sector while collaborating with various government departments.

### 5.2 Outcome of partnership projects

A remarkable escalation in the functioning of the NGOs has led to a large number of diverse projects and approaches. The NGOs have supplemented the government's efforts in monitoring the activities of many vertical programs There are already many successful public health programs implemented in

collaboration with the NGOs including National Action Plan for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases and health promotion (in collaboration with Heart file, a non-governmental think tank) and the Leprosy Control Program (in collaboration with the Marie-Adelaide Leprosy Society). The tremendous success in these ventures is attributed to the fact that NGOs are able to make use of partnerships (especially health care providers) to execute ideal projects serving one limited population in a specified geographic area, at a time. (Nishtar S, 2010) This therefore explains the hypothesis that Partnership Potential has an influence on Performance.

Along with Education and nutrition, Health is considered to be “one of the key elements of the human capital stock” and the public health system is complemented by private and NGO clinics. But despite recent progress in the delivery of health services the country “is not on track to achieve MDGs 4 and 5” because of “increasing pressure” due to “problems” of legitimization. Yves Bennett, (2017) explains that even though progress is being recorded, the issue of authenticity is always brought out.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends that health service delivery NGOs in Ghana take the first steps of enhancing their authenticity through legal registration of their entities to boost their credibility, which in turn will boost their performance in pursuance of living to their image.

Sufficient funding and efficacious technology must be provided by government, or in any case, government should partner and support both the local and international NGOs in the execution of such related projects. This is an essential condition for achieving quality health service delivery systems in Ghana. It is important for the Ghanaian government to know that the only level at which the health system improves

lives is when effective and efficient service delivery meets the opportunity to realize quality health gains in a manner that is accessible to all. It must also be considered that an effective health service–delivery performance must allow for organizational strengthening, adaptation and improvement for future needs and challenges. NGOs and government organizations should make more efforts to bring together financial, physical, and human resources to provide quality and sustainable health services.

In the current period of significant economic, environmental and fiscal stress on governments in developing nations, and for that matter, Ghana, improving the performance of health service delivery systems is important for making and sustaining progress, especially as resources become more and more scarce.

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