

2017

# Managing Humanitarian Relief Organizations with Limited Resources in Ghana

Eric Osei  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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2017

Abstract

Managing Humanitarian Relief Organizations with Limited Resources in Ghana

by

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MS, University of Maryland College Park, 2011

BA, Saint Leo University. 2006

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

August 2017

## Abstract

During disaster operations in Ghana in 2015, as a result of flood and fire, there was evidence of poor coordination between the workers and victims of the NGO, as well as inappropriate use of funds, which consequently caused compounding problems for disaster victims especially the outbreak of diseases. Little, however, is known about what conditions precipitated these events that may have delayed humanitarian, non-governmental organizations' (NGOs) ability to engage in disaster relief to victims. Using Freeman's stakeholder theory as the foundation, the purpose of this case study of the 2015 fire/flood disaster in Ghana was to understand from the perspective NGOs what events and conditions may have contributed to lack of coordination and inefficient practices. Data were collected from 13 executive directors, employees, and volunteers of the NGO through personal interviews. Interview data were deductively coded and subjected to a thematic analysis procedure. Findings revealed that participants perceived that the NGO provided financial accountability to donors, but not to disaster victims, nor were victims involved in the NGO's operations. The study's findings have implications for how future researchers in related disasters may approach studies in disaster management by including the perspectives of both NGO and victims in humanitarian aid operations. Implications for social change include recommendations to NGO management to develop and engage in accountability practices to ensure financial accountability to all stakeholders as well as active involvement of the disaster victims.

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## Dedication

This is dedicated to my step-father of blessed memory, Mr. Lawrence Kwarteng (Taylor Nkrumah), and my mother, Elizabeth Ama Anane, for their support, prayers and selfless sacrifice in helping me attain this height.

## Acknowledgments

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

Raising adequate funding for nonprofit humanitarian organizations can be a daunting task that many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) seem to accomplish with some degree of success. An NGO can be defined as any nonprofit or voluntary citizens' group that operates at local, national, or international levels. NGOs perform a variety of services or humanitarian functions that bring citizens' concerns to governments, encourage political participation, and monitor policies at community level. They provide services and goods that serve a public purpose (O'Dwyer & Unerman, 2005). Parker (2003) defined three types of NGOs: operational, hybrid, and advocacy. The focus of operational NGOs is to provide humanitarian aid based on the principles of independence, neutrality, and morality. Donors are demanding high performance outcomes in return for their financial investments. Nevertheless, when a disaster shakes the society, donors are likely to donate money to alleviate suffering.

Given the number of issues that NGOs confront, they must maintain consistent access to funds so that they can adequately respond to current and anticipated future needs. However, financial resources are not the only requirement for success in achieving desired objectives. In order for NGOs to accomplish their objectives or missions, they must have reasonable costs, the right processes, and the right people in the right places (Tierney & Fleishman, 2011). Inefficiency, diversion of resources, misappropriation, and unnecessary expenses can limit the impact of NGOs in providing humanitarian assistance (Tierney & Fleishman, 2011).

In light of the emerging issues associated with accountability for donor's funds, it is vital to investigate management challenges that NGOs experience in managing limited financial resources. Resources, by their nature, are often scarce, even for corporate organizations, and projects may have to compete for them. The purpose of this study was to explore the proper use of donor funds in NGOs through the management of humanitarian operations. A study of this nature may provide insights into the financial challenges encountered by NGOs, and whether they are genuine or a consequence of inefficiency. Chapter 1 includes background information on the literature relevant to the study and also provides a summary of the theoretical framework.

### **Background of the Problem**

A more rigorous legal framework is required at both international and national levels to hold NGOs accountable. Although NGOs do not seek to cause harm in their endeavors, damage does sometimes occur in the course of undertaking their duties. The issue of accountability is often viewed in terms of how NGOs report to donors and the countries from which they operate (Tierney & Fleishman, 2011). As long as the NGOs can prepare their budgets and adhere to the requirements of donors, they are assumed to have met the requisite accountability requirements. Once NGOs comply with statutory requirements within their home countries, they are considered to have met the required legal requirements. However, most humanitarian interventions are usually done on an international level. Most often the humanitarian interventions are far from the countries in which the NGOs have sought registrations or statutory compliance (Tierney & Fleishman, 2011). For instance, an NGO may be registered in the United States but

operates in Haiti or Ghana. Such an NGO might only be compliant with the U.S. statutory requirements but not the country in which it operates.

There have been efforts by stakeholders to hold NGOs accountable at the international level through peer mechanisms, which revolve around agreements, commitments, and guidance on the operational procedures. However, in some cases, NGOs feel less obligated to follow these rules, thereby rendering them ineffective. In other cases, the regulations fail due to the complexity of the nature of work that NGOs undertake (HAP, 2007). Because the nature of work undertaken by NGOs may be difficult to evaluate, there are difficulties in assessing the work of NGOs. Furthermore, evaluations or accountability audits are usually initiated by donors who have their own interests to safeguard.

When humanitarian interventions go wrong, people's lives are affected even though the NGOs may have met their donors' requirements through their books of accounts. The NGOs may have accounted for the allocated money. The humanitarian intervention in Haiti earthquake disaster is often cited as an example that had mixed outcomes to the disaster victims (Lieberman, 2011). The responding NGOs have been under criticism because, despite the goodwill from donors who donated millions of dollars towards humanitarian assistance, little has been done to ensure access to clean drinking water and food for the victims, further transformation of temporary shelters to permanent homes, and provide sanitation services (Ramachandran & Walz, 2013). Additionally, the humanitarian interventions have been accused of triggering the cholera outbreak and crippling the country's rice farming industry through the importation of free

rice (Lieberman, 2011). Some of the funds used to fund some relief operations in Ghana. Many NGOs received funds to finance their relief operations. Most of the relief funds were given to NGOs because the government received a small portion of the funds.

Although there are projects that acknowledge the rights of humanitarian aid beneficiaries such as the Sphere Project, there is no mechanism to ensure that the sphere project requirements are observed. There is also no framework through which affected communities can hold relief agencies to account. Further, some of the NGOs may lack the capacity to ensure efficiency and accountability of their operations. Such NGOs need to have internal mechanisms that can guarantee transparency, efficiency, and accountability to their beneficiaries. There is a need to allow independent scrutiny of all of the details of the internal workings of humanitarian projects and programs by stakeholders (Tierney & Fleishman, 2011). Donors use their influence to ensure that NGOs comply with their requirements while governments use statutory rules to ensure compliance with the law. However, there are significant gaps on how NGOs account to disaster victims and the recourse those victims have in holding the NGOs to account.

In business organizations, a customer can influence the behavior of business organizations through personal choices. As a result, the private sector owes its survival to customers and must ensure that their preferences are met (Olugbenga, 2012). Conversely, beneficiaries of humanitarian operations, who are the affected communities of a disaster, are often treated as spectators on issues that impact their lives (Tierney & Fleishman, 2011). The purpose of this study was to explore the the practices or strategies that NGOs employ to ensure accountability, transparency, and accountability to the intended



beneficiaries of humanitarian operations. In this research study, the beneficiaries signify the communities affected by disaster, meaning the disaster victims.

### **Ghana Flood and Fire Disaster 2015**

The Republic of Ghana (Ghana) is located in West Africa along the Gulf of Guinea and Atlantic Ocean. Since gaining independence in 1957, Ghana has not upgraded the colonial drainage system that currently serves only 15% of its capital city, Accra, leaving the city vulnerably exposed to flooding. Additionally, open gutters, a rising population, and an expansion of informal settlement has increased the impact of floods (Rain, Engstrom, Ludlow, & Antos, 2011). The increased risk of flooding is documented in the country's flood disaster profile, which shows between 1968 and 2015, the country has witnessed 26 flood disasters, each ending in human deaths, destruction of property, and displacement of population (GhanaWeb, 2015). However, the 2015 flood and fire disaster was among the worst in recent history (BBC News, 2015). According to Reliefweb (2015), torrential rains in Accra resulted in flooding. Floodwater seeped into an underground petrol storage tank at a gas station, which spread the petrol to nearby houses before exploding into a storm of fire. The flood and fire claimed over 200 lives, displaced about 46,370 people, and caused massive loss of property and livelihood (Reliefweb, 2015). Infrastructural problems and more heavy rains in the next few days caused a humanitarian crisis. The government, together with several NGOs, responded to save lives and property and alleviate human suffering.

### **Problem Statement**

Humanitarian relief organizations have often come to the aid of suffering communities and nations around the globe. During disaster operations in Ghana in 2015, as a result of flood and fire, there was evidence of poor coordination between the workers and victims of the NGO, as well as inappropriate use of funds, which consequently caused compounding problems for disaster victims especially the outbreak of diseases. Little, however is known about what conditions precipitated these events that may have delayed humanitarian, non-governmental organizations' (NGOs) ability to engage in disaster relief to victims. There has been an inherent demand for their selfless and noble services in situations where disaster has destroyed most amenities such that basic needs can no longer be met. However, according to Herman (2011), responding NGOs have been challenged with not having the adequate capacity to deal with calls for aid effectively. Spice (2013) explained that the ability of these institutions to assess the scope of the needed immediate disaster relief has been inefficient and ineffective. Consequently, disaster interventions often cause additional problems for disaster victims, especially the outbreak of diseases and the crippling of local farming. There may be weaknesses in the strategies, policies, and practices that relief organizations employ in response to disaster operations. It is important to investigate and highlight these weaknesses so that future relief operations can avoid them.

There is limited research on the inadequacies of humanitarian relief. It is, therefore, important to assess the ramifications of such challenges in order to find solutions to the mishaps of humanitarian operations and their adverse effects on

contemporary society (Litchfield, 2014). The purpose of this qualitative case study was us to use the stakeholder theory to explore the issue of management processes, transparency, and outcomes in humanitarian interventions.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Reasonable costs, business processes, and management systems are critical to the success of humanitarian operations. Inefficiency, misappropriation, diversion of resources, and unnecessary expenses can limit the effectiveness of a humanitarian intervention (Tierney & Fleishman, 2011). The purpose of this research was to explore potential factors that may produce inefficient practices, poor coordination, and inappropriate use of funds that can affect the ability of NGOs to deliver emergency services. In this regard, the management systems used by NGOs are critical. I attempted to address the emerging concerns about the preparedness and capacity of NGOs to tackle relief challenges using available resources. I also addressed the issue of accountability to the disaster victims, the impact of humanitarian aid, and the proper use of donor funds. Because unlimited needs are competing with limited resources, la ack of funds can limit the quality and quantity of work that NGOs undertake (Zakaria, 2011). For that reason, I examined the practices, policies, and strategies of humanitarian operations using the stakeholder theory.

### **Research Questions**

The main research question is the following:

1. What experiences did humanitarian relief nonprofit organization leaders have in coordinating and managing humanitarian assistance operations in the 2015 flood and fire disaster in Ghana?

Subquestions follow:

SQn 1: What are some of the management systems that were used in the humanitarian operations?

SQn 2: What are some of the accountability practices that the NGO used in the humanitarian assistance operations?

SQn 3: In what ways, if any, did the relief organization involve stakeholders, particularly the disaster victims in their operations?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Modern management demands that organizations look beyond outputs and activities to focus on actual results. It is important to define expected results, collect information so as to assess progress, and take timely corrective action in order to maximize positive impact. In this study, I used the stakeholder management approach in managing NGOs to address the interests of all the stakeholders of an organization. The stakeholder theory was first developed by Freeman. Freeman (as cited in Kouwenhoven, 2009) defined stakeholders as those entities without whose support an organization can cease to exist. According to Freeman, stakeholders are groups or individuals who are harmed by or benefit from an organization, and whose actions are either violated or respected by corporate actions. Managers need to understand the expectations of stakeholders in order to formulate strategies that can ensure

organizational survival or competitiveness (Kouwenhoven, 2009). Stakeholders are entities that lay a claim on the firm. Stakeholders have a right to make demands from the management. They also require some form of resolution when their stakes conflict.

Freeman (as cited in Kouwenhoven, 2009)) argued that business problems could be resolved by targeting individual relationships. Furthermore, Freeman argued that there is a need for an understanding of stakeholders and the realization that they must participate in the decision making of an organization. The stakeholder management seeks to create value for each entity that lays claim on an organization. Freeman also advocated for a stakeholder board of directors comprising of customers, employees, suppliers, and members of the local community. Nevertheless, Freeman (as cited in Kouwenhoven, 2009).was mainly concerned with the economic aspects of the theory

There are three key perspectives of the stakeholder theory: how organizations influence stakeholders, how stakeholder influence businesses, and how stakeholders interact (author, year). NGOs have a diverse group of stakeholders that makes it difficult to identify strategic issues. Some categories of primary stakeholders include donors, governments, disaster victims, and suppliers. Consequently, responding to the stakeholders is a challenge for many NGOs.

This research contributes to the body of literature about the management of NGOs and how they respond to their various stakeholders. I proposed the use of the stakeholder management for the management of humanitarian operations. In addition to this, I highlighted the difficulties that NGOs experience in balancing stakeholder interests and the accountability of NGOs, particularly to humanitarian beneficiaries or disaster victims.

The outcome of this research could be beneficial to various NGO stakeholders such as employees, NGO beneficiaries, governments, donors, and managers of NGOs because it will highlight prudent management practices.

Leniency in accountability among humanitarian relief organizations leads to a significant lack of focus and effective strategy or misuse of funds in dispensing the functions of a humanitarian relief organization. This has been blamed on insufficient funding, but there are other factors, such as the culture of the organization, that need to be assessed. I addressed these factors to understand the perceived slow response by these organizations to catastrophic loss of lives in humanitarian disasters.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Actors:* Relief agencies or nongovernmental organizations.

*Advocacy:* Advocacy refers to efforts to promote respect for humanitarian principles by influencing the decisions of relevant authorities and other nonstate actors (ReliefWeb Project, 2008).

*Beneficiary:* The disaster victims or the communities that benefit from humanitarian assistance.

*Calamity:* A calamity is a great and sudden event that can cause damage or distress.

*Capacity:* Capacity refers to all of the combined resources and strengths that are available within a community, a society, or an organization and which helps to reduce the level of risks or effects of a disaster. It may include institutional abilities, physical means,

societal infrastructure, human skills, and leadership or management abilities (ReliefWeb Project, 2008).

*Conflict:* A conflict is a situation where two or more parties differ in their values, interests, goals, or the means of achieving their objectives (ReliefWeb Project, 2008).

*Disaster:* A disaster is a sudden accident or catastrophe that can cause loss of life or damage. A natural disaster is also defined as the consequences triggered by natural hazards that affect the social and economic development of a community or a region. Earthquakes are good examples of natural disasters. A disaster destroys physical infrastructure as well as social and political institutions. Furthermore, it weakens the ability of a society to manage grievances, risks, and political change (Ferris, 2010).

*Earthquake:* Earthquake is the trembling or shaking of the earth whose origin is volcanic or tectonic that can destroy properties and physical infrastructure (ReliefWeb Project, 2008).

*Humanitarian:* Humanitarian implies seeking to promote human welfare, while a donor means a person or institution that offers financial or material assistance (Stevenson, 2010). Strategies have been used to mean plans to achieve certain goals or objectives (Stevenson, 2010).

*Humanitarian assistance:* Humanitarian assistance involves aid or assistance that is used to save lives or alleviate suffering of a crisis affecting a population. It must be provided on the principles of humanity, neutrality, and impartiality (ReliefWeb Project, 2008).

*Humanitarian operations:* Humanitarian operations are activities conducted for the purpose of relieving human suffering, particularly in situations where the responsible authorities are unable or unwilling to act effectively (ReliefWeb Project, 2008).

*Nonprofit (NPO) and nongovernmental organization (NGO):* These terms are used interchangeably throughout the dissertation. NFP signifies nonprofit while NGO is an acronym for nongovernmental organizations.

*Policy:* A policy is a procedure or protocol that can guide organizational behavior or operations (Stevenson, 2010).

*Relief:* Relief refers to the assistance that is offered after or during a disaster to help meet basic subsistence needs. It can be for emergency or long-term purposes. (ReliefWeb Project, 2008).

### **Nature of Study**

The study incorporated a qualitative approach. The use of qualitative techniques, such as semistructured interviews with disaster relief organization leaders, employees, and volunteers to investigate the challenges they face with regard to disaster preparedness and insufficient funding, enabled me to achieve the main objective of the study. It included the use of interviews conducted with the assistance of humanitarian relief organizations' leadership, members of staff, and volunteers. The sampling techniques and the method of interviewing participants included recorded interviews. The records were used to verify their responses before the data were analyzed.



### **Assumptions**

It was assumed that I interpreted the interviews without bias. Furthermore, because humans have innate biases that might manifest in the research, I had themes peer-reviewed by the research supervisor in order to eliminate or minimize the level of bias. Additionally, not all NGOs who participated in the humanitarian assistance were contacted, and they may, therefore, not have been representatives of all nonprofit organizations involved in humanitarian assistance.

There was no mechanism for verifying the accounts of the interviewees. I assumed that they would tell the truth and answer the questions with honesty. Also, people may not have answers to some of the questions, and some may give misleading information in order to protect their image or organization. These are a few examples are some of the limitations and assumptions that can affect the quality of the research, and therefore, must be brought into consideration. Also, the choices of the persons to be interviewed in various NGOs are regulated by the individual NGOs' code of operation. Most NGOs have designated spokespersons to respond to queries about their operations. In some cases, the chief executive officer is the only person allowed to speak on behalf of the organization. It is possible that such a person may give the true account of experiences of all the NGO's employees. It is also possible that they may not represent the feelings and experiences of the NGOs they represent.

### **Limitations**

In research studies of any nature, it is possible that the person being interviewed is influenced by the interviewer, which is a limitation (Hammersley, 2003). The

interviewees may also have emotional positions about the topic and may try to influence the discussions towards their positions. They may also want to portray themselves positively or defend their organizations. In cases where questionnaires are used, the body language and posture of the subject cannot be assessed. Most qualitative researchers assume that the interviewees would be knowledgeable about the topic, be honest and tell the truth, and be representative of the population under study. The reality, however, is that some interviewees might be dishonest or try to protect the image of their organizations (Hammersley, 2003). The other limitation might be the applicability of the findings to other disasters. Although there are likely to be many similarities, I acknowledge that each relief effort might be different given the different cultures and NGOs involved.

### **Significance**

The need to address the impact of limited resources on management in nonprofit relief organizations is paramount due to the increasing challenge of natural calamities and human-made disasters. Calamities such as the Nepal earthquake in 2015, the 2015 Ghana flood and fire disaster, and the 2010 Haitian earthquake disaster have continued to cause suffering for many people. This includes loss of lives and destruction of property. Issues to with food shortage in the developing world, mother and child mortality, and diseases have continued to happen in many parts of the world. Humanitarian relief organizations and well-wishers have continued to come to the aid of the affected parties in these calamities. Funding is, however, an issue. It is critical that even with the limited funds available, these organizations pull their resources together towards maximizing their

contributions to disaster recovery. They need prudent management and operational skills in order to realize their objective. Most importantly, they need to account to those they seek to help by being responsive to their needs. I examined the effectiveness of humanitarian operations in providing humanitarian assistance. I approached the issue of accountability to disaster victims from the perspective of management challenges and the strategies employed in providing humanitarian assistance.

### **Scope of the Study**

A large sample size may make the research difficult and costly to execute. Conversely, a sample size that is too small may fail to answer the research question. Several NGOs participated in the Ghana flood and fire disaster but I identified one NGO and used it as a case study. I interviewed as many individuals as required to reach theoretical saturation. Baker and Edwards (2012) studied a corpus of transcripts from interviewing women revealed that it took 12 interviews to reach saturation. The outcome was, however, attributed to the fact that the sample was homogeneous (Baker & Edwards, 2012). For that reason, I expected it would take a minimum of 12 interviews to reach such saturation, but I interviewed 13 persons.

The scope of the research consisted of an NGO that participated in humanitarian relief efforts in order to learn how they balanced the desires of multiple stakeholders including relief workers, donors, governments, beneficiaries, and media representatives who reported on the Ghana flood and fire disaster. I focused on the 2015 Ghana flood and fire disaster and how NGOs responded to the disaster. I examined the strategies, practices, and policies that the NGOs employed in order to achieve their intended

objective of assisting disaster victims. Furthermore, I examined whether all the stakeholders were involved in their operations, particularly disaster victims. I concentrated on the provision of humanitarian aid to the disaster victims. The participants of the study only included those NGOs who were involved in the provision or distribution of humanitarian aid.

### **Summary**

The chapter provided an introduction to the research study. Raising funds for nonprofit humanitarian organizations is a daunting task, but many NGOs are equal to that task. Many donors are, however, increasingly demanding performance outcomes in return for their financial investments. There are emerging issues associated with accountability and weaknesses in the management of NGO's operations. Inefficiency, diversion of resources, misappropriation, conflicting interests, and lack of effective strategies limit the impact of NGOs in providing humanitarian assistance. Although there is an inherent demand for NGOs' services, they have capacity challenges in providing aid efficiently.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges associated with efficiency and accountability of the beneficiaries of NGO's humanitarian assistance. I addressed the emerging concerns about the preparedness and capacity of NGOs to tackle relief challenges with limited resources. I used the stakeholder theory in managing nonprofit organizations to conceptualize accountability and performance in NGO humanitarian operations.

Chapter 2 will provide an in-depth review of past studies and reports related to the topic. It will include efforts to coordinate NGO operations and develop standards that can

guide accountability. I will also examine management strategies of NGOs towards ensuring efficiency, transparency, coordination, and performance management. I will also review various interests that influence NGOs' operations and accountability with particular focus on Ghana, and provide a theoretical framework of the study. I will examine the application of the stakeholder theory to the NFP sector by reviewing past studies and illustrating how NGOs can account to different stakeholders. I will also discuss the multiplicity of stakeholders in the sector that require balancing of their requirements and influences.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

NGOs can be subcategorized into operational, hybrid, and advocacy in terms of their primary function. Operational NGOs focus on providing goods and services to individuals, particularly in disasters. An example of an operational NGO is the Red Cross, which delivers disaster aid across the world. Advocacy NGOs are concerned with making institutional change by ensuring the change of laws and regulations. Human rights NGOs are a good example of advocacy NGOs because they identify and substantiate abuses. They also seek remedy for the victims by relying on soft power such as public exposure. The hybrid NGOs, on the other hand, are involved in both the provision of aid and advocacy programs. Such NGOs integrate operational and advocacy functions and, for that reason, are called hybrid organization (Hiller & Hiller, 2014). NGOs can also be viewed as international or national in operation depending on the scope. In this study, I focused on operational and hybrid NGOs because they were involved in the distribution of aid in Ghana.

Humanitarian relief NGOs are private organizations that engage in humanitarian or cooperative activities, such as attempting to relieve suffering, promoting the interests of the poor, providing basic social services, protecting the environment, or undertaking community development. They are not business organizations interested in making profits (Werker & Ahmed, 2007). Humanitarian aid or assistance is provided for the purposes of alleviating suffering, saving lives, and maintaining human dignity (author, year). Aid is important for providing assistance in the aftermath of a natural or human-

made disaster, but can also be used to prevent and prepare for such disasters.

Humanitarian assistance is usually based on four key principles that include humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. Independence of humanitarian assistance means that it is autonomous from economic, political, and military or any other objective that any actor may harbor in regards to the intended beneficiaries (Devinit.org, 2015).

Economic influence can occur if donors or NGOs have economic interests, such as selling the products of their home countries. Political influence may be perpetuated by states due to political interests in the crisis. On the other hand, military influence may occur in disasters that are a consequence of civil war.

The number of NGOs is increasing at a higher rate, and particularly in the aftermath of a major disaster, new NGOs often spring up. The increase may be fueled by the desire to help victims of disasters. They are usually described in glowing tributes because of their efforts to alleviate suffering. Their efforts, nonetheless, demonstrate corresponding weaknesses in decision-making, agenda-setting, and resource allocation . The weaknesses seem to reoccur partly because NGOs provide services and goods to a target group that provides little feedback on the quality of products and services they receive. Unlike in the market or political setting, humanitarian aid beneficiaries lack the ability to reward or penalize NGOs for their services. A customer can refuse to purchase a substandard product, but victims of disasters have no such options. Instead, they have to accept any form of assistance extended to them. Consequently, NGOs have more incentives to satisfy donors than the beneficiaries (Zakaria, 2011).

Although there are significant differences in NGOs, the lack of funds limits the quantity and quality of the work that any NGO can undertake (Zakaria, 2011). Some NGOs complain that donations are often inadequate to run existing programs, let alone to expand them. Consequently, managers of NGOs must pay attention to using funds as they do to finding funds (Peterson, 2010). In order for NGOs to raise funds, they have to invest in media relations, contact donors, and conduct mobilization campaigns through schools or churches so as to convince donors that money is being well spent (Werker & Ahmed, 2007). Dependence on donations and grants means that most NGOs have no liberty to choose the activities they wish to undertake. Most donors have their agenda, interests, and opinions on how intervention strategies should be designed. As a result, managers of NGOs are compelled to follow the money and allow donors to dictate the scope or direction of their activities (Peterson, 2010).

According to Brown and Hale (2014), there is an inherent concern to address social and political challenges in nonprofit organizations. A number of nongovernmental organizations operate based on the availability more than the accountability of funds. There is a need to address the concern over the use of funds as it is a contributor to improved funding for these institutions. Mccaffery (2006) stated that there is a need to ensure that these organizations are able to meet their mandate and contributions to society. NGOs have to ensure that they use funds properly because most of it is regarded as public funds. Spice (2013) argued that the apparent lack of preparedness by nonprofit organizations to considerably minimize loss of lives is a matter of lack of accountability and improper structures of governance.



Humanitarian action often undermines the capacity of disaster victims to remain resilient without donor support. Some NGOs do not build the capacity of households or communities to withstand shocks of disaster victims without future humanitarian intervention (Scott, 2014). It is important to delve into the issue of management in nonprofit organizations where poor funding becomes an issue when disaster strikes.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

In the literature research strategy, I used key terms relating to the topic under study as well as concepts and theories that expound on the study. The key terms that were relevant to the topic included *accountability in the NFP sector, the performance of NGOs, the impact of limited resources on humanitarian assistance, NGO operation management, and disaster preparedness, and response mechanisms*. I conducted a search on the EBSCO's MegaFile database on the accountability of NGOs and the efficiency of humanitarian operations. The search yielded about 200 results out of the over 480 results which were narrowed down to peer-reviewed articles. I further scaled it down by targeting only those articles that were available in full text. The final search consisted of 120 articles. I started by reading the abstracts in order to select the articles with relevant information on my area of study. Based on the information in the abstract, I was able to identify about 60 articles that had relevant information on the topic of study. I checked for key themes in the literature as I read through them. Finally, I read through the body of literature to identify the key arguments and propositions.

The results obtained from the queries provided the basis for further research. After relevant articles had been identified, they provided additional references on the

topic. It is from the initial search outcomes that the theories that explain accountability and management styles in NGOs were identified. Further research was later done on key concepts about the topic of study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this research was focused on the effectiveness of NGOs in delivering humanitarian assistance to the needy and how NGOs coordinate their operations in order. The stakeholder theory has been used to understand the impact and management of providing humanitarian assistance (author, year). It provides insights into the issues of accountability, coordination, and performance that affect the provision of humanitarian assistance. Additionally, it lays a foundation on how NGOs can ensure accountability, transparency, proper coordination, and performance management in their operations. The theory is suitable for conceptualizing accountability, performance, and the efficiency of relief organizations.

According to Chu (2015), the stakeholder theory is based on three perspectives: descriptive, normative and instrumental. The descriptive perspective is focused on the management perceptions of strategies to certain stakeholders. According to the descriptive perspective, an organization as a constellation of competitive and cooperative interests that possess intrinsic value. The perspective is concerned with how directors and managers of the organization perceive the interests of its constituencies (Susnienė & Sargūnas, 2011). According to the normative view, stakeholder management involves organizational strategies and an emphasis on ethics. The perspective provides guidelines for the behavior of those involved in the operation of an organization, particularly the

management. It assumes that all stakeholders have legitimate interests that have intrinsic value and merits consideration. None of the interests should receive undue advantage because it helps to further the interests of some other group. Instead, the interests should receive managerial attention and recognition as a matter of right (Susnienė & Sargūnas, 2011). Finally, in the instrumental view, stakeholders are groups or persons that have rights or interest in an organization. The instrumental perspective is used to explain the relationships between an organization and its various stakeholders. It outlines what needs to be done to achieve organizational goals (Susnienė & Sargūnas, 2011). Organizations have limited resources and tend to favor stakeholders who impact on their financial resources. Efforts are targeted at maintaining the relationship with powerful stakeholders (Chu, 2015).

Consequently, beneficiaries are sometimes overlooked in the practice of NGO accountability. According to Assad and Goddard (2010), beneficiaries are viewed as customers without purchasing power because they do not pay for what they receive. However, effective program outcome, which is manifested through the impact on beneficiaries, is central to the survival of NGOs because it can sustain support from other stakeholders, particularly donors.

The normative definition of stakeholders categorizes beneficiaries as stakeholders in humanitarian operations because they have valid normative claims on the NGOs. Stakeholders are viewed as groups or individuals that can be affected by an organization's objectives. The, government, NGOs, and NGO beneficiaries are, therefore,

the primary stakeholders of NGOs. These three categories of stakeholders are central to NGOs' survival (Chu, 2015).

The main issues that impact the behavior of NGOs are accountability, coordination, and performance. Stakeholders are persons or entities that have legitimate interests, claims, or rights in the operations of an organization. In the NFP sector, stakeholders include the donors, the beneficiaries, and the government as well as the society. The influence the various stakeholders have on any particular NGO varies. The strategy an NGO adopts depends on the extent to which the NGO depends on certain stakeholders for the organization. The level of dependence has an effect on the power relations between the organization and the stakeholders. The organization may tend to prioritize the needs of certain stakeholders over others due to those power relations (Olugbenga, 2012). Organizations' focus on stakeholders is on the power relationship between them. Some stakeholders have the power, which is either financial or regulatory, to impose their will on organizations. Donors have access to financial power while governments have access to regulatory power in the NFP sector. Therefore, it is possible that such power can be used to receive attention from NGOs (Chu, 2015).

In order to manage environmental and social issues, an organization has to adapt to stakeholder-oriented management, a management form in which an organization balances differences in stakeholder interests (Fontaine, Haarman, & Schmid, 2006). The stakeholder interests could range from labor conditions to social issues and environmental concerns. Because some stakeholder interests could be in conflict, managing stakeholders may entail managing potential conflict stemming from divergent

interests (Freeman, 1999). According to the stakeholder theory, NGOs must be accountable to the relevant stakeholders. Because NGOs require the support of all their stakeholders in order to succeed, they must account to all their stakeholder groups (Hoque & Parker, 2015). Financial reports and statements are the most accepted tools of accountability, and are often required by regulatory authorities and funding bodies. Providing such reports and statements is a way of accounting. Nevertheless, there are no adequate studies to identify the type of information NGOs report to their donors. In addition, there is no consultation with humanitarian aid beneficiaries to seek their perception of what constitutes quality reporting (Hoque & Parker, 2015).

Concerning performance, Leiter (2013) suggested that as far as organizational performance is concerned, NGOs have to prove their efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability in order to attract more funding from their donors. Their endeavors in attaining efficiency are in response to the expectation of their stakeholders, particularly the donors. In essence, NGOs adopt competitive processes, procedures, and strategies in order to compete for limited resources. The requirements and expectations of donors, as well as other stakeholders, constitute what efficiency is or effectiveness for most NGOs. The measures of performance tend to focus on the activities that the NGOs' objectives, mission, and goals specify, and which are influenced by the expectations of various external stakeholders (Turcker, 2015).

Sector-based differences influence the ways in which organizational performance in an NFP context can be defined and measured. The interests of various groups such as volunteers, donors, community members, victims of disasters, and government

authorities that pull in different directions complicate consensus building as to what constitutes performance in providing humanitarian assistance (Turcker, 2015). Although the donors have the right to demand accountability, the beneficiaries have no basis to demand accountability. Moreover, there is the involvement of numerous stakeholders with different interests. There is a multiplicity of interested groups known as stakeholders and, for that reason, there is a need to balance the requirements and influences from them (Olugbenga, 2012).

There were some challenges to NGO legitimacy to provide relief efforts for the Haitian earthquake. Such challenges included members of a U.S. Baptist church, who as members of an NGO New Life Children's Refuge (NLCR), were tried for kidnapping 33 Haitian children and trying to move them to an orphanage in the Dominican Republic (Balboa, 2015). After an earthquake hit Haiti, NLCR's founder and director, Laura Silsby, attempted to sneak orphaned children out of Haiti without the proper documentation from local authorities. Although the organization had noble intentions, it failed to involve or consult all the relevant stakeholders, particularly the Haitian authorities (Balboa, 2015). Such incidents have prompted calls for accountability of NGOs over the last decade.

NGO accountability is both important to internal and external users. It contributes to the effectiveness and legitimacy of their work. Consequently, the key values and operating principles of NGOs should include good governance and management practices as well as multistakeholder engagement. It must also promote and respect universal principles on human rights, multistakeholder engagement, effective programmes, independence, nondiscrimination, and transparency (O'Dwyer & Unerman, 2008).

In order to promote accountability, there is the need to dissect the various levels at which accountability is required and the methods that are used to operate in such areas. It is only then that the appropriate incentives and disincentives can be implemented. Increased visibility and criticism can sustain pressure on NGOs to be more accountable to its stakeholders. In addition, self-regulation is one means of promoting accountability. Lack of enforcement, however, makes it unrealistic because it is difficult for policies and procedures advocated by donors to promote accountability towards beneficiaries of NGOs.

According to O'Dwyer and Unerman (2008), accountability practices that favor a narrow range of stakeholders that are powerful is becoming common a practice. Further, accountability practices emphasize external and upward accountability to donors while external and upward accountability is sometimes ignored. Additionally, NGOs focus mainly on short-term accountability initiatives at the expense of long-term measures that have lasting political and social change (O'Dwyer & Unerman, 2008). Accountability is focused on donors or stakeholders who have economic influence over them, and not much focus was targeted towards stakeholders upon which the organization impacts. Furthermore, the accountability was financial and did not involve the NGO's objectives and purposes (O'Dwyer & Unerman, 2008).

About 20 years after the stakeholder theory was developed, the Global Accountability Project (GAP) defined stakeholder accountability as the right to hold an organization to account from both within and outside the organization (Jordan & Tuijl, 2012). GAP perceives accountability as being responsive to stakeholders and balancing

their demands with the organization's mission. GAP begins with stakeholder analysis and then incorporates stakeholder accountability in the organization's operations. GAP was initiated by the UK charity One World Trust after calls by the general public for increased downward accountability. The initiative promotes self-regulation by NGOs and downward accountability by encouraging participation of beneficiaries. It also examines the benefits associated with self-regulation, particularly collective initiatives that are aimed at increasing effectiveness and NGOs' activity. It provides an assessment of the accountability of organizations to those they serve based on four mechanisms namely, evaluation, participation, transparency, complaints, and response mechanism. The organizations are assessed on how accountability principles are integrated into the policies and management system of an organization (Boomsma & O'Dwyer, 2014).

As Balboa, (2015) noted, it is impossible to answer to a variety of stakeholders with conflicting demands if their requirements are not known. Thus, it is important to acknowledge their existence and identify their demands before addressing them. Applying the stakeholder theory to NGOs' accountability enables scholars to capture an accurate understanding of dynamic and complicated actors.

Because the main purpose of NGOs is to help the less fortunate, that is, an NGO's key beneficiaries an NGO must be accountable to them by implementing long-term and sustainable programs. Efforts of NGOs' accountability must focus on long-term impacts and how to fulfill the mission of an organization. Accountability should not be short-term or focused on controlling relationships. In addition, NGOs should evaluate their performance through participatory processes. Accommodating dissenting voices from the



beginning of a project can promote inclusivity and preempt stakeholder detour, which may enable NGOs to serve many people (Kouwenhoven, 2009).

### **Stakeholder Analysis**

The stakeholder theory postulates that the success of an organization depends on the relationship with its stakeholders, which may include employees, shareholders, financiers, and the community (Susnienė & Srgūnas, 2011). Thus, organizations must conduct a stakeholder analysis to ascertain their stakeholders. Stakeholder analysis can be defined as identifying the key actors and assessing their respective interests (Cbap, 2011). In resource management, stakeholder analysis is a response to problems associated with facing multiple and conflicting interests. Stakeholder analysis involves developing a list of specific groups that comprise stakeholders and a corresponding list of their interests. According to Freeman (as cited in Kouwenhoven, 2009.), in order to identify the stakeholders, an organization must investigate the existing and potential stakeholders, their interests or rights, how they affect the organization, the assumption of the existing strategy about the stakeholders, and how the organization relates with them.

Furthermore, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the stakeholder behavior, Kouwenhoven (2009) suggested the behavior of NGOs, their cooperative habits and competitive threats. The organizations must also scan the environment for similar actions, beliefs, interests and goals of stakeholder groups. Such an analysis can enable them to explain the behavior of certain stakeholders and initiate appropriate policies (Kouwenhoven, 2009).

According to Cbap (2011), there are several reasons for conducting a stakeholder analysis:

- To discover patterns of interaction among stakeholders.
- To improve interventions
- To improve policy formulation.
- To predict conflict.
- To identify issues that add value or contribute to organizational performances.
- To manage stakeholders and public relations.

Freeman (as cited in Fassin, 2009) was mainly concerned with stakeholders of economic value to an organization. The voluntary sector however requires a management style that is tailored to the sector and not a copy and paste from the private enterprise. NGOs have a wide range of stakeholders with whom they need to discuss their objectives. These stakeholders have their own objectives and interests. NGOs must also be accountable to a number of groups that have different information needs, priorities, objectives and definitions of success or legitimacy. Such stakeholders include board of trustees, donors, employees, partners, volunteers, target communities and external critics. Given the wide range of actors and the multiple accountability requirements that NGOs face, they must discuss objectives, interpretation of results and decisions on what response is appropriate for specific issues (Fassin, 2009). Furthermore, NGOs should also ask themselves who their customers (beneficiaries) are, and what they consider valuable. These questions could be answered by a stakeholder analysis.

It could also help NGOs decide on the focus group and identify the beneficiaries and their values. A stakeholder analysis can help them understand the complex environment in which they operate. It can also be used to formulate policies and improve their selection, efficiency, and effectiveness. Another role of stakeholder analysis is to identify relations between stakeholders for the purposes of project ownership, sponsorship and cooperation (Fassin, 2009). Stakeholder analysis may be used by NGOs for the analysis and formulation of policies, projects, and strategies, as well as the assessment of their impacts.

Additionally, stakeholder analysis can help NGOs understand their operating environment, gain and maintain legitimacy, analyze and formulate policies, projects and strategies as well as identify their beneficiaries and values or interests, which can form the basis of communication and relational management (Fassin, 2009). As a result, stakeholder analysis can be used as a basis of communication with a variety of stakeholders so as to develop and maintain relations with them.

Nevertheless, Fassin (2009) also argued that stakeholder analysis is unable to accurately describe the environment because the boundaries of NGOs are often unclear. For instance, NGOs justify their value to society through the fight against injustice, poverty, exclusion or degradation of natural resources. These roles are voluntary and self-chosen (Fassin, 2009).

### **Performance Management**

Although the topic of performance management has attracted ample interest, it has largely been in the context of business organizations. Research into management

control of NGOs is limited. Without feedback on actual performance, improvement is almost impossible (Ebrahim & Rangan, 2011). That NGOs manage a diverse portfolio of stakeholders who may have conflicting sets of objectives and goals bestows upon them the onus to accommodate those varied set of objectives and goals. Defining performance, given the range of objectives involved, requires a more advanced type of management control than is required in business organizations. Control management is a means of achieving enhanced performance and can only exist when knowledge of the outcome is available. Therefore, conceptualizing and improving organizational performance is a complex issue in NFP organizations. What might be considered as effective in one setting might turn out to be ineffective in another environment (Ebrahim & Rangan, 2011).

In 2011, the international aid that was channeled through NGOs reached US \$16.7 billion, while the cost of delivering relief to victims of disasters also continued to rise (IRIN, 2011). The implication is that NFP organizations continue to operate in a competitive environment where they have to compete for limited resources and thus require improvement of their effectiveness (Leiter, 2013).

There are limited resources and donors dictate the scope and manner in which humanitarian activities are conducted using those limited resources. A fundamental question arises: How effective NGOs are in discharging their mandate? Even though numerous actors arrive at the scene of a disaster to offer assistance, most of them may have no preplanned role. Operations are likely to be ineffectively coordinated by numerous groups and individuals who offer their services. The various actors operate independently and often have no interaction with each other. Coordination is critical to

avoid overlapping of efforts, confusion, and waste so as to ensure that the disaster victims receive maximum benefit. Past experiences with relief operations have demonstrated that relief agencies sometimes work at cross-purposes (Glasser, 2008). In some cases, such operations may even be harmful.

Although NGOs do well for society, the evaluation of their effectiveness has been patchy at best (Fassin, 2009). Whenever a disaster happens, NGOs are usually the first to respond, but there is minimal feedback on their efficiency in responding to such situations. Measurement of NGOs performance involves the impact and effectiveness of their actions. The implication is that they have no bottom line or absolute performance measures against which to compare their actions. The reason is that NGOs focus on qualitative rather than quantitative aspects such as empowerment. Several serious issues concern the measurement of NGOs' performance in humanitarian operations. Measuring their performance is vital in preventing past mistakes from being repeated and improving performance in future incidents (Glasser, 2008). One of the reasons for such scant evidence of NGOs' effectiveness is that there are few rules dictating how NGOs should operate; therefore, some of them are flexible in their policies. In turn, they might respond to disasters in an ad hoc manner, and flexibility has dire consequences as far as efficiency is concerned. At times an inexperienced NGO may try to handle an issue for which it lacks sufficient capacity. For instance, in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide that took place in April 1994, a number of small NGOs created camps in Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo to offer shelter to the refugees (Glasser, 2008). The camps were said to be too small compared to the magnitude of the conflict. The refugees

were more than the camps could accommodate, yet the small NGOs kept admitting refugees into the camps. The result was that some 50,000 refugees died from cholera. Thus, the efforts to provide relief were either redundant or ineffective as the NGOs were not communicating effectively (Glasser, 2008). Similarly, in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami that happened on December 24, 2004, there was confusion as many NGOs competed for resources, funding, and personnel (Ito, 2011). As a result, there was overlapping of services and disparities in providing assistance in places like Indonesia, where some regions were overserved compared to others. The outcome is that the relief operations might have been ineffective (Ito, 2011).

Such mistakes in disaster response operations show that disaster preparation and management are critical for NGO's effectiveness. Disaster preparation plans are intended to minimize damage to infrastructure and loss of life. They include organizing and facilitating timely and effective rescue for the disaster victims. Preparedness entails forecasting, warning, organizing, and managing disaster situations effectively (Ito, 2011).

The logistics alone constitutes a major component of NGOs' costs. Conservative estimates put such costs at about 80% of the funds required to undertake a disaster response (Balland, 2013). Consequently, logistical costs must be cut by ensuring efficiency in humanitarian operations. Humanitarian NGOs often find it difficult to coordinate their activities and thus fail to maximize their effectiveness. Poor coordination leads to increases in inventory costs and lengthens the delivery timelines, thus negatively impacting services to the humanitarian aid beneficiaries. The NGOs' supply chains can be affected by disruption or coordination failure. Thus, NGOs' must identify ways to

improve collaboration with service providers (Balland, 2013). Efficiency and effectiveness of relief operations can maintain or improve the quality, cost, and timely assistance offered to victims of disasters (Schulz & Blecken, 2010). Unless collaboration is fixed, the performance of NGOs might not be enhanced.

In recent times, there have been efforts to interlink the efforts of NGOs as well as develop standards that can be used to guide and make them accountable. For instance, some 400 hundred NGOs spread across 80 countries partnered with the UN to develop an international handbook of standards that outlines the basic performance required from any NGO (Vielajus, 2008). In addition, major NGOs also created the Active Learning Network for Accountability and performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP; Vielajus, 2008).

The complexity surrounding NGOs' accountability has however triggered research on the issue (Boomsma & O'Dwyer, 2014). The common accountability mechanisms for NGOs include formal reports and performance assessment plans. Disclosure reports entail financial data that is usually sent to donors and oversight bodies or made public. Meanwhile, performance assessments include monitoring and evaluation processes conducted by the NGOs themselves for the purpose of assessing progress towards organizational objectives. Some of the evaluations could also be initiatives by donors to assess the performance of the NGOs towards agreed goals (Boomsma & O'Dwyer, 2014). Such accountability mechanisms can take different dimensions.

Generally, different types of accountability in NGOs that can be categorized as inward, downward, and horizontal accountability. Downward accountability is focused

on bonds between NGOs as practiced by Action Aids, which combines stakeholder participation and flexible adaptation. Inward accountability focuses on the NGO, its staff members, and volunteers, while horizontal accountability happens when an NGO is scrutinized by its peers. A community of peers can develop self-regulatory standards to govern their activities (Vielajus, 2008).

Horizontal accountability can also be referred to as self-regulation initiatives. Self-regulation initiatives are aimed at developing standards for operations or codes of conduct by the NGOs themselves. These initiatives are in response to public concerns or scandals and partly to prevent government or donor regulation. The pitfall of self-regulation, however, is that NGOs may rely on upward accountability mechanisms that tend to satisfy donor requirements. This may also encourage them to exaggerate successes and avoid revealing their mistakes (Boomsma & O'Dwyer 2014). To increase their effectiveness, some NGOs have combined forces under the Emergency Capacity Building Project, which is funded by the Gates Foundation to promote interagency collaboration (Ito, 2011). Further, to develop strategies for tackling famine-related crisis, the Coping Strategies Index (CSI) was developed for purposes of detecting food security (Grobler, 2014). The CSI measures or monitors changes in food security and assesses the impact of food aid interventions. Since interventions are done in emergency conditions, there is limited time for data collection. Thus, CSI can be used to analyze and provide real-time information to program managers (Grobler, 2014). The tool was developed in Ghana, Kenya, and Uganda, but has since been used in more than nine African countries as well as in numerous countries in the Middle East and Asia. The tool can be used to



identify populations that are in dire need of food aid as well as to monitor the impact of intervention initiatives. It is an indicator of household food security that is relatively easy to use, straightforward, and correlates with more complex measures of food security. The coping strategies index provides managers with a technique to improve the management of food aid interventions in an emergency situation (Maxwell & Caldwell, 2008).

Upward accountability addresses facing up the aid chain because it is concerned with accounting to donors and managers (Jacobs & Wilford, 2010). Meanwhile, downward accountability is associated with relationships that are down in the aid chain because it is concerned with efforts to address the needs of disaster victims. Downward accountability refers to how resources can flow down the aid chain in a manner that empowers the vulnerable in the society. The tools and techniques used for achieving upward accountability are based on results-based management. Unfortunately, it is difficult to reduce social problems to cause-and-effect relationships because many actors pursue divergent interests. The accountability requirements by donors have a significant effect on the priorities and practices of NGOs. Such management tools are likely to divert the attention of NGO managers from their mandate of alleviating suffering (Jacobs & Wilford, 2010).

Recent studies have revealed that NGOs are increasingly seeking ways to achieve downward accountability. Some NGOs regularly seek the views of disaster beneficiaries, conduct needs assessments and review strategies (Trivunovic, 2011). Some NGOs also evaluate the impact of their programs on the target group. Some of the methods include

open house policies where beneficiaries are invited to town hall meetings and allowed to comment on the project. Other NGOs conduct social audits (Trivunovic, 2011).

One of the accountability mechanisms that promote downward accountability is social auditing, which involves assessing the impact of NGO activity on the lives of disaster victims (Boomsma & O'Dwyer, 2014). Listen First, which was developed after several field trials and innovations by two NGOs, that is, Concern and Mango, is another initiative that promotes downward accountability. It seeks to improve downward accountability across different interventions. It is based on four areas, which include, availing information publicly, encouraging participation listening, and monitoring staff attitudes and behavior. It outlines the type of behavior expected from staff and encourages them to engage the disaster victims further in order to identify their expectations and what downward accountability should entail (Boomsma & O'Dwyer, 2014).

### **Competing Interests in the Humanitarian Sector**

Competing interests in the provision of humanitarian aid work against the purpose of the interventions. Within the humanitarian aid regime, competing self-interests exists among host countries, donors, and implementing agencies (Cunningham, 2012). The competing interests impede the harmonization of aid, thus rendering the entire process ineffective. As a result, the key stakeholder who is the beneficiary, ends up being excluded from the decision-making process. Some agencies may not favor inter-agency coordination since they seek recognition separately for their own public image because they hope to improve individual returns and recoup their costs. The lack of harmonization

in NGOs' efforts affects transparency and leads to parallel efforts that undermine the purpose of humanitarian intervention (Cunningham, 2012.).

In addition, aid donation correspondingly improves the welfare of residents in the donor nation more than in the recipient nation (Cunningham, 2012.). For instance, surplus production of rice and corn in the United States means that there is a need for markets to improve the livelihoods of U.S. farmers. In 2010, a surplus production of corn and rice in the country was shipped to Haiti as a humanitarian aid. The massive influx of imported humanitarian rice killed the Haitian rice industry (Cunningham, 2012). The donation of food aid that was sourced in the U.S. benefited U.S. farmers and the economy by providing a solution for the surplus food.. Sourcing the rice from Haiti would have contributed to rebuilding the country by empowering Haitian farmers (Webster, 2012). Sourcing donor aid in foreign countries disrupts local markets and the economies of the affected countries and promotes dependency over aid (Cunningham, 2012).

Funding for food aid is, for the most part, spent in the donor country. It is also possible that in some instances, aid is probably tied to the national interests of the donor nation. For example, more than 90% of USAID funding is tied to U.S. interests, particularly farming (Cunningham, 2012). In 2012, USAID awarded 59% of its foreign aid spending to U.S. contractors (Taborek, 2012). The awards of USAID contracts suggest that aid is tied to American interests.

Additionally, foreign aid has been used by the United States as an instrument to engage other nations in pursuit of certain foreign policy goals. The policy goals revolve around economic and political interests. For that reason, foreign aid has both political and

economic effects that attract support and opposition from interest groups. Groups that benefit from it support it, while those that are unlikely to be fit oppose it. These interest groups influence political decisions including the allocation and distribution of foreign aid.

Milner and Tingley (2010) examined how legislators support aid policies and found that their votes were correlated with interests of their respective constituents. The authors found that legislators are bound to the interests of their constituents, and they are likely to respond to their pressure or anticipate their needs and preferences. The implication is that legislators are unlikely to support foreign aid policies that have no significant economic impact on their constituents. It is possible that legislators' foreign preferences are based on the characteristics of their constituents (Milner & Tingley, 2010). Legislators may anticipate the feelings of their constituents and support aid policies according to their interests (Milner & Tingley, 2010).

According to Milner and Tingley (2010), political and economic factors affect the flow of aid from donor countries to recipient ones. Studies show that domestic groups in donor countries presumptively benefit from aid flows, especially in regards to exports to aid recipient nations. According to Milner and Tingley, studies conducted in the U.S. show that economic aid has a positive impact on the economy. In the past, one legislator acknowledged that some of the products purchased from Alabama were attributed to USAID. In addition, the USAID also acknowledged its importance in expanding markets for U.S. exports thus creating millions of jobs. The implication is that, in addition to altruism, donor nations also seek to safeguard their strategic interests.

## **Corruption and Transparency**

The trust placed in NGOs started to erode in the 1990s when their influence, power, and presence in some fields caused a shift in public perception of NGOs (Milner & Tingley, 2010). Many NGOs were unable to live up to public expectations and were involved in publicized scandals or other forms of corrupt behaviors. The outcome was mismanagement of public resources, which harmed the credibility of NGOs and contributed to the skeptical perception of their work (Milner & Tingley, 2010). For that reason, many NGOs have recognized that being opened and transparent is critical to their survival.

Corruption is the abuse of power for personal gains. Fraudulent and corrupt practices include bribery, fraud, extortion, and diversion of humanitarian aid for the benefit of nontarget groups (Transparency International. 2010). It may also include the provision of relief in exchange for sexual favors. The worse form of corruption is the diversion of critical resources from disaster victims, who are caught up in natural disasters. NGOs need to put in place measures to curb corruption (Transparency International. 2010).

In 2001, West African refugees accused humanitarian staff of withholding food for sexual favors (Transparency International. 2010). One refugee said that it was difficult to escape their trap because they used food as a bait to satisfy their needs. A report commissioned by the UK and UNHCR had revealed widespread sexual exploitation in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, which involved locally employed staff trading food for sex with underage girls (Transparency International. 2010). The UK's

Save the Children NGO conducted hundreds of interviews and established that there was a high number of rapes, forced child prostitution, sexual assault, pornography, and sex trafficking that was perpetrated by humanitarian aid workers. They established that aid workers often demanded sex in return for food and money (Ndulo, 2009).

Another investigation in sexual exploitation in Congo identified a significant number of babies that were alleged to have been fathered by UN soldiers and workers (Ndulo, 2009). The report identified an American employee of the UN who fathered children in East Timor, Haiti, and Congo. Such children are relatively easy to identify because they are of mixed race. Furthermore, they may grow up without parental guidance because some societies discriminate against children who are born out of wedlock. Such sexual exploitation incidents prompted Kofi Annan, the former UN secretary-General, to say that sexual abuse by humanitarian staff cannot be tolerated because it violates the principles of the UN (Ndulo, 2009).

Sexual exploitation is exuberated by the fact that communities residing in conflict zones are vulnerable because they live in abject poverty due to high unemployment rates. Prostitution is a source of income for such young girls and women (Ndulo, 2009). Although many of them engage in prostitution willingly, minors are considered incapable of consenting to sexual activity. Consequently, any sexual activity with a minor is considered as a sexual abuse. Nonetheless, there is a thin line between exploitation of women and consensual sex or prostitution (Ndulo, 2009).

As a result of the sexual abuse reports, UNHCR was quick to initiate measures to curb the menace. Some of the measures included employing more women and enhancing

camp security (Transparency International. 2010). Furthermore, because of the alleged misconduct of aid workers in West Africa, the UN initiated legislative measures to deal with sexual exploitation in humanitarian operations. However, the intervention by the UN is perhaps a bit late for some victims because the consequence of such demands is disastrous to them. They led to broken marriages, abandoned children, sexually transmitted diseases, single parenthood and psychological trauma. Nevertheless, such incidents show that vigilance, interagency coordination and empowerment of beneficiaries are essential to protect aid recipients from exploitation (Transparency International. 2010). Corruption prevents aid from reaching the intended recipients and can undermine public support for such humanitarian interventions. The “sex for food” scandal demonstrated that corruption in humanitarian assistance does not involve financial fraud and diversion of resources alone, but also includes other forms of abuse (Transparency International, 2010).

In terms of accountability, investigations of NGOs in Uganda by Assad and Goddard (2010) found that NGOs rarely accounted to beneficiaries. The credibility of NGOs and their managers was significantly influenced by the way they accounted for donor funding. Similarly, Burger and Owens (2011) found that there was a high incidence of misrepresentation of facts among Ugandan NGOs in what appeared to be attempts to cover up the misuse of donor funding. For instance, 39% of NGOs in Uganda claimed that they consulted with communities before initiating a project but the majority of the communities denied ever being consulted. Furthermore, in a study conducted in one country, community members did not recognize some of the NGOs that claimed to

work in their midst. Thus, some NGOs misrepresent facts because operating in secrecy allows them to hide corrupt practices, their mistakes, and shortcomings (Burger & Owens, 2011).

In Kenya, a scandal reputed at Neema children's home in 2003 after the organization was awarded \$14,000 from the Kenya National Aids control for campaigns related to AIDS (Burger & Owens, 2011). The organizations, in fact, had no orphans, and no single orphan had benefited from the funds. Numerous fictitious briefcase NGOs in the country write convincing proposals seeking financial assistance (Burger & Owens, 2011). In Nigeria, since 2002, the U.S President's emergency fund for AIDS relief has channeled over \$2.25 billion to the country for the purpose of fighting the AIDS' pandemic. However, there are concerns that some people in the NGO sector are "feeding fat" on the AIDS funds (Smith, 2012).

Nevertheless, some of the NGOs claim that diversion of funds is sometimes essential for the survival of the organization. They claim that many NGOs do not receive funds for administrative costs, and grants seldom cover for administrative costs. As a result, they may be forced to divert some funds from the intended projects in order to pay for utilities, rent, and staff salaries (Trivunovic, 2011). Corruption can enable NGOs 'to grease the wheels' of noncooperative authorities. In corrupt societies, NGOs may be forced to bribe public servants in order to enhance their operations. Some NGOs may also employ workers from the local community, who may turn out to be corrupt (Burger & Owens, 2011).



## **Empowering Beneficiaries**

NGOs vary in the quality and effectiveness of their work. Some rely on the inputs of numerous individuals and agencies. Most often, goods and services are contracted to subcontractors, thus creating numerous levels of decision making. The resultant decentralization and numerous levels of decision making can create inefficiencies. It is prudent to go beyond donor preferences and subject NFP organizations to greater market forces. One way of achieving this is by empowering beneficiaries (Harvey, 2007). If the decision-making power is put in the hands of beneficiaries, the market forces will act to guide the NFP groups to deliver the requisite goods and services much more efficiently and with fewer unintended consequences. Aid vouchers can help in providing market power to would-be beneficiaries. A voucher that is given to the beneficiaries can allow them to procure services or goods from the market directly. Voucher schemes have been rolled out before on a small scale in response to humanitarian disasters, and there is evidence that they are effective (Harvey, 2007). Nevertheless, vouchers cannot work in all situations, especially where advocacy is involved or where there are inadequate goods and services in the vicinity of the disaster. Many NGOs often operate in remote locations where private agencies or vendors are unwilling to invest (Werker & Ahmed, 2007).

Because NGOs outsource their functions to other NGOs or business enterprises, substantial financial resources may not reach the intended recipients (Werker & Ahmed, 2007). Outsourcing some tasks to local NGOs or other agencies has some advantages: The agencies can pay lower local wage rates and could also have a better understanding of the local communities and the issues at play. The limited regulation in the industry and

the inability of the intended beneficiaries to give feedback to their approval or disapproval of the disaster intervention mechanism means that optimal utilization of resources cannot be verified. In addition to this, the administrative costs involved as the number of players increase are significant. It is possible that only a small fraction of the initial donor funds reach the intended recipients because of the numerous players involved (Werker & Ahmed, 2007).

### **The Role of Private Sector in Humanitarian Assistance**

Bailey (2014) analyzed the role of the private sector in humanitarian assistance in Haiti. He noted that several agencies gave money to households as an alternative to in-kind assistance through the private contractors. Vouchers were provided for use in accessing food, shelter, and hygiene interventions. Some agencies partnered with mobile network operators to provide cash transfers through mobile networks and were able to distribute \$57 million to more than 24,000 beneficiaries (Bailey, 2014). In addition, mobile network operators (MNOs) partnered with the UN Development Program (UNDP) to develop and provide electronic vouchers for construction materials such as iron, cement, and wood. Such cash transfers support the purchasing power of consumers as opposed to providing free commodities that compete and kill small businesses in the community. They also elevated the disaster victims to the status of the principal in terms of the agency theory. As a result, the disaster victims can demand accountability from agents who may be subcontractors, business people, or suppliers. Giving money to beneficiaries also supports the local economy and avoids the costs incurred in distributing and shipping commodities (Bailey, 2014).

Short message services also assisted in the dissemination of information. The service proved effective in transmitting information for organizations like the American Red Cross (Bailey, 2014). Media platforms like Facebook and Skype ensured that communication was two-way as Haitians could relay information through the platforms. Short codes were also created so that victims who were in dire need of assistance could text requests for humanitarian aid. Further analysis of mobile phone records as well as the geographic positions of simcards enabled NGOs to monitor the movement of users. Consequently, it emerged that movement of populations during disasters can be monitored with accuracy using such technology (Bailey, 2014).

### **Coordination and the Cluster Approach**

Not-for-profit organizations must provide assurance to constituents that the needs of the intended beneficiaries can be met now and in the future. Not-for-profit organizations must be accountable and efficient. Achieving efficiency and effectiveness at an organizational level requires systematic alignment with the external environment (Bradshaw, 2009).

Not-for-profit organizations are subjected to demands to improve and prove their effectiveness. They have also been subjected to demands for accountability and transparency so as to avoid inefficiency and ineffectiveness (Horswill, 2013). In order to improve coordination and avoid duplication, disaster actors adopted the culture of producing and distributing situation report updates (Gautam, n.d.). However, management control systems are critical in enabling NFP organizations prove their

efforts and maintain their credibility to their various stakeholders (Tucker & Thorne, 2010).

In the aftermath of the Nepal earthquake on April 25, 2015, a poor flow of information between the affected families and disaster relief actors delayed humanitarian response (Horswill, 2013). In addition, though the establishment of coordination committees eased the distribution of relief materials with minimal conflict, it was difficult to ascertain the actual beneficiaries, including the actual family size. Therefore, humanitarian aid was based on an average estimate. The implication is that the aid given out was not suitable for certain families. In other cases, relief efforts were duplicated due to poor or lack of coordination between the various relief actors (Horswill, 2013). Although food stuff, funds, and personnel were available, delays in procurement procedures caused a limited supply of non-food stuff (Horswill, 2013).

Coordination helps to minimize duplication of humanitarian services by preventing overlap, filling gaps, and ensuring NGOs work together in a coherent, effective, and efficient manner (Gillmann, 2010). To improve coordination among different actors, the UN has introduced a coordination mechanism known as the cluster approach. The UN implemented the cluster approach in an attempt to improve coordination and coherence in humanitarian response around the world. The approach seeks to improve the timeliness, predictability, and effectiveness of humanitarian response. It strengthens accountability and leadership by promoting partnerships and complementarity among the various NGOs that may be involved in the humanitarian intervention (WHO, 2015). The cluster agency assigns a lead agency to coordinate the

other agencies. The lead agency is usually a large UN body, such as the High Commissioner for Refugees, which is capable of coordinating other relief agencies at both the local and international levels (Humphries, 2013).

The cluster approach was partly adopted as a result of lessons learned from the Darfur crisis. Following the Darfur crisis, a study established that the humanitarian response was delayed and inadequate largely because of the inability of the agencies to mobilize resources and capacity (Gillmann, 2010). The study noted that there were significant gaps in information sharing, coordination, interagency coordination, leadership, and other cross-sectional issues. Consequently, due to the inadequate response to the Darfur crisis, the UN instituted the cluster approach to address gaps in disaster response mechanisms, and to improve accountability, predictability, and effectiveness of relief operations through coordination (Humphries, 2013).

A follow-up research into the impact of the cluster approach established that it is an effective tool for coordinating humanitarian efforts. Various stakeholders find the approach as an appropriate mechanism for coordinating and improving relief efforts. However, the approach faces a number of challenges in the areas of partnership, predictable leadership, and accountability (Maxwell & Parker, 2010). A meta-analysis of 18 case studies, literature, and evaluations established several challenges that the cluster approach has encountered since its implementation. One notable challenge is the lack of sufficient mechanisms to enhance accountability to the affected populations (Humphries, 2013). For instance, in the aftermath of the Haitian earthquake of 2010, a number of local, national, and international actors with varying levels of experience, skills, and

capacity stretched the cluster's coordination mechanism beyond its capacity (Maxwell & Parker, 2010).

Following the Haiti earthquake disaster, Medicines Sans Frontiers (MSF) deployed the largest surgical team in its history. As a result, the organization was able to treat 55,000 patients within 10 weeks after the earthquake and performed 4,000 surgical interventions (Chu, Stokes, Trelles, & Ford, 2011). This was one of the positive sides of the humanitarian intervention in the country. All the same, the delivery of health care was characterized by supply delays and lack of medical experts. Furthermore, there were coordination problems with other agencies such as the military, government agencies and NGOs, whose motives and interests were sometimes in conflict (Chu, Stokes, Trelles, & Ford, 2011).

Surgical demand was high in Haiti because many victims suffered open wounds, crushed limbs, fractures, and internal injuries (Chu et al. 2011).. Additionally, the number of patients seeking surgical procedures continued to increase as the country's fragile health care system completely collapsed. More than 600 health agencies responded to the needs for surgical care, but few of them had the experience, capacity, and competence to provide emergency surgical services (Chu et al. 2011). Furthermore, because of poor coordination, many of them concentrated in one area while other areas had no access to emergency healthcare. Later on, many of the agencies left after a few weeks, leaving thousands of patients without follow-up care. The outcome is that organizations like MSF were overwhelmed with postoperative patients with wounds, amputated limbs, and fractures. The situation was also complicated by the fact that there was no sharing of

information about the patients, particularly as regards the nature and number of operations. For that reason, claims of inappropriate amputations could not be verified (Chu et al. 2011). Interestingly, poor coordination has been a common feature of various humanitarian disaster interventions, as evidenced by the response to the 1994 Rwandan genocide, 2004 Asian tsunami, and Haiti (Chu et al. 2011).

### **Humanitarian Impact Assessment**

The impact of humanitarian assistance is defined by the OECD/DAC as the positive and negative, secondary and primary, long-term effects produced by humanitarian intervention, indirectly or directly, intended or unintended (Kopinak, 2013). Humanitarian assistance provides life-saving support during times of vulnerability such as war, displacement, or disaster. Provision of humanitarian assistance is usually complicated due to access restrictions, displacement of populations, and large-scale emergency needs, as well as complex political and social environments (Kopinak, 2013).

Measuring the impact of humanitarian interventions is difficult for several reasons. One is that relief operations occur over a short duration of time, and the other is that resources and capacity are often overstretched during such operations (Hofman, Roberts, Shoham & Harvey, 2004). Focusing on what is measurable in humanitarian interventions can reduce operational efficiency as NGOs might neglect those issues that are not measurable (Hofman et al., 2004). The dynamic operating environment, the desire to take action quickly in times of crisis, the culture of NGOs that value action over analysis, and the lack of consensus on the objectives of humanitarian interventions are also among the underlying issues that make impact assessment difficult. In addition, at

the center of NGOs' performance is the term *impact*, the definition of which may not fully capture the nature of work that humanitarian assistance entails. While change is a primary concept in the developmental definition of impact, in humanitarian aid, impact entails averting disaster rather than bringing about positive change. Other relevant terms include the *outcome, results, i effect* of humanitarian assistance. Nevertheless, the difficulty does not mean that the impact of humanitarian aid cannot be measured or analyzed (Hofmann et al., 2004).

Good intentions are not enough, and there is a need to demonstrate positive impact. In the absence of impact analysis, there is skepticism on the part of donors as well as the general public regarding the impact of humanitarian assistance (Hofmann et al., 2004). Substantiating claims of success in humanitarian interventions can help boost support and trust in humanitarian efforts. Assessing the impact of humanitarian assistance can be enhanced by developing greater clarity concerning the objectives of humanitarian assistance. The impact is based on the perceptions of the beneficiaries as opposed to the success in achieving predetermined parameters (Hofmann et al., 2004).

To understand the impact of humanitarian aid, there is a need to distinguish between what happened and what would have happened in the absence of humanitarian intervention. Three major approaches to impact assessment can be discussed: the scientific approach, the deductive or inductive approach, and the participatory approach (Shoham et al., 2004). Proper measurement of impact requires the collection of data, the existence of a baseline, and the evidence of a correlation between the impact and observed phenomena. The scientific approach relies on the quantitative measures of impact. The



deductive or inductive approach is more anthropological and socio-economic in nature.

The approaches can supplement each other (Shoham et al., 2004).

The identification of key indicators is also critical in impact assessment. The indicators include those related to humanitarian implementation such as processes, inputs, and outputs; and those related to the impact and outcome of the interventions. For humanitarian assistance that is aimed at saving lives, mortality rates can be a logical way of analyzing the impact (Holland & Garbarino 2009). The participatory approach uses the method of gathering the views of the beneficiaries. It is critical to understanding the impact of humanitarian assistance.

Within the three broad categories, several tools can be used to analyze the impact. These include workshops, interviews, and discussions (Hofmann et al., 2004). Others are case studies and participatory research, as well as direct observation. Although the participatory approach entails the gathering of views from the beneficiaries, humanitarian interventions are unfortunately largely ignorant of the beneficiaries' views concerning the assistance that is being provided. The humanitarian system is poor at ensuring the participation of the affected people (Hofmann et al., 2004).

The Clinton Foundation (2010) documented the presence of over 10,000 NGOs in Haiti. Yet conditions in Haiti have not improved significantly since the earthquake, and a first-time visitor maybe be forgiven for thinking that the disaster happened 5 months ago instead of 5 years ago (The Clinton Foundation, 2010). In research conducted on resilience outcomes by the Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy (DRLA) in collaboration with the state-run University of Haiti, it was found that the humanitarian

assistance provided by the international community did not have a detectable resilience contribution on society (drlatulane.org, n.d.). The research defined resilience based on seven dimensions that include protection and security, psychosocial, community networks, human capital, wealth, debt and credit, and coping behaviors. The research concluded that while humanitarian assistance may have exceeded the immediate needs of the affected areas, it did not significantly contribute to the resilience of the community based on the seven dimensions. The research concluded that the humanitarian assistance may have caused harm in some areas even as it alleviated suffering in others. The desire for most victims was to get sustainable assistance in order for them to leave the camps and fend for themselves. These desires and aspirations remain a mirage. The study recommended that humanitarian assistance should go beyond life-sustaining and life-saving activities to address causes of vulnerability such as poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation (drlatulane.org, n.d.).

### **Results-Based Management**

Results-based management is a management strategy that is focused on performance and achievement of outcomes, outputs, and impacts. Nongovernmental organizations have a social mission that is aimed at changing the context in which they operate. Output can be measured in terms of the number of services offered or goods provided, the number of beneficiaries, and the number of agreements, policies, or resolutions developed. Results-based management translates into operational and organizational effectiveness (Alesani, 2014). Performance management or results-based management is an instrument that can be used to monitor the performance and impact of

NGOs. It is focused on the recipient of the service, on quality and performance, on the objectives and performance, and on the participation of stakeholders, as well as the budget process or financial management systems (Hofmann et al., 2004).

A study of the progress made by the UN in implementing results-based management found that various agencies have implemented initiatives to improve results-based management (RBM) in their respective organizations (Kjellstrom, 2013).

Incentives are used to encourage staff and managers to use results-based management. The incentives are tailored to the culture and context of the organization. Results-based management systems also promote accountability at both the individual and institutional level (Bester, 2012). Results-based management is focused on performance achievement of outcomes, outputs, and impacts. It provides a framework and tools for planning activities, risk management, performance monitoring, and evaluation. The main objective of RBM is to improve effectiveness and efficiency. Organizational learning means that the knowledge acquired in the course of the project cycle informs decision-making. In such NGOs, the decision-making process entails policy modifications, working methods, and partnerships. Results-based management integrates several tools that include identification of indicators and objectives, monitoring systems, and comparison of intended targets and actual results, as well as accountability, learning, and decision-making procedures (Kjellstrom, 2013). In spite of these, the RBM approach has been criticized for assuming that humanitarian intervention has a linear and causal effect. It also imposes quantitative targets that increase administrative costs, demotivates staff, and

disillusions clients. It can also encourage organizations to pursue easy tasks at the expense of the more complex and difficult tasks (Hofmann et al., 2004).

Feedback should be made a two-way process in humanitarian operations. Any NGO should be able to get feedback, both positive and negative, in order to determine whether the intervention is making a positive impact. A complaints and response mechanism is critical for accountability, impact, and learning (Oxfam, 2007). Today, some beneficiaries do not sufficiently participate in monitoring and evaluation, although they are a critical source of information. Results-based management promotes participant's observation as a source of information. Participant observation is a process through which a community's behavior is systematically and continuously observed. It is critical in gaining information about how social interactions, patterns of behavior, livelihood strategies, and environmental conditions may change as a consequence of the intervention. The useful and timely information obtained can help improve performance. It is important to understand how the end users perceive the assistance they receive. Nevertheless, there are challenges in promoting user participation. For instance, some beneficiaries may seek to manipulate data so that they can receive additional assistance (Kjellstrom, 2013).

### **Accountability in Humanitarian Assistance**

Accountability implies reporting to a recognized authority and taking responsibility for one's conduct. NGOs must take responsibility by explaining their conduct (Unerman & O'Dwyer, 2005). Because NGOs are accountable to multiple

stakeholders, problems crop up related to prioritizing and reconciling the multiple accountabilities. Furthermore, measuring the performance of NGOs is difficult.

Donors have their own mechanisms of detecting fraud in NGO sector. The measures apply during the disbursement of aid, particularly during the selection of recipients or during project implementation. Some of the issues that donors look for, include a sound financial management system that includes accounting practices, accounting tools, auditing practices, financial reporting, fraud prevention, and anti-money-laundering practices. Donors also look at the internal governing structures of the NGOs (Trivunovic, 2011). Moreover, to enhance accountability, donors are making changes in their processes and systems that include a tight fiscal environment, demanding value for money, as well as demanding for changes in government policy. Donors are also increasingly concerned about results or outcomes of NGO's operations (Vermann & Bandyopadhyay, 2013).

There is, however, little empirical evidence to suggest that the mechanisms are effective (Trivunovic, 2011) or if the mechanism created have unintended consequences. Moreover, in humanitarian emergency situations, the threat of loss of lives limits the opportunity to assess organizational capacity and past performance records. Nevertheless, it is important for donors to carry out basic background checks, including past performance review on similar projects. Such evaluations can help them to avoid disreputable organizations (Trivunovic, 2011).

As noted earlier, downward accountability is the extent to which NGOs listen, respond, and involve beneficiaries in decision-making (Bond, 2006). Downward

accountability gives power to the intended beneficiaries. The underlining reason is that development is effective when it is owned by the people themselves. While NGOs can build the requisite infrastructure and provide goods and services, the local people must change their attitudes and behaviors and exhibit confidence in the humanitarian operation. The relationship between an NGO and its beneficiaries is the foundation for effective NGO humanitarian assistance (Jacobs & Wilford, n.d.). When carrying out humanitarian assistance, NGOs should consult with the local people to ensure that the assistance is consistent with the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries rather than with outside perceptions. The process has developed into a self-certification mechanism known as the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP, 2007).

NGOs' effectiveness can be described as the extent to which NGOs achieve their purpose promptly. Humanitarian effectiveness should begin with an effective program design that aims at maximizing outreach, adapting to the context, seeking to be demand-driven and focusing on results as well as respecting of fundamental values. Adapting to the context means that humanitarian action should be tailored to individual contexts, and maximizing outreach means that humanitarian action should minimize risks to life by addressing as many needs as possible. They should also provide value for money. Such programs should be predictable and flexible, timely, and well-coordinated (Scott, 2014).

To ensure every dollar spent generates value for money, NGOs must find innovative ways to deliver assistance in an effective manner. For instance, aid should be demand-driven so as to ensure that disaster victims are supplied with what they need as opposed to what the suppliers want to supply. This will also help to empower people

rather than making them passive recipients of aid. Donors can promote demand-driven assistance by considering tools that enable choice such as cash transfer programs. Cash transfers can enable disaster victims to make decisions about their requirements (Scott, 2014).

### **Organizational Control and Measurement Tools**

Nongovernmental organizations have become very influential non-state actors in the international arena. In 2012, for instance, an estimated US\$18 billion was provided to NGOs for humanitarian assistance by governments and private organizations (Jacob & Wilford, n. d.). Although NGOs have no formal power in the international arena, they have succeeded in promoting environmental agreements, women's rights, and influenced arms control and disarmament measures. Nevertheless, almost all NGOs are subjected to some form of control, such as registration and financial oversight in the countries in which they operate. Even the UN requires accredited NGOs to go through a process of review to determine their legitimacy (Shelly, 2013).

Quality can also be defined by the beneficiaries through their responses, analysis, and evaluation. Consequently, the quality of an NGO's work can be determined by its relationship with the beneficiaries. An NGO must recognize the priorities of its beneficiaries from their point of view (Schmitz, Raggo, & Vijfeijken, 2012). The beneficiaries can shape operational decisions of the NGOs.

Approaches to the management of NGOs' quality can be categorized as statutory, voluntary, organizational management, and evaluation or verification processes (Bond, 2006). Statutory regulations are legal requirements to which NGOs must adhere within

the country or region of operation. These include laws and conventions enacted by governments or multinational bodies such as the UN. While governments may enforce their own laws and regulations, multinational bodies such as the UN have no way of enforcing their conventions and must depend on the good will of governments. The disadvantages of this form of regulation are that in some countries, governments subject NGOs to undue political influence. In Russia, for instance, the government has been accused of restricting and prescribing NGO operations (Bond, 2006).

Adhering to statutory rules and voluntary principles require organizational capacity. Voluntary codes and principles are performance standards that NGOs develop through collaboration with other NGOs. Such principles are not enshrined in law but rather require self-regulation. Bond (2006) noted one example of such a code is the Red Cross Code of Conduct. Some NGOs have their own in-house systems, programs or processes that are critical to organizational performance and accountability. Such approaches include Action Aid's Accountability, Learning, and Planning System (ALPS). The operations of NGOs can also be subjected to assurance mechanisms through external audit and evaluation. Such evaluations can also lead to accreditation or certification. An example of such accreditation is the AA1000 Assurance standard (Bond, 2006). One important tool for the donor community that helps to enhance transparency is the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). It is a multistakeholder scheme that publishes information about aid spending (Ramachandran & Walz, 2013).

Table 1 shows some of the agreements that have been made to promote accountability in humanitarian operations. The humanitarian system acknowledges the



need to establish standards and guidelines for achieving effectiveness in humanitarian action. It also demonstrates that accountability and effectiveness is a shared responsibility among different actors in humanitarian operations. The players play different roles that have an impact on the effectiveness of the entire humanitarian system. Feedback and cooperation among the different actors are critical for an effective and timely response (Scott, 2014).

Table 1.

*Multinational Agreements Concerning NGO Relief Operations*

Date	Name of Agreement	Adherents
2003	Rome Declaration on Harmonization	68 countries, bilaterals, and multilaterals
2005	Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness	166 countries, bilaterals, and multilaterals
2008	Accra Agenda for Action	166 countries, bilaterals, and multilaterals
2011	Busan Partnership for Effective Development	211 countries, bilaterals, and multilaterals
2011	New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States	41 countries, bilaterals and multilaterals

Based on text material in Lessons from Haiti .org (n.d). *Key statistics*. Retrieved from

<http://www.lessonsfromhaiti.org/lessons-from-haiti/key-statistics/>

## **Management of Disaster in Ghana**

The government of Ghana intervenes in disasters through the National Disaster Relief Committee (NDRC), which was established in the 1980s to assist disaster victims. The role of the committee is to develop disaster management plans that mitigate the effects of disasters. They are also supposed to promote training to create public awareness and develop warning systems about disasters. Their job also includes coordinating of both local and international support for disaster intervention initiatives. To achieve its objectives, the National Disaster management Organization (NADMO) developed strategic plans whose goal included coordinating activities of various government and international agencies and stockpiling items for relief services. For example, the NADMO's strategic plan of 2003-2006 endorses partnership with stakeholders to mitigate resource and logistical constraints. These include the Army, the police, fire service, the Ghana health service and NGOs such as USAID, the Red Cross, The Catholic Relief services (CRS) and USAID (Oteng-Ababio 2013). However, after many years of its existence, perennial floods and fires remain a challenge.

As a result, incidents of disasters emanating from drought, flooding, and heavy rains have disrupted the lives of many communities in Ghana. In the last 2 decades, there have been two major disasters among others in Ghana, which include the May 9, 2001, stadium disaster in which 126 football fans died and the June 2006 floods in which 23 people were killed (Melara, Grant, Oteng-Ababio, & Ayele, 2013).

The situation is worsened by a citizenry that continues to endanger their lives by building on waterways and marginal lands without regard to the associated risks (Oteng-

Ababio, 2013). The rapid urbanization and population growth in Ghana also generate potential risks to people. For instance, a growing number of families live in slums in Accra, Ghana. The slums are characterized by poor construction, deplorable sanitary conditions, and cramped spaces. They also lack basic amenities. Most houses are constructed quickly thus ignoring building standards or land-use zoning. These forms of housing present significant risks to the city residents (Oteng-Ababio, 2013). The implication is that authorities have to put in place structures and regulations that will minimize the emergencies associated with modern demographic dynamics.

Although the government relies on the NADMO, there is more that needs to be done as regards disaster management. An analysis of the Ghana's capacity and preparedness to respond to disasters found that the country is ill-prepared for such incidents. The study found that the national disaster management Organization, which is mandated to manage disasters in Ghana, is fixated on a top-down approach. There is no cooperation, collaboration, and coordination with stakeholders (Oteng-Ababio 2013). The outcome is that there is often a poor response to disasters.

### **The Ghana Floods and Fire Disaster of 2015**

On June 3, 2015, torrential rains started in Ghana, affecting many parts of the Greater Accra region. The resulting floods displaced populations, killed over 200 people, and destroyed property and livelihoods (Gadugah, 2015). Nearly 10,000 people were displaced while another 46,000 were affected. Most of the affected areas included Ledzokuku-Krowor, Municipal Assembly, Accra Metropolitan, Labadi Municipal, La-

Nkwantanang-Madina Municipal, Shai Osudoku, Ningo-Prampram, KponeKatamanso, Ada West and Ada East (Gadugah, 2015).

It started as a storm, then it turned into floods before the floods gave way to fire, which left behind death and destruction. The tragedy happened around Circle and Adabraka that are located in Accra. The situation was worsened by the poorly planned city and a reckless citizenry that dumped their home-made refuse into the flood waters (Gadugah, 2015). All waterways and the drainage system overflowed its banks. The gutters were leading to the bigger Odaw drain and the Korle Lagoon, located at Circle, a busy spot in the heart of Accra. When the tributaries filled with water, the floods moved into nearby homes and offices. As a result, thousands of residents were trapped in their homes while those who used Circle as a route to their homes were also trapped. Those who could not find ways to their homes decided to take refuge at a higher ground and Goil filling station provided a suitable location. Hundreds of them stood at the station as they waited for the rains and the floods to subside. Unfortunately, the Goil filling station exploded into flames. Fuel from fuel tankers leaked and mixed with the flood waters. At that stage, fire exploded from a lit cigarette (Gadugah, 2015).

The fire spread quickly due to the toxic mixture of fuel and floods (Gadugah, 2015). What started as a heavy downpour turned tragic when a fuel station exploded. It left about 154 people dead and scores injured with varying degrees of burns. About 187 houses were partially or wholly destroyed by the disaster. Other risks included potential disease outbreak, overexploitation, and looting. About 60% of the victims complained of the lack of safe water for drinking while another 20% said they could not access water.

The disaster also disrupted 80% of the learning. Meanwhile, 40% of the disaster victims complained of not receiving assistance (Shaban, 2016).

After the incident, the government declared 3 days of mourning the dead and celebrating those who survived. There were tons of goodwill messages, and thousands of relief items were donated to help the victims (Gadugah, 2015). The committee recommended that the Odaw drain should be dredged. It also proposed a ban on the use of plastic carrier bags and called for standardized training, certification and licensing of filling station attendants. The committee recommended requiring all commercial vehicles to be filled with baskets or bins, and that disaster managers should be equipped with the necessary tools to handle such calamities. However, one year after the recommendations were made, the Odaw drain is only 30% dredged, the plastic carriers bags are yet to be banned, and the training and certification of filling station attendants are still ongoing (Gadugah, 2015).

Although the floods were caused by the natural occurrence of rains, the exposition resulted from a smoker who dropped a cigarette into the water (Shaban, 2016). The water had floating oil, which exploded into a fire. It is not clear whether the smoker knew that there was oil floating on the water but investigations are yet to make a conclusion on that issue. In its first memorial service, some Ghanaians complained that site of the explosion is yet to be cleared one year after the blast. While asking the family members of the disaster victims to participate in the service, the mayor of the city said that the town is well prepared to handle similar calamities (Shaban, 2016).

Following the Ghana 2015 flood and fire disaster, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC; 2016) released CHF 108,115 to fund the Ghana Red Cross Society respond to the crisis. The NADMO formed a rapid assessment team to assess the damage caused to the infrastructure and identify the number of people affected. The team was also supposed to identify personal belongings and conduct a needs analysis (IFRC, 2016). According to IFRC (2016), the overall objective of the intervention was to provide shelter, relief items and immediate support to some 5,096 community members who were affected by the floods. The organization mobilized 200 volunteers to participate in the relief operation.

### **Summary of the Literature Review**

Not-for-profit organizations now operate in a competitive environment in which they must compete for limited resources means and improve their effectiveness. There are also competing interests in the provision of humanitarian aid that work against the purpose of the interventions. Within the humanitarian aid regime, competing self-interests exists among host countries, donors, and implementing agencies. Because of these multiplicity of factors, how effectively NGOs are discharging their mandates is unclear. The literature review focused on accountability, coordination, and performance in humanitarian operations.

There are three major issues facing NGOs can be discerned during humanitarian operations: coordination, effectiveness, and accountability. Prior to the earthquake, Haiti suffered from profound corruption, ineffective leadership, a dysfunctional economy, and aid dependency. As a result of poverty, many Ghanaians had settled in poorly constructed

homes. Although many people were saved, others suffered at the hands of inexperienced groups who had no prior experience in providing aid.

The experience suggests that the various NGOs operate independently from each other and often have no interaction with each other. As a result, past experiences with relief operations have demonstrated that relief agencies often work at cross-purposes. The outcome is ineffective relief operation. In recent times, there have been efforts to coordinate the efforts of NGOs, as well as to develop standards that can be used to guide and make them accountable. In the last decade, there has been progress in the coordination and accountability of humanitarian operations. The efforts have provided a basis for efficiency.

For instance, in a bid to improve coordination among different actors, the UN introduced a coordination mechanism known as the cluster approach. This approach seeks to improve the timeliness, predictability, and effectiveness of humanitarian responses. For instance, in the Haiti earthquake in 2010, the UN set up the cluster system to coordinate humanitarian efforts during the Haiti disaster, thousands of NGOs and individuals who were unfamiliar with the cluster system arrived and overwhelmed the cluster system. It was unable to cope with the massive influx of responders. Nevertheless, a follow-up research into the impact of the cluster approach established that it is an effective tool for coordinating humanitarian efforts.

Yet it is prudent to go beyond donor preferences and subject NFP organizations to greater market forces. One way is by empowering beneficiaries. If the decision-making power is put in the hands of beneficiaries, the market forces will be compelled to work

overtime and deliver the requisite services and goods. There are two forms of accountability: downward accountability and upward accountability. Upward accountability occurs between aid agencies and donors; downward accountability is between aid agencies and beneficiaries. Downward accountability provides an opportunity for NGOs to listen, respond, and involve beneficiaries in decision making. Most often, people are the best judges of their own interests. Beneficiaries must be able to identify the changes they require, contribute to the decision-making process, and get involved in realizing change. Furthermore, identifying the changes that people yearn for are critical indicators of the impact that humanitarian aid has on the community. Quality and efficiency can be enhanced by the beneficiaries through their responses, analysis, and evaluation.

Up until now, research into humanitarian operations has focused on impact assessment. There is limited research into the management systems and strategies employed by NGOs in order to be efficient and accountable in discharging their mandates. Past researchers have explored the dimensions of contractual accountability because many accountability studies are initiated by donors. It follows that such initiatives are bound to answer the demands of donors rather than address the needs of beneficiaries. For that reason, there is a significant gap in the literature on how NGOs are accountable to the recipients who are not contractual stakeholders.



## Chapter 3: Research Methods

### **Introduction**

Concerns have been raised about the readiness of NGOs to tackle relief challenges with the limited resources that they can obtain (Shelly, 2013). The aim of this research was to gain an understanding of the capacity challenges that NGOs face in operations by investigating the strategies and practices that they employ in discharging their mandates. Consequently, I investigated the weaknesses, strategies, practices, and management challenges that NGOs experienced in providing humanitarian assistance to disaster victims.

In Chapter 2, I examined the concepts of accountability and performance management in NGO operations. Two types of accountability were identified, namely downward accountability and upward accountability. NGOs are predominantly concerned with upward accountability. Meanwhile, downward accountability has not been adequately addressed. The complexity of accountability in NGOs stems from the multiplicity of stakeholders and the difficult nature of their work.

The focus of previous research on humanitarian operations has been on the impact assessment and upward accountability. Few have researched the management systems and strategies adopted by NGOs in order to be more efficient and accountable in discharging their mandates to disaster victims. O'Dwyer and Unerman (2007) studied the implementation of a donor project known as the Multi-Annual Program Scheme (MAPS), whose objective was to make NGOs accountable for their efficiency and long-term impact on the community as well as the beneficiaries. It was a form of contractual

accountability because donors initiated it. The initiative was bound to the demands of donors rather than address the needs of beneficiaries. The donors can withdraw funding if they are not satisfied with the impact of the aid. Furthermore, these donors have their interests to safeguard, which may be in conflict with the interests of the disaster victims. It is unlikely for the interests of the two groups of stakeholders to be the same. There is a gap in how NGOs are accountable to the beneficiaries who are not contractual stakeholders. There is little research on how NGOs achieve downward accountability. In this study, I aimed to address the issue of accountability of NGOs to beneficiaries. I sought to provide insights into management and accountability practices that NGOs employ in order to be efficient in providing humanitarian assistance.

The main research question was the following:

1. What experiences did humanitarian relief nonprofit organization leaders have in coordinating and managing humanitarian assistance operations in the Ghana flood and fire disaster?

The subquestions follow:

SQn 1: What are some of the management systems that were used in humanitarian operations?

SQn 2: What are some of the accountability practices that NGOs used in humanitarian assistance operations?

SQn 3: In what ways, if any, did the relief organization involve stakeholders, particularly the disaster victims in their operations?

By providing a better understanding of NGO's accountability practices, the areas that require further improvements were identified and can be used to lay a foundation for such improvements.

In this chapter, I examine a suitable approach to this research. I also examined the most suitable instrument that would be applicable to this research.

### **Case Study**

The purpose of a case study is to derive an in-depth understanding of a single or number of cases in real-life situations. Researchers use case studies to conduct an empirical understanding of a phenomenon (Yin, 2009). Three situations should be considered when deciding on using a case study. Foremost, the type of research question should be used to determine the type of research design including whether a case study is appropriate for the research. For instance, case studies are important when the research question is an explanatory or descriptive question. They answer questions such as what happened or how did it happen? The reason is that case studies can provide a descriptive or insightful explanation of a phenomenon (Yin 2009).

Second, a case study is appropriate for collecting data in a natural environment because it enables a researcher to understand the phenomenon. A case study is also effective in conducting evaluations. Choosing between single and multiple case studies depends on the number of cases or phenomena that are being examined. If one case is being studied, then the research will be a single case study. If two or more cases are being examined, then the research will be a multiple case study (Yin, 2009).

I used a single case study in this research because the focus was on the 2015 Ghana flood and fire disaster. A case study is an exploration of a particular case or cases in context. Case studies can enable a researcher to examine a complex issue. The contextual analysis of a select number of situations or events is the emphasis. It is useful in examining contemporary situations in order to provide a basis for the use of methods or application of new ideas. However, a criticism of the case study approach is that it offers no grounds for establishing generalizability or reliability of findings (Yin, 2009).

### **Research Design**

Research methods can be categorized as quantitative, qualitative, or mixed method. Qualitative research methods were originally used to study natural phenomena in natural sciences. Qualitative research methods are used in the study of cultural and social phenomena. These methods use participant observation or fieldwork, observation, questionnaires, interviews, documents, and texts, as well as the researcher's reactions and impressions (Yin, 2009). A qualitative research method is used to understand aspects of social life, and its techniques generate words as opposed to numbers for the purposes of data analysis. Samples used in qualitative research are small and may not necessarily represent the entire population. In addition, it is often difficult to determine how significantly the researcher's own feelings influence the final findings (Gerring, 2011). Nevertheless, qualitative research methods were useful in providing insights into the strategies that NGOs employ when managing disaster operations. In conducting this research, the following number of steps were followed:

- I identified NGOs in the humanitarian relief sector that participated in the 2015 Ghana flood and fire disaster through snowball sampling, and published list of NGOs that participated.
- I chose one NGO that was at the forefront in providing humanitarian assistance to the 2015 flood and fire disaster victims.
- I made contacts through either phone or email with the NGO in order to seek their consent and schedule interviews.
- I planned to conduct interviews in person or through Skype.
- Prior to the interview sessions, I provided copies of the interview questions to the participants so that they prepared for the interview. During the interviews, I audiotaped the session.
- I transcribed the audio records from the interview.
- I followed up with phone calls or e-mails to confirm with the participants that the content of the interviews reflected their true opinions. I sent them the transcript interviews for member checking to ensure that I captured their thoughts accurately.
- Overall findings were shared with participants as well as the NGO's leadership.
- I requested documents related to the NGO's plans and operations in order to triangulate the data, and enabled me have two sets of data. The documents included reports on the 2015 flood and fire disaster.

### **The Role of the Researcher**

My role as a researcher was to interview participants and to obtain the relevant information. In a qualitative study, the role of the researcher is to interrogate the phenomena (Adrian, 2012). Thus, I asked participants to not only define performance and accountability, but also to explain why they define them in a particular manner. My role was to ask questions that enabled me to isolate and define phenomena. In addition, I used my personal empathy to ensure that the respondents felt at ease in this study (Adrian, 2012)

I understood that the researcher's preconception about a phenomenon hinders the ability to investigate the topic thoroughly (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013). I employed bracketing, which entailed putting aside my own convictions about the phenomenon that was under investigation in order to avoid influencing the outcome of the investigation. Consequently, I put aside my beliefs, experiences, values, and repertoires of knowledge about the research question. This helped me avoid being biased while interpreting data. In addition to these, I honestly examined my values and interests to identify areas of potential bias and minimized my influence by bracketing them. I wrote down my feelings, thoughts, and perceptions about the issues raised by the participants (Chan et al., 2013).

### **Methodology**

The chosen methodology depended on the questions that were to be addressed. A qualitative research is focused on the holistic, dynamic, and individual aspects of the human experience. The objective of qualitative research is not to predict or control, but to

understand and describe the phenomenon. It tends to describe the experiences of the subjects facing a phenomenon. Qualitative research is useful when the variables under study cannot be easily identified. For that reason, I chose to use a single case study and focus on Ghana's flood and fire disaster. An NGO that participated in the disaster shared its experiences and challenges. Qualitative research methods permits a thorough understanding of an issue. Some of the methods that are used to gather data in a qualitative research are focus group, interviews, and observations as well as texts and documents analysis. I determined that the 2015 Ghana flood and fire served as an exemplar for how small capacity countries respond. Semistructured interviews were a good way to uncover the thoughts and decision-making criteria that nongovernmental leaders, members of staff, and volunteers make in order to balance the needs of donors with disaster victims.

### **Instrumentation**

Qualitative researchers can choose from a range of options as regards research instrumentation. For instance, exploratory studies are less structured than confirmatory studies. I considered three instrumentation methods: observation, texts and documents, and interviews (Yin, 2009). According to Silverman (2013), observational methods are appropriate when the researcher wants to understand how people interact with a community. They involve observing events as they unfold. For that reason, they are suitable for understanding behavior, especially when a phenomenon is ongoing (Silverman, 2013). Because the Ghana flood and fire disaster has already happened, the method was not appropriate for the study.

Interviews are appropriate if a researcher wants to understand the experience and motivation of phenomena. They can be used to understand the beliefs, experiences, views, and motivations of research participants. For that reason, interviews provided a detailed insight and understanding of phenomena (Silverman, 2013).

### **Interviews**

I concluded that interviews were suitable for this study because they enabled me to have firsthand experience with the respondents. The interviews entailed talking to people through formal conversations. In order to benefit from interviews, researchers must develop empathy with interviewees to win their confidence. The researcher also needs to be unobtrusive so as not to impose his or her own influence on the interviewees. Usually, interview questions are structured according to the themes that are important to the research study. For instance, in semistructured interviews respondents give elaborative answers. During the interview process, the researcher should take short notes that can prove useful in the final analysis of the information (Adrian, 2012). Structured interviews are standardized and use prepared questions for respondents. Structured questionnaires were not appropriate for this study because they are inflexible for the exploratory nature of this study.

Unstructured interviews are used in exploratory studies where the phenomena under study are not well defined. The interviewee is allowed to talk freely about issues and determine the direction of the discussion. It is suitable for studies that are interpretive in nature. Informal interviews were useful in this study to clarify issues and fill gaps after



data collection. All the interviewees were members of NGO staff. The interviews were informal to make the respondent feel at ease when responding to issues (Bryman, 2012).

Semistructured questions are not standardized: instead, the researcher has a list of questions that address the topic. The questions can be varied depending on the situation and the person being interviewed. Using semistructured questions was appropriate for this form of study. Thus, for this research, a combination of semistructured and structured interviews were used to acquire the most wide-ranging pertinent data and allowed participants to reveal experiences and perceptions without any hindrance (Baškarada, 2014).

### **Data Sources and Contacting Participants**

The participants or respondents are usually chosen according to the objective of the research. One option for selecting respondents is through the snowball sampling technique. In this technique, one respondent is identified, and then asked to suggest other respondents. Nonetheless, because the researcher selects only a few respondents from a large number of possible respondents, the researcher can be prevented from obtaining an in-depth understanding of each respondent (Adrian, 2012).

A large sample size means that a research will be difficult and costly to execute. Conversely, a sample size that is too small may fail to answer the research question. Therefore, it is important to estimate a sample size that is neither too small nor too large. For this research, the exact number of NGOs that participated in the humanitarian operation in Ghana was not documented: it was difficult to know with certainty the exact number of NGOs that participated in the humanitarian operation. Examining how some

NGOs conducted their operations provided a better perspective about the strategies and practices that were used during the crisis. Therefore, I decided to conduct interviews with one NGO employees until saturation of the phenomenon is reached.

Furthermore, I used a convenience sample. The respondents who showed a willingness to participate in the research were used as the sample of the NGOs. The target population for this study consisted of one NGO and 13 respondents from the NGO. Purposeful sampling was used to identify respondents who were conversant with the topic and who had worked or were currently working in the NFP sector. One of the NGOs was obtained from the NGOs that participated in the 2015 flood and fire disaster relief.

The executive directors or representatives, employees, and volunteers of the NGO were sent invitations through e-mails to participate in the study. Once they confirmed participation, interview sessions were scheduled in their offices or a place of their convenience. I replaced those participants who did not confirm participation. According to Yin (2009), it is important to interview several people from different sections of an organization to get different perspectives of the phenomena. Key leaders such as executive and front-line program directors or similar senior representatives of the NGO who participated in providing humanitarian assistance to the 2015 Ghana flood and fire disaster victims were identified and interviewed. The method of a single case study analysis was used to review the information obtained from the interviews (Baškarada, 2014).

According to Yin (2009), data are likely to be accurate and convincing if they originate from different sources of information. Furthermore, multiple sources of information facilitate data triangulation and convergence of inquiry. It is also akin to data verification (Yin, 2009). I conducted document analysis to triangulate the data obtained from the semistructured and structured interviews. According to Flick (2009), archival data comprise of a wide array of materials such as paper documents, photos, and meeting minutes. They also include case reports (Flick, 2009). While conducting this research, I searched for reports and case studies about NGO operations during the 2015 Ghana flood and fire disaster to help validate my inquiry.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

A case study can be stand-alone or involve multiple case studies. I chose a single case study and the exploration of a unique phenomenon, which was the Ghana flood and fire disaster. A descriptive approach to the case study was used to analyze the information collected. Data analysis involved identifying patterns, themes, and contradictions from the interviews.

I used a qualitative data analysis to interpret the information obtained. The data analysis process for this study was done by transcribing audio files recorded during interviews and identifying key words and phrases. I recorded the interview and transcribed the audios before reviewing them for relevant information. The frequency of the themes and the emphasis that the participants placed on some issues informed the conclusions drawn from the process. The research results and themes were validated

through multiple documents such as audio-recorded interviews, transcribed notes, reports and the question responses entered into NVivo 11.

Open coding is an appropriate technique that can be used to identify themes from unstructured interviews and other documents. Because the research was qualitative, I used NVivo 11 software to store, organize, and analyze the information in order to identify the themes. The method provided a suitable approach for managing the information. The analysis of the observations and interview responses helped to determine how often the themes appeared in the responses. The transcripts were reviewed before they could be used. All notes were verified and analyzed to ensure that they were reliable.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

The issues that relate to trustworthiness include the presentation of views, the presentation of findings, claims concerning their typicality, and the contribution of the researcher's viewpoint to the phenomena (Tracy, 2010). Creswell (2013) argued that research is considered valid if (a) participants are involved in the interpretation and review of data so as to enable plausible results, (b) the participants are informed in the course of writing the results, (c) the research involves participants in the process of writing the findings, (d) the researcher states the assumptions of the study from the onset, (e) there is an elaborate use of descriptions, and (f) negative data are also represented. Furthermore, research is considered credible if there is a clear audit trail that shows how the data were obtained, how decisions were made, and how the data were categorized throughout the study.

To ensure trustworthiness, I sent out e-mails requesting the participants to participate in the study and to inform them that they could withdraw from the study whenever they wish. The correspondence indicated that the interviews were for academic purposes only. Follow-up emails were sent to confirm the interview timing, dates, and locations. The participants were required to sign an informed consent form confirming willingness to participate in the study.

In addition, the emails requested the participant's permission to be tape-recorded. After the interviews were transcribed, a copy of each participant's transcript was sent to the participant so that he or she could verify the authenticity and accuracy of the recorded data.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical norms are important in conducting a research. They promote the aims and objectives of the research. Ethical consideration in research should be used to promote accountability, trust, mutual respect, and fairness. Government or institutional guidelines that relate to information sharing, copyright, and confidentiality should be respected. Research norms ensure that researchers can be held accountable (Babbie, 2007). For instance, there is the need to avoid fabricating, misrepresenting, or falsifying research data. If a researcher fabricates data, then the research outcome may end up misleading the public or the relevant audience.

Further, during the process of data collection, potential risks included conflict of values and opinions of the researcher and misunderstanding, as well as embarrassment.

For that reason, in a qualitative research, researchers must take necessary steps to ensure ethical considerations are addressed (Babbie, 2007).

While my own honesty was important, the truthfulness of the directors who were being interviewed was even more critical. Therefore, from the onset, the participants were asked to be honest and transparent when responding to questions or giving information. Before giving consent, participants were given an opportunity to raise any issues of concern. According to Baxter and Jack (2008), the qualities that are necessary for a research study are transparency, credibility, sincerity, respect, and ethics of the researcher. Nevertheless, it is possible that participants may be unwilling to be associated with certain information that they might consider sensitive to their organization or the sector. Thus, in order to make participants comfortable and willing to provide information freely, their identities were not revealed in the completed dissertation. Nonetheless, the information remained available for the purpose of validating the research (Baxter and Jack, 2008).

### **Confidentiality and Integrity**

Maintaining data confidentiality and integrity relates to how much a researcher is willing to reveal based on ethical behavior and informed consent from research participants. It is important to gain consent before sharing any sensitive information that may portray the participants negatively. Further, if information is shared among the researchers, it is important for those accessing the information to understand the responsibilities associated with the information. Consequently, anonymity was important for a research of this nature. Anonymization of data involved removing any identifying

information or using disguised names to protect participants' identity. The details included location or company name and participants' surnames. The details were replaced with pseudonyms (Yin 2009).

The level of anonymization depends on the nature of the individual cases, and every study has unique concerns that must be put into consideration. For this study, it was important that the details of the participating NGO was not revealed because the information could damage its reputation. For instance, it could affect its sources of financing, particularly when donors come across sensitive information. For that reason, complete anonymity was necessary for this research study. I assigned each participant a pseudonym, which I used throughout the data analysis. After obtaining the information, I put passwords to the transcribed data. For that reason, I was the only person who had access to the data, which ensured data confidentiality and integrity.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 3 I justified the methodology, instrumentation, data sources, and the data analysis plan of the research. I also examined my role as the researcher. I interviewed key leaders, including executive and front-line program directors and similar senior representatives of one NGO. Using a single case study, I examine a complex issue, with the caveat that a case study offers no grounds for establishing generalizability or reliability of findings. That notwithstanding I found a single case study of Ghana to be appropriate for this study. Additionally, I used archival data to triangulate the data obtained from the unstructured interviews. This resulted in two data sets.

In qualitative research, the sample size is usually small and is often not representative of the entire population. It was important to identify the population clearly by setting the criteria for exclusion and inclusion of the participants. A list of NGOs was identified from those that participated in the 2015 Ghana flood and fire disaster relief efforts. The executive director and representatives, employees, and volunteers of the NGO were sent invitations to participate in the study, and I interviewed 13 of them.

The interview sessions were recorded in notes form before they were reviewed for relevant information. The frequency of the themes and the emphasis that the participants placed on some issues informed the conclusions drawn from the research process. I used NVivo 11 software to store, organize, and analyze the information in order to identify the themes. The research results and themes were validated through multiple documents such as the audio-recorded interviews, transcribed notes, and question responses entered into NVivo 11. Participants' pseudonyms were assigned to ensure data confidentiality and integrity. Research data are reported in Chapter 4.



## Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

### **Introduction**

The core mandate of humanitarian NGOs is to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain human dignity during and after a disaster (Beamon & Balcik, 2008). In discharging this mandate, NGOs usually operate with limited resources in an unpredictable environment raising valid concerns about their level of preparedness and capacity to deliver (Spice, 2013). To address these concerns, the purpose of my study was to increase awareness and understanding of the capacity challenges that NGOs face in providing humanitarian assistance by investigating the strategies and practices that they employ when discharging their core mandate. In particular, I explored management strategies, accountability practices, and challenges facing NGOs in providing humanitarian assistance to disaster victims. The central research question was the following:

1. What experiences did humanitarian relief non-profit organization leaders have in coordinating and managing humanitarian assistance operations in the 2015 flood and fire disaster in Ghana?

The subquestions follow:

SQn 1: What are some of the management systems that were used in the humanitarian operations?

SQn 2: What are some of the accountability practices that the NGO used in the humanitarian assistance operations?

SQn 3: In what ways, if any, did the relief organization involve stakeholders, particularly the disaster victims in their operations?

The rest of the chapter is organized into six sections. The first section is a commentary on the settings of the research with a focus on personal or organizational conditions that could influence participants' responses. The second section includes a discussion of the various combinations of demographic profiles of the respondents. The third section is an account of data analysis process starting from initial coding to the final presentation of themes. The fourth section includes evidence of trustworthiness with an emphasis on credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability strategies. In the fifth and sixth sections, I present the results of this study sectionalised according to the research questions and conclude the chapter with a summary of the main findings.

### **Research Setting**

The setting of the research was the Ghana flood and fire disaster of 2015. The research participants worked for an NGO that took part in providing humanitarian assistance to disaster victims. As a part of their job, the participants respond to disasters occurring in different geographic regions or sociocultural settings. They understood and speak English as a common language, which enabled me to conduct all of the interviews in English. Further, because all the participants worked for the NGO, there was easy accessibility to all of them at the NGO's offices allowing me to conduct at least three interviews each day. All of the participants were members of the NGO but that did not affect their responses nor interpretation of the results because each had different responsibilities as well as perspectives of the questions asked.

### Demographics

The intent of using the qualitative research approach was to gather diverse views from participants. Accordingly, the selection of participants ensured that they reflected various combinations of demographic profiles. Table 2 provides a summary of the demographic profiles of participants based on gender and roles in the NGO.

Table 2.

#### *Role and Gender of Participants*

Participant ID.	Gender	Role in the NGO
PT1	Male	Director
PT2	Male	Director
PT3	Female	Employee
PT4	Male	Volunteer
PT5	Female	Employee
PT6	Female	Employee
PT7	Male	Employee
PT8	Male	Employee
PT9	Male	Employee
PT10	Male	Employee
PT11	Male	Volunteer
PT12	Female	Volunteer
PT13	Male	Volunteer

## **Data Collection**

As detailed in the methods chapter, I gathered data from two sources: (a) face-to-face interviews (Source 1) and (b) document review (Source 2). I conducted interviews with 13 participants (Table 2) to gather their experiences on management strategies and accountability practices adopted by the NGO in providing humanitarian assistance to the victims of the Ghana flood and fire disaster of 2015. I also reviewed the Disaster Operational Report detailing the final emergency plan of action of the NGO. The main content of the report was situational analysis, operational strategy and plan, detailed operational plan, and financial plan. I used document analysis to provide a second set of data for comparison and contrasting with interview responses intended to improve the validity of findings.

### **Interview**

The interviews began after participants had read, understood, and returned a signed consent form. Signed forms indicated that they understood their rights as participants, particularly the rights to voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity as guaranteed by the interviewer. Through e-mail messages and/or phone calls, I held discussions about the schedule of the interview, ending with a choice of the most convenient time, place, and channel. Whereas the initial plan was to interview 12 participants, one participant was added, bringing the total to 13 participants. Table 3 provides the proposed number of interviewees, the actual number interviewed, demographics, the location of the interview, and the duration of each interview in minutes.

Table 3.

*Proposed/Actual Interviewees, and Location and Duration of Interview*

	Proposed Interviewee	Actual No. Interviewed	Demographic Profile	Location of Interview	Duration of Interview in Minutes
	PT 1	PT 1	Male	Office	48
	PT 2	PT 2	Male	Office	52
	PT 3	PT 3	Female	Office	45
	PT 4	PT 4	Male	Office	50
	PT 5	PT 5	Female	Office	44
	PT 6	PT 6	Female	Office	51
	PT 7	PT 7	Male	Office	48
	PT 8	PT 8	Male	Office	46
	PT 9	PT 9	Male	Office	53
	PT 10	PT 10	Male	Office	49
	PT 11	PT 11	Male	Office	55
	PT 12	PT 12	Female	Office	48
		PT 13	Male	Office	51
Total	12	13			Average = 49

All of the 13 interviews took place within 4 days, beginning on January 23 and ending on January 26, 2017. All of the participants responded to the same interview questions intended to simplify data analysis and interpretation. All 13 interviews took place at the NGO's offices, selected by the participants as the most convenient and appropriate in previous e-mail and phone interactions with me. The average duration of

the interviews was 49 minutes: 44 minutes for the shortest session and 55 minutes for the longest session.

The initial data collection plan had provided for two channels for conducting the interviews, face-to-face or phone interviews, based on participants' preference and convenience; a face-to-face interview was chosen by all participants. I sought the consent of the interviewees to record the sessions before the interview began. Upon verbal consent, I used a laptop and iPhone 7 to record the interview session. To demonstrate the ethical principle of anonymity, I used pseudonyms throughout the interview session when referring to the interviewees.

### **Document Review**

The Disaster Operation Report on the Ghana flood and fire disaster of 2015 was the second source of data for this study. With the consent and permission of the executive director of the NGO, I received a copy of the disaster operations report prepared by the NGO at the conclusion of the humanitarian operations. The report described the situation during the disaster, their operational plan and strategy, challenges encountered, and financial source (donors) and uses of the donations. The report provided additional details on humanitarian operations to obtain a holistic picture of the management and accountability strategies adopted by the NGO in this case study.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Thematic Analysis of Interview Responses**

The process of thematic data analysis combined top-down (theory-driven) and bottom-up (data-driven) strategies. The initial process included the top-down strategy,

which Clarke and Braun (2014) described as developing broad themes (a master code list) based on concepts and theories synthesized from literature review and guided by the research questions. The top-down strategy identified and described four broad themes (a master code list) as summarized in Table 4.

Table 4.

*Master Code List*

Theme	Description	Code
Accountability practices	In what ways were the NGO accountable to donors and/or victims?	ACC
Management Strategies	What management strategies did the NGO adopt for needs assessment and response?	MGS
Management Challenges	What challenges did the NGO experience when providing humanitarian aid?	CHL
Perceptions of victims	What was the perception of the victims about the NGOs role of providing humanitarian assistance to them?	PCT

From the master code list, analysis moved to bottom-up strategy, a data-driven approach involving identifying common words or phrases from the interview responses to develop subthemes (nodes). This process used the NVivo plus 11 software, which facilitated coding and development of nodes (subthemes) because it broke down the interview data into words or simpler phrases, which were easier to search, identify, and code. The coding process began by transferring the transcribed interview data, which were in pdf format, onto NVivo software. Table 5 provides a summary of the most

frequently mentioned words/phrases associated with the master code list. Sources indicate the number of participants who mentioned the word/phrase, while references indicate the number of times (frequency) the word or phrase appeared in all the 13 interview responses.

Table 5.

*Results of Initial Coding of Frequent Words/Phrases*

Words	Sources	References
Reports	13	35
Donors	13	46
Accountability	13	33
Victims	13	219
Awareness	7	7
Mission	7	9
Assessment	13	50
Needs	13	43
Post-relief	8	8
Ration card	9	15
Voucher	6	6
Funds	13	87
Transportation	3	4
Logistics	6	7
Telephone	2	2



In the text search process, I identified 15 frequently mentioned words/phrases from the interview response, which supported themes in the master code-list. From each word/phrase, I determined the context in which participants mentioned them by reading the sentences before and after the one mentioning the word/phrase to develop common categories (subthemes). The frequency of occurrence of the categories were determined and documented as listed in Table 6 alongside the participants who supported the categories.

Table 6.

*Common Categories and Their References in the Interviews*

Common Categories	Participants	Total References
Detailed-donor reports	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12	11
Victim awareness	2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13	9
Needs assessment	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13	11
Ration card	2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 11	6
Vouchers	1, 3, 4, 6, 9	5
Post-relief assessment	1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13	11
Insufficient funds	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13	13
Logistics problems	1, 2, 4, 7, 10	4
Volunteer support	3, 5, 7, 11, 13	5
Government-funded	2, 4, 8, 10, 13	5
Insufficient aid	2, 8, 11, 12, 13	5

Using the bottom-up thematic analysis strategy, I coalesced the initial coded 15 words/phrases (Table 6) into 11 subthemes (Table 7) that several participants supported. Table 7 shows the master code list and the supporting subthemes gleaned from interview responses.

Table 7.

*Master Code List and Supporting Subthemes*

Master Code List	Supporting Subthemes
Accountability practices	Detailed-donor reports Victim awareness
Management Strategies	Needs assessment Ration card Vouchers Post-relief assessment
Management Challenges	Insufficient funds Logistics problems Volunteer support
Perceptions of victims	Government-funded donations Insufficient aid/assistance

**Document Review**

Document review involved analysis of the disaster operation report of the NGO's detailed situational, operational, and financial strategies. The aim was to provide a secondary set of data to interview data to improve the validity of findings through data triangulation. The focus of the review was to document operational, financial,

accountability, and challenges. Table 8 provides a concise summary of the situational, operational, and financial strategies used by the NGO.

Document review revealed that the NGO used rapid and detailed assessment to estimate the extent of damage, the number of victims affected, and the number of personnel and quantity of relief supplies required. Post-relief interview with beneficiaries aimed at determining and documenting the impact of the humanitarian aid on the beneficiaries was documented. Financial needs depended on results from rapid/detailed needs assessment. However, the NGO only accounted for funds used in providing aids to donors with victims only receiving education on the role of the NGO and expectations of the victims on the extent of help.

Combining findings from both thematic analysis of interview responses and document review, four broad themes emerged: (a) Donor-focused accountability, (b) Needs-based operational and financial management, (c) Operational challenges, and (d) Victims' lack of awareness of NGOs operations. These themes alongside their supporting evidence are discussed in the next sections.

Table 8.

*Summary of Findings (Themes) from the Document Review*

Analysis	Strategies	Description/Outcomes
Operational Strategies	Rapid assessment (10 volunteers)	Data collection: community informants/interviews 46,370 people affected 187 houses destroyed Communication/power lined damaged About 200 volunteers needed
	Needs assessment (30 volunteers)	205 most vulnerable people Oral rehydration needed Household water treatment kits Blankets, clothing and mosquito nets Volunteer training for mobile-based survey
	Post-relief assessment	Impact assessment Interviews with victims
Financial strategies	Approach	Rapid assessment Detailed needs assessment
	Funds (major donor)	Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (Red Cross) Received: US\$108,452 (originally in Swiss Francs) Spent: US\$99,241 Balance: US\$9,209 returned to Emergency Fund
Accountability	Donors	Detailed financial report
	Victims	Education about role of NGO and expectations
	Public	Print/electronic media: on operations/milestones
Challenges encountered	None reported	None reported

**Donor-focused (upward) accountability.** The words *reports*, *donors*, and *accountability* appeared multiple times in the interviews within the context of accountability to donors. On the first appearance of the words *donor* and *report*, PT2 stated, “We sent victims information to the donors and most of the time with their photos attached to the report with detailed information about their needs and the relief items we provided to them.” In another appearance, PT7 stated, “A detailed report with photos and personal statements from the beneficiaries were sent to the donors.” Similarly, PT3 used the word *accountability* in relation to donors, “the report detailed how funds were utilized and recipients’ information were also attached for proper accountability...” On the side of victims, the contextual meaning of the word *accountability* indicated NGOs were not accountable to them. In PT7 words, “There is a saying that a beggar has no choice and therefore think that accountability should be between executives and the donors.” PT4 also indicated, “I don’t, there was any accountability since we there to help” in reference to the question on their accountability to the victims. Still on the perspective of the victims, the appearance and context of words *victims*, *awareness* and *mission* indicated victims only require knowledge of the role of NGOs or the type and amount of aid they were to receive. On the first mention of the word *aware*, PT2 shared, “We made the victims aware that our mission was to support the most vulnerable. Therefore, not every victim will receive a donation or a relief items from us.” PT13 said, “We made the victims aware that our mission was to support the most vulnerable. Therefore, not every victim will receive a donation or a relief items from us.”

**Needs-based operational and financial management.** The words *needs*, *assessment*, and *post-relief* appeared in relation to operational management. The term *post* was mainly made as a prefix to signify the aftermath of disaster or relief activities such as post-disaster, post-evaluation and post-relief. Eleven participants (PT1, PT2, PT3, PT4, PT5, PT7, PT8, PT9, PT10, PT11, PT12, and PT13) stated rapid needs assessment was important to manage operations during or in the immediate aftermath of the disaster. PT10 clearly stated “We used rapid and detailed assessment for data collection and relief items and cash donation are given to victims based on the information obtained during the assessment.” PT3 also indicated, “Our budget was based on the detailed assessment we took and that helped us to request for the funds from the federation and donors.” Eleven participants (PT1, PT2, PT3, PT4, PT7, PT8, PT9, PT10, PT11, PT12, and PT13) mentioned the term *post-relief* in relation to assessment of operational impact on the victims. PT4 put it, “We went back to victims for post-evaluation and their responses helped us determined the impact of our program on the disaster victims.” In addition to operational management, several mentions of two other words *ration card* or *voucher* attested to financial management and accountability strategies. Six participants (PT2, PT3, PT4, PT5, PT9, and PT11) associated ration card with financial management. PT3 stated that, “The use of the Ration Card also helped us to control fraud since some people use this situation to perpetrate fraud” and PT9 shared, “Individuals or families were given a ration card which listed their needs.” Five participants used the word *voucher* in relation to the management of cash. PT1 stated, “Funds given to the victims was through the banks. Victims were given vouchers to draw

at the bank. No physical cash was given to the victims.” PT4 added, “Some victims were also given vouchers to receive cash at the bank.”

**Operational challenges.** The use of the terms *insufficient funds*, *transportation*, *telephone*, and *logistics* problems attested to the operational challenges experienced by NGOs during the initial response and subsequent delivery of humanitarian aid to victims. All the 13 participants (PT1-PT13) mentioned funds in relation to their insufficiency to meet the needs of the victims. PT10 clearly indicated, “Funding was a major issue since we were limited to what relief assistants were able to provide.” In terms of communication and telephone, PT1 shared that, “How to pay for their/our??? transportation allowance was an issue. Other issues include communication and phone networks since most phone lines were down making it difficult to reach volunteers.” PT13 also had this to say: “The weakness is about communication with the volunteers on time.” On the other hand, repeated mention of the phrase *volunteer support*, by five participants (PT1, PT2, PT4, PT7, and PT10) revealed the strength of NGOs. As PT3 indicated, “We have several skilled volunteers such as medical doctors and carpenters and that helped us to provide prompt services during the disaster” and PT13 added that “the strength is the large number of volunteers we mobilized to assist in disaster operations.”

**Victims’ lack of awareness of NGOs operations.** Victims (or beneficiaries) lack of understanding or ignorance of NGOs mode of operations was revealed by the following words/phrases participants mentioned repeatedly: *government-funded* or *wished for more*. Five participants (PT2, PT4, PT8, PT10, and PT13) mentioned

government-funded as illustrated in the responses by PT2: “Some victims also thought that the relief items were from the government and were expecting more than what was giving them”; PT10 stated, “Some victims thought the organization was part of the government agencies who were helping.” Another five participants (PT2, PT8, PT11, PT12, and PT13) mentioned *insufficient aid* as indicated in the responses by PT8, “Some of them thought that the organization was representing the government and were expecting us to do more in terms of relief and financial support” and PT11, “Most of them were grateful but wished for more.”

**Discrepant data.** Discrepant data (or negative data or outliers) refers to data that is inconsistent or contrasts with the general patterns emerging from data analysis, or data which differs from the general reality (Maxwell, 2013). In qualitative research, it is usually common to come across discrepant data. While some researchers may exclude such data, Daymon and Holloway (2003) insisted on their inclusion because they improve the validity and credibility of a qualitative research. As such, the present study included discrepant cases in the presentation and discussion of results to improve validity and credibility of the study. Two instances of discrepant data emerged: accountability and insufficient funds. On accountability, PT4 and PT7 indicated that they are not accountable to victims whatsoever since they are the ones benefiting. Insufficient funds, as part of management challenge, was indicated in the interview responses, while document review reported surplus funds returned to the disaster emergency relief. Detailed discussion of these discrepant data is provided under the section “Discrepant Cases.”



### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

The main issues of trustworthiness discussed are credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability strategies utilized to improve the accuracy, relevancy and acceptability of findings.

#### **Credibility**

Credibility is about the extent to which results of a qualitative study are believable. It depends on the good faith of the participants and the lack of the intention to misrepresent data. In the present study, credibility was strengthened through strict adherence to ethical principles of voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity, which Tracy (2010) argued that it encourages participants to provide their honest views. The concept of data saturation when gathering data was also used to strengthen the credibility of this study. The concept of data saturation suggests that a study has exhausted all the views of participants such that no theme has been overlooked. Continuing data collection would repeat the views already mentioned.

This study also adopted participant validation strategy, which Creswell (2013) asserted improves the credibility of a qualitative study. Participant validation involved inviting the participants to go through and confirm the transcribed data as an accurate presentation of their views and opinions provided during the interview. I sent transcribed data to participants through their provided emails for validation. Table 9 shows the details of the validation process.

Table 9.

*A Summary of Participant Validation Process*

Participant ( PT)	Date Interviewed	Member Checking Date	Date Returned	Modification Needed
PT 1	Jan 23	Jan 24	Jan 24	No
PT 2	Jan 23	Jan 24	Feb 03	No
PT 3	Jan 23	Jan 24	Jan 27	No
PT 4	Jan 24	Jan 25	Feb 06	No
PT 5	Jan 24	Jan 25	Jan 27	No
PT 6	Jan 24	Jan 25	Jan 31	No
PT 7	Jan 24	Jan 25	Feb 05	No
PT 8	Jan 25	Jan 26	Jan 29	No
PT 9	Jan 25	Jan 26	Jan 26	No
PT 10	Jan 25	Jan 26	Jan 26	No
PT 11	Jan 26	Jan 27	Feb 03	No
PT 12	Jan 26	Jan 26	Feb 10	No
PT 13	Jan 26	Jan 27	Jan 27	No

Table 4.7 summarizes participants' validation processes alongside the date of validation and any necessary modifications. Four participants (PT1, PT9, PT10, and PT13) validated the data on the same date, while the remaining took between 2 and 19 days to validate and return the transcribed data. All participants validated the transcribed data, and no modifications or revisions were made.

In addition to participants' validation, credibility was strengthened by cross-verification. The dissertation committee served as peer-reviewers to look at the data independently and determine whether they realize the same findings. Hussein (2009) asserts cross-verification improves the credibility of data and findings. Furthermore, triangulating data strengthened the credibility of the study. The final evidence of trustworthiness was the inclusion of discrepant data, showing the efforts I made to present a balanced view of the findings (Daymon & Holloway, 2003). A discussion of the discrepant cases is important as it provides an insight into the reasons why some participants have observations that are inconsistent with the rest.

### **Transferability**

Transferability is the extent to which the findings of this study could be applied to different settings (contexts) of a disaster. However, while several approaches were taken to strengthen credibility, the transferability was limited to NGOs operating in similar context—that is, limited resources and in a developing country. The methodology adopted, including the sampling procedure and data collection instrument, limited transferability. I interviewed a small sample and gathered contextual data that were not readily transferable to other settings (Creswell, 2013). Findings are thus transferable to NGOs with limited resources in Ghana. Caution should therefore be observed when transferring the findings to NGOs in different contexts, such as different geographical settings or NGOs with sufficient resources.

**Dependability**

Dependability is the degree to which others can repeat or confirm the findings of this study. The underlying question is, “If another researcher repeats this study, will the same results be obtained?” I adopted two approaches proposed by Creswell (2013) that improve replicability. The first was stating the assumptions of the study at the onset, which indicated potential source of errors that replica studies should consider. The second was providing a clear audit trail of the process of research, sampling, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data to enable another researcher to follow and replicate the study.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability means the extent to which others can confirm or corroborate the findings of a study. The first approach used to ensure confirmability was to provide a detailed account of data analysis including the identification of common words/phrases and their evolution into themes. The second approach was to search for and highlight discrepant data that could provide contradictory observations. The final approach was the use of participants’ validation to ensure that transcribed data were accurate presentation of the interview responses prior to data analysis.

**Results of the Interviews**

The central research question posed by this study was, What experiences did humanitarian relief nonprofit organization leaders have in coordinating and managing humanitarian assistance operations in the 2015 flood and fire disaster in Ghana? The subquestions follow: (a) What were some of the management systems that were used in

the humanitarian operations? (b) What were some of the accountability practices that the NGO used in the humanitarian assistance operations? (c) In what ways, if any, did the relief organization involve stakeholders, particularly the disaster victims in their operations? These research questions guided the discussion of results.

### **Management Systems Used in the Humanitarian Operations**

The major theme emerging from management strategies adopted by the NGO in providing humanitarian assistance to the victims of the Ghana flood and fire disaster of 2015 were needs-based operational and financial management.

**Operational management.** Operational management strategies were largely needs-based in all the three operational phases: initial, relief assistance, and aftermath. The initial phase involved rapid response as the disaster unfolded. In this phase, the NGO used rapid assessment to determine whether it was safe for its staff to go into the disaster area. PT3 stated, “A rapid response team was dispatched to the disaster scene to assess the situation and determine whether it was safe for us to go in or not.” Rapid assessment also formed the basis of rescue mission as suggested by PT2, “After the rapid assessment, we immediately helped in the rescue mission and also provided first aid to the victims.”

Rapid assessment also enabled the NGO workers to obtain a rough estimate of the number of victims and the required amount of emergency relief supplies. PT4 stated, “We used rapid assessment. What this means is that we went to the disaster area and made a quick assessment of the situation.” PT13 added, “We met at a central point and the leaders tasked us to do a rapid assessment and report back for further evaluation.” Rapid assessment also informed the NGO about emergency supplies for first aid. PT7

stated, “We use the rapid response strategy for the initial assessment. Once the rapid assessment had determined the safety and emergency supplies required, the response phase began by a detailed needs assessment. It involved direct interviews with the victims and personal observations. According to PT6, “I went to the community where the disaster occurred. I witnessed the situation myself and also interviewed the victims. I also interviewed the community leaders such as the imam, pastors and the assemblyman.” PT7 added, “After that we used detailed assessment through interviews and personal observations and collected information on the victims.”

Both the rapid and detailed needs assessment provided accurate estimates of relief supplies which were vital for prudent use of the limited financial and human resources. PT10 shared, “We used rapid and detailed assessment for data collection and relief items and cash donations were given to victims based on the information obtained during the assessment.” Document review indicated detailed assessment determined the identification and registration of the most vulnerable beneficiaries as well as enabled the NGO’s employees to reach 54,742 victims and distribute emergency supplies.

The final phase of operational management was an evaluation of the impact of the interventions of the NGO to the lives of the victims. Assessment through post-relief interviews revealed most beneficiaries were appreciative and happy for the material support. PT7 stated, “We did a follow up and through post disaster interview, most of the victims that received support from the organization were very appreciative.” The humanitarian aid in terms of relief items and cash had a positive impact on the beneficiaries as stated by PT8, “We went back to the victims after a couple of weeks and

they told us about the positive impact of our relief items and cash.” Document analysis further revealed in the post-relief satisfaction survey, indicated beneficiaries with a mean score of 4.0—suggesting they were happy with the quality and quantity of humanitarian aid.

**Financial management.** Same to operational management, financial management strategies were needs-based. They revolved around the needs of the victims. PT10 stated, “All funds received were either used to purchase relief items or given to the victims as cash.” Information used to draw the initial budget and request for funds was based on the outcomes of the detailed needs assessment. PT3 stated, “Our budget was based on the detailed assessment we took and that helped us to request for the funds from the federation and donors.” The needs-based strategy helped the NGO to reach the most vulnerable within short timelines as PT3 stated, “The strategies we used helped us to provide support to the most vulnerable within the shortest time possible.” The needs-based strategy for financial management also ensured prudent management of the limited resources supported by document analysis findings of surplus funds returned to the disaster relief emergency fund (DREP). Beside budgetary needs, banks also handle cash management: donors deposited financial assistance at designated banks, which managed the remittance of funds to identified beneficiaries. PT1 stated, “Funds received were deposited at the bank... Funds given to the victims was through the banks.” Management of cash intended for beneficiaries was managed using vouchers required for cash withdrawal at the bank. No physical cash exchanged hands between NGO employees or volunteers and the victims. PT1 said, “Victims were given vouchers to withdraw at the

bank. No physical cash was given to the victims.” Despite the importance of needs-based financial management in guiding expenditure, a review of the disaster operation report suggest most items were either over spent or under-spent. For instance, emergency relief supplies (medicines and first-aid) was overspent by 46.9% because of underbudgeting, transportation overspent by 42% because of inflation in the cost of fuel during distribution, and monitoring was underspent by 31% because of overbudgeting.

**Physical supplies management.** Management of physical relief supplies used the ration card strategy. During the needs assessment, NGOs volunteers filled the ration card with the details and needs of each beneficiary. PT4 stated, “Per the assessment, we prioritized victims by vulnerability thereby given priority to the most vulnerable such as expecting mothers, disables, and the aged.” Relief items were purchased based on the ration card upon arrival of the funds. PT4 said, “When we received the funds, the relief items were purchased and victims were invited to receive their items in the office.” The ration card was important for two main reasons: first was to ensure that the funds were used for the designated purpose as well as avoidance of fraud, and secondly the avoidance of commotion during distribution of relief supplies. PT3 shared, “All funds received stated the intended purpose for which the funds were sent for and therefore can’t be diverted or used for any other project” and added that, “The used of the ration card also helped us to control fraud since some people use such situation to perpetrate fraud.” Victims were required to collect the supplies at designated drop points instead of being sent directly to them. PT1 shared, “Due to the limited resources and to prevent commotion and confusion we avoided sending the relief items to the community where



the victims live,” and added, “I wish relief items were sent directly to the victims in their community.”

**Human resources management.** Human resources management strategies emerged as a strength in the operations of NGO when providing humanitarian aid. The NGO had a large network of volunteers that were mobilized during the disaster. PT13 shared, “The strength is the large number of volunteers they mobilized to assist in disaster operation” and “Our strength was our large number of volunteer support as compared to other non-profit organizations” (PT11). In addition to a large volunteer population, the NGO is grass-roots-based, meaning it has volunteers in almost every community who respond quickly to any disaster within the community. PT1 stated, “Our organization is a grass-root based and have core volunteers in almost every community. They are our first respondents and point of contacts in the community where the disaster occurred.” Skills-based volunteers from various professional backgrounds also arrived to tackle complex issues. PT3 shared, “We have several skilled volunteers such as medical doctors and carpenters, and that helped us to provide prompt services during the disaster.” Along with their skills, the volunteers are also dedicated being, “They are skilful and dedicated to the volunteering job” (PT7).

**Management challenges.** Several factors suggested the needs-based management strategy encountered challenges during the humanitarian relief operations. Insufficient funds was the predominant challenge unanimously agreed by all participants. PT1 stated, “Sufficiency, I am not sure since the funds were not sufficient. We received some funds but were not enough” while PT8 was more direct, “Funds were not sufficient at all.”

Insufficiency of funds was a major problem, since it undermined the ability of the NGO to meet most of the needs of the victims identified in the detailed needs assessment. PT3 stated, “Funds were not sufficient and we were not able to provide the necessary support to some of the victims.” Some victims were left out because the funds were not sufficient to meet their needs. “Not all, but a lot of the victims were not taken care of or provided with relief items” (PT9). In addition, the NGO had no seed fund to manage disasters as indicated by PT1, “There is no seed money or disaster funds for NGOs to offer immediate relief support to victim.”

The challenge of insufficient funds contributed to logistics (transport and communication) challenges. A review of the disaster operations report revealed inflation in the cost of fuel, and the increased cost of recharge card made transport and communication budget to increase by 42% and 86%, respectively. The increased costs worsened the problem of insufficient funds. The lack of seed money created a barrier to quick and effective transportation in the first few hours of the disaster. PT1 stated, “There is no seed money or disaster funds for the organization and therefore when we called the volunteers. . . . It became difficult in providing initial financial support to the volunteers. Even how to pay for their transportation allowance was very difficult.” Interruption in communication through damaged phone network was a significant problem delaying rapid response and assessment. “Other issues included communication and telephone network since most of the telephone lines were down making it difficult to reach volunteers” (PT1). Breakdown in communication also delayed communication with volunteers outside of the disaster zone. According to PT2, “The weakness is about

communicating to the volunteers on time. The volunteers have their regular jobs and some of them were not in the disaster area when it occurred.”

### **Accountability Practices Used by the NGO**

Results from the interview and document analysis revealed that the NGO’s accountability during the Ghana flood and fire disaster of 2015 was donor-focused (upward accountability), while victims received only awareness education on the mission and the role of the NGO in the humanitarian relief operations.

**Donors’ funds-focused accountability.** Even though both donors and victims were important stakeholders affected by the operations of NGOs, accountability was only directed to the donors, mainly about proper and prudent use of donated funds. The main accountability practice was the detailed report on donations received and their usage. PT1 stated, “We accounted for the funds received from the Federation and donors. We published a detailed report of how funds and other resources were donated and copies sent to the federation and donors.” These reports are in standardized format for ease of reading and understanding as was indicated by PT3, “We have a standard format we follow in reporting disaster issues. We sent the report to the federation and donors and it contained detailed information about our activities, victims that were supported as well as their contact information.” The contact information on the victims were important for accountability, since some donors made a follow-up to ensure victims received all the listed relief supplies. PT13 stated, “In terms of experience, the donors sometimes verify from the victims to make sure they received the said items. Others provided additional information such as signed personal statements of the victims. PT7 said, “A detailed

report with photos and personal statements from the beneficiaries were sent to the donors.”

**Victims’ information-based accountability.** For the victims, accountability was based on information on the benefits they were to receive and the strategy of distributing relief supplies to victims. In particular, accountability was limited to educating the victims about the mission and role of the NGO in providing humanitarian aid. PT6 stated, “We made them aware of our mission and what they should expect from us.” Victim accountability was also about suggesting to them that NGOs’ only provide relief supplies to the most vulnerable according to their budgets (which were not disclose to victims). PT2 shared, “We informed the victims that our mission was to support the most vulnerable, therefore, not every victim will receive a donation or relief items from us.” No participant mentioned the amount of funds received and the percentage that actually went to the victims. The NGO was also accountable to the victims in making them aware of the reasons of disproportionate distribution of supplies. PT5 stated, “The victims were made aware of the items they were going to receive and the reason for giving some victims more than others.”

**Victims’ general lack of awareness on NGOs operations.** Despite the NGO’s briefing and educating victims on their mission and role, the effect of lack of financial (donation) accountability to victims created a general misconception about the source of funding among the victims. Most victims believed the government funded the relief supplies. PT4 stated, “Some [victims] thought the government was providing the relief items.” PT8 added, “Some of them [victims] thought that the organization was

representing the government.” This misconception led to the perception among the victims that they expect more assistance than was provided. PT2 shared, “Some victims also thought that the relief items were from the government and were expecting more than what was giving them. Some were even unhappy because they missed on the list of beneficiaries despite the education given by the NGO about their roles and limitations. PT6 stated, “Others were also not happy since they were not on the list of victims that received the relief items.” Some victims even perceived the NGO’s operations as fraudulent, receiving much more from donors and giving too little to them (victims). PT1 said, “Some victims perceived that the NGO received so much from the donors but only a little portion were given to them.”

### **How the NGO Involved Disaster Victims**

The NGO involved disaster victims in the humanitarian operations in two main ways: (a) as a source of information and (b) to validate their reports to donors. As sources of information, disaster victims provided important feedback during the detailed needs assessments. They provided information about their individual needs as well as situational information. PT4 stated, “We went to the disaster area and made a quick assessment of the situation and followed up with a detailed assessment to interview the victims.” Information from victims were used to estimate, acquire and distribute relief supplies. PT10 shared, “Relief items and cash donation are given to victims based on the information obtained during the assessment.” The disaster victims also provided their views and perception of the situation in post-relief surveys to help the NGO assess the impact of their humanitarian operations. PT8 stated, “We went back to the victims after a

couple of weeks and they told us about the impact of our relief items and cash.” PT12 added, “We went back to the community and did a house-to-house follow up with the victims who revealed to us about how our donations and program had helped them.” The second important involvement of disaster victims was to validate the detailed reports prepared by the NGO for donors. The disaster victims either provided their contacts, pictures or appended their signatures on the detailed reports to the donors. PT11 stated, “Data of beneficiaries and their signatures, alongside what they received was sent to the regional office.” PT9 shared, “A detailed report on how the funds were spent was sent to donors, and we made sure that photos and statements from recipients were attached.”

### **Discrepant Cases**

Discrepant cases refer to observations that are distant or inconsistent with the general observations. In the thematic analysis, two discrepant cases emerged from the theme of accountability: subtheme victims’ benefit-based accountability and subtheme donor-focused (upward) accountability. On the question of accountability to the victims, it was generally agreed that it would be through the provision of information to the victims about their (NGO) mission and role in humanitarian relief activities. Common responses included, “We explained our mission and what they should expect from the organization” (PT11) and “We made them aware of our mission and what they should expect from us” (PT6). However, two participants (PT4 and PT7) indicated that the NGO was not accountable to the victims whatsoever. When asked about accountability to victims, PT4 said that the NGO was not accountable to the victims since the NGO offered a voluntarily service. “I don’t think there was any accountability since we were there to

help.” On the part of PT7, the response was categorical, comparing victims to beggars who have no choice and do not deserve accountability. Instead, accountability is the preserve of executives and donors. “There is a saying that a beggar has no choice, and, therefore, I think accountability should be between executives and the donors” (PT7).

The other discrepant case was many participants suggesting NGOs were accountable only to donors, but a few indicated accountability to both donors and the public. PT6 suggested that accountability should include both donors and the general public. The NGO availed its detailed financial report to all donors and the general public. PT6 stated, “A detailed report on funds utilization, which was made public, was sent to all donors as well. These reports had photographs and video attachments.” No other participant in the same organization suggested publishing the fund-utilization report for public consumption. However, in cases where the NGO had crowd-sourced funds from the public, the public becomes a donor making the NGO accountable to them just like other institutional or individual donors. Therefore, while this discrepant case might be true, it remains surprising that no other participant shared a similar view.

The third and final discrepant case was insufficiency of funds unanimously agreed by all interviewed participants and document review findings of a balance of US\$9,209, which the NGO returned to the disaster emergency relief fund. Although not explained in the disaster operations report, the surplus funds could be attributed to inflated budget projection. During the detailed needs assessment, the meteorological services had forecasted a continuous heavy rainstorm for a couple of days which influenced the financial team to increase budget allocation for some items. However, the forecasted

weather event did not materialize, which reduced the need for most relief items providing a logical explanation to the surplus funds reported. On the other hand, if the heavy rains had continued as forecasted, then the concern of insufficient funds as shared by all the participants could be valid.

### **Conclusion**

The present study gathered and analyzed the experiences of directors, employees and volunteers of a humanitarian NGO who actively participated in providing relief aid to victims of the Ghana flood and fire disaster of 2015 and three key findings emerged.

First, management strategies were needs-based. Rapid and detailed needs assessment formed the basis of rescue mission, first-aid operations, budget preparation and request for funds. Results of needs assessment were used to fill out vouchers and ration cards for beneficiaries to withdraw cash at the bank and to collect relief supplies respectively. The needs-based strategy benefited from a large body of local, skilled and dedicated volunteers, but encountered substantial challenges of insufficient funds and logistical (transport and communication) problems for volunteers as well as coordination of humanitarian operations.

Second, accountability adopted mixed practices for donors and victims. For donors, accountability was funds-based, involving a detailed fund-utilization report replete with photo and video evidence. For victims, accountability was information-driven, involving creating awareness and education on the mission and role of the NGO, including explanations on distribution strategies – improper distribution or why some victims received more supplies than others. Information-driven accountability was



fraught with victims' misconceptions of government-funded donations and attendants' complaints of insufficiency of aid.

Third, the involvement of disaster victims in the humanitarian operations was twofold: (a) as a source of information for the preparation of detailed needs assessment and postrelief assessment of the impact of the humanitarian operations on the victims.; and (b) to validate the detailed reports of donors through the provision of their contact details, photos, videos, or signed written statement.

In Chapter 5 I discuss the findings and present overall conclusions. The chapter begins with a restatement of the purpose of research and the research questions. I then discuss the contribution of the findings to the wider research field on management and accountability in humanitarian NGOs, the limitations of the study, as well as implications to NGO practices. The chapter concludes by identifying an area for further research that would corroborate the findings or generalize them to other disaster settings or organizations.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

### Introduction

This qualitative case study was conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of the capacity challenges that an NGO experienced while managing humanitarian operations in the 2015 flood and fire disaster in Ghana. In this regard, I sought to investigate the strategies and practices employed by the NGO for the purpose of ensuring efficiency in discharging their mandates. Ultimately, I answered the following central research question as well as three subquestions:

The central research questions was the following:

1. What experiences did humanitarian relief nonprofit organization leaders have in coordinating and managing humanitarian assistance operations in the 2015 flood and fire disaster in Ghana?

The research subquestions follow:

SQn 1: What were some of the management systems that were used in the humanitarian operation?

SQn 2: What are some of the accountability practices that the NGO used in the humanitarian assistance operation?

SQn 3: In what ways, if any, did the relief organization involve stakeholders, particularly the disaster victims in its operations?

The necessary data for answering the research questions were obtained from interviews with a total of 13 ( $N = 13$ ) participants, including directors the front-line managers, employees, as well as volunteers. Such data were also obtained through review

of archival documents, including the Emergency Plan of Action Final Report by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). The following three key findings and two discrepant cases emerged from the study:

1. The NGO adopted two main management strategies in discharging its mandates: operational management strategies and financial management strategies, all of which were needs-based. Other management strategies that characterized the NGO's management systems included physical supplies and human resource management.
2. In the course of managing humanitarian operations in the 2015 flood and fire disaster in Ghana, the NGO experienced three capacity challenges: insufficient funding (predominant challenge), logistical problems (i.e., transport and communication challenges), and volunteer support.
3. Accountability practices employed by the NGO in discharging its mandates included upward accountability (donor-focused) and victim benefit-based accountability.

I encountered the following two discrepant cases:

1. Despite the general feeling that the NGO exercised accountability to the victims, in terms of making them aware of the NGO's mandates in managing the humanitarian assistance operations, some participants thought that the NGO was not accountable to the victims.
2. Despite the general finding that the upward accountability was donor-focused, some participants held that the upward accountability was both

donor-focused and Ghanaian public-focused, especially in cases where the NGO had crowd-sourced funds from the Ghanaian public.

The findings on needs-based management strategies and challenges emerged strongly. Findings on accountability practices had a few discrepant cases on whether NGOs are accountable to donors and the public in the same way. Further cross-sectional research would help solidify this conclusion.

In this chapter, I discuss the findings and conclusions of the study as well as appropriate recommendations for action. In addition to the subsequent introductory section on the purpose and nature of the study as well as provides a summary of key findings of the study, the rest of the chapter is organized into five main sections: interpretation of findings; limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and conclusion. I describe the extent to which the findings of the study confirm, disconfirm, and/or extend knowledge in the area of study by comparing the findings of the study with relevant findings in an existing peer-reviewed literature. I also analyze and interpret the findings of the study in the context of Freeman's stakeholder theory. I describe the limitations regarding the trustworthiness experienced during the execution of the study. On the recommendations section, emphasis is made on the necessary recommendations for further research grounded on the strengths and limitations of the current study, as well as the literature reviewed under chapter 2 of the study. The implications section, on the other hand, provides a description of the potential impact of positive social change at different levels, including individual, family, organizational, as well as policy levels. In

addition, I also describe the methodological, theoretical, and empirical implications of the study.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

Findings revealed that participants perceived that the NGO provided financial accountability to donors, but not to disaster victims, nor were victims involved in the NGO's operations. The study's findings have implications for how future researchers in related disasters may approach studies in disaster management by including the perspectives of both NGO and victims in humanitarian aid operations. Insufficient funds was identified as the predominant operational challenge faced by NGOs while managing humanitarian operations during disasters, and thus affirming Zakaria's (2011) assertion that a lack of funds limits the quantity and quality of work that any given NGO can undertake. In addition, I found that the NGO adopted a donor-focused (upward) accountability practice, a phenomenon that corroborates Zakaria's claim that NGOs have more incentives to satisfy donors than the victims/beneficiaries. According to Chu (2015), the instrumental perspective of Freeman's stakeholder theory implies that organizations would target their efforts in maintaining the relationship with stakeholders such as donors and the government(s). Therefore, the finding of donor-focused accountability practices employed by the NGO in the management of the humanitarian assistance operations in the 2015 flood and fire disaster in Ghana confirms Chu's proposition. I also extended Freeman's stakeholder theory by employing its normative, descriptive, and instrumental perspectives (Susnienė & Sargūnas, 2011) to develop an in-depth understanding of the management strategies and accountability practices employed

by the NGO in the discharge of its mandates during the 2015 flood and fire disaster in Ghana, as well as the capacity challenges experienced by the NGOs during the 2015 disaster.

### **Management Systems Used in the Humanitarian Operations**

In the first research subquestion of this study, I sought to find the management systems that were used by NGO in the management of the humanitarian aid operations in the 2015 disaster. I found that needs-based operational and financial management were the two main management systems used by the NGO in the humanitarian operations in the 2015 flood and fire disaster in Ghana.

**Operational management.** The operational management strategies was employed in all three phases of the humanitarian operations: initial (rapid response) phase, relief assistance phase, and post humanitarian operations phase. PT3 indicated that before carrying out the actual humanitarian assistance operations, the NGO dispatched its rapid response team to assess the disaster situation and safety of staff in their movements into the affected communities. “A rapid response team was dispatched to the disaster scene to assess the situation and determined whether it was safe for us to go in or not.” PT2 confirmed PT3’s claims, and added that rapid assessment formed the basis of the NGOs’ rescue missions. “After the rapid assessment, we immediately helped in the rescue mission and also provided first aid to the victims” (PT2). The role of rapid assessment in determining the number of victims and amount of emergency relief suppliers required by the victims were also emphasized by PT4, PT7, and PT13. “We used rapid assessment: we went to the disaster area and made a quick assessment of the

situation (PT4), used the rapid response strategy for the initial assessment, and assisted the casualties with first aid” (PT7). “We also met at a central point and the leaders tasked us to do a rapid assessment and report back for further evaluation” (PT13).

In a review of the IFRC’s Emergency Plan of Action Final Report (“the Report”), I found that on 4 June 2015, the Ghana Red Cross Society (GRCS) engaged 60 volunteers to carry out a rapid assessment to determine the number of lives lost, disaggregated data of affected persons, property status, as well as immediate needs. The report indicated that the GRCS was able to establish that 46,370 people were affected in the five communities of Adabraka, Alajo, Aworshie, Lower McCarty Hill, and Nima through the rapid assessment. Similarly, the report stated that the rapid assessment enabled the GRCS to perform a detailed assessment that informed the profiling of beneficiaries; orient 30 volunteers on the use of rapid mobile phone-based survey (RAMP) and Epidemic Control for Volunteers (ECV) manual; reach a total of 54,742 people via health and hygiene promotion campaign, distribute 100 household water treatment (HHWT) kits and 60 hygiene kits to the most vulnerable families; establish five oral rehydration points (ORPs) and first aid posts that facilitated the treatment of 167 casualties and 35 onward referrals as well as distribute physical supplies (e.g., clothing, blankets, and mosquito nets) to 205 of the most vulnerable families

The assertions by PT2, PT3, PT4, PT7, and PT13, as well as indications in the report regarding rapid assessment, corroborate the broad consensus that disaster preparation planning, including forecasting organizing, warning, and managing disaster

situation effectively, is an integral aspect of effective, efficient, and successful humanitarian aid operations (Balland, 2013; Ito, 2011).

After the rapid assessment, the NGO embarked on the response phase of the humanitarian assistance operations by providing some basic relief items. As pointed out by PT6, the response phase entailed conducting direct interviews with the disaster victims and making personal observations. “I went to the community where the disaster occurred. . . , witnessed the situation myself and also interviewed the victims. I also interviewed the community leaders such as the Imam, pastors and the assemblyman” (PT6). PT6’s claims were affirmed by PT7, who added, “We used detailed assessment through interviews and personal observations and collected information of victims.” According to PT10, information obtained from both the rapid and detailed needs assessment informed the ration of distributing the limited relief supplies and cash donations to the 2015 disaster victims. “We used rapid and detailed assessment for data collection and relief items and cash donations were given to the victims based on the information obtained from the assessment” (PT10).

A review of the Report confirmed the assertions by PT6 and PT10. Through the detailed assessment of the disaster situation and the needs of the disaster victims, the GRCS was able to identify and register the most vulnerable beneficiaries as well as develop appropriate mechanism for reaching the 54,742 disaster victims and distributing emergency supplies to the victims based on the needs assessment data. The findings, therefore, corroborate Olin and Schreeb’s (2014) assertion about conducting disaster victims’ needs assessments. Defining, measuring, and interpreting such needs, as well as



distributing relief supplies based on the needs assessment data, is an important strategy for ensuring effective and efficient humanitarian assistance operations, especially for NFP organizations operating in resource-scarce settings.

The findings of the study suggest that evaluation of the impact of the interventions of the NGO on the lives of the victims marked the final phase of the NGO's operational management strategy during the humanitarian assistance operations in the 2015 disaster. This is confirmed by PT7 and PT8, who shared that postrelief evaluation of the humanitarian aid operations during the 2015 disaster had positive impacts on the disaster victims. "We did a follow up and through post-disaster interviews, most of the victims that received support from the organization were very appreciative" (PT7). "We went back to the victims after a couple of weeks and they told us of the positive impact of our relief items and cash to them" (PT8). PT7's and PT8's claims are corroborated by the Report, which showed that beneficiaries participating in the postrelief satisfaction survey recorded a mean score of 4.0, an indication that they were happy with both the quality and quantity of the humanitarian aid operations during the 2015 disaster.

**Financial management.** The second management system used by the NGO in the humanitarian assistance operations was financial management, which like the operation management, was needs-based. As pointed out by PT10, the financial management strategy entailed distributing financial allocations in accordance with the needs of the disaster victims. "All funds received were either used to purchase relief items or given to the victims as cash" (PT10). In addition, PT13 indicated that the needs-based financial management strategy informed the NGO of the decision to draw the initial budget and

request for funds based on the disaster victims' needs assessment data: "Our budget was based on the detailed assessment we took and that helped us to request for the funds from the federation and donors" (PT13). According to PT13, the needs-based financial management strategy enabled the NGO to meet the needs of the most vulnerable disaster victims within short deadlines.

Management was prudent of the limited financial resources. The Report indicated surplus funds were returned to the DREF, minimizing embezzlement of disaster funds by ensuring that such funds were not physically handled by the NGO's employees, as pointed out by PT1. Thus, the NGO operated within its budgetary allocations and met the needs of the most vulnerable disaster victims within strict deadlines. The use of needs-based financial management strategy and the prudent management of disaster funds by the NGO, as established in this study, therefore corroborate the proposition by McCaffery (2006) that NGOs have a duty to ensure proper use of funds received as well as account for such funding, since most of the funds are public funds. Despite the effectiveness of the needs-based financial management in enhancing financial prudence, a review of the Report established that most of the relief items were either underspent or overspent. For instance, because of underbudgeting, the NGO overspent by 46.9% in the procurement of emergency relief supplies, such as first aid and medicines.

The findings also extended and strengthened the knowledge area concerning the use of physical supplies management and human resources management as effective strategies for managing humanitarian aid operations. In particular, the findings confirmed the effectiveness of the ration card strategy as an effective tool for managing physical

supplies in humanitarian aid operations. As stated by PT4, the volunteers of the NGO were able to effectively and efficiently manage the physical supplies during the humanitarian operations by using the ration cards to profile the beneficiaries and their specific needs. PT3 pointed out the two ways in which the ration cards were significant. First, the ration cards ensured that funds received were utilized for the intended purposes thereby avoiding potential cases of fraud.

All funds received stated the intended purpose for which the funds were sent and therefore couldn't be diverted or used for any other project. . . . The use of the ration cards also helped us to control fraud since some people use this situation to perpetrate fraud.

Second, according to PT1, the ration cards also enhance order during the distribution of relief supplies. "There was no fear of looting and commotion since items were rationed to the vulnerable" (PT1).

With regard to human resources management, PT13, PT11, PT3, and PT7 identified the large number of professionally diverse and dedicated volunteers at the NGO's disposal as its critical source of strength during humanitarian operations in the 2015 disaster. "The strength is from the large number of volunteers mobilized to assist in the disaster operation" (PT13). "Our strength was that we had a large number of volunteer support as compared to other nonprofit organizations" (PT11). "We had several skilled volunteers such as medical doctors and carpenters and that helped us to provide prompt services during the disaster" (PT3). They are skillful and dedicated to the volunteering job" (PT7).

## **Management Challenges**

This study purposed to develop an in-depth understanding of the capacity challenges faced by the NGO while managing humanitarian aid operations in the 2015 flood and fire disaster in Ghana. The needs-based management strategies adopted by the NGO during the humanitarian operations faced a number of challenges. All 13 participants agreed that insufficient funding was the predominant capacity challenge experienced by the NGO during the humanitarian operations. According to PT3, the insufficiency of funds received was limited to the NGO's ability to provide the necessary support to some of the disaster victims. "Funds were not sufficient and we were unable to provide the necessary support to some of the victims" (PT3). The insufficiency of funds led to logistical problems such as transport and communication. For instance, the Report indicated that the transport and communication budget went up by 42% and 86%, respectively, due to inflation in the cost of fuel as well as increase in the cost of recharge cards. PT1 and PT2 pointed out that poor communication network in the affected areas also posed significant logistical problems. "Communication and phone network were also some of the problems encountered since most of the phone lines were down and made it difficult for the volunteers to be reached" (PT1). These findings therefore confirm an assertion by Zakaria (2011) that insufficient funding significantly limits the quantity and quality of work that NGOs undertake during humanitarian assistance operations.

### **Accountability Practices Employed by the NGOs**

According to Olugbenga (2012), accountability, coordination, and performance most strongly influence the character and behavior of NGOs. Every NGO has different stakeholders, including the donors, beneficiaries, volunteers, government, as well as the society (Olugbenga, 2012). Therefore, the stakeholder theory posits that an NGO must be accountable to all its stakeholders, since every stakeholder counts in the success of the NGO (Hoque & Parker, 2015). I therefore assumed that the management of the NGO's humanitarian operation in the 2015 flood and fire disaster in Ghana were accountable to the stakeholders, and thus sought to establish the accountability practices the NGO employed in the humanitarian assistance operations. The results from both the interviews and document review indicated that the accountability practice adopted by the NGO was mainly upward (donor- focused). The disaster victims, on the other hand, received only awareness education regarding the mandate of the NGO in the management of the humanitarian assistance operation.

**Donor-focused upward accountability.** PT1 indicated that the upward accountability practice employed by the NGO focused mainly on the donors, with particular emphasis on proper and prudent use of donor funds. Tools of accountability in this regard included detailed, standardized reports on donations received by the NGO and how such donations were utilized during the humanitarian operation. "We accounted for the funds received from the Federation and donors. We published a detailed report of how funds and other resources were donated and copies were sent to the federation and donors" (PT1). In addition to demonstrating to the donors how the donations received

were distributed, the findings indicated that the reports also included the NGO's activities, the disaster victims (supported by the NGO) and their personal contacts (PT3), as well as signed personal statements of the victims (PT7).

The findings on donor-focused upward accountability practice by the NGO thus corroborate evidence in existing accountability literature (Chu, 2015; Hoque & Parker, 2015; Leiter, 2013; Olugbenga, 2012). For instance, Olugbenga (2012) asserted that the accountability practice adopted by an NGO to a given stakeholder is determined by the extent to which the NGO depends on that stakeholder. The level of such dependence has an effect on the power relations between the NGO and its stakeholders (Olugbenga, 2012). According to Olugbenga, an NGO would therefore prioritize the needs of a certain stakeholder over other stakeholders as a consequent in the power relations. In the current study, the donor-focused accountability by the NGO to the donors could therefore be attributed to the latter's financial power and the former's dependence on such power to undertake its humanitarian operations.

The reliance on financial reports and statements as accountability tools indicated by the findings of this study confirms Hoque and Parker's (2015) claim that financial reports and statements are the most accepted tools of accountability, as they are popular with the most regulatory authorities and funding bodies who consider them as accountable tools. The findings corroborate Leiter's (2013) contention that NFP organizations resort to donor-focused accountability practice as a means of attracting more funding from their donors.

**Victims' information-based accountability.** Accountability centered on meeting the NGO's mandate to manage the humanitarian assistance operations and the benefits entitled to the victims. This was evident in PT6's and PT2's statements: "We made them aware of our mission and what they should expect from us" (PT6). "We made the victims aware that our mission was to support the most vulnerable so not every victim will receive a donation or relief items from us" (PT2). In addition, PT5 indicated that the NGO accounted to the disaster victims by informing them of the disproportionate distribution of emergency relief supplies. The victims were not informed of the amount or percentage and sources of the amount of funds received by the NGO. Therefore, in this regard, the findings confirm Assad and Goddard's (2010) claim that in most cases, beneficiaries are overlooked in the practice of NGO accountability largely because they are viewed as customers without purchasing power, given that they do not pay for the humanitarian services they receive from the NGOs. According to Chu (2015), accountability efforts by NGOs are often directed at maintaining the relationship with powerful stakeholders (i.e., the donors as evident in the current case). Nevertheless, Assad and Goddard (2010) argued that the center of an NGO's survival is an effective program outcome that is manifested through the impact of the intended beneficiaries.

### **Involvement of Stakeholders/Victims in the NGO's Operations**

The third research subquestion (SQn 3) was aimed at how the NGO involved the stakeholders, particularly the disaster victims in their humanitarian operations. The level of the NGO's involvement with the victims was limited to provision of important feedback during the detailed needs assessment phase (PT12) as well as validation of the

NGO's reports to the donors during accountability (PT9 and PT11) . Consequently, the findings suggested that failure by the NGO to involve the victims in its financial operations occasioned a general misconception regarding the amount and source(s) of funding among the victims. For example, as stated by PT4, PT8, and PT2, most of the victims believed that the government funded the emergency relief supplies, and the NGO was just representing the government. Such misconceptions concerning the amount and sources of funding thus made the victims to expect more humanitarian assistance from the NGOs. According to PT1's statement, some of the victims, especially those who were not included in the list of beneficiaries perceived the NGO as fraudulent, as they believed that the NGO had received much more from donors but far less were given to the victims.

The findings in this regard are inconsistent with O'Dwyer and Unerman's (2008) proposition that good governance and management practices as well as multistakeholder engagement define the operating principles of NGOs. According to O'Dwyer and Unerman's (2008), an NGO should strive to promote and respect universal principles on human rights, multi-takeholder engagement, effective programmes, independence, nondiscrimination, and transparency. The NGO in this case failed to uphold these principles as far as the involvement of stakeholders was concerned.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks**

This study was conducted to establish whether the NGO's management of the humanitarian assistance operations in the 2015 flood and fire disaster in Ghana met Freeman's stakeholder theory. The findings indicated that the humanitarian assistance



operations in the 2015 disaster did not meet the stakeholder theory in a number of fronts. First, the NGO managing the humanitarian assistance operations in the 2015 disaster did not adhere to all the three perspectives of the stakeholder theory: the normative, descriptive, and instrumental perspectives. The NGO focused more on the instrumental perspective of the stakeholder theory at the expense of the other two perspectives. Second, the NGO involved in the humanitarian operations failed to employ management strategies that would have enhanced maximum efficiency, transparency, coordination, as well as performance management. Third, the NGO failed to remain accountable to all their relevant stakeholders, particularly the disaster victims: Contradicting stakeholder theory, the victims were treated as undeserving stakeholders with respect to financial accountability. Lastly, the NGO failed to adopt a stakeholder-oriented management approach to humanitarian aid operations in a manner and extent posited by the stakeholder theory.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The scope of the current study was limited to humanitarian aid operations in the 2015 flood and fire disaster in Ghana. In addition, participants in the study were assumed to be knowledgeable about the topic, honest, and truthful, as well as representatives of the population under study. In this regard, the generalizability of the findings of the study to other disasters is not automatic. However, given the current study's emphasis on issues of trustworthiness, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability strategies utilized to improve the accuracy of research results, relevancy, as well as acceptability of findings, the experiences of the NGO in managing the humanitarian

assistance operations in the 2015 flood and fire disaster in Ghana provide a critical foundation for the development of humanitarian aid operation policy framework that is likely to be replicated in other areas beyond Ghana.

### **Recommendations**

The current research is limited in terms of transferability, given that it was restricted to humanitarian aid operations in the 2015 flood and fire disaster in Ghana—a single case study. Nevertheless, the lived experiences of the NGO and other parties involved in the humanitarian assistance operations in the 2015 flood and fire disaster in Ghana are expected to inform future studies that are aimed at examining other disasters or other aspects of the 2015 disaster. In this regard, I recommend that future studies should adopt a mixed-method approach to research that involves more than one case study and comparison made on the generated results.

Given that the participants in this study were affiliated with the NGO involved in the management of the humanitarian assistance operations in the 2015 disaster, the participants may have attempted to protect the reputation of the organizations with which they were affiliated. Consequently, I recommend that successive studies should explore the perceptions of other stakeholders regarding the management of the humanitarian aid operations in the 2015 flood and fire disaster in Ghana.

In addition, considering that the current study adopted a qualitative research methodology, I recommend that successive studies should use quantitative methods to quantify the levels of satisfaction of stakeholders with the humanitarian aid operations in the 2015 flood and fire disaster in Ghana.

## **Implications**

### **Positive Social Change**

The goal of this study was to establish the management systems and accountability practices employed by an NGO in managing the 2015 disaster. I also attempted to gain an in-depth understanding of the capacity challenges experienced by the NGO during the operations. The ultimate aim was to suggest how the lived experience of the NGO could inform policy development. The knowledge generated in this study is therefore expected to inform the design of humanitarian assistance operations models that protect and promote the rights of all relevant stakeholders in the context of social, political, economic, and cultural concerns associated with emergency humanitarian relief. The concept of social justice is a cardinal consideration by NGOs and other humanitarian aid providers when managing humanitarian aid operations in the future.

### **Methodological and Theoretical Implications**

The that indicated that the NGO failed to exercise financial accountability to the disaster victims, and the victims were not effectively and reasonably involved in the NGO's operations. These constitute a critical contribution to the design of effective and efficient future humanitarian assistance operations models. The study's findings have implications for how future researchers may apply the theoretical framework of the stakeholder theory in assessing the outcomes of other humanitarian aid operations in other disasters.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

I recommend that in the unfortunate event of occurrence of a similar disaster, the lived experiences of the players involved in managing humanitarian assistance operations in the 2015 flood and fire disaster in Ghana as well as the knowledge gained therein should inform the design and management of humanitarian assistance operations. In addition, for purposes of ensuring effective, efficient, and socially just and fair humanitarian aid operations that address the concerns of all relevant stakeholders, NGOs and other providers of humanitarian assistance should plan and manage their activities in accordance with the stakeholder theory.

### **Conclusion**

The lack of adequate preparation and capacity have undermined the ability of NGOs to provide humanitarian aid during and after a disaster. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of humanitarian NGOs in coordinating and managing relief assistance with a focus on the 2015 flood and fire disaster in Ghana. Particularly, I sought to determine what management systems, accountability practices, strategies of involvement of the disaster victims in the relief operations, and challenges were encountered during the provision of humanitarian aid. Data collection included semistructured interviews to gather the experiences and perceptions of 13 members of an NGO that participated in the 2015 flood and fire disaster in Ghana. Data analysis was thematic, using NVivo software to identify, code, and categorize themes as well as determined the relationship between themes.

The findings indicated that humanitarian aid operations can serve as effective adaptation response to disasters such as the one experienced in Ghana in 2015. However, relief efforts must be designed properly, considering all the needs of relevant stakeholders, particularly the victims. Responses must be just, fair, and adequately. Otherwise, humanitarian aid operations can leave some stakeholders dissatisfied if they are not effectively and reasonably involved in the NGO's operations. This study thus proposed a pragmatic victim-centered approach to humanitarian assistance operations during disastrous events. Such an approach ought to be grounded in the stakeholder theory and aimed at ensuring social justice and fairness for the disaster victims as well as other stakeholders, including the volunteers. Henceforth, the stakeholder theory should form the theoretical framework within which NGOs and other providers of humanitarian aid undertake their humanitarian operations.

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## Appendix: Interview Questions

- 1) What informed your decision to provide emergency relief service in the flood and fire disaster on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 in Ghana?
- 2) Did you receive sufficient funds for your operation?
- 3) What were your objectives for serving in Ghana?
- 4) What kinds of experience did you have in Ghana?
- 5) What strategies did your organization use to assist the disaster victims?
- 6) What were the reporting mechanisms or accountability obligations to your donors for the disaster relief operations and what experiences are particularly relevant?
- 7) Were the strategies and to what extent are they effective in realizing your objectives?
- 8) What is the perception of disaster victims about your programs?
- 9) How did you determine their perception?
- 10) What would you say was the weaknesses and strengths of your operations?
- 11) How did you ensure proper utilization of funds?
- 12) How did you assess the impact of your programs on the disaster victims?
- 13) How did you identify the needs of the victims?
- 14) Is there anything you feel you could have done differently?
- 15) What were the accountability mechanisms towards the victims?
- 16) Is there anything else that you would like to add that I have not mentioned?