In June 1999, I was a volunteer for a United States non-governmental organization, Crossroads Africa. I joined six other American women traveling to Ghana, West Africa to participate in a collaborative program designed by the Ghana Red Cross Society and Crossroads Africa. Specifically our group was assigned to work on a Women in Development (WID) project with three rural women’s collectives, “Mothers Clubs,” assisting them with income-generating projects in the Volta Region of Ghana.

The projects varied among the villages. In village one, Anfoeta Tsebi, the women extracted oil from palm fruit and kernels. They sold palm oil at regional markets and used the oil domestically to make stews and soap for washing. In village two, Heffi, Mothers Club members baked bread and processed *gari* from cassava yams. In village three, Anyirawase, the women made batiks, tie-dye, beadwork, and woven mats from cornhusks.

My research objective was to evaluate the role that gender, the WID design, and power played in each project. I also sought to use my observations
and the voices of African women to assess the successes and failures of the collaborative program of the Ghana Red Cross and Crossroads Africa. I used participant observation to gather this information. The sample was inclusive of project participants.

I found that the women's collectives provided positive networks of support for members. The women taught our Crossroads volunteers about how they were creating change. The collectives also showed how successful development depends on improving the quality of life for individuals. The women gained skills in leadership and health education, while they improved their economic situation. Women were becoming collectively empowered through their role as active agents for change in their communities. Their hard work, dedication, and widespread recognition of their accomplishments contributed to group empowerment.

My findings suggest that the primary obstacles to project success were lack of resources and time and physical exhaustion from an increased workload. Poor preparation and training for Crossroads volunteers and their ideological fragmentation prevented effective assistance and collaboration with the Mothers Clubs.

One of my recommendations for future improvements is to integrate men into the development process to play a constructive role and minimize their opportunity for unwanted interference. Another recommendation is to encourage Ghana Red Cross leaders to hold seminars for women from different villages to allow for an exchange of knowledge about development projects. Finally,
recommend that Crossroads Africa and Ghana Red Cross leaders make a greater effort to collaborate and improve preparation and training for participants.

by

Katherine Elise Vickers

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Presented April 4, 2001
Commencement June 2001
Master of Arts thesis of Katherine Elise Vickers presented on April 4, 2001

APPROVED:

Redacted for privacy

Major Professor, representing Applied Anthropology

Redacted for privacy

Chair of Department of Anthropology

Redacted for privacy

Dean of Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become a part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Katherine Elise Vickers, Author
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my sincere gratitude to John Young for your guidance and patience during the writing and many months of tedious editing. I also thank Nancy Rosenberger and Susan Shaw for your support during the graduate program and thesis writing. I wish to especially thank Ataa Akyeampong for your suggestions, advice, and your friendship. I also thank Catherine Knott-Grant for your wisdom, hospitality, and sharing your personal experiences in Africa.

To Mariana Mace, I especially offer my thanks and love. You have been a mentor and friend, during my years in Oregon. I truly thank you and Peter for your emotional and academic support. The evenings of live music, warm meals, and relaxation at Sisters, OR were wonderful. I do not think that I can express my gratitude for all the love and support you have provided me during this challenging process.

I also want to thank my Ghanaian friends at Oregon State University for your generosity. I especially thank Diana Djokotoe and Kweku for cooking me a delicious Ghanaian dinner and answering all of my questions before traveling to Ghana. I also thank your friend Robert who was so kind to me while in Ghana. I thank Wynie Pankani for taking the time to talk with me about Ghana and for providing me with contacts while in Accra. Mercy Chikoko, I am grateful for your friendship and hope that you are safe and happy with your family back in Malawi.

To all of my friends--Nan, Elaine, Emily, Michele, Suzanne, Mike, Oona, Debasish, and Nick--I truly cannot thank you all enough. I especially thank my
loyal and dear friend, Thomas who offered daily support, love, and encouragement. I also want to thank Lorna for bringing so much radiant beauty, laughter, and loving support into my life. To Barbara Delaney, I am forever grateful for your guidance.

To my dear mother and father, I thank with all of my heart, for without you both this would not be possible. You have offered financial, emotional, moral, and loving support for which I am extremely grateful. I also thank my grandmother KaKa, Auntie, Talyne, and Chris for your beautiful cards, letters and words of wisdom.

I also thank my friends in the Crossroads group, especially Stefani and Linda, for all the laughs and evening conversations under the glorious African evening sky. I want to close by offering thanks to the Ghana Red Cross Society leaders in Ho and Accra. I especially thank the women in the Mothers Clubs. I thank you all for being my teachers. Also, I thank you for welcoming “outsiders” into your home and for making us feel so welcome. To the women of the Ghana Red Cross Society, I will forever admire your strength and courage. Safe journey, we shall meet again. Thank you. Nado apemenuie, mak bo amegbe. Achbe.
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Dedication

For Sisterhood and Song

Woman of Africa
   Sweeper
   Smearing of floors and walls
   With cow dung and black soil
   Cook, ayah, the baby on your back
   Washer of dishes,
   Planting, weeding, harvesting
   Store-keeper, builder
   Runner of errands
   Cart, lorry, donkey...
   Woman of Africa
   What are you not?

Okot p' Bitek
Song of Ocol
Source: Our Own Freedom
GHANAIAN WOMEN, CREATING ECONOMIC SECURITY: AN ANALYSIS OF GENDER, DEVELOPMENT, AND POWER IN THE VOLTA REGION OF GHANA, WEST AFRICA

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The topic of women in development (WID) has been widely acclaimed throughout the past decade. Numerous active local and international women’s organizations, governmental and non-governmental organizations, have been established to design WID programs aimed to offer assistance to women worldwide. Several of these programs form “women’s groups” in rural villages to teach health education, establish collective work projects, and design economic programs, with goals of emancipating women. “Such programmes...are usually intended to ensure a more effective role for women in the development of their countries, thereby enhancing their own self-esteem as well as the recognition given them by the wider society” (Dolphyne 1991: xi).

These WID programs have been expanding rapidly within rural areas of West Africa. With the establishment of more programs, feminist researchers have evaluated the overall effectiveness and benefits of certain so-called ‘development’ programs. “For most African women, therefore, the emancipation of women and the status of women in society are closely linked with national development, and during the Decade most of the activities initiated for women in Africa were women in development programmes” (Dolphyne 1991: xn).
In Ghana, West Africa, women participants of the Ghana Red Cross Mothers Clubs in the Volta Region have made substantial progress to overcome social and economic barriers. This thesis is an evaluation of the Mothers Clubs benefits and limitations, regarding 1) sexual division of labor; 2) male impacts on the organization; 3) technological tools of productivity (power, machinery, transportation, financial infrastructure); and 4) the collaboration of an American NGO on certain projects.

This thesis will examine the topic of women’s economic development through extensive literature research and participatory evaluation of a collaborative ‘women in development’ project, specifically, a US based volunteer NGO women’s group, that traveled to Ghana, West Africa (See Map 1) and assisted the Ghana Red Cross Society’s women’s collective --Mothers Clubs-- on income-generating projects. An analysis of the functioning of the projects is based on my personal observations as a crossroads assistant to three Mothers Clubs. An evaluation of the Crossroads NGO group is presented. And finally, recommendations to support gender and indigenous knowledge as a foundation for future improvements are discussed.

My interests in international women’s issues relating to alternative program designs, such as cross-cultural exchange programs, are embedded within a personal background of activism and research on social justice, indigenous knowledge, cultural preservation, economic security and power concepts. These interests led me to work as a volunteer in Ghana in order to have cross-cultural exposure observing and working with an international women’s collective. After project completion, my interests have been directed towards the social and economic benefits of and barriers to ‘development’
Map 1 Ghana, West Africa

COUNTRIES AND CAPITALS
associated with capitalist systems and growth-mania program designs for Ghanaian women. Specifically, I question what type of development program designs benefit local women and actually contribute to self-empowerment and emancipation? Furthermore, what social and economic factors promote or inhibit success of such programs, especially collaborative projects?

The Ghanaian WID project was organized by a regional Red Cross leader, in conjunction with the director of the Gender and Development Institute based in Accra, Ghana. Their objective was to collaborate with Crossroads, in order to establish the first WID project for Crossroads Africa. They designed the program to allow for a 'cross-cultural exchange' among American women and African women. Crossroads Africa assigned me, by request, to be a volunteer for the WID project. There were a total of seven female Crossroads volunteers including one group leader. Our basic assignment was to assist three various Ghana Red Cross women's groups, the Mothers Clubs, with their income-generating projects in the Volta Region of Ghana.

Each village Mothers Club works on different projects to generate a collective income to first pay off their loan to Red Cross and then distribute remaining funds individually. We were told that many Mothers Clubs wanted us to work with them, but Ghana Red Cross planners were limited by time and allowed us to stay in only three villages. In the first village, Anfoeta Tsebi, we assisted the women on palm oil and palm kernel oil extraction, while also making local soap from the oil. In Hlefi, the second village, we worked on gari processing and bread baking. And in Anyirawase, the third village, we made batiks and tie/dye, beadwork, and cornhusk weaving for mats.
The objective of this thesis is to use both my experience and the voices of the African women, to evaluate the collaborative program's successes and failures. The methods used to carry out the research are presented in chapter two. Chapter three is a theoretical depiction of African women's issues concerning key concepts of feminism, development, alternative designs, power concepts and emancipation. Chapter four provides historical background of Ghana, Crossroads and participants, and Ghana Red Cross. Chapter five is the setting of the program with a geographical depiction of the villages in the Volta Region. Chapter six presents data and evaluation of the income-generating projects and findings. The final chapter provides information on economic and social constraints and benefits of Mothers Club programs. The collaborative project, is evaluated, and followed by recommendations to improve program designs that work to emancipate all participants and therefore benefit local women.
CHAPTER TWO

METHODS

Information for this study was gathered using the ethnographic method. Features of this method include combining observation and participation, in order to provide an in-depth analysis into the study of human culture. "The ethnographer participates, overtly and covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983: 2). The most common technique used to carry out this method is participant observation. Bernard defines this as, “getting close to people and making them feel comfortable enough with your presence so that you can observe and record information about their lives” (Bernard 1995: 136).

I began my research by reviewing historical depiction documents in the library before going into the field. I contacted the director of Crossroads Africa in New York City by phone and email to gain a thorough description of the WID project prior to departure in June 1999. I was not given this information until a few weeks before our June departure because I was told that the Ghana Red Cross director did not have a complete project design. I attended a three-day Crossroads Africa orientation in New York City. The orientation consisted of the historical background of the NGO, personal stories of past volunteers, an international health presentation, and group project work. The individual sessions lasted one to two hours, with large gaps of free time. A total of four volunteer groups focused on different aspects of development in Ghana: construction, health, agriculture, and women’s income-generating.
In Ghana, I used participant observation as the primary and most effective technique of gathering information. As an assistant to three local Mothers Clubs, I was able to work directly with the women on income-generating projects, observing their social dynamics. Natural conversations and informal chats took place with a few women who spoke substantial English at the workstations or while in route either to work, farms, or market. Living in three villages allowed me to work on various projects and live among the locals. Interactions took place with Mothers Club members, while cooking, going to fetch water, farming, traveling to market, visiting chiefs, and going to church services. Scheduled weekend trips allowed me to have two informal interviews with Ghana Red Cross leaders (See Chart 1). A final conversation with the director of the Ho regional office allowed me to gain extensive information on the history of Ghana Red Cross Society. I was also able to have an informal interview with the Mayor of Ho while attending a formal dinner at his house.

The participating members of the Mothers Clubs (See Chart 2) and Crossroads Africa (See Chart 3) were the chosen sample. However, there were one or two women per village with whom I worked closely and engaged in most of my conversations. All informants were told that I would be observing them and using our dialogues as a tool for gathering information on the projects. I also informed them that I would write about the Mothers Clubs in a formal context. In this thesis, I refer to all of these consults with pseudonyms in order to preserve confidentiality.
Chart 1. Ghana Red Cross Society Leaders:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Leadership Position</th>
<th>Cities</th>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ho</td>
<td>Accra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Mickel</td>
<td>Ataa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active volunteer</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Sandra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active volunteer</td>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport volunteer</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td></td>
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Chart 2. Names of Mothers Clubs Informants¹:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Position</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anfoeta Tsebi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hlei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anyirawase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Yawa (Vicky)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Akuyah (Val)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mila (Margaret)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-President</td>
<td>Apatia (Ella)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mada (Margie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nisa (Gene)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Reena (June)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asha (Ellie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yawa (Diane)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Secretary</td>
<td>Nana (Mary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vila (Eve)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apatia (Monica)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizer</td>
<td>Menya (Molly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mada (Beth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enya (Dorothy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Nyra (Candace)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maya (Diana)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Akuyah (Edith)</td>
</tr>
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Chart 3. Crossroads Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>College student</td>
<td>21 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blair</td>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>24 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>Full-time women's activist worker</td>
<td>24 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nan</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>30 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ana</td>
<td>College Student</td>
<td>21 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley</td>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>19 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandy</td>
<td>*Crossroads Leader, Graduate Student</td>
<td>42 years old</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ In the Volta Region, children are given a Ghanaian name at birth. The Ghanaian name is the day of the week the child is born. After four weeks (or longer depending on the village), the child goes through a naming ceremony, in which s/he is given a Christian name. Both names are carried on with each person through life. They believe there is a special connection with those people with the same Ghanaian name.
Several limitations inhibited the gathering of information. Language was a primary barrier in the rural villages. I had not been able to learn the language prior to going to Ghana, and only a few village women were able (or comfortable) to speak conversational English. This was disappointing because I could not conduct formal/structured interviews with Mothers Club participants. At the work site, the women conversed in Ewe a majority of the time, so I missed much of the casual verbal interactions among women. Even though I actively engaged in cracking, pounding, gathering, stirring, etc. with the women, they spoke to one another in Ewe’, which put up another distinctive barrier. However, there were a few leaders in each group that could translate in English. I was able to ask questions at the work site and record accurate information on the project work and the Mothers Club collective. The language barrier in village #1 also caused our Crossroads group a major monetary setback, due to communication difficulties about funds for our private group donation for the Mothers Clubs and separate funds for a church donation.

Another major barrier was the inability of the Crossroads group to actively work together. It was apparent that our negative group dynamics and lack of common goals had an impact on the work and dynamics of the Mothers Clubs. Several of the US volunteers were not comfortable with the living arrangements in the villages, which caused a lot of problems when trying to live and work among them. Our group did not collaborate well together from the beginning to the end, which drastically affected the dynamics of the project work in all villages. The Crossroads group was challenged the entire time. For instance, one volunteer had an emotional breakdown and returned to the
United States after week #2 of project work. Ghana Red Cross and Crossroads had to organize her evacuation out of the village. This challenged our group and the Mothers Club. Apatia said, “This is not America. No, we don’t have the same things here. Is this why she left?” The women appeared confused about the volunteer struggling to adapt to African culture. On other occasions, Crossroads members complained frequently of the lack of Western amenities, such as plumbing and shower facilities.

As Crossroads members in a volunteer group from America, we were treated with utmost respect; yet we were clearly labeled as guests and treated as outsiders. Janet Townsend, a geographer at University of Durham in England, quotes Chambers who says about researchers and academics going into these villages from the West, we are “rural development tourists” (Townsend et al. 1995: 4). This “outsider status” placed an additional limitation on my research. The women took it upon themselves to care for us and tend to our every need. For instance, they insisted on preparing and cooking our every meal, and they swept around our dwellings, and provided us with entertainment nightly. They were always attending to us and taking time out of their daily work demands to assist our every need.

I had been told that Ghanaian culture is renowned for its pride and hospitality, which is apparent in the Volta Region; however, this outsider status challenged me as an anthropologist for several reasons. The status of being American and/or from the “Western world” is associated with wealth, prosperity and honor to the common villagers. I struggled with this difference from the time I arrived up to the time departed. Even though I was a volunteer and assistant to the Mothers Clubs, our group was usually placed on wooden stools, and treated as outsiders looking in. As a result, I felt, as did
other Crossroads participants, that there was not a clear cross-cultural exchange occurring. As individuals and as a group we made efforts to allow for exchange by going to the schools and answering questions about American culture. Yet, on several occasions there was nothing tangible to teach local women. Emeya, a woman I visited one afternoon, asked me, “What do you have to teach us?”

Another limitation was the brief amount of actual project work time in each village. Although we were able to work on various projects, I felt that by not staying in one village for the entire length of time our objective of assisting the women and allowing for cross-cultural exchange was not carried out. This also reinforced our position as outsiders or tourists. For instance, the first stay in Anfoeta Tsebi was for fourteen days with only six days of actual project work. The remainder of our time was designed for leisure. One day we visited Amedzope, a mountain village with spectacular waterfalls. Another day, we hiked up to a gravity fed water supply system that a women’s church group helped build for the village a year ago. On other days, we visited homes and attended church services or schools. In Hlefi, we stayed for sixteen days and worked only eight days total. We visited Kpetoe, a village renowned for its kente cloth production. In Anyirawase, we worked for a total of eight out of fourteen days. In each village, we arranged home visits, attended church services, and made frequent visits to Ho. The brief time in each village also limited me in that I was not present long enough to attend the monthly village Mothers Club meeting with the Ghana Red Cross leaders and Mothers Clubs leaders. Although it was beneficial to be exposed to numerous aspects of the culture outside of the project work, this aspect of the project design presented barriers.
A final limitation occurred when the WID project finished and I left the group to gather information independently. At this point, I was faced with an awkward situation with a male political figure in Ho. Our Crossroads group planned to travel for a week. Due to the fact that most of us did not get along with one another, the group broke up and individuals went separate ways. One woman decided to return to the US early, and I chose to return to Accra to visit a Ghanaian friend, Brian. My plan was to return later to the Volta Region for scheduled structured interviews with Ghana Red Cross leaders.

Prior to splitting up, our group attended a dinner at the Mayor's house in Ho. Our group had seen the Mayor on numerous occasions and was overwhelmed by his generosity. After having dinner, he drove us in his Land Rover back to our present village site at Anyirawase. Everyone in the group was tired and quiet, but I stayed awake and talked with him about poetry and American culture. When he dropped us off, he discreetly handed me his card and said for me to call him anytime and he would be at my service.

Weeks later, when I arrived in Accra, I visited my friend Brian and his partner, Leanna. I explained to them plans to return to Volta Region in the next few days. After dinner, I phoned the Mayor to inform him of my plan to travel back to his region for interviews. At that time, he asked me where I was staying in Accra. Then, he proceeded to tell me that he would leave Ho immediately and be at my place in Accra in the morning. He insisted on coming directly to Accra to pick me up and then to take me to dinner. He explained that he would drive me back to Ho the following day and he would make arrangements for my stay.

At this point, I was startled by his request, especially since Ho is a long distance--approximately a six-hour drive-- from Accra. However, the Mayor insisted he would
drive through the night to meet me in the morning. I was made uncomfortable by his offer but wanted to assume it was his hospitality that was the motive. Also, I did not want to offend someone who had been so kind to our group, during our project work.

Immediately, I knew I needed to call my Ghanaian friend to seek his advice. So, I told the Mayor I would call him back soon. After speaking to Brian and Leanna, who informed me that the offer was not appropriate, I called and cancelled my trip back to Ho. As a result, I missed my scheduled interviews in Ho. So, I then decided to stay in Accra with friends the remainder of the time. While in Accra, I made several attempts to meet with the Accra director of Ghana Red Cross, but my calls were not returned.
CHAPTER THREE
THEORY

This chapter addresses the theory of African and Western feminism, development and alternative designs, concepts of power and empowerment. The framework of this study is based on a feminist and praxis anthropological approach.

As scholars, we want to know, to understand. As feminists, we want to represent the lives of pioneer women and to give them some opportunity to represent themselves, with their problems and their solutions, while recognizing that only partial success in these aims is possible... There will be no solution without these voices (Townsend et al. 1995: 14).

Simone De Beauvoir, a French existentialist, first argued in her book The Second Sex (1949), that women’s secondary status to men was a direct result of social conditions rather than biological factors (McGee & Warms 1996: 407). This theory of social conditions within a culture that associates women with a lower order than men was the foundation for feminist theory and feminist anthropological approaches.

Sherry Ortner agrees with De Beauvoir’s early assessment of women’s subordination and believes that this is the framework for which a feminist and praxis approach developed. She explains, “praxis or action or practice as neither a theory nor a method in itself, but rather... a symbol, in the name of which a variety of theories and methods are being developed” (Ortner 1984: 127). Praxis is a diverse approach used to recognize “the system,” a set of holistic, integrated relationships, that has a powerful and “determining” effect on human action and the shape of their events (Ortner 1984: 146). The important focus of her approach is to understand where the system comes from and how it is produced and reproduced, while also examining how it can be changed. The
system is seen as a seamless, "integral whole" made up of social relations, economic arrangements, political processes, cultural categories, norms, values, ideals, and emotional patterns. Yet, the "parts or dimensions do not have equal analytic significance" (Ortner 1984: 149).

Practice (or action) is defined by Ortner as anything people do. She says, "the people doing the action are known to be individual actors [or agents], whether actual historical individuals or social types (women, commoners, workers, junior siblings, etc.)" (Ortner 1984: 149). Practice is the study of all forms of human action from a political angle. Ortner stresses that there is a central core of all action or practice, such as domination, asymmetry, inequality, privilege, and/or power, which drives or forms the action to take place or not take place. "The analyst takes these people and their doings as a reference point for understanding a particular unfolding of events, and/or for understanding the processes involved in the reproduction or change of some structural features" (Ortner 1984: 149).

Ortner's praxis states that domination is at the core of practice, which creates a shift from what culture allows and enables people to see, feel, to do and what it restricts and inhibits them from seeing, feeling, and doing. The system constrains practice by limiting the actor's tools and restricting emotions. Ortner argues, "feminist anthropology is one of the primary contexts in which a practice approach has been developing" (Ortner 1984: 145). The culture and domination becomes a part of the self, thus altering the action. Patriarchy is an example of a dominating force at the core of male and female action. She argues that the reality is that it acts to culturally constitute a hierarchal structure of top to bottom, which dominates and constrains the actions of women.
Sherry Ortner offers an anthropological feminist critique of gender roles in her theory that in all cultures there exists an ideology, or "cultural evaluation," that women are inferior to men. She says,

The universality of female subordination, the fact that it exists within every type of social and economic arrangement and in societies of every degree of complexity, indicates to me that we are up against something we cannot rout out simply by rearranging a few tasks and roles in the social system, or even by reordering the whole economic structure (Ortner 1974: 402).

Ortner argues that this concept of "universal subordination" is a result of either biological determinism, meaning that males are genetically viewed as the dominant gender, or that females are "a symbol of: something that every culture devalues, something that every culture defines as being of lower order of existence than itself" (Ortner 1974: 405). The concept of the lower order includes an assumption that females are closer to nature, while males are associated with the modern or higher order, which is culture. She explains and supports De Beauvoir's ideology that females are physiologically viewed as being closer to nature. Although in reality, women are not closer to nature than men, yet both De Beauvoir and Ortner use this imagery to conceptually frame the devaluation of women.

**Feminism**

Florence Dolphyne, a professor at the University of Ghana, Accra, and a former Chair of the Ghana National Council on Women and Development, makes specific reference to the distinction between Western and African feminism. She states, "it became apparent at the Women's International Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark in
1980, that there was a clear polarization of positions held by women from the Western World in particular and women from Africa on certain burning issues...” (Dolphyne 1991: xi). Furthermore, she argues,

Since the conference I have become more and more conscious of the difference in approach to women's issues between Western Women, especially, 'feminists', and African women who are actively working for women's emancipation. ...I always knew I was working for the total emancipation of women in Ghana... However, I never considered and still do not consider myself a 'feminist', for the term evokes for me the image of an aggressive woman who, in the same breath, speaks of a woman's right to education and professional training, her right to equal pay for work of equal value, her right to vote and be voted for in elections at all levels, etc. as well as the woman's right to practice prostitution and lesbianism (Dolphyne 1991: xii).

Her book is a Ghanaian woman's assessment of the certain aspects of her culture that reinforce and reproduce African women's inferiority to men. For instance, she makes reference to the three types of marriage systems in Ghana and the practices of polygamy, bride-wealth, ownership of property, child-marriage, female circumcision, and the division of labor (Dolphyne 1991). Dolphyne says, "for all of these women [in Ghana, West Africa], the issue of women's emancipation cannot be separated from the politics that brought about their particular situation. For all of them the major problem is one of survival, and a necessary prerequisite for an improvement in their condition...” (Dolphyne 1991: xii). She goes on to describe the apparent differences between women in Africa and those in the Middle East, Asia, and the West. She argues that these cultural traditions provide a clear focus for an African woman's concerns and what she perceives as their emancipation. In contrast, the concerns of a Western woman are equal rights, equal pay for work, individual choice about the body, and lesbian rights.
Gwendolyn Mickell, a Western feminist anthropologist, says that “...the slowly emerging African feminism is distinctly heterosexual, pro-natal, and concerned with many “bread, butter, culture, and power” issues” (Mickell 1997: 4). She argues that African women have formed their own type of feminism, with a primary objective based on basic survival. Mickell says,

African women have been more vocal about their social, personal, economic, and political challenges, and about their newly emerging vision of African feminism. The new African-feminist approach differs radically from the Western forms of feminism with which we have become familiar since the 1960’s. It has largely been shaped by African women’s resistance to Western hegemony and its legacy within African culture... it has been a direct outcome of women’s response to political leaders who have attempted to manage recent crises by further limiting and exploiting women (Mickell 1997: 4).

In acknowledging the apparent differences among women’s needs and concerns cross-culturally, Mickell argues that feminist approaches have become fragmented. She says,

The difference in the development of “feminism” has caused considerable friction in many ways: between Western and African women, particularly over the sensitive issue of clitoridectomy; between Western state actors (who have been intent on implementing policies that would advance “women in development”) and their African counterparts; and between Western and African nongovernmental organizations that focus on women’s activities (Economic Commission for Africa [ECA] 1972) (Mickell 1997: 4).

Mickell points out that the clear distinguishing factor is the difference in the primary goals for the role of women. African women want all women to work together cross-
culturally and collectively in the public arena; yet Western feminists want all women to be "individually autonomous" (Mickell 1997: 4).

Henrietta Moore argues that there is no common, universal model of woman or feminism. She claims that even though there are differences and divisions by class, culture, color, etc. it is important be flexible and understanding of the differences. Moore claims, "there is no single, homogenous body of feminist theory; and secondly, that the divisions between different groups of women, as well as between practicing feminists, make it impossible to assert a commonality based on a shared membership in a universal category ‘woman’ " (Moore 1994: 9).

Sen and Grown of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) believe that feminism encompasses the diversity of women and is a political, universal movement.

Like all political movements, it can be diverse in its issues, immediate goals, and methods adopted. But beneath this diversity, feminism has as its unshakeable core a commitment to breaking down the structures of gender subordination and a vision for women as full and equal participants with men at all levels of societal life (Sen & Grown 1987: 79).

They support the claim that the ultimate challenge of the movement is to expand globally and allow for flexibility. Flexibility is an essential component in the adaption of different methods of approach for assisting women worldwide in the process of emancipation.

Development

One challenge for feminist researchers is in the area of development. First, what is the difference between developed and underdeveloped? Maithreyi Krishna Raj theorizes
that when speaking of “developed” countries, it is assumed that one is referring to Europe, Australia, North America, and Japan. The rest of Asia, Africa, and South America are assumed to be in the category of “underdeveloped”. She argues that “the term ‘developed’ signifies some state of maturity on a biological analogy, i.e., from some unformed state into something bigger, more complex and as having fulfilled capabilities”… they have reached a higher stage or completed stage” (Raj 1998: 4). She argues that in comparison, people who are underdeveloped are in a much lower stage and are therefore assumed to be at the bottom and/or “incomplete, primitive” (Raj 1988). For her, hierarchal structure is formed on the basis of this “concept of completion.”

Raj argues that there are two aspects to the concept of completion. One, is that it is based on economic growth and status. “It is economic and it is based on the level of abundance of material items and the comfortable life” (Raj 1988: 5). If the country’s gross national product (GNP) is high, this is associated with being developed. Secondly, “it is conceived as a process of improvement in regards to a set of values regarding a desired state of society” (Raj 1998: 5). She argues that such concepts of development are based on hierarchal structures and are also relative to personal desires and preferences. Therefore, when establishing “development programs” for the underdeveloped, the “central problem is the difficulty of formulating any adequate or acceptable criteria of development, i.e., how do we know development has taken place or how much development has been accomplished?” (Raj 1988: 7). She supports the concept that “development is a complex social process and that change in the process may not necessarily mean growth”…. “The main goal must be one of improving the
quality of life for all” (Raj 1988: 9). It is evident that when defining and evaluating development, certain cultural preferences emerge.

**Rural Development Tourism**

What is the common role of outsiders coming into rural areas of third world countries to study or gather research on development programs? Robert Chambers refers to this act of urban-based professionals coming into rural areas in order to have a direct experience of rural conditions as “rural development tourism” (Chambers 1983: 10). Specifically, he states that this is “the phenomenon of the brief rural visit” (Chambers 1983: 10). He provides a description of the typical ‘tourist’ or visitor as having differences such as profession, sex, age, background; however, they share three commonalities of “coming from urban areas, they want to find something out, and they are short of time” (Chambers 1983: 11).

Chambers provides an examination of the tourist visit to the rural village as one in which the locals go out of their way to welcome the outsiders. He explains that there is often a presentation of gifts, dancing, photographs, and conversation or inspection. The locals show the importance of the tourist visit by wearing their best attire and performing welcome ceremonies to honor the guests from distant lands and professional positions. He says, “they nervously respond in ways which they hope will bring benefits and avoid penalties” (Chambers 1983: 12). The visit typically ends a few days later and the locals return to their daily lives. Chambers says, “individually or in groups, people are neglected while formal actions and physical objects receive attention. Above all on such visits, it is the poorer people who tend to be seen, far less to be met” (Chambers 1983: 12).
The Role of Women in Development

What is the role of women in the development process in Africa? First Lady Rawlings of Ghana believes that women have always been the primary producers; yet they face numerous problems throughout Africa and in Ghana. She points out,

In Ghana, the women account for the largest part of the country’s economic efforts. More than 51% of the estimated 17 million of Ghana are women. Of these, over 70% live in the rural areas and provide about 90% of the food crops and about 70% of the various raw materials for agro-industry and also contribute about 90% of the agricultural produce. Obviously, they are in charge of preparing food for the family and for looking after the children (First Lady Rawlings of Ghana, web site: 1).

Of course, development involves a process of changing methods, institutions, and cultural traditions, which may take a significant amount of time. Not to mention, the impacts of change in local markets that development programs have on locals, especially women. “When changes take place in traditional societies, they tend to break the previous connection between norms and social structures and, until some new synthesis is evolved, there is a lot of distress” (First Lady Rawlings of Ghana). Women have been directly impacted by the change and “distress,” while also being left out of the development process all together. Women have also remained invisible, so that their needs and concerns have been left out or avoided, especially in certain development program designs.

Women’s concerns in the development process had not been of concern to government policy makers for some time until the year 1975, when the United Nations recognized the year of the “Woman.” This global event had a dramatic impact on women in Ghana (Dolphyne 1991). For instance, “member-states set up national machineries,
which would, among other things, study the condition of women, initiate programmes to
promote the emancipation of women, and monitor progress made in this direction”
(Dolphyne 1991: 86). In Ghana, the machinery has a paid staff of civil servants; yet it is
separate and not classified as a governmental department. Rather, it is “a statutory body
headed by an Executive Secretary who is responsible to a policy-making board”
(Dolphyne 1991: 85).

Considering that women’s concerns had not been addressed by a male led system
of government, the establishment of this machinery allowed for access to government
funding for programs and organizing of projects that would have otherwise remained
nonexistent. In addition, the policy board often collaborated with Ghanaian women’s
voluntary non-governmental organization (NGO’s) to gain collective strength with a
common goal of women’s emancipation. However, over time a backlash brought about
numerous limitations that have kept the NGO’s from actively working together. For
instance, NGO’s have often competed with each other for access to funding for projects.
Furthermore, a majority of women do not truly understand the nature of the policy board,
which results in fear of working in conjunction with the machinery. This lack of trust has
been a direct result of the machinery being associated with a government system that has
left women’s needs and concerns out of their agendas for years.

As a result, local NGO’s have chosen not to work directly with the machinery or
policy board. Dolphyne argues that this has presented a barrier against women achieving
emancipation. She hopes that as more NGO members become educated and involved,
they will try to increase cooperation; however, the resistance is entrenched.
Development Program Designs

Women in Development (WID)

The goals articulated in the establishment of the Women in Development (WID) programs include women in the so-called 'linear notion of development.' Young’s theory says that these programs are mostly based on a Western “liberal feminist stance that with economic growth and modernization, it is assumed that better living conditions, wages, education etc. will be within the grasp of all…”(Young 1993: 129). The programs are designed to concentrate only on women and to establish new work technologies while overlooking the already established indigenous work structures. Beginning in the 1970’s and into the present, the main focus was strictly alleviation of poverty for women in ‘developing’ countries. Young, a supporter of gender and development programs, critiques the WID approach for assuming that women could control their own destinies without any reaction or resistance from men. Also, she objects the focus on women shifting into the public work sphere without considering the impact on their private lives. For instance, increased violence in the home may be a result of women working for wages and/or the husbands claiming the money that the women earn. Third, she says, “that WID programs focus too much on poverty, rather than the oppressive male-centered social structures” (Young 1993: 130).
Women and Development (WAD)

The establishment of women and development programs are a result of a focus on the actual nature of development and how women are integrated into the development process (Young 1993). DAWN is an example of a group that explores the inequalities of women, the impact of the debt crisis, the nature of development processes and impacts on economic growth and processes, as well as the types of feminisms and women’s movements in various cultures (Young 1993). This group commonly maintains “without a more international economic system, there can be no real development, economic, or otherwise” (Young 1993: 134). Furthermore, “DAWN selects key elements of earlier approaches to women and development in forming its empowerment concept and strategy” (Snyder & Tadesse 1995: 14). For instance, a common strategy focusing on women being in control of their own decisions about their futures through actively getting involved in women’s organizations.

Gender and Development (GAD)

GAD programs were established in the mid 1970’s and by the 1980’s, the term ‘gender’ began replacing the term ‘women and development’ (Snyder & Tadesse 1995: 14). Why? Gender is a social construct and GAD “claims that gender more easily accommodates race, class, ethnicity, male-female power relations” (Snyder & Tadesse 1995: 14). Gender also represents the relations between women and men. Furthermore, ‘gender’ replaces ‘women’ because GAD founders believe women are not a solitary group in the development process, but that both women and men are active participants.
The GAD group focuses on the “issues of women’s subordination in the development process” (Young 1993: 134).

They propose:

The totality of women’s and men’s lives must be the focus of analysis, not their productive, or reproductive activities; that women are not passive, nor marginal, but active subjects of social processes. The problem is not women’s integration into development, or their invisibility, or their lack of training, education, credit, self-esteem, but the structures and processes that give rise to women’s disadvantage (Young 1993: 134).

GAD members claim the major disadvantage for women is the uneven distribution of power among the sexes. Cross-culturally there is a commonality of male superiority and men as a gender having power and control over political, social, and traditional realms.

Young argues the GAD approach is holistic, in that it offers an emphasis on the structures that restrict women from gaining power and resources. GAD points out that economic organizations have placed women in a powerless position in the labor market, because much of “women’s work” remains unpaid and undervalued. They place emphasis on the Marxist perspective of the distribution of wealth. Marxist theory combined with feminist theory, results in a viewpoint that capitalist systems have negative impacts on women. Thus, women are limited by economic and social systems, so they struggle to become empowered. GAD supports the concept that positive solutions exist when both males and females are “active agents” in economic development processes. Women are active agents when they are participants having the same amount of power in leadership roles and decision-making as males. Furthermore, women’s empowerment means improving the quality of life for all, not by enforcing capitalist/consumerist economic
systems, but by establishing one that will allow equal distribution of wealth (Young 1993).

Non-governmental programs (NGO's)

Local and foreign NGO's have been established throughout the world and especially Ghana in the past decade. Programs designed in all areas have primarily been established to provide “aid” to the local people, especially women. However, many of these programs have failed drastically and/or have not served to increase the quality of life of the locals long-term. Townsend et al. theorize,

Development agencies, international, governmental, non-governmental, are all good at employing the middle classes but often have minimal impact on poverty. There are many exceptions among NGO's, and governments can do a great deal about poverty, given political will... But trade, debt, investment, aid and the development industry have together established the control of poor countries by international capitalism (Townsend et al. 1999: 22).

The argument is that these organizations are designed to offer aid and to increase the quality of life, yet a majority of them fail to do so. Townsend and Zapata claim,

NGO’s that work with women have proliferated in Mexico in the last few years but suffer from much of the same limitations as other NGO’s. At least they give women the chance to get out into a group, provide services previously the responsibility of the state (such as health education) and increase women’s negotiating power. Apart from service provision, they are active in education/training, alternative technologies and work against domestic violence. Some work for an alternative society where gender relations are equal (Townsend et al. 1999: 56-57).
They point out that NGO’s have diverse agendas and are often limited, due to funding from outside sources.

**Governmental organizations**

The United States Peace Corps is a primary example of a governmental organization that is directly involved in global development. Henry Dobyns, an anthropologist from Cornell University, conducted research on the impacts of a Peace Corps volunteer group and U.S. aid on local indigenous communities in Peru. The Cornell Peru Project group “based their analysis on the data from unstructured interviews, participant observation, photography, and some use of structured questionnaires… to gather information on 60 of the first 150 volunteers to go to Peru (Dobyns et al 1966: 8-9).

Dobyns et al. make a point to examine all the factors that produced negative volunteer impacts on the project efficiency. For instance, the apparent socioeconomic differences, position of outsider status, the isolation from locals, volunteer divisions, development and reaction to project crises, personal frustrations, language limitations, and relationship difficulties among volunteers and local communities. Dobyns points out that in some cases the social impacts of the volunteers assisted in increased production and capital for the local community, but overall it did not.

Furthermore, “U.S. Aid does not necessarily make Andean communities better off” (Dobyns et al 1966: 295). Dobyns research team came to this conclusion based on the outcome of an irrigation project in which the local community received monetary, technical, and mechanical assistance from the U.S. The result was a decrease of
efficiency, an apparent dependence on central government and outside economic sources. Although Dobyns points out certain project failures, he concludes that despite the volunteer impacts and apparent lack of foreign aid, as a whole “the Peace Corps program in the Peruvian Andes did achieve a measurable impact upon its target communities” (Dobyns et al. 1966: 228).

**Alternative Program Designs**

Alternative development program designs have emerged throughout Africa and the world to improve the overall quality of life for women, in resistance to state or governmental development programs and/or disorganized non-governmental projects. Judith Abuwanza says, “Researchers have recognized that Africa has a particularly rich heritage of women cooperating with women in secret societies, revolutionary groups, official women’s organizations, voluntary associations, modern cooperatives, rural work groups, and urban and rural groups mobilized for development purposes” (Abwunza 1997: 128).

Townsend et al. have recognized the emergence and importance of social movements or networks using alternative means to development in rural areas. They state, “...[our informants in Mexico] commonly reject violence as a means, and state power as the principal objective; they reject the [capitalist] market, obsession with economic growth, consumerism and, in some cases, patriarchy” (Townsend and Zapata et al. 1999: 50). These theorists are critical of traditional development, due to the hierarchal structural designs and unequal distribution of power among the participants. They argue
that certain structural designs based on alternatives, such as networking and social movements, allow for a more equal distribution of power.

Indigenous Knowledge

Alternative development designs based on indigenous knowledge² focus on the improvement of the quality of life for local people, including subsistence economic strategies, entrepreneurship, dedication, and survival. Maria Meis says,

[Sinith Shittirak] is one more of those feminists voices from the South who no longer place their hope in the myth of ‘catching up’ industrial development propagated by the World Bank and GATT, but rather in preservation and restoration of their mother’s subsistence economy. Looking at development from Sinith and her mother’s perspective at the same time is indeed the most fruitful methodological approach to demystify all the empty and dangerous promises of the growth-mania (Meis 1998: xi).

Meis refers to “her mother’s subsistence economy”, which is based on the indigenous knowledge that people of various cultures have depended on for centuries as a means of survival. Numerous researchers are now highlighting the importance of subsistence economies and indigenous knowledge to replace growth-mania development concepts. For instance, Maria Meis supports Claudia von Werlhof suggestion that the “best alternative to development is no development” (Meis 1998: xi).

A Ghanaian professor, Ataa Akyeampong, at Oregon State University told me (personal communication, January 2001) that typical development programs are designed to allow outsiders to come into rural villages and teach local women new, supposedly
efficient methods, of weaving or planting. Once the women learn the new method, it is expected that after the outsiders leave the locals will abandon their old methods and replace them with the new just learned. However, women will immediately resort back to their indigenous methods which has worked for them for years.

Entrepreneurism

Dr. (Mrs.) Esther Afua Ocloo is an entrepreneur\(^3\). She is an example of a Ghanaian woman who supports using indigenous knowledge and the traditional role of women as entrepreneurs. Specifically, she argues that this is a valuable role for women in alternative development designs. Women have traditionally been entrepreneurs within their culture. Her goal has been to influence young girls and women to take on these roles so that they will be successful.

Dr. Ocloo, a 79 year old Industrialist, hails from Dzake Peki in the Volta Region of Ghana. Her passion for institutional assistance to the indigenous industrialists and women of Africa won her the affectionate advocacy for access to credit for the underprivileged women of the world during the first UN conference in Mexico in 1975. She contributed, in no small measure towards Ghanaian women’s independence and economic empowerment (Ocloo email: Tues. Dec. 8: 1998).

Dr. Ocloo began making marmalade at a young age and selling it at local markets. Her monetary advances allowed her access to education in Britain. After the completion

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\(^2\)Indigenous knowledge is the foundation for traditional methods of work that are embedded deep within the cultural heritage. It consists of historical knowledge about living and working that cultures have depended on to survive for centuries. It is typically woven into the cultural fabric by a strong spiritual foundation.

\(^3\)An entrepreneur is a person who organizes, operates, and assumes the risk for a business venture.
of her schooling, she returned to Ghana and began Nkulenu Industries, a food processing industry that is now in its 53rd year of existence. Her dedication to women’s work and under-privileged women in society, led her to the establishment of eight foundations over 40 years. One foundation is “dedicated to the creation of jobs for unemployed youth by setting up a youth farm and establishing an Entrepreneurial Training Center to train unemployed school leavers as well as upgrading of the skills of women entrepreneurs” (Ocloo email: Tues. Dec, 8: 1998).

Niara Sudarkasa is another theorist who supports indigenous knowledge. She points out how colonization of African countries created gender differentiation in areas of work and education. She argues that women were forced into lower wage sectors and limited to educational opportunities, while men were allowed entry into more prestigious work positions and access to higher education.

Sudarkasa emphasizes the importance of the extended family system in Africa and how it is based on gender differentiation. She critiques Western feminist liberation models that seek to create equal rights for females and “androgynous” gender roles in Africa. She states,

It is suggested, in other words, that as regards of gender-role differentiation in occupations and education, indigenous African models might provide a basis for change in a direction that is both culturally acceptable and socially progressive (Sudarkasa 1996: 275).
Grassroots organizations

The Center for the Development of People is a grassroots organization\(^4\) that establishes programs for women in Ghana’s leading kente- weaving capital of Bonwire. Traditionally, only males were taught to weave this fabric by foot. Male elders village told women that if they became weavers, they would not be able to bear children. This norm effectively excluded females from the economic processes of the village. Since kente is one of Ghana’s highest priced exports and a staple for tourists, the center sought to bring women into the process.

The Bonwire Women’s Kente Project was established when leaders encouraged a village queen-mother to include women in the economic processes of the village. She agreed, due to her realization of the fact that local village women were limited to low-income work sectors. She thought that including women as weavers would increase their position in the village and provide high-income opportunities. A consequence of women learning to weave was threats of violence from male elders. One woman claimed, “He threatened to beat me and told me to stop weaving” . . .” But I knew that women can do many things man can do, so I continued learning” (Nankani 2000: 40).

African women have begun to question the hierarchal systems in which they are subordinates. Charlene H. Dei says,

During the 1970’s and 1980’s, the experiences of women in Abidjan provided sufficient evidence to challenge the myth that African women take an apolitical stance, and to challenge “conventional wisdom” that decrees African women’s political power to have been destroyed by colonization, urbanization, and the difficult post-independence. . . .this study of political activity among a group of urban women in Abidjan

\(^4\) A grassroots organization is defined in the American Heritage Dictionary as people or society at a local level rather than at the center of a political organization.
demonstrates the survival and dynamism of women's political involvement at the local level, and its importance to national political processes (Dei 1997: 206).

Dei provides an example of a group of Cocody neighborhood women that formed a grassroots women's organization called the "Group d' animation Cultural de Cocody" (GACC) in 1977. This forum allowed women to have a position and a voice regarding their social or political concerns. Dei concludes,

The experience of the women of GACC provides an example of the actions that individuals can take when they lack the means of making their needs known and having their demands fulfilled by the official decision makers within the confines of their own sociopolitical system. Through the GACC, women of diverse ethnic, religious, and educational backgrounds—who shared needs generated common residence and class, but who lack political visibility and influence—developed the capacity to make themselves seen, heard, and acquiesced to on a wide range of issues (Dei 1997: 224).

Cooperatives (coops)

During the 1970's in Ghana, numerous women's organizations formed cooperatives, which were established throughout Ghana as a form of resistance to government and USAID programs that often failed to leave local people with any long-term benefits (Dolphyne 1991). Dolphyne states, "The response from all over the country was clear: the women wanted to be able to earn enough money so that they could feed, clothe, and generally take better care of their children" (Dolphyne 1991: 57).

A cooperative (coop) is a group of people that work together to define common needs and objectives for a certain commercial goal. Faye Maurice states, "Cooperatives have remained one of the surest means through which members can achieve self-
promotion. It is an association of persons based on the values of self-help and solidarity" (INFO-COOP 1996). All of the members of a coop must agree on established rules and regulations. Another key element of cooperatives includes a clear definition of the relationship between the cooperative and its members (and non-members). Cooperatives ideally allow sustainable development to occur socially and economically, catering primarily to the needs of rural communities, and are thought to be “...a precious economic and social instrument” (INFO-COOP 1996).

The International Cooperative Information Centre (ICIC) points out that women and men have both been negatively affected by hierarchal development designs worldwide. Katarina Apelquist of ICIC believes an International Cooperative movement is the answer. She says,

When the main focus is growth, people are seen as tools, not as human beings. This results in poor wages and work environments, which in turn leads to physical and mental illness, lack of security and unemployment. ...cooperatives should be an obvious alternative to the current growth and profit-oriented economic systems which make the rich, richer and the poor, poorer (Alpequist 1983: 2).

Alpequist emphasizes the structures of the international cooperative as one that allows women to play a vital, active role. “Women are active economic agents and contributors to cooperatives, national and global economy by paid productive work and as unpaid reproductive work. They are the basis of the cooperative movement” (Alpequist 1983: 2).

The ICIC believes that the barriers for women in the cooperative environment are illiteracy and lack of education. Women in Africa need more education and training so that they will not be left out of the cooperative process altogether. Some coops have been
poorly organized and mismanaged, resulting in members becoming frustrated and discouraged.

ICIC supports women having influence and a prominent role in the design of cooperative projects. A successful project is one that is flexible to the needs and work demands of its members. Furthermore, success is founded on female members taking leadership and expressing their views in open forums without fear of being threatened.

**Women’s Collectives**

Local women’s networks or collectives have been formed in rural areas, to improve quality of life through combining indigenous knowledge with local resources. They formed as an alternative to coops, which were typically led and dominated by men. Women-only groups became a means for women to gain leadership skills and an open forum in which they could express their opinions, without the intimidation of men.

For instance, in Ghana, “Five Mothers Clubs (women’s collectives) were formed to make shea butter processing and groundnut oil extraction, all benefited from Ghana Red Cross loans of 500,000 cedis. They paid off their loans and began putting their money towards their family and children.” “...Mothers Club leaders said the loans helped to improve their socioeconomic status and supplement the family budget. Some are now able to buy their children school books, sew their uniforms and buy their own clothes” (Ghana Red Cross Society news publication: 1999). Presently, there are 444 Mothers Clubs throughout Ghana working to improve the quality of life for women.

Sangeetha Purushothaman believes that the key to women’s empowerment is through this type of community involvement and networking.
[Purushothaman] applauds the decline of the state-led development and is in favor of alternative, sustainable and holistic forms. The key is that women are viewed as the teachers, as the people who will inform the nature and content of the learning process (Purushothaman 1998: 117).

Townsend and Zapata also support the concept of networking as opposed to hierarchal, male-dominated structures typically associated with development. They quote Nerfin, “We [the researchers] hope networking, which operates horizontally and cooperatively, may be an alternative to hierarchal institutional structures” (Townsend et al. 1999: 23).

Dr. Catherine Knott-Grant, an anthropologist who has worked extensively in Mali and various other parts of Africa as a Peace Corps volunteer and researcher, also values the concept of networking. Specifically, she emphasizes a bridge or exchange of knowledge cross-culturally to further progress.

As the founder of Bridges International, Catherine Knott-Grant’s objective has been carried out through exchanging knowledge between Africa and the United States, including subjects such as farming techniques, conservation of resources, and sustainability (Bridges booklet: 1999). She and her cohorts have been working extensively on designing and implementing alternative programs for ‘development’ based on the concept of exchange.

Dr. Knott-Grant also believes that gender and cross-cultural exchange programs should replace existing approaches to development. Her program, Bridges International, is an example of an action approach to establishing cross-cultural exchange programs. She challenges organizers to examine typical ‘development’ concepts as being based on hierarchal, linear structures that lack efficiency and therefore fail to provide long-term
benefits for local people after project completion.

Bessie House-Midamba says that African market women are networking among themselves and are collectively participating in high levels of trade in the “informal sector.” The informal sector is defined as the level of the economy that is small scale and/or traditional, but does not necessarily have legal status. Women are limited in their access of credit and facilities that would help them to sell products. Market women in this sector work together to sell and/or trade a variety of products without registering for booths, due to the expense. Two products that produce high profits are charcoal and beer brewing and selling. The brewing of beer is illegal in some areas. “...women are sometimes arrested. They have, however, been able to establish cooperative networks over the years (with patron-clients, neighbors, and friends), which have helped them to deal with police” (House-Midamba 1995: 89). House-Midamba argues that women’s roles as traders in the informal sector have...

played a significant role on several levels: 1) as a vehicle or avenue of political resistance and social areas or affairs of society; 2) as entities that have provided alternate strategies to assist women in the acquisition of credit and other critical resources in order to enhance their trade activities (House-Midamba 1995: 94).

She emphasizes the ways that women are working together as active agents for change.

Concepts of Power

Systems of power are important to examine in relation to development designs. Marilyn French states “power and control are often used synonymously” (French 1985: 505).
She says,

"power suggests large size, and has connotations of moving outward, like an armed fist; control suggests tightness, detailed instrumentation, and has connotations of moving inward, pressing together or down—repressing, suppressing, oppressing, depressing. Power connotes ability and energy; control connotes restraint, regulation, a harnessing of energy" (French 1985: 505).

French goes on to describe the types of power in society as “power-to” and “power-over”, which differ considerably in meaning. French states that “power-to” is referred to as ability, capacity, and connotes a kind of freedom which is achieved by a community or a network of supporting individuals. In contrast, “power-over” is domination” (French 1985: 505).

Townsend et al. expand on these concepts of power in their collective book. Specifically, they define power as being “a force exercised by individuals or groups” (Townsend et al. 1999: 23). This section will highlight the various concepts of power presented by Townsend, Alberti, Rowlands, Zapata, and Mercado.

The first concept of power defined by Rowlands, is ‘power over.’ This is defined as the ability of one person or group to get another person or group to do something against a persons’ will (Townsend et al. 1999: 26). This ability can take on numerous forms through threats of violence and/or physical acts of violence by countries, individuals, and groups towards another. “‘Power over’ can be a matter of strength or even force, physical, economic, or social.” “Poorer countries had to agree to the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO) which are often to their disadvantage, because rich countries forced them to do so” (Townsend et al. 1999: 26).

Patriarchy is a social system based on this concept of ‘power over.’ Under patriarchy, men make all of the rules, regulations, and decisions by which women are
expected to live. As a result, women live under a constant threat of violence and/or fear. Patriarchy is a powerful force that also affects political and economic systems cross-culturally. Rowlands points out, “For Srilatha Batliwala power is about control, not only over human bodies and physical and financial resources, but over the ideology which sets rules and ideals.” “Much ‘power over’ is oppressive, divisive, and destructive” (Townsend et al. 1999: 27).

Rowlands refers to Mickel Foucault’s concept of power that: “power is constituted through discourses, and people being constructed as subjects in discourses” (Townsend et al. 1999: 23). In reference to Foucault, “Power is a set of actions that act on other possible actions. It functions in the field of the possible, or inscribes itself in the behavior of actors by inciting, inducing, seducing, facilitating or hindering, expanding, or limiting” (Michel Foucault, 1989: 240). Foucault also says that an individual’s desire for freedom is linked to that of relations of power, in that at the source of the power relation is the will for one to gain freedom. For instance, the will for freedom motivates one to take part in acts of resistance and rebellion, as a result of the negative impact of power relations or the ‘power over’ concept.

Pilar Alberti also draws from Mickel Foucault’s idea that power itself doesn’t exist, only power relations (Townsend et al. 1999: 131). Thus, as a negative impact of ‘power over’, resistance and rebellion result. She uses her case study of women in Tapalehui to further elaborate on this power concept.

They [the informants] defined ‘power over’ to take on three basic forms: 1) exercised by institutions over individuals; 2) that exercised by individuals over others, in this case over women; and 3) the ‘power over’ to be found inside a single person. This is the tyranny we exercise over ourselves, which some form the tension between duty and wish. Often, the
judges and police inside us are much stricter in their dealings with us than are other people. This situation is more common in women (Townsend et al. 1999: 131).

Tapalehui women taught the researchers about their “vision of the future being that of ‘power with’ ” (Townsend et al. 1999: 103). To resist hierarchal structures and the constraints of ‘power over’, the first step is to seek ‘power within.’

‘Power within’ is the second concept of power. Zapata discusses this concept of power which builds on individual strengths and self-respect. The building blocks of self-confidence and self-empowerment carry over into the areas of working in collective groups. Zapata says,

...‘power with’ in the work done and decisions taken together in these organizations with more horizontal power structures where decision-making is more open to participation. ‘Power with’ appears in the journey from ‘me’ to ‘us’, in the pleasure of being together, sharing and exchanging experiences, in the joy of new knowledge and of building positive alternatives, in taking action at any level, from individual to national, without fear. In formal politics, all groups challenge the ‘power over’ in action or hierarchy, in government, NGO’s or their own organizations (Townsend et al. 1999: 103).

When hierarchal structures are broken down and new methods of exchange and bridges are formed, the result is the third concept of power, ‘power to.’ This power leads to self-empowerment and [women’s] emancipation. “‘Empowerment that is based on the “power to” involves gaining access to a full range of human abilities and potential’” (Rowlands 1995b: 22). The two primary limiting components for women are ‘fear and blame.’ In order for strength to be gained and the fear to subside, women must work to creatively carry over their confidence and pride of their work to their everyday lives, so that they can be active agents for change in the process of daily empowerment.
Empowerment

Townsend et al. refer to Kamla Bhasin's definition of empowerment as a series of interactions:

Empowerment for us cannot mean power over others, power to control more than our share; it means *power to be*, power to control one's own greed, avarice, violence; power to nurture, heal, care for other's; power to fight for justice, ethics, morality; power to achieve inner growth learning to wisdom and compassion...Empowerment for women *is not just a one-way process* - in which some activists can go and empower others. It is a two-way process in which we empower and get empowered. This is an *ongoing journey for all of us*. No one can be empowered for good and then become an expert in empowering others (Bhasin 1995: 15-14; Townsend 1999: 40).

Townsend et al. place more emphasis on empowerment gained individually or through the self, in contrast to Bhasin's interaction with others. Why is this? They support that "no one can empower another person, and to us this understanding is the key to success in changing power relations. If you give someone power, then it can be taken away: it is only if they take that power for themselves that it is theirs"... "for us, true empowerment is self-empowerment" (Townsend et al. 1999: 24). Townsend et al. explain that it is necessary to understand that empowerment is an ongoing and challenging process and that it is unrealistic to develop visions of empowerment for others unless 'differences' among cultures are acknowledged.

Townsend et al. point out that one must understand the societal elements that lead to a women's disempowerment, some of which may be a backlash against women gaining power. For instance, although a woman may gain self-confidence and 'power within' leading her to social and economic benefits, her successes may be threatened as a
result. Physical and sexual violence by male patriarchs are acts that are commonly used to restrict, limit, and inhibit the power a woman has gained or is in the process of gaining. Policymakers and planners may fail to protect women against such threats. Under patriarchy, it is also common for husbands to disempower their wives by claiming their earnings for themselves.

Another form of disempowerment lies within the context of the development project itself. Although women may be seeking collective benefits from the actual program success, the dominance of male leaders may reduce the power a woman is gaining. It is common that some women are fearful to speak out in meetings and also to take active leadership positions when males are present. It is for this reason that women-only programs have been established.

Townsend et al. point out that as outsiders coming into other cultures with certain agendas and knowledge, we may try to “‘give’ them new formal power, but in the process destroy the old power base on which they have always depended.” They stress, “We cannot empower other people, but we can disempower them” (Townsend et al 1999: 36). For instance, women’s “informal power” based on indigenous knowledge and experience is the foundation from which many women have worked from for years. This can often be disrupted when new forms of formal power are introduced from “outsiders.” Therefore, the informal power is altered to make way for the new, yet often causing a ripple effect or disruption in the process of having and establishing power for women.
CHAPTER FOUR

HISTORY

The Republic of Ghana, lies on the Gulf of Guinea and borders the countries of Togo, Burkina Faso, and Cote d’Ivoire, and was formerly known as the Gold Coast (See Map 2). A country with a landmass the size of Great Britain or the state of Oregon, Ghana is known worldwide for its radiant colored kente cloth production and alluring Ghanaian hospitality. It is a country with rich political history and vibrant cultural diversity. With a population exceeding 17 million in 1998, the cultural variety is quite profound from region to region, as is the geographical landscape.

Pre-history

The period of time prior to European arrival and written documentation is otherwise known as Ghana's pre-history. During this time, Ghanaian cultural traditions were passed on through oral histories, rituals, folklore and ancestral spiritualities. Historians assume that Ghana was completely void of written language and centralized government or state. All African peoples had social systems based on lineages with no single center of power or authority (Gordon 1996: 30). Therefore, political interactions were conditioned by kinship and established rituals. Matrilineal descent patterns were prominent throughout Ghana. The wife would live with her mother’s family, and all children would belong to the mother’s extended family.
Map 2. Republic of Ghana
European Arrival

Africans were and still are culturally and spiritually tied to their extended family systems as the basic foundation for their economic structures. Ancestor spirits were deeply embedded within the fabric of the African culture. Europeans began to arrive in the 16th century, accompanied by Christian and Muslim missionaries. At this time written histories of Ghana first appeared, as traveling missionaries sought to describe the culture and people they were attempting to convert.

In some regions of Africa, kingdoms were also established as a central point of trade and power. In Ghana, "the rise of the Asante (or Ashanti) state owed much to the control of the goldfields in central Ghana" (Gordon 1996: 38). "Ghana is a country of great mineral and natural wealth, for which reason it has been an important center of trade since prehistoric times" (Briggs 1998: 30). The primary cash crops were cocoa and gold, followed by kola nuts, palm oil, cotton, rubber, and timber. These items were heavily traded with the Dutch and British. Rapidly, the coastline of Ghana became an area taken over by Europeans who built forts and held African slaves captive until the ships carried them overseas. For 250 years, the Dutch, Portuguese, and British battled one another for slaves and goods coming out of Ghana.

When British invaders finally conquered what they referred to as the "Gold Coast" in 1874, they were determined to take not only products and African slaves from Ghana, but also to colonize the land itself. The British persevered for years and attacked Kumasi, the Ashanti capital city, until they finally took hold of the city around 1900. The British set out over the next decade to establish universities, build rail systems and churches, and bring the coastline to the peak of its trading power. The 1920's were
notably the height of production, trade, and establishment of British institutions throughout Ghana.

The University College of the Gold Coast at Legon, which is now the University of Ghana, Legon, was established in 1948. One notable leader educated through this University was Kwame Nkrumah. He was one of the few students given the opportunity to study in the United States. As a student, he was enlightened by his studies of Black scholarships and Marxist theory in particular. The knowledge he gained influenced him to return to Ghana and begin the Convention People’s Party (CPP). His goals were to unite Africans and bring the people together to overthrow the United Gold Coast Convention, which was the primary British led political party of the times.

**Independence**

The British were threatened by Nkrumah’s popularity and influence over the people, so they reacted with hostility. However, as the CPP party grew even stronger, British leaders agreed to let Nkrumah begin forming a government. By 1951, the CPP had become powerful enough to take control of a once British dominated government. In 1957 Ghana gained Independence from Britain and the government was under Nkrumah’s leadership. In 1960, Nkrumah was elected the president of what is now known as the Republic of Ghana.

The following years were a great struggle for Nkrumah and his people. The so-called “socialist policies” that he was trying to enforce were drastically failing as a working political system. By 1966, a military coup removed him from office, which resulted in even more chaos for the people of Ghana for years to come.
From 1966 until the late 1970’s, Ghana went through numerous rulers and political systems. In 1972 a political leader known as Acheampong insisted on Ghana printing its own money, known as the cedi. The cedi was almost in full circulation by 1976, but inflation was so high that prices soared dramatically on all goods. This resulted in Ghana’s cash crops, such as cocoa, being taken illegally across the border into Togo and sold. Ghana was in a state of disaster until Jerry Rawlings and his followers moved in and took over the government in 1979. In a matter of months, he and his people, established an entire new political arena. Yet, surprisingly, he turned his leadership over to a Dr. Hilla Limann soon after.

By 1981, Rawlings was again displeased with the political system and he staged a coup to take over government for a second time. He formed a seven member national assembly known as the Provisional National Defense Council, and worked with his followers to establish a working democratic constitution that would include the establishment of elections. Rawlings held political office through 1996, when the next newly elected president was voted into office.

An example of a government development program in Ghana is the 31st December Women’s Movement, which began in May 15, 1982. It was founded by the First Lady of Ghana, H.E.Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings. Her initial aim was to bring women together at a difficult time in Ghana’s history. What began as a women’s group later grew to form a women’s program, intended to emancipate women at all levels. This program presently has about 2.5 million members. Rawlings states, “women’s vital role of promoting peace in the family, the country and the world at large must be acknowledged. And to do this, they must be empowered politically to equip them
adequately for the challenges if critically identifying and assessing situations for the betterment of society” (Rawlings, web page). Recently, environmental projects have been organized around tree-planting programs, conservation seminars and workshops, establishment of a seed nursery, and reforestation. Members are also trained to take leadership positions and establish goals, needs, and wants for their future.

**Present Day Ghana**

Ghana’s government is presently a “constitutional democracy”, which is led by an elected President and Congress. The President works directly with the Assembly and/or Congress to establish new laws and regulations for the country. Although government officials have worked to preserve the democratic structure of government, it is constantly threatened by opposing parties and military coups.

The country has had a stock market since 1990 and an economy that is based predominately on agriculture. Cocoa is the primary cash crop, along with nuts, yams, and millet. In addition, mining of gold and aluminum and the export of timber are all central to the country's economic growth. Gold and *kente* cloth are the two highest priced exports.

The Christian religion and traditional African ancestor spiritualities are intertwined and deeply embedded within the present day fabric of Ghanaian culture. “Ghanaian people are 60% Christian and 25% Muslim, with minority religions being Buddhism, Hindu, and Judaism and other traditional faiths” (Briggs 1998: 5) Islam is practiced primarily in the northern region, while Christianity is in the southern and central regions. “Catholicism, now the most widespread and popular denomination, was
reintroduced to the south with the establishment of a French mission at Elmina in 1880
and it arrived in the north in 1906, when the White Fathers opened a mission in
Navrongo” (Briggs 1998: 6). Christian missionaries built churches and taught English,
which resulted in a staunch conversion throughout the Volta Region.

Marriage

The concept of marriage in Ghana is based on a kinship union among families,
rather than the love between two people. Marriage is an “alliance” among families
(Dolphyne 1991). In the Volta Region Customary Law which allows a man to marry as
many women as he chooses, as long as he can support his wives financially. “Such
aspects of this marriage system involve, bride-wealth, child-marriage, widowhood, and
the inheritance of property” (Dolphyne 1991: 4). Since Customary marriage is based on
particular customs and traditions of the diverse African societies, it may vary from village
to village. Due to the impact of Christianity in the Volta Region, Ordinance Law is
prominent. Ordinance law is based on the Christian ideal that a man marries one woman,
in which he must remain monogamous.

It is common for Customary marriages to take place prior to a more formal
Ordinance marriage. This arrangement begins with “bride-wealth,” which is the
exchanging of gifts over an extended period of time between families. The gifts from the
groom’s family are of much higher value in patrilineal societies, since the family is
essentially “losing their daughter’s services” (Dolphyne 1991: 8). The gift value is to be
based on the status of the family and the status of the future bride. In the Volta Region, I
observed that one high value gift was fine *kente* fabric. A groom from a high-class family
would offer such a gift, especially if he was the son of a Chief. An average villager would
give something more useful, such as four goats and six chickens. In patrilineal societies,
the gifts are generally returned if there is a divorce. Yawa, the president of the Anfoeta
Mothers Club, divorced her first husband and later married a Chief Linguist in another
village. Yawa’s son, Limba, informed me that divorce was becoming more common in
the Volta Region.

Polygamy

Polygamy is practiced in all villages in the Volta Region in Ghana. This form of
marriage is not as common today as it was in the past, due to the financial burden it
places on the husband. However, polygamy is still practiced. “In traditional African
societies, men have usually married more than one woman in order to have more hands to
help them work on their farms. More wives meant more children, and the larger a man’s
farm, the more wives and children he had...the number of wives a man had was a
reflection of his affluence” (Dolphyne 1991: 16). This practice has put a tremendous
emotional strain on some women but has benefited others. For instance, it has offered a
female support network for some women, allowing them more help with their work.

Descent Patterns

Anfoeta Tsebi, like the other two villages we visited, is based on a matrilineal
descent pattern. In fact, a majority of Ghanaian societies are matrilineal—lineage traced
through the mother. For example, “In southern Ghana, the matrilineal cocoa-farming
migrants from the Asante and other Akan peoples enjoy a distinct advantage over those
from patrilineal societies, for they alone are able to form cooperative, descent-based "companies for buying and recruiting labor..." (Seigel 1998: 228). Although it is advantageous for women to have a significant role in the political arena aside from males, there may be no substantial economic benefits for women, since Elder male authority figures and male Chief's are still prevalent in these societies.

In the Volta Region there are a mixture of descent patterns, depending on the preference of the woman. Apparently, the variation in descent patterns has become more common in the present day, as families are adapting to new, outside cultural impacts such as educational changes, external religious/spiritual influences, and rural development strategies.

Patrilineal patterns are combined with matrilineal in some families. Gordon says, "Under patriliny, descent is traced through men [father], and when the bride marries she goes to live in the groom's village area. Children who are the products of patrilineal marriages are also considered to be primarily part of the father's family line" (Gordon 1998: 391). Patrilineal descent is common throughout most of Africa and the world, yet matrilineal societies are still in existence throughout the Volta Region.

Sexual Division of Labor

The sexual division of labor was clearly marked in the area of the Volta Region where I visited. Women farmed (planted and harvested), prepared, cooked, collected, cleaned, washed, went to market, fetched water and wood, produced and raised children. Some women were also teachers at the village school while others worked at the village
bar or market stand. Women worked a seventeen-hour workday, beginning before dawn and going until after dusk (See Figure 1).

Men were teachers, farmers, wood carvers, palm wine distiller workers, *kente* cloth weavers, and/or workers in the grinding or bakery mills. However, it was not unusual to see teenage and older men at the bar or sleeping on benches during the day.

“According to most women, men only ‘talk and flock to market’ or ‘sit and order women’” (Abwunza 1997: 43). However, some men went to the cities for extended periods of work or school in Ho or Accra. Abwunza explains the distinction between “home work” and outside “women’s work.”

She says,

“Both sexes understand that a woman’s role is to ‘provision’ for her family in whatever way is necessary... labour tasks are divided into two major domains: ‘home work’ and ‘outside’ work. ‘Home work’ is women’s work, and entails the production of food and staples from plots of land owned by men. ‘Outside work’ ought to be men’s work and entails the production of food and materials from cash” (Abwunza 1997: 43).
A WOMAN'S WORK IS NEVER DONE
A day in the life of a typical rural African woman

20.30 - 21.30
Wash children and dishes

21.30
To bed

4.45
Wake up wash and eat

5.00 - 5.30
Walk to fields

5.30 - 15.00
Work in fields

16.00 - 17.30
Pound and grind corn

16.00 - 16.00
Collect firewood return home

17.30 - 18.30
Collect water

18.30 - 20.30
Cook for family and eat

Source: Our Own Freedom by Murry and Emecheta, 1981.

Education

Educational opportunities were also divided among women and men in the villages. It was common for girls to miss a significant amount of school due to the demands of their daily work outside of school helping her mother. The educational structure in Ghana is based on a British system, including a primary level and junior secondary level, followed by the university. Comprehensive tests must be passed at the end of each year in order for students to advance to the next level. If a test is missed or failed, a student does not move up, and is required to re-take the entire year. I observed that most girls assisted their mothers with work for the farm and the family, thus they
missed classes and fell behind in their schoolwork. Most girls did not advance beyond the primary or secondary level.

Since it was so difficult for girls to keep up with their schoolwork, many dropped out entirely. "The gap between schooling for males and females remains wide: 81 girls are in primary school for every 100 boys; in secondary school the ratio of girls per 100 boys drops to 72" (World Bank 1995: 219). One goal of numerous women's groups in these rural communities was to encourage young girls to carry on with their studies, despite the competing demands and expectations placed on them. Presently in Ghana, learning to read and write in English is an asset for girls allowing them to pursue opportunities in the city. Although university education is more available to young adults from families with secure financial standing, it is possible for a student with good test scores to gain the opportunity for higher education.

**Ghana Red Cross Society**

Dr. Selwyn Clarke formed the Ghana Red Cross Society in 1929. Ghana Red Cross began as the League for Maternal and Child Welfare, consisting of housewives, mothers, nurses and teachers. The main priority of the League was to assist pregnant and welfare mothers, to aid in caring for children, and to assist in keeping living areas hygienic for newborns, infants, and children (Ghana Red Cross pamphlet). In 1932, Ghana remained under British rule, and the Society was referred to as the "Gold Coast Branch" of the British Red Cross Society. When Ghana gained independence from British rule in 1957, the Ghana Red Cross became an independent, non-profit voluntary
organization. As the society became better established, its main priority broadened to encompass assisting in the relief of all forms of human suffering.

Presently, the national headquarters is located in Accra, the capital of Ghana. There are 110 districts in Ghana, and the Red Cross has offices in ten regional areas, offering assistance to 68 district regions (Partnerships in Profile 1998: 1). It is independent of the government, yet it claims to work cooperatively with the government to improve the quality of life for Ghanaians. Ghana Red Cross provides services in 60% of the Ghana’s territory, and this coverage is currently expanding. There are numerous categories of programs within Ghana Red Cross; for instance, disaster preparedness and relief, community health services, youth formation, and information dissemination.

Any person in Ghana is allowed membership into the Society. As of 1997, it has a total of 25,040 members—9,376 adults and 15,658 youths age 6 to 25. Most of the adult members belong to the Mothers Clubs and are in the low to middle income levels. Three types of membership categories exist. A youth membership is free and available to anyone ages 6 to 25. An adult-active member is defined as a member dedicated to the Society’s philosophy by merely donating money. The suggested donation is 2,400 cedis\(^5\) a year. An adult-volunteer is a person who not only donates money but spends a significant amount of time participating in various activities.

The Ghana Red Cross philosophy is based on four primary objectives: to provide relief services during times of war and peace to both civilians and military personnel, to provide information about International Humanitarian Law, to provide first aid and community health services, and to assist in youth group formation. The seven main ideals

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\(^5\) Ghanaian currency in June 1999; C 2500 = US $1
are: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universalisity (Ghana Red Cross, training manual for Mothers Clubs).

The Ghana Red Cross has a strong foundation of leaders that are both volunteers and paid employees. There are only twenty-four paid staff overall in the main office located in Accra. Ten of those are professional staff and the other fourteen are primarily support staff. In the regional areas, there are twenty paid workers who are either field officers or clerical staff. Volunteers on staff work regular hours without pay. A majority of the Ghana Red Cross leaders are volunteers who hold positions at the regional and district levels, such as youth officer, Mothers Club facilitator, emergency first aid teams coordinator and chapter organizer. The leaders at the district level may also assist those at the regional level (Partnerships in Profile 1998: 2).

A main management committee of leaders meets every two months. The Chief Executive or the Secretary General, Mr. Anthony Gyedu-Adomako, is the head of all administrative and executive committees. The main committee, or management committee, consists of the President (Mr Ebenezer Serseh Aidoo), Vice President (Dr. Partick K. Quist), Honorary Treasurer (Mr Henry Mc Vroom), Honorary Health Adviser (Dr. Foser Gbagbo), Honorary Public Relations Adviser (Mr. Cecil Crabbe), Honorary Legal Adviser (Colonel Tom Allotey), National Youth Representative (Mr. Fidelis E. Naaikuur) and the Chairperson of Standing Committees (Partnerships in Profile 1998: 2).

The five standing committees that meet quarterly deal with resource development, disaster preparedness and relief, health and community services, and information and youth. Ghana Red Cross receives its financial support primarily from Participating National Societies (PNS), which are voluntary contributions from governments and
national societies that support the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. In addition, membership donations, private donations, government grants and fund raising all contribute to its support.

During the past twenty years Ghana Red Cross has transformed its focus from a specifically disaster relief organization to one that is also focused on community services and development for certain oppressed groups (Ghana Red Cross training manual). In the 1970’s, two programs known as “Healthy Living” and “Health in the Home” were established for women throughout Ghana. In time, this developed into a program known as the Primary Health Care Program (PHCP) of the Society. This particular program helped to establish the Ghana Red Cross Society women’s group, the Mothers Clubs.

Ghana Red Cross has also begun working from a gender perspective, which allows both women and men to actively take part in open discussions and gender planning. A 1999 news publication contains an article about a Gender Awareness Seminar held in Accra for all Ghana Red Cross program officers and secretaries. The main objectives of the seminar were:

- To introduce the Gender concept to Council members and program officers of the Society.
- To sensitize the above on the Gender approach in planning, implementing and monitoring of Ghana Red Cross Program, and;
- To develop strategies for planning Gender sensitive projects and program.

One example of such gender programs is the Ghana Red Cross Mothers Clubs.
Mothers Clubs

The first Mothers Club group was started twenty years ago in a small village in the Western Region of Ghana, known as Nsuopon. Several village women were brought together as a result of their extreme desire to assist their children in order to gain proper health care, since most of their children were suffering and/or dying. As a result, the PHCP initiated a group of volunteers to go to the village and teach the women childcare, nutrition, personal hygiene, environmental sanitation and first aid (Ghana Red Cross pamphlet). Over time, the women realized that there was a significant reduction in various lingering infectious diseases attacking their children. The women were so pleased to see these positive results over time that they spread the word to other villages, which motivated other women’s groups to be formed in the surrounding areas. These women’s groups or collectives became known as the Mothers Clubs of the Ghana Red Cross Society. A total of 444 Mothers Clubs are presently established in ten political regions of Ghana. An estimated total of 5,808 women members are currently active in the organization (Mothers Clubs pamphlet).

The Mothers Clubs pamphlet lists the main objectives of the group:

- To propagate Red Cross and Red Crescent Principles through as many channels as possible.

- To enhance the quality of life and general well-being of adult female members of the Ghana Red Cross Society in particular, their families, and the community in general.

- To reduce the impact of disasters on vulnerable groups.
To use local people (especially Mothers Clubs members) as agents of change in their communities.

To complement the Primary Health Care Program of the government.

To provide women from the disadvantaged communities with the ability to generate income to supplement household incomes, in order to ensure nutritional and health status of family members.

Five main areas of activities for Mothers Clubs are:

- Dissemination of Red Cross Principles, History and Activities;
- Primary Health Care
- Leadership Training
- Income Generating Activities
- Community Service

The design of the programs allows women to gain leadership skills and honorary positions in the community. Each village Mothers Club selects leaders every two years, which allows for the women to rotate leadership positions. The Ghana Red Cross employees and volunteers assist the groups in this process. A regional representative attends monthly village meetings, in order to answer questions and offer guidance in the process of establishing projects and economic assistance.

Crossroads Africa

Ghana Red Cross leaders collaborated with the US based non-governmental organization Crossroads Africa to bring United States volunteers to Ghana, in order to
assist the Mothers Clubs on local projects. This was the first time for the Ghana Red Cross to collaborate with Crossroads Africa on a ‘women in development’ project.

Crossroads Africa, founded in 1957, is a “private, independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to strengthen relations among peoples of Africa and Diaspora and those of the Northern Hemisphere nations in America and Europe” (Crossroads Africa program booklet). It offers programs in various countries relating to building schools, providing medical care, staff literacy, agriculture needs and most recently, women in development. The projects are based in the summer months for a total of eight weeks in the assigned country, including one week of travel.

The program has an open door admissions policy, in that anyone of any background and age can apply to serve as a volunteer. Some persons choose to come for school or research interests and others merely for a cross-cultural experience. The application process included a personal interview, background health records check, and references. In the interview, I was told not to be concerned about acceptance, since few applicants are rejected. As long as the volunteer is able to cover their expenses, the opportunity will be available.

Crossroads Participants

A total of seven participants from all parts of the United States, including one group leader, made up the United States Crossroads group. Laura, was a twenty-one year old student at Wellesley Women’s College in Massachusetts. Her academic interests were in math and women’s studies. Her desire after her senior year was to apply to law schools. Her interests in women’s issues and feminism encouraged her to apply and
volunteer for Crossroads Africa. Apparently, she was informed about the organization through her women's studies program. She explained to our group that she wanted experience working with women in another culture. She admitted that she was accepted without any real knowledge of the program or of African culture.

Blair, a twenty-four year old college graduate from Iowa City, had recently worked in Washington D.C. for the Children's Defense Fund. She quit her job prior to becoming a volunteer. Her goals were to take a break from work and find some future answers and goals. She thought the cross-cultural experience would benefit her long term. She often spoke of her plans to visit a friend in Israel after volunteering in Africa. She had a passion for working with children and hoped to be a positive influence on children in Africa.

Sandra, was a twenty-four year old from Maryland, who worked for the National Breast Cancer Fund in Washington, D.C. She was dedicated to women's activism, which was why she thought a cross-cultural experience for the summer would benefit her and give her some time away from work and her personal life. She was interested in 'women in development' and wanted to return to work and share her experiences with her colleagues and family.

Nan, a thirty year old from Wisconsin, was a kindergarten teacher. Her reasons for going to Africa were a result of a recently cancelled trip to Cameroon. She explained to us that she had originally planned to go with her boyfriend to Africa, but he had cancelled their trip by breaking up their relationship. However, the emotional strain did not keep her from following through with her plans to go to Africa for the summer. Instead, she surfed the web and found the most available program, which was Crossroads
Africa. Her desire to be a participant for a women’s project stemmed from the break up and her desire to be surrounded by women. Her interests in feminism and women’s issues were also motivators.

Ana was a twenty-one year old from up-state New York. She found out about Crossroads Africa on her college campus. Her academic interests were in African and African-American studies. The objective for her participation was to be in touch with her African roots, since her father was an African-American. She was interested in the women and development project, because she planned to return to school and report on her experience. Her primary goal was to be a research participant in Ghana.

Ashley, the Crossroad’s director’s niece, was nineteen and had recently graduated from high school. She did not express much interest in the women in development project because she just wanted a cross-cultural experience and something to do for the summer. Apparently, her aunt had encouraged her to participate in a Crossroads program. She agreed to work on the WID project.

Brandy, the group leader, was forty-two and a mother of an eight-year-old who joined our group in the Volta Region. Brandy was a community college professor working on her Ph.D. in African-American studies. She had been a Crossroad’s Africa participant in the past and had returned the past two years as a group leader. She was also a dancer in a traveling African dance group. She often spoke of her extensive history of travel through Africa and her profound desire to be immersed in the surroundings of African culture.
CHAPTER FIVE
SETTING

The Volta Region is one of ten administrative regions in Ghana (See Map 3). It is a diverse area of mountain ranges and lush rainforest that surrounds the largest human made lake in the world, Lake Volta. The tropical climate region is in the southeastern part of Ghana and encompasses about 20,334 km^2 (See Map 4). The landmass extends to the bordering country of Togo. The Togo-Atakora mountain range, in the eastern highlands, has peaks that reach 900m near the border (Briggs 1998: 33). The tribal people are Ewe' (ev-vy) in the Volta region. There are two common languages throughout this area, Ewe' and Twi (chwee). The regional capital is Ho, which is the location of the Ghana Red Cross Society’s main office for the southeast.

My Crossroads group arrived in the capital city Accra and was welcomed by a Ghana Red Cross leader, Ataa. She informed us that she would be guiding us to our sites. We were then transported by Ghana Red Cross to the regional office in Ho, after dropping off two other Crossroads groups at their village work sites. In Ho, we met the regional director of our program, Mickel Lumba. We were given written instructions about our projects and then sent off to our first village, Anfoeta Tsebi.

Anfoeta Tsebi

Anfoeta Tsebi (See map 5) was a village with a population at an estimated 1,000 with a total of 200 families. It was surrounded by lush rainforest at the base of a mountain
Map 3. Volta Region of Ghana and Project Villages

Anfoeta Tsebi
Hlefi
Anyirawase
Map 4. Intertropical Convergence Zone of Ghana

NATURAL REGIONS AND ITCZ LOCATION
(Intertropical Convergence Zone)

- Tropical Forest
- Desert
- Wet Savanna
- Mediterranean (Forest & Scrub)
- Dry Savanna
- Upland Vegetation

ITCZ: JUNE --> JAN. -->
Map 5. Anfoeta Tsebi

Mountain Range

Villager huts

Water filtration system

Village Farms

Village farms

Villager huts

YMCA

Primary School

President hut

Pub

Village market

Work Hut

Dirt Road

To

Accra

To

Togo

Water Pump

Village farms

Village farms

Church

Junior
Secondary
School (JSS)

Villager huts

school building
range with Mt. Adaklu facing the village to the north. There was only one dirt road that ran through the center of the village.

The main form of transport was the tro-tro (mini-bus). The road was lined with thin wood poles and loosely hung electric wire. This allowed electricity to reach a few buildings in the village. One such building was our residence, a YMCA day care center for the village children. They vacated it so that we could stay in a more modern building. The building was made of cement, with four small rooms, a banquet or eating room and a large porch. We set up our sleeping arrangements in the small rooms and used the large room to store our food and wash bins. The villagers assisted us in setting up mosquito nets over our foam mattresses, as a precaution against malaria.

There were two other large cement buildings in the village. One, built by a Crossroads group in 1980, was presently used for Catholic Church services. Christianity is prominent throughout the Volta Region. The denominations included Presbyterian, Baptist, Catholic, and Methodist. It was also explained that ancestral spiritualities were woven into the services and practices. Services were held inside buildings and also outside near the local boabob trees. These indigenous trees are unique in that their root system is outside of the ground. Services incorporated African ritual traditions, such as drumming and dancing in combination with the more modern church-like sermons and singing of praises.

Another building was at the site of the Junior Secondary School compound. We visited the school, in order to answer questions the Ghanaian children had about US culture. The primary school compound was a line of decrepit cement buildings without roofs, all four walls or windows. It was common during the rainy season for school to be
cancelled, since the heavy rain water would pour down into the classrooms. The local people primarily lived in small earthen sod huts built from a mixture of sand, mud, and animal dung. The roofs were made from dried palm leaf branches or metal scraps. Most of the villagers lived in these huts or in small cement buildings. The village Chief, Elders, and their wives, known as the Queen Mothers, typically lived in cement structures that had chairs, sofas, rugs, and some with TV’s. We made home visits to the Chief and Elders in the village upon their formal request.

**Village Political System**

The Chief or Torge, Elders, and Queen Mothers were central to each village. The Tsiami was the chief linguist and the only one to speak directly to visitors. The rural areas depend largely on a strong lineage (kinship) system that acts as the local political system. “Many Africans still rely on extended family organizations and call upon kinship behavior to maintain justice and cultural and territorial integrity, not only in domestic but also in wider spheres” (O’Toole 1998: 32).

In each village that we visited, we were formally greeted (*wezolo* -welcome all) first by the Elders, Chief and Queen Mothers in a welcome ceremony. During this ceremony, we were called on to state the purpose of our stay. This formal greeting or welcome ritual to all outsiders was performed to gain acceptance into the village and to give offerings to the ancestors. The offerings were prayers that the Torge recited in the native language *Ewe*, including the sipping and sharing of alcoholic gin with all persons present. It was customary and proper for the Chief to drink first. Then he passed the same glass around in sequence to the council of Elders, Queen Mothers, and guests. The entire
contents must be drunk from the same glass used by the Torge. The Chief would speak, but only the linguist or Tsiami would hold the staff and make eye contact with us. The Torge sat on his elaborate Ghanaian wood-carved and gold lined “stool,” adorned with an exquisite kente cloth robe. He spoke in Ewe’, making eye contact only with the Tsiami. It was custom in the Volta Region that the Torge did not directly address outsiders. Although the Chief is a powerful clan figure, the council of Elders has tremendous authority and can dismiss the Chief from his position if necessary.

The extended family and its importance is a strong component of African culture. “Here in Africa, the family is first. This will never change” (Seigel 1998: 221). The word family in Africa is not the “nuclear family” concept as in the Western world. In Africa, the concept of family is the extended family, based on patrilineal or matrilineal descent patterns.

Hlefí

The second village, Hlefí (See Map 6), was within an hour drive of Anfoeta Tsebi, and was surrounded by heavy vegetation, mountains, and rainforest. The village had a population of 1,200 people. It was similar to Anfoeta Tsebi in size and appearance. A dirt road went through the middle of the village with sod huts lined on both sides. The village had electricity lines and several cement structures. The school buildings were old and weathered. The newest cement structure was the pub, a common hangout for the local men and passing tourists.

Our place of residence was a Chief’s house at the base of the mountains. It was isolated and had a gate that closed us off from the villagers. It had the modern
Map 6. Hlefi

Mountain Range

Village farms

Crossroads compound

Villager huts

Primary school

Grinding mill

Villager huts

Secondary School

Pub

Work Station

Dirt Road

To

Accra

To

Togo

Market stand

Water Pump

Kindergarten

Village Market

Mud Oven

Church

Villager huts

farms
conveniences, such as a TV, couch, dining table, and chairs. We were able to divide up the group and sleep in two large rooms. Lena, an elderly woman, lived next to us on the right side of our building. Apatia said, “she is 94 years old and a wise woman.” Every morning she walked out to fetch her wood and begin a fire for boiling water. She appeared independent and was treated with the utmost respect by the villagers. Elders are viewed as the wise and noble ones in the village.

Male village Elders have substantial authority in the decisions of political and social concern involving the villagers. Abwunza argues that the rule of male Elders has placed additional limitations on women’s emancipation. She says, “In fact, the two domains [home work and outside work --by women] articulate and conflict while sharing a common theme of male elder rule” (Abwunza 1997: 43)

Agriculture

Farming is the primary source of work for the villagers, especially for women. “Agriculture remains at the heart of the economy, contributing almost 50% of the GDP and directly or indirectly supporting 80% of the population” (Briggs 1996: 33). Hlei women leave before dawn to hike up the side of the mountains to the location of their farms. Apatia, a Mothers Club member complained, “I can’t go up to the farms anymore. My leg is so sore. I can’t climb up the mountains.” Physical ailments imposed this and other limitations on the women in Volta Region, as I will discuss in Chapter six.

The main harvested crops in this area of the Volta Region are cassava (a white yam), millet, maize and cocoa. Cocoa is the largest export cash crop for the region. Cassava is harvested and sent to a local grinding mill to be made into *gari*, a primary
food staple in Ghana. Maize is also ground in a local mill into a type of corn dough, or *kenkey*, another common food staple for villagers. In the villages closer to Lake Volta, processing smoked fish is a primary source of capital for local women.

Most of the farms are family-- (in Africa: extended family)-- owned in the Volta Region. However women are the farm managers. Since land ownership is family based, land is automatically considered to belong to the husband according to the rule of patrilineal descent. Therefore, the wife may plant, weed, farm, and harvest the land without having a legal title to it. The land is essentially her husband's and can be taken from her if her husband dies or leaves. Furthermore, "Because farms are increasingly likely to be registered to the husband as the sole owner, women are often ineligible for most farm aid available only to farmers with legal title to their land (World Bank 1989: 103). Therefore, women must depend on their daughter's to be farm aids, unless they are in a polygamous marriage. However, in Ghana, "the government passed the Law on Intestate Succession, which makes provision for surviving spouse(s) and all the children that a man claimed to be his during his lifetime, to inherit the greater proportion of his self-acquired property" (Dolphyne 1991: 28). This law, passed in 1985, is an example of how active women's organizations and the Ghanaian legislature have collaborated for their benefit.
Anyirawase

The last village, Anyirawase (See Map 7), was an hour driving time from Hlefi. It is a village that has developed around the intersection of two major roads. The roads had a significant amount of traffic that brought more people through the village. Thus, it was less isolated than the other two villages. Anyirawase was surrounded by rainforest, yet the mountains were further in distance than in the prior villages. The population was approximately 5,000 people. The village was more developed, with more cement buildings and fewer sod huts. Two church buildings and several market stands and pubs lined both sides of the road. In one large cement building four men worked daily carving wood coffins from locally cut timber. Timber was cut daily from the surrounding forests and used locally or exported off the coast.

The villagers provided us with an elaborate welcome ceremony that included dancing and drumming. The feasting and dancing continued through the evening. Our place of residence, called the compound, was even more isolated and larger than those in the other villages. The residential building was a new cement structure built by a man who held a political position in the regional capital of Ho. A local family lived in the compound as caretakers. They helped our group cook and clean. The building had a large meeting room and three additional rooms with windows. There was an outdoor balcony used for washing clothes and looking out over the valley.
Map 7. Anyirawase

Mountain Range

Village farms

Water pump

Primary School

Church

Mother’s Club Work Station

Market stand

Wood shop

Pub

Pub

To Accra

to Togo...

(intersection)

to Ho...

To compound

Market

Pub

Village farms

Village market

Villager huts

Prayer camps
Patriarchy

Patriarchy is an active social system in the Volta Region, even though matrilineal descent patterns also exist. Men are clearly the decision-makers, especially in Anyirawase. The Mothers Club is an all women’s group with female leadership, and some men did not appreciate the presence of the group in the village. For example, the husband of the president of the Mothers Club appeared at all meetings and dominated her leadership position. She did not speak out against his intrusion, nor did the other members. Women’s subordination to men is common in Africa. “The dominant ideology in [Maragoli] supports the authority and power of men over women, the rights of men to treat women as they wish (including physical abuse) and to benefit from their labor, support, incomes. Central to this sentiment is the right of men to make decisions and the obligation of women to obey” (Abwunza 1997: 87). This phenomenon was common in all decisions involving the Mothers Clubs. Some Club members must seek approval from their Chiefs, Elders, and/or their husbands in order to participate. Physical violence or verbal chastisement is often used on women and children as a means of enforcing obedience. Disempowerment of women in the Mothers Clubs is further discussed in chapter six.

Traditional African rituals and customs were more prominent in Anyirawase. Villagers attended prayer camps in the forests all day long. Anyone could take a break from work and attend. The camps were hidden deep in the forest, along paths unknown to outsiders. The singing, drumming and chanting from the camps could be heard from miles away. One afternoon we were taken to the camp because the villagers wanted to pray for our safe journey home. The ritual at the prayer camp consisted of women in long
white robes and red hats performing dances while other women and men played music, clapped, and sang.

Female Circumcision

Female genital circumcision has been practiced in Ghana for hundreds of years. This cultural practice signifies a rite of passage, and is usually performed by a group of elder women on younger girls. It is an ancient custom for all girls to go through this rite of passage marking the transition from youth to adulthood. Girls who do not go through this rite of passage are viewed as unclean and do not receive offers of marriage, thereby jeopardizing the future security of their families who depend on marital alliances with other families.

The practice of circumcision has become a controversial topic among women and human rights organizations in Africa and abroad, due to health risks. Medical studies show that girls are at high risk for serious health problems ranging from vaginal infections, disease, and/or death. Human rights organizations have collaborated with feminists to condemn this practice as an act of female mutilation that must be banned.

However, some researchers and scholars believe that this is an ancient custom deeply embedded within the fabric of culture. The future of a woman is dependent on the extended family. To ban circumcision would be intruding upon the cultural tradition of the extended family. As an alternative, some critics support the promotion of health education. Education about sanitation practices and the medical dangers of such practices might result in safer conditions and the practice eventually dying out. The Ghana Red
Cross Society plays a role in health education, providing information to women about health risks associated with unsanitary medical procedures.
CHAPTER SIX

PROJECTS

Numerous projects have been established to improve the quality of life for women and children in the Volta Region. Most of these projects started as a result of the assistance of the Ghana Red Cross and the establishment of the Mothers Clubs. Although some projects have failed, a majority have proven to be successful, in that they have generated self-esteem, solidarity and economic security for women and children that was otherwise absent. This has resulted in the proliferation of Mothers Clubs, now 444 in number. This chapter will present findings and an analysis of three income-generating projects started by Mothers Clubs in the Volta Region.

Projects in the Volta Region vary from fish smoking, garri processing, batik and tie-dye, palm oil extraction, and bread baking. Mickel, the Ghana Red Cross director of Ho, explains, "a group begins in a village by organizing women who are interested in a certain project. They must have fifteen women to begin a group. Then, they apply to the Ghana Red Cross to start their club. As a group, we all meet and discuss the project work and then apply for a loan" (Interview Mickel: July 29, 1999). Financial loans are usually for 500,000 to 1 million cedis. The Club has six months to pay off 500,000 and a year to pay off 1 million cedis. Mickel says, "Considering that Ghana Red Cross must raise 70% of their funds, fund raising is the biggest obstacle in pushing the regional district for results." Once the women have been approved for the loans, the Ghana Red Cross staff assists them in writing up a group constitution, and the women elect their own group leaders. The Ghana Red Cross also helps women in tending to a communal bank account.
Mickel explains, "presently, the women pay 15% interest and they have up eight months to a year to pay off their loans."

Palm Oil Extraction and Soap Making: Anfoeta Tsebi

In the first village the local Mothers Club consisted of a total of twenty-two members. The members worked on income-generating projects consisting of palm kernel oil extraction from palm kernels and palm oil extraction from the peels of the fruit. Palm oil food processing is common in the Volta Region. Palm trees are in abundance, and the locals cook most of their stews with palm kernel oil and reddish palm oil. The oil is also used for making soap and palm wine. The palm wine distiller workers in Anfoeta Tsebi were all men. The Club members met to work on their projects for two hours each day. The demands of their daily work kept them from devoting more time to their projects. Not all twenty-two members were present at the worksite at the same time.

Palm Oil Production (See Appendix 1)

1) Preparation and Cracking of the palm kernels

The first step was to purchase or trade something for the palm fruit. The red buds were removed from the head of the fruit and then peeled and put aside, while the inner nut or kernel was scattered on the ground to dry out. During the rainy season, it took two weeks or more for the kernels to dry out completely. The Mothers Club had dried some kernels prior to our arrival. We observed the women gather the kernels and place them on a flat, hard, rock-slab surface. Then, each kernel was individually hit with a large stone or
rock. The force of the impact broke open the shell leaving a small brown seed. These seeds were collected and put into a large pan. This first stage was known as the "cracking of the palm kernel."

2) Roasting and Cooking

The next stage was the roasting and cooking of the kernel seeds. All of the seeds were put in a large pan over a blazing fire to be roasted for 30 minutes to an hour. When the kernels were hot, they began to pop and crack. Then they were taken off the heat, cooled and sent to the nearest village mill in Hlei for grinding. The group waited a few days for the contents to return. The ground seeds were put over a hot fire while water was gradually added forming a thick, dark-brown paste. The paste was continuously stirred until the oil began to rise. At this point, a gourd was scooped across the to remove all the remaining oil. The leftover residue in the pan was taken to the fields and used for fertilizer on the fields. The Mothers Club stored some of the oil and sold it in bulk containers at the local village market. They also traveled to Ho and sold some of it at the regional market. The Mayor of Ho informed me that women had to register for a booth at the market. The registration was either on a daily or yearly arrangement. The daily cost at Ho market for a booth was 200 cedis.

3) Peel crushing

The reddish-orange peels of the kernels were stored and used to make palm oil. The peels were placed in a large mortar and crushed by two women with large wooden pestles. After the peels were crushed, the bright orange extract was placed in a large
bowl. Water was continuously added and stirred. A gourd strainer was scooped across the surface, to gather pulp rising to the top.

4) **Heat and Stir**

The extract was then heated over a fire and stirred until a thick red oil appeared on the surface and was also scooped off the top and stored. The remaining residue returned to the earth for fertilization. The red palm oil was used in the making of local stews and local soap.

**Soap Production from Palm Oils**

Women made soap for personal use from the left over palm oil by combining it with coco or potash.

**Stages:**

The procedure for making soap involved: 1) the adding of coco ash to palm oil over a fire; 2) cooking and stirring until all moisture was removed and solidification was achieved; 3) scooping off foam from top; 4) removing from the heat and cooling; 5) gathering the raw material with moist hands and forming it into small balls. During process #5, there was a distinct color change first from red to orange and then to a yellow tone when using peels of the kernels. However, when the kernel oil was used, a brown color remained consistent. In the final stage, the soap balls were bagged together and sold by the Mothers Clubs at local village markets in packages of three balls per bag.
Project Evaluation

Successes

1) Positive Attitude

A common theme of efficient collective work was present among the women. They frequently sang together and talked while they were working. A popular song went, “we are working, we are working, we are working to save Ghana...(repeat) ... we are working to save our Kind...if they ask, if they ask, we are the women of the Ghana Red Cross...” The women also stopped to play hand-clapping games, especially when rain was coming. Although some of the members were individually quiet and reserved, as a group, they were expressive and worked efficiently.

Sometimes, Club members who were not working on the project stopped by the work site and talked with us. There was never a time when all twenty-two members were present and working. Yawa said, “our work is demanding and there is little time. Some women must go on and do other work for their families.” Also, when I asked Apatia why some women in the village chose not to be a Club member, she commented, “some women just cannot take time away from their other work.”

2) Leadership

The Anfoeta Mothers Club had been in existence for several years under Yawa’s leadership. She was the President of the Mothers Club and a prominent woman in the village. Yawa had numerous roles in the village, such as mother, teacher, preacher,
builder, farmer, provider, and disciplinary, which were reflected in her independence and leadership skills. The other women in the club benefited from her leadership because she was a positive and active role model.

Yawa explained to me that she had attended a teacher's college in Ho several years ago, which allowed her to gain an understanding of the importance of education. Yawa insisted that the Mothers Club also help with establishing a village adult education school to provide illiterate adults with education -- reading, writing, and learning English. In several informal chats, she emphasized the importance of her children having access to education. Kweki, one of her sons, was presently attending a university in Accra, and one of her daughters was attending a school in Ho.

Yawa emphasized that it was essential for girls to continue with their education. She said, "I have one daughter at school in Ho, and I hope to one day send her to America to enter a university." She asked me about the school system in America and about jobs. She also made reference to women's roles in Ghana and the world. One afternoon, Yawa led our group on a hike to observe a water filtration system built by a women's church group. After returning to the village, we saw a large group of people watching a TV set showing a women's world cup soccer game between Ghana and Australia. Yawa said to a Crossroad volunteer, "See, a woman can do anything a man can."

Yawa's determination kept the Club members motivated. Although the work was tedious and the resources limited, her leadership boosted the women's self-confidence. Apatia, the Vice President, said one day at the work site, "see how we suffer here?" She was referring to the smoke that would blow into the eyes of the workers while they were
preparing soap over a fire. At this point, Yawa moved in and began stirring the pots, she said something to make the women laugh, and they happily kept working together.

2) Economic

The financial benefits of the project were another factor motivating the women to keep working. The income from the project allowed the women to pay off their loan in six months and therefore distribute their extra earnings among themselves. This working added to their self-confidence. For two years, this group earned enough money to improve upon their socioeconomic position and create economic security. The money went to education for children, healthcare, food, and clothing. My informants indicated that they were benefiting from the collective work and that they enjoyed being a part of a group that was gaining recognition for their work.

3) Organizational support

The Ghana Red Cross Society offered aid and assistance to the Mothers Club regularly. A representative came to the village and met with the group monthly to address questions or concerns about their project.
Obstacles

1) Time and Resources

The time involved in the production of palm oil and soap was a definite limitation on productivity. The kernels had to be dried for several days, which was difficult to accomplish in the rainy season. In addition, preparing the oil and soap over a hot, smoky fire and the task of fetching wood and tending to the fire was time consuming.

Coal was used for the small stoves, but it was expensive and not readily available. Coal stoves required constant attention, since they needed to be fanned to maintain the output of heat. Firewood was a limited resource. Women and children spent several hours each day gathering and storing firewood for cooking. Women had to sometimes walk for miles, returning with piles of wood stacked high on their heads. In tending to the fire and stirring the oil, exposure to smoke presented a major problem. The smoke was constantly changing with the wind, burning the eyes and lungs of the workers.

2) Machinery and Transportation

The lack of machinery for grinding the seeds and the lack of transportation were also major limitations on productivity. Since the grinding mill was located in another village, the women were idle for several days waiting for delivery of the ground seeds. Local transportation was infrequent and also expensive, which added to more loss of time.
3) Sexual division of labor

The sexual division of labor in the Volta Region limited the women’s production. Women worked long days aside from the project work. Sometimes members could not be present at the work site because of the demands of work for their families and homes. The time that some women could dedicate to project work was inconsistent.

**Bread Baking and Gari Processing: Hlefi, Volta Region**

**Bread Baking (See Appendix 2a)**

The project in the second village involved the baking of bread in a mud-dome oven. The baking of the bread began with the making of the dough. All of the dough ingredients-- egg, baking powder, yeast, flower, nutmeg, and sugar-- were purchased through local markets in bulk.

The dough was produced in a mill owned and run by a local family in Kpeve, a village located on the other side of the mountain range bordering Hlefi. Inside the mill, there were three pieces of large equipment-- a machine to mill corn kernels, a large hand spun mixer, and a hand fed dough presser. Three men operated these labor-intensive machines. The women from the Mothers Club paid the family a rental fee of 200 cedis per visit to have access to the mill. They used the blender and the presser for processing the dough. The ingredients were mixed and pressed to form the dough, which was then placed in large steel pans for transport. The Mothers Club members relied on the tro-tro to find transportation back to Hlefi.
When the dough arrived back in Hlefi, ten Mothers Club members gathered at the cement building where all the bread pans were stored. The pans were distributed and greased with butter, while several women sat at nearby tables to hand knead and roll pieces of dough into proper sizes, to be placed into pans. They formed the dough into large round rolls, small rolls, long baguettes, and regular loaf styles. Fifty-five pans were filled, covered with burlap and placed in a dark cement room. The dough remained in the room for several hours until it began to rise. One woman, Akuyah, referred to the dough as “our babies.” She said, “our babies must rest and continue sleeping but they will be watched until they begin to wake.”

While some of the women were busy kneading dough or greasing the pans, others were tending to the hot fire inside the mud-dome oven. They sang and talked as they worked. Other members went to fetch firewood and then returned to fill the oven with large pieces of wood. They ignited the wood and left it to burn the entire day and into the night, while waiting for the bread to rise. Several women tended the fire through the night and periodically went to watch the bread.

At five a.m. Akuyah and Apatia came to our compound to let us know it was time. We all gathered and helped take the pans down to the hot oven. A long wooden stick was used to shove each pan into the oven. The fifty-five pans filled the entire inside of the oven. Three large sheets of scrap metal covered the door while the bread was baking. The bread was baked in about thirty minutes. Then the pans were removed and taken back to the cement room to be cooled. The bread was bagged in plastic bags later in the afternoon and taken to local and regional markets the following day to sell for profit. All of the loaves of bread were completely sold by sundown the following day.
Some of the proceeds were set aside to buy the ingredients for the next batch of dough to be made the next day.

**Gari-Processing (See Appendix 2b)**

The second type of project work at Hlefi was gari-processing. Gari is a starchy food staple eaten by the local people with vegetable and meat stews. The production process for gari involves grinding, drying, heating, and bagging cassava. Cassavas are large yams that are rooted in the ground and pulled up from the stalk out of the soil.

The outside of a cassava has a rough brown texture and the inside is white. The day of the harvest was eventful. We hiked with the women to their collectively owned farm. The farm, four acres in size, was located about three miles from the village. When we arrived at the farm, the women gathered together and honored the gods and goddesses. The honoring was in the form of a song [in Ewe'] and prayer. Afterwards, Akuyah reached down to the ground, touched the soil, and uprooted the first cassava. She lifted it up for all to observe, evoking sighs of relief from the women. Apatia turned to me with a disappointed look and said, “There has been so much rain this year, the wet soil may have ruined most of our crop”. The women set out to salvage any of the crop that may not have been damaged.

Apatia showed us how to uproot the cassava. She used a machete knife to chop the base of the stems of leafy green branches. These branches were later gathered and taken back to feed the goats. She grabbed leftover stems by hand and pulled the cassava out of the soil. The long wooded stems were used for firewood. The harvested cassava roots were taken back to the village and peeled by hand. The women insisted that
we scoop up piles of cassava leaves and take them back to the village. I gathered a bundle of branches and followed after Mada, who carried a large steel pan filled with cassavas on her head. She walked so fast that I struggled to stay up with her, especially since a fierce wind was blowing and threw my footing off balance. Mada and I were the first to return to the village. I asked her about the weight of her load and trying to balance it through the fields against the high winds. She responded, “It is what we do in Africa, sister. We are used to it.”

After the time-consuming peeling process, the women take the cassavas to the village mill to be ground into soft, white dough. The mill had one generator grinder, operated by men, used to grind both cassava and corn for cornmeal. I asked Apatia what they do if the generator was not functioning properly. She laughed, “We do it with our hands use our woman power.” The dough was put into several large burlap sacks, and huge stones were set on top for about two days until the water was drained. The bags were then taken over to the hot fire, and the dried cassava was removed and placed on top of a large hand woven basket over a hot stirring pot. The basket worked as a type of filter. A woman brushed her hand back and forth over the top of the basket. Small pieces of cassava filtered through the basket, dropping into the pot. The cassava was taken out of the pot and gradually added to a large heated bowl over the fire. A gourd was used to stir continuously over the fire for about an hour.

The heat proceeded to transform the white color of the cassava to a yellowish tint, indicating that it was time to remove the finished garri from the fire to cool. After cooling, the garri was then portioned out, packaged in plastic bags and sold at local and regional markets.
**Project Evaluation**

**Successes**

1) **Positive Attitudes**

The Hlefi group was dynamic and enthusiastic about their work. They bonded as friends and were energized as a group. This could have been a result of their younger ages, the success of their projects, and/or their pre-existing close friendships. Akuyah, Asha, Apatia, Vila, and Maya had been all close friends. They constantly teased one another and poked each other while working. They were playful and happy a majority of the time. I often asked Apatia to translate, and she would tell me how they would tease each other about their husbands.

The group of women used laughter to cope with the gender role restrictions of their society, especially relating to arranged marriages. For instance, Apatia, a large woman, had a small husband. She said jokingly, “Oh, but I prefer them [men] to be smaller.” Vila’s husband was much older; Asha laughed and joked about her going home to her “daddy.” Asha’s husband was said to be the moody one. Apatia said, “We often tease each other and say how we [women] are the stronger ones.”

A theme of pride and self-confidence was present among the women in Hlefi. Apatia and Vila always wanted us to take pictures of them working. Apatia said, “You must take pictures of us working. We work hard here and we want your family in America to see what we do.” When Akuyah came to announce that all seventy-seven loaves of bread sold in one day and that the money would go to the Mothers Club, the women clapped and cheered at the good news. When they worked, they treated each
other with respect and were polite about thanking each other for helping with the dishes or the preparing food.

A theme of dedication to their project work was also apparent. For instance, some Crossroads group members wanted to go shopping for drums at a far away village. They left one afternoon from Kpeve, after going to the mill. When they later returned to Hlefi, Vila was upset. She said to Blair, "Why didn't you tell us? You should have informed us because there was work to do!" She was stern and upset because the women needed help with the project work. She said that she was disappointed with some of our group members. It was obvious the women were serious about their work and demanded the same from us. They would work until they became too tired to continue. Asha often made "rain calls" in the late in the afternoon. She said, "We call the rain when we are tired and need a break from the work of woman... ‘The farm is our office, the cassava we pick, maize we plant. She continued, ‘we are hard workers but we often suffer and become tired."

3) Group Collaboration

I did not notice one particular person who held a leadership position to guide or motivate the other women. The women made a collaborative effort. The social dynamics and sense of pride of the Mothers Club in Hlefi were the strong points of the group’s apparent efficiency. Because Vila, Asha, Apatia, Akuyah, and Maya were close friends and hard workers, their positive group dynamics carried over into the work environment.
4) Economic

The Mothers Clubs projects in Hlefi were providing economic security. Bread baking and selling of gari were quick turnover projects. The group was able to borrow the money for the mud dome oven and pay off their loan in ten months. This allowed the individual women to share their surplus income. Apatia said, “I am going to a doctor in Ho tomorrow about my leg. I now have the money to pay for a doctor.” She was pleased that her earnings from the Mothers Club allowed her to go to the city for medical attention. Several of my informants claimed to be benefiting economically. Akuyah believed that these good things were a result of God’s power. She would often say, “God is all around us. No fears, God is here.”

Obstacles

1) Time and Transportation

Travel to the mill at Kpeve took both money and lots of extra time away from work. Akuyah said, “it is far for us to go and it is expensive.” Although they usually sent only two or three members to the mill, the time involved could amount to an entire morning or afternoon. One afternoon our group waited two hours in Hlefi for the local tro-tro (transport bus). The trip required changing buses at another station to go over the mountain range into Kpeve. After arriving in Kpeve, we had to walk two miles to reach the mill. When we were ready to depart Kpeve, it took even more time to wait for the bus to fill up with passengers before it departed for the other side of the mountains.
2) Medical

In Hlefi, I saw the first signs of physical weakness and suffering due to lack of healthcare. For instance, Apatia said, “We are struggling. Women are struggling here. Do you see how we struggle?” She was referring to one of the Mothers Club members that was suffering from “the sickness.” The symptoms of her disease were fatigue, diarrhea, vomiting, and fever. One day, the leaders took us to visit the Mothers Club member who had been extremely sick. Vila turned to me and said, “See how she suffers? We can only pray that she will be better soon. She works so hard, though, even when she has the sickness.” Several women made daily efforts to check on her and bring her to the work site to cheer her up.

It was apparent that the women all worked together to care for each other. If one felt tired or sick, the others were there to help. Apatia was always motivating everyone by singing a song or encouraging the others. She would say, “Keep working, keep going, keep doing well. Ah, I want to see you smile!” On other occasions, she would hum with the intention to “relax everyone.”

The women helped each other with medical needs as well. For instance, while Maya worked at market, she took care of Akuyah’s baby. Apatia often spoke of her ailing leg. Asha and Vila would go to her farm up on the mountain and tend to her family’s land since she could not travel long distances by foot. Apatia said to me one day while cooking and pointing to her leg, it pains me so. I can’t go to the farm anymore, which makes me sad, very sad.” The other women helped her overcome her physical and emotional pain by joking with her and making her laugh.
3) Climate

The tropical climate in Hlefi was a limitation on cassava crop production. It was evident that some of the crop had been ruined due to the heavy rains during the past year. This was a disappointment and presented some uncertainties for the gari-processing project. In addition, the maintenance of the fields involved intensive labor over a long period of time. To have a majority of a crop ruined was discouraging for the women.

Batik, Tie-dye, Beadwork, and Corn Husk Weaving: Anyirawase, Volta Region

The Mothers Club in the third village had been established in 1996 and had twenty active members. The project work involved batik making and tie dying. The women also engaged in bead making and weaving of mats from dried cornhusks to help to pay off their Ghana Red Cross loan.

Batik (See Appendix 3a)

All of the project materials for batik and tie-dye were brought from Tamale, a distant village. The batik materials included three yards of white cloth, large rectangular blocks of latex foam, bulk wax, caustic soda, hydrosulfide, and various chemical powder dyes. The newly elected President, Mila, had been trained to work with the toxic chemical dyes. She wore a surgical mask and long rubber gloves when mixing the dyes. Natural dyes were rarely used, since the preparation time was so labor-intensive and the plants were hard to come by.
The batik making process involved taking the blocks of latex foam and placing them on a large rectangular wooden table. The foam was then measured and sliced into smaller blocks. Pencils were used to trace patterns and creative designs on the foam. Then razor blades were used to carve out the patterns, and the cut-out pattern was removed. White cloths were stretched out on the wooden table. To the right of the work hut, there were large stones arranged in a triangle with firewood underneath. A large steel pot containing bulk wax was balanced on top of the stones and heated. When the wax was melted, the pot was removed and placed on a smaller coal stove near the workstation. The small block of latex foam was dipped in the hot wax and then taken over to the white cloth to stamp the design onto the cloth. Dribbling wax over the cloth created various dot designs. When the entire three yards of cloth had been covered with a design, the cloth was placed in a large pot of cold water. Later it was removed from the water and placed on the ground to allow the water to drain.

To the right of our workstation, Mothers Club members were mixing the dyes. The first batik was colored with yellow and red dyes that combined to produce a rustic orange shade. For three yards of cloth, one-and-a-half spoonfuls of powdered dye was needed. The chemical powder was mixed with warm water, four teaspoons of caustic soda, and four spoonfuls of hydrosulfide. Cold water was stirred into this mixture. The batik was then spread out on the ground to dry for a few minutes. Afterwards, it was put into a pot with the coloring dye and was moved around with a large wooden stick while cold water was added as needed. Then the cloth was drained and put out on the grass to dry. Drying would only take fifteen minutes in the sun. Nisa said, “the work is good when the sun is hot.” After the cloth dried out, it was placed on in a pot of hot water so
that the wax would melt off of the cloth. The wax was then removed from the top layer of the pot, and the cloth was taken from the pot, put through three cool rinses, and again placed on the grass to dry. The final step was to place the cloth on the wooden table to be smoothed out with a coal-heated iron.

The leftover dye was always re-used by the Mothers Club. Some was used for dying cornhusks. Cornhusks are dipped into the dye and then dried. This added color designs to the weave. The leftover dye was also used to add a second color to the batik. The women used various creative design techniques. For instance, they dipped some of the batiks a second time into a different dye color after being pressed by a second wax design. The final batik often appeared with two or more colorful designs.

Tie-dye (See Appendix 3b)

The tie-dye process used the same kind of white cloth. In this case the cloth was crumpled and twisted while sections tied off with bark shavings called “raffia.” After tying, the cloth was dipped in cold water and hung over a tree branch to drip-dry. It was then dipped in a pot of dye and removed to hang in the sun. After drying, the raffia ties were removed, re-tied in other spots, and dipped into another dye of a different color. In this way the previously tied-off white parts were colored. Finally, the cloth was hung to drain off excess water and dye, and then placed on the grass to dry in the sun.
Beadwork (See Appendix 3c)

Mothers Club members also used beads to make bracelets, necklaces, and waist bands. Beads were easy to acquire and cheap, since they came in bulk strings.

Beads are common adornment in the Volta Region. They are believed to offer protection to newborn babies. Women adorn their newborns with strings of beads on their hands, waist, and ankles. The beads removed after being worn for about a year. When a girl reaches puberty, she again wears beads in a waistband for spiritual protection. One woman in Hlefi had twelve bands of beads on her waist.

Corn Husk Weaving for Mats (See Appendix 3d)

Husks from locally grown maize were peeled and dried after harvest. The husks were weaved into small mats using long steel needles. I worked daily on weaving mats with Nisa. She taught me how to weave and make designs with dyed husks. She encouraged me by saying, “See, yours is better than mine.” I often worked beside her and observed her hands, while trying to follow her lead. Women sold their mats at the local village market.
Project Evaluation

Successes

A) Group Collaboration and Positive Attitudes

Many of the Mothers Club members did not speak English. One afternoon Nisa began to sing a song in Ewe’, and the other women soon chimed in. She paused and translated for my benefit, "Yawa [me], years ago our men went off to fight. Many lost their lives. We sing that it is time for the women to grab the guns and fight with the men for freedom. We know women all over the world are doing things that men do. It is time for women in Ghana to do the same."

My informants spoke highly of their participation in the women’s collective. They enjoyed being a part of a group and being recognized publicly for their work. They especially seemed pleased to be working with a group from America. As a whole, the women were reserved and conservative socially, and they worked hard collectively.

B) Leadership

Mila had been President for about a year. She was appeared shy and reluctant to speak in English to our group. Since her leadership skills were weak, Nisa usually acted as the defacto leader in the group when Mila’s husband, Senya, was not present. Nisa usually was the one to say all the prayers before and after work, and she encouraged everyone to sing songs.
Nisa was an albino from a family of eight children. She said, “I am from a family with two like me [yellowish tone, light blond/white hair, and green eyes] and three with dark black skin.” She was the only woman who had reached thirty-five and still was not married. She said, “It has been difficult for me most of my life. I was rejected for a long time [because of skin tone] and I don’t plan to ever marry.” She claimed that life was easier for her now that she was older. She was a teacher, member/leader in the Mothers Club, and lived happily with her sister. Nisa and I became close friends. Because we were both born on Thursday, we were called *Yawa* which means Thursday in Ewe’. Nisa often came to visit me at the Crossroads compound, and she offered me small gifts daily. Her English was the best among the entire Mothers Club group. She often translated for me while we were working.

**Obstacles**

**A) Power Struggles**

Mila’s husband, Senya, was fifty-two year old and had been a devoted Red Cross Volunteer for twenty-nine years. He was the regional volunteer organizer for Anyirawase. He attended all of our Mothers Club meetings and claimed to be the women’s group leader and spokesman. He also came to the worksite daily, took us to visit people in the village, and scheduled our work and our leisure time.

Senya’s self-appointed rule caused tension among the group members. He refused to allow his wife Mila to carry out her role as leader and elected President. Mila often
appeared frustrated and upset by her husband's constant interference. However, neither she nor any other of the group members were willing to confront him.

B) Time and Resources

The batik and tie-dye projects were delayed for two days because the supplies did not arrive on time. The women complained about the lack of resources, poor transportation, and slow deliveries of product materials. Even after the materials arrived, there were additional time constraints, due to the long hours of work required to make batik and to sell it at the market.

C) Finances

The cost of materials and the time involved in production were not justified by the market demand. A common theme for the women in the Anyirawase Mothers Club was frustration and suffering, related to a lack of capital and resources. The project did not yield enough income for the women to pay off their loans. Even though they had supplemental incomes, the women were barely getting their loan paid off. This affected the motivation of the group. Nisa said, "It is often difficult for us to buy the materials for batik. We usually don't have the money to buy a lot of materials. The expense is great. The demand for the product is low here." She continued, "There is no reward for the money spent. The market isn't high for it."

The members of the Crossroads group used our own funds to buy our batik materials so that we could work on the project. We spent 3,000 cedis on supplies for our entire group. Unfortunately, the demand for batik was low in the Volta Region. Batik
fabrics bring high prices only in the cities visited by tourists. The Mothers Club in Anyirawase had not been educated about the market demand in their region. Even though the women found other ways to supplement their income, their lack of market knowledge and access kept them struggling to pay off their loan. Many of the members were frustrated and looked to our group both for financial and moral support.

**Projects Summary**

It was evident that the common theme in the three villages was the determination of the women. They persevered despite the obstacles. The villages with the food processing projects were the most productive and received the greatest financial benefits. The Ghana Red Cross offered assistance with for the basic project requirements but neglected to address issues related to production efficiency and effective marketing.

The most apparent obstacles were lack of time and lack of resources necessary for production. The Crossroads visitors also created an extra burden for the Mothers Club groups.

**Crossroads Group**

The American group, sent by Crossroads Africa, often placed additional burdens on project efficiency. Interactions among volunteers were strained. For example, the group leader, Brandy, often left the village to go into Ho market, not showing up for project work and then returning with expensive fabrics. She claimed to be buying the fabrics for herself and her dance group members. However, she would take most of her
fabric to the village seamstress to make dresses and wraps for herself. This produced negative reactions from the Crossroads group members, since it delayed project work for the Mothers Club. In addition, the fabric was expensive and some members of the Crossroads group thought the excessive buying was inappropriate and disrespectful to the local women.

Another volunteer was not emotionally acclimating to African culture. She began having panic attacks, which led to her evacuation by Ghana Red Cross and Crossroads US. She was released from her assignment to be transported from the village to the airport in Accra and then escorted to America. The evacuation caused emotional stress for the entire Crossroads group and Mothers Club.

These emotional strains carried over into our relations and project work with Mothers Club members. At the farewell ceremony in Anfoeta Tsebi, the Secretary of the village, James Kweku, recited a speech to our group apologizing for any offences they [villagers] might have unconsciously made against us. It was evident that the villagers took our negative group dynamics personally, thinking it was due to African culture and our disappointment with the Mothers Club project. In the speech, Kweku also thanked us for “leaving our glamorous lifestyles in America” to come work in their village. Conflicting feelings about lifestyle differences added to the tension among our group.

The stressful situation among the Crossroads members carried over into Hlefi. For instance, the Crossroads group leader arranged a trip for us to Accra where she planned to pick up her son. This caused problems since our group was not informed of the plan until the last minute. Also, the trip delayed our project work and took money from our group account. We went to Accra as directed by the leader. At this point, we
were still waiting for a Crossroads director from New York to visit our work site. However, there was no word when this person was to arrive.

In Accra, we visited the Ghana Red Cross office and made plans to meet with the Accra director, Ataa. A miscommunication led to an argument between our group leader, Brandy and Ataa. The members of our group were quite upset about the argument and resented our substandard lodgings in Accra. Brandy moved us to an expensive hotel downtown. Ataa later pointed out that the hotel was commonly known as a place where wealthy white men would sleep with Ghanaian prostitutes. The hotel held true to its reputation. My roommate, Nan, and I woke in the middle of the night to a blackout and a woman screaming in the hallway outside of our door. The bloodcurdling screams continued for an hour. Apparently, the woman was demanding that the white customer pay for her sexual services. He refused to pay and physically beat her in the hallway.

After returning to Hlefi to continue project work, Brandy decided to leave one afternoon for Ho. The Ghana Red Cross director, Ataa, arrived and was quite upset with her for changing our lodging and incurring expensive hotel costs. Ataa also was enraged not to find Brandy in the village after traveling from Accra to speak with her personally. Needless to say, Brandy’s irresponsibility reflected on our group and promoted even more tension and division among us. She returned to face even more frustration and disappointment about her actions as our leader. Brandy called a group meeting, but group members remained distant and non-communicative.

As a result of the constant tension among Crossroaders, our project work continued to suffer. It was apparent to villagers that we were fragmented and as a result, our group did not work well together. Each of us dealt with this problem in our own way.
Nan, my roommate, began hiding alcohol [gin] in our room and sipping on it at night while reading her book. Sandra and Ashley smoked cigarettes and chatted for hours at night outside in the compound. Blair and Ana became close friends and distanced themselves from everyone else. Brandy spent time with her son, or away from the project. I closed off from everyone and devoted myself to observation, journal writing, and reading.

Eventually, some members withdrew completely and did not go to the worksite. For those of us at the worksite, Apatia kept saying, "We want you all to smile! We are your mommy’s here, no need to be upset." She continued, "If you feel sad, I am here. I am your mommy." The Mothers Club members talked among themselves and appeared quiet. I would ask Apatia if I could assist her. She looked determined and focused on her work saying, "not yet." She took away dishes from my hand and said, "I am your mom here and I will do the work for you while you are here. This reiterated once again our position as rural development tourists and/or guests. Apatia took on a mother role and tried to care for us. The other Mothers Club members sang and smiled but the social strains persisted within our Crossroads group. The Mothers Club interpreted the tension to mean that our group was disappointed with the project work. We received a letter of apology from the Mothers Club the day of our departure. Once again, the negative dynamics of our group had an impact on the social interactions with the Mothers Club.

Crossroads group members were obviously divided due to differing expectations and goals, and a few merely by culture shock. However, we were also fragmented as a women’s group, due to our differing feminist views. This primarily surfaced in the last village when we discussed the sexual division of labor and the power struggles in
Anyirawase. We remained divided about what action would be appropriate to take in regards to the President’s dominating husband. We finally agreed that at the closing ceremony, Brandy would make a speech to the Mothers Club members, with Senya present, highlighting the importance of female leaders in the collective, with the hope that Mila would take a more active leadership role in the future. When she made this speech, Senya appeared disturbed and bothered.

The Crossroads group decided to separate and part ways after the completion of the project work. The director from New York never visited the work site as promised. A few members continued on with the Crossroads agenda and traveled for another week. Another member decided to return to the US early, and I visited friends in Accra with plans of returning to Ho for more research.
CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

This final chapter presents my overall evaluation of the Ghana Red Cross women's collectives relating to economic security, gender, power and development. I will also discuss the effectiveness of the Crossroads collaborative project. I will then offer recommendations for future improvements.

Collective Effort

The Mothers Club collective serves as a network of support for women in the rural areas. This network is an outlet for women to come together and work to improve their social and economic situations despite the constraints placed on them within their communities.

• Networking

My findings support Sangeetha Purushothaman's theory that women's networking in the community is a valuable tool in assisting women in the process of empowerment. She suggests that networking alters the hierarchal structure of power to create a horizontal framework. Thus, women take on the role of being the teachers to others about their learning process and indigenous methods.

• Role as Teachers

A primary example of how the women were creating change was through their role as teachers. The Mothers Club members were actively engaging in being mothers and teachers to our Crossroads group. It was apparent that our group represented the
"outsiders" and perhaps their only connection to the outside world. Our visit to their villages and opportunity to work with them, allowed them to take on this role of being our teachers. They showed us their project skills with hopes of us returning to the US to share our stories with families, friends, and schools.

This role of mother and teacher to our Crossroads group proved significant in relation to development. Although our group consisted of women from solid academic backgrounds, our position was clearly not outsiders coming in to teach the women about development methods. Instead, we came from the outside and observed as the women taught us how they are making their own progress. We learned from them about efficient collective development processes.

**Development and Quality of Life**

My findings support the theory by Raj that development structures should be based on improving the quality of life for locals.

- **Health Education**

A major component of the Ghana Red Cross program is teaching health education to all participating members. One of the objectives of the Ghana Red Cross Mothers Clubs is “to complement the Primary Health Care Programme of the government” (Mothers Club pamphlet). The Mothers Clubs are actively carrying out this objective through training all women in the areas of health, sanitation, and nutrition. This program plays a major role in improving health conditions for participants and their families.
• Gaining of Valuable Skills

Mothers Club members also gain skills through general education and community service work. I observed that the women are exposed to learning oral communication and leadership skills through their participation in the Mothers Clubs activities and meetings. This allows women the opportunity to play an active role in the process of improving their own lives. These skills are beneficial in that they aid them in the improvement of their socioeconomic situations.

Furthermore, the women carry their knowledge, sense of pride, and skills back into the local community. For instance, in addition to their project work, some Mothers Club members hold classes for illiterate adults in the village to teach them reading and writing in English and Ewe’. They also used their indigenous knowledge of farming, baking, cooking, and weaving to enhance their economic status and new skills.

• Economic Security

My findings also suggest that the projects are working to improve economic conditions and provide Ghanaian women with improved economic security. Economic security is defined as the women gaining and having control over their own money. Some projects work better than others. For instance, in Anyirawase the batik project is limited, due to the expense of materials and lack of access to resources and markets. However, the women do work to circumvent such obstacles through other creative projects. The women have worked together to keep the program running.

The successful income-generating projects lead to better education, health care, and extra food and clothes for women and children. For instance, some women use their
money to pay for school uniforms and shoes, since they are in high demand for the children in Volta Region.

**Empowerment**

My findings suggest that the Mothers Clubs assists women in gaining empowerment as a result of improving the quality of life for women and children in the Volta Region.

- **Role as Active Agents for Change**

  My findings support Young’s theory that when women are active agents for change in their lives, this leads to empowerment. As individuals, the women enjoy working as a group on collective work projects. They laugh, talk, play hand-clapping games, sing about improving their lives for themselves and their families, and help each other in times of sickness or exhaustion. Even though the project work is demanding and takes time away from their workday, they are part of a group that allows them to be active agents for change in their communities.

- **Community Acknowledgement**

  My findings support Dolphyne’s theory that community acknowledgement and improvement of their own lives positively contributed to sense of empowerment experienced by the women. The Mothers Club members were overjoyed to work and teach Crossroads participants from America. The fact that we were taking photographs of their project work and were also going back to the US to share our information about the Mothers Clubs, added to the women’s motivation and confidence.
- **Power Concepts**

The women of the Mothers Clubs are also using their knowledge and having a say in solutions for present and future problems. The power dynamics of Mothers Club groups support Townsend et al. theory of self-confidence leading to collective empowerment through a process of ‘power within’ (self-empowerment) to ‘power to’ (collective empowerment).

- **Hard Work and Dedication**

It was apparent that the women expressed confidence and pride of their hard work and dedication to their projects. The Mothers Clubs face numerous obstacles but they remain empowered through their collective efforts.

**Obstacles**

- **Women in Development**

My findings support Young’s critique of Women in Development programs that focus primarily on the “alleviation of poverty, rather than the oppressive male-centered social structures” (Young 1993: 130). Men’s interference is a major obstacle for the Mothers Club groups. The WID project design focuses on the economic status of women and the primary focus is generation of income and economic security for women. This design excludes the consideration of men and their attributes. Women’s collectives in the Volta Region were formed to place women in non-threatening environments where they can speak and gain leadership skills. I observed the negative effects on a Mothers Club
group as a result of a male feeling threatened by being excluded from the women-only group. This conflict put the success of the Mothers Club in Anyirawase in jeopardy.

WID designs avoid addressing the negative impact that a women-only group may have on women’s relationships with men. Men who are used to traditional gender roles and feel threatened or excluded from the process of development will engage in public resistance. The women were not comfortable with handling such situations.

- **Physical Demands**

  Niara Sudarkasa’s theory about gender differentiation playing a role in women’s subordination was another obstacle that appeared as a common theme in my findings. The Mothers Club members had to work harder and longer hours, which resulted in physical suffering and exhaustion. The sexual division of labor in Ghana places extra work demands on women who participate in development projects. The women often pointed out that to be an active member in a collective requires a lot of physical energy and additional time. They often complained of exhaustion and of needing a break, due to the amount of extra time the projects required, aside from their daily work demands.

- **Lack of Resources**

  House-Midamba’s theory that women may resort to supplemental or alternative employment in the informal sector to compensate for lack of resources and low efficiency in project work was supported in my findings. The women mentioned how difficult it was for them to work on their projects when they had to wait for transportation to travel to mills, or when they had to wait for the project materials to arrive. In addition, the time it took to gather firewood to prepare palm oil, soap, and to keep the mud oven hot was limiting. Furthermore, they experienced discomfort in tending to fires while the smoke
burned their eyes and throat. As a result, they turned to supplemental projects or additional work at local markets selling fish.

- **Lack of Knowledge about Market Trends**

Another obstacle for the women was lack of knowledge about current market trends. The Ghana Red Cross failed to inform Mothers Club members of current market trends and demand for their products. This lack of market knowledge effected project efficiency and financial returns. In Anyirawase, the women spent hours preparing batiks that were not high in demand at regional markets. Although batik is a durable product that will last for a long time, it requires toxic and expensive materials for production. It is also expensive and caters primarily to tourists. Considering that few tourists visit the regional markets at Ho, batik is a product with low demand in these markets. As a result, the women struggled because the revenue was not sufficient to justify the input of material expense and labor. In contrast, food items are in high demand in regional markets and have a high return. However, food items are a perishable commodity and must be sold immediately.

- **Collective versus Individual**

A temporary obstacle for the women of Ghana Red Cross was the lack of assistance from our Crossroads group and the Mothers Clubs. My findings support Mickell’s theory that the primary role for women differs between Western and African women. Mickell’s argument is that women of the West want women to all be “individually autonomous,” while African women want women to work cross-culturally and collectively (Mickell 1997: 4). This difference in the values was apparent between Mothers Club participants and Crossroaders. Members of the Crossroads group each went
their separate ways and could not become part of the collective. Our individualism kept us apart as outsiders.

- **Lack of Exchange**

  Catherine Knott’s theory is that project designs which fail to allow for exchange of knowledge often leads to immediate or long-term failure. In their project design the Ghana Red Cross and Crossroads organizers failed to allow for a meaningful exchange among participants. This was an obvious disappointment for the Mothers Club members and Crossroads participants. This created a barrier between the two groups and negatively affected project efficiency.

- **Negative Group Dynamics among Crossroaders**

  Dobyns theory that the apparent differences among members of volunteer groups can create negative group dynamics and can have a negative impact on the local people and project efficiency. The factors that played a role in the Crossroads group dynamics were differing expectations of project goals and design, lack of Western amenities, emotional and physical stresses, relationship difficulties, and lack of leadership. These factors prevented us from working effectively as a group with the Mothers Clubs. This placed an additional strain on the Mothers Clubs, since our group was often late, stressed out, tired, complaining, and fragmented.

- **Feminism**

  Henrietta Moore’s theory is that there is no common body of feminist theory. I observed different views on this subject among the women in our Crossroads group. Ideological differences contributed to our group becoming fragmented and divisive. Moore points out that although approaches to feminism may differ, we must accept our
differences and not let them create more fragmentation. The Ghanaian women’s collective strengths are a good example for a unified approach to feminism.

**Recommendations:**

1) **Gender and Development Approach**

My first recommendation is to integrate a gender approach to the Ghana Red Cross development design, so that men are not entirely excluded and threatened women gaining leadership skills, power, acknowledgment, money, etc. One suggestion is for Ghana Red Cross to have a men’s group that meets on a regular basis. The men’s group could collaborate with the women’s group in several ways. For instance, the women could use some of their funds to purchase a tro-tro vehicle and then pay designated male drivers. The drivers could go to village mills and pick up project supplies. This would reduce the amount of travel and waiting time for the women. Mothers Clubs could also pay male workers to build a mill for palm oil grinding and preparing dough. Additional funds could be provided to have male workers operate the machines.

This is a more holistic approach to development as opposed to the linear approach of poverty alleviation. I think men can successfully be integrated into Mothers Clubs projects if the structure remains horizontal, which may be a great challenge. My findings suggest that power dynamics must be considered when exploring the ways to integrate men. When women were initially brought into the development process, they took charge of their own destiny by forming “women-only” programs. This was necessary because of unequal power dynamics and gender differentiation within the
community that placed additional burdens on women. Now if men are integrated into projects women should not be negatively affected by their presence.

One suggestion would be to have open forums among the men’s and women’s groups. If Ghana Red Cross representatives acted as facilitators, perhaps this would allow for dialogue among group leaders about collaborative work strategies.

I suggest that more development organizations should place more emphasis on understanding the role of gender differentiation in Africa. Gender differentiation is deeply imbedded within African extended family structures, which carry over into other arenas. Men tend to gravitate toward positions of dominance, just as in Anyirawase. Gender roles and power dynamics are a part of the framework of the family structure. It will be a challenging and gradual process integrating women into positions of power. However, I do not think that women-only groups are the answer for long-term improvements in quality of life. Women and men must be able to work collectively not separately. The Ghana Red Cross is making gradual steps in this direction through sponsoring gender seminars about the roles of women and men in the development process. It would be a logical next step to integrate gender and development programs.

2) Exchange of Knowledge Among Groups

A second recommendation is to schedule communication forums between village Mothers Clubs about project benefits and projected solutions. The goal would be to create an open dialogue and exchange of knowledge among Mothers Club groups in nearby villages. My findings suggest that the Ghana Red Cross was not playing an active role in teaching the women about market trends. I think that if women participants and leaders
were to able meet and discuss project strategies in surrounding villages, then this would promote an exchange of knowledge regarding benefits, problems, and possible solutions for the obstacles to development.

I suggest that Ghana Red Cross leaders initiate a discussion among village Mothers Clubs leaders to assess the potential for this dialogue to become a regular activity. This forum might also allow an opportunity for Mothers Club representatives to discuss strategies for integrating men into their development projects.

3) Improvements with Collaborative Program Design

A third recommendation is that the leaders of the Crossroads NGO and the Ghana Red Cross make improvements in program design and communicate with each other more effectively in the future. There were obvious problems with the project design that could have been solved prior to the project and also during the project; however, the communication among leaders remained non-existent or ineffective. Furthermore, the project was disorganized, which limited the amount of assistance that the Crossroads group could have provided to the Mother Clubs. I suggest that in the future leaders of both organizations work together to design a program that will allow for a bridging of knowledge and ongoing cross-cultural exchange. I found it frustrating to be a part of a program that was disorganized and did not allow for a meaningful exchange.

I also suggest that the Crossroads group properly screen, train, and prepare their volunteers for the cross-cultural experience and project work. It was apparent that some of the volunteers were not emotionally, mentally, and physically prepared to embark on such an adventure. Our group faced numerous challenges in Ghana. The lack of
preparation directly impacted project efficiency and our relations with the Ghanaian women. The Crossroads organization should plan to hold more inclusive and extended training prior to departure.

As a volunteer and participant, I took an active role in gaining knowledge in the field of cross-cultural development. Although my time in Ghana was limited, I hope that this overall evaluation and suggestions are valuable in examining gender, power, and development in the Volta Region of Ghana. It is my hope that this analysis offers insight into the current and necessary issues facing women in Africa and around the world.
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Appendices
Appendix 1: Anfoeta Tsebi
Crossroaders

Cracking of kernels

Crossroaders and Mothers Club

Roasting and Cooking

Palm Kernels

Formation of Dark Paste and Oil

Cracking of kernels
Appendix 2: Hlei
Mothers Clubs and Villagers

2a. Bread Baking Project
Kpeve Mill Workers

Cooking Stew with Palm oil
Adding Ingredients
Mixing
Stirring
Add Water while mixing

Mill worker pressing dough with machine

Preparation for baking

Baking in Mud dome oven

Remove from oven

Remove all trays from oven
2b. *Gari-Processing-*

Hike to Cassava farms

Transport to shelter for cooling and bagging

Returning to village with branches and cassava

Filter

Cooking and Stirring over hot fire to form *Gari*

Removal of Cassava
Appendix 3: Anvirawase

Mothers Club and Crossroaders

3a. Batik Making Project

Step one: Mixing toxic chemicals for dye

Step two: Preparation of dye

Step three: Preparation of dye
Dipping of block design in Dye

Press/Stamp on white sheet

Cover entire sheet with design

Dip entire sheet in dye

Lay on grass to dry

Stir in pot with hot melted wax
Cold Water Rinse

Creative Designs with dye

Cold Water Rinse again

Ironing

Batik #2

After Drying
3b) Tie-dye Project

1. Tie off sheet with raffia

2. Drip dry after first dip in dye

3. Finished product

3c) Beadwork

Working on necklace

Necklace in progress
3d) Corn Husk Weaving

Work in progress

Women Selling at Market

Ghana Red Cross Leaders and Crossroaders

Sign #1

Sign #2