

The Life Chances of Women and Children: Does development make a difference?

A Case Study of the Management of NGOs and Competing Interests in the Volta Region of Ghana.

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Rachel Outhred, PhD; MA (Int Dev); Dip Ed; BCA.

**Flinders University
Institute of Public Policy and Management
Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences**

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Summary

The thesis explores the management and the competing interests of NGOs providing development programs to marginalised women and children exploited by a cultural practice in the Volta Region of Ghana. The thesis considers the extent to which women's and children's citizenship and human rights are violated, to what extent international perspectives on the customary 'enslavement' are constructed through international fund-raising initiatives and what the women and children gain from development programs offered by the NGO.

The thesis develops a social justice and rights based argument ¹ based on a case study and participant observation of the management of an international NGO. Fieldwork spanned five months and included observation and interviews with the international NGO, as well as interviews with local NGOs and government officials. The thesis concludes that on the one hand, some National NGOs are driven by cultural relativist values and power, buttressed by patronage networks. On the other hand, the international NGO is driven by welfarist and anti-poverty policy approaches that place the women and children as passive victims, rather than empowering the women by meeting strategic needs. The thesis develops an argument based on empirical research by:

- Assessing the life chances of women and children in Ghana
- Exploring the citizenship rights of Ghana's women and children and assessing the extent to which the women and children are able to access these rights

¹ Nussbaum, 1999. Page 232.

- Assessing the extent to which Africa's imperialist history impacts on the life chances of women and children
- Analysing contested reports concerning customary servitude and critiquing stakeholder interest in denying and/or constructing the practice
- Analysing intervention approaches using a Social Relations Approach²
- Building on Schaffer and Smith's 'Human Rights and Narrated Lives, the Ethics of Recognition',³ to not only explore the ethical considerations surrounding human rights and the narrated story, but to explore the impact of the stories on the life chances of women and children
- Positioning women within the struggle against neo-colonialism in Africa and questioning if these positions have changed since Ghana's independence struggle
- Critiquing the extent to which NGOs are able to meet women's and children's strategic needs when they function without diverse values
- Extending current understanding concerning diversity management within NGOs and the impact on women and children when NGOs do not employ diverse values
- Extending current understanding concerning the extent to which strategic needs can be met when decisions are not widely informed through the inclusion of key stakeholders in decision-making processes

² March C, Mukhopadhyay M and Smyth I. 2003. Page 102.

³ Schaffer K and Smith S, 2004. *Human Rights and Narrated Lives, The Ethics of Recognition*. Published by Palgrave Macmillan.

Declaration of Originality

I, Rachel Outhred, certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by Flinders University's Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Outhred". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rachel Leanne Outhred

Dedication

To my husband Michael Yiyi Annoh

Who cared for me when malaria rendered me unconscious,
Who supported and encouraged me to finish the task that I had began,
Who loves me 'plenty plenty'.

To my daughter, Luanna Afadua Annoh

I pray that you grow into a strong, proud black woman, who values the great privilege you have in belonging to two cultures. I pray that you might truly value the great heritage you have as the great granddaughter of a chief and the great granddaughter of a minister. Your father and I celebrated our engagement in Kenya, as the world celebrated the inauguration of America's first black president. The advances that this generation has achieved in challenging racism and sexism are great, but there is so much more left to be achieved. I pray that you *value* the traditions of your diverse cultural heritages but that you also *challenge* the unequal positions created by them.

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Given the immense task that writing a PhD thesis is, it spans many years within the life of the researcher. Within the life of *this* researcher, the process has been underway through many major life events; including two international relocations, an engagement, a marriage and the birth of a child. Over the years I have evolved as both a researcher and as a person, and on most occasions one was a direct result of the other. As I reflect on the years that have passed since I first began this adventure, I am aware that the people who have supported me most in my aim to conclude this thesis, are the same people who have supported me in all of my life goals. Therefore, as I thank the people below for their input, support and strength during this process, I thank them also for their friendship and for their belief in me, in so many ways.

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conversations being conducted outside of business hours and I am extremely grateful for her immense flexibility.

My gratitude, and that of my family, goes out to both Janet and Yvonne, for their regular contact, support and wise advice during the fieldwork period. I am particularly grateful for the immediate and wise advice to exit the field when danger became imminent.

It is with sincerity that I thank the NGO for the opportunity to observe their work in the field. Though I am sure the outcome of the research is far from what the organisation expected; this is the very purpose of empirical research. I applaud the NGO on the ways in which its programs have improved the life chances of women and children and I hope that we can all learn the lessons that working together has provided for us.

To David Woodman and the '*Crucibelles*' at Crucible, Centre for Human Rights Education at Roehampton University. It is one of the many goals of my career to provide the support, opportunities and guidance for other early career academics, in the same way in which it was provided to me within the Centre. Many thanks to David Woodman, Dr Corinna Heipcke, Flavia Gapper, Victoria Hartley and Jenny Stayner, I will be eternally grateful for the opportunity to work in such a prestigious centre (with people who have their feet planted firmly on the ground!), for constant encouragement and advice concerning my PhD research and for the many opportunities provided to me within the Centre.

I would like to acknowledge the opportunity provided to me within the University of South Australia's Hawke Research Institute. What a fantastic beginning to post-doctoral life!

On a personal note, I am so very grateful to my Mum and Dad and my siblings Tim, Michelle, Chris and Trish. Each one has encouraged me along the road to achieving my goals in different ways and at different times. I would like to say a special thank you to my Dad, my Mum and my sister Michelle, who have made so many personal sacrifices, both small and large, to help me achieve my goals; and who have always displayed such pride in my achievements.

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Surprisingly, I did not just leave Ghana with a backpack full of notes and interview transcripts, I was fortunate enough to also bring back my best friend and now husband. I thank my husband for giving me a window into his culture, his people and his way of seeing; what a privilege it is.

And finally, many thanks to Cathy Stubberfield, Dearne Waters, Kerry Ewing and Samantha Kruger who showed interest, support, and practical assistance along the road to submission!

List of Acronyms

AFROL	African News Agency
CHRAJ	Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice
CEDAW	Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Woman
FESLIM	Fetish Slaves Liberation Movement
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
HDI	Human Development Index
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslav
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
IMF	International Monetary Fund
GAD	Gender and Development
GDI	Gender Development Index
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
NDP	National Democratic Party
NPP	National Patriotic Party
NRM	National Resistance Movements
NGO	Non – Governmental Organisation
NMG	Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft

OECD DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
PAR	Participatory Action Research
UN	United Nations
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
WAD	Women and Development
WID	Women in Development
WLV	Women in the Lord's Vineyard

Chapter 1 The Area of Concern: Life Chances of Women and Children in Ghana and the Implications of Human Rights Abuses

The thesis strives to explore the extent to which the women's and children's citizenship and human rights are violated in Ghana through enslavement and to what extent the construction of customary 'enslavement' is a product of international fund raising initiatives. The thesis addresses the concern that the women and children remain passive recipients of welfarist and anti-poverty policies that do not empower their rights as either citizens or in terms of human rights law.

Within the original research plan, the study aimed to explore the 'enslavement' of the women per se and to explore the extent to which development and aid from the United States of America, Canada, Australia and the Netherlands had made a difference to the life chances of women and children.

Once in the field it became clear that the issue was more complicated as access to the marginalised women and children was impeded by several national stakeholders. Rural women were overwhelmingly represented by patriarchal males who acted as gate keepers in a network of patronage. It was clear that the women and their children are yet to gain sufficient empowerment, in order to participate in decision making at the household and community levels and are without power in the wider institutions of the state. Whilst the NGOs program increases the women's ability to engage in productive work, the burden of domestic work is not alleviated, increasing the work of the women. The women are without the right to participate in community management or community politics. Women remain 'spoken for' on every level. Even more importantly, the children

are without participatory rights and are excluded from the rights awarded to all children under The Children's Act 1998.

Secondly, in the field, it became apparent that within Ghana reports of the systemic enslavement of women and children is widely contested by both independent and interested parties. Prevalence of the custom and affected women and children are highly challenged in Ghana and the extent to which the NGO has portrayed the custom as more prevalent and severe than is the case, is questioned within the thesis.⁴

Thirdly, National Resistance Movements exist in Ghana, claiming their collective right to practice their own culture, without the imposition of outside powers.⁵ In this way, the two groups engage in a war, between the Interventionists and the African renaissancist, in which the women and children play out as pawns in the struggle for each group's political power. The thesis explores the extent to which some international NGOs perpetrate imperialist interests within Ghana, the way in which National Resistance Groups resist imperialist opinion and assesses the impact that this has on the life chances of the women and children. It also addresses the way in which local NGOs resist international interventions and develop patriarchal African renaissancist responses to Christian interventionism. They develop the argument that fundamentalism works both ways. Women however remain disadvantaged from the positions of both standpoints.

⁴ See Julie Dogbadzi *escaped. Now she's freeing others. After a life of slavery.* Newsweek (International Edition) New York: April 5 1999 and Larkin B, 2000. *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom.* Report submitted to the Committee on Foreign relations US Senate. Joint Committee Print.

⁵ See Trainer 1989, World Bank 1991 *Truth about the system of slavery known as Trokosi, troxovi, or fiashidi. The truth is Slavery Does Exist in West Africa, and it is Not a Glorious Institution! Answering the ludicrous false claims of the Afrikania Mission*

Fourthly, the research analyses the program offered to the women and children and highlights the need for NGOs to compete in the establishment of patronage networks in difficult economic conditions and questions the extent to which NGOs are accountable to patronage networks, the state in which they function and, most importantly, the women and children whom they serve.

Finally, and most importantly, the thesis acknowledges the narrow pragmatism⁶ of the NGO's programs, however it questions the extent to which the project addresses the strategic needs of the women and children and analyses the extent to which their practical needs are met.

The argument is developed that the NGO has no ability to work with diverse values as they are driven by the values of patronage networks, and therefore a narrow pragmatic approach is employed. The development program fails to meet the women's and children's strategic needs and therefore, they are unable to be empowered within the community and the state. Under the state, the women and children do not have citizenship rights or human rights because when legislation protecting women and children has been enacted, often courts fail to try cases that are seen as being in conflict with cultural rights.⁷

National courts need to acknowledge Ghana's duties under international law and ensure that rural women and children have equal access to protection under the law. Women need to have the right to represent themselves in national and international forums, make policy and political decisions and become political participants within the nation. This is the distinction between meeting practical basic needs for survival versus

⁶ In the sense used by McIntyre-Mills, 2009. Page 201 – 218.

⁷ See Ghana Law Report, 1974. (GLR) 45 t SC

strategic gender needs based on achieving greater equality through body integrity and control of wages to ensure women and children are able to play an active role in decision making at the local and national level.⁸

Thus the social, cultural and political dynamics locally and internationally are addressed in an attempt to give a detailed case study of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the management of aid in Ghana.

1.1 Statement of the Problem Investigated in this Case Study

The research aims to contribute to existing knowledge by furthering the understanding of the management of NGOs and how pragmatic approaches use women as 'pawns' to support narrow interests and fail to improve the life chances of women and children by enabling participation in the decision making process.⁹ The thesis assesses the extent of the problem and the extent to which it is being addressed through local, national or international development interventions.

The practice addressed in the thesis is termed 'Troxovi' and the women enslaved by it are referred to as 'Trokosi'.¹⁰ The practice has received a considerable amount of attention in the international media over the past ten years.¹¹ It is reported that the

⁸ March, Mukhopadhyay and Smyth. 2003. *A Guide to Gender – Analysis Frameworks*. 2003. Printed by Oxfam Great Britain.

⁹ McIntyre. 2003. *Yeperenye Dreaming in Conceptual, Geographical, and Cyberspace: A Participatory Action Research Approach to Address Local Governance within and Australian Indigenous Housing Association*. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, 16(5), 309-338.

¹⁰ Commission on Rights of the Child, 10 March – 18 April 1997. Fifty-third session Item 21 (b) of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, provisional agenda. Accessed on <http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord1997/documentation/commission/e-cn4-1997-95.htm> on the 5th April 2005.

¹¹ See Julie Dogbadzi escaped. Now she's freeing others. After a life of slavery. *Newsweek* (International Edition) New York: April 5 1999, Page 33. 'Save the Slaves' April 2003. Released by [The NGO], Australia, Hawthorn, Victoria. Australia.

Mercy's Story and Trokosi: Treasure in Earthen Vessels. 'Save the Slaves' Video Released by [The NGO], Ghana. April 2003. Owusu-Ansah, 2003. Assistant Professor of Education. *Trokosi in Ghana: Cultural Relativism or Slavery?* Lindsey-Wilson College, Kentucky, USA www2.ncsu.edu/ncsu/aern/trokony.html Accessed on 19th November 2004. Hawksley H, 2001. *Ghana's Trapped Slaves*. BBC News Website. Accessed at

women's and children's rights are abused as their labour is controlled and no compensation is received, they lose their liberty, they are sexually assaulted, physically abused and subjected to acts of violence.¹² The Trokosi practice is rationalised within the community as a form of providing atonement to the gods for the sins or crimes of the community and is upheld by family and community members through fear of retribution from the gods.¹³

This research is important because it situates the role of the NGO in delivering development programs and assesses the extent to which development changes the life chances of women and children who are currently excluded from decision making within the household, community, market and state. Globally, women's and children's rights are being ignored due to their perceived threat to cultural rights.¹⁴ This work situates the African woman within the interventionist/African renaissancist struggle and compares the modern African woman's place with that of women during the nationalist struggle; questioning if any advances have been made.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/1158115.stm on the 21st June 2005. Pages 1-4. Rinaudo B. 2003. *Trokosi Slavery: Injustice in the name of religion*. La Trobe University, Australia. Accessed on <http://64.233.179.104/u/flinders?q=cache:xrWD3CS33p8J:www.ssn.flinders.edu.au> on the 16th June 2005. Page 5. Ari B. 2002. *Liberating Ghanaian Girls from 'Trokosi'*. Africa Recovery. Accessed on http://www.afrol.com/News2002/gha001_girls_Trokosi.htm on 22nd June 2005. .Page 1. Hawksley H, 2001. *Ghana's Trapped Slaves*. BBC News Website. Accessed at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/1158115.stm on the 21st June 2005. Ahiabile M, 1995. The Anatomy of Trokosi system in Ghana: Report: First National Workshop on Trokosi system in Ghana (July 6-7, 1995) Accra. Workshop by International Needs, Ghana.. Eckardt , 2004. *Trokosi Field Assignment*. MSW Program St. Louis University. Accessed at <http://www.slu.edu/colleges/SOCSVC/TrokosiIntroductionII.pdf> on the 24th June 2005. French H W, 1997. *Ritual Slaves of Ghana: Young and Female*. The New York Times International May/June 1997 Volume 7, Issue 6 Pages 24. Gakpleazi,. 1998. *Trokosi is Not a Slave* Ghanaian Times, Monday November 16 1998, Page 6. *Practice of Trokosi Still Hurting Girls*. Ghanaian Chronicle. Accra, Ghana. 25th August 2004. Accessed at <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/printnews.php?> On the 19th of November 2004. Gyau Orhin, I, 2001. 'Ghanaians Asked To Condemn Trokosi' By Public Agenda. General News. Accessed at <http://www.modernghana.com/news/12507/1/ghanaians-asked-to-condemn-Trokosi.html> on the 5th February 2009. *Mercy's Story and Trokosi: Treasure in Earthen Vessels*. 'Save the Slaves' Video Released by [The NGO], Ghana. April 2003.

¹² Outhred, 2009. Page 3.

¹³ Ibid. Page 4.

¹⁴ Rai . 2008. Page 31.

Sitting squarely within the neo-colonialist struggle, the NGO functions delivering aid programs to the most vulnerable in society. Currently, the only assessments pertaining to the empowerment of the Trokosi women and children are available exclusively through the NGO providing the program. Without current and *independent* assessments of the extent to which development programs meet the strategic needs of women and children, their ability to live with human dignity is at risk.

This thesis offers an understanding of how NGOs work and explores the policies and practices of the NGO in its delivery of programs to women and children.

The thesis addresses the following questions:

1. What are the life chances of women and children in Ghana?
2. What are the life chances of Ghana's *rural* women and children?
3. What are the life chances of women and children held in customary servitude?
4. To what extent does Africa's imperialist history impact on the life chances of women and children?
5. What is the impact of cultural relativism on the life chances of the women and children?
6. Are the women's and children's life chances increased by the work of the NGO?

Within the thesis, Chapter two summarises the key concepts raised within the case study. Chapter three outlines the research approach and details the research journey within the field. It addresses questions relating to participation, including; in what ways can participation increase the life chances of women and children? And; what are the challenges of using participation to increase the life chances of women and children? Chapter four assesses the life chances of women and children at the national,

regional and community levels and questions the prevalence and severity of customary servitude, as reported by the NGO.

International, national and local discourses concerning the Troxovi practice, are discussed in chapter five. The chapter assesses the extent to which the practice is constructed through the production and reproduction of discourse. The chapter then explores the impact these representations have on the women's and children's life chances.

Chapter six addresses the impacts of Africa's imperialist history and cultural relativism on life chances through the exploration of *Gunboat Humanitarianism*. The chapter then addresses questions concerning the extent to which the women are able to live with human dignity and to what extent their basic and strategic needs are met through the program.

Chapter seven takes the findings from the case study and addresses the overarching question; to what extent can certain resources, structures, organisations or governmental bodies increase the life chances of women and children and how can development make a difference?

Chapters seven and eight explore the ways in which diversity management might be used to increase life chances and addresses questions relating to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats present in the NGO's program.

1.2 Political Context

Ghana is recognised throughout Africa as a country spearheading economic development on the continent. Ghana is said to have ‘an impeccable record’¹⁵ of implementing reforms and policies under the direction of the IMF and the World Bank.¹⁶ However, despite this ‘impeccable record’ the rights of women and children in Ghana are consistently balanced against perceived threats to cultural rights, resulting in decreased life chances for women and children.¹⁷

Under national law women and children are protected against discrimination,¹⁸ however in practice such laws face stiff resistance and women and children are often not able to access such laws meaningfully.¹⁹ The state has consistently proven itself slow to act in favour of women’s and children’s rights when in conflict with cultural rights, often referring cases back to customary arbitration.²⁰ Similarly, women are not sufficiently economically empowered to access these rights should the perpetrator be a partner, as surveys reveal that women would not be able to survive, should their husbands be arrested.²¹ This lack of protection under the law discriminates against women and children, decreasing their life chances, particularly for *rural* women and children.

¹⁵ New Asmah, 2004. Page 28

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Rai 2008. Page 31

¹⁸ See The Children’s Act 1998 and the Constitution of Ghana.

¹⁹ Ababio, 2000. Page 58.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Dvolo, 2005. Page 655.

In order to contextualise Ghana's political dynamic, I will discuss three laws that have been passed in order to protect women and children and briefly explore the ways in which protection is not guaranteed by those laws.²²

In 1985 the Intestate Succession Law (PNDC Law 111) was passed in order to protect women and children after the death of a husband. The law was created to ensure that they would receive a larger share of the estate of the deceased, however implementation of the law continues to face difficulties.²³ Customary practices on succession have created a legal pluralism and as those with the most power in rural areas prefer traditional avenues. Therefore the national law is not adequately protecting those it was created for and many women and children are being removed from their homes by the family members of the deceased.²⁴

Similarly, after four years of national debate, the Domestic Violence Bill 2007 was passed in order to augment the Criminal Code of 1960 (Act 29), criminalising assault and battery, rape, defilement of children and incest. The main reason for the protracted debate was that to the original draft legislation's inclusion of the criminalisation of marital rape.²⁵ This inclusion caused such public outcry that it was excluded from the final bill. Christian, Muslim and Traditional religious groups have spoken out against the passing of the law stating that it '*confuses cultural norms*' and has the '*potential to cause societal harm*'.²⁶ Consequently, Ghanaian married women, do not have the legal right to body integrity; a basic right necessary to live a life with human dignity.

²² Later in the thesis legal aspects will be discussed in greater detail. (See Section 6.2)

²³ Amankwah. *Ghana: Cepil to Present Parliament With Memorandum On Intestate Succession Bill* 22 August 2008 Accessed at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200808220745.html> on the 25th June 2009. Page 1.

²⁴ Amankwah. 2008. Page 1.

²⁵ Dovo, 2005. Page 651.

²⁶ Ibid.

In 1998 after much activism and pressure relating to CEDAW, some amendments were made to the Criminal Code banning harmful traditional practices,²⁷ however not one arrest has taken place since this time and case law reflects that the state is rarely willing to rule on issues of custom, referring cases back to traditional courts.²⁸

In 1997 Ghana received much criticism from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child concerning its submission to the Committee at the 15th Session in Geneva.²⁹ The report strongly recommended legislative and policy changes in order to protect children as is required under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In response, Parliament passed The Children's Act, 1998. The Act defines children as those under 18 years of age and protects children from discrimination on the basis of gender, race, age, religion, disability, health status, custom, ethnic origin, rural or urban background, birth or other status, socio-economic status or because the child is a refugee.³⁰ The Act protects children's rights to parental property, to an education and to well-being, to social activity, to the right of opinion, to protection from exploitative labour, torture and degrading treatment and the right to refuse betrothal or marriage.³¹ The Act also ensures that regional administrations enact the use of Child Panels when dealing with youths in conflict with the law and proclaims a duty of care on people legally responsible for children to provide health necessities, education and reasonable shelter.³² The minimum age for light work is set at 13 years of age.

²⁷ UNFPA 2007, Page 86. 'Violence Against Women'

²⁸ Ababio, 2000. Page 21.

²⁹ Lacroix, 1997.

³⁰ See The Children's Act 1998. Ghana.

³¹ Ibid.

³² See The Children's Act 1998. Ghana.

Under the law, children's basic rights are met and some strategic rights, such as the right to express an opinion and the right to play are protected. However, in practice child labour is a major problem within the nation. In the Volta Region, Ghana's 2000 census reported that 16% of children aged 7 – 14 years worked or actively looked for work during 2000 and the 2001 report revealed that 33% of all 5 – 17 year olds in the Volta were employed as child labourers.³³ In this way, the Children's Act is unable to protect children who are rarely aware of their rights, often unable to question custom and are responsible for family survival.

Therefore, though national laws have been passed as a result of international human rights legislation, women and children are rarely able to access these rights, if laws are perceived to confuse cultural norms or threaten family survival.³⁴

³³ Ghana Census 2000 – 2001. GHA Ghana_GSS_GCLS_2001. Accessed at <http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/childlabor.html> on the 26th June 2009.

³⁴ See *Tana v. Akosua ~oko*. Ghana Law Report, 1997. 45 t SC

1.3 Use of Land in the Volta Region

Understanding the way in which land is used in the Volta Region is vital in understanding the life chances of women and children in Ghana because land is the main source of income for households and the key to basic livelihood.³⁵ The region is mainly rural and has vast natural resources and fertile soil.³⁶ Chapter three of Duncan and Brant's *Access to and Control over land from a gender perspective*, outlines the agricultural activities that take place within the Volta Region as follows.³⁷

Fishing on the Volta Lake is also an important income-generating activity in the Volta and trading activities take place across the whole region. The most common forms of food crops in the Volta Region are garden eggs, yam, banana, maize, cassava, okra, plantain, cow peas, beans and peppers and the most common forms of cash crops include cocoa, oil palm, coffee, rice, yam, shallot, tomato, peppers, cassava, maize and beans. Only a very small percentage of food goes to market and the vast majority of produce is consumed within the household. This highlights the importance of farming activities in the region in terms of food security.

Within Ghanaian farming communities there exists a clear division of labour between men and women. Women are responsible for planting, weeding, watering, harvesting, the transportation of produce and the marketing of small amounts of farm produce. Men are responsible for the initial clearing of land and the marketing of larger amounts of farm produce. Women are also more involved in food crop production for family consumption and men are more involved in cash crop production. In this way

³⁵ *Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. Access to and Control over Land from a Gender Perspective*. Duncan and Brants. 2004. Chapter 3.

³⁶ Duncan and Brants. 2004. Chapter 3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

men's work is often supported by the state in order to develop the agricultural sector. The report also cites Benneh et al's (1995) claim that women involve themselves with food cropping for several reasons, firstly; the initial outlay is less costly and secondly; less labour is required. Given that women have less time to spend on productive activities due to their heavy daily reproductive workloads, they do not possess the adequate time or money to involve themselves in cash cropping.

In addition, under custom, women are obliged to assist their husbands in their farming activities, in addition to their own farming activities. This further increases the work of women, reduces their productivity and decreases the life chances of women.

1.4 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This thesis uses the case study of marginalised women and children within the Volta Region in order to provide further understanding of the NGO's functioning and the effects that fundamental values or diverse values can have on the life chances of women and children. It explores how imperialist struggles in post-colonial states impact on women's and children's life chances and critically evaluates the role of development in improving women's and children's chances of living a life with human dignity. The study recommends policy changes that will enable the women and children to participate in their own development, as the women do not yet have a significant level of empowerment. In view of the fact that access to the women was impeded, it is important to note that the thesis does not incorporate the views of the women and children. Women and children do not currently participate in discussions concerning their own futures at the household, market, community and/or state levels, thus subsequent policy recommendations refer to ways in which their voices can be heard.

Once the views of women and children are able to be heard, policy should be aligned to social movements from within. The thesis argues that the women are positioned as individuals whose marginality provides a '*distinctive angle of vision*',³⁸ and champions empowering the women; that these voices might be heard.

The study does not incorporate recent primary quantitative statistics on the prevalence or severity of the Troxovi customary practice. These topics have been painstakingly discussed by national stakeholders and are driven by urban males within Ghana. These discussions place the women as passive victims and do not answer the question of primary importance; are the women being strategically empowered at the household, community, market and state levels.

1.5 Summary of Chapters

The thesis begins by outlining key concepts such as life chances, traditions in international development, human rights, gender mainstreaming and the capabilities approach (Chapter 2). The inadequacy of traditional resourced based development measures to measure the life chances of women and children are discussed. The negative impact of imperialism in Africa on human rights discussions is explored and in order to bypass the deep philosophical tensions in human rights language, a combination of approaches is employed, including Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach.

The thesis uses an auto-ethnographical, Participatory Action Research methodology³⁹ and recognises the '*complicity*' of the researcher.⁴⁰ This methodology has been acknowledged as an effective way of empowering women by inviting them to

³⁸ Collins, Black Feminist Thought. Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment. Routledge. New York and London. Page 12.

³⁹ Following McIntyre-Mills, 2003.

⁴⁰ Romm and McKay, 2008. Pages 149 – 171.

participate in and contribute to the research. The research journey and the resultant shift in the research plan will be discussed in chapter three.

Chapters four, five and six assess the life chances of women and children in Ghana. Beginning with broad national indicators in chapter four, each successive chapter focuses more sharply on the Trokosi women and children.

Chapter four assesses the life chances of women and children in Ghana through measuring development and empowerment statistics for the nation. The chapter also identifies regional differences within the nation, and therefore assesses the life chances of women and children within the Volta Region, relying on the indicators available. The chapter looks at the disparity of wealth within the nation and assesses the extent to which the life chances of Ghana's rural women are decreased, due to their regionalism.

Chapter four also focuses on the life chances of women and children within Troxovi practicing communities, by exploring functions of the shrine within the community, the various roles within the shrine and the history of intervention. Contested reports concerning the prevalence and severity of the practice at the household level will also be discussed. Such reports raise concerns regarding the construction of the practice, however; the objections of those defending the practice give significant insight into the restrictions placed on the women. Chapter four also assesses the impact that previous NGO liberation projects have had on the life chances of the women and children and evaluates the impact that uninformed pragmatic approaches can have on life chances.

Chapter five considers the extent to which the imagery of '*the Trokosi woman*' is constructed at international, national and local levels. This is explored through a

discourse analysis of the key stakeholders within the case study and the role of the narrated story is considered.

Chapters five and six focus on the life chances of Trokosi women and children, both within the shrines, and outside, among those *released* through the NGO's intervention. The comparative analysis assesses the life chances of Trokosi women and children according to the most severe reports of shrine life, the least severe reports of shrine life and the NGO's intervention program.

Chapter six acknowledges the *Legacy of Mistrust*⁴¹ between European and African relations and identifies five themes of *Gunboat Humanitarianism* that impact negatively on the life chances of the women and their children. The extent to which the women and children are given a voice through the NGO's program, what the women are *actually able to do and be*,⁴² and whether the women's strategic needs are met are also discussed in chapter six.

After assessing the life chances of women and children at the national, regional, community and household levels, through the Trokosi case study, chapter seven explores the means by which women's and children's life chances might be improved, as identified within the case study. The chapter begins with a broad international focus, by identifying the challenges of using international resources to increase life chances, then looks at national resources, the use of national law and finally, the use of NGOs to increase women's and children's life chances. Current Aid Effectiveness strategies and the likelihood of Ghana meeting its millennium goals are assessed. Resource allocation for goals related to gender and the lack of important aid effectiveness strategies within

⁴¹ Onyeozili, in Kalunta-Crumpton and Agozino, 2004. Page 225.

⁴² Nussbaum, 1999. Page 235.

the management of NGOs is criticised. And finally, the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats within the NGO's program are assessed in chapter seven, using a Social Relations Approach.⁴³

This thesis concludes that women and children are barely improved by the NGO program, because the NGO is unable to work with diverse values due to their reliance on fundamentalist patronage networks. Avoiding a cultural relativist post-modern view, the thesis insists that it is essential that women are to be a part of discussions and solutions surrounding their own exploitation.⁴⁴

The thesis finds that the Trokosi women and children are not adequately empowered at the household, state or community levels and therefore, the rural women and children are represented and discussed by urban males.

In this way, the Trokosi women and their children play out as pawns in a holy war between the interventionist's and the African renaissancist's struggle for power. The life chances of the women and children are barely improved by the development program offered by the NGO as the program employs a narrow pragmatic approach, through welfarist/anti-poverty policy approaches which temporarily meet the women's and children's basic needs. However, the program ignores the strategic needs of the women and children and therefore the role of women in the community and the state remains unchallenged.

⁴³ March, Mukhopadhyay and Smyth. 2003. *A Guide to Gender – Analysis Frameworks*. 2003. Printed by Oxfam Great Britain. Chapter 2.7

⁴⁴ Following McIntyre-Mills, 2003.

Table 1.1 Assessing the life chances of Women and Children within the Case Study

<p>CHAPTER 4 Life Chances of Women and Children Nationally</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ghana's national indicators reveal that women's life chances are improving (Section 4.1)
<p>CHAPTER 4 Life Chances of Women and Children in the Volta Region</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are few indicators available to measure if Ghana's rural women benefit from advances made at the national level (Sections 4.2 and 7.1) • <i>Available</i> indicators reveal that the advancement of women's life chances in Ghana do not advance rural women (Sections 4.2 and 7.1)
<p>CHAPTERS 4 and 5 Life Chances of the Trokosi Women and Children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The life chances of Trokosi women within the shrines vary as the practice severity varies depending on location and authority within the shrine (Sections 4.3 and 4.5) • Even the least severe forms negatively affect the life chances of women and children as the priest decides which rights are adhered to within the shrines. Women and children are not able to make decisions to determine their own futures (Sections 4.5, 4.6, 6.2) • The women and children's life chances are negatively effected by the inability of each stakeholder group to place the women and children's needs as a central concern. Rather the political interests of each stakeholder group drives action (Sections 5 and 6.1.1)
<p>CHAPTER 4 Life Chances of Trokosi women 'released' by NGO programs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the past the women and children's life chances have been limited by pragmatic approaches that were not widely informed, resulting in the women returning to the shrines (Section 4.3.4)
<p>CHAPTER 5 and 6 Life Chances of Trokosi women 'released' by THE NGO's program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arguments that distract from the central issue, (being the life chances of the women and children) limit life chances as dialogue and action is hijacked by powerful patriarchal systems (Sections 4.5, 5.6 and 6.1) • Gunboat Humanitarianist tactics decrease the life chances of women and children as insensitive imperialist aspects of the program desocialise the women and limit their liberty of conscience (Sections 6.1.4, 6.2, 6.3) • The program increases the life chances of the women and children by meeting the basic needs of the women and increases their market participation, however this is not sustainable as the unequal position of women has not been challenged (Sections 6.2 and 6.3)

Table 1.2 Findings from the Case Study Concerning Increasing the Life Chances of Women and Children

<p>CHAPTER 7 International Resources to increase the Life Chances of Women and Children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research reveals that within Ghana, international aid alone does not increase the women and children's life chances as there is resistance to gender equality within the system (Section 7.1.2)• A lack of indicators for assessing the life chances of rural women indicates a lack of commitment. Without such indicators the life chances of rural women can not be measured, evaluated and improved. Sections (4.2 and 7.1)
<p>CHAPTER 7 National Resources to increase the Life Chances of women and children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A lack of national women's machineries limits the extent to which rural women's life chances can be increased as their priorities and demands are presented by white western women or national urban males (Sections 5, 6.3 and 7.1.3)• Crucial to increasing the life chances of women and children is an increase in community monitoring tools in order to meet rural women's needs (Sections 5, 6.2, 6.3 and 7.1.2)
<p>CHAPTER 7 The law to increase the Life Chances of Women and Children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In order to increase the life chances of women and children their bodily integrity must be protected under the law. (Sections 6.2, 6.3 and 7.1.4)• Women and children must be able to meaningfully access the law to have increased life chances, rather than simply holding rights 'on paper'. Women are currently unable to access the law due to decreased economic empowerment. (Sections 6.2, 6.3 and 7.1.4)

CHAPTER 7
NGO's to increase
the Life Chances
of Women and
Children

- The NGO increases the extent to which women and children can access their 'rights on paper' by increasing the women's market participation (Section 6.2, 6.3 and 7.1.4)
- NGO's can represent women and children as passive victims. This decreases life chances as it disempowers (Sections 5 and 7.2)
- Often NGO's bypass the very institutions that require change in order to increase the life chances of women and children (Section 7.2)
- NGO's limit life chances when 'hard' humanitarian interests are prioritised over 'soft' humanitarian interests (Section 7.2.3)
- NGO's can increase life chances but this will not be sustainable if strategic needs are not met (Section 7.2.4)
- NGO's that are not accountable to multiple stakeholders (most importantly, the participants themselves) limit the extent to which life chances can be increased as successful outcomes are not monitored or evaluated to ensure improvement. (Sections 3.6 and 7.2.5)

CHAPTER 7 and 8
Embracing Diverse
Values to increase
the Life Chances
of Women and
Children

- Embracing diversity increases the life chances of women and children as it increases the choices available to them (Section 7.3)
- When multiple stakeholders dialogue for understanding, the life chances of women and children become the central area of concern, rather than arguments concerning opposing political views (Sections 3.6, 4.4, 5, 6.1, 7.3)
- Embracing diversity allows women to challenge their multiple unequal positions as they are not forced to identify with their gender over their race (Sections 3.6, 5 and 6.1)
- Embracing diverse values allows for an argument to support the increasing of women's and children's life chances whilst not disrespecting culture (Section 7.3)

Chapter 2 Key Concepts and Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction – The Trokosi Women and Children

Since 1998 reports of customary servitude in the Volta Region of Ghana, have flooded through international media, often termed ‘slavery’.⁴⁵ Reports have cited narratives of the institutionalised and systematic torture, repeated rape, forced marriages, forced labour and social outcasting of women and girls in rural settings in West Africa. The practice is named ‘Troxovi’ and the girls are called ‘Trokosi’.⁴⁶

Various forms of international media reported, and continue to report that Troxovi is being practiced in Togo, Benin, Nigeria and Ghana by the Ewe group.⁴⁷ Reports outline the belief system practised in regional areas which results in young virgin girls

⁴⁵ See Julie Dogbadzi escaped. Now she’s freeing others. After a life of slavery. Newsweek (International Edition) New York: April 5 1999, Page 33. ‘Save the Slaves’ April 2003. Released by [The NGO], Australia. *Mercy’s Story and Trokosi: Treasure in Earthen Vessels*. ‘Save the Slaves’ Video Released by [The NGO], Ghana. April 2003. Owusu-Ansah, 2003. Assistant Professor of Education. *Trokosi in Ghana: Cultural Relativism or Slavery?* Lindsey-Wilson College, Kentucky, USA www2.ncsu.edu/ncsu/aern/trokony.html Accessed on 19th November 2004. Hawksley H, 2001. *Ghana’s Trapped Slaves*. BBC News Website. Accessed at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/1158115.stm on the 21st June 2005. Pages 1-4. Rinaudo B. 2003. *Trokosi Slavery: Injustice in the name of religion*. La Trobe University, Australia. Accessed on <http://64.233.179.104/u/flinders?q=cache:xrWD3CS33p8J:www.ssn.flinders.edu.au> on the 16th June 2005. Page 5. Ari B. 2002. *Liberating Ghanaian Girls from ‘Trokosi’*. Africa Recovery. Accessed on http://www.afrol.com/News2002/gha001_girls_Trokosi.htm on 22nd June 2005. .Page 1. Hawksley H, 2001. *Ghana’s Trapped Slaves*. BBC News Website. Accessed at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/1158115.stm on the 21st June 2005. Ahiabile M, 1995. The Anatomy of Trokosi system in Ghana: Report: First National Workshop on Trokosi system in Ghana (July 6-7, 1995) Accra. Workshop by International Needs, Ghana. Eckardt , 2004. *Trokosi Field Assignment*. MSW Program St. Louis University. Accessed at <http://www.slu.edu/colleges/SOCSVC/TrokosiIntroductionII.pdf> on the 24th June 2005. French, 1997. *Ritual Slaves of Ghana: Young and Female*. The New York Times International May/June 1997 Volume 7, Issue 6 Pages 24. Gakpleazi,. 1998. *Trokosi is Not a Slave* Ghanaian Times, Monday November 16 1998, Page 6. *Practice of Trokosi Still Hurting Girls*. Ghanaian Chronicle. Accra, Ghana. 25th August 2004. Accessed at <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/printnews.php?> On the 19th of November 2004. Gyau Orhin, 2001. ‘Ghanaians Asked To Condemn Trokosi’ By Public Agenda. General News. Accessed at <http://www.modernghana.com/news/12507/1/ghanaians-asked-to-condemn-Trokosi.html> on the 5th February 2009. *Mercy’s Story and Trokosi: Treasure in Earthen Vessels*. ‘Save the Slaves’ Video Released by [The NGO], Ghana. April 2003.

⁴⁶ Owusu-Ansah, 2003. Assistant Professor of Education. *Trokosi in Ghana: Cultural Relativism or Slavery?* Lindsey-Wilson College, Kentucky, USA www2.ncsu.edu/ncsu/aern/trokony.html Accessed on 19th November 2004. Page 4

⁴⁷ Rinaudo. 2003. *Trokosi Slavery: Injustice in the name of religion*. La Trobe University, Australia. Accessed on <http://64.233.179.104/u/flinders?q=cache:xrWD3CS33p8J:www.ssn.flinders.edu.au> on the 16th June 2005. Page 5

being used to provide unpaid labour to the fetish priest, the rationale being that their labour will appease the gods for sins or crimes committed either by living relatives within their community, or by their ancestors. The debt of the past can be invoked by the powerful fetish priests, so that the labour of the powerless can be called upon. It is stated that the women are called Trokosi, literally translated '*brides of the gods*'. The community believes that by appeasing the gods they will be saved from calamity.⁴⁸

Media reports state that the total number of Trokosi women could be as high as 30 000 in West Africa⁴⁹ and that in 1998, 5000 Trokosi women existed in Ghana.⁵⁰ In 1995 Dvolo and Adzoyi reported the estimated number of Trokosi in Ghana to be 5000, in 1999 Nukunya estimated the number to be 9000 and in 1998 Ameh cited the number as upwards of 20 000.⁵¹ It is also estimated that 9 percent of those held in ritual slavery are under the age of ten and sources have documented more than 6 000 children whose mothers are known as Trokosi.⁵²

International media focusing on the Trokosi practice report that thus far the women's only hope of a different life lies in the work of an NGO, based in Accra.⁵³ The NGO emancipating Trokosi women operates in 37 countries on various social welfare programs. In contrast to most international NGOs, they employ national staff only and in order to finance their health, education and social justice programs they are supported through donations from western nations, through both individual donors and

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ 'Save the Slaves' April 2003. Released by [The NGO] Australia, Hawthorn, Victoria. Australia.

⁵⁰ Gyau Orhin, 2001. 'Ghanaians Asked To Condemn Trokosi' By Public Agenda. General News. Accessed at <http://www.modernghana.com/news/12507/1/ghanaians-asked-to-condemn-Trokosi.html> on the 5th February 2009.

⁵¹ UNFPA 2007, Page 87. '*Violence Against Women*'

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ *Mercy's Story and Trokosi: Treasure in Earthen Vessels.*

'Save the Slaves' Video Released by [The NGO], Ghana. April 2003.

government aid.⁵⁴ The NGO also employs a child sponsorship program, an annual 'release the slaves' tour in various western nations and corporate sponsorship initiatives.⁵⁵ International media and academic articles claim that the NGO is working to change social norms, negotiate within cultural frameworks and release Trokosi women, giving them a livelihood outside of the shrines.⁵⁶ The NGO claims that any legal enforcement without social and economic development programs will simply drive the practice underground.⁵⁷

The custom of blaming the powerless for misfortune as an answer to the 'Why me?', 'Why now?' question is widespread across Africa. The Trokosi custom is not unlike

⁵⁴ NGO Strategic Plan 2008.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ See Julie Dogbadzi escaped. Now she's freeing others. After a life of slavery. Newsweek (International Edition) New York: April 5 1999, Page 33. 'Save the Slaves' April 2003. Released by [The NGO] Australia, Hawthorn, Victoria. Australia.
Mercy's Story and Trokosi: Treasure in Earthen Vessels. 'Save the Slaves' Video Released by [The NGO], Ghana. April 2003. Owusu-Ansah, 2003. Assistant Professor of Education. *Trokosi in Ghana: Cultural Relativism or Slavery?* Lindsey-Wilson College, Kentucky, USA www2.ncsu.edu/ncsu/aern/trokony.html Accessed on 19th November 2004. Hawksley, 2001. *Ghana's Trapped Slaves*. BBC News Website. Accessed at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/1158115.stm on the 21st June 2005. Pages 1-4. Rinaudo. 2003. *Trokosi Slavery: Injustice in the name of religion*. La Trobe University, Australia. Accessed on <http://64.233.179.104/u/flinders?q=cache:xrWD3CS33p8J:www.ssn.flinders.edu.au> on the 16th June 2005. Page 5. Ari. 2002. *Liberating Ghanaian Girls from 'Trokosi'*. Africa Recovery. Accessed on http://www.afrol.com/News2002/gha001_girls_Trokosi.htm on 22nd June 2005. .Page 1. Hawksley, 2001. *Ghana's Trapped Slaves*. BBC News Website. Accessed at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/1158115.stm on the 21st June 2005. Ahiable, 1995. *The Anatomy of Trokosi system in Ghana: Report: First National Workshop on Trokosi system in Ghana (July 6-7, 1995)* Accra. Workshop by International Needs, Ghana. Eckardt R, 2004. *Trokosi Field Assignment*. MSW Program St. Louis University. Accessed at <http://www.slu.edu/colleges/SOCSVC/TrokosiIntroductionII.pdf> on the 24th June 2005. French H W, 1997. *Ritual Slaves of Ghana: Young and Female*. The New York Times International May/June 1997 Volume 7, Issue 6 Pages 24. Gakpleazi, 1998. *Trokosi is Not a Slave* Ghanaian Times, Monday November 16 1998, Page 6. *Practice of Trokosi Still Hurting Girls*. Ghanaian Chronicle. Accra, Ghana. 25th August 2004. Accessed at <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/NewsPrintNews.php> On the 19th of November 2004. Gyau Orhin, Isabelle, 2001. 'Ghanaians Asked To Condemn Trokosi' By Public Agenda. General News. Accessed at <http://www.modernghana.com/news/12507/1/ghanaians-asked-to-condemn-Trokosi.html> on the 5th February 2009. *Mercy's Story and Trokosi: Treasure in Earthen Vessels*. 'Save the Slaves' Video Released by [The NGO], Ghana. April 2003.

⁵⁷ Ari. 2002. *Liberating Ghanaian Girls from 'Trokosi'*. Africa Recovery. Accessed on http://www.afrol.com/News2002/gha001_girls_Trokosi.htm on 22nd June 2005. Page 1

other practices that strive to explain misfortune or to elicit money through controlling the labour of the least powerful in the community.⁵⁸

2.2 Life Chances – Traditions in International Development and the Impact on Women and Children

On July 9th 2004 Ghana reached the 'completion point' of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, receiving US\$3.5 billion in debt relief.⁵⁹ The New African states,

*'This is done provided the country completes an additional three years of agreed policy and structural prescriptions devised jointly by the IMF, World Bank, the debtor government and resident identifiable civil society groups'*⁶⁰

However, resourced based measures, such as the GDP do not adequately reflect the resource distribution within the nation as 28.5% of Ghana's population continues to live in poverty, with 18.2% living in extreme poverty.⁶¹ Within the rural setting inhabited by the Ewe, 60.1% of the population live in poverty, with 45.4% living in extreme poverty.⁶²

Whilst resourced based approaches, fueled by Neo-Liberalism, have achieved some results (measured through the GDP) through large scale privatisation projects, neo-liberalism has been unable to sustain changes for the world's poorest people. More importantly, it has limited the states power to act favourably towards its poorest

⁵⁸ See 'End of the Wicked – Nigeria' Aired on Four Corners on the 22nd June 2009. Film by Gary Foxcross

⁵⁹ New Asmah, 2004. Page 28

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ghana Statistical Service, *Pattern and Trends of Poverty in Ghana*, 1991-2006, April 2007, Tables A1.1 and A1.2. Cited in UNDP, Human Development Report. 2007. Page 25.

⁶² Ibid.

citizens.⁶³ Through a complex interaction of racist and sexist policies and laws, which will be discussed later in the thesis, statistics overwhelmingly indicate that the rural female is among the poorest of Ghana's citizens.⁶⁴ By removing the state's power to act favourably towards the poorest members of society, rural women have been excluded from community and state politics, further cementing their place in society and negatively affecting the life chances of women.⁶⁵

Since 1990, the Human Development Report has published the HDI (Human Development Index). The HDI is used to measure longevity, knowledge and access to basic resources needed for individuals to develop their capabilities. The HDI has been published to indicate how various nations' human development is progressing.⁶⁶ In 1995 the Human Development Report released another version of the HDI, called the Gender-related Development Index.

*'The GDI measures achievement in the same basic capabilities as the HDI does, but takes note of inequality in achievement between women and men. The methodology used imposes a penalty for inequality, such that the GDI falls when the achievement levels of both women and men in a country go down or when the disparity between their achievements increases.'*⁶⁷

The GDI measures inequalities between men and women in the areas of life expectancy, share of income earning, adult literacy and education enrolment.⁶⁸ Using the GDI, Ghana was ranked at 91, out of 130 countries. It is noteworthy that of the four

⁶³ Schuurman. 1993. Page 12.

⁶⁴ Amadiume, I. 2000. *Daughters of the Goddess, Daughters of Imperialism: African Women Struggle for Culture, Power and Democracy*. Zed Books.

⁶⁵ Schuurman. Loc. Cit.

⁶⁶ UNDP Report, 1995. *'Measuring gender inequality.'*

Accessed at http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/1995/en/pdf/hdr_1995_ch3.pdf on the 27th June 2005. Page 1

⁶⁷ Ibid. Page 2.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

countries that are reported to practice Troxovi, Ghana was ranked the highest. These countries measured as follows:

Table 2.1 - Measuring Gender Inequality in West Africa - 1995⁶⁹

1995 GDI Rank	GDI	Share of Earned Income (%)		Life Expectancy (Years)		Adult Literacy (%)		Combined Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Gross Enrolment Ratio (%) 1992	
		F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
91 Ghana	0.460	32.7	67.3b	57.8	54.2	49.0	72.9	39.0	50.6
101 Togo	0.380	28.9	71.1b	56.8	53.2	32.9	63.3	43.9	75.1
114 Benin	0.314	40.0	60.0b	49.3	45.9	21.9	44.5	22.0	46.0
100 Nigeria	0.383	28.5	71.5b	52	48.8	42.1	63.4	47.3	55.5

b. An estimate of 75% was used for the ratio of the female non-agricultural wage to the male non-agricultural wage.

⁶⁹ UNDP Report, 1995. 'Measuring gender inequality.' 1995. Page 5.

Table 2.2 – Measuring Gender Inequality in West Africa – 2007/08⁷⁰

GDI Rank	GDI	Share of Earned Income (%)		Life Expectancy (Years) - 2005		Adult Literacy (%) - 2005		Combined Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Gross Enrolment Ratio (%) 2005	
		F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
116 Ghana	.549	NA	NA	59.5	58.7	49.8	66.4	48	53
133 Togo	.494	NA	NA	59.6	56	38.5	68.7	46	64
144 Benin	.422	NA	NA	56.5	54.1	23.3	47.9	42	59
138 Nigeria	.456	NA	NA	47.1	46	60.1	78.2	51	61

⁷⁰ UNDP Report 2007/08. 'Measuring gender inequality' 2007/08. Accessed at http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_GHA.html on the 7th February 2009.

While currently, industrialised countries do tend to receive a higher GDI than developing countries, (with exceptions); significant changes have taken place in the last three decades.⁷¹ The 1995 *Measuring Gender Inequality* report recorded that between 1970 and 1992 developing nations had a 62 percentage improvement; whereas industrialised nations only recorded a 28 percentage improvement. Developing nations are making rapid progress in the area of gender sensitive development. Ghana achieved a 78 percentage change in value between 1970 and 1992 and Togo achieved a staggering 105 percentage change in value in the same twenty two years. On the other hand, Australia achieved a 24 percentage change and the USA received an 11 percentage change.⁷² Obviously industrialised nations begin from a higher base level than developing nations, however the societal adaptations required to work towards gender equality are significant regardless of 'starting point'.

Another example of how improvements are being achieved is that of the United Arab Emirates. In 1970 the literacy rate for women was just 9% and 27% for men. In 1992 the rates were almost equal at 77%.⁷³ These figures remind us that gender disparity is decreasing across the globe, and at a greater rate in the developing world.⁷⁴ When comparing the 1995 and the 2007/08 Gender Development Index results, the most easily noted difference is that all four nations are ranked lower in comparison to other nations. However, when looking at the individual statistics making up the Index, it is clear that this is simply due to

⁷¹ UNDP Report, 1995. 'Measuring gender inequality.' 1995. Page 7.

⁷² Ibid. Page 9.

⁷³ Ibid. Page 10.

⁷⁴ Ibid. Page 1.

other nations advancing at a greater rate than these West African nations. Most significantly, the reports show that Ghanaian women are making a steady climb towards closing the gender gap, as measures across all three comparable indicators record a rise in development and life expectancy. However there is some discrepancy in statistics as according to the Ghana Living Standards Survey of 2000, only 37% of Ghana's women are literate, compared to 49% in the 1995 Gender Development Report and 49.8% in the 2005 Gender Development Report.⁷⁵ On the whole, most indicators record a rise in development, with a few exceptions. Togo's enrolment in education ratio for males fell from 75.1 percent to 64, Nigeria's life expectancy for males fell from 48.8 to 46 percent and for females fell from 52 to 47.1 percent and the literacy rate for Ghanaian men fell from 72.9 to 66.4 percent. Benin has made immense advances in the area of female education, with the female enrolment ratio increasing from 22 to 42 percent.

Within the '*Measuring Gender Inequality*' report, there was also published the GEM (Gender Empowerment Measure), which measures gender empowerment through participation in economic, political and professional activities.⁷⁶ The GEM uses statistics measuring the percentage of women holding seats in parliament, the percentage of women administrators and managers, the percentage of women professional and technical workers and the percentage of women's share in earned income, and ranks nations accordingly.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ UNFPA 'Violence Against Women' 2007. Page 85

⁷⁶ UNDP Report, 1995. 'Measuring gender inequality.' 1995. Page 11.

⁷⁷ Ibid. Page 14.

In 1995, of the four countries practicing Troxovi, Ghana was ranked the highest at 76. Benin was at 84, Nigeria at 108 and Togo at 110.⁷⁸

The four countries are not ranked for Gender Empowerment in the 2007/08 report and the only statistics available refer to the percentage of women holding parliamentary seats.⁷⁹ Whilst in 1995 only 7.5 percent of Ghanaian parliamentary seats were held by women, the 2007/08 report indicates a rise to 10.9 percent. However, since 2007, the number has decreased to 8.3 percent.⁸⁰ Benin has also seen an increase in the empowerment of women during this time, increasing the percentage of parliamentary seats held by women from 6.3 in 1995 to 8.4 percent in 2007 and 10.8 percent in 2010.⁸¹ In 1995 Nigeria had just 2.1 percent of seats held by women. In 2007-08 this data was not available and by 2010, 7 percent of all parliamentary seats were held by women.⁸² Remarkably, Togo has increased women's participation in politics at the national level from a dismal 1.2 percent in 1995, to 8.6 percent in 2007/08 and to 11.1 percent in 2010.⁸³ On one hand, remarkable advances have been made in the four nations practicing Troxovi, in the area of women's empowerment at the national political level. On the other hand, Togo is the only nation currently holding more than a bleak 10 percent of representation for women at the national level.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ UNDP Report 2007/08, 'Measuring gender inequality.' 2007/08. Accessed at http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_GHA.html on the 7th February 2009.

⁸⁰ As at 28th February 2010. Interparliamentary Union website. Accessed at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> on the 6th May 2010.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid

⁸³ Ibid.

Statistics across several other key indicators making up the GEM are not available for the four nations practicing Troxovi. However, the ratio of estimated female to male earned income also indicates that Ghana has achieved a greater level of gender empowerment than the other three nations practicing Troxovi. The 2007/08 report indicates Ghanaian women earn 71⁸⁴ percent of what their male counterparts earn. For Beninese women, the percentage is 47, for Togolese women, just 43 and for Nigerian women 41 percent.⁸⁵ The gap between Ghanaian women's earnings in relations to their male counterparts, and Beninese, Togolese and Nigerian women is significant.

In 1991 a NGO, *Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre* published their findings of a nation-wide study on violence against women and children in Ghana. The report found high levels of violence against women within the nation, revealing that one in three women reported that they have suffered physical abuse, usually inflicted by an intimate partner.⁸⁶ It also found that about 23 per cent of marriages in Ghana are polygamous and that while usually women in polygamous marriages are not young or well educated, young well-educated women often enter into informal unions with married men in order to gain access to scarce resources.⁸⁷ A denial of access to economic resources was also cited as one of the major complaints leading to violence against women.

⁸⁴ UNDP Report 2007/08 Op Cit.

⁸⁵ UNDP Report 2007/08, 'Measuring gender inequality.' 2007/08. Accessed at http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_GHA.html on the 7th February 2009.

⁸⁶ UNFPA 2007, Page 85. 'Violence Against Women'

⁸⁷ Ibid.

2.3 *Human rights*

*'Human rights is often seen as a term a bit like motherhood and apple pie. It is generally regarded as a good thing but the way it is used in both international and national politics indicates, that it is not well enough understood that human rights actually have a very secure international legal foundation.'*⁸⁸

In the same way that International Humanitarian Law responded to the treatment of soldiers during the First World War, international human rights laws were formed by the United Nations just after the Second World War, in response to the horrors of the holocaust.

The first critical document was entitled the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. This document was passed unanimously in the United National General Assembly. (With eight abstentions in 1948. Those in abstention included mainly the Soviet bloc of nations, Saudi Arabia and South Africa).⁸⁹ The passing of this document initiated the conception within the UN; the way a country chooses to treat its nationals is a matter of international concern. The UDHR and subsequent Conventions and Covenants created a language of cross-cultural objectives characterising just societies as those morally committed to '*dignity, equality, bodily inviolability, and freedom.*'⁹⁰ Most international law (with a few exceptions) is based on the use of treaties. Treaties are the strongest form of international law and, although they are occasionally broken, they are obligatory commitments

⁸⁸ Moon. Ed. 1996 *Making Her Rights a Reality: Women's Human Rights and Development*. Published by Community Aid Abroad, Law Foundation of New South Wales, Sydney. Australia. Page 35

⁸⁹ Ibid. Page 35

⁹⁰ Schaffer and Smith, 2004. *Human Rights and Narrated Lives, the Ethics of Recognition*. Published by Palgrave Macmillan. Pg 2

entered into by governments.⁹¹ During the Cold War it became too difficult to maintain one binding treaty, and so two treaties were adopted, one containing economic, social and cultural rights and the other civil and political rights.⁹² Other important treaties, relevant to this thesis, include the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 1979, the Declaration on the Right to Development, 1986, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 and the Vienna Declaration in 1993. The Vienna Declaration states on numerous occasions, '*All human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated*'.⁹³ The implications and tensions around the claim that all human rights are universal in nature will be further discussed within the thesis, particularly with reference to the post-colonial state.

In response to the research findings, the issue of monitoring and evaluation within development programs has been added to the thesis, therefore the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness is also of importance.

There currently exist two mechanisms that implement international law. The first is through a treaty monitoring body. This body receives reports from governments who have signed onto the treaties. Secondly, there are three ways in which complaints against human rights violations can be accepted.

The treaties allow for individual complaints under 'the individual complaint procedure'.⁹⁴ They also allow state to state complaints. Any state is able to make

⁹¹ Moon, Ed. Op. Cit. Page 36

⁹² Ibid. Page 37

⁹³ Moon, Ed. 1996. Page 37

⁹⁴ Ibid. Page 39

a complaint about another country's performance in the upholding of their human rights commitments, however, Professor Hilary Charlesworth comments,

*'I think, most countries would regard it almost as a declaration of war to actually complain in an international forum about another country's treatment of human rights. This is an unexploited mechanism.'*⁹⁵

And thirdly, relevant committees can undertake inquiries on any nation state signed onto human rights treaties..

It is also important to note that individual countries are able to make reservations concerning the particular terms of treaties. Unsurprisingly, the treaty that has attracted the most international reservations is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. However, Ghana did not submit any reservations to this treaty.⁹⁶

2.3.1 Tensions

Whilst the UDHR may have a strong international legal foundation, the theoretical and practical tensions in human rights language are not new concepts and have existed since the inception of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Declaration was unanimously adopted at a time when the sun never set on the British Empire,⁹⁷ many indigenous people around the world did not have the right to vote, not one African nation had achieved independence and

⁹⁵ Ibid. Page 40

⁹⁶ University of Minnesota. 2005. *Ratification of International Human Rights Treaties – Ghana*. <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/research/ratification-ghana.html> Accessed on 5th April 2005, Pages 1. See Appendix Eight.

⁹⁷ Macartney, (1773). *An Account of Ireland in 1773 by a Late Chief Secretary of that Kingdom*. p. 55.; cited in Kenny. (2006). *Ireland and the British Empire*. Oxford University Press. p. 72,fn.22.

modern civil rights activists in the US had not even began their decades of struggle.

Since independence, the tensions within human rights language as specified in the UDHR have only increased as the language has entered international politics and has left human rights entangled within the same criticisms of neo-colonialism. Neo-colonialism is said to be the third external force seeking to exploit Africa; the first being slavery and the second colonisation. Whilst through globalisation, human rights language has successfully brought about a set of fundamental rights, useful in assessing and aligning state policy to universal human rights norms, to many observers globalisation is merely the *fourth* stage of external forces seeking to exploit Africa.⁹⁸ Thus the World Trade Organisation, The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have earned themselves the title of the 'Three Horsemen of Globalisation'.⁹⁹ The deep philosophical tensions within human rights language become unavoidable when discussing the post-colonial state and for this reason it is useful to use a combination of approaches.

2.4 Human Rights and the Narrated Story

In the last decade there has emerged a phenomena that Schaffer and Smith have entitled 'Human Rights and the Narrated Story.'¹⁰⁰ Human rights and the narrated story refers to the role of witness accounts and victim testimonials in the international community, referring to the abuse of individual and group rights.

⁹⁸ Brill, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, December 2002. Page 271 (16)

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Schaffer and Smith, 2004. Page 3.

The narrated story has played a vital role at the international political level, holding communities, governments and non-state parties accountable for abuses that oppose the values proclaimed by such groups in international treaties, historical accounts and/or media reports.

Schaffer and Smith state,

*'These acts of remembering test the values that nations profess to live by against the actual experience and perceptions of the storyteller as witness. They issue an ethical call to listeners both within and beyond national borders to recognize the disjunction between the values espoused by the community and the actual practices that occur.'*¹⁰¹

The role of the narrated story in human rights discussions has been extremely useful in creating a qualitative account of how human rights abuses take place, which human rights legal instruments are useful in prosecuting such abuses and how human rights abuses can be averted in the future. In the case of the Second World War's 'Comfort Women', narrated accounts of the horrors suffered by kidnapped women forced into institutionalised sexual slavery highlighted the horrifying ambiguity of women's rights under international law. Prosecutors discovered that under international law, the Japanese government was only guilty of failing to pay the women for their 'labour' under international labour laws; whilst their kidnap, torture, rape and physical abuse was not illegal under international law at the time of the offences.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Schaffer and Smith, Op. Cit. Page 3

¹⁰² 'Pragmatism, International Law and Women's Bodies' Ustinia Dolgopol. Australian Feminist Studies, Vol 11, No 24, 1996. Page 232

However, there does exist a conflicting discourse surrounding human rights and the narrated story, encompassing questions of verifiability.¹⁰³ The world would be a very different place if we could merely look at human rights as a moral or philosophical debate, rather, as Margaret Jolly points out, human rights are politically grounded¹⁰⁴ and unlike within a court of law, narrated stories concerning human rights abuses are often not required to be verifiable. It is true that behind every Human Rights violation there exists a power relationship and one group's deficiency of rights is equal and proportionate to another group's power.¹⁰⁵ It is also true that behind every *report* of a human rights violation, there exists a power relationship; between witness and cameraman, story-teller and translator, journalist and interviewee, station master and news-watcher and between practitioner and '*victim*'.

As a result of fieldwork, human rights journalism in post-colonial states, power relations between practitioners and survivors of human rights abuses and policy and ethical issues in international development have been added as key areas of enquiry within the thesis.

2.5 Gender Mainstreaming and Development

Early thinking from feminist academics and development professionals in the 1980's, approached the issue of Women and Development (WAD) or Women in Development (WID) by focusing on analysing the roles, rights and

¹⁰³ Schaffer and Smith, Op Cit. Page 28-33

¹⁰⁴ Jolly. 2000. Haggis, J. and Schech S Ed. Page 145

¹⁰⁵ Outhred, 2005. Page 86.

responsibilities of women specifically, in order to correct their exclusion from development planning.¹⁰⁶ McDonald identifies many of the difficulties with the approach, stating that this approach has been widely criticised as it views women in isolation and therefore, leads to the support of women within their traditionally defined roles, rather than questioning the roles of women in the community and the sexual division of labour. Power relationships between men and women remained unchallenged by this approach.

Gender and Development (GAD) acknowledges the *interdependent* roles of men and women, it considers the economic inequality between the sexes and compares the status of men in the same cultural strata as women. The GAD approach considers men individually and collectively, however it focuses more heavily on women due to the discrimination faced by women. The strength of the GAD approach is that it is able to be applied cross-culturally as it does not consider that all women everywhere are the same and recognises that women have various problems based on class, caste and ethnicity; and also questions these power relations. It recognises that men and women start from unequal positions and involves men in the redefining of the sexual division of labour. Working from a GAD point of view means seeking to change the balance of power between men and women from the household to the international institution; and most importantly, as it applies to this thesis, GAD calls for changes within the institutional structures and cultures of NGOs themselves.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ 'Gender Planning in Development Agencies; Meeting the Challenge' Macdonald. Oxfam Print Unit. 1994. Page 16.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. Page 18

2.6 Capabilities Approach

Responding to the limitations of human rights language and the deficiencies in assessing the development of the world's poorest women through quantitative resource based approaches, Nussbaum¹⁰⁸ and Sen¹⁰⁹ discuss the advantages of utilising a capabilities approach when assessing the ability of women in post-colonial states to live with human dignity. Commenting on the shortfalls of resource-based approaches to development, such as the GNP per capita, Nussbaum states that, '*This approach tried to weasel out of making any cross-cultural claims about what has value – although, notice, it does assume the universal value of opulence.*'¹¹⁰ Nussbaum also recognises that resource-based approaches, including those that are sensitive to distribution, do not adequately recognise that individuals vary in their ability to convert such resources into functionings. For example, for all citizens to achieve the same level of educational attainment, more resources will need to be available for those citizens who encounter obstacles from traditional hierarchy or prejudice; and for this reason women's literacy will often require more resources than men's literacy.

Therefore, rather than assert a universal claim to a certain income or equal access to resources for women, Nussbaum's capability approach, delineated in her 1997 *Women and Equality: The Capabilities Approach*, relies on a basic perception that human abilities put forth a moral claim that they be

¹⁰⁸ Nussbaum, 1999, 2007.

¹⁰⁹ Sen, *Development as Freedom*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999.

¹¹⁰ Nussbaum, *Op Cit.* Page 232.

developed. This perspective enables the imagination to conceive a picture of successful development that is not defined by a nation's ability to emulate the west. The capabilities approach asks the question '*What is she actually able to do and to be?*'... They ask not just about the resources that are present, but about how those do or do not go to work, enabling the woman to function.' When questioning what the woman is able to do and be, the basic capabilities are divided up into ten categories, and are considered the innate equipment of an individual that is required in order to develop the more advanced capabilities. The basic capabilities are life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses, imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, respect for other species, play and control over one's environment.¹¹¹

Nussbaum clearly differentiates between internal capabilities and combined capabilities. Internal capabilities refer to the state of the person herself that are, so far as the person herself is concerned, sufficient conditions for the exercise of the requisite functions. Combined capabilities refers to internal capabilities combined with external conditions that enable the exercise of the function. The Capabilities Approach bypasses difficult philosophical ground that is unavoidable in the human rights terrain, such as the origins of human rights, the basis of the right to claim such rights, whether rights can belong to groups as well as individuals and whether certain rights can be traded for other goals.

Often, within the context of post-colonial states, discussions surrounding individual rights verses group rights are perceived by western nations as a thinly veiled disguise to devalue women's rights, claiming that women's rights create a

¹¹¹ Nussbaum, 1999. Page 232-239.

great threat to cultural rights. Conversely, many post-colonial states view western ideals of individual rights as contrary to cultural norms and therefore, irrelevant to African societies.

2.6.1 Women's Rights and Cultural Rights in the Post-Colonial State

Many scholars have sought to evaluate the tension between women's rights and cultural rights within the post-colonial state, resulting in a variety of perspectives. After conducting research into women's rights in Canadian indigenous communities, Jackson (1994, p17) simplistically views '*certain customary values of kindness, reconciliation and family cohesiveness*'¹¹² as obstacles that prevent some women from officially reporting violence in the home and reporting sexual abuse. Elechi dismisses Jackson's claim and states that this perspective is informed by the belief that the modern (western) state has a better view of the rights of women¹¹³ and Rai gives us greater insight, using Australia's indigenous women as examples, stating that '*... self-imposed and self-regulated codes of silence protected their [indigenous] communities from the attacks of the imperialist Western powers*'¹¹⁴ even though many women's groups held a discomfort with women's places within the community. The tension between cultural rights and women's rights is not one that can be ignored in any work addressing women in post-colonial states. Whilst I certainly do not argue that women's rights can be traded for cultural rights, any reluctance to embrace

¹¹² In Elechi 'Women and (African) Indigenous Justice Systems', in Kalunta-Crumpton and Agozino. 2004. Page 158.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Rai, 2008. Page 31.

women's rights must be properly explored. This thesis examines the history of 'Gunboat Diplomacy' and 'Gunboat Criminology' and explores the possibility of a new 'Gunboat Humanitarianism' in human rights relations. 'Gunboat Criminology' refers to the condensed relations between European travelers and intruders and indigenous Africans prior to colonisation. It refers to the way in which Europe achieved colonisation within Africa and it is linked to the Ibadan School of History and the Ikime school of thought of 'Gunboat Diplomacy' in which '*it was no longer 'what is right' but 'might is right'*'.¹¹⁵ Gunboat Criminology encompasses the complex interactions of colonisation, African consciousness, de-colonisation, neo-colonialism and nation-building politics.¹¹⁶ The history of Gunboat Diplomacy in Africa creates a legacy of mistrust in all European/African relations as '*the systematic use of intimidation and falsification of facts to secure subjugation of kings will of course reverberate in all future discussions concerning British relations with Africa...*'¹¹⁷ Within this thesis this history will be further examined and I argue that this history of intimidation and falsification continues to reverberate, negatively impacting on current human rights discussions within post-colonial states. The extent to which this history impacts on development programs within post-colonial states will be examined and a capabilities approach will be applied in order to prevent the possibility of perpetrating colonialist views within the research.

Rather than asserting the claim that all humans have certain rights, no matter what nation or culture they belong to, the Capabilities Approach is based

¹¹⁵ Ikime, 1977. Page 6.

¹¹⁶ Onyeozili in Kalunta-Crumpton and Agozino, 2004. Page 205.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. Page 225.

on the claim that humans have a dignity that deserves respect from laws and social institutions.¹¹⁸ This idea has many traditions and is now found at the centre of modern democratic thought. Nussbaum provides reasoned arguments clearly defining the ways in which human needs and capabilities differ to that of animals and successfully argues that due to these differences, humans require development.¹¹⁹ Therefore, the thesis will assess to what extent international development increases the capabilities of women and in whose opinion/using what framework.

The question of whose opinion/using what framework is important as colonising powers and many citizens of the colonising world paternalistically considered colonisation as a legitimate way of not only increasing imperial interests, but also was considered a way of bringing light to the people of the '*dark continent*'.¹²⁰ Equally the question of whose opinion and what framework is essential as, whilst on one hand, '*people are the best judges of what is good for them, and if we say that their own choices are not good for them, we treat them like children*',¹²¹ on the other hand '*a preference-based approach will typically reinforce inequalities, especially those inequalities that are entrenched enough to have crept into people's very desires*'.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Nussbaum, 1999. Page 227.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ 'Dark Continent' is a 19th century expression referring to, mainly sub-Saharan, Africa. The expression resulted from habit of map-makers to leave areas of the continent dark, due to a lack of knowledge about the continent's interior geography.

¹²¹ Nussbaum, Op Cit. Page 230.

¹²² Ibid. Page 233.

Nussbaum and Sen's Capabilities Approach adequately addresses the issue of choice by separating internal and external capabilities and defining how the two may work together in order to create combined capabilities.¹²³

2.7 Epistemology

It is now widely recognised in the scientific world that pure objectivity in the pursuit of knowledge does not exist. Freedman states, *'The ideal of a "detached" observer has been thoroughly trounced, feminists have pointed out that individuals are socially situated in a particular ethic, historical, social and political context.'*¹²⁴ Within the debate concerning post-colonial human rights interventions, where the observer or practitioner is ethically, historically, socially and politically situated has become an issue of contention. As discussed, Nussbaum deals with this contention through the Capabilities Approach, and this thesis follows the approach in order to bypass difficult philosophical ground inherent in the human rights terrain.¹²⁵

However, epistemology remains a key concept within the thesis in relation to the construction of *'the Trokosi woman'*, *'the Fetish priest'*, *'the NGO'* and other stakeholders within the case study. Within the field it became clear that the universally accepted image of the Trokosi woman, as found in the international media and academia, is not shared at the national and local levels. As interventions into the practice are funded and decided upon within the international sphere, the construction of the practice has implications for the life

¹²³ Nussbaum, 1999. Page 233.

¹²⁴ Freedman, 2009. Page 48.

¹²⁵ Nussbaum, Op Cit. Page 239.

chances of the women and children. Freedman argues for diversity and intersubjective verifiability through the publicity of content, in order to verify claims of truth.¹²⁶ However, the case study reveals that voices that do not verify the content of the most powerful, are silenced at the national level and the international content remains '*truth*'.

Collins argues that the oppression of black women is encompassed in three interdependent dimensions. She claims black women are oppressed through the exploitation of their labour and through political dimensions of oppression both past and present. These two interdependent dimensions will be discussed within the thesis; however the third dimension is of particular significance. Collins contends that the control of images applied to black women attests to the ideological dimensions of black women's oppression. She argues that racist and sexist ideologies '*permeate the social structure to such a degree that they become hegemonic, namely, seen as natural, normal, and inevitable.*'¹²⁷ The thesis explores the extent to which the imagery of the Trokosi woman is constructed in order to produce hegemonic representations of black rural women. This is explored through an exploration of local, national and international discourse.¹²⁸

This thesis explores these challenges through key concepts such as human rights, capabilities and quality of life, unpaid reproductive labour and

¹²⁶ Freedman, 2009. Page 47-8.

¹²⁷ Collins, 2000. *Black Feminist Thought. Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Routledge. New York and London. Page 5.

¹²⁸ See Chapter 5

slavery, development, human rights and the narrated story, post-colonialism and policy implementation.

Chapter 3 The Research Approach

Within this chapter of the thesis, the methodological approach and the key areas of enquiry are outlined, and the research journey is discussed. The chapter explores the advantages and challenges of using a Participatory Action Research approach and concludes that in order to have meaningful access to the women and children, a certain level of empowerment must have already been gained.

3.1 Context

Focusing heavily on the voices of post-colonial, third world feminist literature, this thesis seeks to critically analyse the policies, politics and social relation structures surrounding the Trokosi practice and the development programs currently employed to emancipate 'Trokosi slavery'.¹²⁹ This research

¹²⁹ See Julie Dogbadzi escaped. Now she's freeing others. After a life of slavery. Newsweek (International Edition) New York: April 5 1999, Page 33. 'Save the Slaves' April 2003. Released by [The NGO] Australia, Hawthorn, Victoria. Australia.
Mercy's Story and Trokosi: Treasure in Earthen Vessels. 'Save the Slaves' Video Released by [The NGO], Ghana. April 2003. Owusu-Ansah, 2003. Assistant Professor of Education. *Trokosi in Ghana: Cultural Relativism or Slavery?* Lindsey-Wilson College, Kentucky, USA www2.ncsu.edu/ncsu/aern/trokony.html Accessed on 19th November 2004. Hawksley, 2001. *Ghana's Trapped Slaves*. BBC News Website. Accessed at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/1158115.stm on the 21st June 2005. Pages 1-4. Rinaudo, 2003. *Trokosi Slavery: Injustice in the name of religion*. La Trobe University, Australia. Accessed on <http://64.233.179.104/u/flinders?q=cache:xrWD3CS33p8J:www.ssn.flinders.edu.au> on the 16th June 2005. Page 5. Ari B. 2002. *Liberating Ghanaian Girls from 'Trokosi'*. Africa Recovery. Accessed on http://www.afrol.com/News2002/gha001_girls_Trokosi.htm on 22nd June 2005. .Page 1. Hawksley, 2001. *Ghana's Trapped Slaves*. BBC News Website. Accessed at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/1158115.stm on the 21st June 2005. Ahiabile M, 1995. The Anatomy of Trokosi system in Ghana: Report: First National Workshop on Trokosi system in Ghana (July 6-7, 1995) Accra. Workshop by International Needs, Ghana. Eckardt, 2004. *Trokosi Field Assignment*. MSW Program St. Louis University. Accessed at <http://www.slu.edu/colleges/SOCSVC/TrokosiIntroductionII.pdf> on the 24th June 2005. French, 1997. *Ritual Slaves of Ghana: Young and Female*. The New York Times International May/June 1997 Volume 7, Issue 6 Pages 24. Gakpleazi. 1998. *Trokosi is Not a Slave* Ghanaian Times, Monday November 16 1998, Page 6. *Practice of Trokosi Still Hurting Girls*. Ghanaian Chronicle. Accra, Ghana. 25th August 2004. Accessed at <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/printnews.php>? On the 19th of

seeks to uncover what historical, social, political, legal and economic factors and frameworks impede the rights of the Trokosi women, following McIntyre-Mills work in Central Australia.¹³⁰ The thesis seeks to explore what historical, social, political, legal and economic frameworks facilitate the fulfillment of the women's and children's rights. As Tuhiwai-Smith writes;

*'Intervening is directed then at changing institutions which deal with indigenous peoples and not at changing indigenous peoples to fit the structures.'*¹³¹

Relying on secondary research, my earlier work *'The Trokosi Women and Children: Assessment of the Extent to Which Human Rights Legislation Is Addressed in South East Ghana'*¹³² concluded the following: The Trokosi practice is against Ghanaian domestic law, as of 1998. The Trokosi practice is against a number of International Treaties, to which Ghana is a signatory. All signatories to international legal treaties are liable to accountability. Though in its current form international law is patriarchal in nature, these frameworks must be reshaped and reclaimed for women rights to be realised. The Trokosi women and children do not have the same rights as other women and children in Ghana. The releasing of Trokosi women will not re-adjust the unequal gender relations within Trokosi communities or within the nation of Ghana. Unequal power relations and the viewing of women as cultural battlegrounds will continue to perpetuate the oppression of women. One group's deficiency of rights is equal and proportionate

November 2004. Gyau Orhin, Isabelle, 2001. 'Ghanaians Asked To Condemn Trokosi' By Public Agenda. General News. Accessed at <http://www.modernghana.com/news/12507/1/ghanaians-asked-to-condemn-Trokosi.html> on the 5th February 2009. *Mercy's Story and Trokosi: Treasure in Earthen Vessels*. 'Save the Slaves' Video Released by [The NGO], Ghana. April 2003.

¹³⁰ McIntyre, 2003. Op Cit. Pages 309-338.

¹³¹ Tuhiwai Smith, 1999. Page 147. *'Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples'*

¹³² Outhred, 2005. Page 85. *'The Trokosi Women and Children: Assessment of the Extent to Which Human Rights Legislation Is Addressed in South East Ghana.'* Flinders University Library.

to another group's power. The argument of cultural relativism is one that relies on the assertion that there is such a thing as natural rights and begs the question: Why should the right to religious freedom overshadow the rights of women? The Troxovi religion is currently being practiced far from its original form. The enforcement of legal instruments alone will not end the Troxovi practice. '*Social relations change, they are not fixed or immutable*',¹³³ however, the '*roots of violence are cultural*' but '*so are the means of digging up those roots*'.¹³⁴ And finally, the thesis concluded that '*Emancipation dramatically demonstrated that power was in the hands of the free, not the slaves*'¹³⁵

Building upon the findings of my earlier work,¹³⁶ this research develops a social justice and rights based argument¹³⁷ based on a case study and participant observation of the management of an international NGO. Fieldwork spanned five months and included observation and interviews with the international NGO, as well as interviews with local NGOs and government officials.

¹³³ March, Smyth and Mukhopadhyay, 2003. Pg 103

¹³⁴ Jolly. 2000. Page 151. Outhred, 2005. Page 86.

¹³⁵ Lovejoy, 2000. Page . Outhred, 2005. Page 86.3

¹³⁶ Outhred, Op Cit.

¹³⁷ Nussbaum, 1999. Page 232.

Diagram 3.1 The Trokosi Case study: Areas of Inquiry

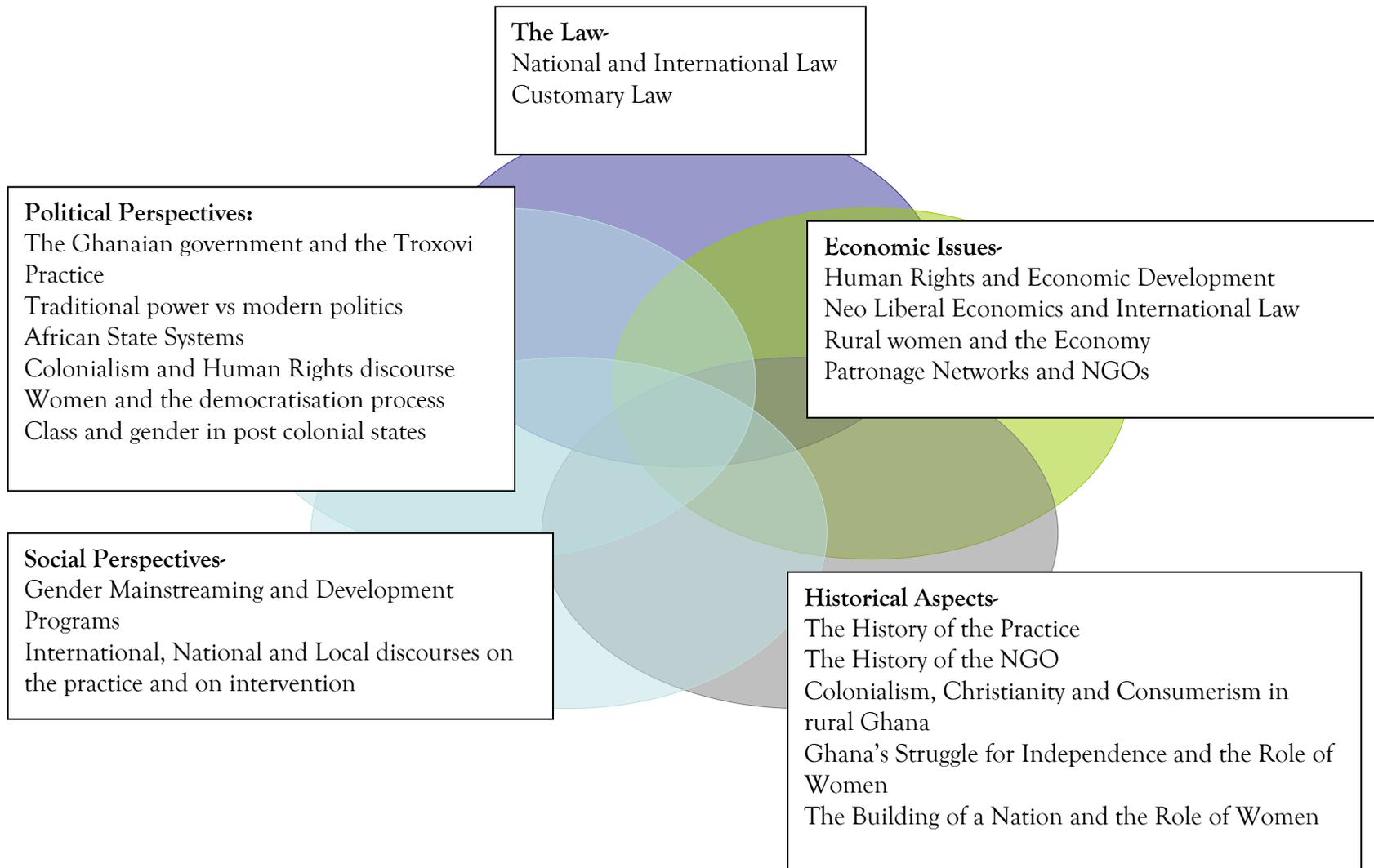
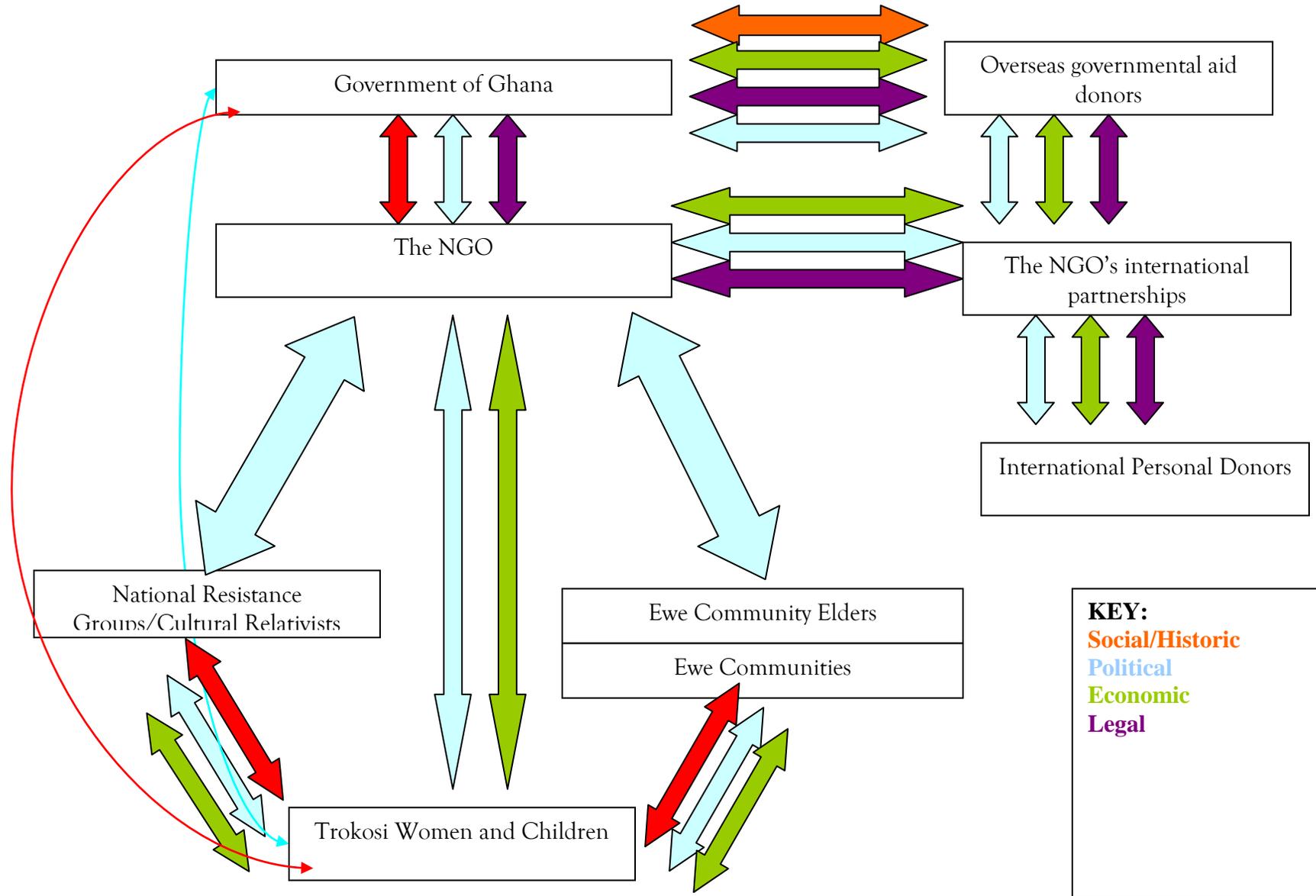


Diagram 3.2 – Social, Political, Economic and Legal Interactions of the Various Actors and Agents



3.3 Key Areas of Inquiry

Within each area of inquiry the follow questions were sort from the sources listed:

KEY

- TRO Trokosi Survivors
- CM Community Members
- EE Ewe Elders
- The NGO The NGO, Ghana Staff
- NRG Representatives from National Resistance Groups resisting Trokosi emancipation
- GGR Ghanaian Government Representatives
- IPD International Personal Donors
- IGD International Governmental Donors
- CEO CEO The NGO, Australia
- FD Finance Director – The NGO, Australia
- LM Local Material – Libraries, archives
- O Observation

Source of knowledge	Key Areas of Inquiry:
TRO, CM, EE, THE NGO, NRG, GGR, LM	<p>Historical</p> <p>What is the history of the Troxovi practice?</p>
TRO, CM, EE, THE NGO, NRG, GGR, LM	<p>What is the history of the Ewe people?</p>

<p>TRO, CM, THE NGO, NRG, GGR, CEO, LM THE NGO, NRG, GGR, IGD, CEO</p> <p>CM, EE, THE NGO, NRG, GGR, CEO, LM CM, EE, THE NGO, NRG, GGR, LM,</p>	<p>What is the history of the NGO?</p> <p>What historical aspects in the making of international and domestic law are relevant to the Troxovi practice?</p> <p>How many women who were once Trokosi are now free?</p> <p>Women’s representation with Ghana’s independence struggle, nationalisation process and democratisation</p>
<p>TRO, CM, EE, THE NGO, NRG, LM, O TRO, CM, EE, THE NGO, O THE NGO, CEO, FD, LM TRO, CM, EE, THE NGO, NRG, CEO, LM, O TRO, THE NGO, CEO, LM, O TRO, THE NGO, CEO, LM, O</p>	<p>Social</p> <p>How do Trokosi survivors function within the community?</p> <p>How do communities view the release of the Trokosi?</p> <p>What other work does The NGO do?</p> <p>What choices are available to Trokosi survivors?</p> <p>What NGO policies and/or practices currently benefit the Trokosi women?</p> <p>What NGO policies and/or practices currently impede the rights of the Trokosi women?</p>
<p>THE NGO, NRG, GGR, LM TRO, CM, EE, THE NGO, NRG, GGR, LM, O THE NGO, CEO, IGD, O TRO, CM, EE, THE NGO, NRG, LM, O, GGR</p>	<p>Political</p> <p>Why hasn’t the government enforced the 1998 law banning the practice?</p> <p>Are there other organisations working with or for the Trokosi women?</p> <p>Does The NGO use a gender specific approach to their work with the Ewe?</p> <p>What community practices, NGO policies and procedures and national laws benefit and/or impede the rights of the Trokosi women and children?</p> <p>Who benefits from the release of the Trokosi women and children?</p>

<p>GGR, LM, O</p> <p>IGD, CEO</p>	<p>Legal</p> <p>What national legal instruments and mechanisms are available to the Trokosi women and children?</p> <p>What international legal instruments and mechanisms are available to the Trokosi women and children?</p>
<p>THE NGO, IGD, CED, FD, LM, O</p> <p>THE NGO, CEO, FD, LM</p> <p>THE NGO, CEO, FD, IRD</p>	<p>Economic</p> <p>What obligations must The NGO adhere to in order to receive finance from the International Governmental Donors?</p> <p>What obligations must The NGO, Ghana adhere to in order to receive finance from The NGO, Australia?</p> <p>What obligations must The NGO, Australia adhere to in order to receive finance from individual donors?</p>

3.3 Auto-Ethnographical Approach

Spark reviews Moreton-Robinson's *Talkin' Up to the White Woman*' saying, [Talkin' up] '*...exposes the need for white feminists to interrogate their race privilege in order not to perpetuate colonialist and racist violence*'.¹³⁸ In response to Moreton-Robinson's observations, the approach used incorporates her two requests; '*...an interrogation of white race privilege and a giving up of power*'.¹³⁹ I believe that using an Auto Ethnographical methodology will enable me to address the issue of representation. It is clear that the key experiences of all women are certainly not the same. They are grounded deep within culture, race, class and sexuality.¹⁴⁰ By interacting with the text; relaying my fears, questions, thoughts, similarities and differences, mixed emotions and questioning about my own society through the research project; any over-representation of the Trokosi women, the NGO staff, government representatives and representatives from organisations resisting the emancipation of the Troxovi practice, may be judged by the reader.

Ellis and Bochner state, '*Reflexive ethnographers ideally use all their senses, their bodies, movement, feeling, and their whole being – they use the self to learn about the other*'. Foucault presented the idea that in order to learn about a topic, one must study the other.¹⁴¹ It is in this space that I investigate myself as '*the other*' and plan to partake in '*...an interrogation of white race*

¹³⁸ Quoted in Morton-Robinson, 2006. *Whiteness Matter Implications of Talkin' Up to the White Woman* Australian Feminist Studies, Vol 21, No 50 July 2006. Page 248.

¹³⁹ Moreton-Robinson, 2006. *Whiteness Matters Implications of Talkin' up to the white Woman* Australian Feminist Studies, Vol 21, No 50 July 2006. Page 250.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. Page 246.

¹⁴¹ See McIntyre-Mills, 1997. Chapter 4.

privilege'.¹⁴² Lina Tuhiwai speaks similarly stating, '*Rationality in the Western tradition enabled knowledge to be produced and articulated in a scientific and 'superior' way.*'¹⁴³ By relying heavily on indigenous knowledge, I will engage in '*a giving up of power*'.¹⁴⁴ In this way rationality in non-western traditions will be given a voice within the research. Discourses concerning the researcher and the research must be explored as Stanley and Wise conclude that,

*'We see the presence of the researcher's self as central in all research. One's self can't be left behind; it can only be omitted from discussions and written accounts for the research process. But it is an omission, a failure to discuss something which has been present within the research itself.'*¹⁴⁵

Within the field, responses to the researcher were often catalysts for investigating new lines of enquiry within the research. For example, the leader of the National Resistance Movement against the emancipation of the Troxovi practice, stated: '*First there was a bunch of German 'researchers', then journalists from Australia, then [the independent researcher hired by the NGO]. I find it suspicious that here you are, hot on their heels.*'¹⁴⁶ Following this response to my presence, I investigated the number of researchers and journalists that had travelled to the region to enquire about the practice. I looked into how they knew about the practice, who they knew in the country, what accommodation they stayed in, which interpreters they used and what results they found. As will be

¹⁴² Moreton-Robinson, 2006. *Whiteness Matters Implications of Talkin' up to the white Woman* Australian Feminist Studies, Vol 21, No 50 July 2006. Page 250.

¹⁴³ Tuhiwai Smith, 1999. Page 170.

¹⁴⁴ Moreton-Robinson, Op Cit. Page 250.

¹⁴⁵ Stanley and Wise, 1993. Pg 161

¹⁴⁶ Discussion (did not agree to formal interview) from Principal Researchers notes. 29th September 2008

seen throughout the thesis, this line of enquiry significantly contributed to the findings within the case study. Similarly, responses to the research/er from various participant groups revealed as much about the stakeholder groups as it did about research/er. For example, a representative from the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice stated '*Go and speak to the women and the communities yourself. Do not let your research be lead by [the NGO].*'¹⁴⁷

Other responses revealed which issues are key concerns within the case study. Highlighting the issue of white race privilege, the National Resistance Movement leader stated,

*'Look at how you have abused your own indigenous people. Then you come here and research our people. You come here because you are paid to come here. No-one will pay to research the human rights abuses of the white man.'*¹⁴⁸

Prior to the data collection period in Ghana, I was aware that I possess a privileged economic and political position; as I have benefited from the colonisation projects of my ancestors. However, this unearned privilege had always been subtle to me. By subtle, I refer to my own consciousness, as I'm sure white race privilege is never subtle to those who are without it. Prior to the data collection period, I had never witnessed such blatant white race privilege.

After an article concerning the Troxovi practice appeared in the national newspaper, I travelled to the publications offices in Accra to try to speak with the journalist who wrote the article. When I arrived at the reception area, the receptionist bypassed the very long line of Ghanaians waiting to be served, to assist me in my enquiry. She informed me that the publication had moved offices

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Principal Researcher, 15th September 2008.

¹⁴⁸ Discussion (did not agree to formal interview) from Principal Researchers notes. 29th September 2008

and were now situated on the other side of Accra. I discovered that I was actually in the offices of the national TV station. As I left, the CEO of the station came out after me and asked if he could assist me in finding what I was looking for. I explained to him that I had come to the wrong media office and that I was looking for the office of '*The Spectator*'. The CEO offered to have his driver take me to the office as it would take a long time on a Tro Tro¹⁴⁹ and would be very uncomfortable for me. I did not take him up on his offer, however I was amazed at the lengths people were willing to go to for someone they had never met, purely based on whiteness.

Likewise, when travelling in rural areas, it is common to travel in the tray of 4WD vehicles. During a trip to a rural area, I was rarely *allowed* to travel in the back tray of the vehicle and was often escorted off the back of the truck and into the front seat. This inevitably involved escorting whoever was sitting in the front seat to the back of the truck. My protests were never adhered to and I learnt quickly that the longer I protested, the longer I delayed everybody's journey. However, on one occasion when I was escorted to the front seat, a heavily pregnant young woman stepped out, ready to be escorted to the back of the truck, she was obviously resigned to the fact that I would take her place. On that occasion I decided to walk.

I also witnessed many white westerners asserting their white race privilege through outright racism with service providers who would risk their jobs; should they challenge the tourists. However, the most powerful example of white race

¹⁴⁹ Tro Tro's are the national form of transport in Ghana. Usually Tro Tro's are privately owned mini buses that are maned by a driver and his 'mate' who travel predetermined routes to pick up passengers.

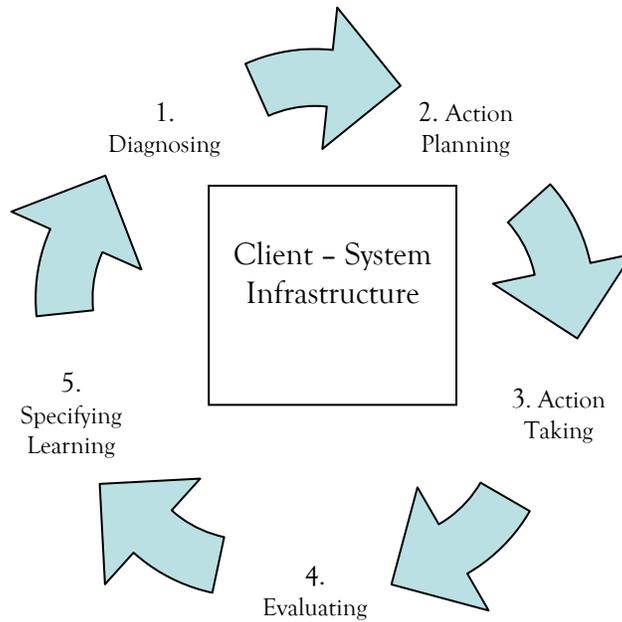
privilege was evident when hearing local and national discourse concerning the Trokosi women; and realising the extent to which their voices are silenced within international discussions.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ This discourse will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5.

3.4 Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Action Research relies on five identifiable phases¹⁵¹:

Diagram 3.3 – Baskerville’s Client-System Infrastructure within Action Research¹⁵²



¹⁵¹ Pål de Vibe, July 2004. *'In the Shadow of The Commander Reformulating a South African Health Information System in the Cuban Health Sector'*. University Of Oslo, Department of Informatics. Page 38.

¹⁵² As cited in Pål de Vibe, July 2004. Page 39.

The NGO states that within the Participatory Action Research model, three stages have already been undertaken: Diagnosing, Action Planning and Action Taking. Engaging with key stakeholders within the cultural setting, this research forms stages four and five - Evaluation and Specifying Learning. It is important to note that 'Evaluating' and 'Specifying Learning' is aimed at all systems and structures around the Trokosi emancipation process, it is not specific to The NGO. Stages four and five look at the interactions of all stakeholders from the local, to the global.

In order to assess the impact of the program on the life chances of the Trokosi women and children, quantitative research using secondary sources has been used to investigate the life chances of women and children in Ghana and to assess the prevalence of the practice within the Volta Region, Ghana. Observation formed a strong component of the methodology. It was originally intended that field research would mainly consist of qualitative research, in the form of interviews.

Interviews were to be conducted with 20 Trokosi survivors, 20 community members from villages that no longer practice Troxovi, 5 elders within the Ewe communities that no longer practice Troxovi, all staff of the NGO, who work on the Trokosi program and are able/willing to participate, 2 representatives from local groups resisting the emancipation of Trokosi women, 2 representatives from the Ghanaian government, the CEO of The NGO in Australia and the Finance Director of The NGO in Australia.

Diagram 3.4 – Participant Information¹⁵³

Participant Group	From a pool of	Source	Language	Interview conducted by
20 Trokosi survivors	3000	Groups that The NGO, Ghana currently work with.	Ewe	Interpreter and Principal Researcher, Rachel Outhred
20 community members from villages that no longer practice Troxovi	Approx. 10 000	Communities that The NGO, Ghana currently works with.	Ewe	Interpreter and Principal Researcher, Rachel Outhred
5 elders within the Ewe communities that no longer practice Troxovi	There are approximately 1.3 million Ewe people. Not all of the Ewe sub-tribes practice Troxovi. I would estimate that there are approximately 2000 Ewe elders within sub-tribes currently practicing Troxovi.	Elders from communities that The NGO, Ghana currently work with.	Ewe	Interpreter and Principal Researcher, Rachel Outhred
The NGO Head Office Staff	Approx. 10	N/A	English	Principal Researcher, Rachel Outhred
The NGO Adidome Staff	Approx. 10	N/A	Ewe	Interpreter and Principal Researcher, Rachel Outhred
2 representatives from local groups resisting the emancipation of Trokosi women	There are currently 2 organisations resisting Trokosi emancipation. The size of the groups are unknown	Resistance groups are identified within much of the literature, however groups are anonymous within this thesis)	English	Principal Researcher, Rachel Outhred
2 representatives from the Ghanaian government	N/A	N/A	English	Principal Researcher, Rachel Outhred
The CEO of The NGO, Australia	N/A	N/A	English	Principal Researcher, Rachel Outhred
The Finance Director of The NGO, Australia	N/A	N/A	English	Principal Researcher, Rachel Outhred

¹⁵³ Note, the information compiled within the original research plan relied on secondary sources. The thesis concludes that this information is heavily contested within Ghana.

3.4.1 Recruitment and Interviewing Processes

The following recruitment and interviewing processes were to be employed upon arrival in Ghana:

Trokosi survivors, community members and community elders

For cultural reasons, the Head of Women's and Children's programs within The NGO was to introduce me to the community before the collection of data began. She was to explain the reasons for my presence and explain that in time I would ask if anyone would like to be involved. I was to observe the communities and spend time with the women over the course of a few weeks. When it was deemed to be culturally appropriate by the Head of Women's and Children's programs and the community members, the NGO representative was to speak to the community again and ask if anyone would like to be involved. Before each individual interview, Participant Information was to be verbally communicated with the participant. Interviews were to be conducted in Ewe through an independent interpreter, hired locally.

All staff of The NGO, Ghana who are able/willing to participate

I was to be introduced to all of the staff upon arrival in Ghana. The aims of the project were to be verbally communicated to the staff within a group setting, and potential participants were to be given copies of the Participant Information Form. Interested potential participants were to be asked to approach me, or contact me via email to indicate interest.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ See Appendices

2 representatives from National Resistance Groups that resisting the emancipation of Trokosi women

For cultural reasons, when in Ghana, I was to go to the offices of groups resisting emancipation and explain the project. Participant Information Forms and a letter of introduction were to be left with the group. This was to be followed up with a visit during the following week.

2 representatives from the Ghanaian government

I was to personally go to the offices of the appropriate government officials, ready for interview but also ready to make an appointment for another day.

The CEO and Finance Director of The NGO, Australia

The NGO, Australia was aware of the thesis project and had verbally agreed to be involved. A letter, a letter of introduction and Participant Information Forms were to be sent to the both the CEO and the Finance Director of The NGO, Australia.¹⁵⁵

Confidentiality

All names of interviewees remained confidential and participants were identified by the participant group that they represent.

¹⁵⁵ See Appendices

3.5 Original Objectives of the Research

Originally the specific objectives of the research were,

To document:

1. The history of the Troxovi practice, the Ewe people and the history of Ghana
2. The history of western activity in Ghana and within the context of international development, globally
3. The history of the NGO and their work in Ghana

To explore:

1. How the Trokosi survivors function within the community
2. How communities view the release of the Trokosi women
3. Why the 1998 law, banning the practice has not been enforced
4. What approach the NGO uses in their programs
5. The financial obligations associated with receiving funds from governmental aid agencies and personal givers in the west
6. What choices are available to Trokosi survivors
7. What policies and processes have been useful in releasing Trokosi women
8. What political agendas silence the Trokosi women
9. What political agendas serve the Trokosi women
10. The extent to which the women have been empowered through the work of The NGO

To create:

A model based on the achievements and oversights/obstacles of all structure that exist around the emancipation of the Trokosi for other practitioners to use in the emancipation of gender specific cultural practices that legitimate violence against women.

3.6 *The Research Journey*

There was much anticipation leading up to the fieldwork period as my family and I had established relationships with a number of the staff members at the NGO over almost a decade. In 2001 I had worked in a school in Tanzania and through my pre-deployment training I had come into contact with a couple working for the NGO in Uganda. It was through this connection that my family and I volunteered in the following years to host fundraising events in Australia to assist the Ghanaian arm of the NGO in their work with the Trokosi women and children. During these fundraising campaigns, the NGO staff stayed in my parents' home and we maintained contact between visits. My commitment to the program run by the NGO was such that in 2005 I had completed a Masters thesis on the topic, using secondary resources and had spoken on several national radio programs concerning the practice. Similarly, the commitment of my parents was such that they organised full scholarships in Australia for the children of one of the NGO's staff members. Between 2006 and 2008 my parents housed the two children within their home and the teenagers were considered part of our family.

Almost two years prior to the fieldwork period, upper management and the Executive Director of the NGO had agreed to and welcomed, research into the Troxovi practice. An overview was sent to key members of the NGO six months prior to my arrival, and was approved both verbally and in writing by the Executive Director. During this time I had been in consistent contact with both the Executive Director and with a member of upper management. I sought local

information in order to establish the research plan, particularly in regards to the ethics approval process.

Initially, upon my arrival in Ghana, I was well received by the organisation until it became clear that I was not willing to compromise several ethical requirements, as stipulated by the University's Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee. It became clear that many students had traveled to Ghana and had been taken to various places of interest by the NGO. They had spoken to the women through the NGO's translator or staff members and made their conclusions. These were the conclusions that I had drawn on in my Masters thesis.

In 2008 an *independent* report had been commissioned by the NGO and funded through a governmental donor. Whilst I had been told verbally on several occasions that I would have full access to this report and other reports conducted on the project, I witnessed the Executive Director publicly informing all staff that under no circumstances were any of the reports to be given to *anybody* without the Executive Director's permission. The Executive Director promised a copy of the report to me personally, however in the five months that I was in Ghana, this offer never materialised.

The Executive Director did, however introduce me to the author of one of the *independent* reports, written to secure another three years of funding for the NGO's vocational centre, where emancipated Trokosi were housed and educated. The Executive Director stated to his staff that this report cost US\$26

000 to commission and the amount of funding that it secured was in excess of US\$900 000.¹⁵⁶

Several events led me to question the *independent* nature of the report, including the following. The author was described as ‘a very good friend’ by the Executive Director.¹⁵⁷ His office was in the geography department of the university and upon looking into the matter I found that his qualifications are in oceanography, natural resources and urban and rural planning. It was clear that he possessed no qualifications in women’s rights or cultural practices; the two central areas to any investigation into the Trokosi women and children. The author gave me a list naming the people I should contact. He seemed very interested in where I might be receiving funds from and claimed that in order to conduct this research I would need huge amounts of funding. He asked if I was being funded through Ausaid and asked how much money I had in my bank account. He told me several stories about people who had gone before me wishing to conduct *independent* research into the Troxovi practice and indicated that they all had to stop the project mid way through, due to financial constraints. He also told me that speaking with an ex-Trokosi woman would cost me US\$50 for half a day, and speaking to a priest would cost over US\$200; unless I went through the NGO.¹⁵⁸

It was very clear to me that the author was actively seeking to discourage me from conducting independent research. At the time I wondered if he was

¹⁵⁶ Principal Researcher’s Diary Submission. September 2008.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Principle Researcher’s Journal Entry. September 2008.

fearful that my findings may not resonate with his. However as the project moved on, it became clear that this was not the issue.

In a meeting with a member of upper management, the manager raised two issues with which she was uncomfortable, the first being that interviewees and the organisation would not be named. The member of upper management felt that I had traveled to Ghana '*under the banner of [the NGO]*' and that therefore '*[the NGO] should receive the credit for the final results*'.¹⁵⁹ I explained the nature of independent research and explained that staff needed to feel secure that they could share whatever information they see as important, without fear of the NGO losing credibility or of losing their job. The second point mentioned by the manager eventually became an issue of immense tension within the research project and was responsible for major changes to the research plan. This was regarding the use of an independent interpreter.

Initially I was told by the member of upper management that an independent interpreter would cost in excess of US\$250 a day plus expenses.¹⁶⁰ I insisted that I could not use a staff member of the NGO, or relatives of staff members within the NGO. I was then told that the author of the 2008 *independent report* could provide a student to interpret but I also declined this offer. After embarking on some local fact-finding missions, I was directed to the local University's language centre; so I informed the NGO that I would find an interpreter there.

¹⁵⁹ Principal Researcher's Journal Entry. 12th September 2008.

¹⁶⁰ Principal Researcher's Journal Entry. 12th September 2008.

I met with the Head of Ewe Studies at the university's language centre, where we agreed on a price and a date to travel to the Volta Region. I was assured that a suitable interpreter would be found.

During the course of seeking a translator I continued interviewing participants from other stakeholder groups. This included the government of Ghana's Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice. The interview yielded a number of interesting outcomes. It was stated in the interview that the Commission had just completed an assessment of the Troxovi situation, which included travel to the rural areas and that the Commission was currently in the process of finalising the research findings and the report would be available in February 2009. The following was stated:¹⁶¹

*'We discovered two things. The first thing is not proven yet. But we have been told by people within the communities that some lists are not accurate... the lists that [the NGO] are making... We have been informed that they [shrine lists and Trokosi lists] are not accurate.', '...some women that are 'liberated' were never Trokosi', 'we have several independent people reporting the same thing. We believe that [international governmental aid agency] money is slipping into the pocket of someone at the top' and; 'The other finding is that either the practice has transformed through the advocacy work of this department and through the work of [the NGO], or the practice is not as prevalent or as abusive as it has been reported and continues to be reported.'*¹⁶²

In response to my question: *'Can I clarify? You believe that the current 'independent' reports commissioned through [the NGO] are reporting higher incidences of Trokosi and worse conditions for Trokosi than is actually the case?'*, the interviewee replied:

'Yes. We will be holding a stakeholders workshop about this issue later in the year or early next year. [National Resistance Groups] ...are allowing

¹⁶¹ Interview Transcript. 15th September 2008

¹⁶² Interview Transcript. 15th September 2008

transformation. These days it is a matter of an individual priest misusing power. [National Resistance Groups] have changed things. Now the Trokosi go to school. This council is transforming the practice from within as well, not just [the NGO]'s work. One of the problems is that all the research going out into the international community is coming out of [the NGO]. All interviews with the Trokosi women and all interviews with community members are currently conducted and/or translated by [the NGO].'

After this interview, the need for an independent interpreter was even more pressing.

Two days before we were set to leave for the vocational centre to interview the Trokosi women, the representative of the language centre contacted me and informed me that he had found me an interpreter and we set up a meeting. At the meeting the Head of Ewe Studies smiled, saying *'I am told that you know the interpreter, that you are friends.'* I was very confused and considered all of the people I had met since arriving, sure that none were studying Ewe at the university. The Head named the staff member from the NGO who had originally offered to do the translations. The same staff member had offered for her nephew to do the translations, and had told me that it would be impossible to find someone outside the organisation to translate for less than US\$250 a day. I questioned how this had come about and the academic informed me that he had mentioned our discussions to a friend in the university and the following day, the staff member from the NGO had visited his office and offered to do the translations. He stated that he had met with her weeks prior and she had asked that he keep it *'between the two of them for as long as possible.'*¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Meeting held 18th November 2008.

Other events that initially only seemed slightly odd became central as impediments, or attempted impediments, to the research. Within the first week of arriving in Ghana I had a meeting with the Executive Director and I explained the research plan, the 'critical analysis' paradigm and that my next task would be to seek an independent interpreter. My journal records a response from the director that I found problematic. He paused for a long period of time. Then he leaned forward on the lounge chair in his office and stated:

*'I think your research will not be easy.'*¹⁶⁴

I enquired as to which aspects he thought would be difficult and he responded;

*'I would not be surprised if you came under physical threat doing this research. You may be harmed.'*¹⁶⁵

I asked him who he believed would be the instigator of violence towards me and he responded saying that the fetish priests may harm me or the organisation that resists the NGO's emancipation process. He paused and then stated;

*'Rachel, you know I hate to say this, but all of my country-men; they are liars. Every one of them. They just lie.'*¹⁶⁶

The reason I found this conversation bizarre was that just two weeks prior to this conversation I had sought specific pieces of information required by the university's ethics approval committee. One of these issues was that of threat to the researcher. The ethics committee was concerned about retribution being taken on the Trokosi women or on the researcher following the release of the

¹⁶⁴ Principal Researcher's Diary Entry. September 2008.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

research findings. I had been told by a member of upper management within the NGO that she had spoken to the Executive Director and they believed there was no threat. I also found it bizarre that the Executive Director believes all Ghanaians to be liars, particularly as he, himself is a Ghanaian. I wondered what had stirred both the conclusion and the comment.

As time moved on, it became extremely clear that the original research plan could not take place. It also became clear that access to the women at the vocational centre was reliant on using the NGO's staff as interpreter and that cooperation with the research was dependant on allowing the NGO to provide an interpreter. After the initial brief discussion with the Executive Director after arriving in Ghana; and after it was discovered that I intended to use an independent interpreter; the Executive Director did not attend (or cancelled) over six different appointments for interview. Initially I was told by the Executive Director that the organisation would provide accommodation at the vocational centre.¹⁶⁷

Upon arriving in Ghana and discussing the *independent* nature of the research and my intention to source an independent interpreter, I was told that I would be charged US\$50 a night to stay at the centre and \$16 a day for food. This would be doubled to bring an interpreter. I was then told by a member of upper management that the NGO may be able to arrange a discount for me, but it would need to be cleared with the Executive Director. This was never cleared, however I was told that there was room for me at the vocational center but unfortunately there would simply be no room for me ***to bring an interpreter with***

¹⁶⁷ Letter of Invitation, 11 February 2008. Dates changed in subsequent emails, February 2008.

me. This happened, though the timing of this research and the need for one or two rooms in the centre had been cleared by the NGO at least six months prior.

During the fieldwork period, I received physical threats. One took place on the street by a stranger. I was just one hundred meters from the organisations office after conducting interviews. I was confronted by a stranger, grabbed on the shoulders, pushed away and then pulled in close and the stranger whispered in my ear '*You are not welcome here, give up now and go home.*' I was also covertly threatened in a number of interview and informant situations, for example: One informant made me aware that he knew of my whereabouts on a number of prior occasions, yet did not indicate how he knew. I politely asked him how he knew this information and he simply smiled and stated: '*This meeting is over now*'.¹⁶⁸

Eventually, in light of these events, I left the organisation's accommodation in Accra as I felt unsafe and I felt it may jeopardize the independent nature of the research. I informed my parents and the Australian High Commission of the move, as they were my emergency contacts. I also discussed with my mother, who is an academic and women's rights advocate herself, that I was worried that after this move, the Executive Director would attempt to discredit my actions and the research.

On her advice I emailed my supervisors with up to date information about the situation and asked them to be very careful if contacted by the Executive Director. Within hours and before speaking with me, the Executive Director phoned my parents in Australia and spoke to my mother. In this conversation he

¹⁶⁸ Principal Researchers notes. September 2008.

explained that I had left the accommodation and that he was '*very concerned for my safety*,'¹⁶⁹ citing the reason for this major issue of concern: '*Are you aware? Do you know Rachel has a Ghanaian boyfriend. She has left the family home to go and be with the Ghanaian man.*'¹⁷⁰ My mother reports that the tone of the conversation implied that I had *run away*, to be with some strange man.

The following morning I confronted the Executive Director about a number of impediments to the research project and asked for an explanation. Within this meeting he blamed his lack of attendance for interview on his secretary and stated '*I didn't know you were waiting. I have told her now that she should tell me when people are waiting.*'¹⁷¹ However, at the end of every scheduled interview day (after I had waited in the reception area for over 8 hours) he greeted me, apologised, saying he was too busy that day, and rescheduled. The Executive Director stated that I could have access to the *independent* report written in 2008, however this has still not been forthcoming. He stated that he fully supported my travel to the vocational centre and claimed he had told all staff to give me whatever resources I required. Yet, this had been a central point of frustration as all staff members claimed having to seek approval from the Director in order to supply me with any of the project resources and whenever the Director was approached directly, he informed me that he would have to get back to me. He would then not attend meetings or interviews to respond to the requests. I had also witnessed the Executive Director inform all staff members that no reports or resources were to be given to anyone without his permission.

¹⁶⁹ Principal Researchers notes, November 2008.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Interview Transcript 21st November 2008

Within this meeting, the Director initiated a conversation about my leaving the organisational accommodation. Within this conversation he made it clear that he somehow knew where I was now staying, that he knew of my '*Ghanaian boyfriend*', that he had informed my parents and that he '*does not condemn me*'.¹⁷² I had, in fact sought refuge within my now husband's village. I found the conversation (and the phoning of my parents) extremely interesting for several reasons. The Director had sexualised a political situation in an attempt to discredit me. In ringing my parents he had sought to tell a story of a rebellious daughter who's reputation was questionable. I found it almost ironic that the Director was perpetuating the exact kind of attitude about women that the organisation's project purports to confront.

The Director also stated that '*for ethical reasons I ask that you do not confront any of the women without my consent*'.¹⁷³

Due to these events, the methodology employed during the fieldwork period included both PAR and action learning based on reflection on my role and experience as a researcher. The observation portion of the research was originally to be focused on the workings of the NGO as an organisation, how the Trokosi emancipation project is implemented and how released Trokosi women function in the community. Observation was not only focused on the NGO and the Trokosi program but included the political and socio-economic conditions and issues of representation, historical links between NGOs and the media and the state of organisational transparency and accountability within international NGOs.

¹⁷² Interview Transcript 21st November 2008.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

What was initially planned to be open participatory action became secret interviews conducted in hidden corners of governmental buildings, or hushed whispers within organisational hallways. Many opted for the status of 'anonymous informant' rather than participant or interviewee. At least one representative from each participant group warned that caution should be exercised when looking into the Troxovi practice and one interviewee and several 'informants' either covertly or overtly threatened that continuing with the research would be harmful to the researcher. It also became evident that I was under surveillance.

Of particular interest is that within the original research plan, approximately 75% of interviewees were to be female, however of all of the interviews conducted, across three different organisations or governmental departments, not one interviewee was female. It is also noteworthy that of the 100 planned interviews, approximately thirteen were to take place within Accra and the remaining within the vocational centre or the rural areas surrounding the centre. However, not one interview with a rural Ghanaian or a former Trokosi woman was secured.

Whilst the empowerment of rural women is supposedly the very focus of the Trokosi project, they are discussed by urban males. The research sought to gain valuable insight from rural women, who have little formal education and no access to learning an international language. However; of the interviews secured,

the average interviewee was 41 years of age, male, educated to masters level and an English speaker.¹⁷⁴

Whilst, in theory using a participatory approach will give a voice to the people whom the research is about, it also assumes that meaningful access to participants is granted. When dealing with research that will impact on social justice, it is almost always certain that strong political ramifications will result from any research findings.

One of the challenges of PAR, as it relates to gender empowerment, is that a certain level of empowerment by the participants must first be established in order to gain meaningful access to participants. Often this is restricted by governments or citizens seeking to avoid complex interactions between imperialism and women's rights. Access can also be restricted by traditionalists or traditional structures seeking to maintain culture through women's duties and women's bodies. I argue within the thesis that the key players and key issues within this complex paradigm have remained the same since independence struggles. They are confronting and they reflect complex tensions within the society. And finally, I argue within the thesis that international NGOs may resist meaningful access to poor women as NGO funding is not reliant on delivering successful development projects; but rather, funding is reliant on *not* evaluating NGO programs. For these reasons, it has been impossible to assess if emancipated Trokosi's rights are adhered to in any greater sense than non-emancipated Trokosi women, as the women can only be accessed through the

¹⁷⁴ The position of English within the global linguistic configuration of power has been widely acknowledged within International Relations literature. See Demont-Heinrich, "*Politics, Power, and the Language of Wider Communication: The Hegemony of English in International Relations*"

NGO, seen through the NGO's lenses and communicated with through the NGO. In this way the NGO simply replaces the community (or shares the space with the community), as gatekeepers to the women. For this reason, I argue within the thesis that in order for the women's strategic needs to be met, the women and children must participate in decision making processes and that decisions must be widely informed through dialogue with all stakeholders. As Churchman explains, *'The 'objectivity' of experience is to be based on some kind of interconnection of observers.'*¹⁷⁵

As a result of limited options to interview the women themselves, the thesis builds on the fieldwork findings through the use of a discourse analysis. This methodology seeks to explore the contrasting values and historical traditions of the multiple stakeholder groups.

3.7 Avenues for Future Research

Certainly the most pressing area in which future research could be undertaken would be a tracking survey of the women and children who have participated in the NGO's program, in order to document the views of the women and children and assess their life chances to a greater extent. Threat to the researcher was encountered during fieldwork and therefore, undertaking such research would require a *team* of researchers and would require adequate security planning.

¹⁷⁵ Churchman, 1971. Page 149.

In the field, it became clear that a rise in Human Rights language has led to a growing number of university students and journalists in western nations embarking on 'Human Rights Tourism' explorations in Post-Colonial states. Often students and media officers are hosted by national NGOs and taken to see certain places and people of interest by the NGO. As 'human rights tourism' is becoming increasingly popular, this is a topic worthy of further investigation.

Chapter 4 **Assessing the Life Chances of Women and Children**

Life chances refers to the opportunities each individual has to improve upon his or her quality of life and is generally correlated to the individual's social situation.¹⁷⁶ Traditionally, life chances has been related to lifestyle choices and the distribution of rewards, however has more recently been used within a social justice perspective informing the question of capabilities and inequalities between social categories.¹⁷⁷

The first section of this chapter uses secondary sources to assess the life chances of women and children in Ghana over the past fifteen years and will be assessed against the life chances of other nations in which Troxovi is practiced. The chapter then focuses on the life chances of women and children within the Volta Region. The second section of this chapter explores the literature relating to the Troxovi practice, roles and responsibilities within the shrine and compares contested reports relating to the treatment of the women and children within the practice. The chapter finds that national indicators signify that women's life chances in Ghana are improving, however available indicators show that these advancements do not extend to Ghana's rural women. The chapter also finds that the prevalence of the practice has most likely been overestimated. It explores treatment within the shrines and finds that the practice severity varies depending on location and authority within the shrine. However, the chapter also

¹⁷⁶ Cockerham 2005, Page 12

¹⁷⁷ Manuel, 2006. *Capability and Life Chances: An Assessment of Two Analytical Traditions*. Annual International Conference of the Human Development and capability Association, Groningen, The Netherlands, 29 August 2006. University of Sussex.

highlights that despite contested reports concerning the treatment of the women in the shrines, even the least severe forms of customary servitude negatively affect the life chances of women and children as the priest decides which rights are adhered to within the shrines. The women and children are not able to make decisions to determine their own futures.

4.1 Ghana Today – Situating Women in Ghana

Being one of the most populated countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana is home to nearly 18 million people.¹⁷⁸ Adlakha's *International brief Population Trends* provides statistical information regarding Ghana's inhabitants stating that since independence the population has grown from about 6 million in 1957 to 18 million in 1996 and is expected to grow to 27 million by 2020. This population explosion is the result of high fertility and a declining mortality rate in Ghana and has important consequences when assessing the life chances of women and children within Ghana today. As a result, Ghana currently has an extremely young age structure, with 43 percent of the population under 15 years of age. Whilst the actual number of children under 15 will remain consistent in 2020, it is expected that the 15 – 64 age group will nearly double from 9 million to 18 million,¹⁷⁹ therefore decreasing the population's dependency on the labour of children.

¹⁷⁸ Adlakha, 1996. *International Brief. Population Trends: Ghana*. US Department of Commerce. Economics and Statistics Administration Bureau of the Census. Page 1.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

In July 2004, The New African commented on Ghana's completion of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative ¹⁸⁰, stating that,

'This is done provided the country completes an additional three years of agreed policy and structural prescriptions devised jointly by the IMF, World Bank, the debtor government and resident identifiable civil society groups' ¹⁸¹

However, although Ghana has received international attention as a nation spearheading development, resource based measures, such as the GDP do not adequately reflect the resource distribution within the nation. This can be seen in Ghana as 28.5% of Ghana's population continues to live in poverty, with 18.2% living in extreme poverty.¹⁸² Within the rural setting inhabited by the Ewe, 60.1% of the population live in poverty, with 45.4% living in extreme poverty.¹⁸³

Neo-liberalism has been unable to sustain changes for the world's poorest people. In fact, participation in neo-liberal development projects has limited the states power to 'act favourably towards its poorest citizens'¹⁸⁴, such as the Ewe woman. In order to assess the life chances of Ghana's women, changes in Ghana's ranking within the Gender Development Index will be assessed and compared to other Troxovi practicing nations.

The GDI measures inequalities between men and women in the areas of life expectancy, share of income earning, adult literacy and education enrolment.¹⁸⁵ Using the GDI, Ghana was ranked at 91, out of 130 countries. The

¹⁸⁰ New Asmah, 2004. Page 28

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ghana Statistical Service, Pattern and Trends of Poverty in Ghana.1991-2006, April 2007, Tables A1.1 and A1.2. Cited in UNDP, Human Development Report. 2007. Page 25.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Schuurman, 1993. Page 12.

¹⁸⁵ UNDP Report, 1995. 'Measuring gender inequality.' 1995. Page 2.

1995 *Measuring Gender Inequality* report recorded that between 1970 and 1992 developing nations had a 62 percentage improvement. Therefore, developing nations are making rapid progress in the area of gender sensitive development.¹⁸⁶ However the extent to which these changes are advancing the life chances of Ghana's rural women and children is questionable.

4.1.1 Share of Earned Income

Within the Gender Development Index produced in 1995, it was reported that the average Ghanaian woman earned a 32.7% share of earned income, while the average Ghanaian man earned a 67.3% share of income. Within the 2005 GDI, income was calculated on the basis of data on Ghana's Gross Domestic Product per capita (PPPUS\$) and population data from the World Bank 2007, data on wages from the International Labour Organisation 2007 and data on economically active population statistics from the International Labour Organisation 2005.¹⁸⁷ Based on the PPPUS\$ amounts listed in the 2005 Gender Development Index, the average Ghanaian woman earned a 41.544% share of earned income and the average Ghanaian man earned 58.456% of earned income. As can be seen in the charts below, this indicates that Ghana's women are earning a larger piece of the pie. However, whether this economic advancement has reached Ghana's poorest citizens cannot be assessed via these statistics.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. Page 7.

¹⁸⁷ UNDP Report, 1995. 'Measuring gender inequality.' Page 7.

Table 4.1 1995 Percentage of Earned Income, Ghana¹⁸⁸

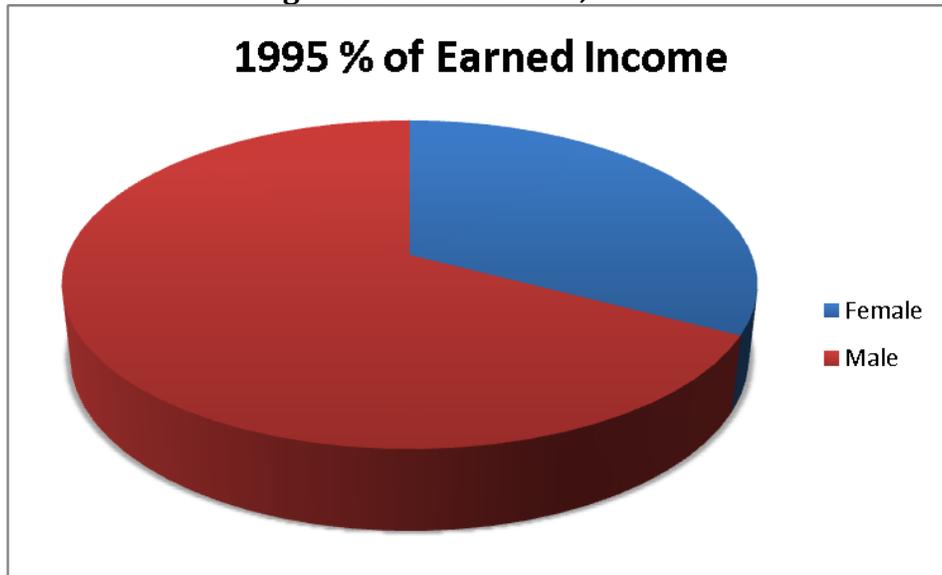
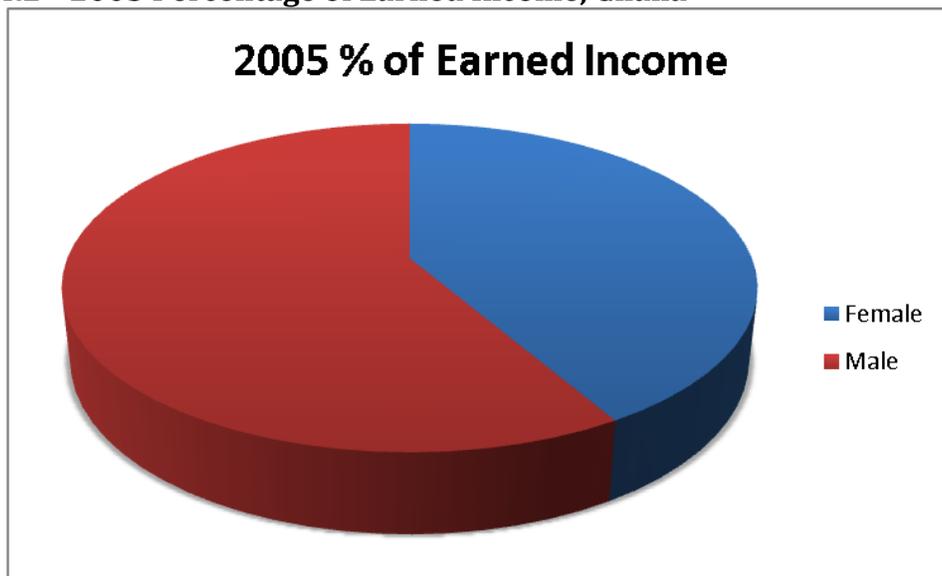


Table 4.2 2005 Percentage of Earned Income, Ghana¹⁸⁹



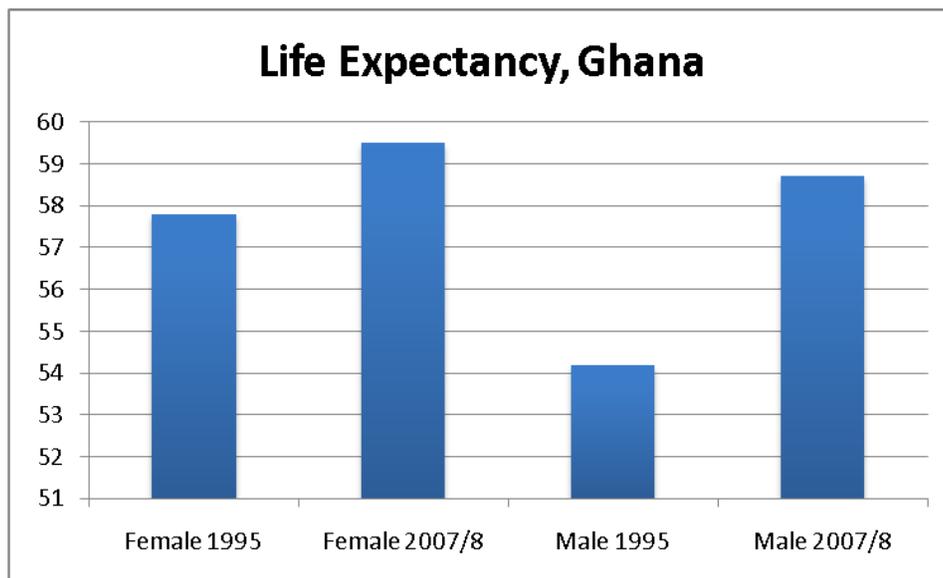
¹⁸⁸ UNDP Report, 1995. 'Measuring gender inequality.' 1995. Page 5.

¹⁸⁹ UNDP Report 2007/08. 'Measuring gender inequality' 2007/08. Accessed at http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_GHA.html on the 7th February 2009.

4.1.2 Life Expectancy (Years)

One of the major factors in lengthening life expectancy in West Africa has been the reduced infant and child mortality rate.¹⁹⁰ In 1957, an estimated 237 children per 1 000 births died before the age of 5, compared with 126 in 1996.¹⁹¹ For this reason life expectancy has increased for both men and women within Ghana between 1995 and 2005.^{192 193}

Table 4.3 Life Expectancy, Ghana¹⁹⁴



¹⁹⁰ Adlakha 1996, Page 1.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

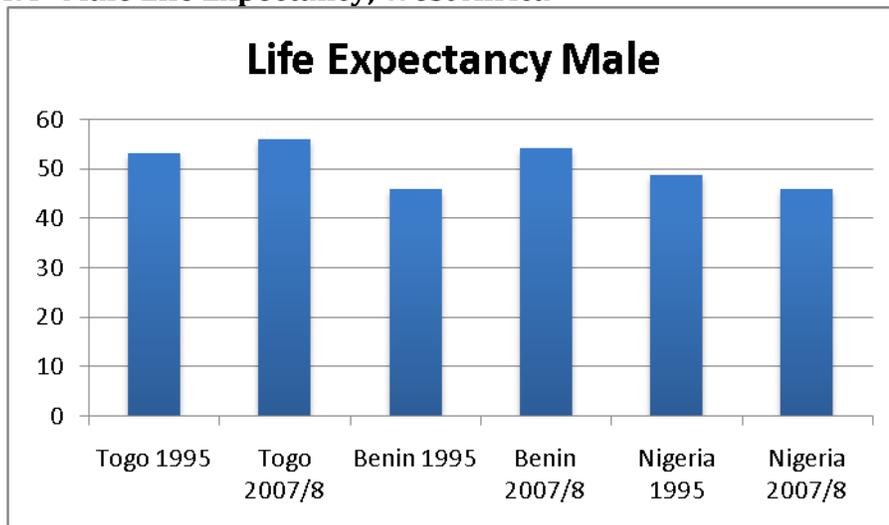
¹⁹² UNDP Report 2007/08. Op Cit.

¹⁹³ UNDP Report, 1995. Op Cit. Page 5.

¹⁹⁴ UNDP Report 2007/08. Op Cit. and UNDP Report, 1995. Op Cit.

Across West African Troxovi practicing communities, the life expectancy of males saw the most dramatic increase within the reporting periods, with the exception of Nigeria, where both males and females saw a decrease in life expectancy. This dramatic decrease in life expectancy could be attributed to the 3.6 million people in Nigeria living with HIV/AIDS (5.4% of the population, of which 58% are estimated to be women),¹⁹⁵ as just 350 000¹⁹⁶ are estimated to be infected in Ghana (2.7% of the population).¹⁹⁷

Table 4.4 Male Life Expectancy, West Africa ¹⁹⁸



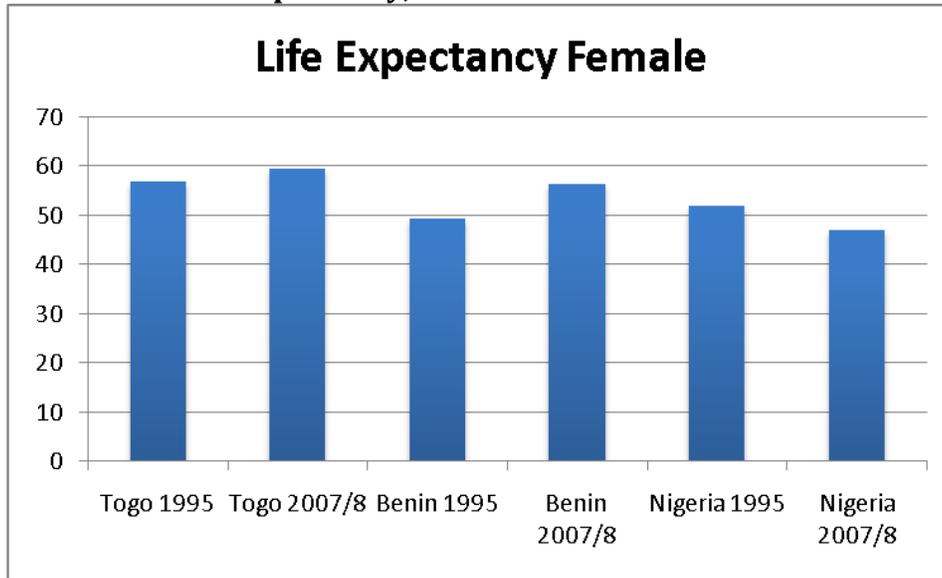
¹⁹⁵ *HIV/AIDS Policy Factsheet*. 2005. Page 1. The Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation October 2005.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid

¹⁹⁷ Ibid

¹⁹⁸ UNDP Report 2007/08. Op Cit. UNDP Report, 1995. Op Cit.

Table 4.5 Female Life Expectancy, West Africa¹⁹⁹

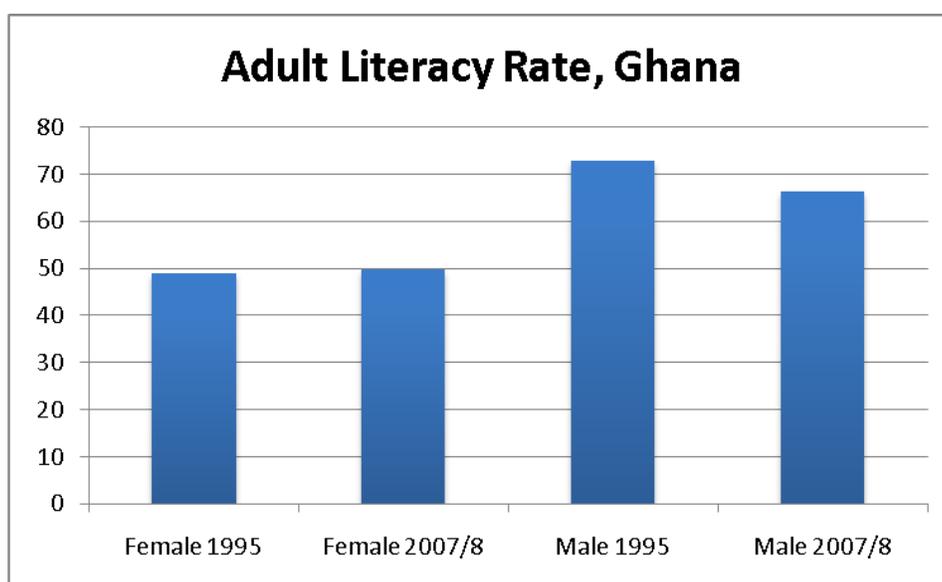


¹⁹⁹ UNDP Report 2007/08. Op Cit. UNDP Report, 1995. Op Cit.

4.1.3 Adult Literacy (%)

The adult literacy rate in Ghana between 1995 and 2005, shows deceiving results. Whilst the female literacy levels increased slightly, at a rate of 0.8%, the male literacy rate decreased by 6.5%.

Table 4.6 Adult Literacy, Ghana ²⁰⁰

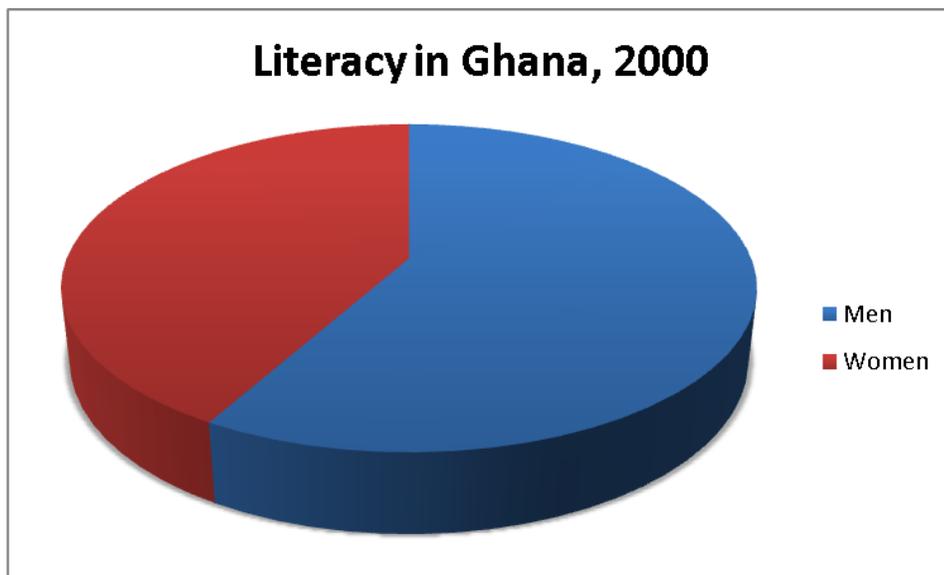
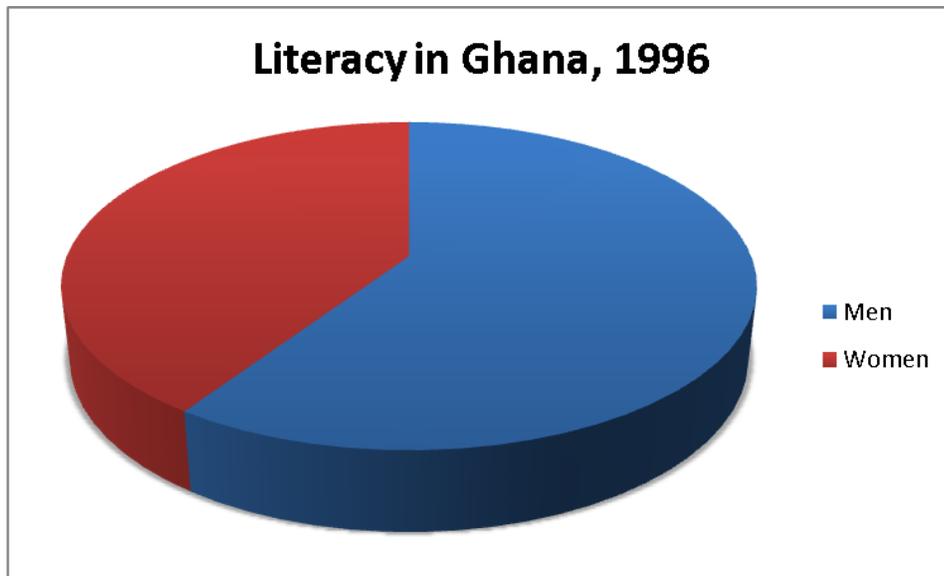


Upon first impressions it may seem that the number of literate men has decreased within the period in Ghana, however based on published population statistics, 282 035 more men were literate in 2000, than in 1996 and 430 465 more women were literate in 2000 than in 1996.²⁰¹ As can be seen in the graphs below, when measured against the high population increase, the impact of these

²⁰⁰ UNDP Report 2007/08. Op Cit. UNDP Report, 1995. Op Cit.

²⁰¹ Literacy rates between 1995 and 2005 were divided into a per year literacy rate and applied to the population predictions for 2000, as published in Adlakha, 1996. Page 4.

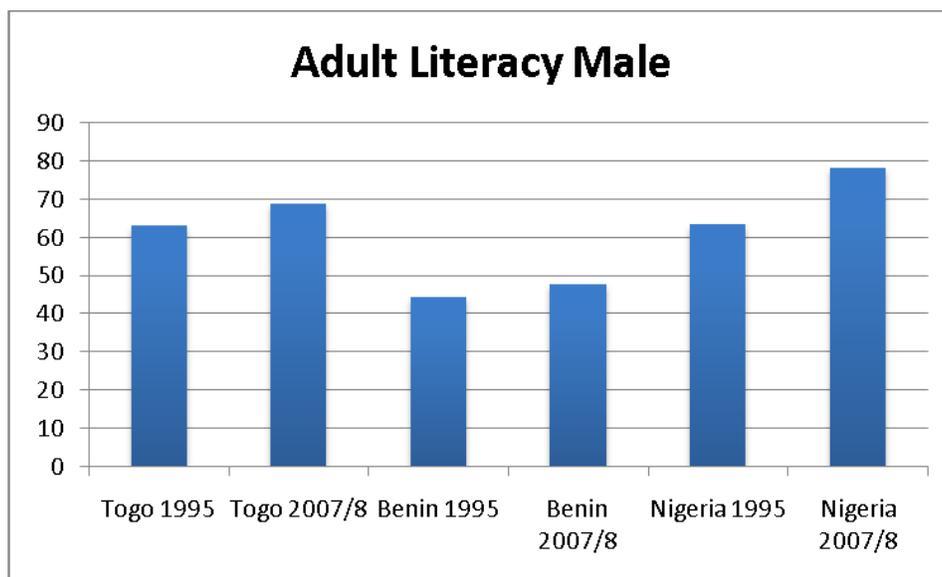
advances had little effect on the overall percentages of literate men and women in Ghana between 1996 and 2000.



Within nations reported to practice Troxovi, Ghana was the only nation that saw a decrease in the male literacy percentage within the period. Togo and

Benin reported a steady increase and Nigeria reported a marked increase during the period.

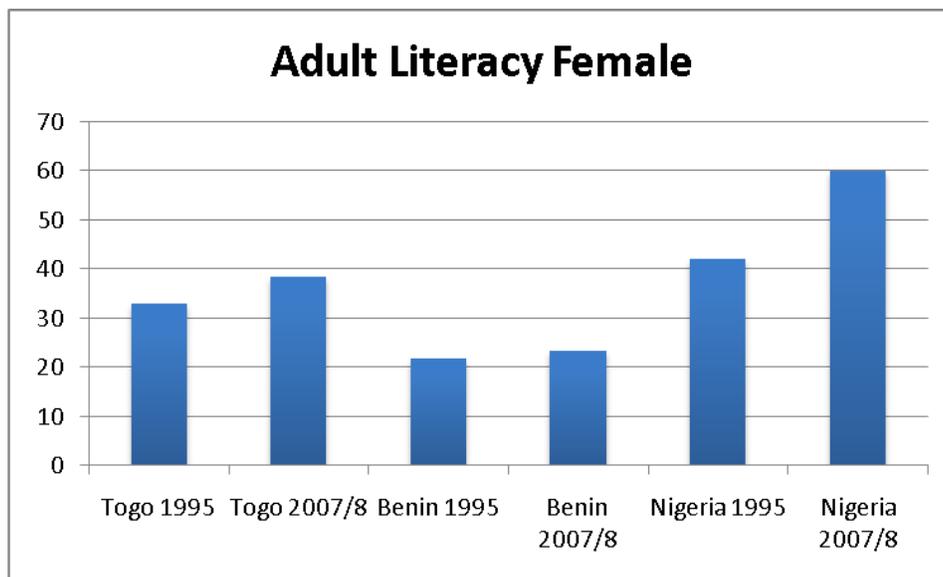
Table 4.7 Male Adult Literacy Rate, West Africa ²⁰²



²⁰² UNDP Report 2007/08. Op Cit. UNDP Report, 1995. Op Cit.

Nigeria's marked increase in the literacy rate can also be noted within the female population. Benin reported a slight increase in the literacy rate of females and Togo had a larger improvement, though not at the rate seen in Nigeria.

Table 4.8 Female Adult Literacy, West Africa ²⁰³

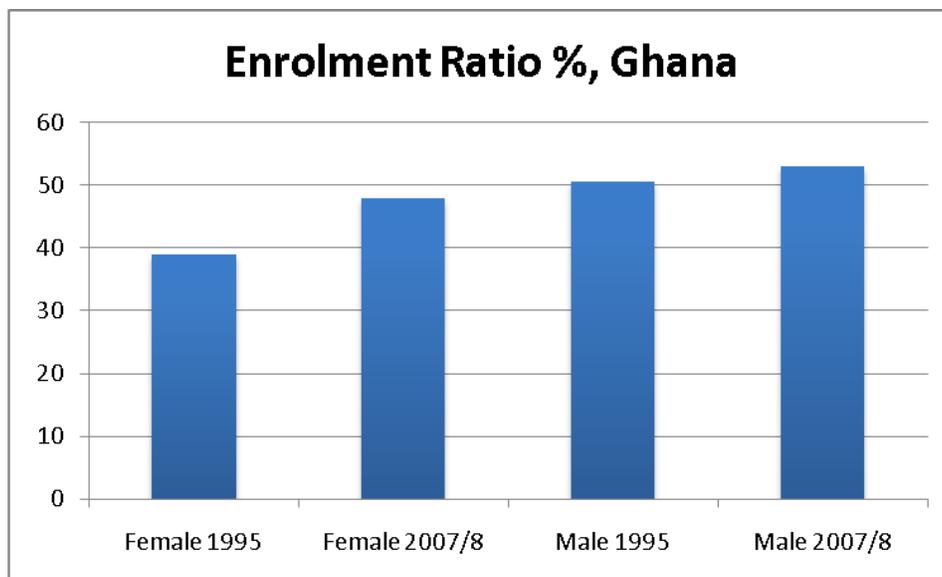


²⁰³ UNDP Report 2007/08. Op Cit. UNDP Report, 1995. Op Cit.

4.1.4 Combined Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Gross Enrolment Ratio

Between 1995 and 2007 the combined Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Gross enrolment rate reported a steady increase for Ghana's women. According to the reports, enrolment rates for females rose from 39% to 48% during the period. Enrolment rates increased for Ghanaian men during the period also. When compared with other nations who are reported to practice Troxovi, Ghana's rise in enrolments has been at a slower rate, both amongst the male and female population.

Table 4.9 Male and Female Combined Enrolment Rates, Ghana²⁰⁴



²⁰⁴ UNDP Report 2007/08. Op Cit. UNDP Report, 1995. Op Cit.

Table 4.10 Male Combined Enrolment Rates, West Africa²⁰⁵

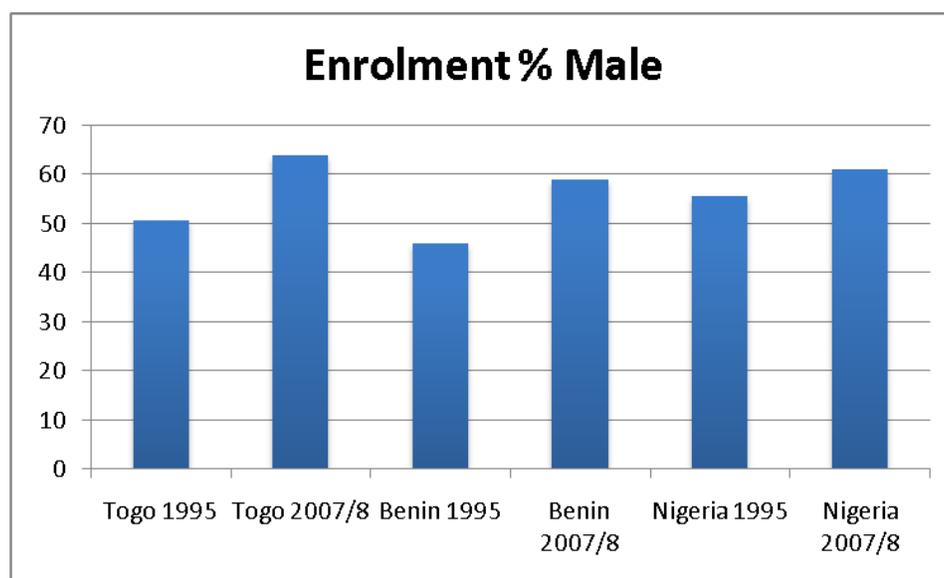
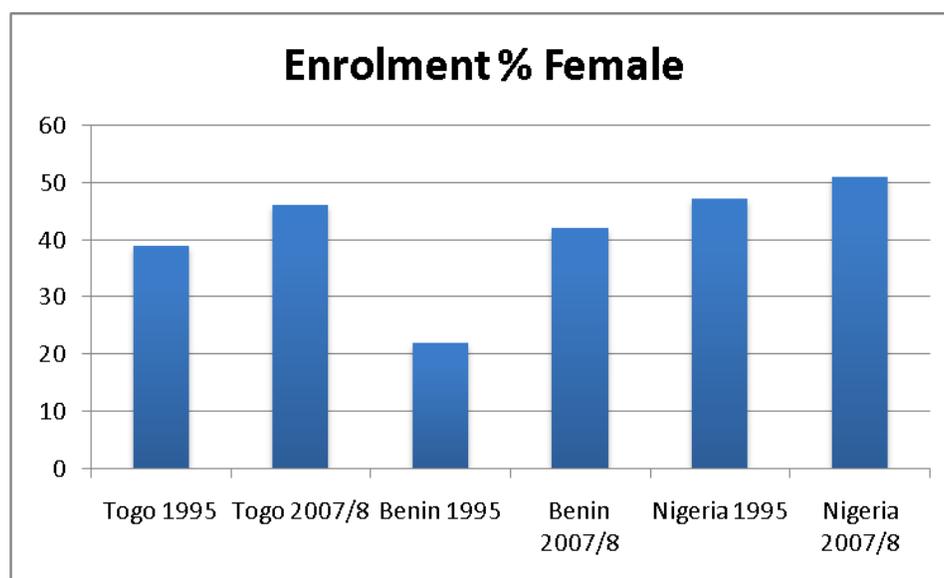


Table 4.11 Female Combined Enrolment Rates, West Africa²⁰⁶



²⁰⁵ UNDP Report 2007/08. Op Cit. UNDP Report, 1995. Op Cit.

²⁰⁶ UNDP Report 2007/08. Op Cit. UNDP Report, 1995. Op Cit.

4.2 Measuring Inequality - Significance of National GDI Data

As can be seen in the Gender Development Index, national indicators suggest that women's life chances in Ghana are increasing, however the extent to which this impacts on the life chances of women and children in Ghana's Volta Region is not measured. National indicators provide a broad picture of women's development within the nation, however the extent to which the nation's poorest women are advanced through these developments is unknown. The statistics do not seek to discover the extent to which social mobility exists within the society.

In order to demonstrate the extent to which opportunities for social mobility impact on life chances, I will take the example of education enrolment statistics within Ghana.

The GDI reports that between 1995 and 2007 the total combined enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education for females rose from 39% to 48%.²⁰⁷ A report released by Ghana's Girl's Education Unit for Basic Education identified that between 1998 and 2000 wide regional differences existed in the drop-out rates of pupils. It was reported that drop-out rates were the lowest in the Greater Accra Region and the highest in the three most remote regions within the nation.²⁰⁸ Statistics indicate that regional differences are significant, such as the drop-out rate, ranging from 1.85% in urban areas to 28% in rural areas in the early primary years.²⁰⁹ Gender differences in drop-out rates within regions were also significant. Statistics report that in the Greater Accra

²⁰⁷ UNDP Report 2007/08. Op Cit UNDP Report, 1995. Op Cit.

²⁰⁸ *A National Vision for Girls' Education and a Framework for Action: Charting the Way Forward.* Prepared by the Girls' Education Unit Basic Education Division, Ghana Education Service. Page 3.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

Region early primary male pupils were more likely to drop-out than their female classmates (2.8% and 0.9% respectively),²¹⁰ however once students reached upper primary both rural and urban females were more likely to drop-out. Between years P5 and P6 3.8% of urban boys and 4.9% of girls dropped out in 2000, while in regional areas between P5 and P6 4.4% of boys and 6% of girls dropped-out.²¹¹ Therefore the disparity in maintaining access to education is not solely gender specific nor solely specific to region, rather; gender and regionalism interact and reduce the educational chances of rural women. This renders them the least likely social group in the nation to maintain access to education. The rural Ghanaian woman is less likely to maintain access to education than rural males, urban females, and of course; urban males. Wies acknowledges,

*'Researchers generally agree that the offspring of well-educated parents who occupy high-level positions in the occupational structure and who have urban patterns of residence have considerably better chances of obtaining entrance to selective institutions than the children of other groups in the population.'*²¹²

Maintaining access to education is important as obtaining a certain *level* of education is also intrinsically linked to other important avenues of empowerment. Statistics within the GDI do not take account of *educational level* and give equal weight to primary school and tertiary enrolment rates. For example, while females account for 44.9% of all Junior Secondary enrolments in Ghana, the gender gap widens at each successive level. At Senior Secondary level, females only

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Weis, *'Education and the Reproduction of Inequality. The Case of Ghana'* Comparative Education Review. Volume 23 No 1 February 1979. Page 41

account for 33% of enrolments and at tertiary level, just 25%.²¹³

Important avenues of empowerment include access to contraception²¹⁴ and a lower incidence of marital violence.²¹⁵ Adlakha notes that a Ghanaian woman who has received a Senior Secondary education is 20% more likely to use contraception than a Ghanaian woman who has received a Middle School education; 26% more likely to use contraception than a Primary School educated Ghanaian woman and 40% more likely to use contraception than a woman who has received no education.²¹⁶ Adlakha also notes that an urban residing woman in Ghana is 16% more likely to use contraception than her rural counterpart.²¹⁷ These figures are important as access to contraception not only increases women's empowerment, but also dramatically increases the life chances of women and their children.²¹⁸

In 1991 a NGO, the *Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre* published their findings of a nation-wide study on violence against women and children in Ghana. The report found high levels of violence against women within the nation, revealing that one in three women reported that they have suffered physical abuse, usually inflicted by an intimate partner.²¹⁹ It also found that uneducated women were more likely to enter into polygamous marriages,

²¹³ *A National Vision for Girls' Education and a Framework for Action: Charting the Way Forward*. Page 3.

²¹⁴ Adlakha, 1996. Page 2.

²¹⁵ UNFPA 2007, Page 85. 'Violence Against Women'

²¹⁶ Adlakha, Op Cit.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ UNFPA 2007, Op Cit.

where resources are scarce and that the denial of access to limited economic resources was one of the major complaints leading to violence against women.²²⁰

Therefore, whilst the life chances of women in Ghana is improving at a national level, the extent to which this has impacted on the lives of Ghana's poorest women is not measurable through the GDI statistics and questioned within this thesis.

These education statistics give an important overview of the life chances of women in Ghana; and it is my argument that whilst GDI statistics report that women's life chances in Ghana are improving, these improvements are only accessible by certain groups of women within the nation. The lack of other indicators available to measure the development of Ghana rural population reflects the extent to which access development in rural areas is on the nation's agenda.

Development projects which fail to empower women further cement patriarchal class privilege. In this way, the women are unable to enjoy the improvements made within the nation and rather, these improvements are enjoyed women residing in Ghana's urban areas..

²²⁰ UNFPA 2007, Page 85. 'Violence Against Women'

4.3 Shrine Life

Information on the Trokosi practice has been reported in Parliamentary proceedings, international human rights forums, within international media, United Nations development reports, academia and Ghana's national media.

Discourses on the nature of the Trokosi, the types and severity of abuses that occur, the numbers of Trokosi women and girls that exist, intervention results and the changing nature of the practice are often contradictory.

In order to contextualise discourse on the Troxovi practice, this chapter explores the history of the practice, names and functions within the shrines, the history of NGO intervention, the prevalence of the practice and the treatment of the Trokosi women and children. Through analysis, the problem of contested reports is raised.

4.3.1 Situating Ghana's Ewe

The social structure within Ghana is made up of several fundamental institutions. They include kinship, marriage and the family institution; religious beliefs and practices; traditional and modern political systems and economic organisation.²²¹ Kinship can include social relations originating in consanguinity, marriage and adoption. The kinship system defines how various members of the community relate to each other and determines the roles of various individuals, depending on their relationship to the group.²²² The inheritance of wealth, the taking up of official duties and the inheritance of property is defined in ethnic groups through either patrilineal or matrilineal lines. Ewe speaking societies are

²²¹ Human Development Report, Ghana. 2007. Page 59.

²²² Ibid. Page 60.

patrilineal, as opposed to the largest ethnic group, the Akan (mainly Twi speaking), who inherit via the maternal line.²²³

Conducting her research on the Northern Ewe of Ghana, situated in the town of Tsito, Bukh documents the political and economic organisation of the Ewe people.²²⁴ The Ewe people are made up of eight clans, originating back to the first eight settlers in the area. After the first generation of settlers the clan's formation was of three patrilineal lineages and has remained so since that time. Each was led by one of the three sons of the clanhead, and the mother of each being a legal wife of the clanhead.. These half-brothers were called '*tovis*', meaning 'father's son' to indicate their lineal heritage to the clanhead. The land was divided into three and allocated to the three *tovis*, to distribute among the people, in conjunction with the elders, and used as the economic system within each clan.

Although the clanhead was the representative head of the village, the elders were actually the most powerful within the village, as they had the power to destool²²⁵ the clanhead, should he fail to perform the tasks expected of him, in the way in which the elders saw fit. Politically the clanhead and the *tovis* functioned as representatives and mediators in conflicts. The clanhead, undertook the important function of ensuring that communal labour is performed equally by all members of the village, for the purposes of building roads or schools.

²²³ Bukh, 1979. Pg 23

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ To 'destool' is the West African term referring to the removal of a chief from office.

4.3.2 History of the Practice

The Troxovi system is said to be largely practiced in the Volta Region of Ghana, located in south-eastern Ghana and is predominately practiced by the Ewe and Dangbe groups. The Volta Region is Ghana's fourth largest region and covers a surface area of about 20, 572km².²²⁶ The 2000 Population and Housing Census recorded a total population of 1 635 421 inhabitants (790 886 men and 844 535 women).²²⁷

According to Ewe researcher, Ababio, the practice stretches across parts of Togo, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Cameroon and parts of Nigeria.²²⁸ These are the areas in which groups of people have cultural affinities with the Ewe. For example the Fon in Benin whose kinship relations, social organisation, beliefs and practices are similar to those of the Ewe.²²⁹

The Troxovi system is said to have developed over time to deal with communal responses to restoration after a criminal act is committed.²³⁰

There is very little information available outlining the history of the practice of taking virgin girls to shrines, however several researchers have offered various suggestions. One researcher likens the system and the terminology to practices found in the Dahomey Kingdom (modern day Benin) in the 1700's, where wives and slaves both bore the name 'ahosi'. 'Aho' meaning 'King' and 'si' meaning

²²⁶ United Nations Report 'Access to and control over land from a Gender Perspective. A study conducted in the Volta Region of Ghana.' Duncan, Beatrice Kua, Brants, Caroline, 2004. Page 10

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ababio. 2000. Page 17

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

'dependent' or 'subordinate'.²³¹ However, there is no conclusive evidence that the two practices are related, and few compelling arguments historically linking the two, beyond the likening of wives to slaves. Vormawor cites Dovlo (1997) and says that primarily the basis for establishing shrines was for their service as war gods for the protection of individuals and their communities.²³² However, it is important to understand that shrines exist all over Ghana and, in fact, all over West Africa and the existence of a shrine does not indicate that the fetish priest takes Trokosi women and/or children. In fact, the number of shrines that practice Trokosi is very small compared to the total number of shrines within Ghana. Though there is little agreement on the total number of Trokosi practicing shrines in Ghana, the highest number recorded is cited by Rinaudo at 200.²³³ When one considers that every community within Ghana has at least one shrine and often several shrines, one can argue that Trokosi practicing shrines are in the vast minority.

The United Nations Population Report on *Violence Against Women* states that prior to the eighteenth century livestock or other gifts were given in atonement by warriors, to the war gods in exchange for victory in combat and a safe homecoming.²³⁴ The same report also cites that shrines in South Tongu, including Adzemu Shrine, did not originally practice Trokosi, however strangers from Avenor in the Akatsi region came to assist them for success in war and in

²³¹ *Wives of the Leopard – Gender, Politics and Culture in the Kingdom of Dahomey*. 1998. University of Virginia Accessed at http://voodoosi.vi.lib.bz/#cite_note-23 on the 10th March 2009. Quoting Bay, Edna G. Press. Page 8.

²³² Vormawor 1998. Page 51

²³³ Rinaudo, 2003. Page 8

²³⁴ UNFPA 2007, Page 87 'Violence Against Women'

thanksgiving two virgin girls were sent for three years. This practice was then adopted by the Adzemu shrine.²³⁵ The report does not reference the research so it is difficult to establish the viability of these accounts. However, the timing of these events does co-incide with documented cases of constant and unrelenting slave raids on the Ewe people,²³⁶ as will be explored in chapter 6 of this thesis. These raids severely impacted on the lives of the Ewe and various modes of defense were utilised, including raiding other groups to subsidise the purchase of weaponry. At this time, Indigenous slavery had moved away from its original form through interaction with the Transatlantic slave trade and slavery had become institutionalised within the economic and social fabric of Indigenous communities. Indigenous groups had begun to practice slavery, in an attempt to protect the lineage.²³⁷

In 1895 Major Ellis of the First Battalion West India Regiment, documented a practice very similar to the Troxovi Institution in the Dahomey Kingdom (modern day Benin), stating that one god called 'Khebioso' had 1500 wives. He stated that the role of the women was to care for the shrines and that they were to engage in religious prostitution. He noted that most of the Ewe-speaking people had women who were consecrated to live and serve within the shrine, stating that they were considered 'wives' of the gods.²³⁸ However, very little is known about how the women serving at Khebioso's shrine lived. Bukh's

²³⁵ Vormawor 1998. Page 39

²³⁶ Bukh 1979, Page 29

²³⁷ See Section 6.1.1

²³⁸ Quoting Major Ellis. First Battalion West India Regiment. *The Ewe Speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa*. Bahamas, 1890, republished by Benin Press, Chicago. 1965. Page 38. Accessed at http://voodoo.vi.lib.bz/#cite_note-23 on the 10th March 2009.

research records Ewe oral tradition which affirms a historical practice of taking slaves to pay for fines enforced when a member of the community was accused of committing a social taboo, such as swearing, committing adultery or using black magic against another member of the group.²³⁹ She states that the use of slaves in payment for sins or crimes can be dated back to 1906, which was long after slavery had become institutionalised within Ewe communities, through the Transatlantic slave movement.²⁴⁰

Vormawor states that in 1919 a man known only as *Nyagbledsi* wrote a petition to the Secretary of Native Affairs, describing the practice of Trokosi. Indignant with the practice he urged the colonial administration to act.²⁴¹ Acting District Commissioner of Addah investigated and supported his allegation but decided that as it was a place of worship it should not be 'interfered with'.²⁴² After 1919 the colonial administration did intervene substantially with local places of worship and the relationship between religion and the colonial administration will be explored within this thesis.²⁴³

4.3.3 Names and Functions within the Shrines

The Troxovi system is considered to comprise of several deities.²⁴⁴ This belief is not only held by the Ewe who practice Troxovi, but is also the basis of most indigenous belief systems in Ghana.²⁴⁵

²³⁹ Bukh, 1979. Page 27

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Vormawor 1998. Page 29

²⁴² Ibid. Page 104

²⁴³ See Section 6.1

²⁴⁴ Ibid. Page 47

²⁴⁵ Discussions with local residents in Greater Accra. 30th September 2008.

According to this worldview, the Creator god is the almighty god, who is omnipotent and omnipresent. Within the same realm exists the ancestral spirits, who serve as a mode of communication between the living and the dead and the living and the deities. Ancestral spirits also safe-guard their people from harm.²⁴⁶ This is a common belief system within Africa and has been noted in key anthropological texts.²⁴⁷

The lesser gods are the gods of the environment. For example, tree gods, river gods or ocean gods. The lesser gods control the environment and give caution or reward or punish men through the environment. For example, drought is seen as a punishment from the gods for a breach of law. The lesser gods hold the whole community, including the priests to account and will bring about calamity, should the priest misuse his power within the shrine.²⁴⁸ The lesser gods are considered intermediary gods and are appointed by 'mawa', the supreme deity and creator of the universe. There are approximately 600 lesser gods who also mediate on man's behalf giving protection or acting supernaturally in criminal cases and they can also punish those who are guilty.²⁴⁹

In some cases, a region may need to appease the gods for a misdeed, and in these cases the ancestral spirits will advocate for their community, and appeal to the lesser gods to take a sacrifice from another community or to accept a cow or a goat in sacrifice, rather than a human.²⁵⁰ It is important to note, that

²⁴⁶ Vormawor 1998. Page 47

²⁴⁷ *The Drums of Affliction*. A study of religious processes among the Ndembu of Zambia. Victor Witter Turner. 1981. Published by the International African Institute. *Health, Healing and Dis-ease in a South African Township*. Janet Mills. 1983. University of Cape Town.

²⁴⁸ Vormawor Op Cit.

²⁴⁹ Ababio. 2000. Page 4

²⁵⁰ Rinaudo. 2003. Page 4

whilst the concept of human sacrifice is used in traditional religion, the human is not taken by the community and sacrificed, rather, it is believed that the gods take someone from the community. Any unexplained death is said to be a result of the gods taking a life to appease the community's' crimes.²⁵¹ The community, rather than the individual is held to account in this belief system. This belief system is in line with the African notion of *Ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* is a Nguni word which has no direct translation into English, but which describes the worldview in which one can only find meaning through interacting with others. Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu has said '*Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language... It is to say, 'My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in what is yours.*'²⁵²

Charles reflects on the notion of Ubuntu as an African approach to being, which is not a specifically Southern African heritage, but can be traced back to the cosmologies of most African societies, through their Ancient Egyptian origins.²⁵³

This worldview clashed with the colonial administration's worldview on many occasions and caused great upset during colonial times. On the 28th of December 1937 a petition from worshippers at Sogbo Fetish was addressed to the Government and Commander in Chief requesting that their shrine be allowed to continue to function, adamantly claiming that their shrine did not use human

²⁵¹ Vormawor Op Cit. and personal communication with adherents to Troxovi 28th March 2009

²⁵² *No Future Without Forgiveness: A Personal overview of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Desmond Tutu. 2000.

²⁵³ Eden,. 2007 *How Can I Bring Ubuntu As A Living Standard of Judgement Into The Academy? Moving Beyond Decolonisation Through Societal Reidentification And Guiltless Recognition*. Page 101. Accessed at <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/edenphd.shtml> on 23 August 2010.

lives as sacrifices 'as claimed by our attackers'.²⁵⁴ This matter seemed to remain unresolved in the Office of Native Affairs, as on the 15th of January Ms Field, a government sociologist, sent a letter to the administration following her visit to the Volta region to investigate the claims that human lives were being sacrificed. Ms Field points out the positives of the practice and compares the worldview of the people to Christianity, reflecting on their similarities. She then informed the administration that in traditional religion, most Africans believe that all people who die are taken by the gods, and that therefore to claim that the gods have struck people down, is not uncommon within the belief system.²⁵⁵ Within the same letter she comments on the Ningo Fetish at Dzemawodzi, reporting that '*They are quite harmless and not without dignity and beauty*'.²⁵⁶

Literature addressing the Trokosi practice usually identifies two major stakeholders within the practice and analyses the practice within that paradigm. However the priests and the Trokosi girl's family members are not the only stakeholders in the system and are, in many cases, the least powerful. Understanding the roles and duties of various stakeholders in the shrine is crucial to understanding the practice.

²⁵⁴ Field. 15th January 1938. Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Ghana [CSO 21/10/10]. Accessed on the 11th September 2008

²⁵⁵ Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Ghana [CSO 21/10/4]. Accessed on the 11th September 2008

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

Diagram 4.1 Shrine Hierarchy 257



²⁵⁷ Vormawor 1998. Page 41

The **Chief and/or Queen mother** is the stakeholder group that hold the most power regarding the treatment of Trokosi within the shrines, and along with shrine owners, are the first point of contact for negotiation regarding the possible 'release' of any Trokosi from within the shrine. Chiefs and Queen mothers are in charge of the shrines and have power over fetish priests.²⁵⁸ Though the role of Queen mothers in the chieftaincy system is a relatively new institution,²⁵⁹ many have been instrumental in educating communities on human rights. The impact of the Chiefs and Queen Mothers are often understated. For example, as most of the land in the Volta Region is organised in lineages, the lineage heads, (generally men), grant usufruct land rights to individual members of the lineage.²⁶⁰ The Chief and Queen mother are the custodians of community land and as custodians are able to give land to priests to supplement their activities within the shrine. In some shrines, the Trokosi women provide the labour for the priest on the land given by the Chief.²⁶¹ Therefore, the control of the activities on the land can be traced back to the Chief, rather than the Priest.²⁶²

Shrines can be owned by an elder in the community, the Chief, or by the entire community.²⁶³ There can be several shrines within one community, whereby one shrine is owned by the whole community, being responsible for the protection of the community and also individual shrines, whereby individuals can go for consultation in the event that the community shrine is inundated with cases

²⁵⁸ Ababio, 2000. Page 94

²⁵⁹ Vormawor 1998. Page 50

²⁶⁰ Duncan, and Brants, , 2004. Page 7

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Vormawor Op Cit.

requiring resolution. Within shrines that practice Trokosi, shrine owners hold much greater power regarding the release of the Trokosi, than the priests or the families of the girls. The shrine owners are often omitted in literature concerning the Trokosi, yet they are fundamental within the structures in which the women exist.²⁶⁴

Priests and Priestesses (Zekor/Kpesi) are responsible for protecting the Chief while on the throne and are responsible for the spiritual protection of the whole community.²⁶⁵ Priests and Priestesses are often called upon to ensure protection and prosperity to individuals in the community through the use of their spiritual powers. They are consulted by business people, those serving in the military and those seeking resolution of family matters (such as infertility).²⁶⁶ The Priest and Priestesses are generally feared in society as they are often consulted to make decisions determining the culprit's of particular crimes. The reparation for the offence, (depending of the cult of the priest), can range from lightning and thunder, sickness sent to the culprits family or a community member is *taken by the gods*. Priests are responsible for deciding on repatriation for crimes and in communities that practice Trokosi, this includes appeasing the gods, through the giving of a Trokosi girl.²⁶⁷

Priestesses are appointed all the rights of other citizens in society, being able to marry freely, move around freely and wear any attire in public.²⁶⁸ They are able to attend school and also gain education within the shrine. The

²⁶⁴ Vormawor Op Cit.

²⁶⁵ Ababio. 2000. Page 39

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid. Page 37-38

education that they receive within the shrine enables their becoming a Queen Mother within the community.²⁶⁹ They are treated with the utmost respect and reverence within society. Female priests are to be virgins and are free to marry after going through certain customary rites before marriage. Men who violate such women before marriage may be required to appease the gods for their crime, possibly even by giving a relative to become a Trokosi.²⁷⁰

Whilst within Troxovi practicing communities the Priest or Priestess can call for a Trokosi to appease the gods, at the point of intervention they often are inconsequential to the negotiation process. As Charmla the priest at Dorfor states, *'their families wouldn't take them back even if I begged them. They're too afraid of angering the fetish.'*²⁷¹

Assistants/Linguists (Ngorgbie/Ngorgbea) have a divine calling to serve within the shrine. Similar to the role of a Personal Assistant, if the Priest is illiterate, the Linguist will record any required information.²⁷² He will also act as an intermediary between the Priest and community members. When entering the shrine the Priest will sit behind the partition and the Linguist will speak with the individual seeking consultation and then consult with the Priest about the remedy and will report the Priests findings back to the individual.

Drink servers (Ahakuor/Ahakua)²⁷³ do not live in the shrine, but are called from within the community to serve drinks within the shrine. This role within

²⁶⁹ Ababio. 2000. Page 37-38

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Brooker, 1996. Page 2.

²⁷² Vormawor 1998. Page 50

²⁷³ Ibid.

the shrine is filled by a male and the role often involves following the Priest or Chief and giving the drink to the Chief, in order for him to pour libation.²⁷⁴

Trokosi women are traditionally responsible for polishing floors, sweeping and making the beds within the shrines.²⁷⁵ The issue of exact tasks and treatment of the Trokosi will be discussed shortly. However at this stage, how the Trokosi women fit into the hierarchy of the shrine will be discussed.

Trokosi has been translated in a variety of ways within various literatures. For example, Vormawor, an Ewe woman working with the Trokosi, translates Trokosi as '*servant of the gods*'.²⁷⁶ The Ghana Studies Council Newsletter translates the term as '*brides of the gods*'²⁷⁷ and Human Rights Lawyer, Sarah Aird translates the term as '*slaves to the gods*'.²⁷⁸ 'Tro' refers to a spiritual force that acts for anyone who observes the proper rites and ceremonies of the cult. 'Tro' is said to originate from a verb (rather than a noun) meaning 'to change' (for the good of society)²⁷⁹ and 'Kosi' has been translated as either slave, bride or servant in the literature. The translation of the word Trokosi is of great importance in assessing the intervention programs for releasing the women, however this will be discussed in section 6.1.1 of this thesis. The term refers to the virgin girls committed to the shrines to atone for crimes or sins of the family.

²⁷⁴ *Libation* refers to the pouring of a drink as an offering to a god. Within biblical times, Jacob poured a libation in Genesis 35:14 and Isaiah uses the metaphor of pouring one's life out as a sacrifice to others. Isaiah 53:12. Within Ghana, liquor or spirits are used to pour libation and is often used as a thanks to god for protection.

²⁷⁵ Vormawor 1998. Page 50

²⁷⁶ Ibid. Page 19-20

²⁷⁷ *Ghana Studies Council Newsletter*. Issue 20. Summer/Fall 2007. Chari Remarks. Gocking R, Mercy College. Page 6

²⁷⁸ Aird. Date not given. *Ghana's Slave to the Gods*. Washington College of Law. . Accessed at <http://www.wcl.american.edu/hrbrief/v7i1/ghana.htm> on the 28th March 2009. Page 1

²⁷⁹ Vormawor, Op Cit. Page 36

Troklu refers to male Trokosi.²⁸⁰ Literature cites that Troklu are rare, however there are several documented cases.²⁸¹

Woryokewe is the Danbge word for Trokosi. In Adanbge or Ga 'Won' means cult and 'yokwe' is cited by Ababio to mean slave, however this is also contested. Local Ga residents that I spoke to in the field insist that 'yokwe' refers to one who is in service, in the same way that priests are in service within the Roman Catholic Church,²⁸² and seemed surprised that anyone would translate 'yokwe' to mean slave.²⁸³ A Trokosi or woryokwe is recorded in several international pieces of literature as being the *slave* or *servant* of a cult.²⁸⁴

Fiashidi/Fiasidi refers to those who function as Trokosi in Akatsi, ketu and Keta districts and southern Togo and Benin. Vormawor states that Fiashidi/Fiasidi's are the same as Trokosi in function. Fiashidi/Fiasidi is literally translated as 'wife of a king'.²⁸⁵

4.3.4 History of Intervention

Within Africa Non-Governmental Organisations often play a complementary or supplementary role to public social service. According to both published reports and interviews with the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice, government departments did not have the resources to intervene into the Troxovi practice,²⁸⁶ and therefore approached several NGOs

²⁸⁰ Vormawor 1998. Page 32

²⁸¹ Ababio, 2000. Page 126

²⁸² Discussions with local residents, Greater Accra, Ghana. 30th September 2008.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ababio. 2000. Page 4

²⁸⁵ Vormawor 1998. Page 19-20

²⁸⁶ Ababio, Op Cit. Page 22. Interview with representative from CHRAJ, Principal Researchers Diary. 15th September 2008.

requesting that they intervene. The first release took place in July 1996,²⁸⁷ long before the Criminal Code was amended, outlawing the practice. Intervention was attempted by several NGOs and the processes were far from flawless. Ababio states that several NGOs quickly moved to liberate women with little coordination or consultation with those already in the field, or with the community members involved.²⁸⁸ One organisation, the Fetish Slaves Liberation Movement (FESLIM) was initiated by a Ghanaian evangelical Christian who claimed his aim was to *'wipe out all denominations of African traditional religion and covert and baptise'*.²⁸⁹ FESLIM *liberated* the women in a shrine at Fievie with no *rehabilitation* programs in place. The women became economically destitute and isolated from their communities, and quickly returned to the shrines. Sentinel (an NGO) liberated two shrines at Volo using *'substantial'*²⁹⁰ compensation packages, without any consultation with the women or with the communities throughout the process. There was also no rehabilitation program in place for the women who had left the shrines and, because they had no means of survival outside of the shrine, they also quickly returned to the shrine.²⁹¹ Ababio's research also notes another unnamed NGO that liberated many women, but *'forgot'* about the liberation of their children and resulted in the women returning to the shrines for the sake of their children. The families of the women were not consulted and as a result were not willing to welcome them back into the community once liberated. The process was undertaken with haste and the

²⁸⁷ Ababio, 2000. Page 113

²⁸⁸ Ibid. Page 23

²⁸⁹ Vormawor, 1998. Page 106

²⁹⁰ Ababio. Op Cit. Page 23

²⁹¹ Ibid.

community members encouraged women to return to the shrine because there was no other place for them in the community.²⁹² One fundamental reason for communities not welcoming the women back was due to the conflicts between the various NGOs campaigning for the girls release and the communities. The families of the girls had been described by several NGOs as '*primitive and wicked people*'²⁹³ and '*uncaring*'²⁹⁴ in the national media and due to this accusation the families decided that the NGOs should be responsible for providing the girls with shelter and that they should take the place of their families.

Vormawor states that a Canadian woman started working in conjunction with The NGO, however the two differed on ideas about how intervention should take place. The Canadian woman advocated for the temporary release of the women so they could attend a vocational centre, however when some refused to return to the shrines, the Priests were angered and claimed that the missing Trokosi must be replaced.²⁹⁵ Ababio also cites an unnamed NGO who, in order to avoid being accused of imperialism, set up vocational schools for Trokosi women and girls near the shrines at Afife. The organisation purposefully decided against releasing the girls and rather, educated them within the context of their shrine lives.²⁹⁶ It is unknown if Vomawor and Ababio are referring to the same organisation, or if two organisations took the same approach. The Women in the Lords Vineyard (WLV) released 80 women and their 224 children from a number

²⁹² Ababio. 2000. Page 23

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Vormawor, 1998. Page 106

²⁹⁶ Ababio. Op Cit. Page 25

of shrines in 1995. By 2000, the Director of the NGO was forced to make public appeals for funds, admitting that the NGO did not have the resources required to care for the women. The Director also stated that the women's children were receiving education under '*deplorable conditions*',²⁹⁷ as the NGO had been unsuccessful in gaining funds from the government or other private agencies, as expected.²⁹⁸ Yet another NGO, Sentinnel was managed locally by a German national and also struggled to find the finances required to care for the released women. Some of the organisations activities were handed over to The NGO and the Director returned to Germany.²⁹⁹

Some analysts believed that as the women were so accustomed to the shrines, having spent the majority of their lives there, that they should be left within the shrines as any intervention would inevitably result in the girls returning to the shrines.³⁰⁰

Independent researcher, Ababio, notes in her 2000 thesis that '*[The NGO] has so far been the only non-government organisation that has sustained its programmes of rehabilitation.*'³⁰¹ Citing the NGO's own newsletter, she states that about one thousand girls from several shrines had been released and that a number of programs had been set up in order to integrate the Trokosi women and their children, back into mainstream society.

²⁹⁷ Ababio. 2000. Page 24

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Vormawor, 1998. Page 106

³⁰⁰ Ababio. 2000. Page 23

³⁰¹ Ibid. Page 24

4.3.4.1 'Nationals Do the Best Job' ³⁰²

The United Nations Population Fund states that the NGO registered as a not-for-profit organisation in October 1987 and began its operations in 1995. ³⁰³ However, Vormawor states in her unpublished thesis that the organisation registered as a not-for-profit organisation and began operations in 1981 in Ghana. ³⁰⁴

The organisation originates in New Zealand and is currently operating in 37 nations worldwide. ³⁰⁵ The NGO offices located in western nations are referred to as '*supply line*' nations and developing nations are referred to as '*front line*' nations. ³⁰⁶ Occasionally short term volunteers are sent from supply line nations to front line nations but predominately supply line nations financially support front line nations through assisting with grant and aid applications in the west, and seeking donations from individuals. ³⁰⁷ Therefore, in contrast with most NGOs working in Africa, the NGO employs nationals as development workers and the organisation often cites the slogan 'Nationals do the best job.' ³⁰⁸

Three out of the four programs run by the NGO focus on releasing and rehabilitating the Trokosi women and their children. The projects all feed into each other, beginning with negotiation for the release of the women from the shrines, the '*empowering*' of the women through the NGO's Vocational Learning

³⁰² This is an often used slogan within the NGO. The NGO differs in its work to many NGOs as it does not use white development workers, but rather employs national development workers within developing nations.

³⁰³ UNFPA, 2007. Page 88. *Violence Against Women*

³⁰⁴ Vormawor, 1998. Page 109

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ http://www.innetwork.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=69&Itemid=75 Accessed on the 6th April 2009

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Principal Researcher's journal entry. 12th September 2008.

Centre at Adidome,³⁰⁹ the empowering of communities through the Trokosi Modernisation Project and the Microcredit and Enterprise Scheme that provides entrepreneurial incentives for the released women. In providing these programs, the NGO has cooperated with a variety of international and local NGOs and multilateral organisations including, Equality Now, Anti-Slavery International of Great Britain and Australia, OakTree Foundation of Australia and the Reebok Human Rights Foundation. United Nations bodies such as UNFPA and the UNIFEM have given financial support. The NGO also reports its local network partners to include the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), the National Commission on Civic Education, Centre for National Culture, National Council on Women and Development, Ghana Law Reform Commission, the Federation of Women Lawyers and the Ghana Human Rights Coalition.³¹⁰

Working in conjunction with CHRAJ and the Commission for Civil Education, the NGO and other NGOs initially met to discuss the possible replacements for a virgin girl, in order to atone for the crimes of the community. The options discussed originally consisted of a cow, sheep, fowls, calico, money and items for rituals.³¹¹ Vormawor states in her thesis, that the NGO's negotiation process consists of a number of steps. First, the historical background of the community and the shrine is researched. The way in which the shrine functions within the community is researched. Researchers enquire into such questions as

³⁰⁹ Vormawor, 1998. Page 109

³¹⁰ UNFPA, 2007. Page 88. *Violence Against Women*

³¹¹ Vormawor, Op Cit. Page 88

*'has there been any transformation in the system in recent times?'*³¹² Negotiation with Chiefs, Queen mothers, Priests, Shrine owners and the leaders in the community takes place. The NGO seeks to convince the stakeholders that it is an abuse of human rights to keep the women in the shrines and they advocate for development and modernisation through releasing the women. How the Trokosi practice can be abolished without undermining the religious beliefs of the community is discussed. Education on human rights is undertaken at the local, district, national and international levels. Communities are taught about human rights through the NGO's schools and community development programs. Workshops are held to explore the issue. Once it is agreed that the women should be liberated, a liberation ritual is performed. Women who are still considered Trokosi, but no longer live in the shrine are sent messages via the radio to return to the shrine for total liberation. Liberation rituals are performed to release the women and the women receive a signed document to confirm that they are now free. This also enables the community to embrace liberated Trokosi as they no longer have to fear retribution from the gods. Ownership of the women is removed from the Priest. On a specific day the women are freed in front of the whole community and Priests and Shrine owners sign a resolution to not return to the practice or take any other girls. The Priests are compensated in the form of cattle, goats and/or money etc The Executive Director of the NGO states *'While [the NGO] does not put a price on slavery, the average cost of a 'Trokosi' girl's freedom is about \$250'*.³¹³ Rehabilitation is offered to women at the Vocational

³¹² Vormawor, 1998. Page 109

³¹³ Ayliffe, Year not stated. Page 3

Learning Centre at Adidome. Relief items are also provided for the women. These items include footwear, mats, nets, clothing, lanterns, and toiletries.³¹⁴ The United Nations Population Fund indicates that '*Data collected from [the NGO] shows that the process of liberation takes an average of 5 years,*³¹⁵ and Vormawor states that liberation can take months or years.³¹⁶

4.3.4.2 Rehabilitation and The Vocational Learning Centre - Adidome

Adidome is a small town located in the North Tongu district of the Volta Region in Ghana. The NGO's Vocation Learning Centre at Adidome has facilities to accommodate 140 people.³¹⁷ Another NGO has also set up a Vocation Training Centre for released Trokosi in Adidome and yet another has a centre located at Volo, also located within the North Tongu district.³¹⁸

Upon release, several options are available to Trokosi survivors. Young girls between the ages of 5 and 13 are sent to a school near their parents and are reunited with them. In the situation where parents cannot be contacted the girls are cared for by a warden at the Vocational Learning Centre, until a parent assumes responsibility for them. Women aged between 14 and 80 often attend the Vocational Learning Centre, either as residence or as day students. In some cases, women are unable to attend the centre are apprenticed by traders near their homes and are provided with the tools to start their own businesses.

³¹⁴ Vormawor, Op Cit. Page 113

³¹⁵ UNFPA, 2007. Page 88. *Violence Against Women*

³¹⁶ Vormawor, Op Cit. Page 103

³¹⁷ UNFPA, 2007. Op Cit. Page 87.

³¹⁸ Vormawor, Op Cit. Page 15

Women who are considered too elderly to attend the centre benefit from Microcredit schemes provided by the NGO.³¹⁹

Two courses are offered at the NGO's Vocational Learning Centre. The first is a three month course in confectionery making, soap making and body and hair cream production and the second is a one year course in batik or tie dying and hairdressing.³²⁰ Graduates, or women who are too elderly to benefit from a course at the centre, benefit from the Microenterprise and Credit Scheme offered by the NGO.³²¹ Simultaneously, communities who have released their Trokosi women gain infrastructure, such as boreholes for clean water and schools.³²²

Rinaudo states that the NGO's strategy is to rehabilitate 100 slaves annually, however the NGO's website states that the regular (one year) program admits students every two years and 300 students are admitted to the three month course every year.³²³ The initial grant to begin the program was provided by an overseas governmental aid agency, and more than \$72 000 was also received by another overseas governmental aid agency. The program runs in phases and is primarily financially supported through an overseas governmental aid agency. The first phase began in 1998, the second in 2003 and the program is now in the third phase. The second phase received \$300 000 for the release of 900 slaves.³²⁴

³¹⁹ Vormawor, 1998. Page 15

³²⁰ UNFPA, 2007. Page 88. *Violence Against Women*

³²¹ Ibid. Page 87.

³²² Ibid. Page 88.

³²³ The NGO's website. www.intneedsgh.org/contents/projects/project.php?projid=1 Accessed on the 9th March 2009

³²⁴ Rinaudo, 2003. Page 7

According to the NGO released women must go through a needs assessment upon admittance to the centre. The NGO states that the women have considerable trauma to overcome, including separation from their family, divorce, family breakdown and sexual abuse. The NGO states that this is particularly true of Dangbe women as the practice in these regions includes being handed around to other members of the shrine for sex.³²⁵ For this reason, instructors at the Vocational Learning Centre have been provided with information on violence against women³²⁶ and the women are then evaluated by a psychologist.

Vormawor reports that in Pupilampu's psychological report, most released Trokosi suffer from economic and spiritual fear, deference to male authority, resignation to fate or depression, expressions of pain and bitterness, as they have no understanding of why they were sent to the shrines, alcoholism, emotional despondency including spontaneous crying, moodiness and/or tantrums, repressed anger at the system, extreme economic concern, feelings of self worthlessness and illiteracy.³²⁷

Education is then offered to the women. This could be formal or non-formal, depending on the needs assessment conducted. The goal of the education offered is to facilitate viable income generating activities for adults and full integration back into society as independents.

According to Vormawor, education also includes counseling, health education concerning AIDS and STI's, economic education, including how to

³²⁵ Vormawor, 1998. Page 97

³²⁶ UNFPA, 2007. Page 87. *Violence Against Women*

³²⁷ Ibid. Page 113

save and how to open a bank account, personal hygiene, reproductive health, childcare, reconnecting with family and functional literacy.³²⁸ After the women have completed their course at the Vocational Centre, counselors, sociologist and health workers visit the women and ensure that the women are achieving full integration back into society.³²⁹ The extent to which this integration takes place is currently unknown and is one of the questions this thesis seeks to answer.

³²⁸ Vormawor, 1998. Page 113

³²⁹ UNFPA, 2007. Page 87. *Violence Against Women*

4.4 Prevalence and Contested Reports

Information available in the international media tends to simplify the practice in order to avoid complicated tensions inherent within any investigation into the Trokosi system. For example, in 1996 Brooker reported on the Trokosi practice in *The Independent*, stating that ‘*Senior members of Ghana’s armed forces, police service and a handful of government ministers are said to visit the shrines seeking promotion, protection and success in their operations...*’ and concluding ‘*..but their calls for [the practice] to be banned have had little impact on this centuries-old tradition, which has the blessing of some of Ghana’s most powerful men.*’³³⁰ Brooker fails to identify the role of shrines in Ghanaian cultural life, across all tribes and in all communities. Whilst it is true that senior members of Ghana’s armed forces, police service and government ministers seek promotion, protection and success within Ghana’s shrines (along with the majority of Ghanaian’s who seek similar progression in life through the fetish), not all shrines practice Trokosi. In fact, Trokosi practicing shrines are in the minority, even according to reports indicating the higher levels of incidence. Explaining how the Trokosi practice eventuated and why it has continued is a complex task and these questions are rarely explored in the international media.

In order to contextualise the levels of incidence, the reports citing the prevalence of the practice will be compared and analysed. As will be discussed later within the chapter, definitions of Trokosi vary and therefore, it stands to

³³⁰ Brooker, 1996. Page 4

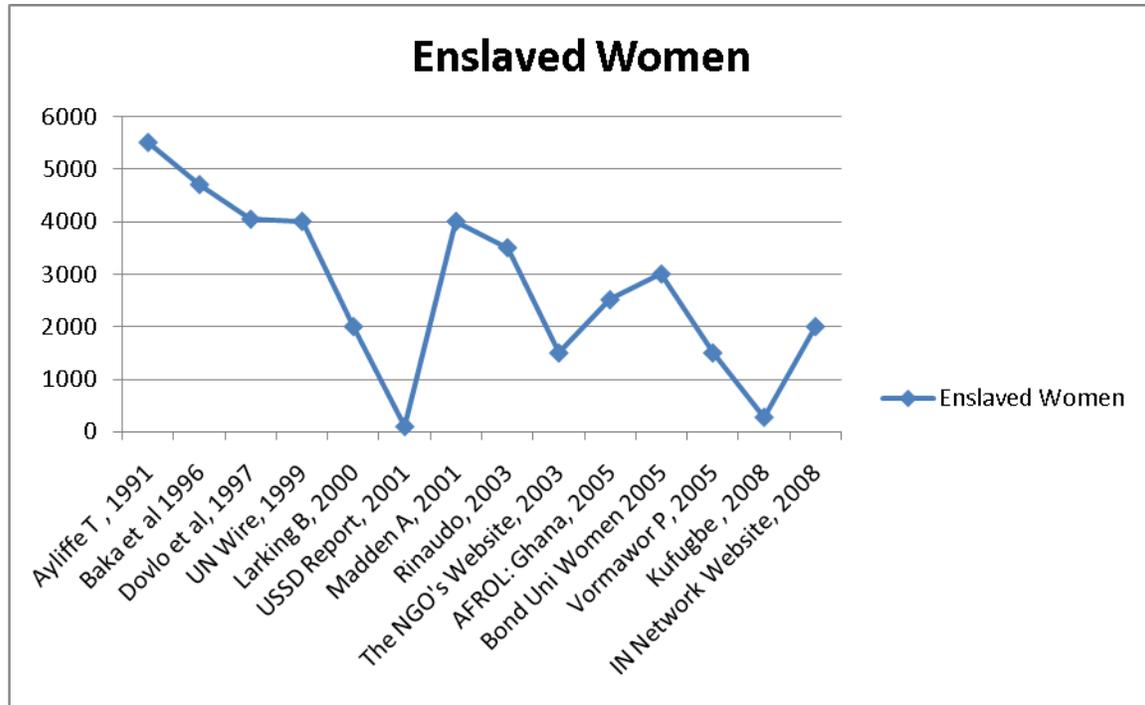
reason that numbers will vary also. The extent to which definitions and prevalence vary will be explored.

4.4.1 Enslaved Women

Diagram 4.2, indicates that the prevalence of enslaved women ranges from 5 500 in 1996 to 100 in 2001 and ends with 278 in 2008. Whilst obviously, the liberation of Trokosi throughout the years will explain some decrease in the number of enslaved women, numbers of released women cited by the NGO do not account for such large initial estimates of enslaved women. It is also important to note that the first release took place in 1995 and released only 80 women. Therefore large discrepancies in numbers, such as 5 500 and 4 700 enslaved women reported in 1991 and 1996 and 278 and 2000 enslaved women reported in 2008 do not match NGO liberation patterns and therefore cannot be explained by liberation alone. The very low prevalence reported by the USSD in 2001 is explained in the report openly disputing the numbers cited by the NGO. It states '*According to credible reports from international observers, there were no more than 100 girls serving at Trokosi shrines throughout the Volta Region.*'³³¹

³³¹ USSD Report 2001. Section III.

Diagram 4.2 Prevalence of Enslaved Women within the Literature



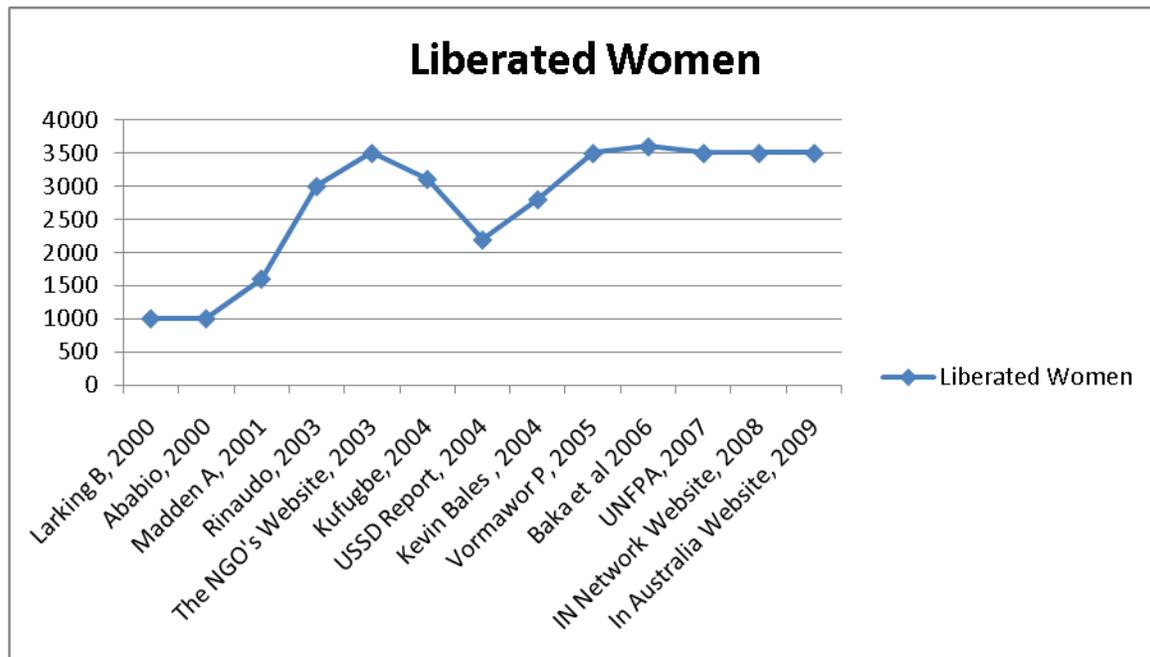
In order to assess these patterns, we will discuss the prevalence of liberated women and then compare the statistics.

4.4.2 Liberated Women

The prevalence of women liberated by the NGO within the literature also reveals some inconsistencies. As can be seen in diagram 4.3, liberation statistics begin at 1000 in the year 2000 and increase up to 3500 by the year 2003. These numbers then drop considerably in 2004, with three reports citing between 2190 and 3108. This is equivalent to a difference of over one thousand women. Unlike

enslavement statistics, liberated women cannot move from liberated to unliberated and therefore the conflicting numbers cannot be accounted for in this way. Though some women returned to shrines after intervention by other NGOs, the numbers reported on refer to the women liberated by the NGO within the case study. After 2005, the statistics round off to around 3500 women, which indicates that no liberations have occurred since this time.

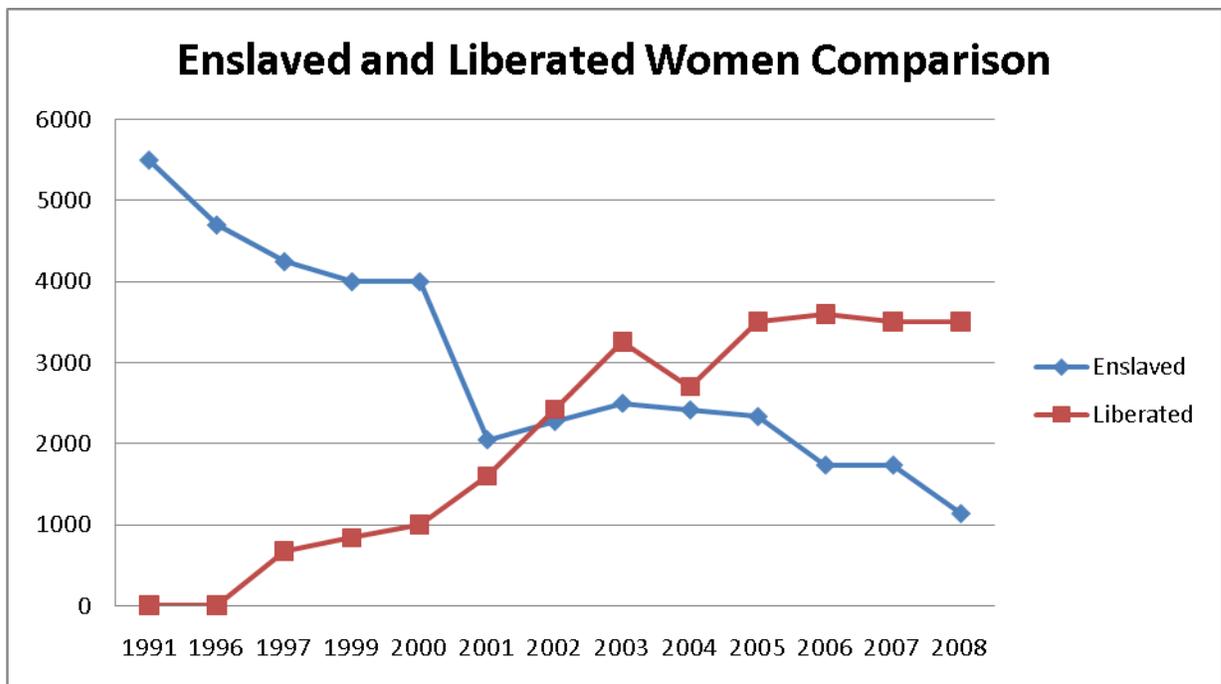
Diagram 4.3 Prevalence of Liberated Women within the Literature



In order to assess enslavement numbers against liberation numbers, the prevalence of enslaved and liberated women reported in the literature since 1991 must be compared. Diagram 4.4 compares these numbers using the following methods. Where sources published in the same year differed, the

median of the numbers was used. Where no statistics of prevalence have been reported within a year, the median of the year prior and the year following was used. In this way, massive peaks and troughs reported by individual sources are somewhat contained when distributed amongst more conservative reports. It is important to note that the number of liberated women listed in the diagram, refers to when the statistics were published. Therefore the literature does not indicate that any women were released prior to 1997, but rather, no significant literature had been published reporting the numbers of released women.

Diagram 4.4 Prevalence of Enslaved and Liberated Women Comparison



According to Diagram 4.4, there has been a slow decrease in the prevalence of enslaved women between 1991 and 1996. This cannot be

accounted for in the literature as published liberation numbers remained at zero during this time. The first possible explanation for the high incidence of enslavement prevalence within the literature is that, at this time the practice was relatively unfamiliar to the international community and within Ghana itself. Until 1996, sources were comprised of international media reports and were unlikely to be based on primary research. Between 1999 and 2001 the prevalence of enslaved women remained the same. Concurrently, liberation statistics steadily increased between 1997 and 2000. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the first liberation took place in 1995 and during the initial stages of liberation a substantial number of women returned to the shrines, as liberation processes had not been adequately considered. Therefore, it is entirely plausible that during the early stages of liberation, numbers were not reported within the literature as prevalence was chaotic. Therefore the steady increase in liberation numbers could refer to the decrease in enslaved women between 1991 and 1999. This explanation is also supported by the fact that between 1991 and 2001, the prevalence of enslaved women decreased by approximately 1500 and the prevalence of liberated women increases by approximately 1500.

According to the literature, in 2002 the number of enslaved women was equal to the number of liberated women, at approximately 2200. This equilibrium supports a late reporting of liberated women also, as original statistics for enslaved women were approximately double the equilibrium. Between 2002 and 2004 liberation prevalence waivers between reports, however after 2005, liberation rates remain static at approximately 3500, while enslavement numbers

decrease substantially. This pattern could be explained in a number of ways. Firstly, it is possible that enslavement numbers were estimated at a much higher prevalence than the actual in the early years of reporting and that the equilibrium actually occurred after 2002. Secondly, it is also highly possible that as women were liberated through the work of NGOs in the Volta Region, communities that were not actively targeted by NGOs discontinued the practice. Many communities received human rights education through NGOs and the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice. The banning of the practice in 1998 coupled with active human rights education within communities could have reduced the number of enslaved women, without direct NGO intervention. This is supported by the USSD 2004 which states,

'the practice has decreased in recent years because other belief systems have gained followers, and fetish priests who died have not been replaced'.³³²

Overall, when individual high or low estimates are averaged out within the literature, patterns of prevalence are more easily identified. When comparing the prevalence of enslaved and liberated women in the literature, there are some inconsistencies, however valid explanations can be offered for the inconsistencies.

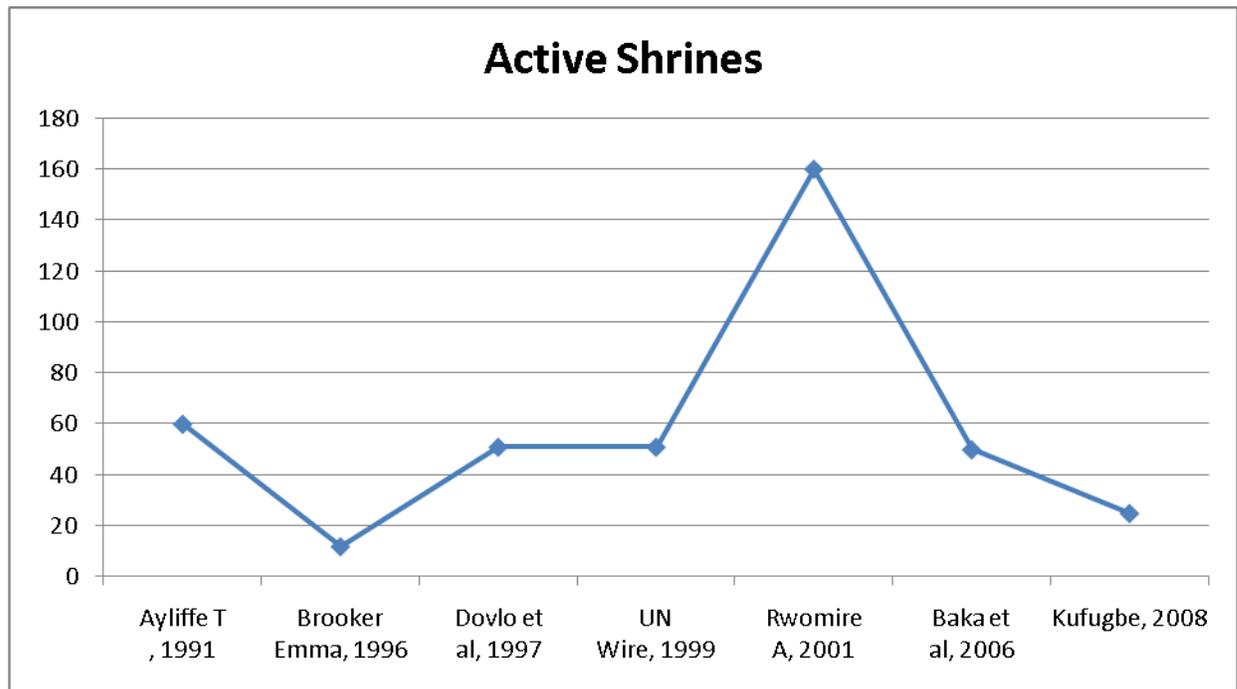
In a similar manner to the comparison of enslaved and liberated Trokosi, active and liberated shrines can be compared within the literature. '*Active shrines*' refers to the number of shrines that practice Trokosi and '*liberated shrines*' refers to shrines that have received intervention from the NGO.

³³² USSD IRF Report, 2004. Section 5

4.4.3 Active Shrines

Perhaps the most inconsistent comparison of prevalence within the literature is that of shrines. In 1991 Ayliffe reported 60 active shrines, in 1996, Brooker reported just 12 active shrines, Dovlo and the UN wire reported 51 in 1997 and 1999 and Rwomire reported a substantial 160 in 2001. Baka et al and Kufugbe report a much more conservative number in 2006 and 2008 at 50 and 25 respectively.

Diagram 4.5 Prevalence of Active Shrines within the Literature



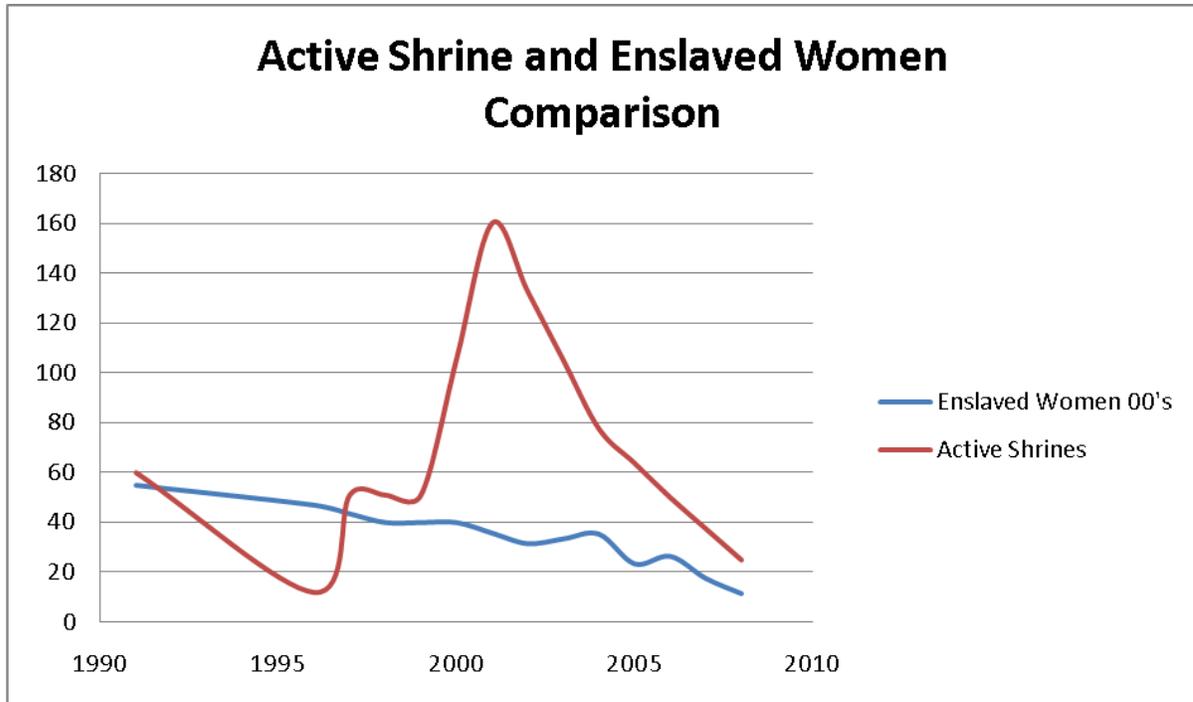
In order to assess these inconsistencies further, the prevalence of active shrines and enslaved women are compared in diagram 4.6.

Diagram 4.6 compares the patterns of active shrines and the numbers of enslaved women using the same methods as diagram 4.4. Where sources

published in the same year differed, the median of the two numbers was used. Where no statistics of prevalence have been reported within a year, the median of the year prior and the year following was used.

The numbers do not reflect the same patterns seen when comparing with the statistics of enslaved women. One would expect that these statistics would correlate in a reasonable manner, as women are liberated in groups from the shrines. Women are not approached individually and liberated, therefore though it is possible that prevalence of the practice was overestimated in the literature, the pattern between active shrines and enslaved women should be parallel. However, as can be seen in diagram 4.6, this is not the case. The only plausible explanation is that shrine numbers are unreliable. As all shrines in the Volta Region are not practicing shrines, the only way to establish prevalence is to gain intimate knowledge of the religious practices of a large group of people, over a massive expanse of extremely remote land. Gaining empirical, independent data on the prevalence of active shrines in Ghana would be an extremely large project, which has not yet been undertaken. It is my argument that shrine numbers have been estimated and are unreliable.

Diagram 4.6 **Prevalence of Active Shrines and Enslaved Women within the Literature**



In order to further evidence the unreliability of shrine numbers, liberated shrine numbers have been compared to active shrine numbers.

4.4.4 Liberated Shrines

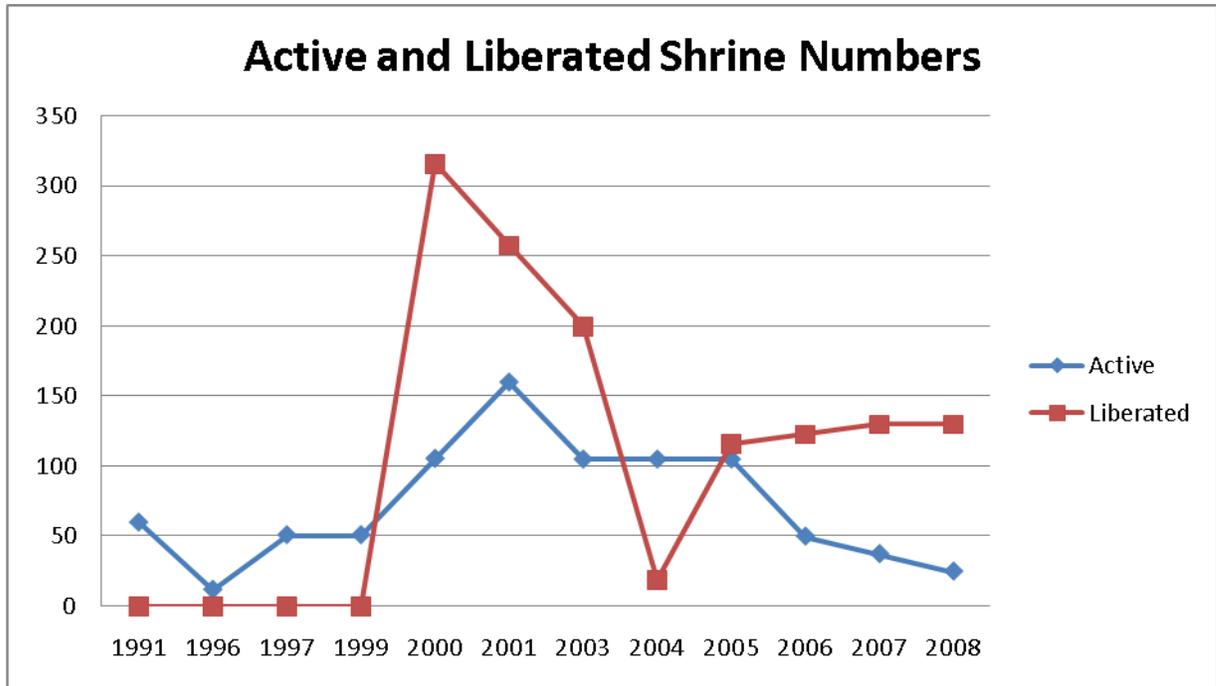
Diagram 4.6 compares the patterns of active shrines and enslaved women using the same methods as other comparative diagrams.³³³

As can be seen in diagram 4.6 there is little overlap between active and liberated shrine patterns. In fact, liberation prevalence alone is totally illogical as, unlike active shrines, liberated shrines are targeted by the NGO and therefore numbers should be readily available. This diagram shows that the number of liberated shrines decreased substantially between 2000 and 2004. The only logical pattern within the diagram occurs between 2005 and 2008. In 2005 equilibrium occurs between the number of active and liberated shrines, reporting that approximately 120 active and 120 liberated shrines exist. Though the equilibrium of enslaved and liberated women occurs in 2002/2003, it is plausible that this equilibrium occurred later for shrine numbers as each shrine does not keep the same number of women as Trokosi, so numbers need not correlate in that way. Between 2005 and 2008 the diagram shows a steady increase in the number of liberated shrines and a marked decrease in the number of active shrines. These numbers would correlate with liberated and enslaved women statistics discussed earlier, further supporting the CHRAJ's report that shrines may have stopped practicing Trokosi without direct NGO intervention. For these reasons, it is probable that between 1991 and 2005 all shrine estimates are inexplicably chaotic and therefore, unreliable; however after this time shrine

³³³ Years which had no published results for either active or liberated shrine numbers were not included. Where sources published in the same year differed, the median of the two numbers was used and where no statistics of prevalence have been reported within one category in a given year, the median of the year prior and the year following was used.

numbers correlate in a plausible and reasonable manner and, though not definitive, can be considered much more reliable.

Diagram 4.7 Prevalence of Active and Liberated Shrines within the Literature



4.5 The Treatment of the Trokosi Women and Children

The prevalence of the practice is not the only contested report within the literature. The treatment of the women within the shrines is also highly disputed. In order to highlight these inconsistencies, some of the literature available within the international media will be compared. The most common inconsistencies about treatment within the shrines exist around the questions: Are the women raped or do they suffer other kinds of sexual abuse? Are they subjected to forced labour? Do they suffer physical abuse and violence at the hands of the fetish priests? Are the women subjected to psychological abuse? How are the younger Trokosi or children of the Trokosi treated within the shrine? Are Trokosi abandoned by their families? Are Troklu (male Trokosi) mistreated within the shrines? Are the women considered the property of the priest? Is abuse systematic within the practice?

4.5.1 Are the women raped or sexually abused?

Frequently referred to as '*sexual slavery*',³³⁴ the Trokosi practice has been represented as one of the worst forms of violence against women practiced in the world today. From the moment the Trokosi practice come under international review, and until 2004, this view had been challenged only by National Resistance Groups who supported the practices using arguments that can be summarised in cultural relativist terms. Currently the literature refers to sexual abuse as inherent in the practice. Many reports cite that the rape of the women is

³³⁴ <http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enwiki/117064> Accessed on the 4th May 2009, <http://www.reference.com/browse/Sexual+slavery> Reference Encyclopedia Online. Accessed on the 4th May 2009

not only highly likely within the shrines but that the rape is integral to the belief system as a whole.³³⁵

One article from Australia states that *'in every sense, wherever it is practiced, the Fetish 'priest' owns the child and he must forcefully consummate the 'marriage with the gods' as soon as the child goes through puberty.'*³³⁶

Vormawor resonates with the article stating *'Virginial rape is portrayed as a ritual and usually involves violence and manipulation (inviting to clean his room etc)'*³³⁷

She states that in the Dangme area some worryokwe (Dangme word for Trokosi) are shared amongst the men of the village³³⁸ and that in Ketu, Akatsi and Keta districts, though the practice is less harsh and women are able to leave the shrine once their period of servitude is over, women continue to be kidnapped and raped by the priest.³³⁹ Vormawor's opinion is that in most shrines, particularly within the Tongu area, the Trokosi are raped.³⁴⁰

The refusal of sex is reported by Vormawor as a grave sin and does not go unpunished. In the first instance, if the Trokosi refuses sex with the priest her family are called to the shrine and are forced to pay for the refusal through giving animals or money to the shrine and offering an apology on behalf of their daughter. Family members are required to tell the woman to engage in sex with

³³⁵ <http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enwiki/117064> Accessed on the 4th May 2009,
<http://www.reference.com/browse/Sexual+slavery> Reference Encyclopedia Online. Accessed on the 4th May 2009

³³⁶ Rinaudo, 2003. Page 1 Citing Dovlo with Adzoyi Report on Trokosi Institution Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana Legon October 1995 1 – 26

³³⁷ Vormawor 1998. Page 70

³³⁸ Ibid. Page 79

³³⁹ Ibid. Page 77

³⁴⁰ Ibid. Page 34

the priest.³⁴¹ Vormawor also cites other punishments for refusing sex including kneeling over broken bottles, lashes, starvation and the '*denial of sex*'.³⁴² Her thesis narrated one woman's experience of being raped in front of all the other women and children at the shrine, who excused themselves or looked on.³⁴³ A human rights journalist reporting on the Trokosi practice quotes a released Trokosi woman:

*'The priest was a very old man, and because I refused him sex, I was tied to the bed and beaten by four other men until I had bruises all over my body I was beaten throughout the whole night. When I think of that day, I feel like crying'*³⁴⁴

In 2001 the United States State Department supported the view that the women are raped, stating in a report '*because they are the sexual property of the priests, most Trokosi slaves have children by the priest.*'³⁴⁵ Ababio's research, conducted in 1999 did not concur with reports that sexual abuse is an integral part of the system but did find that in some shrines women are unable to refuse the sexual advances of the priest and most women are subjected to '*heinous forms of sexual abuse*'.³⁴⁶ Ababio reports that in such shrines (not all shrines) the priest initiates the Trokosi into adulthood and then releases them into the community for marriage to community members.³⁴⁷

³⁴¹ Vormawor 1998. Page 69

³⁴² Ibid. This punishment for refusing sex would usually lead one to believe that rape has not occurred as denying sex to an alleged victim on the basis that the individual is not willing to engage in sex indicates that the alleged victim did consent. This area of enquiry moves to defining rape and will be discussed to a much greater extent within Section 6.2, where the extent to which the women can live with human dignity, will be discussed.

³⁴³ Vormawor, Op Cit. Page 99

³⁴⁴ Ayliffe. Op Cit.

³⁴⁵ Lorraine Fiadjoe Petitioner, v. Attorney General of the United States, Respondent., 411 F.3d 135 (3rd Cir. 2005)

³⁴⁶ Ababio. Op Cit. Page 19

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

Interestingly, in 2004 the United States State Department released another report entitled *International Religious Freedom* and opposed its former view that *most* Trokosi slaves bear the priests children, because they are the sexual property of the priests. The report states that:

*'The practice explicitly forbids a Trokosi or Fiashidi to engage in sexual activity or contact during her atonement period. In the past, there were reports that the priests subjected the girls to sexual abuse; however, while instances of abuse may occur on a case-by-case basis, there is no evidence that sexual or physical abuse is an ingrained or systematic part of the practice.'*³⁴⁸

However, three year later, the United Nations continued to report that sex with the priest was an integral part of the Troxovi system.³⁴⁹

4.5.2 Are Trokosi subjected to forced labour?

There is little contention that it is one of the responsibilities of a Trokosi woman to labour in the fields, however inconsistencies occur when reporting on remuneration or compensation for such labour.

Newsweek International reported in 1999 that the Trokosi women and children are forced to labour on the priests land for little or no wage.³⁵⁰ Ababio reported in 2000 that when a Trokosi arrives at the shrine, she is not permitted to play but must work on the farm for no remuneration. She also indicates that not only does the Trokosi woman receive no remuneration,³⁵¹ but she is not entitled to any of the produce, and must engage in economic activities outside of these

³⁴⁸ USSD IRF report 2004. Page 3

³⁴⁹ UNFPA, 2007. Page 88. *Violence Against Women*

³⁵⁰ Newsweek (International Edition). 1999. Page 33

³⁵¹ Ababio. 2000. Page 20

duties in order to feed her family.³⁵² The AFROL gender profile reported in 2005 that Trokosi women must work on the priest's farm, and perform other forms of labour for him,³⁵³ and the 2007 UNFPA Violence Against Women report indicated that forced labour was inherent in the system.³⁵⁴ However the NRG claims that women receive compensation for their time in the shrines. It is unclear if the NRG is referring to the *Grandma Lands*. *Grandma Lands* is the land given to Trokosi women after their time of service within the shrines, however the *Grandma Lands* have now become male dominated. Vormawor reported in 1999 that only 9% of the women she interviewed received any compensation.³⁵⁵

4.5.3 Do they suffer physical abuse and violence at the hands of the fetish priests?

Though the NRG states that human rights abuses do not occur within shrines, acts of violence are reported by NGOs. Every Child Ministries states:

*'When these modern-day slaves refuse anything commanded by the priest, when they do not make their work quota, or when they displease him in any way, they are given a choice. It is the only choice they ever face. Many of them tell of two items being laid in front of them. One is a whip. The other is broken glass. Shrine slaves can be whipped long and hard while others hold them down, or they can kneel for hours on large shards of broken glass, with no medical care afterward.'*³⁵⁶

The 2007 UN report on Violence Against Women states that Trokosi are denied education, food and basic health services and states that women are

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ AFROL Gender Profile (accessed 17 August 2005) [37a] Page 2.

³⁵⁴ UNFPA, 2007. Page 88. *Violence Against Women*

³⁵⁵ Vormawor 1998. Page 84. See Section 7.1.4 of this thesis.

³⁵⁶ Every Child Ministries Website. <http://www.ecmafrica.org/36223.ihtml> Accessed on the 10th March 2009.

beaten if they try to escape.³⁵⁷ However the USSD reports of 2001 and 2004 report, '*Trokosi may or may not attend school.*'³⁵⁸ Therefore, the extent to which the women have access to education and other basic services is contested by the various reports.

4.5.4 Are the women subjected to psychological abuse?

As discussed in chapter one, adherents to the Troxovi religion state that the role of a Trokosi woman is that of a priestess and that the purpose of her time in the shrine is to learn about living a morally upstanding life. In this way, adherents report that a Trokosi woman is to be revered, not abused.³⁵⁹ Rinaudo's 2003 article strongly opposes this view stating that '*Their status is lowered to the categorisation of being regarded as sub-human.*'³⁶⁰ The majority of the abuses Vormawor cites as psychological abuses, exist around the observance of rituals and taboos before entry into the shrine, within the shrine and upon the release of a Trokosi woman. Vormawor's research articulates that one of the main issues released Trokosi feel uncomfortable speaking about is the initiation ceremony, stating that the women find it degrading. Women are reported to be dressed up in beads, draped in a simple cloth that falls between her legs and paraded through the community.³⁶¹ The UN's 2007 Violence Against Women report indicates that women are forced to shave their heads, wear a piece of calico wrap around their bodies, raffia leaves around their necks and forced to go bare foot.³⁶² Vormawor

³⁵⁷ UNFPA, 2007. Op Cit. Page 88.

³⁵⁸ USSD Report 2001, Section IV

³⁵⁹ Owusu-Ansah, 2003. Page 2.

³⁶⁰ Rinaudo, 2003. Page 1

³⁶¹ Vormawor 1998. Page 65

³⁶² UNFPA, 2007. *Violence Against Women*, Page 88.

also reports that upon the death of a priest, Trokosi are required to adhere to a nine month mourning period, observing certain taboos, which the women find degrading.³⁶³ According to Vormawor, once a Trokosi has served the required period in the shrine, her pubic hair and nails are cut and placed in a basket which she takes to her home after observing the required rituals to be released from the shrine. When the Trokosi woman passes away, community members send the basket to the priest as a sign that the woman has died and a new girl will take her place.

In addition to reports of psychological abuse within the observance of rituals, Vormawor also claims that Trokosi are often named by men's names in order to cause embarrassment within the shrine.³⁶⁴ Examples cited include *Agoemaedze* (I have committed a crime); and *Agordzeter* (Sinner or offender).

Vormawor states that the abuse does not only cause embarrassment to the women but it also ensures that the women lose their family names, and therefore lose their kinship and degrades their identity.

³⁶³ Vormawor Op Cit. Page 76

³⁶⁴ Ibid. Page 67

4.5.5 How are the younger Trokosi or Troviwo treated within the shrine?

The issue of children within the shrine tends to be a matter of much confusion. Two separate categories of children are often referred to in the literature. The first being the Trokosi women, taken to the shrine at a very early age and the second being the children of the Trokosi (Troviwo or Trovivo). The question of sending small girls to live in a village shrine is often a central issue of concern in international media, however the USSD report of 2001 reports that young Trokosi do not live in the shrines, they live with relatives located near the shrine.³⁶⁵ Ababio confirms that girls of a very tender age are sent to the shrine but does not cite sexual reasons for this tendency. Ababio states that the practice encourages very young girls to be offered to the shrine as they are required to be pure and innocent so as not to create any conflicts in the shrines '*with regard to incidents of the past lives which may infringe on shrine values*'.³⁶⁶ Vormawor states that young Trokosi girls who are unable to care for themselves are often accompanied by a family member, usually an older sister, until such a time that she can care for herself.³⁶⁷

The Troviwo are the children born to a Trokosi woman. International media reports claim that the Troviwo have no access to education, healthcare or food through the shrine.³⁶⁸ Vormawor's thesis states that girl Troviwo stay with their mothers until they are married, and boy Troviwo go to live with their maternal uncles. She also reports that many of the boy Troviwo are used for dangerous

³⁶⁵ USSD Report Op Cit.

³⁶⁶ Ababio. Op Cit. Page 19

³⁶⁷ Vormawor, Op Cit. Page 99

³⁶⁸ Owusu-Ansah, 2003. Page 4

fishing activities and that some have been murdered and thrown into the Volta River to attract more fish.³⁶⁹ However, the Troxovi belief system states that the Troviwo are divine, due to their divine lineage and that they are destined to redeem mankind from the mistakes made by society.³⁷⁰

It is also of some importance to note that often international media reports cite the existence of the Troviwo as proof that sexual abuse occurs within the shrines. However this assumption is based on a lack of knowledge of both the Troxovi system and of customary law. Many reports fail to understand that Trokosi women marry men from the community after completing their period of servitude and that under customary law, any child born to a Trokosi woman is regarded a child of the fetish priest.³⁷¹ Whilst this speaks strongly about the nature of the power relationship between fetish priests and the Trokosi women, it does not prove that rape occurs within the shrines.

4.5.6 Are Troklu mistreated within the shrines?

Most literature addressing the Troxovi issue fails to mention the existence of male relatives taken to shrines to atone for the crimes of the community. Most expansive pieces of literature mention the existence of the Troklu, however even these accounts differ on their findings.

In 1998 Vormawor's thesis stated that men are only sent to shrines when no females are available or when there is a gap in a male role within the shrine. The report states that Troklu are responsible for performing labourous tasks such

³⁶⁹ Vormawor, Op Cit. Page 99

³⁷⁰ Owusu-Ansah, 2003 Page 4

³⁷¹ Vormawor, Op Cit. Page 71

as fixing fences and fishing, but that they are not sexually interfered with. It is also claimed that Troklu retain their freedom of movement and that they are not stigmatised for marriage like the Trokosi women.³⁷² However, Ababio's interview with a former Troklu indicates that the Troklu experience similar stigmatisation within the community and suffer similar hardships to Trokosi.³⁷³

4.5.7 Are the women considered the property of the priest?

By all accounts, Trokosi are seen to be the property of the *shrine god* during the period spent within the shrine, however the literature differs when discussing whether she is considered the property of the *priest*. The USSD International Religious Freedom report clearly distinguishes between the two, stating that a Trokosi woman '*becomes the property of the shrine god and the charge of the shrine priest for the duration of her stay.*'³⁷⁴ In stark contrast, the AFROL Gender Profile,³⁷⁵ Vormawor,³⁷⁶ and the UN *Violence Against Women* report³⁷⁷ state that a Trokosi woman is considered the property of the priest.

The question of whether the priest is simply considered the custodian of the women is refuted by Vormawor who claims that women are not allowed to choose their sexual partners and that community members are forbidden to touch a Trokosi woman or to show any kindness towards her.³⁷⁸ The UN *Violence*

³⁷² Vormawor 1998. Page 73

³⁷³ Ibid. Page 61

³⁷⁴ USSD IRF Report. 2004. Page 3

³⁷⁵ AFROL Gender Profile (accessed 17 August 2005) [37a] (p2)

³⁷⁶ Vormawor, Op Cit. Page 68

³⁷⁷ UNFPA, Op Cit. Page 88.

³⁷⁸ Vormawor 1998. Page 68

Against Women report also indicates that movement and contact with community members outside of the shrine is restricted.³⁷⁹

4.6 Summary

Assessing the life chances of women and children at the national and regional levels indicates that the advances made in increasing the life chances of women in Ghana have not advanced the rural Ghanaian woman as available indicators show that rural Ghanaian women are the least likely to maintain access to important empowerment avenues. The life chances of the women and children held in customary servitude is difficult to assess as the literature available on the Troxovi practice is highly contested. Although reports of abuse are more easily accessible, this fact alone does not negate the plausibility of opposing reports. It is most likely that the prevalence of the practice has been overestimated, and that diverse treatment occurs within various Troxovi practicing shrines. However, the extent to which the priest controls, whether the Trokosi women receive an education, who they may marry and whether sexual violence takes place within their shrine, indicates the power that the priest has over the women and children. Most importantly, the women and children have no choice concerning their servitude within the shrine, regardless of the treatment bestowed upon them. Therefore, the life chances of the women and children may vary depending on the location and authority within the shrine, but even the least

³⁷⁹ UNFPA, Op Cit.

severe forms of the practice limit the life chances of the women and children as they are not able to make decisions to determine their own futures.

Literature available within the international media concerning the Troxovi practice, rarely explores national and local discourses around the practice. In order to gain a greater understanding of the practice, chapter five compares and analyses discourses at the international, national and local levels, as gathered during the fieldwork period. Within the chapter, the literature available on the practice is explored and the extent to which the practice is constructed through the production and reproduction of media will be explored.

Chapter 5 Exploration and Examination of Discourses

Within this chapter I make the case that currently the life chances of the Trokosi women and children are negatively affected by each stakeholders inability to place the women's and children's needs as the central area of concern. I also argue that any account of the practice that does not include the voices of the women themselves, is incomplete as the political interests of each stakeholder group drives the construction of the women as passive victims or the embodiment of culture; negatively impacting on their life chances.

As discussed in Chapter 2,³⁸⁰ '*ways of knowing*' are a key concern within the thesis. Within the field it became clear that the universally accepted image of the Trokosi woman, as found in the international media and academia; is not a reflection of national and local *knowings*. Freedman argues for diversity and intersubjective verifiability through the publicity of content in order to verify claims of truth.³⁸¹ Within this chapter I argue that voices that do not verify the content of the most powerful, are silenced at the national level and the international content remains '*truth*'. Freedman states that; '*...background assumptions are often invisible and only with the contrasting values of another interest group do our particular value commitments come to light.*'³⁸² Such background assumptions are often the result of a historical tradition of omitting the voices of those who are situated within '*other*' collectivities.³⁸³ Therefore, within this chapter I examine the

³⁸⁰ See Section 2.7

³⁸¹ Freedman, 2009. Page 47-8.

³⁸² Ibid. Page 55.

³⁸³ Collins, Op Cit. Page 5.

contrasting values of multiple interest groups within the case study, through a discourse analysis of the various stakeholders. I make the case that the political interests of each group drive their construction of the practice. It is my argument that until the voices of the women and children themselves are heard, there remains a lack of accurate modeling or representation of the practice.³⁸⁴

The exploration, and consequent examination, of discourse is essential to any analysis of power.³⁸⁵ Foucault's fundamental insights into the construction of knowledge/power through the dynamics of discourse in Western societies has made way for similar enquires to be conducted into the construction of knowledge/power within the context of the Third World.³⁸⁶ Escobar argues that '*grand strategies*' are constructed by Western nations to maintain domination over the Third World.³⁸⁷ Escobar names these '*grand strategies*' as '*the discourse on the underdevelopment of the Third World constructed by the developed countries*'³⁸⁸ and claims that '*...the penetration and control of the Third World is embodied in communication and information technologies, especially the mass media, television and commercial cinema.*'³⁸⁹ However, Collins argues that the representation of black women is not simply undertaken by white men, but that white women and black men also silence the *knowledges* of black women as part of a highly effective system of social control that seeks to

³⁸⁴ Freedman, 2009. Page 46.

³⁸⁵ Foucault. 1969 The Archaeology of Knowledge. Editions Gallimard Press.

³⁸⁶ Escobar, 1984-5; Page 377

³⁸⁷ Ibid. Page 383

³⁸⁸ Escobar, Op Cit. Page 383

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

keep black women in a subordinate place.³⁹⁰ Therefore, the ways in which black men represent the women is also important and must be equally interrogated.

In order to explore the impact that these representations have on the life chances of the women and children, this chapter explores the conflicting discourses on key stakeholders within the case study, dividing them into international, national and local discourses.

This chapter seeks to explore the problem of recycled data within the literature through an analysis of the discourses (and silences within these discourses) using both primary and secondary sources from the fieldwork. This analysis provides valuable insight into the key questions of this thesis. I assert that the case study of the Trokosi women and children provides an important and relevant example of how white patriarchal males have gained and maintained global power through the construction of knowledge, how white women have benefitted from this privilege, how national elites promote some discourses and silence others in order to gain access to white privilege and how class structures within Ghana remain as uninterrogated as white race privilege within development discourse. It is therefore argued that the life chances of the women and children cannot be sustainably improved, until the women and children are able to become agents, rather than targets, as presently they remain pawns within a religious *tug-of-war* between powerful international white men and women and powerful patriarchal nationals.

³⁹⁰ Collins, Op Cit. Page 5-10.

5.1 *The Trokosi Women*

Contrasting the imagery of the 'Trokosi woman' through discourse found in international, national and local literature gives a powerful insight into the construction of knowledge, through power. Within this section of the chapter I present evidence that the NGO's representation of the women as passive victims is (at the very least) incomplete; that opposing reports provide valuable insight into the patriarchal nature of the practice and most importantly; that the silence of the women and children themselves reveal an *incomplete knowing* concerning the practice. It is my argument that until the voices of the women and children are heard, any representation of the practice is incomplete, as a piece of the *intersubjective pie* is missing; and any decision-making that does not incorporate the voices of the women and children will negatively impact on their life chances.

Discourses concerning the women 'released' and 'rehabilitated' by the NGO will be presented separately. It is important to note that within the literature, national and local stakeholders refer to the 'release' of Trokosi women by the Fetish priests. Within the fieldwork it became apparent that the Trokosi women are not only released by the NGO, as represented within the NGO's international marketing campaigns,³⁹¹ but that many are released after a period of service within a shrine, by the Fetish Priest himself.³⁹²

³⁹¹ 'The so-called 'Trokosi slave' is a girl who has been bound to a fetish priest for a *lifetime of service* based on the belief she can appease the anger of the gods for offences committed by her ancestors'. The NGO's Australian website. Accessed on the 3rd November, 2009

³⁹² Interview with representative from the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice, 15th September 2008. Discussion (did not agree to formal interview) with a NRG leader. Principal Researchers Diary, 29th September 2008. The Spectator's 'Trokosi Practice: Is it relevant?' 13 September 2008. Page 11.

The vast majority of discourse presented within the international media represents the Trokosi women as uneducated, innocent, unknowing and 'incomplete'³⁹³ passive victims. One international media report, published in the UK in 1996, questioned the '*rescuing*' subtext within international dialogue and the United States State Department released a document in 2004 that seems to be the only international discourse that questions the imagery of the Trokosi practice as being synonymous with slavery. It is important to note, however that this document is not prevalent in the international media or in international academia and the reference was provided to the researcher within the fieldwork period in Ghana.³⁹⁴

In stark contrast to international literature, the vast majority of national voices represent positive images of the women. A representative from the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice acknowledges that abuse of Trokosi women did occur traditionally within the practice, concerning the women's freedom of movement. However, he also clarifies that sexual abuse in the shrines is a case of a priest abusing the system, rather than a case of abuse being systemic *within* the system.³⁹⁵ In this way, it was likened to the sexual abuses that have occurred within the Roman Catholic Church.³⁹⁶

Local voices on the Trokosi women provide a valuable insight into how the Trokosi women are viewed within the communities that practice Troxovi. Resonating with discourses provided by the CHRAJ within Ghana; within one

³⁹³ Interview with the Executive Director of the NGO. Principal Researchers Diary. September 2008.

³⁹⁴ United States State Department Report. Op Cit.

³⁹⁵ Interview with CHRAJ representative. Principal Researchers Diary, 15th September 2008.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

source, a Chief within the Volta Region acknowledges that inequality once existed within the system, but suggests that the practice is transforming.³⁹⁷ Within the same source, a Fetish Priest shares the same view.³⁹⁸ A Trokosi woman states that she is not happy with the conditions in the shrine, however she also notes that the system did have a function '*during the good old days*.'³⁹⁹

Within discourse analysis, silences must also be explored. At the local level there remains few voices penetrating through local institutions, and instead, rural men and women are represented through urban males. One of the challenges of Participatory Action Research is that a certain level of empowerment must first be achieved by marginalised women, in order for researchers and practitioners to gain meaningful access to the women. This access was initially granted, but was subsequently denied by the NGO, once it was discovered that the research would not employ the use of one of their staff members as interpreter. Therefore another silence within the discourse is that of women. At the national level, all literature perpetuates the discourses provided by urban males, and at the local level, all literature perpetuates discourse provided by males, with the exception of one Trokosi woman from the Klikor shrine.

The conflict between the international, the national and the local image of the Trokosi woman is not represented in international media. Rather, the image of an unknowing, uneducated, abused Trokosi woman has become a universally accepted truth. One might argue that this imagery of the Trokosi woman supports Escobar's argument that the Third World is constructed through information

³⁹⁷ The Spectator's 'Trokosi Practice: Is it relevant?' 13 September 2008. Page 11.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

technologies, the mass media and the production of DVDs. However, this argument fails to challenge patriarchy and class within Ghana itself, and in doing so would allow for the further subordination of women and children within Trokosi practicing communities.

Much of the discourse found in national and local literature, denys the international imagery of the Trokosi woman, yet provides insights into the extent to which the Trokosi practice is a powerful patriarchal system. Within this system an individual priest can '*allow*'⁴⁰⁰ a Trokosi woman to participate in education when the service to the shrine is complete, the priest is the gatekeeper of the woman's sexual activity and her reproductive choices, he can decide who is allowed to touch a Trokosi woman, and can decide whether and when a Trokosi woman can marry a man within the community. This speaks to the extent to which a Trokosi woman is able to make choices concerning her own life.

⁴⁰⁰ Interview with the CHRAJ, 15th September 2008.

Table 5.1: Discourses on the Trokosi Women and Children

International	National	Local
Social Outcasts ⁴⁰¹	Divine ⁴¹¹	Will be liberated ⁴¹⁸
Slaves ^{402 403}	Many are allowed to be	‘Allowed to be’
Subhuman ⁴⁰⁴	Educated ⁴¹²	Educated ⁴¹⁹
Uneducated ⁴⁰⁵	Happy ⁴¹³	Not happy ⁴²⁰
Unknowing ⁴⁰⁶	Role Model ⁴¹⁴	
Incomplete ⁴⁰⁷	Abuses are non-existent ⁴¹⁵	
Innocent ⁴⁰⁸	Abused ⁴¹⁶	
Christianity’s trophies ⁴⁰⁹ virginal	Revered ⁴¹⁷	
Not systemically abused ⁴¹⁰		

⁴⁰¹ UNHD Report, Ghana 2007 Page 72

⁴⁰² Rinaudo, 2003. Page 1 Citing Dovlo with Adzoyi Report on Trokosi Institution Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana Legon October 1995 1 – 26

⁴⁰³ ‘She will be lead **unknowingly** to a life of total slavery.’ www.ecmafrica.org/36223.ihtml Assessed on the 10th March 2009

⁴⁰⁴ Rinaudo, 2003. Page 1 Citing Dovlo with Adzoyi Report on Trokosi Institution Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana Legon October 1995 1 – 26

⁴⁰⁵ ‘She has **not had any schooling**, she has **no marketable skills** and her family has most likely **abandoned** her.’ DVD circulated by the NGO

⁴⁰⁶ DVD circulated by the NGO

⁴⁰⁷ Interview with the Executive Director of the NGO, November 2008.

⁴⁰⁸ ‘Motivated by the threats by the witchdoctors curses of death, their parents give these **innocents girls** over to serve a sentence of bondage to sexual **slavery** and misery.’ DVD circulated by the NGO

⁴⁰⁹ ‘And what more exquisite **trophy** could one of the Christianity’s raw recruits have hoped for than the souls of **vestal virgins**, snatched from the sweaty clutches of African fetish priests?’, Brooker, 1996. Page 5.

⁴¹⁰ USSD IRF report 2004. Page 3

⁴¹¹ Discussion (did not agree to formal interview) with NRG leader. Principal Researchers notes. 29th September 2008

⁴¹² Interview CHRAJ representative. 15th September 2008.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Discussion (did not agree to formal interview) with NRG leader. Op Cit.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Interview CHRAJ representative. 15th September 2008.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Evans Alato Chief, Farmer, Afiegbedu Volta Region The Spectator, Op Cit.

⁴¹⁹ Meheso Dzaku Fetish Priest Adzima Shrine Dzodze The Spectator, Op Cit.

⁴²⁰ Abla Kporgo Ablochiva a Trokosi women from the Klikor shrine The Spectator, Op Cit.

5.2 Discourses on 'Released' Trokosi Women

This section of the thesis provides further evidence to support my argument that the NGO's representation of the practice is incomplete and that key stakeholders prioritise their political aims over the needs of the women, adversely affecting their life chances. The section also highlights the NGO's self-appraisal as a transformative power, meeting the needs of women and children. Complexities, evaluations and critique of the intervention are ignored and the NGO saves the helpless victim from the villain, within the humanitarian '*fairy story*'.⁴²¹ This issue is discussed further within the thesis⁴²² where I argue that NGO self appraisals limit opportunities to increase the life chances of women and children.

It is important to note that within the literature, '*released Trokosi*' refers to those released through the intervention of the NGO, with the exception of the USSD Report. This report refers to those who are released by the Priest after the obligations to the shrine have been fulfilled.

Within the international literature, the imagery of the 'released' Trokosi woman, is one of stark contrast to that of the oppressed Trokosi woman presented earlier. The Trokosi woman has been transformed from an uneducated, unknowing, innocent victim to a self sufficient advocate, liberated by Christ and opposed to the oppressive traditions of her people. Within this discourse there is no room for complexity, tension or intricacy. The United States

⁴²¹ Benthall, 1993. *Disasters, Relief and the Media*. Tauris, London.

⁴²² See Section 7.2.5

State Department and the United Nations Development Report acknowledge the existence of a universally accepted image of the released Trokosi woman and contest that image. The UN cites that the women return to their traditional religions, and the USSD reports that no stigma is experienced by released Trokosi. However, as noted earlier, these discourses are not prominent in the international media.

Unlike the international literature 'Released' Trokosi women, national discourses provide plurality. One source presents a released Trokosi woman who revolts against her religion by attending Christian churches. Overwhelmingly, debates on the Trokosi practice are presented from the viewpoint of the Christian interventionist or the African renaissancist. However, rarely is it acknowledged that within this struggle the Trokosi women and children play out as pawns in the struggle for each group's political power. According to Vormawor, Afi revolts against traditional religion, by attending churches. Interestingly, this discourse not only acknowledges the existence of the religious battle between traditional religion and Christianity but within the discourse, the woman identifies her own body as the battleground.

Within the national literature, the released Trokosi is also represented as the only viable informant into the practice. The woman is introduced by the NGO and for a fee, can show you the great work of the NGO. When viewed with discourse from the CHRAJ, and in context with requests by the Executive Director of the NGO, requesting people to seek his permission to speak with released women; this creates an insidious image of 'released' Trokosi and the

extent to which the practice is constructed at the national level is likely to be questioned.

At the local level, members of the community seem to be more concerned with the requirement for liberated women to marry irresponsible men, than any abuses that may occur during their time serving within the shrines. Interestingly, this concern does not appear within any international literature concerning the practice. This could highlight that the actual concerns of the people whom practice Troxovi are not reaching the national or international levels, however this is difficult to ascertain as access to local stakeholders is patrolled by gatekeepers. Once again, discourse is predominately provided by urban males.

Table 5.2: Discourses on ‘Released’ Trokosi Women and Children

International	National	Local
Self Sufficient ⁴²³	Rescued by the NGO ⁴²⁹	Forced into marriage ⁴³⁴
Human Rights Advocates ⁴²⁴	Informant ⁴³⁰	Maltreated ⁴³⁵
Liberated by Christ ⁴²⁵	Revolutionary ⁴³¹	
Opposed to Traditional Religion ⁴²⁶	Represented ⁴³²	
Not Stigmatised ⁴²⁷	Constructed ⁴³³	
Participants in Traditional Religion ⁴²⁸		

⁴²³ <http://www.internationalneeds.org.au/appeals.asp?id=13> Accessed on the 3rd November 2009

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ www.ecmafrica.org/36223.ihtml Assessed on the 10th March 2009

⁴²⁶ *‘Yet, every girl who has been forced into the Trokosi slave system has seen what idolatry is really all about. Once freed, do you think any of them want to have anything to do with that life? No way!’*

Ibid.

⁴²⁷ USSD IRF 2004. [2c] Page 3

⁴²⁸ *‘A significant observation is that, in general, former Trokosi’s continue to associate themselves with the shrine into adulthood, making voluntary visits for traditional religious ceremonies.’*

UNHDR, 2007. Page 72.

⁴²⁹ Interview with employee of the NGO, 22 September 2008. *‘...to bring a smile onto the face of a young women who has been rescued from slavery and from bondage and has been given the opportunity to live life afresh. I think that these are the things that excite me and that keep me connected with [the NGO].’*

⁴³⁰ Interview with Independent researcher, 16th September 2008. *‘If you contact this woman [women’s name, an ex Trokosi], she will get you into the shrines, there is no other way, you will be chased out. They will show you the shrines that use to be in use and now they are empty because of the work of [the NGO]. They need US\$50 a half day to show you these things’.*

⁴³¹ Vormawor, 1998. Page 147. *‘Out of frustration, Afi revolted against the Trokosi system by attending Christian churches.’*

⁴³² Conversation with the Executive Director of the NGO. Principal Researchers Notes. 21st November 2008. *‘For ethical reasons I ask that you do not confront any of the women without my consent.’*

⁴³³ Interview with CHRAJ representative, 15th September 2008. *‘And some women that are ‘liberated’ were never Trokosi’*

⁴³⁴ *‘The situation where liberated Trokosi’s are allowed to marry men unknown to them, and who are unemployed within the catchment area of the shrines are unacceptable since they infringe on their human rights’* Koku Ntortsie Farmer, Dzodze. The Spectator, Op Cit.

⁴³⁵ *‘I understand most of the liberated Trokosi’s marry irresponsible men who depend on the women for their upkeep and maltreat them when they are unable to meet their demands. Abla Kporgo Ablochiva a Trokosi Woman at a Klikor Shrine. The Spectator, Op Cit.*

5.3 Discourses on the Fetish Priests

Once again, contrasting the representations of the fetish priest at the international, national and local levels provides evidence that the NGO's representation of the practice is incomplete and that opposing views provide valuable insight into the patriarchal nature of the practice. Once again, the literature proves that each stakeholder group represents the practice according to its own political agenda and that the voices of the women and children are missing, and therefore, what is *known* about the practice is incomplete.

Within the international literature the imagery of the priest ranges from the evil and violent one, who perpetuates the practice for his own gain; to an ignorant fool whose religion and belief system is worthy of mockery. In most of the international literature the priest is unquestionably represented as the cause of the evil Troxovi practice. This representation does not align with voices at the national level. As can be seen below; at the national and local levels the role of the priest is not simplistic, it is transitory and complex.

At the national level the discourse representing the priest ranges from one who upholds the protection of the community, a harmless religious practitioner, to a farmer. The most sinister representations of the priest refer to their ability to introduce you to the work of the NGO for a small fee, or males guilty of domestic inequality.

Local voices on the priest are somewhat lacking, as with many of the local stakeholders. Local literature available responds to and seeks to destabilise international perspectives, however this discourse still situates the priests as key

participants in an oppressive patriarchal practice that uses women and children as a means to an end for the benefit of the community. One priest claims that *'Those who are in doubt should not be talking about servitude in our shrines when they have not visited us to ascertain the truth'*,⁴³⁶ however when I sought to visit the shrines during the fieldwork period, I was denied access to the shrines by African Resistance Groups working in conjunction with fetish priests, and I was told that I was seeking to *'eradicate the culture of the African people'*.⁴³⁷

In this way, many practicing priests join with powerful National Resistance Groups declaring their intent to maintain control over their cultural practices. In doing so they ensure that control over the women and children is maintained also. One local informant claims that some priests perform rites under unhygienic conditions and, though this discourse does not present the priests as evil or abusive, as in the international literature, it speaks of one of the ways in which the life chances of the women and children may be negatively affected by involvement with the shrine.

⁴³⁶ The Spectator, Op Cit.

⁴³⁷ Discussion (did not agree to formal interview) with NRG leader. Principal Researcher's diary. 29th September 2008

Table 5.3: Discourses on the Fetish Priests

International	National	Local
Evil ⁴³⁸ Violent Rapist ⁴³⁹ Ignorant ⁴⁴⁰	Informant ⁴⁴¹ Protector ⁴⁴² Farmer ⁴⁴³ Harmless ⁴⁴⁴ Guilty of Domestic Inequality ⁴⁴⁵	Unhygienic ⁴⁴⁶ Misrepresented ⁴⁴⁷

⁴³⁸ *'The fetish has evil power.'* Development worker quoted in International Media; Brooker, 1996. Page 4

⁴³⁹ Liberated Trokosi quoted by the NGO in International Media *'By the time I was seven, the priest wanted to have sex with me, but I resisted until I was 12. I gave in because if you didn't sleep with him, the priest would beat you.'* Ibid. Page 3.

⁴⁴⁰ *'It is not uncommon for priests and shrine owners to 'sign' papers with their thumbprints, because their 'god' forbids them to learn to read and write'* International NGO Website www.ecmafrica.org/36223.ihtml Assessed on the 10th March 2009

⁴⁴¹ *'And if you contact this man [former fetish priest] he will show you shrines that use to be in use and now they are empty because of the work of the NGO. They need US\$50 a half day to show you these things'* Interview with independent researcher, commissioned by the NGO. 16th September 2008

⁴⁴² Ababio. 2000. Page 39

⁴⁴³ Interview with Employee of the NGO, September 2008

⁴⁴⁴ Letter from Ms Field Sociologist 1940 Ghanaian National Archives CSO 21/10/1. Letter dated 15/1/1940 In reference to Ningo Fetish

⁴⁴⁵ Interview with CHRAJ representative, 15th September 2008.

⁴⁴⁶ *'Some of the priests of the shrines perform their rites under unhygienic conditions which affect the health of the inmates.'* Moses Ahiamale. The Spectator, Op Cit.

⁴⁴⁷ *'We are not practicing servitude in our shrines. Those who are in doubt should not be talking about servitude in our shrines when they have not visited us to ascertain the truth.'* Meheso Dzaku Fetish Priest Adzima Shrine Dzodze The Spectator, Op Cit.

5.4 Discourses on the Practice

As can be seen in Table 5.4, the nature of the discourse on the practice varies across international, national and local levels. Key stakeholders at the international level only acknowledge negative aspects of the practice, while at the national and local levels stakeholders are more likely to acknowledge both the aspects that may require change in order to acknowledge individual rights, but are also more likely to point out the purpose of the system within the society.

Within the framework of neo-liberalist approaches and modern NGO marketing requirements, it is of little surprise that NGOs are unlikely to attempt to unpack complex social interactions to their western patrons. Therefore, rather than seeking to educate western donors on complex international issues, or risk turning away donors with narrow fundamental values, the practice is presented and represented as simplistically evil.

A representative from the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice supports the view that the practice is not as prevalent, or as abusive, as it is reported to be by international NGOs; it is also claimed that the Troxovi practice was a good system which reduced crime. A National Resistance Group leader also claims that the practice ensures the morality of society, a local informant claims that *'The terms are flexible to the extent that the liberated Trokosis visit the shrines occasionally to perform errands while others insist on rites which dehumanizes them'*⁴⁴⁸ and a local Herbalist claims that after

⁴⁴⁸ The Spectator, Op Cit.

serving in the shrines there are certain requirements as to who a Trokosi woman is allowed to marry.⁴⁴⁹ Once again, though national and local voices present the practice as a traditional system established for the good of the community, these arguments evidence the *lack of choice* available to the women and justify maintaining control over the women and children. The practice is represented as less abusive than internationally reported, however the women remain pawns within the community, acting as vessels of atonement for the crimes of men.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

Table 5.4: Discourses on the Practice

International	National	Local
Institution of Sexual Slavery ⁴⁵⁰ Secret ⁴⁵¹ Dirty Secret ⁴⁵²	Community Owned ⁴⁵³ Ensures Law and Order ⁴⁵⁴ Ensures Morality ⁴⁵⁵ Transforming ⁴⁵⁶ Good ⁴⁵⁷	Good ⁴⁵⁸ Ensures Morality ^{459 460} Not Bad ⁴⁶¹ Unifier ⁴⁶² Dehumanising ⁴⁶³ Costly ⁴⁶⁴ Severe Conditions ⁴⁶⁵

5.5 Discourses on the NGO

Schaffer and Smith refer to the ethical issues within human rights narratives in their ‘Human Rights and the Narrated Story’.⁴⁶⁶ The narrated story, refers to the current global trend in addressing human rights abuses through the

⁴⁵⁰ The NGO’s American Website
http://www.innetworkusa.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=39&Itemid=45 Accessed on the 3 November 2009

⁴⁵¹ Independent Researcher Commissioned by the NGO. The NGO’s website, 17th September 2008

⁴⁵² http://truthforafricalovers.com/truth_about_Trokosi__shrine_slavery Accessed on the 3rd November 2009

⁴⁵³ *The Truth about the Troxovi Institution Definitions and Origin*. Literature of a National Resistance Group. Chapter 5. Page 48

⁴⁵⁴ Discussion (did not agree to formal interview) National Resistance Leader. Principal Researchers notes. 29th September 2008

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Interview with CHRAJ representative, 15th September 2008.

⁴⁵⁷ ‘*The traditional system was like a court and the Trokosi practice was meant to reduce crime. We didn’t have soldiers, policemen; they had gods that had power/energy. It was good. If the court couldn’t find the culprit then the gods would. This is how the Trokosi system started.*’
 Interview with CHRAJ representative, 15th September 2008.

⁴⁵⁸ Futukpor, liberated Trokosi. *The Spectator*, Op Cit.

⁴⁵⁹ Dzaku Fetish Priest Adzima Shrine, Dzodze . *The Spectator*, Op Cit.

⁴⁶⁰ Tesu Yali, Herbalist. *The Spectator*, Op Cit.

⁴⁶¹ Ahiamale. *The Spectator*, Op Cit.

⁴⁶² Tesu Yali Herbalist. *The Spectator*, Op Cit.

⁴⁶³ Futukpor, liberated Trokosi . *The Spectator*, Op Cit.

⁴⁶⁴ Alato, Chief Farmer Afiegbedu. *The Spectator*, Op Cit.

⁴⁶⁵ Alato, Chief Farmer Afiegbedu. *The Spectator*, Op Cit.

⁴⁶⁶ Schaffer and Smith, 2004. Page 3.

use of stories supplied by those who have not had their human rights adhered to; in order to bring perpetrators to account. Schaffer and Smith state,

*'These acts of remembering test the values that nations profess to live by against the actual experience and perceptions of the storyteller as witness. They issue an ethical call to listeners both within and beyond national borders to recognize the disjunction between the values espoused by the community and the actual practices that occur.'*⁴⁶⁷

The role of the narrated story in creating qualitative accounts of how human rights abuses take place, how they can be averted in the future and what the consequences of such abuses are on individuals and communities; has been vital. In the case of the Second World War's 'Comfort Women', narrated accounts of the horrors suffered by kidnapped women forced into institutionalised sexual slavery highlighted the horrifying ambiguity of women's rights under international law.⁴⁶⁸ In 1987 Sally Morgan's narration of her discovery of her Aboriginal heritage is told in the biography 'My Place', selling over a million copies in Australia and highlighting the legacy of isolation, deculturalisation and discrimination experienced by Australia's stolen generation.⁴⁶⁹ Transcripts of victims testimonies from South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission were published globally and the atrocities supported through a racist regime were thrown into the international spotlight.⁴⁷⁰ However, Schaffer and Smith question what happens when autobiographical narratives emerge from local settings and are produced and reproduced within international settings; questioning how

⁴⁶⁷ Schaffer and Smith, Op Cit.

⁴⁶⁸ 'Pragmatism, International Law and Women's Bodies' Ustina Dolgopol. Australian Feminist Studies, Vol 11, No 24, 1996. Page 232

⁴⁶⁹ Morgan. My Place. 1987. Fremantle Arts Centre.

⁴⁷⁰ Truth and Reconciliation Report of South Africa. Released 21st March 2003.

personal narratives may take on new meanings within new contexts.⁴⁷¹ In short, the ethics of recognition, representation and authenticity become central to any human rights narration. For example, indigenous writer and historian Jackie Huggins points out the danger in making one form of Aboriginality intelligible to non-Aboriginals, in that other forms of Aboriginality could be excluded.⁴⁷² Similarly, Marcia Langton argues that white Australia's overwhelming response to *My Place* is due to the release and relief it provides to those who wittingly and unwittingly participated in the oppression of Aboriginal Australians, rather than the oppressed themselves.⁴⁷³

Likewise, rather than viewing the testimonies of former Trokosi women provided by and through the NGO, in isolation; discourses concerning the NGO itself bring powerful insights to the issues of representation of the women and children at the international, national and local levels. Within the discourse, the extent to which NGOs must compete is emphasised. International websites seeking donations from patrons claim that no former slaves have been re-enslaved, however the Executive Director of the NGO states that he would not be surprised if women and children were simply being taken to other shrines, once released.⁴⁷⁴ Similarly, the Executive Director and international websites aimed at Christian patronage networks, state that 98% of the women released by the NGO convert to Christianity.⁴⁷⁵ However, a senior member of staff within the NGO

⁴⁷¹ Schaffer and Smith, Op Cit.

⁴⁷² *Always Was, Always Will Be*. Jackie Huggins. *Australian Historical Studies*, 1940-5049, Volume 25, Issue 100, 1993, Pages 459 – 464

⁴⁷³ *Aboriginal Art and Film, the politics of representation*. Marcia Langton, 2005.

⁴⁷⁴ Interview with the Principal researcher. November 2008.

⁴⁷⁵ [The NGO website] Accessed on the 10th September 2008; Interview with Principal researcher. November 2008.

states that this cannot be verified as such data has never been collected.⁴⁷⁶ He also states that the proselytising of Christianity is strictly prohibited by the international government aid agencies that also help finance the programs.⁴⁷⁷ National Resistance Group leaders claim that there are currently no women living in the vocation centre, who were once Trokosi.⁴⁷⁸ During the fieldwork period it became clear that of several hundred women, there were only two ex-Trokosi women currently participating in the development program. The majority of the NGO's marketing material had not been adjusted to reflect this change and literature representing the project as a transformative program that releases women and children from slavery continue to be produced and reproduced internationally. The NGO reports,

*"The rehabilitation of ex-Trokosi slaves continues in Ghana. A further 100 women from rural communities have been transported to the [the NGO's] Vocational Training Centre at Adidome. The women were taken through the orientation process before receiving guidance counseling on their choice of vocation. Although their adjustment to their new lifestyle was slow, they were positive in spirit. Through intensive counseling, the women have gradually regained their confidence and self-esteem."*⁴⁷⁹

Again, this reflects the extent to which the stories of the women are used by the NGO to compete for funding, highlighting the need for NGOs to produce or reproduce the most abusive stories available in order to gain access to powerful western patronage networks. Therefore, the NGO represents itself differently,

⁴⁷⁶ Interview with Principal Researcher, September 2008.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Discussion (did not agree to formal interview) from Principal Researchers notes. 29th September 2008.

⁴⁷⁹ Literature provided by the national branch of the NGO to the international patronage network, through the NGO's international branches. Accessed at http://www.internationalneeds.org.au/files/inspiration_issue12009a3.pdf on 3 March 2010

according to the audience, stressing the ways in which NGOs compete for finance in difficult economic conditions. This highlights issues of verifiability within human rights narratives⁴⁸⁰ and confirms that human rights are not simply moral or ethical constructs; but that they are *politically grounded*.⁴⁸¹ The stories supplied by the women and children are controlled by the NGO. Therefore, behind every *report* of a human rights violation, there exists a power relationship; between witness and cameraman, story-teller and translator, journalist and interviewee, station master and news-watcher and between practitioner and victim.

It becomes clear in the literature that this competition is not just in reference to sourcing development funding but it is more often discussed in reference to '*glory*' for the important work of releasing slaves. Within the discourse the NGO provides self portraits, painting themselves as the rescuers of Ghana's women,⁴⁸² the pioneers of the Trokosi reformation movement⁴⁸³ and releasers are restorers.⁴⁸⁴ This is also seen at the local level when priests describe themselves as custodians of justice, morality, security and socialization;⁴⁸⁵ however the NGO's self portraits are represented to a wider audience. The Executive Director of the NGO also states that many international researchers have used the research materials of the NGO on the practice and published under their own names.⁴⁸⁶ This highlights the extent to which the lives of the women and children are seen, not only as a means to gain development

⁴⁸⁰ Schaffer and Smith, Op Cit. Page 28-33

⁴⁸¹ Jolly 2000. Haggis and Schech Ed. Page 145.

⁴⁸² DVD distributed by the NGO.

⁴⁸³ Document drawn up by the NGO for priests and chiefs to sign in order to gain access to development programs. Document copy from the NGO. September 2008.

⁴⁸⁴ DVD distributed by the NGO

⁴⁸⁵ The Spectator, Op Cit.

⁴⁸⁶ Principal Researchers Diary Notes, September 2008.

funds, but also as a means to gain prestige for the good work of rescuing women and children.

The issue of sustainability within development programs is highlighted by a researcher commissioned by the NGO, who states that the NGO must be careful to ensure that they are not seen as '*Father Christmas*' in view of other poverty alleviation programmes being offered within the district.⁴⁸⁷ This is an important issue and will be further discussed in the following chapters.

At the international level, the NGO is portrayed as a redemptive and transformative saviour and at the national level, the NGO is represented as fraudulent and/or ignorant.

Whilst the NGO's program may meet the basic needs of the women and children, the extent to which the released women are able to speak for themselves, represent themselves, choose their religion and participate within community and state politics is questioned. Therefore, whilst the NGO portrays adherents to the Troxovi practice as fundamentally evil and/or ignorant; the NGO is presented as fraudulent and/or ignorant (buffoon like), by National Resistance Groups.⁴⁸⁸ However, both groups are made up of patriarchal urban nationals who control access to, and dictate the futures of, the women and children.

Local literature highlights the need for the NGO to consult with local stakeholders. Both local informants cite the fetish priests as the people that should be consulted within the local setting. Within this dialogue local males perceive the shift in power whereby the NGO is able to also decide on the futures

⁴⁸⁷ *Enforce Criminal Amendment Law of Trokosi* Accessed on www.myjoyonline.com/tools/print/printnews on the 17th September 2008

⁴⁸⁸ Discussion (did not agree to formal interview) from Principal Researchers notes. 29th September 2008

of the women and children and therefore, they seek consultation with the powerful national males in '*dealing with the victims*'.⁴⁸⁹ This highlights the extent to which the women and children lack empowerment both within their communities and at the national level as they continue to be discussed and represented by powerful men.

⁴⁸⁹ The Spectator, Op Cit.

Table 5.5: Discourses on the NGO

International	National	Local
Worthy of Glory ⁴⁹⁰	Ineffective ⁴⁹⁷	Not consultative ⁵⁰⁶
Warriors Against Evil ⁴⁹¹	Inaccurate Reporters ⁴⁹⁸	Should Brainstorm
Saviours ⁴⁹²	Fraudulent ⁴⁹⁹	with other
Seen as Father Christmas ⁴⁹³	Unmonitored ⁵⁰⁰	stakeholders ⁵⁰⁷
Releasers and Restorers ⁴⁹⁴	Buffoons ⁵⁰¹	
Pioneers ⁴⁹⁵	Converters ⁵⁰²	
Achieves Permanent Results ⁴⁹⁶	Worthy of Credit ^{503 504}	
	Corrupt ⁵⁰⁵	

⁴⁹⁰ 'I told her that the glory belongs to the Lord... but [name withheld] wanted a sign with the name of her organisation, Missions International, in big letters. The other charity [the NGO] would be allowed only a small plaque inside on a desk. She insisted and the sign was uprooted.'

Ghanaian development worker liberating Trokosi. Brooker, 1996. Page 5.

⁴⁹¹ 'The funding of Church Planters, training of Trokosi girls and the education of their children is necessary to continue this battle against evil' International NGO Website. Accessed on the 10th September 2008

⁴⁹² 'If it were not for [the NGO] Ghana women like these would be still be in the shrine left with no hope at all.' DVD distributed by the NGO.

⁴⁹³ Independent researcher commissioned by the NGO. *Enforce Criminal Amendment Law of Trokosi* Accessed on www.myjoyonline.com/tools/print/printnews on the 17th September 2008

⁴⁹⁴ 'Just as that (shrine) is a place of fear, so this (NGO school) is a place of release and restoration' DVD distributed by the NGO.

⁴⁹⁵ Release document drawn up by the NGO and signed by Chiefs and Fetish Priests

'Now therefore we the undersigned have resolved and it is hereby resolved that we seek aid from [the NGO] pioneers of the Trokosi reformation movement, to perform all necessary rituals to effect the said reformation.' Document copy from the NGO. September 2008.

⁴⁹⁶ 'In Ghana, not one single shrine area has taken new slaves or re-enslaved former slaves after release.' International NGO Website; '[The NGO] staff have convinced the village leaders that they should let the girls go free.' DVD distributed by the NGO

⁴⁹⁷ 'I would not be surprised if communities who have released their Trokosi are just sending new girls to other shrines. It is the belief of the people, we have not changed their mindsets'

Executive Director of the NGO

⁴⁹⁸ Interview with CHRAJ representative, 15th September 2008.

⁴⁹⁹ 'Those buffoons over at [the NGO], they are involved in fraud, bribing of commissioners and they do not have any women at their centre who use to be Trokosi.' Leader of the National resistance movement. Discussion (did not agree to formal interview) from Principal Researchers notes. 29th September 2008

⁵⁰⁰ Interview with CHRAJ representative, 15th September 2008.

⁵⁰¹ Leader of the National Resistance Movement Discussion (did not agree to formal interview) from Principal Researchers notes. 29th September 2008

⁵⁰² Ababio, Op Cit. Page 56.

⁵⁰³ Executive Director of the NGO. Discussion with Principal Researcher, Principal Researchers Diary Notes September 2008.

⁵⁰⁴ '[The international arm of the NGO] has introduced you to [the National arm of the NGO] How can you do anonymous research? We will not receive the credit'. Discussion with Employee of the NGO. Principal Researcher's Journal Entry. 12th September 2008.

⁵⁰⁵ Interview with Principal Researcher, 15th September 2008.

5.6 Discourses on National Resistance Groups (Cultural Relativists)

National groups resisting the emancipation of the Troxovi practice use arguments that can be summarised in cultural relativist terms. The resistance movement claims that it is responding to a legacy of deculturalisation, perpetuated by the west through a history of travelers and intruders, the transatlantic slave movement, missionaries, colonisers and neo-colonialism within the current world order.⁵⁰⁸ According to voices provided by National Resistance Movements, Christian international patronage networks become the imperialist, the national development worker becomes the west's collaborator, and the resisters are seen as the nation's freedom fighters.

Following the NRG's direction in examining the past, it is of interest to re-examine the role of the African woman in reference to the struggle against colonialism as the framework remains the same.

Within this framework, women are positioned in exactly the same way as during the decolonisation of the nation whereby, the rights of the women become sacrifices to the greater good.⁵⁰⁹

During decolonisation agenda setting, colonial and nationalist male elites began the process of strategising the hand-over of the nation. Women were predominately excluded from these conversations,⁵¹⁰ resulting in a universalised male citizen as agent and target of development agendas, while women became

⁵⁰⁶ Dzaku Fetish priest, Adzima Shrine, Dzodze. The Spectator, Op Cit.

⁵⁰⁷ Ntortsie Farmer Dzodze . The Spectator, Op Cit.

⁵⁰⁸ Discussion (did not agree to formal interview) from Principal Researchers notes. 29th September 2008.

⁵⁰⁹ Rai, 2008, Page 21.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid. Page 12.

targets, and rarely agents.⁵¹¹ It is my argument that international, national and local discourse on the various stakeholders within the case study indicate that women’s positions within community, national and international settings have not changed since independence.(See diagrams 5.8 and 5.9) Poor African women are not permitted to participate in discussions concerning the transformation of their culture, rather, these discussions take place between the nation’s elite, who tend to be urban African males. Poor rural women remain the battleground on which the maintenance of culture is fought.

Table 5.6: Discourses on National Resistance Groups (Cultural Relativists)

International	National	Local
Like Hitler ⁵¹² Violent ⁵¹³ Refuse contact ⁵¹⁴ Organised ⁵¹⁵	Transformational ⁵¹⁶ Accepting ⁵¹⁷ Not Against Changing the Practice ⁵¹⁸	Not Available

⁵¹¹ Ibid. Page 37.

⁵¹² ‘Some well-funded traditionalists are working day and night to strengthen traditional devotion to the idol gods and to oppose release of the Trokosi slaves. The most pitiable of their claims is that the girls are not really slaves but are treated more like queens... This claim reminds us, in fact, of Hitler’s naming of his vans for gassing people to death as ‘Charitable Transport for the Sick’.’ www.ecmafrica.org/36223.ihtml Assessed on the 10th March 2009

⁵¹³ Independent researcher commissioned by NGO. Principal researchers Diary Notes, 12 September 2008.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

⁵¹⁵ Executive Director of the NGO. Interview with the Principal Researcher. November 2008

⁵¹⁶ ‘This council [set up by the National Resistance Group] has changed things. Now the Trokosi go to school. This council is a transforming from within as well, not just [the NGO’s] work’. Interview with CHRAJ representative, 15th September 2008.

⁵¹⁷ ‘So these people congregate together and find acceptance within a movement. And this thing has been with us and many people have been socialized in the practice, many people revere the deity and it makes it very difficult to infuse change within the framework of the rights based movement’. Employee of the NGO Interview with Principal Researcher, September 2008.

⁵¹⁸ Interview with CHRAJ representative, Op Cit.

5.7 Discourses on the Slave Trade and Trokosi

Within the international literature the practice has long been referred to as 'customary slavery' and the women and children referred to as 'slaves'.⁵¹⁹ Many national informants find it offensive that the traditional practice can be likened to slavery. Interestingly, within the international literature an international NGO website positions National Resistance Groups as '*the opposition*',⁵²⁰ once again positioning the women and children as passive targets within a holy tug-of-war, rather than agents of their own destinies. The same website indignantly reports that these same NRG leaders claim reparations from the West for the transatlantic slave movement.

In exactly the same manner in which resistance leaders argue that the human rights abuses committed by the west should disqualify westerners from intervening in human rights discussions in Ghana, international abolitionists argue that human rights abuses committed by Ghanaians should disqualify them from participating in discussions concerning human rights abuses committed by the West. Therefore, within the discourse the two groups point fingers concerning who has the right to discuss the plight of the women and children; leaving those affected totally removed from the discussion. This further evidences my claim that within the case study stakeholders prioritise their own political agendas over the empowerment of the women and children.

⁵¹⁹ See *Julie Dogbadzi escaped. Now she's freeing others. After a life of slavery*. Newsweek (International Edition) New York: April 5 1999 and Larkin B, 2000. *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom*. Report submitted to the Committee on Foreign relations US Senate. Joint committee Print.

⁵²⁰ www.ecmafrica.org/36223.ihtml Assessed on the 10th March 2009

At the national level, a Ghanaian member of upper management within the NGO avoids comparing the practice with the transatlantic slave movement, and rather highlights the way in which slavery has fixed Ghana's position within today's globalised world. The employee discusses how slavery destabilised communities and has created Ghana's current dependency on development funds. This discourse resonates with many of the concerns listed by National Resistance Group leaders, yet the two groups are unable to recognise mutual interests within international discourse as the NGO is reliant on development funding from international patronage networks. Therefore, certain national discourses that confront neo-colonialism are silenced at the international level due to the power relationship that exists between national development worker and international funder.

Table 5.7: Discourses on the Slave Trade and Trokosi

International	National	Local
<p>Trokosi ‘girls’ insist that they are Slaves⁵²¹</p> <p>Slave Trade and Troxovi are the same⁵²²</p> <p>Those Enslaved now Enslave others⁵²³</p>	<p>Has Caused Current Economic Peril in Ghana⁵²⁴</p> <p>Slave Trade and Troxovi are NOT the Same⁵²⁵</p>	<p>Not Available</p>

⁵²¹ www.ecmafrica.org/36223.ihtml Assessed on the 10th March 2009

⁵²² *‘For over 300 years the slave trade thrived from these shores. How can it be that in these shores, of all places on earth, a similar system exists even to this day?’*
DVD Circulated by the NGO.

⁵²³ *‘The other claim the opposition makes is that the Trokosi slave system should be preserved simply because it is the tradition of their people. It is interesting to note, however, that the very same people who make this claim at the same time condemn slavery in the West and even demand reparations! They didn’t like slavery when it was done to them, so why do they defend doing it to others?’*
www.ecmafrica.org/36223.ihtml Assessed on the 10th March 2009.

⁵²⁴ Employee of the NGO. Interview with Principal Researcher, September 2008.

⁵²⁵ *‘We must go and see the priests and chiefs as they are upset about us using the word ‘slave’ in reference to the Trokosi practice in our literature. They said ‘did we shackle these women, did we put them on ships and send them across the ocean?’* Staff member within the NGO. Principal Researchers Diary Notes. October, 2008.

5.8 Summary

This chapter substantiates my argument that the life chances of the Trokosi women and children are adversely affected by each stakeholder's inability to place the women's and children's needs as the central area of concern. 'Opposing' stakeholder groups that share mutual concerns are unable to work together in order to empower the women, because their own political agendas prioritise destabilising the other group's claims. Similarly, the NGO's representation of the women and the practice disempowers the women as it places them as passive victims, rather than agents of their own futures.

Within the discourse there is a resounding silence at the local level, contributing further evidence to my argument that the NGO's program does not empower the women in order to allow their voices to penetrate beyond the local level. This omission also results in a lack of accurate modeling or representation of the practice.⁵²⁶

Collins argues that suppressing the knowledge produced by any oppressed group allows dominant groups to rule as the absence of contestation infers that the group willingly collaborates in its own victimisation.⁵²⁷ The omission of the Trokosi women's voices resonates with Collins' claims that there is not only a racist bias in feminist theory, but also a masculinist bias in Black social and political thought.

⁵²⁶ Freedman, 2009. Page 46.

⁵²⁷ Collins, 2000. *Black Feminist Thought. Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Routledge. New York and London. Page 3.

The analysis of international, national and local discourse on the key stakeholders within the case study provides valuable insights into the power relationships that occur between each stakeholder group. Within the discourse the history of imperialism in Africa is a key theme. At the international level, white men and women are not required to acknowledge their role as oppressors, National Resistance Groups use cultural relativist arguments to justify the control of the women and children, national development workers are seen as 'collaborator's' in neo-colonialism and national elites are not required to acknowledge their role as oppressors within the nation itself. Throughout discussions on imperialism in Africa, the women and children remain silent, spoken for and represented by international white women or national urban males. This highlights the extent to which the women's and children's voices are able to be heard, decreasing their life chances.

The discourse examined within the chapter evidences the extent to which the women's and children's life chances are not the central area of concern for any stakeholder group. Rather, the imagery of the practice is constructed by those more powerful, controlling the very representation of who the women and children are, what their lives are like and what they want from life. For NRG's the women are the embodiment of culture and the battleground against imperialism and for the NGO they are vessels to claim for Christ. Meanwhile, the government of Ghana sits as referee between the two stakeholder groups, and dialogue is high jacked by the political interests of each group.

Whilst many reports on the prevalence and severity of the practice is contradictory, arguments outlining what the Trokosi women are 'allowed' to do, highlights the extent to which the movements of a Trokosi woman is decided on and controlled by local fetish priests. Similarly, the extent to which Trokosi women 'released' by the NGO are allowed to choose their own religion, participate in discussions concerning their own futures and represent their own interests is controlled by the NGO. Therefore, whether released by the NGO or serving within a shrine, the women and children are controlled within powerful patriarchal structures, which use the women and children to secure their own political power. The extent to which women's and children's life chances can be improved within this context is limited as the women and children are not able to challenge their unequal status and present their priorities and concerns; rather those of each stakeholder group takes priority over the life chances of the women and children.

Though national development workers and National Resistance Groups share some mutual concerns regarding neo-colonialism, national development workers are silenced in the international discourse as NGOs compete for prestige and finance, in difficult economic conditions. The two organisations are constructed as opposing forces and the extent to which neo-colonialism can be challenged is limited. This, once again, limits opportunities to challenge the unequal status of the women and children as a result of neo-colonialism, reducing their life chances.

The extent to which the NGO and NRG's positions can be likened to that of the national 'collaborator' within *Gunboat Diplomacy* discourse, makes way for discussions surrounding a new *Gunboat Humanitarianism*. Within the next chapter I argue that the history of intimidation and falsification in European relations with Africa continues to reverberate, negatively impacting on current human rights discussions within post-colonial states.⁵²⁸ This chapter also illustrates that the position of women within the fight against imperialism has not changed since independence. Poor African women remain the battleground for culture and are therefore, unable to participate in discussions concerning their futures. Within this context the women's and children's strategic needs cannot be met and life chances cannot be sustainably increased.

In order to side-step many of the problems inherent in human rights discussions within post-colonial states, and prevent the possibility of perpetrating colonialist views within the research, a capabilities approach will be applied.

.....

⁵²⁸ Onyeozili in Kalunta-Crumpton and Agozino, 2004. Page 226.

Western Feminists
Seeing as victims of culture
Seen as collaborators in their unequal status on the basis of race

Diagram 5.1
Tensions in Post-Colonial Nationalism and Women's Bodies

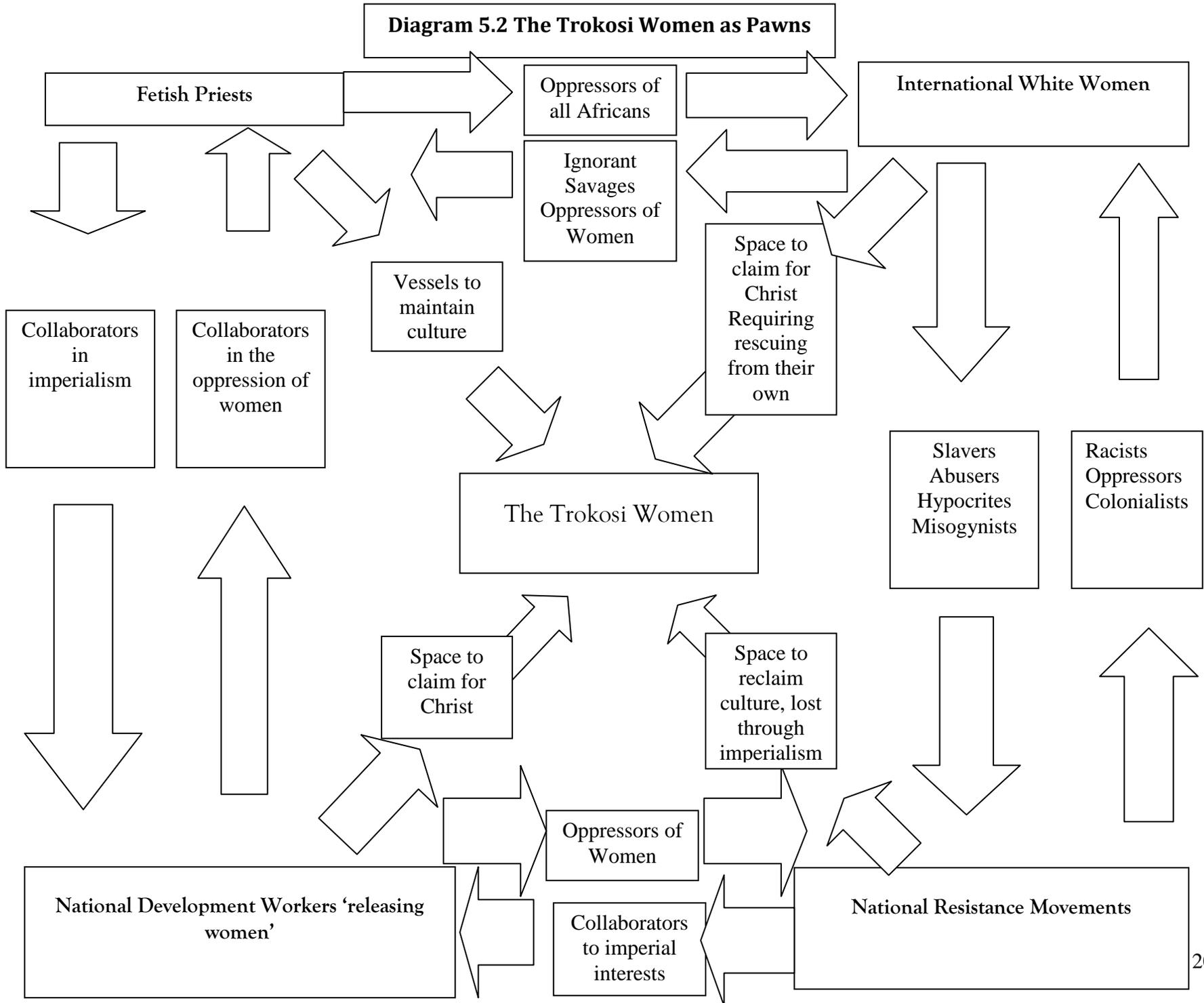
Imperial Powers
Seeing as the image confirming the notion of the 'uncivilised' African
Seen as collaborators in their unequal status on the basis of race and gender

3rd World Women's Bodies
in the Post-Colonial
Setting:

Modern Nationalist Elites
Seeing as a new space for the defining of modern culture
Seen as collaborators in their unequal status as their bodies are used to symbolise the reforming of culture.

Traditional Nationalist Elites
Seeing as the space to reclaim/maintain culture, in the post-colonial era.
Seen as collaborators in their unequal status on the basis of maintaining culture.

Diagram 5.2 The Trokosi Women as Pawns



Chapter 6 Beyond The Legacy of Mistrust

The history of Gunboat Diplomacy in Africa creates a legacy of mistrust in all European/African relations as *'the systematic use of intimidation and falsification of facts to secure subjugation of kings will of course reverberate in all future discussions concerning British relations with Africa...'*⁵²⁹ Onyeozili (2004) theorises on the context of the *'legacy of mistrust'* inherent in all African/European relations, *Gunboat Criminology* encompasses the complex interactions of colonisation, African consciousness, de-colonisation, neo-colonialism and nation-building politics. The history of *'Gunboat Diplomacy'* and *'Gunboat Criminology'* on the African continent is explored and the chapter begins by comparing the history of intervention on the continent with interventions into the Troxovi system and then questions the extent to which the NGO's transnational human rights intervention is, or can be likened to, a new *Gunboat Humanitarianism*.⁵³⁰

However, predominantly the chapter seeks to consider how transnational human rights interventions might move *beyond* the Legacy of Mistrust, in order to ensure women are able to lives worthy of human dignity.⁵³¹ The chapter differentiates women's practical needs and women's strategic needs and assesses the NGO's program in reference to women's reproductive, productive and community managing roles. This is of primary importance as, *'...it is profoundly wrong to subordinate the ends of some individuals to those of others.*

⁵²⁹ Onyeozili in Kalunta-Crumpton and Agozino, 2004. Page 205 - 25.

⁵³⁰ Ikime, 1977. Page 6.

⁵³¹ Nussbaum, 1999. Page 236.

*That is at the core of what exploitation is, to treat a person as a mere object for the use of others.*⁵³² As long as the legacy of mistrust is viewed as an impasse for women's rights in post-colonial states, these women will remain subordinated as mere objects for the use of others political gains.

6.1 Five themes of Gunboat Humanitarianism

Whether cited as the first line of defense for adherents, or ignored by interventionists funded by those who have benefited from the legacy; the history of slavery, imperialism, colonialisation, missionisation and neo-colonialism lies squarely in the centre of all discourses surrounding the Trokosi women and their children.

In my discussions with movement leaders who resist intervention into the Troxovi system, I was strongly admonished for researching human rights abuses within post-colonial states while Australia's indigenous people continue to be treated so abhorrently within my own nation. While I '*start wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and destroy nations*',⁵³³ and while my countrymen are responsible for shackling and enslaving the African people.⁵³⁴

Within interviews with employees from the NGO, senior members of staff refuted the link between neo-colonialism and transnational human rights interventions, with one stating that '*we do not try to impose foreign values on the*

⁵³² Ibid. Page 234.

⁵³³ Discussion (did not agree to formal interview) with NRG leader. Principal Researchers Diary. 29th September 2008.

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

people, we deal with the issues that are of benefit to the people' ⁵³⁵ and that human rights, as defined in the universal declaration of human rights, '*...are universally accepted norms, it has nothing to do with a western country or a developing country.*'⁵³⁶ However, within the same interview it was stated that '*Donors have their objectives clearly spelt out and sometimes you wish to carry certain other things onboard...but maybe within the context of the window you are accessing you may not be able to do that*'⁵³⁷ and also affirmed that '*the western model drives some of these things.*'⁵³⁸

Thus, resistance movement leaders fail to acknowledge their dual roles as oppressors, as well as the oppressed; and the NGO fails to acknowledge that their patronage network does not only seek to defend the rights of Ghana's rural women and children but have also benefited from their oppression (as indeed, all white people have; myself included).

Therefore, the legacy continues to reverberate throughout discussions concerning the Trokosi women and children and it is my argument that if discussions do not move *beyond* that of the legacy of mistrust, these discussions halt action defending the women's and children's right to live a life worthy of human dignity. I certainly do not suggest that the impact of the history of western interventions in Africa should be discarded or belittled, to the contrary. It is my argument that any theoretical approach seeking to deal with the Trokosi question must acknowledge the history and the impacts of intervention in Africa, and

⁵³⁵ Interview with NGO employee. September 2008.

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

provide a framework that allows action beyond the legacy. Without this, western donors continue to declare inequality on the grounds of sex and national resistance movements continue to declare inequality on the grounds of race; and the women and children remain oppressed at the hands of *both* imperialism and sexism.

It is my argument that it is important that any theoretical approach concerning the Trokosi question move beyond the legacy; but must also discuss and acknowledge that history within its framework. This is vital as leaving the voices of the oppressed out of history is, in itself a further oppression. Secondly, the very interventions that created the legacy of mistrust have cemented the economic position of the oppressed in our globalised world; and these power imbalances are not irrelevant to the oppression of the Trokosi women and children.⁵³⁹ And lastly, because excluding these discussions would ensure that power imbalances between *the west and the rest*⁵⁴⁰ go unchallenged. Development programs are often seen as an imperialist threat, therefore it is vital that development practitioners examine these interactions, in order to not further subordinate women through their development programs.

In order to assess the extent to which the NGO's transnational human rights intervention into the Trokosi practice is, or can be likened to a new Gunboat Humanitarianism,⁵⁴¹ the history of western intervention in West Africa will be explored. This will be explored through five themes that are inherent in

⁵³⁹ Bukh 1979, Page 29

⁵⁴⁰ Scruton, 2002. *The West and the Rest: Globalization and the Terrorist Threat*. Intercollegiate Studies Institute

⁵⁴¹ Ikime, 1977. Page 6.

discourse surrounding historical interventions in Africa and in discourse surrounding the Trokosi transnational human rights intervention. These themes are inexplicably linked and feed into one another. They include *slavery, women's roles, collaboration and resistance, conversion and Christianity and political/economic power.*

6.1.1 Slavery

The Trokosi practice is often referred to as slavery in international discourse, whereas adherents to the practice find this offensive, stating '*did we shackle these women, did we put them on ships and send them across the ocean?*'⁵⁴²

As discussed, the word 'Trokosi' has been translated in a variety of ways within various literatures. Within the field, it became clear that the translation of the word to mean '*slaves of the gods*'⁵⁴³ is prominent in international literature alone. Other international translations include '*brides to the gods*'.⁵⁴⁴ However, in the field national informants translated the word to be '*servant to the gods*',⁵⁴⁵ and indicated that any other translation would be incorrect. When I enquired '*could the word be translated as 'slave to the gods?*'⁵⁴⁶ I was told that the language has another word for slave. Similarly, as discussed,⁵⁴⁷ in Dangbe

⁵⁴² Interview with a member of upper management within the NGO, quoting adherents. September 2008.

⁵⁴³ Aird. Date not given. *Ghana's Slave to the Gods*. Washington College of Law. . Accessed at <http://www.wcl.american.edu/hrbrief/v7i1/ghana.htm> on the 28th March 2009. Page 1

⁵⁴⁴ *Ghana Studies Council Newsletter*. Issue 20. Summer/Fall 2007. Chari Remarks. Gocking R, Mercy College. Page 6

⁵⁴⁵ Principal Researchers Diary. Conversations with locals at Kokrobite Village, September 2008, November 2008. Interview with NGO employee. September 2008.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ See Section 4.3.3

regions, the word for *Trokosi* is *Woryokewe* and has been translated as 'slave to the gods' within international literature, however in Adanbge or Ga 'Won' means cult and 'yokwe' or 'Woryoo' refers to a female servant.⁵⁴⁸ The Ga word for 'slave' is 'Nyonn'.⁵⁴⁹

Lovejoy examines the definition of slavery and concludes that exact definitions of slavery are always subjective depending on time, geographical location, culture and economy, however he finds that generally the characteristics of slavery can be summarised as follows:⁵⁵⁰ Slaves are property, owned by a master, they are alien by origin or denied their heritage through judicial sanctions, they are kinless, slavery usually involves some form of coercion, slaves have no right to their sexuality or any right to make choices involving their own reproductive capacities, they '*...have no rights, only obligations*', slavery usually begins with violence in the form of warfare, kidnapping or banditry, the identity of the slave is through the master, the slave lives with an absolute lack of choice, the master has complete sexual access to the slave, and the slave's labour power has been at the complete disposal of their master.

Contested reports exist surrounding the practice and as access to the women and children is controlled by national urban males, the extent to which the Trokosi women and children are slaves cannot be assessed. However, it is of use to note that should the practice exist in accordance with adherents' claims, the practice still shares two characteristics with slavery, in that the women and children live with an absolute lack of choice in their fate and their labour is

⁵⁴⁸ Discussions with local residents, Greater Accra, Ghana. 30th September 2008.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁰ Lovejoy. 2000. Page 1-6.

controlled by the master. In this way, according to adherents' descriptions, the practice resonates with the practice of pawnship,⁵⁵¹ where a debt is paid for through labour; and when the debt is paid the pawn is redeemed by their kin and returned to their community.⁵⁵² However the key difference, and the reason that the rights of the women are children in question is that the Trokosi woman 'works off' a debt that is not her own.

Adherents to the Troxovi practice point to the function that the practice fulfills within the society to justify its continuance;⁵⁵³ however slavery, in all its forms, has fulfilled a function within the society in which it exists. The function may be social, political, economic or a combination of these.⁵⁵⁴ Whether political, economic or social, slavery serves the master or the community, and never the slave. Historically, some forms of slavery have evolved from fulfilling one function and expanded to incorporate a combination of these. For example, indigenous slave practices in West Africa were based on tribal survival. Prisoners were taken in warfare and assimilated into the community and this was a social form of slavery.⁵⁵⁵ However, the transatlantic slave movement began as an economic form of slavery and evolved into a combination of economic and political slavery.⁵⁵⁶ Slavery's role in the economy cemented slavery as an institution within society.⁵⁵⁷ Similarly, whilst adherents claim that the practice serves a

⁵⁵¹ Ibid. Page 5

⁵⁵² Lovejoy. 2000. Page 5

⁵⁵³ The Spectator, Op Cit.

⁵⁵⁴ Miller. 1998. From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate Commerce': The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-Century West Africa. (Book Reviews). The Historian, Spring 1998. Volume 60, Number 3. Page 607 (3).

Page 1

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

social function within the society, the practice also secures the economic and political positions of the powerful within the community by controlling the women's labour.

Another interesting link between historical slavery within West Africa and the Troxovi practice is missionisation. This will be explored within the *Christianity and Conversion* theme.

6.1.2 Women's Roles

It is reported that when asked why girls are taken to shrines, and not boys, the priest will laugh at you and say '*men cannot sweep and cook, that is women's work.*'⁵⁵⁸ Within Troxovi practicing communities women's roles consists of sweeping, cooking and labouring without remuneration. This is true of most rural women in Africa and is often viewed as inherent in African culture, however the role of women has been drastically influenced through western intervention.

At the turn of the 20th century, the production of cocoa became the principal industry of colonial interest in modern day Ghana, and in 1902 modern day Ghana was declared a British protectorate and named *The Gold Coast*. In the space of just 20 years, cocoa went from being exported at a rate of 80 lbs annually to 39, 000 ton annually in 1911.⁵⁵⁹ The introduction of cocoa cultivation in modern day Ghana, significantly changed the role of Ewe women. Jette Bukh argues in her '*The Village Women in Ghana*' that,

⁵⁵⁸ Interview with representative from the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice, 15th September 2008.

⁵⁵⁹ Hill 1963, page 117. *The migrant cocoa-farmers of southern Ghana: A study in rural capitalism*. Cambridge, U.K. Cambridge University Press

*'...the development of the market economy and the introduction of cocoa cultivation brought a new social division of labour that allocated to women a major role within subsistence activities, while the men were drawn more into the cash economy, first as cocoa producers and then later on, when the conditions for cocoa production changed, also as migrant labourers.'*⁵⁶⁰

Bukh (1979) transcribes the productive activities of the Ewe as recorded through oral tradition:⁵⁶¹ She states that in the older days agriculture was carried out exclusively by men. Before cocoa was introduced women helped on the farms only in times of harvest or weeding and only if the family had no slaves in pledge. However, with the introduction of wage labour, the men were no longer present for seasons at a time and therefore the responsibility of food production became one of the main responsibilities of the village's women. Colonial regimes often reinforced unequal gender relations by providing certain training to men, based on their belief that men were suited to certain tasks, and women to others.⁵⁶² Women were often completely excluded from economic and political activities due to the colonial fixation with controlling African women's sexuality and reproductive capacities.⁵⁶³ In this way, the families food provisions became predominately the women's responsibility, unaccounted for in the new financial arrangement, whereas men's labour became family income, usually more *'visible and valued.'*⁵⁶⁴ This new formation in household economy forged the decision by women to partake in extra labour activities in order to sell a surplus and take advantage of the new cash system in operation. They would sell the extra in the

⁵⁶⁰ Bukh, 1979. Pg 11.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid. Pages 28 - 29

⁵⁶² Rai, 2008. Page 21.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid. Page 20 – 21.

local market, in order to take part in the market economy and thus; the work of women was increased.⁵⁶⁵

Active amongst the Ewe since 1847, it was the German pietist missionaries of the Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft (NMG) that first introduced Christianity to the Ewe people; however this did not involve an introduction to Christ alone. Meyer's (1998) research argues that Missionisation not only saw the introduction of western consumer goods, but in fact introduced the consumption of western goods as an indicator of a moral and Christian lifestyle and used this viewpoint as a means to *civilise* the Ewe.⁵⁶⁶ The NMG did not agree with the introduction of trade activities amongst the Ewe, believing that it was the role of Africans to produce raw material and the role of Europeans to trade. The NMG promoted paid labour through its educational system. It promoted teaching, clerkships, cash crop farming and artisan activities; however, these paid positions were not promoted to all members of the Ewe community. Young women could only work as '*housegirls*' at the mission posts or as childcare attendants in the kindergartens. Once married, Ewe women were expected to devote themselves entirely to their immediate families.

The mission expected Ewe converts to wear western clothes and possess western goods; and their lack was viewed as a sign of '*savagery*', which was considered entirely *unchristian*.⁵⁶⁷

Interestingly, many of the missionaries were driven from their homes in Wurttemberg in southern Germany to West Africa, by a deep suspicion of the

⁵⁶⁵ Bukh, Op Cit. Page 29

⁵⁶⁶ Meyer, ,1998. Pg 754

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid. Pg 755

nature of consumerism, yet introduced that exact same consumerism to West Africa. The introduction of this consumerism promoted changes within the very fabric of African society: The family.⁵⁶⁸

Meyer records that the missionaries encouraged the Ewe converts to move away from the extended family, and rather to live with the nuclear family only. In this way, the nuclear family's home could be furnished with western goods, displaying the converts move from *savage* to *civilised*. The introduction of western furniture saw a change in eating habits within the family and the introduction of western clothing brought about changes in existing patterns of cooperation between family members. Prior to colonisation, women were responsible for the spinning of cloth, however the weaving was done only by men. In this way husband and wife had to cooperate in order to produce clothing for the family. Whilst traditionally, members of the community were expected to share their wealth with their extended families, the mission encouraged the nuclear family as the primary unit of production, distribution and consumption. The mission viewed itself as an anti-materialistic religion, and acted upon this doctrine by burning the objects used in the people's traditional religion. However, by introducing western consumerism as part and parcel of a worthy Christian life, the mission produced Christianity through consumption, in order to create civilisation.⁵⁶⁹

It was only during the Second World War that the dependency on the world economy became evident amongst the Ewe. The demand for cocoa

⁵⁶⁸ Meyer, 1998. Pg 756-758

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid. Pg 757

declined, and the Ewe were left with the produce, without a means to participate in the exchange for western goods. This moved the Ewe back into a subsistence existence and coupled with a decline in cocoa cultivation, for many communities migration labour became the only way to make money. As men had been promoted to these positions by the missionaries, they migrated and the women, children and elderly stayed at home; becoming more and more reliant on their men for cash.

The introduction of Christianity, through consumerism amongst the Ewe, did not only introduce the consumption of western goods. Through a series of racist and sexist practices, the missions supported dependency on the global economy, secured Africans as the producers of raw materials to a European market, excluded women from the cash economy, subjected women to domestic employment only, banished married women to the home, changed existing patterns of cooperation between family members and supported uneven distribution of wealth within the community. Essentially, the introduction of Christianity, significantly undermined the community's previous moral order⁵⁷⁰ and modified the social order of the family unit. These events were in no way negligible in the formation of women's roles within Ewe communities.

6.1.3 Collaboration and Resistance

Collaboration and resistance are key themes within both the history of imperialism in West Africa and intervention into the Troxovi practice. The link is so strong that Africa's Diaspora resists the emancipation of the Troxovi practice,

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid.

which they perceive as cultural imperialism, by funding National Resistance Groups.⁵⁷¹ For these patrons, cultural imperialism is a greater threat than slavery, whereby the national development worker becomes the west's collaborator, and the resisters are seen as the nation's freedom fighters. Collaboration and resistance within the case study mirrors collaboration and struggle during Africa's imperialist past in several ways. In much the same way as during the transatlantic slave trade, collaboration is reproduced within international discourses and resistance is silenced, the complex interactions between national stakeholders are uninterrogated within Eurocentric texts and the economic consequences of resistance and the cultural consequences of collaboration are unexamined by western interventionists.

Beckles reports that *'The people who paid the highest price for standing against the [slave] trade were the Africans themselves. They continue to pay a price because their struggle has been written out of history within Eurocentric texts, and their invisibility in abolitionism maintained.'*⁵⁷²

Collaboration was central to *Gunboat Diplomacy*, and has been well recorded into history;⁵⁷³ however the resistance of Africans themselves during capture, transportation on the slave routes, the middle passage and in their final destinations has been written out of history. In order to compare the similarities of collaboration and resistance this history will be explored.

Whilst some African elites did collaborate with traders and participate in violent raids, other important leaders resisted the enslaving of their people. King

⁵⁷¹ Personal communication with Executive Director of the NGO. September 2008.

⁵⁷² Beckles, 2007. Page 88.

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

Afonso I of the Congo; Sundiata, founder of the Mali Empire; the great scholar of Timbuktu; Ahmed Baba and Shaka, King of the Zulus all openly resisted the transatlantic slave trade.⁵⁷⁴ However, rulers were not the only ones that resisted slaving. The struggle of the people against slaving stirred through communities and became a movement of resistance as important as the arrangements between slavers and collaborators.⁵⁷⁵

Beckles (2007) documents the following displays of resistance undertaken by Africans themselves.⁵⁷⁶ In 1703 Africans overpowered the guards at Fort Sekondi and beheaded the supervisor. In the same year a European slave agent in Anomabu was forced to buy his life with slave money, by attackers. In 1727 slaves succeeded in a rebellion in the Fort Crevecoeur on the Gold Coast; those uninjured gained their freedom, however those injured in battle were put to death on the wheel. In 1730 Captain Adrian Vanvoo, Dutch slaver and owner of the French vessel *the Phoenix*, left the vessel and the crew at the mouth of the River Volta (Eweland) as he and the vessel's captain left to negotiate the sale of a group of slaves with a river chief. A group from the local community gathered around the vessel and burnt it to the ground. Dozens of the crew and many slaves lost their lives during the battle. In 1758 Captain William Potter and his crew, on the ship *Perfect* were attacked by community members and the whole crew was killed. In 1767 thirty warriors in Calabar attacked English slavers unsuccessfully, as the English were assisted by collaborators, and the leader of the warriors was beheaded and survivors sold into slavery. In 1768 Hugh

⁵⁷⁴ Kake in Diene 'From Chains to Bonds – The Slave Trade Revisted' Paris. 2001, Page xxiii.

⁵⁷⁵ Beckles, 2007. Page 82.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid. Pages 82 – 86.

Thomas of the *Cote d'or* was assaulted on the Volta River (Eweland) by warriors in rafts, freeing all the slaves. In 1776 *Peleg Clarke* had thirty six slaves who jumped overboard just clear of Accra. Many more community attacks, uprisings and suicides can be found in the logs of the Dutch and British traders. So much so that '*Slavers knew that Africans would rise if any opportunity was offered.*'⁵⁷⁷

Beckles claims that Africans found enslavement an alien form of social oppression. The arbitrary and random way in which all members of society were chained and reduced to mere property was unfamiliar to Africans and was resisted. In response to this new form of social oppression, social protest moved away from traditional forms in West Africa. Resistance and protection mechanisms adopted resulted in mass migration of whole people groups, a restructuring of economic activities, new agricultural farming patterns to enable quick results on new land and the fortifying of land through the building of protection walls.

The resistance of communities and those captured are rarely acknowledged in the abolition of the slave trade⁵⁷⁸ and in much the same way, questions concerning resistance within Troxovi practicing communities have not been asked within the international discourse. During personal communication with a senior member of the NGO's international branch, the question of *Gunboat Humanitarianism* was raised. The staff member responded, '*If we were sending in a bunch of white missionaries or development workers to eradicate cultural practices then yes, it would be an issue, but [the NGO] only employs*

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid. Page 85-86.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

Ghanaians.⁵⁷⁹ What is omitted from this view is that historically, imperialists have always required the aid of nationals to further their political agenda. This reductionist view sees all Ghanaians as a homogenous group and fails to recognise the complex interactions between people groups *within* Ghana.

. The unequal positions created through class, gender and ethnicity are ignored. During slavery, national slavers from the interior collaborated with slavers and during colonialism chiefs interpreted land rights in a manner that would benefit their own agendas.⁵⁸⁰ Do national elites fill the space of the collaborator within the neo-colonialist era? Questions concerning what is lost and what is gained through working for the NGO are never raised within international discourse on the practice.

Other important questions concerning resistance are also ignored. Do the women and children employ forms of resistance against the practice? Do other community members employ forms of resistance? Are the priests the only resisters within Troxovi practicing communities? Do any of the women resist the NGO's intervention? If so, in what ways? Rather than exploring what is resisted and how, within international discourse, the women and children are represented as passive victims who are acted upon, rather than being '*agents of history*'⁵⁸¹ themselves. In this way the women and children are disempowered and written out of history.

⁵⁷⁹ Personal Communication with the Principle Researcher. March 2009.

⁵⁸⁰ Firmin-Sellers. 1996. *The Transformation of Property Rights in the Gold Coast. An Empirical Analysis Applying Rational Choice Theory*. Cambridge University Press. Page 146

⁵⁸¹ Crush, 1995. Page 241.

Within any analysis of indigenous collaboration within struggles against imperialist powers, the consequences of resistance must be weighed. During the transatlantic slave movement, military and political factors were important motives. With the trading in slaves and guns dominating economic life, traditional forms of trade patterns were destabilised.⁵⁸² In order to survive economically, and therefore politically, dependence on slaving forged large armies '*unleash[ing] violence across communities*'.⁵⁸³ Politically, participation in the new trade became a matter of survival for many people groups and in some cases the price to be paid for standing against the trade was to face the weight of European military power.⁵⁸⁴ Beckles argues that '*Leaders who resisted involvement were targeted by European slavers for military destabilization*'⁵⁸⁵ and Lamouse-Smith asks important questions such as: did African leaders know what the European interest was and could they understand and foresee the future implication of their commercial exchanges?⁵⁸⁶

Just as collaboration was central to *Gunboat Diplomacy*, collaboration is central to *Gunboat Humanitarianism* also. As a result of imperialist activity in West Africa, trading in slaves and guns dominated economic life and in order to survive economically many African elites collaborated with the slavers.⁵⁸⁷ Today, as a result of globalisation, colonisation and neo-colonisation, Ghana's position within the global economy has been cemented. Currently 28.5% of Ghana's

⁵⁸² Beckles, 2007. Page 87.

⁵⁸³ Ibid. Page 82.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid. Page 88.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid. Page 83.

⁵⁸⁶ Lamouse-Smith, 2007. Page 228.

⁵⁸⁷ Beckles, Op Cit. Page 87.

population continues to live in poverty, with 18.2% living in extreme poverty.⁵⁸⁸ Within the rural setting inhabited by the Ewe, 60.1% of the population live in poverty, with 45.4% living in extreme poverty.⁵⁸⁹ In Ghana's current economy, international aid inflows are as important to the nation's economy as all combined trade exports. In 2008 Ghana's aid inflows were equal to the nation's trade in exports (\$4 billion),⁵⁹⁰ and of the \$4 billion aid dollars, it is estimated that \$1.9 billion is made up of individual remittances.⁵⁹¹ Therefore, the important questions put forward by Lamouse-Smith are just as important in Ghana today: What is the cost of resistance? Do African collaborators know what European interest is and do they understand and foresee the future implications of their commercial exchanges?⁵⁹²

Who resists and who collaborates, the ways in which resistance and collaboration take place, the complex interactions between national resisters and national collaborators and the economic consequences of resistance and the cultural consequences of collaboration are unexamined within the literature on the Troxovi practice, much like within Eurocentric texts on the transatlantic slave movement.

⁵⁸⁸ Ghana Statistical Service, *Pattern and Trends of Poverty in Ghana, 1991-2006*, April 2007, Tables A1.1 and A1.2. Cited in UNDP, *Human Development Report*. 2007. Page 25.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁰ United States State Department website. Accessed at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2860.htm> on the 27th February 2010.

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹² Lamouse-Smith, *Op Cit*. Page 228.

6.1.4 Conversion and Christianity

*'The way the campaign against [the Trokosi] Institution is proceeding gives the impression an attempt is being made to replace African Traditional Religion with Christianity. This is unfortunate and discriminatory. Christianity failed to prevent crime in Europe.'*⁵⁹³

Wilmington states that religious conversion of indigenous peoples has been part of all British colonial efforts since the settlement of Virginia began in 1607.⁵⁹⁴ Therefore, there is no escaping the relationship between European intervention and the introduction of Christianity. Historically, Christianity presented colonisation as a means to further engage Africa in commerce, in order to *civilise the natives*.⁵⁹⁵ Within the Troxovi case study, NGOs provide international patronage networks with discourse that reflects a similar attitude. On the website of an NGO releasing the women it is stated,

*'It is not uncommon to see a priest walking long distances barefoot in the scorching sand, because his "god" forbade him to wear even sandals.'*⁵⁹⁶

Interestingly, oral tradition traces this practice back to the Old Testament,⁵⁹⁷ where Moses is confronted with the burning bush and God says to him, "*Do not come any closer, take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.*"⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹³ Quoting the Director of a National Resistance Group. Dovlo, 2005. Page 629.

⁵⁹⁴ Wilmington, J. 'Writing on the Sand: The First Missions to Aborigines in Eastern Australia', in Swain and Bird Rose, eds., *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions: Ethnographic and Historical Studies*, Australian Association for the Study of Religions, Adelaide, 1988, at 77.

⁵⁹⁵ Meyer, 1998. Pg 757

⁵⁹⁶ www.ecmafrica.org/36223.ihtml Assessed on the 10th March 2009

⁵⁹⁷ Personal communication with the son of the Chief of Oshiyie, Greater Accra Region. 3 March 2010.

⁵⁹⁸ Exodus 3 verse 5.

The history of colonial activity reminds us that it is not only possible for policies and organisations to be both humanitarian and racist, but that these dual factors have been the cornerstone of much colonial activity. Within Australia and Canada, the need to control indigenous populations was both racist and humanitarian⁵⁹⁹ and though international NGOs may seek humanitarian ends, providing western patrons with the imagery of savage fetish priests in order to achieve that end mirrors a racist past that has ongoing consequences for those who were colonised.

In discussions with a National Resistance Group leader, it was stated; '*Christianity is here to obliterate what we have left of our African culture.*'⁶⁰⁰ The extent to which the development program offered to the women and children also promotes societal changes from within families in Troxovi practicing communities is worth exploring.

During a fundraising '*Save the Slaves*' tour, conducted in Australia by the NGO in 2005, a former Trokosi woman who was *released* by the organisation told her story.⁶⁰¹ The survivor spoke very little English and her story was translated by a staff member of the NGO. At the end of her narrative, the translator explained that the woman has given her life to Christ as a result of the program, and she has been renamed '*Mercy*' by the organisation.

⁵⁹⁹ Buti, 1999. Page 9.

⁶⁰⁰ Discussion (did not agree to formal interview) with National Resistance Leader. Principal Researchers notes. 29th September 2008.

⁶⁰¹ *Save the Slaves Tour* Adelaide. October 9, 2005.

Communicating in English for the first time that evening the former Trokosi woman stated, '*I am Mercy because God showed his Mercy to me.*'⁶⁰²

The act of renaming indigenous people with Christian names follows colonial practices. Renaming has been adopted in many colonies, including Australia and Canada, and usually takes place through the mission schools.⁶⁰³

Buti reports '*The desire to 'tame' the 'wildness' in indigenous children was apparent in practices adopted.... Typical, and perhaps most fundamental in the move to re-socialise indigenous children, was the practice of renaming children on their arrival at residential schools and Australian Aboriginal missions....*'⁶⁰⁴

Similarly, the act of renaming the Trokosi women points to a desire to re-socialise and control the women, rather than empower them. The NGO reports to the patronage network that the women are taught to pray and are taught literacy skills through reading the bible.⁶⁰⁵ Academics and practitioners alike, agree that literacy is fundamental to women achieving empowerment,⁶⁰⁶ therefore the acquisition of literacy skills within programs is fundamental to their empowerment. However the use of Christian texts in order to achieve literacy, again, imitates a colonial past.

Are the women taught to pray and read the bible within the program? Are fetish priests viewed as savages by the organisations releasing the women and children? Are the women renamed with Christian names within the program? Or

⁶⁰² Ibid.

⁶⁰³ Buti. 1999. Page 29.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁵ Principal Researcher's diary notes, September 2008.

⁶⁰⁶ *Innovative Approaches to Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment* UNDP Paper for the partnership event on September 25 2008. MDG3 – Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women – A prerequisite for achieving all MDG's by 2015. New York, 2008. Page 63.

are these practices simply marketing campaigns reported on for the benefit of the patronage network? Either way, the program perpetuates the concept of providing Christianity as a means to escape savagery, in exactly the same way as was carried out in West Africa's colonial history. In the decades leading up to Ghana's independence, the British Gold Coast's colonial administration waged a war against fetish shrines and traditional religion. The administration required that shrines obtain licenses from the government in order to function and passed laws stating that the government was able to close down shrines should it see fit.⁶⁰⁷ During this period, many fetish shrines became centers of resistance to colonial rule.⁶⁰⁸ As the struggle for independence intensified, Christianity and the traditional religions were represented as opposing sides in the battle between the African and the Imperialist. Christianity as a representative of imperialism and colonial rule continues today as Smith argues,

*'Concepts of spirituality which Christianity attempted to destroy, then to appropriate, and then to claim, are critical sites of resistance for indigenous peoples. The values, attitudes, concepts and language embedded in beliefs about spirituality represent, in many cases, the clearest contrast and mark of difference between indigenous peoples and the west. It is one of the few parts of ourselves which the West cannot decipher, cannot understand and cannot control... yet.'*⁶⁰⁹

Ghana's National Archives paint an interesting picture of the colonial administrations misinterpretation of the beliefs and practices of the people, much like international discourse on the Troxovi practice today. In 1937 worshippers at

⁶⁰⁷ Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Ghana [CSO 21/10/4]. Document dated 6th October 1939 .Accessed on the 11th September 2008.

⁶⁰⁸ Allman and Parker, 2007. *Defying Dichotomies of Tradition versus Modernity*. The Journal of African History, 48: 157-159 Cambridge University Press. Page 158

⁶⁰⁹ Tuhiwai Smith, 2007. Page 74.

Sogbo Fetish submitted a petition to the Government and Commander in Chief requesting that their shrine be allowed to continue to function, stating that they do not use human lives as sacrifices.⁶¹⁰ In 1939 at a meeting of the Executive Commissioner in the Volta Region, the colonial government recommended in an Order in Council under Section 14 (1) of the Native Customs Ordinance (Caption 77), that the government prohibit the practice of Fetish worship in certain shrines where priests claimed to have the power to strike people dead.⁶¹¹ Three months later government sociologist, Ms MJ Field, wrote a letter to the government pointing out the positives of the people's traditional practices and the ways in which the belief system is similar to Christianity.⁶¹² She then articulates that all Africans believe that any person who dies is taken by the gods and points out that therefore, to claim that the gods have struck people down, is not uncommon in their belief system. A month later the Commissioner of the Eastern Province, Duncan Johnstone, authored a letter to the Commission of the Gold Coast Police explaining that in the interests of keeping order, shrines were now able to be destroyed without requiring a court order and that all police officers were to be accompanied by a European police officer. The letter then ordered the destruction of 15 shrines. Over the next two months, 33 worshippers were convicted and sentenced and priests were fined \$25 or were to face 6 months imprisonment for continuing to practice in shrines closed down by the administration. Two months later a further 27 were arrested and made to destroy

⁶¹⁰ Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Ghana [CSO 21/10/10]. Letter dated 28th December 1937. Accessed on the 11th September 2008.

⁶¹¹ Ibid.

⁶¹² Ibid.

their shrines in public and the shrines were burnt to the ground. The following month, in June 1940 the Criminal Investigation Commission of the Gold Coast Colonial government issued over 500 fetish licenses at 30/- per annum. This money was used '*to help with the Anglo Administration Fund.*'⁶¹³ Finally, on the 18th August 1946 a letter was received by the Colonial Secretaries Office in Britain, noting the increase in the fetish practice, stating there has been '*unjustifiable interference in the expression of the religious beliefs of a large number of people*'⁶¹⁴ and points out that the Offices' main concern is that some priests are abusing their power by taking large amounts of money from worshippers.⁶¹⁵

It is unsurprising that the legacy of mistrust impacts so significantly on the development program offered by the NGO. The program's approach to the religious practices of the people mirrors that of the colonial administration and therefore shrines have once again become spaces of resistance. Traditionalists continue to fight imperialist fundamentalism; fearing the ongoing destruction of their places of worship. The extent to which the program can meet the strategic needs of the Trokosi women and their children is greatly decreased within this context.

⁶¹³ Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Ghana [CSO 21/10/4]. Document dated 11th of June 1940. Accessed on the 11th September 2008.

⁶¹⁴ Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Ghana [CSO 21/10/23]. Accessed on the 11th September 2008.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid.

6.1.5 Political/ Economic Power

*'Africa, well poised like Europe and Asia for economic development at the end of the 15th century, was plundered and derailed by the reign of terror known as the transatlantic slave trade from which it has yet to recover.'*⁶¹⁶

Following Foucault's power/knowledge paradigm,⁶¹⁷ the following section outlines the way in which political and economic power were inexplicitly linked during West Africa's imperialist history and compare the extent to which this is the case in modern day Ghana, through the case study.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as many as four million slaves were exported from the West African coast alone.⁶¹⁸ By this time slavery had progressed from being a marginal feature of society to becoming an institution due to its role in local, national and international economies.⁶¹⁹ For the Ewe, this '*reign of terror*'⁶²⁰ involved consistent raids by the Ashanti people and, caught in the vicious circle created by the transatlantic slave movement, the Ewe people also traded in various forms of slavery.⁶²¹ Ewe families that had managed to preserve a surplus of food, traded the food for items such as salt, iron tools, guns, gunpowder, alcohol, tobacco and domestic slaves.⁶²² It was the purchase of these slaves and weapons that protected the Ewe people against further raids.⁶²³ Therefore, resistance from the imperialist during the transatlantic slave

⁶¹⁶ Beckles, Op Cit. Page 87.

⁶¹⁷ Foucault. [1976] (1998). *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1: The Will to Knowledge*. London: Penguin.

⁶¹⁸ Lovejoy, 2000. Pg 80

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

⁶²⁰ Beckles, Op Cit.

⁶²¹ Bukh 1979. Page 26.

⁶²² Ibid. Page 26-27

⁶²³ Ibid.

movement was reliant on achieving sufficient economic power in order to gain political power. Similarly, gaining political power through slave raids, secured greater economic power through the labour of captured slaves.⁶²⁴

Economic power as political power can be identified within the case study. Both Christian and African NGOs tap into the patronage networks most likely to yield the greatest economic result in order to establish the group's political goals. This political power is used to represent the needs of communities and in turn, enables both NGOs to acquire more funding. Resistance movements are funded by patronage networks from the Diaspora in the United States,⁶²⁵ and groups seeking to emancipate the Troxovi practice are funded by Christian churches and international government agencies. Within the fieldwork, both a NRG leader and the Executive Director of the NGO lamented the funding available to the other group and both individuals expressed contempt towards the others strategies to gain *international funding*. Therefore, the political powers of both groups are reliant on funding from the west. This, in itself, points to the extent to which the political interests of the western patronage network are able to play out within Ghana's domestic matters.

The program offered to the women and children by the NGO reflects many of the practices and policies of Ghana's previous colonial administration. These practices take on the form of a new Gunboat Diplomacy; *Gunboat Humanitarianism*. *Gunboat Humanitarianism* is both humanitarian and racist and, as can be seen within the case study, further oppresses those who it seeks to

⁶²⁴ Ibid.

⁶²⁵ Personal communication with Executive Director of the NGO. September 2008.

liberate. The women and children cannot have their strategic needs met when practices within the program seek to control the women, rather than empower them. Similarly, the activity of National Resistance Groups sacrifice the rights of the most vulnerable in society in order to gain political power against the perceived imperialist. Both NGOs employ *Gunboat Humanitarianist* tactics in order to retain their political/economic power.

The legacy of mistrust continues to reverberate throughout discussions concerning the Trokosi women and children, as both resisters and emancipators hijack discourse, and speak for those without power. To enable discussions to move *beyond* the legacy, the voices of diverse groups must be included in decision making processes; most importantly, the voices of the people who must live with the consequences of decisions made.⁶²⁶ Moving *beyond* fundamentalism requires embracing diversity at the local, national and international levels.

The second section of this chapter seeks to measure the extent to which the program offered by the Christian NGO increases what the women are *able to do and be*,⁶²⁷ and measure the empowerment of the women. In order to prevent the possibility of perpetuating colonialist views within the research, a capabilities approach will be used and policy approaches will be discussed.

⁶²⁶ Flood et al, 2000. Page 64.

⁶²⁷ Nussbaum, 1999. Page 233.

6.2 *Living with Dignity*

Nussbaum's capability approach relies on a basic perception that human abilities put forth a moral claim that they be developed.⁶²⁸ The ten categories are considered the innate equipment of an individual that is required in order to develop the more advanced capabilities,⁶²⁹ and asks the question '*What is she actually able to do and to be?*', rather than seeking solutions which inevitably require the emulation of the west.⁶³⁰

In order to assess the extent to which the NGO's program increases the life chances of the women and their children, this section seeks to analyse what the women are actually able to do and be. This will be done by comparing the basic capabilities of the women in the shrines, according to the most severe reports, according to the least severe reports and the basic capabilities of the women who have completed the program offered by the NGO. The latter does not just seek to analyse what the women are able to do and be within the vocational training centre where the women live when completing the program; but rather, what the women are able to do and be once they return to the community. Within the three categories, what the women are able to do and be, is based on reports which, as already discussed within the thesis, are highly contested. The basic capabilities are life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses,

⁶²⁸ Nussbaum, 1999. Page 236.

⁶²⁹ Ibid. Page 233.

⁶³⁰ Ibid.

imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, other species, play and control over one's environment.⁶³¹

The basic capability; *Life*, refers to '*being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.*'⁶³² The first capability encompasses both a *qualitative* and a *quantitative* element and each shall be analysed separately. According to the most severe reports on the lives of the women within the shrines, '*Their status is lowered to the categorisation of being regarded as **sub-human**.*'⁶³³ However, whether this reduces the women's lives to the extent they not be worth living can only be answered by the women themselves. As access to the women was blocked during the fieldwork period and in order to avoid speaking on behalf of the women, the question of the extent to which the women's lives have the *quality* required to be worth living cannot be answered within the thesis. *Quantifying* the first capability is also difficult as in order to assess if the women are able to live a life '*of normal length*', one must define normal. Whilst Nussbaum addresses the issue of *equality vs adequacy* in relation to the capabilities, much '*remains a question that societies will have to hammer out.*'⁶³⁴ It seems that defining an *equal* length of human life is quite a simple task, whereby the average global life expectancy becomes the determining factor in whether the capability has been reached. As the global average life expectancy

⁶³¹ Nussbaum, Op Cit. Page 235.

⁶³² Nussbaum, 2002. Page 60 in Molyneux M and Razavi S, 2003. *Gender Justice, Development, and Rights. Oxford Studies in Democratization.* Oxford University Press

⁶³³ Rinaudo, 2003. Page 1 Citing Dovlo with Adzoyi Report on Trokosi Institution Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana Legon October 1995 1 – 26

⁶³⁴ Nussbaum, 1999. Page 294.

in 2003 was 68.8,⁶³⁵ and the life expectancy of a Ghanaian woman in 2005 was 59,⁶³⁶ this capability is unlikely to be met by many women living in Ghana. Should 'a human life of normal length' be defined according to *adequacy* then this determinant is yet to be *hammered out* by the society concerned⁶³⁷ and cannot be determined within this thesis. The issue of *equality* and *adequacy* in reference to a human life of normal length highlights the difficulties in applying such approaches under neo-liberal economic structures. The capabilities approach is concerned with applying a cross-cultural framework, whereby nation states are asked to agree on the ten basic entitlements, and the rest is left to be determined by that society.⁶³⁸ Should the length of a *normal human life* be determined by equality, due to neo-liberal economic structures many nations do not have the resources required to lift their citizen's life expectancy to that of western nations. And should the shorter *length of human life* be determined as *adequate* for some nations (or classes, or gender, or races etc) we remove all dignity from the lives of those people. Therefore, it cannot be assessed if the women are able to live a life that is worth living, as the quality of the women's lives cannot be established without speaking to them. Similarly, it cannot be assessed if the women are able to live a *life of normal length* as the equality criteria is unrealistic and the *adequacy* criteria is unsuitable for this capability.

⁶³⁵ CIA Worldfacts. 18 December 2003. Accessed at www.ciaworldfacts.com on the 3rd March 2010.

⁶³⁶ UNDP Report, 1995. Op Cit. Page 5. Within chapter four I argue that national indicators do not adequately represent Ghana's rural women due to differences in class, gender and regionalism within the nation. However, as the Trokosi women are rural living and from low socio-economic backgrounds, it is likely that their life expectancies are consistent with, or below the national average.

⁶³⁷ Nussbaum, 1999. Page 294.

⁶³⁸ Nussbaum, 2007. Page 297.

In order to live a life worthy of dignity one must *'be able to have good health, including reproductive health; be adequately nourished and have adequate shelter.'*⁶³⁹

According to the worst reports on the practice, the priests beat the women who try to escape the shrine, demand labour and sex from the girls and deny food, education and access to basic health services.⁶⁴⁰ These reports claim that, not only do the women and children lack access to health; but that their health is severely compromised by the practice. Less severe reports also state that the practice compromises the health of the women and children. For example: A resident of the Volta Region stated in the nation's *'Spectator'* that the rites performed by some of the priests are not carried out under hygienic conditions.⁶⁴¹

The NGO reports that within the program, the women are provided with shelter, education and basic healthcare. It is reported;

*"When they come the first day, we talk to them. We say this is our home. We are all free, you are my sister you are my daughter," she said.*⁶⁴²*"They don't have the idea to go to hospital freely so we counsel them in that area and pay for their medical check-ups"*⁶⁴³

Whether this is actually the case cannot be ascertained in this thesis as access to the women was denied.

Whether the women are raped or not has been an issue of international investigation. What is perceived to be *the worst kinds of rape*, involving violence

⁶³⁹ Nussbaum, 2002. Page 60

⁶⁴⁰ Aird. Date not stated.

⁶⁴¹ Ahiamale in *The Spectator*, Op Cit.

⁶⁴² Medilinks. *Trokosi: NGO Attempts to Free Ghanaian Girls from Endentured Servitude* - Tuesday, October 10, 2006 Accessed at <http://medilinkz.org/news/news2.asp?NewsID=18161> on the 10th March 2010.

⁶⁴³ Ibid.

and beatings, have been used as examples of the abuse suffered by Trokosi women in the shrines and these examples have found their way into international websites, journal articles and advocacy settings.⁶⁴⁴ According to Vormawor, not all Trokosi women speak of the existence of violence inherent in the act of rape.⁶⁴⁵ She states that most of the Trokosi are virgins upon arrival in the shrines and many are unaware that such acts exist,⁶⁴⁶ reporting that some physically resist sex with the priest, resulting in violence against them, and some do not.⁶⁴⁷ Does this mean that some are raped and some are not? Does this mean that on specific occasions a Trokosi may be raped but on another day she is not?

Legally defining rape has been a convoluted and complex process throughout the ages and depending on time and location, the answers to the above questions will differ, as *'Each time a rape law is created or applied, or a*

⁶⁴⁴ See Julie Dogbadzi escaped. Now she's freeing others. After a life of slavery. Newsweek (International Edition) New York: April 5 1999, Page 33. 'Save the Slaves' April 2003. Released by [The NGO] Australia, Hawthorn, Victoria. Australia. *Mercy's Story and Trokosi: Treasure in Earthen Vessels*. 'Save the Slaves' Video Released by [The NGO], Ghana. April 2003. Owusu-Ansah, 2003. Assistant Professor of Education. *Trokosi in Ghana: Cultural Relativism or Slavery?* Lindsey-Wilson College, Kentucky, USA www2.ncsu.edu/ncsu/aern/trokony.html Accessed on 19th November 2004. Hawksley H, 2001. *Ghana's Trapped Slaves*. BBC News Website. Accessed at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/1158115.stm on the 21st June 2005. Pages 1-4. Rinaudo. Op Cit, Page 5. Ari B. 2002. Liberating *Ghanaian Girls from 'Trokosi'*. Africa Recovery. Accessed on http://www.afrol.com/News2002/gha001_girls_Trokosi.htm on 22nd June 2005. .Page 1. Hawksley, 2001. *Ghana's Trapped Slaves*. BBC News Website. Accessed at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/1158115.stm on the 21st June 2005. Ahiabile, 1995. The Anatomy of Trokosi system in Ghana: Report: First National Workshop on Trokosi system in Ghana (July 6-7, 1995) Accra. Workshop by International Needs, Ghana. Eckardt, 2004. *Trokosi Field Assignment*. MSW Program St. Louis University. Accessed at <http://www.slu.edu/colleges/SOCSVC/TrokosiIntroductionII.pdf> on the 24th June 2005. French H W, 1997. *Ritual Slaves of Ghana: Young and Female*. The New York Times International May/June 1997 Volume 7, Issue 6 Pages 24. Gakpleazi, 1998. *Trokosi is Not a Slave* Ghanaian Times, Monday November 16 1998, Page 6. *Practice of Trokosi Still Hurting Girls*. Ghanaian Chronicle. Accra, Ghana. 25th August 2004. Accessed at <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/printnews.php?> On the 19th of November 2004. Gyau Orhin,, 2001. 'Ghanaians Asked To Condemn Trokosi' By Public Agenda. General News. Accessed at <http://www.modernghana.com/news/12507/1/ghanaians-asked-to-condemn-Trokosi.html> on the 5th February 2009. *Mercy's Story and Trokosi: Treasure in Earthen Vessels*. 'Save the Slaves' Video Released by [The NGO], Ghana. April 2003.

⁶⁴⁵ Vormawor 1998. Page 69

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid.

*rape case is tried, communities rethink what rape is.*⁶⁴⁸ The legal definition of rape depends greatly on the enforcing court and recently the International Criminal Court Tribunal for Rwanda has made some historic advances in defining rape, but these definitions have not been taken on in all rape proceedings since. Rape law in the US and other capitalist countries was originally framed for the protection of men of the upper classes, whose daughter and wives might be assaulted.⁶⁴⁹ English Common law definitions, of which Australia's law leans on, rely heavily on the concept of *non-consent* concerning rape, however this omits essential factors inherent in many rape cases. The use of physical force has tended to indicate where the line is drawn concerning consent or non-consent, however force takes on many forms and physicality is not the only way in which force may be exerted.⁶⁵⁰ To highlight the problematic nature of the use of non-consent to define rape we will look at the legal definitions of rape used within International Humanitarian Law.

In the 1998 *Akayesu* decision, the Trial Chamber I of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) found that rape, to be charged as a crime against humanity, is '*a physical invasion of a sexual nature, committed on a person under circumstances which are coercive.*'⁶⁵¹ This definition moved away from definitions of consent and non-consent and leaned on *coercion* as a definitive factor. Traditionally rape was defined in reference to the victim of the

⁶⁴⁸ MacKinnon 2006. Page 940. '*Defining Rape Internationally: A Comment on Akayesu*' International Law Journal. First Presented as a workshop at the international Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, Arusha, Tanzania on November 15 2003.

⁶⁴⁹ Davies 1983 '*Women, Race and Class*'. Vintage Books New York, Page 172

⁶⁵⁰ MacKinnon Op Cit.

⁶⁵¹ MacKinnon, 2006, Page 942

act; did she want it? But for the first time the definition lay with the perpetrator/s; what circumstances were enforced on the victim as to ensure her coercion into a sexual act/s? The Chamber considered that, '*... rape is a form of aggression and that the central elements of rape cannot be captured in a mechanical description of objects and body parts*' '*coercive circumstances need not be evidenced by a show of physical force*' but '*may be inherent in certain circumstances*'.⁶⁵²

Mackinnon comments that '*...inquiry into individual consent was not even worth discussion*'⁶⁵³ and that '*arguably for the first time, rape was defined in law as what it is in life.*'⁶⁵⁴ In Rwanda rape was defined by a wider conceptualisation than the enacting of one individual upon another; group force was considered. Within coercion definitions of rape the surrounding context is the defining feature, looking at the social, the collective and at systems and structures of hierarchy. As Mackinnon points out, to consider the issue of individual consent within the wider context of one group displaying their complete dominance over another in acts of rape, torture and murder; often within the same time frame, is inconceivable. However, the *Akayesu* decision did not permanently redefine rape in international law. In the same year in the International Criminal Court for the Former Yugoslav's (ICTY) *Furundizija* case, the Trial Chamber leaned more heavily on non-consent and removed the context of power-relations and coercion. Rape was defined under the '*body parts*' definition again, requiring evidence of penetration. Three years later the ICTY's *Kunarac* trial, shifted the focus away from consent once again with the Chamber agreeing for '*the need to presume non-consent*

⁶⁵² Ibid, Page 943

⁶⁵³ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid, Page 944.

here’ and that the raped women *‘were considered the legitimate sexual prey of their captors.’* It concluded that *‘such detentions amount to circumstances that were so coercive as to negate any possibility of consent.’*⁶⁵⁵

Back at the ITCR, the 2003 *Semanza* trial deviated from the progress made in the *Akayesu* definition, labeling the *Akayesu* definition as *‘broad’*⁶⁵⁶ and decided to take a *‘narrow’* view, holding that *‘the mental element for rape as a crime against humanity is the intention to effect the prohibited sexual penetration with the knowledge that it occurs without the consent of the victim.’*⁶⁵⁷ McKinnon argues that the *Semanza* trial reduced the definition of rape to the question of what goes on inside the minds of individuals and what body parts were used to do what; to whom. Individual consent does not just place onus on the victim to prove non-consent and ignores the fact that when rapes are being inflicted on one group, by another, there is a power structure and/or struggle that goes beyond the individual’s concerned. It is inconceivable to consider that individual sexual desire is the driving force behind the mass rape of one social group, by another.

In the case of rape being used as a tool of warfare, under International Humanitarian Law these social groups are defined by ethnicity; in the case of the *Trokosi* women, the social group is defined by status within the society. The *Akayesu* case considered *‘proof of objective fact inflicted on the complainant with others similarly located.’*⁶⁵⁸ When defining rape it is imperative to consider

⁶⁵⁵ MacKinnon, 2006, Page 951.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid. Page 952.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁸ MacKinnon, 2006, Page 955.

'others similarly located.' The question becomes not; what did she want? And, what did he do? Instead the question becomes; to what extent can a member of this group want and/or reject sex?⁶⁵⁹

Should the worst reports within the Troxovi case study be considered, the following factors would indicate that the reported sexual relationship a priest has with a Trokosi woman or girl is legally definable as rape, under the definitions used in the *Akayesu* case. These reports indicate that all Trokosi women must engage in sex with the Priest. When considering 'others similarly located' the experiences of all Trokosi women within the group must be acknowledged. If force is used against one Trokosi, it is used against all Trokosi; as their status within the group is what defines their duties. Several sources report that the Trokosi survivors from different shrines, in different geographical locations are routinely raped within the shrines.⁶⁶⁰ If so, the act of rape exists within a wider construct where the Trokosi girl/woman is shamed and degraded in a variety of ways.⁶⁶¹ These reports say that refusing sex with the priest is punishable and a crime against the system. If a Trokosi refuses sex at times physical force may be used and at other times the family of the girl/woman will be called and made to pay a fine to the shrine and they will be made to apologise and beseech the girl to engage.⁶⁶² It is reported that the act of defiling a Trokosi virgin is seen as a religious ritual which is part of the community's atonement for their crimes/sins.

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid. Page 952.

⁶⁶⁰ Julie Dogbadzi escaped. Now she's freeing others. After a life of slavery. Newsweek (International Edition) New York: April 5 1999, Page 3. *Mercy's Story and Trokosi: Treasure in Earthen Vessels*. 'Save the Slaves' Video Released by [The NGO], Ghana. April 2003. Vormawor Patience, 1999. 'Emancipation of women from ritual bondage: A case study of Trokosi women of South-Eastern Ghana.' University of Ghana. Unpublished.

⁶⁶¹ Vormawor. Op Cit. Page 65.

⁶⁶² Vomawor. 1999. Page 69.

⁶⁶³ Refusing sex with the priest is said to result in being made an example of through harsh punishments such as being made to kneel over broken bottles, lashes and starvation.⁶⁶⁴ The priest is reported to have complete economic, social and reproductive control over the women.⁶⁶⁵ Even if rape within the shrines is not inherent in the system, but is a case of individual priests abusing their power, this highlights the amount of power that the priest have over the women and children within Troxovi practicing communities.

The rape of the Trokosi women is a form of aggression encompassed in the multilayered use of group force that extends from the priest to the community and to the family members of the Trokosi. The central elements are not sexual gratification; sex is forced upon one group in society, by another. Perversely, and perhaps ironically, Vormawor reports that childless women, of childbearing age may be punished by the priest for non-compliance with the rules of the shrine through his refusal to engage in sexual intercourse with them.⁶⁶⁶ At first glance it is difficult to understand that it could be possible that the same women who are being punished through the refusal of sex, could in fact be the victims of rape by the same man. If a woman finds the refusal of sex a punishment, then surely engaging in sex with the same man cannot be rape? In fact, the opposite could be true.

Should the most severe reports be true, the coercive and aggressive nature of the rape is seen, not just in the use of forced sex on the girls but also in

⁶⁶³ Ibid. Page 70.

⁶⁶⁴ Ayliffe. Year not stated. Op Cit.

⁶⁶⁵ Vormawor Op Cit.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid.

the denial of it. The use of refusal as a tool of punishment is just as much a form of aggression as the alleged rape itself. Denying sex to a Trokosi woman, who is forbidden to have sexual relations with any other man,⁶⁶⁷ is an effective punishment as she is not able to reproduce. According to reports, this is the Trokosi woman's only form of economic hope, it is her only hope of engaging in a loving relationship,⁶⁶⁸ and it is a tactic devised to heap shame on her within the community. According to Vormawor, many Trokosi reveal that their children are their only source of joy within the shrine.⁶⁶⁹ Relying on these reports would establish that the priest's use of sex is not for gratification, but about asserting power over the women. Within such a context, the extent to which the women can refuse or consent to sex becomes questionable. This can be likened to Nussbaum's assertions concerning the senses of the human being operating at an animalistic level;

*'In Marx's example, a starving person cannot use food in a fully human way – by which he seems to mean a way infused by practical reasoning and sociability. He or she just grabs at the food in order to survive, and the many social and rational ingredients of human feeding cannot make their appearance. Similarly, the senses of a human being can operate at a merely animal level...'*⁶⁷⁰

Therefore, the alleged act of refusing sex as a punishment highlights that the woman is unable to enjoy sex with *the many social and rational ingredients* of human expression, but rather, that the act is reduced to an assurance of social and economic security, through procreation.

⁶⁶⁷ Interview with CHRAJ representative, 15th September 2008.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁹ Vormawor Op Cit.

⁶⁷⁰ Nussbaum, 1999. Page 234.

Interestingly, according to reports defending the practice, the Trokosi women still lack bodily integrity. The reports deny that rape is inherent in the Trokosi practice, by claiming that the practice explicitly forbids a Trokosi woman to engage in sexual activity.⁶⁷¹ Therefore, according to adherents themselves, as the women's sexuality is controlled, the women lack opportunities for sexual satisfaction and have no choice in matters of reproduction during their time of servitude within the shrine.

As access to the women was denied, there is little information concerning what the women are able to do and be within the NGO's program, and after returning to their communities from the NGO's vocational rehabilitation centre. One might question the extent to which the women have opportunities for sexual satisfaction within the residential centre, due to the Christian values of the NGO; however this is mere speculation and is not based on any primary or secondary resources. Nevertheless, due to national law, not one of the Trokosi women, whether serving in shrines or not, have bodily integrity. The Domestic Violence Bill 2007, passed in order to augment the Criminal Code of 1960 (Act 29), criminalises assault and battery, rape, defilement of children and incest. However, excluded from the final bill, after four years of national debate, was the inclusion of the criminalisation of marital rape.⁶⁷² Dovlo reports that Christian, Muslim and Traditional religious groups spoke out against the passing of the law

⁶⁷¹ USSD IRF report 2004. Page 3

⁶⁷² Dovlo, 2005. Page 651.

stating that it '*confuses cultural norms and has the potential to cause societal harm*,'⁶⁷³ He states that,

*'A survey reveals that some women, especially in the rural areas, fear that if the laws were applied and they were to report their husbands, their husband's families, and even their own families, would cast them and their children aside.'*⁶⁷⁴ *This outcast state would lead to hardship when the husband is imprisoned for the offense. Thus, it seems that many women want their husbands to be punished for abusing them, but not too much.*⁶⁷⁵

Struggling to grasp the interconnectedness of political, and social and economic rights, Dvolo's analysis fails to perceive that '*... liberty is not just a matter of having rights on paper, it requires being in a material position to exercise those rights.*'⁶⁷⁶ Until marital rape is included as an offense *and* until women in Ghana are in a material position to have their rights exercised, married women in Ghana do not have bodily integrity; which is necessary to live a life with human dignity.

The fourth capability is '*senses, imagination and thought*' and refers to being able to use the senses; being able to imagine, to think, and to reason. It includes being able to be informed through an adequate education, being able to use one's mind and exercise freedom of expression, political speech and religion.⁶⁷⁷ According to all reports, the women in shrines are not in servitude of their own free choice. Therefore, no matter what the treatment of the women within the shrine entails, the women are not able to choose whether to engage in

⁶⁷³ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁴ Interview with Rev Abamfo Atiemo, Department for the Study of Religions, Legon. Quoted in Dvolo, 2005. Page 655.

⁶⁷⁵ Dvolo, Op Cit. Page 655.

⁶⁷⁶ Nussbaum, 1999. Page 231.

⁶⁷⁷ Nussbaum, 1999. Page 231.

the religious rites required of them. As discussed earlier within this chapter, reports indicate that the women *released* through the NGO's intervention, are taught literacy skills using the bible and are taught to pray.⁶⁷⁸ However, as access to the women was denied, there is little information available concerning the extent to which the women are able to choose to participate in these activities. Fundamental to the fourth capability is being able to express political and artistic speech. Within the shrines and within the NGO's program women are only allowed to speak through urban males,⁶⁷⁹ even concerning the decision making processes that determine their futures; therefore they are not able to express political speech.

According to the most severe reports on the treatment of the Trokosi women within shrines, the women live in absolute fear. In fact, their very presence in the shrine is based on the fear of the gods and their obedience to the priest assured through the fear of rape, torture and isolation.⁶⁸⁰ Adherents to the practice report that traditionally a Trokosi woman was not allowed to marry any other man as she was considered the wife of the deity. Therefore her ability to love and be loved by a husband and family, should she so choose, was not available.⁶⁸¹

Recently the practice has changed, and local reports indicate that the women are allowed to marry, however reports also indicate the priest decides

⁶⁷⁸ Principal Researcher's diary notes, September 2008.

⁶⁷⁹ Discussion with the Executive Director of the NGO. Principal Researchers Notes. 21st November 2008.

⁶⁸⁰ DVD Distributed by the NGO.

⁶⁸¹ Interview with CHRAJ representative, 15th September 2008.

who they are allowed to marry.⁶⁸² Several local reports indicate that often the men are irresponsible and maltreat the women.⁶⁸³ Therefore, even in the least severe cases, many Trokosi women may not be able to experience love with a partner of their choosing.

There are no reports that women who are *released* by the NGO are denied the external ability to have attachments to things and people outside of themselves. However, Vormawor reports that psychologist Pupilampu believes most released Trokosi suffer fear, pain and bitterness, emotional despondency and low self worth.⁶⁸⁴ Vormawor states that many of the women are unable to comprehend building a relationship with a man after what they have suffered within the shrines.⁶⁸⁵ Should this be the case, women *released* by the NGO, have the external capability to have attachments but may not have this internal capability.

The most significant finding within this case study is the women's inability to exercise their capability to critically reflect about the planning of their lives. Whether women are currently serving in shrines reported to meter out severe treatment or not and whether women are *released* by the NGO; the women are not able to participate in processes that determine their futures. Therefore, the women do not have the external capability to exercise practical reason.

The women's capability to exercise liberty of conscience is challenged within this thesis. According to the least severe reports on the practice, the

⁶⁸² The Spectator, Op Cit.

⁶⁸³ The Spectator, Op Cit.

⁶⁸⁴ Vormawor, 1998. Page 113

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid.

women are unable to exercise choice regarding the requirement to engage in religious rituals. Therefore, drawing upon Chandran Kukathas definition,⁶⁸⁶ as the women are unable to exit, they do not have liberty of conscience. As for the women participating within the NGO's program, the extent to which the women are able to exit is questionable. Early interventions that focused on *releasing* the women, but had no rehabilitation components within the program design demonstrated that the women do not have the economic means to survive outside of the shrines.⁶⁸⁷ Nussbaum contends that the capabilities approach does not preclude a women's choice to lead a traditional life so long as this choice is made with certain economic and political opportunities firmly in place.⁶⁸⁸ This can also be applied to a women's choice to participate in non-traditional religious activities. Therefore, whilst a woman may have the *right* to exit the NGO's program, if she has no means to survive economically outside of the program and outside of the shrine, the extent to which she is able to exit is limited.

According to all reports, shrine practices dictate how society is to relate to Trokosi women.⁶⁸⁹ A representative from the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice states that Trokosi women are revered in the community, and that nobody is even allowed to touch a Trokosi woman as she belongs to the gods.⁶⁹⁰ Some claim that the women are completely isolated from society through

⁶⁸⁶ Kukathas. *The Liberal Archipelago*. 2003. Oxford University Press. Page 103 ff

⁶⁸⁷ Ababio. 2000. Page 23

⁶⁸⁸ Nussbaum, 1999. Page 229.

⁶⁸⁹ Interview with a representative from CHRAJ. September 15, 2008. Ababio. Op Cit. Page 19. USSD Report 2001, Section IV, Discussion with the Executive Director. Principal Researchers Notes. 21st November 2008. Ababio, Op Cit. 128.

⁶⁹⁰ Interview with a representative from CHRAJ. September 15, 2008.

forced removal from their families and communities.⁶⁹¹ The USSD report of 2001 reports that Trokosi do not live in the shrines, but that they live with relatives located near the shrine.⁶⁹² Regardless of where a Trokosi woman resides, the extent to which she is able to engage in friendship and social interaction is determined by the rituals of the shrine and therefore, she does not have the capability to live with and towards others freely. This capability is increased by participation in the NGO's program in some respects, but is not completely fulfilled. The extent to which the women are able to participate in political speech and have freedom of affiliation whilst living in the vocational centre is questionable as the NGO limits the women's interactions and NGO staff act as gatekeepers to the women.⁶⁹³ However, once released back to their communities, the women report that they are able to move about freely for the first time.⁶⁹⁴

Nussbaum's capabilities approach specifies that in order for a woman to live with human dignity, she must be treated with dignity, whose worth is equal to that of others. International, national and local discourse all claim that the Trokosi women and children are dehumanised in various ways within the shrines. Adherents claim that the women are not dehumanised, but even within adherents discourse, it becomes clear that the women are required to perform certain rituals against their will. These rituals separate the women from others within society and this reduces them to the social category to which they belong and

⁶⁹¹ Ababio. Op Cit. Page 19

⁶⁹² USSD Report 2001, Section IV

⁶⁹³ Discussion with the Executive Director. Principal Researchers Notes. 21st November 2008.

⁶⁹⁴ Ababio, Op Cit. 128.

stigmatises the women for marriage.⁶⁹⁵ Such rites and rituals performed against the will of women are not uncommon in Ghana. Under Article 26(2) of the Constitution '*All customary practices, which dehumanize or are injurious to the physical and mental well being of a person, are prohibited.*' However, within Ghana's dual legal system, case law has consistently undermined the Constitution. For example, in the Tana vs Akosua-Okro case, a Krobo woman challenged the customary puberty rite '*dipo*', which involves periods of confinement, rituals and other ceremonies initiating a girl into adulthood.⁶⁹⁶ Failure to abide by the custom can result in being ostracised and possibly banished from the community. Ghana's Supreme Court acknowledged that the punishment was overly harsh, yet believed that ruling against the custom would result in immoral permissive sexual behaviour by youths. Therefore, the court ruled that the Krobo people were permitted to continue to practice the rite, as long as they see fit.⁶⁹⁷ This decision evidences the reluctance of the Ghanaian courts to rule against cultural practices, even when this inhibits Ghanaian women's ability to live with human dignity. As in the case study, this results in women's bodies being used as the battleground for the maintenance of culture and traditional morality, at the expense of the individual rights of the women. This is particularly true of Ghana's rural women.

This capability also specifies that women must be able to live for and in relation to others, and engage in various forms of social interaction.

⁶⁹⁵ The Spectator, Op Cit. Vormawor Op Cit. Page 61.

⁶⁹⁶ Ghana Law Report, 1974. (GLR) 45 t SC

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid.

In 1999 independent Ewe researcher, Ababio, interviewed many of the women who have been *released* by the NGO. Ababio reports that 74% of the women are reunited with their families and are rarely stigmatised within the community for being Trokosi. However 26% are not able to be reunited with their families due to their *sudden conversion to Christianity*.⁶⁹⁸ Ababio states,

*'Presently communities watch on and see large numbers of Trokosis immediately changing their religion and adopting Christian names as soon as they are released... They claim that conversion to Christianity is being used as a basis to free girls from shrines.'*⁶⁹⁹

The NGO reports that the program seeks to instill self respect and dignity to the women, and many of the women are able to live a life outside of the shrines without stigmatisation from the rest of society due to their participation in the NGO's program. However, some of the women continue to be treated unequally and are discriminated against due to their involvement with the Christian NGO.⁷⁰⁰ Therefore, the majority of the women are able to live for and in relation to others but the minority are not able to engage in various forms of social interaction within their communities and live in relation to their own families.

The capabilities approach states that women must be able to laugh, play and enjoy recreational activity with others. The most severe reports concerning the treatment of the women in the shrines clearly state that due to the demands placed upon her, a Trokosi woman or child has no time for play, only work.⁷⁰¹

⁶⁹⁸ Ababio, 1999. Page 129.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid. Page 130.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁰¹ Ababio, 1999. Page 74.

Adherents to the practice avoid providing answers on whether the women are used as labour for the priest. In discussions with the leader of a National Resistance Group, I asked whether the women and children are required to work long hours in the fields for no remuneration. The leader pointed me to the first book of Samuel, in the Old Testament, where Hannah gives her child to the temple in thanks to God for giving her a son, stating that what happens to the Trokosi women and children is the same practice.⁷⁰² Therefore, as resistance leaders, priests and chiefs speak on behalf of the women, concerning what their lot in life entails within the shrines, it is unknown if the women are able to enjoy recreational activities while serving within shrines.

Within my first two weeks in Ghana, I visited the Adidome Vocational Centre. I was taken to the 'hairdressing' class where two lively and confident young women braided my hair and I attempted to communicate with them about their daily activities at the centre and attempted to learn as much of the Ewe language as possible from them. Within my research journal, I recorded my surprise at how the young women seemed to have recovered after such horrific lives within the shrines. The young women were lively, active, extremely well mannered (it had crossed my mind that the young women may have been *groomed* to display such impeccable western manners to visitors from the patronage network) and seemed genuinely happy.⁷⁰³ I discussed this with a senior member of staff and she smiled and stated; 'Yes, *they receive*

⁷⁰² Discussion (did not agree to formal interview) from Principal Researchers notes. 29th September 2008

⁷⁰³ Principal researcher's diary entry. September 2008.

counseling.⁷⁰⁴ It was not until later in the fieldwork period that I became aware that only two of the several hundred women at the centre, were once Trokosi. Therefore, whether the women who were once Trokosi are now able to laugh, play and enjoy recreational activities, is unknown as these women do not reside at the vocational centre.

Thus, the women lack control over the environment in which they live. This can be said of both the women living in the shrines and those who have participated in the NGO's program. The women are unable to participate in discussions concerning their own futures at the family, community and state levels. However, Ababio's research does indicate that women participating in the NGO's program do have their freedom of movement protected after returning to their communities, often for the first time in their lives.⁷⁰⁵ Released women state that they are now able to move about freely as they are no longer tied to the taboos of the shrine.⁷⁰⁶

Most reports on the Troxovi practice claim that the women are forbidden from owning any possessions or acquiring assets like land, farms or household items.⁷⁰⁷ The representative from the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice reports that the women do not own material possessions, but that most women living in these communities live similarly.⁷⁰⁸ All reports concerning the women exiting the NGO's *rehabilitation* program indicate that the women leave with vocational packages to assist them in starting their own

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁵ Ababio, 1999. Page 119.

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁷ Ababio, 1999. Page 118.

⁷⁰⁸ Interview with CHRAJ representative, September 15, 2008.

businesses. This usually includes small items, such as soap, buckets, cloth, tools and access to microcredit schemes.⁷⁰⁹ Therefore, the women gain material possessions and it is reported by the NGO that the women are able to establish trading businesses within their communities. However, the extent to which the women are able to enter into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers cannot be assessed as I could not access the women in the field.

The following table represents what the women can '*be and do*' before participating in the development program offered by the NGO, and after.

⁷⁰⁹ Vormawor, 1998. Page 15

Table 6.1 Analysis of the Basic Capabilities of the Trokosi Women⁷¹⁰

	Most severe reports concerning the Troxovi practice	Least severe reports concerning the Troxovi practice	After completing the NGO's development program
Life	N/A	N/A	N/A
Bodily health	X	X	√
Bodily integrity	X	X	X
Senses, imagination and thought	X	X	X
Emotions	X	X	√
Practical reason	X	X	X
Affiliation A	X	X	√ Limited
Affiliation B	X	X	√ Majority X Minority
Other species	N/A	N/A	N/A
Play	X	N/A	N/A
Control over one's environment A	X	X	√ Limited
Control over one's environment B	X	X	√

⁷¹⁰ Following Nussbaum, 1999. Page 231.

As has been discussed and evidenced throughout this section of the thesis, and can be seen in the table above; the NGO's program increases what the women are able to do and be in reference to their bodily health, their emotions, their affiliations and increases the control that they have over their environment. These increases life the life chances of the women and children but as will be discussed in the following section;⁷¹¹ this increase is minimal and is not sustainable as the strategic needs of the women are not met.

⁷¹¹ See Section 6.3

6.3 Practical Needs vs Strategic Needs

As The type of productive work that is available to women in Ghana's Volta Region differs to that of men as women are required to undertake heavy daily reproductive workloads and therefore, do not possess the adequate time or money to involve themselves in cash cropping.⁷¹² In order for women to participate equally with men in their productive roles, they must be alleviated of the burden of domestic labour. However, alleviating women of the burden of domestic labour does not only serve to ensure their equal participation with men in the market, but creates opportunities to engage in empowerment activities. According to Collins, the exploitation of black women's labour is the first of three interdependent dimensions encompassed in the oppression of black women. This exploitation does not just further the economic conditions of the dominant group, but is intertwined with other forms of oppression, such as suppression. Collins argues,

*'Survival for most African-American women has been such an all-consuming activity that most have had few opportunities to do intellectual work as it has been traditionally defined.'*⁷¹³

Therefore, the suppression of black women's voices, as discussed in chapter 5, interplays with the exploitation of black women's labour, leading to oppression. Within development, challenging the unequal position of women has been discussed using the discourse of '*meeting strategic needs*'.

⁷¹² Duncan and Brants. Op Cit.

⁷¹³ Collins, Op Cit. Page 4.

A GAD approach to development recognises that men and women start from unequal positions and involves men in the redefining of the sexual division of labour.⁷¹⁴ A GAD approach meets the *strategic needs* of women, rather than only recognising their immediate *practical needs*.

Strategic gender needs are '*those needs which are formulated from the analysis of women's subordination to men, and deriving out of this the strategic gender interest identified for an alternative, more equal and satisfactory organization of society than that which exists at present, in terms of both the structure and nature of relationships between men and women.*'⁷¹⁵ Moser provides examples of interventions that address the strategic needs of women including, the abolition of the sexual division of labour, the alleviation of domestic labor and childcare, the removal of institutionalised forms of discrimination such as rights to own land or property, access to credit, the establishment of political equality, freedom of choice over childbearing and the adoption of adequate measures against male violence and control over women.

Practical gender needs are those needs that have arisen out of women's engendered positions within the sexual division of labour and refer to the needs that must be met in order to ensure human survival. They do not '*...challenge the prevailing forms of subordination even though they arise directly out of them.*'⁷¹⁶ Programs that meet women's practical needs are usually responding to an immediate perceived necessity required for human survival. These needs include

⁷¹⁴ Macdonald, 1994. Page 17

⁷¹⁵ Moser. 1989. Page 1803.

⁷¹⁶ Ibid.

food, water, shelter, the learning of vocational skills that do not challenge the sexual division of labour and assistance with childcare and other domestic duties.

Whilst meeting practical gender needs aids women in their day to day need for human survival, it does not identify the triple role of women.⁷¹⁷ Poor women are often managing reproductive, productive and community management roles within communities and households and when programs do not challenge these triple roles, the work of women can be increased. For example, though teaching vocational skills to low income women may increase their ability to engage in productive work, if they are not alleviated of their reproductive roles; their workload is increased. In this way, without identifying and addressing the triple role of women through meeting strategic needs, planning for the needs of low income women is not necessarily '*feminist*'.⁷¹⁸

Following Moser's examples of sectoral interventions in terms of the triple role of women and meeting practical and strategic gender needs,⁷¹⁹ the following table lists the types of interventions provided by the NGO's program, as documented in Chapter 4⁷²⁰ of this thesis. The table also assesses the extent to which each intervention overcomes the sexual division of labour, overcomes discrimination against women and/or alleviates the burden of domestic labour.⁷²¹

⁷¹⁷ Ibid. Page 1804.

⁷¹⁸ Ibid.

⁷¹⁹ Moser. 1989. Page 1805.

⁷²⁰ See Section 4.3.3

⁷²¹ Ibid.

Table 6.2 Program Elements and Women's Strategic Needs⁷²²

Type of Intervention	R	P	CM	PGN	SGN
Released from the Shrines through negotiation with the shrine owners		X			X++
Liberation ritual		X			X++
Relief items provided for the women and their children (footwear, mats, nets, clothing, lanterns, toiletries)	X			X	
Vocation taught:					
Confectionery making	X?	X		X	
Soap making		X		X	
Body and hair cream production		X		X	
Batik		X		X	
Tie dying		X		X	
Hairdressing		X		X	
Microenterprise and Credit Scheme		X		X	X
Health Education concerning AIDS and STI's	X			X	
Economic education, including how to save and how to open a bank account		X		X	
Personal hygiene	X			X	
Reproductive health	X			X	
Childcare	X			X	
Functional literacy	X	X	X?	X	

Key:

R	Reproductive
P	Productive
CM	Community Management
PGN	Practical Gender Need
SGN	Strategic Gender Need
+	Overcoming the sexual division of labour
++	Overcoming discrimination against women
&	Alleviation of the burden of domestic labour

⁷²² Following on from Moser, 1989.

As can be seen from the table, the release of the women from the shrines, the liberation rituals that take place and the provision of access to credit are the only strategic gender needs met by the program. Whilst meeting these needs does overcome discrimination against *these* women (Trokosi women) through discontinuing the practice, it does not meet the strategic needs of women in terms of questioning their subordinate status to men within the household, community, market or state. However, the release of the women and the following release rituals overcome discrimination against these women by challenging the Troxovi practice. Being released from the shrines also increases the women's ability to fulfill productive roles by alleviating them of unpaid labour within the shrines.

Access to microcredit schemes increases the women's ability to compete with men within their productive roles, however as this need is not complimented by meeting needs that alleviate the burden of domestic labour, their workload will be increased.

Vocational programs, functional literacy, education on how to open a bank account and access to credit all meet the women's practical needs within their productive roles. All of the vocational programs offered to the women reinforce the gender division of labour as the types of vocations made available to the women do not challenge traditional gender divisions. Similarly, the needs of the women that are met within their reproductive roles do not alleviate women of the burden of domestic labour and further affirms women's roles in childrearing.

Therefore, based on the extent to which the program meets practical and strategic needs, the program is based on a combination of Welfarist and Anti-poverty approaches.

The Welfare approach views women as passive recipients of development, rather than participants in the development project and reinforces societal norms claiming that motherhood is the most important role for women and that women's roles in childrearing is fundamental for economic development.⁷²³ Such redistributive initiatives that redress economic injustice, leave intact the structures and policies that generate the initial disadvantage. Furthermore, Welfarist Approaches can affirm group differentiations and can *'end up creating injustices of recognition,'*⁷²⁴ whereby the disadvantaged can come to appear privileged. This was seen in the field, when the men within the village asked the NGO *'Why only the women? What about our men? Why are the women getting all of the assistance?'*⁷²⁵ Organisations often view welfarist approaches as *'family centered'* approaches, however these programs ignore women's productive roles, assuming their reproductive roles to be the greatest area of concern.⁷²⁶

Anti-poverty approaches have arisen *'...out of the reluctance of development agencies to interfere with the manner in which relations between men and women are constructed in a given society.'*⁷²⁷ Anti-poverty approaches generally adhere to a *'basic needs'* agenda, providing food, clothing, shelter and

⁷²³ Moser, 1989. Page 1807.

⁷²⁴ Fraser, 1997. Page 25.

⁷²⁵ Principal Researchers Diary Notes. September 2008.

⁷²⁶ Moser, Op Cit. Page 1807-8.

⁷²⁷ Ibid. Page 1812.

fuel. Anti-poverty approaches also provide social needs such as education, human rights and '*participation*' in social life through employment and political involvement.⁷²⁸ Unlike Welfarist approaches, anti-poverty approaches focus on women mainly within their productive roles, seeking to increase the private ownership of land for women, provide access to capital, and decrease sexual discrimination in the labour market.⁷²⁹ Therefore, Anti-poverty approaches aim to increase employment and income generation for low-income women through better access to resources required within their productive roles.⁷³⁰ Anti-poverty approaches tend to have the aim to increase productivity in activities that are traditionally undertaken by women and fail to introduce them to new areas of work. These approaches assume that women have free time and can only succeed by increasing the work of women.⁷³¹ Welfarist and Anti-poverty approaches are not specific to the NGO within the case study; but are popular with a variety of NGOs for several reasons. These reasons shall be discussed within the thesis.⁷³²

6.3.1 Empowerment Approaches

Moser articulates the advantages of empowerment approaches in the following terms: Empowerment approaches seek to empower women through the redistribution of power within, as well as between nations, and seek to increase women's choices in life through attaining control over material and nonmaterial

⁷²⁸ Ibid.

⁷²⁹ Ibid.

⁷³⁰ Moser, 1989. Page 1812.

⁷³¹ Ibid.

⁷³² See Section 7.3.

resources in order to achieve equality. Oppression is not just viewed in terms of the relationship that women have with men, but includes oppression according to class, race, nationality, colonial history and neo-colonialism. The approach upholds that in order to be free from oppression, women must challenge *'...oppressive structures and situations simultaneously at different levels.'*⁷³³ The concept of empowerment has been focused on in the 1960's Afro-American movement and in Paulo Freire's conscientization theory.⁷³⁴ The Empowerment Approach in development theory originates from emerging third-world feminists and the experiences of grass roots women's organisations in the Third World. Moser argues that the approach documents the limitations of top-down governmental changes concerning the empowerment of women, and champions the use of legal changes, political mobilisation, consciousness raising and popular education in order to challenge subordination. National liberation from colonial powers and neo-colonial domination, avoidance of export-led growth strategies and greater involvement in the activities of multinational corporations, are all fundamental to the empowerment approach. The empowerment approach *'...recognizes the triple role of women and seeks through bottom-up women's organisations to raise women's consciousness to challenge their subordination.'*⁷³⁵

⁷³³ Moser. Op Cit. Page 1815.

⁷³⁴ *The Empowerment Approach. A Methodological Guide.* The Commission on Women and Development, Belgium. June 2007. Accessed at http://www.dgci.be/documents/en/cwd/women_empowerment_approach.pdf on the 10th March 2010. Page 6.

⁷³⁵ Moser, 1989. Page 1816.

The Empowerment Approach responds to many of the criticisms of development. Firstly, it responds to Ecobar's disparagement with development⁷³⁶ by challenging the domination and economic exploitation of the west and confronts power imbalances by identifying oppressive structures and situations at a variety of levels.⁷³⁷ Similarly, the approach responds to Sachs⁷³⁸ concerns that development enables a western perception of reality, by placing program planning within the hands of the participants themselves; Third World women. The Empowerment approach also enables women to challenge the three interdependent dimensions of black women's oppression, as documented by Collins.⁷³⁹ However, whilst increasing the participation of poor women, the approach is not solely preference based. This is important as

*'Such preferences, too are not fixed in the nature of things: they are constructed by social traditions of privilege and subordination. Thus a preference-based approach typically will reinforce inequalities: especially those inequalities that are entrenched enough to have crept into people's very desires.'*⁷⁴⁰

Unlike Welfarist and Anti-poverty approaches, the Empowerment approach does not silence black women about their histories, requiring them to identify with their gender over their race, as the approach identifies the multiple oppressions of race, gender and class.⁷⁴¹

Collins argues that within the US, worldviews originating in the cosmologies of West African ethnic groups were used to order and evaluate the

⁷³⁶ Ecobar, 1984-5; Page 378

⁷³⁷ Moser. Op Cit. Page 1815.

⁷³⁸ Sachs, 1992. *The development dictionary: a guide to knowledge as power.* - London. Zed Books. Page 5.

⁷³⁹ Collins, Op Cit. Page 4.

⁷⁴⁰ Nussbaum, 1999. Page 233

⁷⁴¹ Behrendt, 1993; Page 35

lived experiences of slave communities and that this offered enslaved Africans explanations for their slavery which were alternative to those of the white slave owners. These knowledges were hidden from and suppressed by the dominant group. Therefore, whilst Anti-poverty and Welfarist Approaches might meet the immediate needs of the women, it is through Empowerment Approaches that the women themselves might *construct and reconstruct* such *oppositional knowledges*. Such oppositional knowledges might provide explanations for their oppression which are alternative to those of the international community and the national elite. Collins argues that the economic exploitation of US Black women created the conditions for distinctively Black and female forms of resistance and using this example, the Trokosi women can be seen as *'individuals whose marginality provide[s] a distinctive angle of vision on... intellectual and political entities.'*⁷⁴²

The Empowerment Approach acknowledges the wider context in which women live and as Romm and McKay note from their experiences with HIV/AIDS awareness within the Zambian context; *'The difficulties in people's lives, which render their decisions very complex... cannot be tackled independently of a concern with the wider social, economic and political factors.'*⁷⁴³

Within this framework it can be seen that increasing the work of the women to produce greater economic outcomes does not address the cultural norms that bias the women, as they are institutionalised in the state and in the economy. This increase in the work required of the women also limits the extent

⁷⁴² Collins. Op Cit. Page 12.

⁷⁴³ McKay et al, 2007. Page 388.

to which they are able to participate equally in the making of culture, '*in public spheres and in everyday life.*'⁷⁴⁴ In this way the program is unable to offer the women full emancipation as the '*vicious circle of cultural and economic subordination*'⁷⁴⁵ has not been interrupted.

Like other forms of alternative development, the Empowerment Approach cries for visibility, participation and justice;⁷⁴⁶ without disengaging from the world economy. Munck contends that any development theory that seeks to disengage from the world economy is '*simply not viable*,'⁷⁴⁷ and criticises alternatives to development, stating that, 'to say 'black' when someone says 'white' does not, necessarily, constitute a viable radical alternative.'⁷⁴⁸

However, challenges remain within the Empowerment approach. As cited earlier, the approach is largely unsupported by governments and agencies as it seeks to challenge all forms of oppression; tends to be underfinanced and is reliant on voluntary organisation.⁷⁴⁹ This results in slow significant growth.⁷⁵⁰ Other challenges noted within the field by McKay and Romm include ensuring that researchers remain alert to the possibility of placing unfair expectations on poor households, who do not necessarily have political power to change social systems.⁷⁵¹

Munck and O'Hearn criticise bottom-up approaches stating;

⁷⁴⁴ Fraser, 1997. *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the 'Postsocialist' Condition*. Routledge. New York. Page 15.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁶ Hettne, 1995. Page 161

⁷⁴⁷ Munck, 1999. Page 203

⁷⁴⁸ Munck, 1999. Page 203

⁷⁴⁹ Moser, 1989. Page 1815.

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁵¹ McKay and Romm, 2006. *Assessment of the Impact of HIV and AIDS in the Informal Economy in Zambia*. Lusaka : International Labor Organization... . Page 27.

*'The new 'Holy Trinity' of engendered, sustainable and bottom-up development may be a laudable political goal, but we must not confuse rhetoric and reality ...there really is no magic fix.'*⁷⁵²

Clearly, the Empowerment Approach provides no such quick fix. It does however, provide significant advantages to Welfarist and Anti-poverty approaches as it seeks to challenge the very structures that women's practical needs arise out of. Challenges arise within the approach as the very structures that oppress women tend to be the sources of funding for Welfarist and Anti-poverty development programs. These difficulties and the problem of aid effectiveness will be discussed in the following chapter.

6.4 Summary

This chapter highlights the extent to which both NGOs employ *Gunboat Humanitarianist* tactics in order to retain their political power, at the expense of increasing the Trokosi women's and children's life chances. Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach confirms that the NGO increases what the women are *able to do and be*. The women are able to have bodily health to a greater extent, build meaningful relationships with others, choose who they affiliate themselves with and have an increased ability to control the environment in which they live.

Using Moser's analysis of strategic needs, the chapter finds that the NGO's program meets the practical needs of the women, but it does not challenge the triple role of women.⁷⁵³ The initial release from the shrines is the most empowering aspect within the program as it challenges the unequal status of the Trokosi women; however the program does not challenge the unequal

⁷⁵² Munck and O'Hearn . Op Cit. Page 202.

⁷⁵³ Moser, 1989. Page 1804.

status of all women. This increases the life chances of the women and children, however the extent to which this is sustainable is limited as the women's status at the community and state levels have not been challenged.

The NGO's program is highly paternalistic because it views the women as passive victims. Similarly, life within the shrine is also highly paternalistic as women are sent to the priest to learn how to live.⁷⁵⁴ The Capabilities Approach says nothing against a woman's choice to live a traditional life '*...provided that there are sufficient political, educational, and other capabilities present to ensure that the choice is a choice.*'⁷⁵⁵ Even according to the least severe reports, it is clear that the women do not have sufficient other capabilities in place, in order to argue that the women chose to live a traditional life. Similarly, whether the women are able to choose their religious beliefs within the NGO's program is limited as, though the women have increased economic empowerment, their political capabilities are not improved through the program and the extent to which '*the choice is a choice*'⁷⁵⁶ is limited.

The chapter also highlights that the women and children do not have adequate protection under the law, and though the Domestic Violence Act increased the protection of the women and children 'on paper', this protection is not accessible without other capabilities present. The exclusion of black women from the rights and privileges routinely extended to other dominant groups forms Collin's second interdependent dimension that encompasses the oppression of

⁷⁵⁴ Ababio, 1999. Page 129.

⁷⁵⁵ Nussbaum, 2007. Page 298.

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid.

black women.⁷⁵⁷ The denial of rights interplays with the exploitation of the women's labour and the application of negative stereotypes to the women. This web of economic, political, and ideological oppression, keeps the women in a subordinate position.

It is only through the empowerment of the women that the '*domains of power*' that constrain them might be resisted,⁷⁵⁸ as currently, the women are placed as pawns between powerful stakeholders who seek to use them to eliminate stakeholders who hold opposing political views. Each stakeholder group denies the other the choice to live with diverse values. This thesis argues that it is important to be respectful of the ways others might choose to live, '*provided that those do not cause harm to others... Such respect is what human dignity requires.*'⁷⁵⁹

The following chapter takes the findings from the case study and addresses the overarching question; to what extent can certain resources, structures, organisations or governmental bodies increase the life chances of women and children? Of key importance within the thesis is the question of how diversity might be managed to increase the choices available to women and children, therefore increasing their life chances and this will be explored within chapters seven and eight.

⁷⁵⁷ Collins. Op Cit. Pages 1-19.

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid. Page 19.

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid. Page 296.

Chapter 7 Empowering Women to Increase Life Chances

This chapter takes the findings from the case study and addresses how certain resources, structures, organisations or governmental bodies can increase or limit the life chances of women and children. The chapter questions how resource allocation within '*domains of power*'⁷⁶⁰ can increase or limit the life chances of women and children, it assesses whether indicators currently show that resources are increasing life chances and questions, '*what structural inequalities are proving to be most resistant to change, and why might this be the case?*'⁷⁶¹ The chapter explores the impact of international, nation, legal and organisational resources on women's and children's life chances. Chapters seven and eight explore the ways in which diversity management might be used to increase life chances.

As is demonstrated in the previous chapter women's capabilities cannot be increased by the work of NGOs alone. The women are not able to live with bodily integrity as the law within Ghana does not protect them within the institution of marriage.⁷⁶² Similarly, Ghanaian women have protection from domestic violence '*on paper*', and children have protection from defilement '*on paper*', through the 2007 Domestic Violence Bill.⁷⁶³ However, surveys show that women are not economically empowered enough to report their husbands for

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁶¹ Rai, 2008. Page 2.

⁷⁶² Dovlo, 2005. Page 651.

⁷⁶³ Ibid.

such assaults on their bodies.⁷⁶⁴ Therefore, in order for women to be able to live with bodily integrity, the position of women must change at all levels; state, market, community and household. Working from a GAD point of view means seeking to change the *balance of power between men and women* from the household to the international institution.⁷⁶⁵

McKay and Romm note the importance of acknowledging wider social and political contexts within their participatory research in Zambia,⁷⁶⁶ by referring to Zambia's Millennium Development Goals in their final report.⁷⁶⁷ Within the research, research assistants provided accounts of the complexities people experience surrounding decision-making processes and McKay and Romm highlight how approaches addressing one specific need identified by women cannot be isolated from wider social, economic and political factors.⁷⁶⁸ Programs that neglect wider social and political contexts bypass the very institutions that require change in order to meet the strategic needs of women. Rai argues that in order to further the advancement of women; we need to ask, *'what structural inequalities are proving to be most resistant to change, and why might this be the case?'*⁷⁶⁹ In this way, all structures that either resist change or are ineffective in applying change; must be challenged, not just relationships within the shrine.

The role of the state in meeting Millennium Development Goals, resources required to meet gender equality goals and the extent to which NGOs are, or can

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁵ Macdonald, 1994. Page 18

⁷⁶⁶ McKay et al, 2007. Page 152.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid. Page 388.

⁷⁶⁹ Rai, 2008. Page 2.

be, accountable for the effectiveness of their programs within the current neo-liberal economic climate is assessed within this chapter. Weil et al suggests that bringing *'multiple stakeholders into new forms of dialogue is integral to the research itself'*⁷⁷⁰ and within this chapter I argue that a range of stakeholders must be included in dialogue in order to meet the strategic needs of the Trokosi women. Of uppermost importance, the women themselves must participate in such dialogue.

7.1 Governance and Aid Effectiveness

Over the past decade the concept of Aid Effectiveness in development strategies has become central to any development discussion and as a result of the fieldwork undertaken, aid effectiveness has become a central issue within this thesis. Increasingly donor and partner countries are becoming aware that whilst the *amount* of aid provided to developing nations is key to achieving development goals, the *effectiveness* of how such funding is allocated is equally important.

In March 2002 the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development put out the call that developing countries take up the commitment to strengthen policies and institutions that could reduce poverty. Similarly, developed countries agreed to provide more and better aid and to improve trade and debt policies in order to contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development in partner countries.⁷⁷¹ In February 2003 the First High Level Forum on Harmonisation in Rome established an agreement that development assistance needs to be

⁷⁷⁰ Weil et al, 2005. Page 13.

⁷⁷¹ *Information Brief on Gender Equality and the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness to be held in Accra, 2-4 September 2008.* Page 1.

harmonised around the principle of recipient-country ownership and government leadership, including strengthening civil society and the private sector's involvement in national development processes.⁷⁷² Following up on the Monterrey Consensus the Barcelona Commitments European Union Member States agreed to increase their ODA volumes to .39% of their Gross National Income by 2006.⁷⁷³ February 2004 saw the Second Roundtable of Development Results in Marrakech where partners outside the EU signed the Marrakech Memorandum with a view to place development results at the centre of planning, implementation and evaluation.⁷⁷⁴

7.1.1 The Paris Declaration

In March 2005, at the Second High Level Forum in Paris, 100 signatories from partner governments, bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, regional development banks and other international agencies endorsed the Paris Declaration and agreed on 56 partner commitments to deliver aid in a more effective way. 12 indicators were identified as a means of providing a measurable and evidence-based way to assess progress against aid effectiveness objectives. 11 of the indicators for the Paris Declaration targets are to be assessed in the year in which this thesis is submitted, 2010. The aid effectiveness agenda as outlined in the 2005 Paris Declaration was signed by over 100 countries, including Ghana.⁷⁷⁵ The Paris Declaration Principals on Aid Effectiveness are *Ownership* of development policies and strategies by partner countries,

⁷⁷² Ibid.

⁷⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁵ *Mapping Aid Effectiveness and Gender Equality in Africa – Regional Issues and Trends*. Muteshi, 2008. United Nations Development Fund for Women. Page 3.

Alignment of a single funding framework of conditions or indicators with partner countries national development strategies, institutions and procedures, *Harmonisation* of donor actions, increasing predictability, regulating conditionality and scaling up aid to achieve development goals, *Managing* and implementing aid with a focus on results through transparent and monitorable assessment frameworks and, *Mutual accountability* of development results by donors and partner countries.⁷⁷⁶

It was recognised prior to the High Level Forum in Accra that new aid arrangements and policy developments born of the aid effectiveness discussions needed to be more accountable to gender equality and women's human rights.⁷⁷⁷ During the period in which fieldwork was being carried out in Ghana, the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness was held in Accra, Ghana. The Forum was held in order to review progress made since the Paris Declaration and broaden and deepen the dialogue on aid effectiveness by giving space and voice to partner countries, Civil Society Organisations and emerging donors.⁷⁷⁸ The forum in 2008 was co-sponsored by the Government of Ghana, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Ghana Forum provided an opportunity for the international community to critically reflect on how the new aid agenda and the implementation of the Paris Declaration principles have impacted on gender equality and

⁷⁷⁶ *Information Brief on Gender Equality and the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness to be held in Accra, 2-4 September 2008. Page 2.*

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid. Page 7.*

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid. Page 1.*

women's empowerment.⁷⁷⁹ The need for critical reflection was highlighted in an OECD Monitoring Survey in 2006 and 2008 which revealed several obstacles to improved aid effectiveness, including a lack of strong accountability systems at country level to monitor the impact of the aid effectiveness agenda.⁷⁸⁰

7.1.2 International Resources to meet Gender Equality Goals

Key findings of Muteshi's report presented at the forum, on Gender Equality and Aid Effectiveness mirror the concerns highlighted through the Troxovi case study explored within this thesis. Muteshi reported a lack of indicators to monitor progress in the areas of gender equality and empowerment. As evidenced in this thesis, gender equality advances for Ghana's *rural* women cannot be measured through national indicators. The disparity between Ghana's urban and rural women was evidenced through education statistics, however other important indicators are not available. Muteshi reported a need for 'watchdog' roles for civil society and national women's machineries in order to improve accountability. Within the Troxovi case study the NGO was accused of corruption and the lack of accountability within NGOs was highlighted by the government's CHRAJ. However, more significant was the extent to which women were represented by urban males within all stakeholder groups. This highlights the lack of national women's machineries available to represent women's issues and challenge their unequal status within the society. And, critically, as already discussed within the thesis, Muteshi emphasises the need for participatory

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁰ Muteshi, 2008. Page 3.

community based monitoring tools.⁷⁸¹ Specific issues related to aid effectiveness and gender equality in Ghana were raised prior to the 2008 High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness. These included persistent widespread gender disparities, especially in rural areas, despite poverty reduction efforts being supported by sustainable financing arrangements and the lack of women's literacy rates and accessible productive resources for Ghanaian women. However Muteshi also states that Ghana has received increasing levels of donor assistance in recent years due to donor confidence in the government's management abilities and due to Ghana's strong economic performance and she confirms that the current economic and political environment makes the achievement of most of the Millennium Development Goals within reach. This has been in part through the high levels of funding in Ghana, as while '*the percentage of ODA to GDP has been steadily decreasing, the volume of aid has in absolute terms been increasing.*'⁷⁸² Therefore, funding has increased yet indicators specific to gender equality have failed to reflect a great deal of change. This highlights a resistance to change within the nation, and following Rai's argument, warrants further investigation into *why* this might be the case.⁷⁸³

7.1.3 National Resources to meet Gender Equality Goals

Moser argues that '*third world governments have remained reluctant to allocate resources from national budgets to women*'.⁷⁸⁴

⁷⁸¹ Ibid. Page 27-28.

⁷⁸² Muteshi, 2008. Page 13.

⁷⁸³ Rai, 2008. Page 2.

⁷⁸⁴ Moser, 1989. Page 1812.

In the field, governmental representatives stated that the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice were the body that initially alerted the NGO to human rights abuses occurring within Troxovi practicing shrines, and called on the NGO to intervene, claiming that the nation did not have the funding to act.⁷⁸⁵ Interestingly, the fieldwork period also coincided with the 2008 election campaigns within the nation. After two rounds of voting, murmurs of aggression concerning a widely-held misinterpretation of the nation's constitutional 50+1% majority rule and a number of disappearing and reappearing votes; the National Democratic Congress was voted in taking a 50.23% majority.⁷⁸⁶

Ten days after the inauguration of the new president, ex President Kufour's retirement package was leaked to the press, and the *New African* reported the following.⁷⁸⁷ The package was allegedly approved at the 30th sitting of the third meeting of the fourth session, of the Fourth Parliament of the Fourth Republic held on Tuesday 6 January 2009, however this has been denied by many including those within Kufour's National Patriotic Party. Paul Collins Appiah Ofori, an NPP MP and noted anti-corruption campaigner, has even vowed to challenge the package in court. The package is reported to apply to all future ex-presidents and not Kufour alone. The package includes two fully-furnished residences, six fully maintained, fuelled and chauffeur-driven cars, (to be replaced every four years), three salon cars, two cross-country cars, and one all-purpose vehicle, traffic free travel, including police escorts, 65 days a year overseas for the ex-president and his spouse, 3 personal assistants and security

⁷⁸⁵ Interview with a representative from the CHRAJ, September 15, 2008.

⁷⁸⁶ '*Ghana Shows the Way*' *New African*. February 2009. Edition No 481. Page 20-31.

⁷⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

staff, diplomatic passports for the ex-president and his spouse, 24 hour entertainment, paid for by the state, a non-taxable ex-gratia of 12 month's salary for every 12 months served in office, (and for ex-presidents who have served two terms, 6 months salary for every 12 months served in office within the first term), and US\$1 million to set up a foundation or form an NGO. The package was to be maintained by the state and would not revert to the nation when the former president dies. Noticeably, when Rawlings awarded himself similarly upon retirement, Kufour withdrew most of the privileges.

This kind of retirement package for an ex-president within any nation is extreme, yet within a nation where the nation's poorest citizens are denied the resources required to protect their basic human rights; is inconceivable. This gives some insight into why so many African states have been wrought with violence at election time, elections have become the lynch pin of the desperate struggle between impoverished people and the national elite.⁷⁸⁸ Whilst the Ghanaian government claims insufficient resources to meet gender equality goals, the nation's elite seek to secure inconceivably large retirement packages for their own personal gain. Therefore, national finance, anti-corruption and administrative justice frameworks within the nation are proving *resistant to change*.⁷⁸⁹ In this way, the life chances of women and children in Ghana are not solely determined by gender, race and nationality; but are also determined by class.

⁷⁸⁸ Examples include Angola, DR Congo, Guinea, Cote D'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria, Togo and Zimbabwe; 'Ghana Shows the Way' New African. February 2009. Edition No 481. Page 18

⁷⁸⁹ Rai, 2008. Page 2.

7.1.4 The Law

In a similar manner to education statistics, women rights in Ghana are highly dependent on patterns of urban or rural residence.⁷⁹⁰ Under national law women and children are protected against discrimination,⁷⁹¹ however in practice such laws face stiff resistance in rural settings where women's and children's rights are seen as contrary to cultural rights. This results in women and children being unable to access laws meaningfully as often such cases are referred back to customary arbitration,⁷⁹² in order to retain perceived national cultural traditions. This lack of protection under the law discriminates against women and children, decreasing their life chances. At the customary level, women and children have access to certain protections, however many of these protections have been dissipated through various historical interventions. This is particularly true for Ghana's *rural* women and children. Traditionally, Trokosi women were compensated for their work within the shrines through the giving of '*Grandma Lands*'.⁷⁹³ *Grandma Lands* refers to the land Trokosi women were given to cultivate during their time in the shrines. This land was given to the women once the period of servitude was complete, along with additional lands in exchange for their services and they reserved the right to pass on the land to their children.⁷⁹⁴ Duncan et al report that traditionally the Fiasidi women tended to pass on their *Grandma Lands* to their daughters in order to counteract discriminatory inheritance norms and state that the land was predominately used for the

⁷⁹⁰ Ababio, 2000. Page 58.

⁷⁹¹ See The Children's Act 1998 and the Constitution of Ghana.

⁷⁹² Ababio, Op Cit.

⁷⁹³ Duncan, et al. Op Cit. Page 9.

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid.

cultivation of reeds and wickers, in order to be used by female basket weavers.⁷⁹⁵

In this way, women's economic activities were also supported through the use of the Grandma Lands.⁷⁹⁶

However, in the 19th Century, as a result of cash crop farming, land value increased and men gained more and more access to the Grandma Lands in order to produce shallots and sugar cane.⁷⁹⁷ Therefore, the colonial administration's introduction of cash cropping significantly affected the economic survival of the Fiasidi post-servitude. This left the Fiasidi with the obligation to fulfill their communal responsibilities, whilst withdrawing, not only their individual right to compensation, but the mechanism by which women would counteract discriminatory inheritance rights.⁷⁹⁸

The Trokosi women have been denied access to land through the interaction of two powerful patriarchal structures: custom and colonisation. Just as structures and systems can interact to oppress women, they are also able to interact to challenge the oppression of women. Examples include the great advances made in the protection of women's citizenship rights through pressure at the international level.⁷⁹⁹ Therefore, by drawing attention to the wider social and political contexts in which programs operate, ways in which powerful structures can cooperate to challenge the oppression of women can be investigated.

⁷⁹⁵ Duncan, et al. Op Cit.

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁹ UNFPA 2007, Page 86. 'Violence Against Women'

7.2 Aid Effectiveness and NGOs

Of prime importance in the case study is the issue of aid effectiveness through monitoring, accountability and transparency. Though governments of developing nations and governmental and multilateral aid agencies are opening up dialogue concerning how development goals can be monitored for aid effectiveness, there remains little monitoring, accountability or transparency by NGOs delivering aid projects in developing nations.⁸⁰⁰ NGO policies are rarely viewed or understood by individual donors in developed nations and independent monitoring of results is rarely necessary in order to continue gaining funds.⁸⁰¹ Issues surrounding the monitoring of NGO funding, codes of conduct for NGOs and accountability structures are explored within this section of the thesis. Whilst Muteshi argues that '*To date, governments and DAC donors are not yet mutually accountable to people living in poverty, including the millions of women and other working poor...*',⁸⁰² I argue that within the case study, the NGO is not accountable to the nation in which it functions, to those giving to their campaigns and most importantly; to the women and children in the communities in which they work.

This lack of accountability has come about through a rise in the use of the narrated story to gain development funds, a lack of legal and political accountability, a rise in *human rights journalism* and the absence of meaningful monitoring requirements by donors.

⁸⁰⁰ De Waal, 1997. Page 80.

⁸⁰¹ Ibid.

⁸⁰² Muteshi, 2008. Page 31.

7.2.1 Human rights Journalism

According to De Waal, '*Journalists know in advance what a 'famine story' looks like and search for the right elements. The overall plot has been characterized as a 'fairy story'*⁸⁰³ *consisting of a helpless victim in distress, a villain and a savior (preferably a white nurse). The story gives the comforting illusion that a solution is at hand, and that the reader or viewer is (or can be) part of it.*'⁸⁰⁴ De Waal refers to NGOs working in conflict areas and within this section of the thesis, I argue that this can be equally applied to the NGO within the case study; reducing the life chances of women and children by portraying them as passive victims.

*"[A Trokosi girl] is 13 years old. At the age of 12, she was given to a local priest in atonement for the rape that resulted in her birth, the rape of her mother by her mother's uncle."*⁸⁰⁵

A helpless victim.

*"As soon as [she] has completed three menstrual cycles, she too will almost certainly be raped, by the priest to whom she was given."*⁸⁰⁶

A villain.

*"It was feared she would never integrate back into society. She had experienced so many awful things in the shrine that had left her deeply traumatised.... Through the tireless work of the team at Adidome, [she] has now adjusted well and has become very well integrated into her community..."*⁸⁰⁷

A saviour.

⁸⁰³ Benthall, 1993. *Disasters, Relief and the Media*. Tauris, London.

⁸⁰⁴ De Waal, Op Cit. Page 81.

⁸⁰⁵ Women's Action 14.1 March 1998. Accessed at http://www.equalitynow.org/english/actions/action_1401_en.html on the 12th March 2010.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁷ *Small Things Make a Difference*. World Development Service, 2008/2009. Accessed at www.irishmethodist.org/cmsfiles/ on the 10th March 2010.

*'In funding the training of Trokosi slave women, you are enabling them to develop skills that will help them start small businesses so that they can provide for their families.'*⁸⁰⁸

You can be part of it.

This analysis is not intended to diminish the plight of the Trokosi women and children, but rather, seeks to highlight that as long as the women are represented as helpless victims, the capacity to have their strategic needs met is diminished. De Waal and Benthall document the role of the media in humanitarian interventions asserting that relief agencies work in conjunction with journalists in order to produce the humanitarian '*product*' required for an international audience.⁸⁰⁹ '*Relief agency guides take visitors to the worst places... This leads to 'exaggerated, dire predictions and stereotypes of pathetic dependence.'*⁸¹⁰

These stereotypes of *pathetic dependence*⁸¹¹ can equally be seen within the Trokosi case study. Within chapter five of this thesis, I argue that international discourse on the practice provides the imagery of an unknowing, uneducated abused Trokosi woman, an evil and violent priest and a rescuing, releasing and restoring NGO. In this way, human rights discourse is high jacked by need to produce the story of the '*ordinary person's tragedy*',⁸¹² avoiding all political and/or social analysis;⁸¹³ and ultimately avoiding verifiability. British journalist, Forsyth wrote of the

⁸⁰⁸ *Ghana Trokosi Slave Vocational Training Appeal*, Give Now. Accessed at <http://www.givenow.com.au/cause972> on the 11th March 2010.

⁸⁰⁹ De Waal, 1997. Page 81. Benthall, Jonathon. 1993. Op Cit.

⁸¹⁰ De Waal, 1997. Page 81.

⁸¹¹ Ibid.

⁸¹² De Waal, 1997. Page 84.

⁸¹³ Ibid.

Nigerian-Biafran War; *'People who couldn't fathom the political complexities of the war could easily grasp the wrong in a picture of a child dying of starvation.'*⁸¹⁴ Likewise, in order to secure much needed funding to meet the needs of the world's poorest women, the NGO provides the *'ordinary person's tragedy'*⁸¹⁵ for people who cannot fathom the political and social complexities of intervening in traditional systems in post-colonial states.

The following section explores the history of NGOs in providing relief in Africa and I argue that though originally NGOs were set up to bypass governments – it is now crucial to include governments in stakeholder dialogue in order to challenge the unequal position of women.

7.2.2 History of NGOs

Humanitarian NGOs became popular in the 1960's, as a direct response to the Nigerian-Biafran War from 1967-70. Bernard Kouchner was one of many French doctors who volunteered with the Red Cross and objected to the conditions impinged by the organisation's quest for neutrality.⁸¹⁶ Publicly criticising the Nigerian government for civilian murders and starvation caused by blockades, he created Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors without Borders), and a great array of NGOs followed.⁸¹⁷ The Nigerian government's hand was moved by the international community's outcry at the pictures of starving children they witnessed on their televisions, allowing humanitarian supplies into the region.

⁸¹⁴ Ibid. Page 74.

⁸¹⁵ Ibid. Page 84.

⁸¹⁶ Ibid. Page 79.

⁸¹⁷ De Waal, 1997. Page 79.

The complexities of the political situation were not required by the international community; and two new lessons were learnt within the international political environment. Firstly, state authority can be bypassed within the new neo-liberal project,⁸¹⁸ and secondly; providing images of powerless victims to the international community can move the hand of the state.

In the 1970's relief NGOs gained respectability and maintained a measure of the influence gained in Nigeria's civil war.⁸¹⁹ Many of the larger NGOs banded together to develop professional standards and mechanisms of regulation, under the authority of host governments.⁸²⁰ In 1968 the Canadian government first began to channel funds through NGOs, deliberately bypassing African governments. The trend was closely followed by a number of donor governments.⁸²¹ This altered the institutional framework of humanitarianism and in the 1980's it became clear that NGOs lacked any form of enforceable professional standards, or minimum requirements for entry.⁸²²

NGOs are generally referred to as '*operational NGOs*' or '*non-operational NGOs*'. Operational NGOs deploy expatriate staff members to work '*on the ground*' and non-operational NGOs work through local partners '*on the ground*'.⁸²³ Non-operational NGOs are mainly church based agencies,⁸²⁴ and the extent to which these NGOs function through the '*second and third generation*' Christians created through the missionisation projects of the 1900's is of interest.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid. Page 66.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid. Pages 78-9.

⁸²⁰ Ibid. Pages 78-9.

⁸²¹ Ibid.

⁸²² Ibid. Page 79.

⁸²³ De Waal, 1997. Page 79.

⁸²⁴ Ibid.

In the field an employee of the NGO stated; *'I was converted by a groups of Australian missionaries who came to Ghana in 1923. I went through their missionary school when I was in my 20's'*⁸²⁵ This highlights the extent to which colonising powers continue to maintain influence in post-colonial states; both as the grandparents of the Christian religious experience and as the patrons of international aid programs.

7.2.3 Soft vs Hard Humanitarian Interests in a Competitive 'Market'

Within previous chapters I have argued that the NGO's program increases the women's capabilities in the areas of health, affiliations and control over one's environment . I also argue that even the least severe reports on the practice highlight the extent to which the women have little choice concerning their own lives within the powerful patriarchal Troxovi system. Chapter 6 highlighted the Welfarist, anti-poverty approach taken by the NGO and I argue that the strategic needs of the women are barely met. Welfarist and Anti-poverty approaches are not particular to the NGO within the case study. As discussed, these approaches are popular within many NGOs as agencies are reluctant to interfere with the relations between men and women.⁸²⁶ In addition, within the current neo-liberal economic climate, NGOs are rarely afforded the luxury of being solely concerned with the interests of program recipients, but must produce programs palatable to donors and patronage networks. De Waal refers to '*soft*' and '*hard*' humanitarian interests.⁸²⁷ Soft humanitarian interests refer to the stated aims of the institution;

⁸²⁵ Informal discussion with an employee of the NGO, Principal Researchers Notes. September 6 2008.

⁸²⁶ Moser. Op Cit. Page 1803.

⁸²⁷ De Waal, 1997. Page 66.

preventing poverty, protecting human rights, assisting the poor etc.⁸²⁸ Hard humanitarian interests refers to demands on the organisation itself; job security for staff, job satisfaction, and funding and marketing requirements needed to deliver the soft interests of the organisation.⁸²⁹ Soft and hard humanitarian interests interrelate, in that, the soft interests of the organisation can not be met without meeting the hard interests also. De Waal argues that '*the demands of fundraising and institutional survival make it imperative not to admit to failures. The competition is for funds, not successful famine prevention.*'⁸³⁰ This can be equally applied to the work of the NGO within the case study. In the field, the Executive Director claimed that he would not be surprised if families are sending their girls to other shrines as '*the mindset of the people has not changed.*'⁸³¹ This reinforces the limitations that programs have when policies do not employ empowerment approaches. Obviously this concern of the Executive Director was not communicated to donors and individual givers. The competition is for funds, not for successful feminist outcomes and broadcasting the limitations of popular Welfarist and Anti-poverty approaches would simply stifle donor contributions. Therefore, it is not that the international NGO is simply able to escape accountability structures, but rather; the international 'market' requires the NGO to lack accountability.

⁸²⁸ Ibid.

⁸²⁹ Ibid.

⁸³⁰ Ibid. Page 80.

⁸³¹ Principal Researchers Journal Entry. Discussion with Executive Director. September 2008.

7.2.4 Sustainability

Sustainability is a key issue within programs that employ Antipoverty and Wefarist approaches. The question of sustainability was investigated in the field, as the project cycle heavily funded by an international governmental aid agency was coming to an end⁸³². The NGO's sustainability strategy projections include asking for payments by vulnerable women within communities to attend the Adidome Vocational Centre.⁸³³ Within this framework, poor rural women become the means to sustain the NGO, rather than vice versa. The issue of sustainability is also important as people tend not to want to give to certain areas, such as sanitation,⁸³⁴ public health,⁸³⁵ and empowerment projects for rural African women.⁸³⁶ The ability of the nation-state to provide such services is limited, as the state has been bypassed within the donor and NGO arrangement. Therefore, within the case study, the gains won in meeting the women's needs are not sustainable within the current funding model. The women are not empowered through the project, the structures that have caused their oppression are not challenged and future projections see the NGO's hard humanitarian interests taking precedence over their soft humanitarian interests.

⁸³² Principal Researchers Journal Entry. Observation. September 2008.

⁸³³ Interview with Executive Director, Finance Manager and attendance at the NGO's annual staff conference. September – November 2008.

⁸³⁴ De Waal, 1997. Page 81.

⁸³⁵ Ibid.

⁸³⁶ Empowerment projects which challenge the full range of oppressive structures, as discussed earlier within the chapter.

7.2.5 Lack of Accountability

In recent years, donor governments have undertaken their own monitoring and evaluation research within NGO provided programs, however as no agreed professional standards exist within the field, there are few benchmarks to report against.⁸³⁷ With few agreed standards, the monitoring and evaluation exercise can be seen to be an exercise of power over the NGO,⁸³⁸ and within non-operational NGOs, an act of imperialism.

De Waal argues that NGOs also conduct their own internal monitoring and evaluation reports, and claims that this *'is as though the sociological study of the church were undertaken by committed Christians only: criticism would be solely within the context of advancing the faith itself.'*⁸³⁹ It is possible that this is the case within the Troxovi case study. The NGO produces and reproduces media regarding its achievements in working with the women, however little independent research has taken place concerning the empowerment of the women. Independent evaluation that has been conducted has focused on the number of Trokosi women still in servitude, in order to gain further aid from governmental donors.⁸⁴⁰

The lack of benchmarks and the absence of agreed standards renders the need for NGOs to interact and dialogue with multiple stakeholders, even more vital. In this way, a variety of perspectives can inform the decision making

⁸³⁷ De Waal, 1997. Page 81.

⁸³⁸ Ibid.

⁸³⁹ Ibid. Page 65.

⁸⁴⁰ Kufugbe, 2008.

process. This approach will be discussed further within the following section of this chapter.

7.3 Diversity Management

Diversity management is a key concept within the thesis as the case study reveals that opportunities for stakeholder groups to work together are ignored as each group is unable to work with diverse values. The NGO has no ability to work with diverse values as it is driven by the values of its patronage network. National Resistance Groups have no ability to work with diverse values as they are driven by the desire to maintain the status quo; both with regard to maintaining power relationships within communities and protecting communities from perceived imperialist attacks. Therefore, each employs a narrow pragmatic approach.

Diversity management is about... *'...people managing the increasing diversity of issues they confronted by increasing the diversity of types of model, methodology and theory available to do the job.'*⁸⁴¹ Diversity is important within the case study as currently the only means of improving the life chances of the women and children raises serious concerns surrounding respect for culture. This leaves the women and children with few choices concerning how they might choose to live their lives.

⁸⁴¹ Flood and Romm, 2000. Page 9.

7.3.1 Why is Diversity Important? Diversity and the Post-Colonial Woman

The conundrum that the Trokosi women and children face regarding the choices available to them reflects the choices many women faced during independence struggles and national agenda setting in the early years of independence. Historically, in order for the post-colonial woman to benefit from international feminist advances, she would have to trade the advancement of her culture, her people and her nation, for the advancement of her sex. History has shown that often this price has been too high for the post-colonial woman and, as is the case with the Indigenous communities within Australia, '*... self-imposed and self-regulated codes of silence protected communities from the attacks of the imperialist Western powers...*'⁸⁴² Rai argues that despite the fact that many post colonial women saw imperialism as more sinister than sexism, '*women's groups also remained uncomfortable with the nationalist leaderships' articulations of women's place within the national movements.*'⁸⁴³ Within this framework, post-colonial women were left with few choices concerning their empowerment. Similarly, within the case study, in order to obtain emancipation from customary servitude the women must engage with the perceived imperialist; reducing chances to emancipate themselves from neo-colonialism.

It is my argument that the emancipation of women can only be achieved by empowering women to claim equality on the grounds of race, sex and class. Within the case study there is a lack of diversity of choice for the women as each stakeholder group uses their own political agenda to offer the women an option

⁸⁴² Rai, 2008. Page 31

⁸⁴³ Ibid.

for living. This thesis argues (through the use of PAR and Nussbaum's capabilities approach) that it is important to be respectful of the ways others might choose to live, *'provided that those do not cause harm to others... Such respect is what human dignity requires.'*⁸⁴⁴

Replacing traditional religion with Christianity is not a new means of managing issues in Africa. In order to respect the ways others might chose to live, one must offer more than one alternative to practices that limit the life chances of women and children. This can be achieved through diversity management.

7.3.2 Managing Diversity

This thesis avoids a cultural relativist post-modern view, as *'postmodernism seemed to conclude that the crux of emancipation is, 'anything goes'.... Leaving a fluid and diverse world of many equally valid truths.'*⁸⁴⁵ Many equally valid truths results in an inability to challenge unequal power relations that reduce the life chances of women and children. Similarly, this thesis does not seek to support the global homogenising of cultures, religions and communities. Rather, the thesis supports respect for diversity and the way others choose to live their lives; whilst acknowledging that we are *'implicated in each other's lives'*⁸⁴⁶ and therefore, the way we live should not cause harm to others.⁸⁴⁷

Flood and Romm argue that in order to answer the question of how diversity and emancipation can be designed within one scheme of thought,

⁸⁴⁴ Nussbaum, 2007. Page 296.

⁸⁴⁵ Flood and Romm, 2000. Page 3.

⁸⁴⁶ Ibid. Page 12.

⁸⁴⁷ Nussbaum, 2007. Page 296.

contemporary social theory has four main styles of responses.⁸⁴⁸ These include pragmatism, isolationism, imperialism and complementarism.⁸⁴⁹

As discussed, several NGOs took pragmatic approaches by attempting to intervene to emancipate the women from customary servitude in the 1980's and 1990's. Pragmatic approaches do not require the interventionist to reflect on an underlying theory, methodology of model and rather, is reliant on a trial and error approach.⁸⁵⁰ Flood and Romm argue that pragmatic approaches can lead to experimental interventions that run the risk of *'unnecessary levels of damage and distress to people.'*⁸⁵¹ Such unnecessary levels of damage and distress were caused when the first efforts to *release* the Trokosi women were undertaken by several NGOs without undertaking consultations.⁸⁵²

Within the case study the NGO practices isolationism by protecting the philosophical beliefs of the patronage network by consistently subscribing to the use of Christianity in the emancipation process. Adherence to one theory on how affairs can be managed limits people's choices, and the promotion of one way of doing things inevitably involves devaluing other ways.⁸⁵³ Therefore, failing to endorse a variety of options to people is totalising and can be oppressive.⁸⁵⁴ Concerns surrounding isolationism ring true within the case study as the extent to which the

⁸⁴⁸ Flood and Romm, Op Cit. Page 3-4.

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁰ Flood and Romm, 2000. Page 4.

⁸⁵¹ Ibid.

⁸⁵² Ababio. 2000. Page 23

⁸⁵³ Flood et al, Op Cit.

⁸⁵⁴ Ibid.

women are provided with choices concerning their affairs is limited by the fundamentalism of the Christian NGO.

Ironically, it is the National Resistance Groups that practice imperialist responses. Imperialism is like isolationism except that when incongruities in the preferred theory appear, recognition is given to other theories in order to respond to the problem.⁸⁵⁵ However, within the imperialist framework, the recognition given to other theories is always viewed through the lens of the imperialist's arguments.⁸⁵⁶ Within the case study, NRG's argue for cultural relativism, however when their postmodernist arguments fail them, they refer to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, quoting their right to practice their own culture.⁸⁵⁷ Within this perspective, the cultural relativist picks and chooses sections of the rights-based approach that suit the favoured theory.

Following Flood and Romm, I argue for a complementarist approach. It is my argument that when comparing theories, a complementarist approach is most likely to perform well concerning the measurement standard in question within this thesis. That measurement standard is how the life chances of women and children might be improved. Within the case study, a complementarist approach⁸⁵⁸ would provide an approach that enables interventionists to act within various worldviews, whilst still emancipating customary servitude within communities. A

⁸⁵⁵ Flood et al, 2000. Page 5.

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁷ Discussion (did not agree to formal interview) with NRG leader. 29th September 2008

⁸⁵⁸ Flood et al, Op Cit.

complementarist approach would preserve the diversity of opportunities for the women and children.

7.3.3 Diversity and Triple Loop Learning

My argument outlines that supporting both religious fundamentalism and cultural relativism leads to oppression. This is evidenced within the case study as each group uses the women and children to further their own political agenda, rather than placing the life chances of the women and children as the central area of concern. Flood and Romm (2000) explicate Triple Loop Learning, stating that it requires theorist or practitioner to ask '*Are we doing things right?*', '*Are we doing the right things?*' And; '*Is rightness buttressed by mightiness and/or mightiness buttressed by rightness?*'.

The first two loops of learning ask '*Are we doing things right?*' and '*Are we doing the right things?*' These questions acknowledge the need for a task to be completed and to be completed well, as well-executed action is vital to emancipation.⁸⁵⁹ However, they fail to consider the risk of power relationships dictating what is *right*. Therefore, the third loop asks '*Is rightness buttressed by mightiness and/or mightiness buttressed by rightness?*' In this way, the three loops work in concert to assure that relevant action is taken, and is well-executed, but that within the interventionists mind, he or she is conscious of unequal power relationships that might buttress rightness within society.⁸⁶⁰

⁸⁵⁹ Flood and Romm, 2000. Page 10.

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid.

Triple Loop Learning advocates that *'...choice, it should be remembered, can only be made using locally generated criteria informed by wider considerations.'*⁸⁶¹

It is my argument that a complementarist approach requires the participation of the women and children when determining if the right things are being done, if they are being done right and if rightness is buttressed by mightiness. However, I also argue that participation alone cannot emancipate the women, as decisions must be widely informed and include a variety of stakeholders.

For a number of decades practitioners and academics alike have questioned the usefulness of development when it doesn't include the participation of the people for whom the program is designed.⁸⁶² Edwards argues that poor people must be included in order for programs to remain relevant, stating, *'We cannot be relevant to people unless we understand their problems, but we cannot understand these problems unless people tell us about them.'*⁸⁶³ Edwards argues that in order to increase the control which poor people have in decision making, they must be participants in the development process.⁸⁶⁴ However, participation alone does not ensure that the choices of the world's poorest people are increased. Hearing the problems of poor people, and understanding these problems does not necessarily result in a relevant or particularly useful development program. This is because the strategic needs of

⁸⁶¹ Ibid. Page 7.

⁸⁶² Edwards, 1993. Page 79.

⁸⁶³ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid. Page 80.

women cannot be met by one stakeholder alone. NGO programs cannot provide legal protection for women, access to community resources, political participation or alleviation from domestic labour and childcare etc. Meeting women's strategic needs requires dialogue for action, with a variety of stakeholders. Similarly, issues around power and representation within communities cannot be solely resolved through participation as communities are not '*homogeneous, static and harmonious units within which people share common interests and needs.*'⁸⁶⁵ Other criticisms of participatory methods claim that participation can bypass national institutional safeguards and bring restructuring processes directly to rural communities.⁸⁶⁶ Therefore, in order to expand the choices available to the least powerful individuals at the local level, decisions must be widely informed.⁸⁶⁷ Ackoff argues that '*objectivity cannot be approximated by an individual investigator or decision-maker; it can be approached only by groups of individuals with diverse values [that are brought to bear in framing the issues].*'⁸⁶⁸

This thesis insists that it is essential that women are to be a part of discussions and solutions surrounding their own exploitation,⁸⁶⁹ and therefore; the thesis advocates for the inclusion of the women's and children's views when approaching policy decisions, rather than outlining strict policy recommendations. The following section of this chapter will provide an analysis of the NGO's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, using a Social Relations

⁸⁶⁵ Guijt, Shah and Chambers, 1993. *The Myth of Community: Gender Issues in Participatory Development*. Intermediate Technology Publications.

⁸⁶⁶ Slocum Wichart Rocheleau and Thomas-Slayter. Eds. 1995. *Power, Process and Participation: Tools for Change*. Intermediate Technology Publishers. London.

⁸⁶⁷ Flood et al, Op Cit. Page 12.

⁸⁶⁸ Ackoff, 1999 p 312

⁸⁶⁹ Following McIntyre-Mills, 2003. Pages 309-338.

Approach. However, ultimately policy should be aligned to social movements from within.

7.4 SWOT Analysis

An analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the NGO and its program provides a useful framework for ways in which diversity might begin at the organisational level, in order to penetrate to NGO programs.

7.4.1. Strengths and Weaknesses

An analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the NGO reveals six key areas in which the NGO has either strengths or weaknesses or both strengths and weaknesses. These areas are *knowledge, networks, human resources, funding, organisational structure* and *policy outcomes*.

7.4.1.1 Knowledge

The NGO has a high level of local knowledge of rural communities within the Volta Region. The Ewe people group is overrepresented in upper management within the NGO, which results in very high levels of first-hand knowledge in the geography of the region, and in the culture and language of the people. However, as the NGO employs welfarist policy approaches, the views of the rural women and children within the region are not incorporated into the program. It is possible that this weakness in the program is actually born out of the NGO's strength in that as such a high number upper management staff members originate in the Volta Region, policy makers may think or feel that they understand the problems of the people, and so do not see the participation of the

people as necessary. As has been discussed within this thesis extensively, the participation of the women and children is essential as they must live with the consequences of decisions made.

7.4.1.2 Networks

Due to the high levels of *knowledge* that the NGO has concerning the Volta Region and its inhabitants, the NGO has significant access to marginalised women and children. This is a great strength for the NGO as National Resistance Group leaders are resisting intervention and therefore, reducing outside access to the women and children. This strength also highlights an opportunity to network with National Resistance Movements in order to discuss and take action regarding mutual concerns. However, the fundamentalism of each group immobilises cooperation, thus turning an opportunity into a weakness.

The NGO has significant networks internationally, the image of the NGO is high within these networks and the networks are concerned with the life chances of women and children. This is a great asset to the NGO in terms of their ability to gain resources and mobilise resources, although this international network is also a great weakness as the fundamentalism of the patronage network controls the extent to which the NGO can embrace holistic empowerment policy approaches. This inability to embrace diverse values has resulted in a weak image at the national and local levels.⁸⁷⁰ Seeking out diverse international networks would enable the NGO to strengthen this weakness. Similarly, another weakness within the NGO's program is the lack of cross-institutional, multilevel networking

⁸⁷⁰ Interview with CHRAJ representative, 15th September 2008, principal researchers diary notes, September, October, December 2008.

undertaken to target institutions that resist changes that challenge gender inequality.

7.4.1.3 Human Resources

Within the NGO all of the major southern Ghanaian people groups and languages are represented within the organisations staff. Whilst the Ewe group is over-represented in upper-management, all major groups are represented at the management level, with the exception of the northern Hausa people. The Hausa people live in the Northern Region of Ghana, which is approximately sixteen hours north of Accra. The NGO does employ Hausa people within the management levels of the organisation, however they work remotely and travel to Ghana for annual staff retreats.⁸⁷¹

7.4.1.4 Funding

Though the NGO employs narrow pragmatic approaches that cannot *sustainably* increase the life chances of women and children, the life chances of the women and children participating in the NGO program are increased. This has been made possible through the NGO's ability to gain and maintain funding to meet the immediate needs of the women and children. As discussed above, the weakness within this strength is that the funding relies of fundamentalist patronage networks that limit the NGO's ability to embrace diverse values.

⁸⁷¹ Principal researchers Diary 13th September 2008.

7.4.1.5 Organisational Structure

The weakness of the NGO's organisational structure reflects the inequality seen within the case study. The NGO does not have a diverse representation in the areas of religion, rural residence or gender. The NGO has a 20% female representation in the upper-management of the organisation. This is far from equal representation, however it is higher than the nation's female representation in parliament, which was only 10.9% in 2007/8,⁸⁷² and 8.3% in 2010.⁸⁷³

The NGO does not employ organisational equality and diversity policies and several staff members mentioned in interview that they were awarded their position in the NGO through family contacts.⁸⁷⁴ This has resulted in a very low level of representation of people from a low socioeconomic background within management and upper-management within the organisation. This also compounds the urban/rural gap in accessing resources as people from high socio-economic backgrounds tend to have urban patterns of residence.⁸⁷⁵

Allegations of corruption were made within the field. These allegations were not confirmed, however should corruption exist within the NGO, this would drain valuable resources and weaken the work of the NGO.

7.4.1.6 Policy Outcomes

Through the application of a capabilities approach, this thesis contends that the NGO has increased the capabilities of the women. Similarly, it has been

⁸⁷² UNDP Report 2007/08, Op Cit.

⁸⁷³ As at 28th February 2010. Interparliamentary Union website. Accessed at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> on the 6th May 2010.

⁸⁷⁴ Interviews with the principal researcher. September, November and December 2008.

⁸⁷⁵ Weis, 'Education and the Reproduction of Inequality. The Case of Ghana' Comparative Education Review. Volume 23 No 1 February 1979. Page 41

argued that the productive capacities of the women have been increased through participation in the NGO's program and has brought about a decrease in the prevalence of the powerful patriarchal practice both directly and indirectly. These strengths within the NGO's program could work in conjunction with opportunities to enable increases to become sustainable. Currently the advances increase the work of the women and do not seek to involve the women and children in decision making processes.

As discussed, the program unnecessarily reflects imperialist themes in order to further the political agenda of the NGO, at the expense of the empowerment of the women and children. As argued above, the NGO could use its strong international networks to seek out diverse patrons so that funding is not reliant on fundamentalism.

Table 7.1 NGO Strengths and Weaknesses

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Knowledge	Has a high level of local knowledge of rural communities within the Volta Region	Policy approaches do not incorporate the input of the women and children
Networks	Has significant access to marginalised women and children Image of the NGO at the international level is high Has significant networks with people concerned with the life chances of women and children	Does not network with National Resistance Groups in order to discuss and take action regarding mutual concerns The program does not target institutions across multiple levels to challenge gender inequality Image of the NGO is weak at the national and local levels
Human Resources	All major Ghanaian languages are represented within organisations staff All major Ghanaian people groups are represented within the organisations staff	
Funding	Ability to gain and maintain funding to meet the needs of women and children	Funding relies on fundamentalist patronage networks
Organisational Structure	Has some representation of women within the organisations management	Does not employ organisational equality and diversity policies Does not have diverse representation at management level within the organisation. Eg: Gender, rural and regional residents, religion Possible corruption draining resources
Policy Outcomes	Has increased the capabilities of the women Has increased the productive capacities of the women outside the shrines Has brought about a decrease in the prevalence of the powerful patriarchal practice directly and indirectly	Policy approaches do not incorporate the input of the women and children Policy approaches increase the work of women Imperialist themes reflected in programs

7.4.2 Opportunities and Threats

Kabeer's Social Relations Approach⁸⁷⁶ examines the interrelations between the state, market, household, community and, one could add the International Community, to determine the positioning of different groups of people within society. Following Kabeer's approach the analysis of the opportunities and threats that surround the NGO reveals significant ways in which opportunities might be used to reduce threats at the state, market, household, community and international levels.

Within the table the threats are listed within each '*level*', (Household, market, community, state and international) and opportunities available to respond and reduce threat are listed in the '*opportunities*' column.

As can be seen in the Table 7.2, often the way in which threats at one level can be minimised, is through engaging with another '*level*'. For example, a treat at the market level is the inability that women have to compete with men in the marketplace as they are not alleviated from their domestic work. This threat can only be limited by creating opportunities to challenge the inequality of women at the household to alleviate the domestic duties of women. In order to successfully achieve gender inequality at the household level, gender inequality must be challenged at various levels. Therefore, as argued within this thesis, the table shows that all of these *levels* are interlinked and in order to achieve empowerment at one level, empowerment must cut across multiple levels.

⁸⁷⁶ March, Mukhopadhyay and Smyth. 2003. *A Guide to Gender – Analysis Frameworks*. 2003. Printed by Oxfam Great Britain. Chapter 2.7

Therefore, the empowerment of women is reliant on the targeting of, and challenging within, a variety of organisations and structures.

Within the table, the execution of each opportunity must be driven by the priorities of the women and children themselves through participation. As argued by McKay et al, '*Active research as we see it, aims to enable decision-makers at these levels to become more attuned to public considerations around the benefits and limitations of programmes.*'⁸⁷⁷

⁸⁷⁷ McKay et al, 2007. Page 152.

Table 7.2 Using Opportunities to Reduce Threats

	Threats	Opportunities
1. International	<p>1.1 International fundamentalist patronage networks will not fund empowerment programs that value diversity</p> <p>1.2 Neo-liberal economic policies reproduce poverty through unequal trade agreements</p>	<p>1.1 Build on established patronage networks to include diverse groups</p> <p>1.2 Challenge the unequal status of citizens from developing nations. Build networks across governmental, non-governmental, north and south divides to challenge neo-colonialism</p>
2. State	<p>2.1 National law does not protect the women</p> <p>2.2 The women are not able to access their citizenship rights due to limited economic empowerment</p> <p>2.3 Government continues to resist allocating funds to women in national budgets</p> <p>2.4 Aid effectiveness monitoring does not show significant improvement in gender empowerment indicators</p>	<p>2.1 Campaign for legal and policy changes at the national level eg, the inclusion of marital rape as a criminal offense</p> <p>2.2 Challenge the unequal status of women at all levels, including within the household and the market</p> <p>2.3 Build national women’s agency platforms to enable women’s voices to be heard at the national level. Build networks with other NGOs and community groups concerned with increasing the life chances of women and children. Target specific government bodies and engage in dialogue to campaign for changes at the national level.</p> <p>2.4 Target institutions that resist change. Engage in dialogue with these stakeholders to explore why the structures or institutions resist change</p> <p>2.4 Enable women to participate in decision making processes - Apply monitoring tools at grass roots</p>

3. Market	<p>3.1 Women cannot compete with men in the marketplace as they are not alleviated from their domestic work</p> <p>3.2 The role of women in traditional vocations is not challenged within the marketplace</p>	<p>3.1 Challenge the inequality of women at the household level to alleviate the domestic duties of women</p> <p>3.2 Educate women in non-traditional vocations in order to challenge the unequal status of women</p>
4. Community	<p>4.1 Mindset of the people remains the same</p> <p>4.2 Customary law trumps national law when it comes to women's rights</p>	<p>4.1 Increase activities in rural communities. Engage in dialogue with community members and continue human rights education programs. Ensure the education programs challenge the unequal status of women at all levels.</p> <p>4.2 As above</p> <p>Campaign at state level for adherence to national law for Ghana's rural women</p> <p>Campaign for an increased level of participation for rural women within community and state political roles</p>
5. Family/ Household	<p>5.1 Women are not alleviated from their domestic duties at the household level</p> <p>5.2 Women do not have equal access to the law due to insufficient economic empowerment</p>	<p>5.1 Participate in discussions and education programs within rural communities that challenge the unequal status of women</p> <p>5.2 Continue microfinance credit schemes for women</p> <p>5.2 Challenge the unequal allocation of resources within households</p> <p>5.2 Enable women to participate in decision making processes - Apply monitoring tools at grass roots</p>

7.5 Summary and Recommendations

This chapter has argued that international aid alone cannot increase the life chances of women and children, as there is resistance to gender equality within the nation. This is evidenced through the lack of indicators for assessing the life chances of rural women. A lack of indicators limits life chances as measurement, evaluation and subsequent improvement cannot take place. Similarly, within the nation there is a lack of national women's machineries, resulting in white western women and/or national urban males presenting the priorities and demands of the nation's poorest women. Further evidence is seen in the lack of community monitoring tools which limit the sustainability of any advances, as the unequal status of women has not been challenged. The women's right to bodily integrity is not protected under the law as, though the Domestic Violence Bill gives women and children some protection 'on paper', access to this protection is limited for those who are not sufficiently empowered in other areas. Whilst the NGO increases the life chances of the women and children, they also present them as passive victims, disempowering them and reducing life chances.

My argument that aid alone cannot sustainably increase life chances is furthered by the NGO's bypassing of the very institutions that require change in order to increase life chances. This chapter evidences that until the status of women is challenged at the household, community and state levels, advances made are not sustainable. Increasing the women's and children's life chances

means ensuring that interventions do not use the women as a means to an end, but rather that increasing life chances is the central issue of concern.

Chapter 8 Embracing Diverse Values to Increase the Life Chances of Women and Children

Within this thesis I have used the NGO's intervention into the Troxovi practice as a case study to consider whether development makes a difference to the life chances of women and children. The research finds that the Trokosi women's and children's life chances are increased as their basic needs are met through participation in the development program, however the multiple unequal positions of the women and children remain unchallenged. The women continue to be discriminated against according to their class, nationality, race, gender and rural status; as the program bypasses the institutions and structures that resist the changes required to achieve gender equality.

What the women are able to '*do and be*'⁸⁷⁸ is increased by the NGO. Unlike many Trokosi women still serving in shrines, the women have access to basic healthcare, are able to move around freely, the majority of the women are reunited with family members and the extent to which the women are able to have control over their environment is increased. The program increases the women's income generation through their productive roles. However, as the women's positions within the household are not challenged through the program, the women are not alleviated of their domestic duties and their workload is increased. The program *does* challenge the inequality of the Trokosi women through their release from the shrines, however the effectiveness of this

⁸⁷⁸ Nussbaum, 1999. Page 235.

challenge is questionable as in the field the NGO stated that the mindset of the people has not changed.

Though recent aid effectiveness strategies have been employed between the OECD DAC and the governments of developing nations, NGOs have little accountability to donors and to the people who participate in their development programs. NGOs are often seen as '*empowering, emancipatory vehicles*',⁸⁷⁹ however within the case study the NGO often reinforces the women's unequal positions. The NGO's Christian interventionism reflects patriarchal imperialism, provoking African renaissancist responses that leave the women and children disadvantaged as each group uses the women to forward its own political agenda. Following Nelson's argument, within the thesis I have questioned whether NGOs accurately represent the priorities and demands of poor communities.⁸⁸⁰ Within the case study, this could not be assessed as the NGO controls access to the women and speaks on their behalf. This, in itself, speaks of the extent to which the women are able to participate in the decision making processes that determine their futures.

At the international level, the women are presented as passive victims to fundamentalist patronage networks, who seek to convert the women and are not required to acknowledge their role as oppressors. At the national level, the state has failed to prioritise the needs of rural women and children. Women and children are excluded from national budget allocations and protection under, and equal access to, the law. The women suffer a double disadvantage due to their

⁸⁷⁹ Nelson in Edwards and Gaventa, *Global Citizen Action*, 2001. Page 59.

⁸⁸⁰ Ibid. Page 61.

gender and their rural status within the nation. At the local level, the women's market participation increased, but the unequal relationships between men and women remain unchallenged within the household and at the community levels.

Within the fieldwork, the NGO was accused of corruption. This claim could not be verified; however the thesis does find that the prevalence and severity of the practice has been exaggerated by the NGO. Each national stakeholder disputes the claims of the other concerning the treatment of the women within the shrines, however these discussions confirm that within all shrines, it is the priest who decides if the Trokosi women's rights are adhered to. This provides a valuable insight into the powerful patriarchal nature of the system. Through an exploration of the history of NGOs I have argued that the exaggeration or proliferation of the 'worst cases' of human rights abuses is not uncommon in international NGOs. This is done in order to secure funding in difficult economic conditions.

It is my finding that the life chances of women and children cannot be significantly increased when NGOs function without diverse values. Within the case study the political agenda of the NGO takes priority and increasing the women's and children's life chances is not the central area of concern. Diversity requires that the women and children are to be seen as ends in themselves, rather than a means to further the agenda of others. In this way, I recommend empowerment policy approaches that challenge the multiple unequal positions of the women.

Access to the women and children was impeded in the field and therefore, the policy recommendations of the thesis are limited as the research does not incorporate the views of the women and children. Once the views of women and children are able to be heard, policy should be aligned to social movements from within. This requires that the women are involved in decision making processes and that decision making procedures are widely informed. In this way, oppressive structures and institutions are involved in discussions concerning the inequality of the women and are able to be challenged in their roles as oppressors.

Upon completion, a report of summary recommendations will be supplied to the NGO staff both within Australia and in Ghana. It is hoped that this might open up dialogue between 'front line' and 'supply line' development workers to explore the themes presented within the thesis and discuss the legitimacy of the observations and arguments presented. It is envisaged that such a discussion might be the first step towards engaging in intersubjective discussion at a cross-institutional level and seeking to employ diverse values within the patronage network.

Furthermore, the recommendations found in this case study can be readily applied to other development contexts and therefore a number of articles based on this fieldwork have been submitted and accepted for publication⁸⁸¹ and in time the thesis will be published as a book. It is my aim to ensure the recommendations put forward as a result of this research might be made publicly

⁸⁸¹ Outhred, 2009; *Human Rights Activism and the Silencing of Women*
In Print. The Australian Review of African Studies. Vol. 31 No. 2 December 2010 Special Issue on Africa
in a Restructuring World

available so policy makers, researchers and development practitioners might '*switch their attention to knowledge-power play.*'⁸⁸²

Within this thesis I emphasise the need for researchers to employ participatory approaches as it was only through seeking to speak with the women that it became clear that the women were represented by others. This reflects both the strengths and the challenges of using PAR approaches. In order to access participants meaningfully, a certain level of empowerment must have been achieved, yet when access is impeded, the extent to which participants are spoken for by others is revealed.

This research provides valuable insight into the functioning of NGOs, the extent to which they are able to represent the priorities of poor people, and the effects that fundamentalist values can have on the life chances of women and children. Within the thesis I find that it is only through the use of the *oppositional knowledges* of the oppressed that *domains of power* can be challenged and resisted. This is imperative as the life chances of women and children can only be sustainably increased through the eradication of both cultural and economic subordination. Essential ingredients in poor black women's emancipation include: equal participation in the creation of culture; equality in both paid and unpaid labour activities; equal rights under, and equal access to, the law; the abolition of unequal labour arrangements and exploitative global economic policies; and the eradication of the proliferation of images which place women as victims, rather than agents of their own futures. Sustainably raising the life chances of women and children cannot be achieved through NGO programs that focus on

⁸⁸² Flood et al, 2000. Page 169.

victimology, rather than the attainment of political, economic and ideological empowerment.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Information for Participants

Working Title. 'Knowledge is a Baobab Tree'⁸⁸³:

A Collaborative Critical Analysis of the Politics, Policies and Processes of Practitioners working to Release Slaves in West Africa.

Contact details for the Principal Researcher

Ms Rachel Outhred

rachelouthred@hotmail.com

Aims of the research

In short, the goal of this research is to evaluate the frameworks (social, legal, economical, historical and political) that exist around the Trokosi women, and gain an understanding of how these frameworks can be adjusted to better represent the rights of the Trokosi women.

To document:

1. The history of the Troxovi practice, the Ewe people and the history of Ghana
2. The history of western activity in Ghana and the history of international development, globally.
3. The history of the NGO and their work in Ghana

To discover:

1. How Trokosi survivors function within the community
2. How communities view the release of the Trokosi women
3. Why the passing of the 1998 law has not been enforced
4. What approach the NGO, Ghana uses in their programs

⁸⁸³ Traditional Ewe Proverb. 'Knowledge is a Baobab Tree, You Can't Wrap Your Arms Around It'

5. The financial obligations associated with receiving funds from Ausaid and personal givers in the west
6. What choices are available to Trokosi survivors
7. What policies and processes have been useful in releasing Trokosi women
8. What political agendas silence the Trokosi women
9. What political agendas serve the Trokosi women

To create:

A model based on the achievements and oversights or obstacles of the NGO work for other practitioners to use in the emancipation of gender specific cultural practices that legitimate violence against women.

Please note: The name of NGO providing the development program will remain anonymous within the thesis.

Your role

Key stakeholders within the frameworks surrounding the Trokosi women, and the Trokosi women themselves will be approached for interview in order to gain insight into all aspects and inter-relations between key stakeholders. Those being interviewed include:

Trokosi survivors

Community members from villages that no longer practice Trokosi

Elders from the Ewe community

Staff from the NGO, Ghana

Representatives from local groups resisting Trokosi emancipation

Representatives from the government of Ghana

International givers who give to the work of the NGO

Representatives from governmental donors

The CEO of the NGO, Australia

The Finance Director of the NGO, Australia.

All interviews with Trokosi survivors, community members, community elders, international givers and NGO staff within Ghana will remain anonymous.

Interviewee's from all participant groups, with the exception of the NGO, will not have their names published and only their participant group will appear in the thesis. In the case of the NGO, the participant group will be identified as 'a group working to emancipate the Trokosi system'. In the case of the NGO, Ghana, your position title will not be identified in order to ensure anonymity. In the case of the NGO, Australia, please be aware that your job title may be identified (though the organisation will not be).

The final work will NOT NAME [the NGO], it will only refer to 'an organisation working with the Trokosi in Ghana'.

Observation will be a strong component of the methodology. This will include observing the work of the NGO, Ghana both within Accra and within the vocational centre. The principal researcher will shadow the work of consenting participants.

Please note: All anonymity assurances will apply as above.

How the research will be monitored

This research has passed the ethics approval required by Flinders University, Australia. Research will be monitored at all times by:

1. Dr Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes (Yvonne.corcoran-nantes@flinders.edu.au)
2. Ass Prof Janet McIntyre (janet.mcintyre@flinders.edu.au)

If you have any concerns about the ethical nature of this research that you do not feel you can discuss with the Principal Researcher (Rachel Outhred) please contact one of these supervising researchers.

Privacy and Confidentiality

As stated above, all names of interviewees will be kept confidential. Which participant group you represent will be stated.

Interview transcripts will be stored in three places.

1. In electronic form on my personal computer, protected by a password.
2. In electronic form, at Flinders University, protected by a password.
3. Once out of Ghana, documents will be downloaded onto hardware and printed out in paper form and stored in a safe within Australia.

Once the research is written up and the thesis is complete, all electronic data will be destroyed and only copies, kept within a safe will remain. These may be used in the future for further research; however confidentiality will always be assured.

Withdrawal from the Project

Participants have the right to withdraw from the project at any stage during the data collection stage. At any stage within the data collection period (August 2008 – February 2009) participants may withdraw from the process and may seek withdrawal of the data collected. However, the acknowledgement that withdrawal

by a participant and information concerning the withdrawal of data may be anonymously included (only naming the participant group) within the final project conclusions.

Funding for the Project

Early in the research project the Principal Researcher received a bursary of Aus\$3000 for expenses, by the Wyndham Richardson Foundation.

For this reason there will be no reimbursement of costs to participants. The NGO, Ghana staff will be able to complete their interviews within their prescribed work hours.

Dissemination of Results

Results will be submitted to various publishers for dissemination. Publications could take the form of a book, journal articles and/or conference papers.

The research data may be used again at a later date, however all anonymity and confidentiality agreements will remain in place.

Benefits

The name of this work is titled 'Knowledge is a Baobab Tree' originating from the Ewe proverb 'Knowledge is a Baobab Tree; you can't wrap your arms around it'. This proverb is about the inferiority of one mind, in comparison to the community conscience. This research seeks to gather the knowledge of all participants to further understand how the frameworks existing around the Trokosi women and their communities can be improved to ensure the fulfillment of all peoples social, political, cultural and civil rights. It is hoped this research will assist other groups working to eliminate cultural practices that legitimate violence against women.

Appendix 2 Consent Form TRO, ELD, CMS

**TROKOSI SURVIVORS, ELDERS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS
CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH
(by interview)**

I
being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the Letter of Introduction and Participant Information Sheet for the research project on 'Knowledge is a Baobab Tree': A Critical Analysis of the Politics, Policies and Processes of development programs working to Release Slaves in West Africa.

1. I have read the information provided.
2. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
3. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference.
4. I understand that:
 - I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
 - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.
 - I may request a copy of the interview or see the interview notes at any time after the interview has taken place.
 - While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.
 - There will be an interpreter present at the interview, however all confidentiality assurances remain.
 - I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.

Participant's signature.....Date.....

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name.....

Researcher's signature.....Date.....

NB: Two signed copies should be obtained. The copy retained by the researcher may then be used for authorisation of Items 8 and 9, as appropriate.

8. I, the participant whose signature appears below, have read a transcript of my participation and agree to its use by the researcher as explained.

Participant's signature.....Date.....

Appendix 3 Consent Form The NGO

NGO STAFF GHANA and NGO, AUSTRALIA CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH (by interview and/or observation)

I
being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the Letter of Introduction and Participant Information Sheet for the research project on 'Knowledge is a Baobab Tree': A Critical Analysis of the Politics, Policies and Processes of development programs working to Release Slaves in West Africa.

3. I have read the information provided.
4. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
3. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference.
4. I understand that:
 - I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
 - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.
 - I may request a copy of the interview or see the interview notes at any time after the interview has taken place.
 - While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential. My job title may be included (NGO Staff only), but the name of my organisation will remain anonymous.
 - My work may be observed by the Principal Researcher during the course of data collection (NGO, Ghana only).
 - I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.

Participant's signature.....Date.....

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name.....

Researcher's signature.....Date.....

NB: Two signed copies should be obtained. The copy retained by the researcher may then be used for authorisation of Items 8 and 9, as appropriate.

8. I, the participant whose signature appears below, have read a transcript of my participation and agree to its use by the researcher as explained.

Participant's signature.....Date.....

Appendix 4 Consent Form IDA, CHRAJ, NRG

**DONOR GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE
GOVERNMENT OF GHANA REPRESENTATIVE
NATIONAL RESISTANCE GROUPS REPRESENTATIVE
CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH
(by interview)**

I
being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the Letter of Introduction and Participant Information Sheet for the research project on 'Knowledge is a Baobab Tree': A Critical Analysis of the Politics, Policies and Processes of Development Programs working to emancipate Trokosi.

5. I have read the information provided.
6. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
3. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference.
4. I understand that:
 - I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
 - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.
 - I may request a copy of the interview or see the interview notes at any time after the interview has taken place.
 - While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, you will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential. Your organisation will be named and the area that you work within will be named in the research (eg: policy department, Ausaid).
 - I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.

Participant's signature.....Date.....

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name.....

Researcher's signature.....Date.....

NB: Two signed copies should be obtained. The copy retained by the researcher may then be used for authorisation of Items 8 and 9, as appropriate.

8. I, the participant whose signature appears below, have read a transcript of my participation and agree to its use by the researcher as explained.

Participant's signature.....Date.....

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