Transnational Feminisms and the Politics of International Development in Ghana

By

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Abstract

International development organizations have been argued to be sites of contestations where power is invoked to maintain the othering of developing countries. Guided by Western liberal feminist ideas, international development projects are argued to situate in the othering of African women. Critiques have called for an alternative development that ensures accountable practice. The study used critical discourse analysis and in-depth interviews to examine how power is invoked and assumed when development projects are implemented in Ghana and how African feminist scholars and Ghanaian women development workers navigate and interrupt such power relations. Informed by a transnational, intersectional African feminist theoretical framing, the study found that international development was perceived as a social control mechanism through its hierarchy, governance, rhetoric, political positioning, and conceptualization. It highlighted how women resisted, negotiated, and strategized within international development spaces. The study recommends synergizing African feminist scholarship and development practice to ensure accountable development.

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Chapter One: Introduction

"[A] strategic shift would see us moving beyond our favourite African woman, to strategic engagements with those other women who… can be strategic allies and leaders in development. Nevertheless, of course, this means the power relations between Northerners and African women also shift dramatically. From seeing us as objects of charity to seeing us as agents of our own change, from seeing us as junior partners with the anecdotes to seeing us as analysts and macro-level actors in our own right. And when we talk back and challenge, we would perhaps no longer be labelled "so difficult to work with" or "too sensitive" (Everjoice Win, 2004, p.64)

International development organizations are argued to be sites of contestation where there is the invocation of power to maintain the North-South binary, which (in)directly challenges nation-making (Al-Kharib, 2018; Brown, 2018; Igwe, 2018; Langan, 2017; Mawuko-Yevugah, 2014; Ndaguba & Hanyane, 2018.) Guided by imperial interventionist policies and knowledge production, international development responds to the Western ascendancy, engineered through aid mechanisms and development assistance (Horner, 2020; Mawuko-Yevugah, 2016.) Critical international development scholars refer to the binary phenomenon as a race problem, a 'white gaze' of development, or a neocolonial tool to disrupt the sovereignty of nation-states within the Global South (Bruce-Raeburn, 2019; Pailey, 2020; Williams, 2013.) Programs implemented present a containment of the Global South as a site in need of rescue and intervention and thus assume a helping position with catchwords including poverty eradication, globalization, and empowerment (primarily when referring to development for women), which propagate a sense of a shift from a state of helplessness to a developed one (Makuwira, 2018; Okome, 2003; Pieterse, 2012.)

Women, especially from the Global South, remain targets of international development organizations, whether in rhetoric or practice (Al-Kharib, 2018; Brown, 2018.) Due to their social positioning, they tend to be the most impacted by neoliberal policies, such as increased privatization and corporatization (Krubnik, 2021; Mohanty, 2003.) They are also positioned in the narrative of subjugation, impoverishment, and disempowerment, all anti-Western traits, and thus are significantly othered by Western hegemonic feminisms. As othered women, they find themselves at the receiving end, with white women assuming the helping role, seeking to save as a moral imperative and through Western ideals ascribed to what development should mean (Ha, 2014; Heron, 2007; Mohanty, 1984; Obayelu & Chime, 2020; Win, 2004, 2008.) Okome (2003) calls this imperative moral need to help the "worst traits of Western feminist evangelism"(p.74). She points to the intersections of specifically African women that are lost in the helping narrative, querying the one-dimensional lens through which such women are viewed:

> It grossly over-generalizes the condition of women in African societies, who are described as oppressed, downtrodden, and immiserated. African women are treated as an undifferentiated mass of humanity. Neither class nor status is taken into consideration. Even where there are attempts to grapple with the implications of class and status, African women are viewed as objects of history rather than active agents. The result is the conceptualization of feminine gender in Africa as a disability across the board. When this scholarly depiction is juxtaposed with living and breathing women in Africa, its one-dimensional nature is revealed, and the question "What women?" becomes relevant (Okome, 2003, p.74.)

The universalizing of women's needs and accompanying solutions have ranged from events dating to the call to recognize women's role to initiating their development in seminal works, including

Esther Boserup's (1970) "Women's Role in Economic Development" to the consecutive global women's conferences in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995.) Their subsequent reviews, the most recent being the 25-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action (U.N. Women, 2019.)

The constant in these shifts, the hereditary need to help, justifies the growing conversations on feminist foreign policies[i] (FFP.) The FFP was introduced to dispute the liberal discourse on gender equality and projects a more feminist approach to women, peace, and security. However, the FFPs lend themselves to criticism since the traditional and liberal order they challenge is replicated due to their situatedness to national interests. They are critiqued as racialized and gendered (Achilleos-Sarl, 2018), pointing to the "instrumentalization of gender equality" (Aggestam & Rosamond, 2019; Rao and Tiessen, 2020.) Rao and Tiessen examining Canada's FFP, the Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) indicated that through the application of gender-based analysis to all Canadian projects in the developing world, the FIAP, despite claiming efforts to address inequalities in the world, does so through a Canadian feminist lens (depicting the dominant white settler society) (Rao & Tiessen, 2020, p. 355.) So even though there is a recognition of differences among women, it is presented as a technical requirement and not necessarily an acknowledgement of power differentials, one of the criticisms of especially feminist development that assume Western lenses operating in assisted countries.

These criticisms, not limited to FFPs only but traditional international development projects as well, feed into the failure of development in Africa. Considered one of the highest recipients of donor support from developed countries, with much investment in empowerment, Africa has most countries ranked as the least performing regarding the global gender equality index (Dilli et al., 2019; Salami, 2021.) Questions that came up for the study included the nature of

development empowerment introduced to these countries and, again, from what political positions these gender equality indices are measured; and finally, in this global discourse, do African women get to define what their development is, and if they do, by what or whose standards do they define their development? The study also gave the space to interrogate who the African woman is by contesting the flattening and homogenizing of a large group and erasing their multiplicity and diversity across region, class, ethnicity, and political histories.

Research Purpose and Questions

This research contributed to the ongoing critiques of 'international development' (Al-Karib, 2018; Ndaguba & Hanyane, 2018; Pailey, 2020; Salem, 2019; Struckmann, 2018) and added to the proposed alternatives to the international development agenda (Aguinaga et al., 2013; Clements & Sweetman, 2020.) Specifically, the study interrogated power relations in international development politics in three tiers. First, it sought to interrogate the suggestive mechanics of power relayed in the organizational mandates and project goals of international development organizations operating in Ghana. Second, it also explored the relationship between African feminist scholarship and the conception of international development projects, and) lastly, it examined how Ghanaian women development workers navigate power structures in projects internationally funded projects. Therefore, engaging with African feminist scholarship, the study investigated multiple and diverse ways power is invoked and assumed when development projects are implemented in Ghana and how Ghanaian women workers navigate and interrupt such power relations. The study engaged with qualitative methods and drew from a transnational, intersectional feminist lens to examine the following questions:

1. How does the governance structure of international development practice re/produce hegemonic feminist ideologies in Ghana?

2. How do African feminist scholars and Ghanaian women development workers navigate or/and interrupt international development organizations' othering and exclusion of African women in Ghana?

Researcher's positionality

The need for "African feminists to speak more liberally of the liberation of feminist theory from the personalization and jargons of Western scholarship, and the acknowledgement of mainstream scientific and objective scholarship as more 'malestream'' (Arnfred & Adomako Ampofo, 2010, p. 8), calls for the kind of epistemology that recognizes African women's positionality. I, therefore, approached this study considering and acknowledging my positionality as a Ghanaian woman. Inspired by Nagar's (2002) questioning on accountability and the nature of one's political commitment, I specifically undertook this study, asking myself - who am I writing for, how, and why? Based on this, I situated myself within the research, clearly highlighting that I intend to write, representing African women in their cultural authenticity and explicitly challenging the structure of scholarship that informs the design of development by drawing from my own experiences while also engaging with African feminist scholars and development practitioners, to co-produce knowledge that serves the interest of African women. Although we, as African researchers and scholars, generally succumb to the dominance of objective knowledge, there are alternative indigenous ways of knowing that oppose the objective lens of knowledge production. Evidence of "communities among the Akan of West Africa, when stumped for ideas on issues, or a deadlock over a decision, consult the 'abrewa' (the old lady), and this wisdom is usually received without question. Her perspectives are respected and validated because they have been built **over time of experience.**" (Arnfred & Adomako Ampofo, p. 8.) The emphasis on experience has formed the core of my belief of knowledge production being authentic when it

represents the lived experiences of the people it writes. Therefore, my theoretical positioning and epistemological viewpoint dominantly projected this position, co-producing knowledge with African women based on their lived experiences to represent their interests.

I acknowledge that my experiences shaped the research process. My feminist journey is tied to my cultural background; therefore, that is the first place I drew my inspiration. I culturally identify as an Akan from the Fante tribe in Southern Ghana, specifically the central region. We practise matrilineal kinship, where inheritance and lineage are traced through the wife. Women from this tribe are identified with traits such as being autonomous, and historically, these cultural traditions favoured women in situations such as claiming rights to their children as well as property and being kingmakers. In other parts of Ghana, where children can be only claimed by the husband, in my culture, children belong to the wife, and in the event of divorce, the woman's family claims the right to the kids. Due to the interaction with colonialism, as Patil (2013) has elicited, these traditions and accompanying religious traditions are less common today, but women still tend to be very autonomous. So, for me, that foregrounded my interest in opposing the "subjugated narrative" that is aligned with African women as disempowered and subdued, having no autonomy as people. I am not making this comment to generalize but to highlight that there are multiplicities that should be acknowledged when discussing African women.

Beyond my cultural underpinning, I have engaged with international development and feminist politics in Ghana and Canada in the past years as a development worker, student, and researcher. These positions served as my other primary engagement sites in Ghanaian and Canadian institutes of higher education and development and research organizations, significantly contributing to my interest in interrogating the politics within international development praxis in Ghana and its relationship with African feminist scholarship. Therefore, I engaged this research

from a personal epistemological position, informed by theoretical and empirical experiences, interacting with discourses of inclusion/exclusion and an outsider/insider positionality.

As a development worker, I engaged as local staff on international development projects in Ghana while also operating as a migrant worker within the geographical sites of operation. I interacted within these sites as an educated migrant southern urban woman operating as a local expert in Northern rural agricultural value chain projects with female participants possessing multiple identities. I interacted with power relations extending Western ideals of empowerment that inform projects implemented. My interest in interrogating how power is invoked and navigated is therefore situated within the experience of challenges in the uptake of specific interventions, which reflexively present a sense of contestation of local and introduced feminist identities.

In my capacity as a student and feminist researcher, my encounter with theoretical feminism has been more Western, even in my Ghanaian sites of experiences. Although I engage with Ghanaian women's livelihoods and empowerment, I do so through Western gender analytical frameworks. Engaging with African feminist scholarship, the study interrogated multiple and diverse ways power is invoked and assumed when development projects are implemented in Ghana and how Ghanaian women workers navigate and interrupt such power relations. However, the intersection of identities as a development worker, researcher, and student has initiated my interest in the importance of engaging transnational Southern feminist scholarship, precisely African feminist thoughts, if the intention is to reflect local women's needs. I understand that interrogating power relations using dominant frameworks is only anti-demystifying and replicative of the dominant discourse. Thus, there was the need to explore alternative feminisms that lent

transnational tools to interrogate international development politics within Ghana and the Global South.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This section situated the research by focusing on a preliminary literature review and theoretical framework on international development, transnational feminism, intersectionality, and African feminisms. To introduce the concepts, the section briefly explored the contentions of international development, highlighting its history and relationship with colonialism and its critique as a social control mechanism. It also explored how Western hegemonic feminism draws from the neocolonial politics of development and how non-Western women are othered in this political discourse. The section also introduced transnational feminism as a critique and alternative to hegemonic feminism and how it connects with intersectionality. The section explicated transnational intersectionality, examining international development as a non-neutral structure where power is invoked and deployed and its effects (Bunjun, 2011.) It finally contextualized the discussions to Ghana, connecting transnationalism and intersectionality to develop a critical transnational, intersectional African feminist framework as the study's theoretical framework.

The Contentions of International Development: History, Shifts and Alternatives

Development has multiple meanings, and according to Nwaichi (2021, p.9), it is "complex, contested, ambiguous and elusive [with context-specific meanings that may be used] ….to reflect and justify a variety of different agenda held by different people and organizations." The role played by international development organizations is an essential factor that should be pointed out in this discourse. Development is argued as a by-product of colonialism (Langan, 2017; Pieterse, 2012.) Most postcolonial thoughts, including Said's Orientalism (1978), Karl Marx's critique of capital (2004) and Walter Mignolo's (2007) decolonization, emphasize the need to understand current development happenings with a reflection on historical shifts. One key point to note is the binarized position development activities take, from the colonial era, based on the assumption of

extending civilization, to the post-war period, where international development is said to have been initiated through the establishment of the Bretton Woods institutions to rebuild national economies.

The history of development dates to the 1940s post World War, when financial and technical assistance was provided to economically backward countries, necessitating the binary dichotomy of the First and Third Worlds (Parpart & Veltmeyer, 2004, p. 4.) The institutionalization of aid through the establishment of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), later referred to as the World Bank (W.B.), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), now subsumed by the World Trade Organization at the height of the second world war began the conversations of international development (Knorr, 1948; Rawat, 2018.) The objective was primarily around creating interdependence between countries through trade and establishing avenues for reconstruction through aid and expertise after the World War. Each institution had its governance structure - a board of governors, executive directors, and a managing director, with permanent board representation from specific countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom (Mirakhor & Zaidi, 2006; Knorr, 1948.)

The introduction of the Bretton Woods system, with trade built around the United States (U.S.) dollars, served as an alternative to the gold standard, where gold stood as the key currency, tied to the British sterling, and made them the world monetary manager. It may have replaced Britain's singular hegemonic power in the international financial space; however, this dominance was replicated in the case of the U.S., formalized through the agencies that made up the Bretton Woods system (Igwe, 2018; Rawat, 2018.) Although the introduction of the Bretton Woods suggested a common measure or standard, Igwe (2018, p.119) critiques the system as

“protectionist, asymmetrical and impeded balanced economic development." He refers to the agencies' relationship with the world economy as indirect imperialism under the 'pan Americana' or Roosevelt's 'pax Americana,' later called neocolonialism's foundation (Igwe, 2018, p. 117.) Rawat (2018, p.20), reiterating the critiques of the Bretton Wood system, refers to their goal of helping 'economically troubled nations' as "an arm-twisting tool... used to provide cheap loans to low-income and developing nations." Attached to the goal to help were conditionalities that, according to Rawat, sought to open developing economies and allow a free market as against government monopolization. This thereby threatens developing nations' sovereignty through economic trade and capitalistic policies.

‘Development’ as a threat to nations’ sovereignty and its hegemonic assumption predates the establishment of the Bretton Woods, to colonial times where imperial mercantilist/classical economic motive drove colonial preoccupation. It is presently, and over time, one dominant trait in economic development discussions, as Canterbury (2011) pointed out. Reiterating, Sachs (1992), cited by Parpart and Veltmeyer (2011, p. 4), refers to “‘development’ as a geopolitical project to steer formerly colonized countries to capitalist-driven paths couched by the West.” Development geared through international cooperation has gone through different stages, from colonial exploration and occupation, with civilization as a presumption, and conquest and resource exploitation as outcomes. Nation-states from the West accumulated wealth at the expense of the colonized. The priority of development in the post-World War period was economic growth to steer traditional societies of underdeveloped countries to modernity, stimulating their stagnant economies.

Development shifts are captured from the colonial through to the modernity era, in which period the Bretton Woods system is structured. Modernity, referred to by Pieterse (2012) as a

Western project, was synonymous with Western progress, exhibiting the inequalities in class, race, nation building and gender. These multiple spaces interconnect to determine one's position in power. Rostow's (1959) stages of economic growth model was one of the definitive highlights of the period, where advanced development only meant reaching the age of high mass consumption, which was attainable through the wielding of power based on the intersection of multiple privileged positions such as class, race, national identity, and other locations or power structures.

The neoliberal globalization era emerged after modernity in the 1970s. It was more of a continued system to employ capitalist and multiple privileged intersections, further severing inequality as was in the earlier decades. But, with the agenda to redistribute resources to reform the declining living standards and economic decay in the Global South, macro-economic recovery programs were introduced, significantly the Structural Adjustment Programs[ii] (Langan, 2017; Mawuko-Yevugah, 2016; Moskowitz, 2022; Rawat, 2018.) The capitalist-driven market, as it was in the post-World War era and even beyond, further exploited resources overseen by the state through neoliberal international policies and economic restructuring agreements.

Following these reforms, also in the 1980s was a surge in international development organizations, with the rationale to equip the nonprofit organizations - international and local NGOs (non-governmental organizations) to be able to contribute to the agenda of redistributing growth (The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana, 2004.) The Bretton Wood institutions funded these organizations by providing financial and political support (Bawa, 2013.) They also replicated the superior West and the othered world binary dichotomy. This othering was developed and structured in knowledge production, as Said (1978) described. This introduces a neocolonial worldview of Eurocentric superiority to lead the Global South in realizing 'development.' NGOs are, therefore, perceived as tools of Western imperialism, mostly in developing countries and are

referred to as service delivery mechanisms for predetermined development agendas (Bawa, 2013; Mohan, 2002; Oya & Pons-Vignon, 2010; Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001.)

Alternatives to Western-fashioned international development have suggested disengaging the mind from Western discourses through knowledge production and a redefinition of development praxis (Gouws, 2017; Mignolo, 2007; Mohanty, 2003.) Marxists, dependency theorists and other postcolonial theorists raised the need to pay closer attention to subjugated relations formed because of the divisiveness created by the Western superior discourse. They argue that development practice was formed around capital, and I further argue that imperialism and entrenched unequal positions are determined by one's relations to capital and empire. The over-dependence of the Global South on their Western allies needs to be stated more, with the inevitable stratification of the nature of development processes.

In theorizing, spaces are created to promote development pluralism, where non-Western alternatives are encouraged to redefine development. The multiplicity of knowledge and the locations based on which knowledge is produced are recognized, building on Said's (1978) critique and paving the way for alternative knowledge production. Struggles were theorized to enable a vision of self-defined and non-capitalist values that allowed for communal ownership and non-exploitative relations to capital. Emerging were people-centred approaches and integrated rural development programs that were anti-capitalist. It is important to note that neocolonial constraints still challenge these alternatives, primarily because of their dominance and reliance on the capitalist market and funding.

Centering International Development in Africa

The development trajectory in Africa has been like the picture in the previous section. As its countries are a significant part of the Global South, Africa has found its shifts within Muslim

Arabic conquests of North Africa and trade in other African countries, and Europe's conquests and colonization (Hill, 2009; Maddox, 2018; Michalopoulos et al., 2012; Pierre, 2018.) The resistance to colonialism necessitated discussions on nationalism (Mylonas & Tudor, 2021.) However, because of free trade and globalization policies, most African countries continue to be exploited through neocolonial relationships with the West (Langan, 2017.) Ghana is no different with neoliberal economic recovery programs and the influx of NGOs. Ghana specifically had the structural adjustment program managed by the Bretton Woods agency, IMF, in 1983, which was meant for "poverty reduction and bridge the gaps between the rich and the poor and between the rural and urban areas" (Konadu-Agyemang, 2000, p. 470; Konadu-Agyemang & Takyi, 2018.) It has since then had other programs such as special assistance for the heavily indebted economically challenged countries in the 2000s and other IMF bailouts dating to the 1960s and, relevant in 2022 as the country went back again in July 2022 to the IMF for assistance (Gbadomosi, 2022; Mawuko-Yevugah, 2016.)

Development failures in Ghana and other African countries have been attributed to mostly internal factors such as the failure of leadership, lack of good governance, the proliferation of failed states beset with corruption, and ethnic/tribal conflict over natural resources (Gbara, 2017; Hellsten, 2008; Van Wyk, 2007.) There is a cultivated apathy because of lousy leadership and systemic institutional failures disregarding accountability. However, Luke and Eme (2014) call out corruption as a colonial legacy, highlighting the use of gifts by European traders to coerce traditional leaders in Africa, defying the existing African agrarian and barter relationship.

This notwithstanding, most African countries, including Ghana, rely heavily on donor assistance travel of concepts that inform policymaking at the national level. International NGOs mostly carry out these donor provisions as implementing partners. These organizations work based

on interventionist economic redistributive paradigms consistent with neoliberal development thought. As Bunjun (2011) points out, the neutrality of institutions, especially international institutions, needs to be more questionable. They present spaces of subliminally intruding on nations' sovereignty and nationalism through geographical and intersectional neocolonialism, thus legitimizing the claim that INGOs are tools of Western imperialism which act as service delivery mechanisms for predetermined development agendas (Makuwira, 2018; Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001.) The hierarchical relationship within the binarized relation is reproduced within policy formulation and implementation at the national level in Ghana. Most policies developed are drawn from research or projects funded by international institutions. A question on the intent of these institutions informing the nature of the projects introduced leaves room for questions of policies drawn from these projects' findings.

'Development' as a social control mechanism of neocolonialism

I argued under this section that international development is a mechanism of social control to advance neocolonialism, maintaining the dominant-dependent relationship between the West and the Global South. This is despite the limited understanding of the power development organizations have over governments, policy discourses or the people they claim to support (Opoku-Mensah, 2007.) Although Makuwira (2018) argues on the exercise and governance of power by local NGOs as they interact with local communities in development practice, I draw convergently from his position that development organizations, whether local or international, respond to the accountability owed to donor agencies. Therefore, rules and regulations on the mechanics of aid disbursement take up a hegemonic trajectory. As such, the relationship between donors, implementing development organizations and the direct recipients is skewed.

Using social control as a concept to understand the power invoked by international development, I employed Maynard's (2017) narrative, which expresses social control as the use of different measures directed at policing a group of people and their way of life (Maynard, 2017.) It serves as a significant part in a "historical uninterrupted series of legal and political machinations to enforce the power exuded by a dominant group [in this case, the West], maintaining their supremacy both economically and socially over a subordinated, usually racialized group" [Global South] (Chan & Chunn, 2014, p. 12.) Reflecting on Maynard's definition of social control also brings up Walcott's (2021) argument connecting Black bodies, property and policing, and white supremacy's institutionalized grounding. In the context of development conceptualization and practice, the historical relationship of Black bodies as property, even for Indigenous Africans, has been internalized, and with the dominant-othered dichotomy, informed their relationship to autonomy and control and entrenched their place as othered beings. So even as autonomous individuals and sovereign nations, the consistent perpetuation of the othered cycle places Black bodies in positions where it is assumed they cannot manage their rights and thus the validation of the saviour complex assumed by these international organizations. Foucault's operationalization of power, adapted by the study, adds to earlier arguments, highlighting how power manifests itself through relations and is invoked where differences exist or are created. Intersecting social control and power, I found it necessary to highlight Foucault's assertion on the multiplicity of forms of domination. Thus, emphasizing the importance of how power is operationalized and experienced "at the level of ongoing subjugation, at the level of those continuous and uninterrupted processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviours" (Foucault, 1982, p. 97.)

Bunjun (2011), drawing from Foucault's analysis of power relations, argues its manifestations within and across institutions and organizations, and how it is crystallized into law

and policy, and through the process of institutionalization, "reinforces, sustains, and polices effects upon other institutions, communities, and individuals" (p. 26.) The invoking and manifesting of power relations applied in the international development discourse brings to the fore the question of whose interest is protected in development processes. The skewed power relations between organizations and their receiving beneficiaries, informed by the history, goal, implementation and monitoring of development processes, is a starting point for discussing international development as a social control mechanism (Igwe, 2018; Mawuko-Yevugah, 2014; Ndaguba & Hanyane, 2018.) Langan (2017) teases out the social control mechanics of international development through the definition of neocolonialism as first defined by Kwame Nkrumah.[iii]. He indicates that neocolonialism is the continuation of "external control over African territories by newer and more subtle methods than that exercised under formal Empire… [where African countries] are penetrated by external influences on such a degree that they are not self-governing." (p. 4)

The language of development – underdeveloped and developed - also points to its social control traits. Before a nation assumes development, it describes itself as underdeveloped, an outcome of consistent othering in a binary world system. As discussed previously, the donor relationship forms part of the mechanics of international development in invoking power through control. The non-neutral, power-invoking space within which international development organizations operate rationalizes the thriving of social control. Bruce-Raeburn (2019, para 12) specifically calls out the racialized nature of development and how recipients of development aid, rather than being empowered, "are stripped of their agency over their lives, normalizing dependency in their own eyes." Advancing this argument, I gleaned Bunjun's (2011) notion of organizations constructed as colonial sites of encounters and power relations, where racist, hegemonized and classist cultures are sustained and reproduced.

Therefore, international development cannot claim innocence of control under its history and mechanics in extending neocolonialism. Pailey (2020) refers to its mechanics as dissecting the political, socioeconomic, and cultural processes of Black, Brown, and other subjects of colour in the so-called global South and finding them regressive, particularly in comparison to the progressive North. She calls on the de-centering of the 'white gaze of development' as emphasis. The intent, mechanics and governance systems leave a lot to be questioned. Bruce-Raeburn (2019) expresses this claim succinctly, indicating the inherence of social control in development through its structure and mechanics.

> Inherent in the very concept of [development] aid is race and racism because only in this system can majority white societies with ample resources determine what poor Black and Brown people need, how much they need, set up the parameters for delivery of what they need, and of course create an elaborate mechanism for monitoring how well they have managed the donated fund to meet their needs. (Bruce-Raeburn, 2019, para 10)

Hegemonic Feminism and Development

For this study, hegemonic feminism referred to the dominance of white Western assumptions about what it means to be a feminist and what women need to be liberated (Ang, 2020; Bunjun, 2011.) Thompson (2002) describes it as feminism that is white-led and marginalizes the activism and world views of women of colour. Feminist thoughts, although assuming a deterrent position to colonialism and its continuous domination, tend to participate in advancing the neoliberal discourse critiqued (MeltCafe & Woodhams, 2012; Okome, 2003; Oyewumi, 2003.) Referred to as market feminism (Squire & Kantola, 2012), 'imperial' and 'managerial feminism' (Eisenstein, 2009) and 'governance feminism' (Halley et al., 2018), hegemonic feminism tends to invoke and perpetuate marginalization through knowledge production (Mohanty, 1984; Said;

1978) and extension of an othered rest, that informs policy agenda and multiple needs of diverse African women.

In a “dangerous liaison with capitalism"(Eisenstein, 2017, p. 37), hegemonic feminism advances a single-dimensional view of poverty and underdevelopment by fostering education, training and jobs for women and girls without paying attention to their context-specific needs. Most women-centred projects, especially those funded by the West, are underlined by liberal feminist thoughts that pursue "Western scripted" global development expected to meet international standards. With well-travelled, embraced, and adopted underlining concepts practised by many African development workers (Sylvester, 1995.) The creation of women's machinery, such as women's desks and units as guided by donor demands, is one clear example of the influence of Western feminism, especially on women's lives in Ghana.

Focusing on the political location of thoughts and ideas in designing and implementing international development projects in Africa first opened discussions on intersectionality (Rich, 1986), noting the differences among women. The idea of conceptualizing others' experiences from an external lens and imposing external thoughts as others' realities questioned the positionality of the 'imposers.' The rationale, therefore, was to oppose the universalization of women's experiences by hegemonic feminism through a singular lens of dominance, where thoughts of women's oppression are quickly connected to patriarchy, losing sight of the imported imperial assumptions and agenda that accompany most interventions into African countries (Patil, 2013.)

Transnational Intersectionality in the Development Discourse

Despite the domination of Western ideals, there has been a good rise in Southern solidarity relations, especially in feminist/women's movements. Organizing from the margins, women from the Global South have formed meaningful solidarities to fight notions of Western thoughts as a

joint group while maintaining their autonomy and creating the possibilities of rethinking development. Alliances, both diasporic and within Global Southern spaces, have taken the form of opposition to hegemonic feminisms, tackling overlooked conversations on race, class, sexism, and imperialistic institutions, speaking to the ways non-white women experience the world and address issues that are otherwise ignored by mainstream feminism (Burnham, 2016; Cuadra, 2021; Quataert, 2014.) The section explored two critical theories – intersectionality and transnational feminism, indirectly recognizing the work of the Third World Alliances and Development Alternative with Women for a New Era (DAWN) and how they are explicated to understand international development as a non-neutral structure where power is invoked, deployed and its effects (Bunjun, 2011.) Exploring these concepts was also used as an entry point to discuss situated African feminist outlook and how they can inform African women's development in international debates.

Intersectionality within feminism is a theoretical concept emphasizing the differences among women, challenging the binary positioning of Indigenous, Latinx, Black, and racialized women and laying out their interconnecting social identities that collectively entrench their vulnerabilities. The term has alluded to Black feminists' positionalities in their oppression as Black women, among other subjugations. As a concept, intersectionality historically has been involved by Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and women of colour to demonstrate their experiences of omission and exclusion within social justice movements (Bowman Williams, 2021.) Kimberly Crenshaw (1989) further developed the concept, which predated the days of Sojourner Truth (2020) [originally published in 1851], when she articulated her multiple identities that situate her life as a chattel enslaved person within interconnecting systems of oppression. This is further elaborated by Patricia Hill Collins (1990) in her matrix of oppression, articulating the multiplicity of her

positionalities informed by race, gender and class as an interlocking system of oppression for Black women.

The Combahee River Collective's "A Black feminist statement" in 1977 also elaborates on intersectionality, expressing the goal to commit to "struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and seeing as our particular task, the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives." (The Collective, 1977, as cited by McCann et al., 2021, p. 64.) Intersectionality, therefore, presents itself as a form of political analysis to understand how power shapes people's lives. A critical reading of "A Black feminist statement" expatiates intersectionality not just as a process of listing multiple identities but captures the weaved nature of these identities in shaping a person's life. This is not to say that non-white women lack privileges, but intersectionality as a tool facilitates the identification of subjugated positions and privileges.

Against the background of recognizing the multiple and different oppressions of non-white women to contest the universalizing of women by mainstream feminist and development discourses, several anti-western feminist movements and alliances sprang up. The Third World Women's Alliances in the 1960s to the 80s, significant in the second wave of feminism and foregrounding to the Combahee River collective, as well as other critical anti-imperial feminist thoughts, significantly contributed to the understanding of the intersections of race, gender, and class in women's experiences (Kannan, 2018; Mendez, 2019.) This period also constituted the discourse on cross-cultural solidarity within the Global South. Although the Third-World women's alliance was predominant in the diaspora, organizing was across cultures in the Global South within the U.S.

Following the second wave was the emergence of the Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), a network of women scholars and activists from the economic South who engage in feminist research and analysis of the global environment and are committed to working for equitable, just, and sustainable development (DAWN, 1999.) DAWN was drawn from the Global South feminist solidarities at the end of the United Nations decade (1975-1985.) Here, women's differences were significantly glaring and necessitated conversations on transnational feminist networks that offer a holistic analysis from a Southern perspective grounded in women's experience and inspired by women's collective strategies. As much as the goal of a Southern perspective somewhat confirms the Western binary trajectory, it was an excellent place to engage the concept of transnationalism.

Transnationalism recognizes the intersections of oppressions through a geopolitical lens, opposing the idea of a global sisterhood that hegemonic feminists tend to propagate- the universalizing of women's experiences- losing sight of the specificities in experiences (Trotz, 2013.) It introduces the recognition of borders as significant to women's experiences, moving away from the single global viewpoint. Swarr and Nagar (2010) present transnational feminism as:

> An intersectional set of understandings, tools, and practices that can (a) attend to racialized, classed, masculinized, and heteronormative logics and practices of globalization and capitalist patriarchies and the multiple ways in which they (re)structure colonial and neocolonial relations of domination and subordination; (b) grapple with the complex and contradictory ways in which these processes both inform and are shaped by a range of subjectivities and understandings of individual and collective agency; and (c) interweave critiques, actions, and self-reflexivity to resist a priori predictions of what might constitute feminist politics in a given place and time. (p. 5)

Transnational feminists in knowledge production tend to contend with the politics of choosing a methodology and the difficulties in capturing the nature of transformation in researching the development of third-world women because of the normalized one-dimensional approach in development practice. A country like Ghana may not be considered as having typified interaction like racialization, as it is a non-settler colony. However, this does not absolve the exploitative and imperial actions continually perpetuated through development nexus underpinned by global capitalist identities. In dealing with women's issues, especially regarding women's rights, a transnational feminist viewpoint allows for a spatial and temporal understanding of development discussion, considering the South's continuous geopolitical interactions with the North because of globalization and the market.

As such, although intersectionality and transnationalism may be distinct in their rights, they lent a multiplicity of analytical, methodological, and theoretical lenses to reflect women's experiences across geospatial positions. It, therefore, allowed for interrogating the international development agenda while paying attention to the different geopolitical influences at the global and local positions that inform international development debates. Transnational feminist discussions rethink the possibilities of feminist and development praxis (theory, methods, practice) and an entry point to local and global while maintaining authenticity, especially in translation and mediation (Swarr & Nagar, 2010; Tambe & Thayer, 2021.) How does their significance play out in the global development discourse, especially given that development projects continue to be funded by international neoliberal donors and designed by organizations that act as imperial sites for the continuous dominance of countries that are assisted through development programs?

Transnational feminist discourses began in the 1970s and have continued to expand while considering historical and present conceptual issues. The persistent advancing of Western ideals

in present-day 2022 raises questions on the othering of transnational feminist efforts in international development practice. Are there efforts by development formulators to incorporate knowledge produced on African women by African transnational feminists in the work done? Questions such as this legitimized the study's goal to place more importance on local work done and how they can inform the practical transformation of the international development discourse in Ghana. The focus, therefore, was on the interaction of transnational feminist activities, emphasizing local African feminist researchers and international development workers within Ghana and their daily and experiential engagement with travelled thought patterns through international development projects that oppose local women's realities. I, therefore, employed transnationalism, intersectionality, and African feminism as a combined framework to understand how power is invoked and navigated in international development practice in Ghana. I used the term transnational-intersectional-African feminism to respond to this objective.

Theorizing African Feminisms.

The African Feminist Forum (AFF)[iv], a platform created by and for African feminists to affirm the progressive visions and strategies of African feminists and to contribute to stemming the backlash against basic principles of equality and rights across the African region (AFF, n.d.) I draw from the conceptualization of African feminisms by AFF to begin centring the theorizing of African feminists for this study.

> We define and name ourselves publicly as Feminists because we celebrate our feminist identities and politics. By naming ourselves as Feminists, we politicize the struggle for women's rights…. We are African women. We live here in Africa, and even when we live elsewhere, our focus is on the lives of African women on the continent…. We recognize that we do not have a homogenous identity as feminists – we acknowledge and celebrate

> our diversities and our shared commitment to a transformatory agenda for African societies and African women in particular. This is what gives us our common feminist identity. Our current struggles as African Feminists are inextricably linked to our past as a continent, diverse precolonial context, slavery, colonization, liberation struggles, neo colonization, globalization, etc... Our experiences are linked to that of women in other parts of the world with whom we have shared solidarity and support over the years. As we assert our space as African feminists, we also draw inspirations from our feminist ancestors who blazed the trail and made it possible to affirm the rights of African women. As we invoke the memory of those women whose names are hardly ever recorded in any history books, we insist that it is a profound insult to claim that feminism was imported into Africa from the West. We reclaim and assert the long and rich tradition of African women's resistance… We henceforth claim the right to theorize for ourselves, write for ourselves, strategize for ourselves and speak for ourselves as African feminists[ii]. (AFF, 2015, pp. 3-6)

African feminisms have appeared and been theorized under development discourse, scholarship and activism and have dealt with issues on politics, reproductive health, sexuality, family, gender-based violence, development, militarism, conflict and women's activism, land, labour, and gendered livelihoods (AFF, 2015; Darkwah, 2021; Salami, 2022.) The use of the plural "African feminisms" is an intentional and conscious effort to explore the multiple realities that underline African feminist theorizing. The pluralizing of African feminisms is necessitated by the impossibility of referring to a single 'African feminism' and has been acknowledged by different African feminist scholars, including the Zimbabwean feminist scholar and activist Rudo B. Gaidzanwa (2010) in her "African Feminism: Rethinking approaches and reconsidering strategies," as pointed out by Minna Salami (2022, p. 2.) This is reflected in other African feminist

writings as well (Adomako Ampofo, 2010; Bawa, 2018; Darkwah, 2021; Dosekun, 2021; Nkealah, 2016; Odinye, 2022.) Acknowledging the multiplicities and diversities, I approached African feminisms in this section, not adhering to a particular theory (maybe naming a few) but working across multiple African feminisms to first elucidate the theoretical understanding of African feminisms and then explicating them to the study to better explain my proposed analytical framework, transnational-intersectional-African feminism.

"Feminist knowledge must be situated and very often rooted in experience." (Arnfred & Adomako Ampofo, 2010, p. 10.) This is evident in mainstream feminist knowledge production, opposing the objective production of knowledge as male-centred and necessitating the concepts of positionality, politics of location, standpoint and situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 2020; Hartsock, 2020.) Considering situatedness and relationality, African feminist theorizing is necessary to produce knowledge on African women by African women, not as an afterthought to fulfil an 'inclusion checklist', but as a politically deliberate action to acknowledge the authenticity in the experiences of African women. As Dosekun (2021, p. 2) rightly asserts, "the central concern is to define a feminist politics and praxis for African women, one that speaks to their lives and challenges." Therefore, to meaningfully explain African feminism, as Obioma Nnaemaka (1998, p. 9) indicates, "it is not to Western feminism but rather to the African environment that one must refer. African feminism is not reactive; it is proactive. It has a life of its own that is rooted in the African environment." To critically research African women's experiences then, it was imperative to employ tools that recognize and allow the reclamation of African women, "to theorize for ourselves, write for ourselves, strategize for ourselves and speak for ourselves as African feminists" (AFF, 2015, p. 9; Adomako-Ampofo, 2010; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Dosekun, 2021)

The theorizing of African feminisms has been gleaned from the multiple realities of African women and differing historical underpinnings. One common trait was the introduction of different concepts three decades ago to represent African women's ideologies as an alternative to Western feminism and to argue that African feminisms reflects "the fact of women enjoying, expecting, or struggling for rights, dignities, and opportunities as "indigenous" to Africa, and "tradition," not imported, externally imposed, or newly conceived" (Dosekun, 2021, p. 3.) These theories were precisely distanced from feminism, critiquing it as an importation of Western culture, and until recently and quite still existent, most African women preferred not to associate themselves with feminism due to the cultural disconnect and the opposition (Bawa, 2018.) Some scholars argue that African women were feminists before the coinage of the term "feminism" due to their show of autonomy as priestesses, queen mothers, matriarchs, wisdom-giving 'abrewas' as referred to by Arnfred and Adomako Ampofo (2010), and the debatable patriarchal system which is argued to be influenced by the advent of colonization. Kolawole (1997, p. 10), in emphasis, argues that "African women did not learn about self-assertion from the West," which, of course, is very disconnected from the African woman's image of disempowerment, impoverishment and helplessness mainly propagated by Western feminist discourse. Women's resistances are also evidence of their assertiveness through equally traditional and often distinctly female practices and symbols, including "witchcraft[ii]", stripping naked to shame their oppressors; "genital cursing" and verbal obscenities, insults, and taunts; striking from their vital socioeconomic roles as market traders; among others (Amadiume, 1987.) More recently, these resistances have also shown in the refusal to uptake imported development programs that do not resonate with them (Baidoo, 2022.)

The theories - Motherism (Acholonu, 1995), African womanism (Kolawole, 1997), Femalism (Opara, 2005), Stiwanism (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994), Negofeminism (Nnaemeka, 2003),

Womanism (Ogunyemi, 1996), and all the other named and equally critically unnamed strands of African (non) identifying feminist thoughts sought to reflect better the cultural values existing in Africa as opposed to foreign concept of feminism. The emergence of these variants suggests the politics surrounding the naming of feminisms in the African context. These theories were based on Black women nationalists' standpoint theory as propagated by Alice Walker (1979) and explained by Ogunyemi (1996.) There are evolving variants more central to the African continent, such as Kolawale's African womanism. Opara's femalism, centred on the African female body as a site of feminist discourse, and Acholonou's motherism which projects the critical role rural women play in their tasks as nurturers of the society in their productive, community and reproductive roles. Ogundipe-Leslie's stiwanism, a product of her "social transformation including women in Africa, is also argued as not intended to "replace nor fight with men but to incorporate women, to bring them in as co-participants in Africa's development. " (Dosekun, 2021, p. 5) Or Nnaemeka's negofeminism, almost close to Ogundipe-Leslie, focuses on gender inclusion, complementarity, and collaboration.

In their deliberations, these theories have commonly come from a place of African cultural perspective, geopolitical location, and ideological viewpoint. As argued by Naemeka (2015), they are modelled resisting the Westernized label "feminism", drawing from indigenous theoretical standpoints as well as histories and cultures to explore appropriate tools to empower African women and men. They are also formed through the lens of inclusion, collaboration, and accommodation to contribute to women's material conditions. However, these theories independently are fluidly exclusive (for example, motherism's attention on rural women), and more recent African feminist theorists challenge their arguments on inclusivity. Their conceptualization, like the depoliticized focus on patriarchy, also raises questions. Other feminists

believe in wholly embracing the name feminism, not demonizing but through an African lens, aligning the term with better meaning based on the African woman's realities. Dosekun (2021) makes mention of some scholars - Abena Busia, Cheryl Johnson Odim, Amina Mama and Sylvia Tamale- that have, in different spaces, contested the shying away from the use of feminism as a terminology in African discourses. In an interview with Elaine Sola (2001), Amina Mama categorically indicated that "changing the terminologies doesn't solve the problem of global domination…Words can always be appropriated…- but this does not get away from the main problem namely white domination of global politics and northern-based white women's relative power to define"(p. 61.) She bluntly indicates that "white feminism has never been strong enough to be "the enemy" in the way that say global capitalism can be viewed as an enemy" (p. 61.) To further this argument, even white feminism and the concepts discussed in this study, both national and international, are significantly determined or highly influenced by global capitalism.

The African Feminist Forum's (2015) charter, as was presented in the opening of this section, recognizes Amina Mama's argument and, beyond that, highlights the need to reclaim feminism, defining and naming publicly as feminists and recognize the politics, and prefer to theorize their identities and histories as African feminists. Theories such as stiwanism are depoliticized in their position not to challenge patriarchal systems and appear more like liberal feminist tenets. They are also critiqued for questionable positionings and influenced mainly by liberal development politics, which does nothing to change the existing order. Ahikire (2014), in elaborating this argument, suggests that depoliticizing, mainly where safe terms like Gender activists or practitioners are used in African development political spaces, is the process of de-radicalizing to conform to the institutional conceptualization of the international and national development spaces. The operationalizing of African women's experiences and the commitment

of national interests to gender equality is thus questionable as "very little [is done] when it comes to concrete operationalization and commitment of resources" (Ahikire, 2014, p.12.) With the loose and de-radicalized positioning of conceptualization comes the imposition of donor agenda in policies and cooption as a further tactic to depoliticize. A political understanding of African feminist positioning aids in better navigating impositions, but when operating in a non-political space, it becomes challenging to legitimize one's identity, and even in spaces where culture is held on, there is always the tendency of being unsettled by systemic patriarchal norms due to the exclusion of its potency as a threat.

Based on these conversations, it is difficult to identify an all-inclusive African feminist theory that can respond to the objective of exploring the invocation of power relations that accompany development interventions and how they are navigated. As such, this thesis looked for literature that conforms to an African cultural perspective underlining epistemology, methodology, and praxis, whether on the African continent or within the diaspora, paying attention to the geopolitical location and ideological positioning. With these in mind, and as explained earlier in the opening paragraph of this section, it was next to impossible to use a single African feminist theory. After all, as Ahikire (2014, p. 9) rightly points out, "Feminism in Africa is made up of multiple currents and undercurrents that defy simple, homogenizing descriptions." However, the study employed the tenets they showcase, including the challenge of the discourses on African women, the conscious acknowledgement of the avenues created to specifically attend to the cultural influence and values of the study's targeted group from an affirming strength-based viewpoint and not the vulnerable painted narrative western discourse usually depicts of African women. Therefore, the proposed analytical framework allowed for a critical view of development interventions, recognizing the different politics they present and are conceived and applying tools

from African feminisms through an intersectional lens, with intersectionality viewed from an African feminist's perspective.

African Feminisms and Ghanaian Feminist and Development Discourses

Although the origins of documented intersectionality tend to find descent in Black feminists' locations, it is important to note that Black feminism differs from African feminist thought. However, the coinage, African feminism as feminist theory originating from Africa is referred to, tends to suggest a leaning toward intersectionality. Mekgwe (2008) refers to the multiplicity of African feminisms as fluid. Lewis (2001) points to the underpinning of African feminism as "prioritizing connections between gender, imperialism and race" (p.4.) Even if the wording may be foreign to the African languages, the multiplicity in feminisms from Africa suggests the differences in identities and, by extension, needs of African women.

As a postcolonial arrangement, African women began to organize as feminist movements to fight against inequalities (Atanga, 2013; Cruz, 2015; Tamale, 2006.) They have organized across movements and scholarships constituting charters (in 2006) even in their differences to be able to address the needs of African women living within the continent (Ahikire, 2014; Beoku-Betts, 2021; Dosekun, 2021; Mama, 2011.) Ghana has its Feminist Manifesto, which is expected to guide development activities concerning women in Ghana (The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana, 2004.) With these resources, it is important to explore what an African feminist theoretical framework achieves in discussing international development activities. The multiplicities in ideologies of development workers and researchers and how they can converge to meet local women's needs in Ghana are pertinent. A transnational and intersectional lens, therefore, afforded the opportunity to systematically understand how participants navigate beyond their relationship with the projects to their subjectivities and experiences as African women.

The transnational, intersectional engagement has been argued to allow for the maintenance of autonomous positioning, respecting individual histories, geographies, and locations while still investing in alliances for a common goal (Swarr & Nagar, 2010.) This establishes the partiality in perception for all engaged in development activities. The call for attention to local researchers and workers does not absolve them of partial perceptions. However, it gives place to a multiplicity in development design and implementation to meet the actual multiple needs of women that intended projects may target (Collins, 1990). The shared knowledge building and solidarity among differently subordinated groups, as willed by a transnational conversation in development practice, checks epistemic privileges that accompany Westernized ideals, giving power to the differently marginalized to reflect the different truths of oppressed women (Mohanty, 2003; Shahbazi, 2018.)

A transnational, intersectional African feminist outlook also better interrogated power invoked by studying international organizations and their project activities with more than a development outlook. It employed the recognition of borders and their locationalities (through transnational intersectionality) while maintaining a significance to the local Indigenous feminisms. The choice of this theoretical framing subverts and responds to the anti-imperial and anti-racist perspective to establish how social control is advanced even within African indigenous homelands when they are the dominant inhabitants. The transnational, intersectional African feminist theoretical framework was, therefore, better placed to respond to the study's main research objective of interrogating multiple and diverse ways power is invoked and assumed when development projects are implemented in Ghana and how Ghanaian women workers navigate and interrupt such power relations.

Chapter Three: Methodology

A qualitative methodology was adopted to interrogate the multiple and diverse ways power is invoked and assumed when development projects are implemented in Ghana and how Ghanaian women workers navigate and interrupt such power relations. This research is deeply steeped in interdisciplinarity and guided by the transnational, intersectional African feminist framework; the study's objective was to engage with participants on how they interact with power in the international development discourse and serve as a conduit to meet local women's needs. As such, the methodology allowed the researcher to facilitate participants' social construction of meanings centred on their knowledge and grounded in their experiences (Ritchie et al., 2013; Shank, 2006). The methodology aimed to highlight knowledge produced through interactions with research participants, considering their multiple identities and intersections – and recognizing that all knowledge is socially and politically located, underlined by distinctive power relations (Potts & Brown, 2015.)

Drawing from the methodology, the study drew on a transnational, intersectional feminist approach to allow for both the development of new knowledge and the production of social change, focusing on the meanings women give to their world, especially when research is conducted within androcentric and neocolonial institutions such as international development practice. Possessing a trans-disciplinary characteristic, this approach enabled the use of different methods continuously (re)defined by the concern of women within a given context (Kaur & Nagaich, 2019.) This study used the approach to critically engage the governance structures of international development organizations and how they (re)produce hegemonic feminist structures. It also facilitated the engagement of research participants on how they navigate or/interrupt othering and exclusion of women in Ghana. As a variant of critical theory, its choice was to co-construct knowledge on

development practice suited to Ghanaian local realities based on the viewpoints of African scholars and Ghanaian women development workers.

Research Methods

The study employed two types of qualitative methods to collect the data. It combined discourse analysis with in-depth interviews to achieve an account of multiple perspectives and ensure triangulation of the data collected. I engaged in a comprehensive study interrogating the governance structures introduced by international development organizations. This was done through reviewing their organizational mandates, goals, and/or objectives. It was important to critically engage the documentary sources (webpages and reports) to analyze the language used and how to inform the research on how power is invoked and assumed in their operations. Through the in-depth interviews, I explored how African feminists, through their scholarships, and Ghanaian women development workers, through their implementation of project goals, navigated and/or interrupted the process and actions of othering and/or exclusion embedded in power structures introduced by international development organizations in their operations.

Critical Discourse Analysis

The study focused on language used in development and how social control traits underline it. To understand how language in international development invokes power and otherizes a group of people, specifically development beneficiaries, I employed critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a method. The use of CDA was not only to examine how language, or specifically the use and structure of words, is employed to produce or facilitate a social phenomenon, in this case, the othering of development beneficiaries, but I was more interested in how this language is especially used in creating and sustaining power and control (Fairclough, 2013; Mullet, 2018; Willig, 2014.) Locke (2004), inspired by Norman Fairclough's (1994) conceptualization of CDA, describes it as

"a way of viewing the systematic analysis and interpretation of texts as potential revelatory of ways in which discourses consolidate power and colonize human subjects through often covert position calls" (p. 2.) Drawing from Locke's description, I explored the polarizing, specifically binarizing within the global development capitalist space, which, according to Bruce Raeburn (2019, para 2), has consistently led to "the stripping of agency and normalizing of dependency" ensured through the design of discourses around international development. CDA, according to Fairclough (2010), is defined as systematically exploring often assumed neutral relationships "to investigate how practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power" (p. 132.) The use of CDA as a method in this study, therefore, was to unravel, as Okome (2003) explains, "the reformist feminist evangelism," but in this case, the neutrally presented international development organizations that "act like superiors who hand down valuable knowledge, define the relevant issues for African women, how these issues ought to be promoted and pursued, and what the end result should be."(p.74) Development and its language within this space are therefore designed assuming the helping narrative described by Heron (2007.)

CDA was therefore used to interrogate words and how they are presented in documentary sources from multiple international development organizations operating in Ghana. These sources were located online using search engines. Organizational documents were examined, including annual reports, project/programming reports, and web pages. The selection criteria of documentary sources were documents from international organizations (mainly headquartered in countries in the West.) These international NGOs had at least ten years of operational experience in Ghana or, minimally, in Africa. The reason was that most organizations maintain a homogenized structured governance system and adopt policies that are not tailored to specified countries, as is the case of

the feminist foreign policies meant for beneficiary countries with no specificities. Another selection criterion was that the organization should have a project running or recently ended in Ghana. The researcher's definition of recent was at most five years. Specifically, two core areas were examined: first, how organizational mandates conceptualize organizational goals and/or objectives were presented, and the kind of words used, and second, specific projects and their operational goals in Ghana.

In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were also explored to understand how African feminist scholarship and Ghanaian development work navigate and/or interrupt international development organizations' othering and exclusion of African women in Ghana. The emphasis was on the agency of African feminist researchers and Ghanaian women development workers in engaging with power invoked through international development work and how they navigate to meet local women's realities. Interviews were conducted virtually due to the spread of participants across the diaspora, specifically, the United Kingdom and Ghana. I conducted open-ended interviews with eight African feminist scholars and Ghanaian women development workers. Using a two-dimensional design, I conducted interviews employing two separate data collection tools for either feminist scholars or women workers to delineate the work they do and the theoretical and empirical differences that came up between the two interview categories. This method allowed the researcher to establish a relationship with participants, considering their intersections and respective relationships to the study goal. Respondents were identified, contacted, and recruited through personal and professional contacts and snowball procedures, and specifically for the African feminist scholars, names were found within the relevant literature. Interviewees were promised confidentiality with their comments by committing to redacting direct and indirect identifiers.

Study Area

The study area was envisioned on two levels. The first was the transnational space in which scholarship on international development and African women's experiences is conducted in Africa. Therefore, the borders defined for this first level were from scholarships in the political African feminist space. As such, of the African feminist scholars engaged, one was in the diaspora, whereas the others were domiciled in Ghana.

On the second level, Ghanaian women development workers who had experience working in Northern Ghana. Each woman had worked in an international organization or a project in Northern Ghana. By Northern Ghana, I meant the areas comprising the Northern, Upper East, Upper West, Northeast and Savannah regions. The rationale behind Northern Ghana is that it is considered the area with more than three of the poorest regions. Out of the 16 regions in Ghana, Northern Ghana attracts the majority of INGOs (Nikoi, 2008; Mwakideu, 2016; Ghana et al., 2020). Mwakeideu (2016) asserts that Northern Ghana hosts more than half of NGOs in Ghana. Nikoi (2008) points to its history of neglect due to the colonial capitalist segregation system. Southern Ghana was invested more due to its resource provisions and the neglect of Northern Ghana, resulting in its continuous poverty. My experience of international development work was also in northern Ghana.

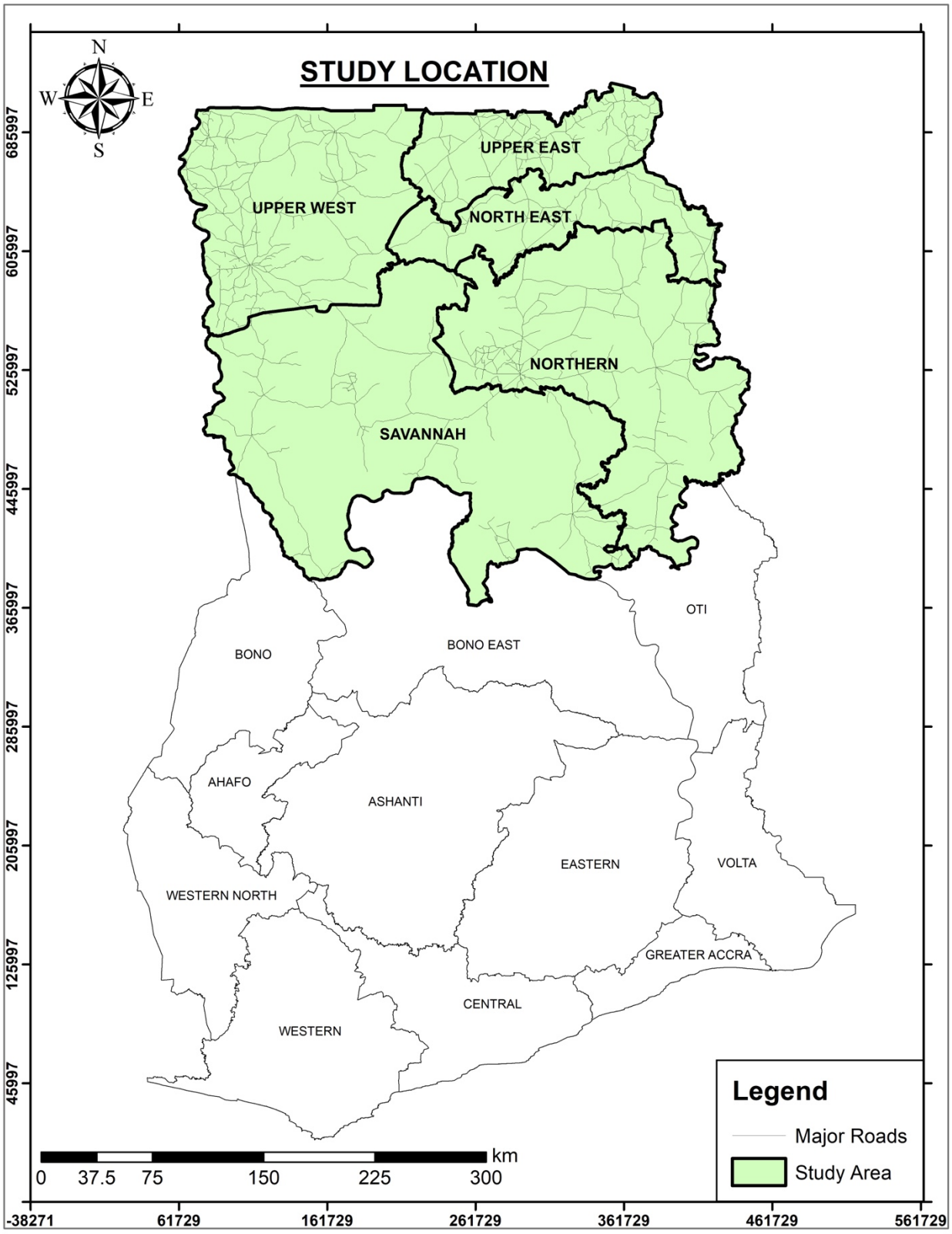

Figure 1 Map of Ghana highlighting the study area (the five Northern regions)

Participant Recruitment

The purposive sampling technique was used to select study participants and the relevant documents/reports. As indicated earlier, the secondary sources for the CDA were reports and website pages owned by international development organizations headquartered in the West. As previously stated, the selection criterion was a 10-year operational experience in Ghana or Africa. Reports and website pages from ten organizations were reviewed. For the interviews, the participants' selection was on two levels. Using my position as a development worker and feminist researcher, I initiated participant recruitment based on personal contacts and references and then extended through snowballing. Although participants were recruited through snowballing, there was a differing selection criterion between the feminist scholars and the Ghanaian women's development workers. I operationalized African feminist scholars as women who had spent at least three years researching and publishing on international development and African women. Their publications, therefore, served as an inclusion criterion. Most of the feminist scholars identified as feminists except for one. All of them were contacted based on their research. They ranged from academics, activists, and researchers. Therefore, the overarching theme for inclusion was African women who had worked and published intersecting international development with African women's experiences. Ghanaian women development workers were recruited through personal and professional contacts and references. They were operationalized as women who had worked with international development organizations and/or projects focused on Ghanaian women's development. Recruited participants' working experiences in international development ranged from five to twenty years.

Participant demographics

To understand the positionality of the organizations, I explored where they were headquartered, where they operate in Africa in addition to Ghana, program areas they focus on, and the racial and gendered composition of their leadership. These explorations, as guided by the study's combined theoretical framework, enabled an understanding of operations of the selected organizations transnationally, beyond their geographical boundaries, therefore allowing for an interrogation of racialization, whiteness and other intersections that would otherwise be missed if analyzed with a single theoretical lens (transnational or intersectionality or African feminism). The analysis of the documentary sources was to understand the political location of the organizations. Finally, I examined the kind of words that came up in the documents sourced using critical discourse analysis to understand the use and structure of words and how they are positioned to sustain the othering of the countries in which they operate. Eight of the ten organizations had headquarters in North America, specifically Canada and the United States. The remainder had their headquarters in Europe. All the organizations worked around program areas focusing on gender equality, crisis response, nutrition, health, education, inclusive governance, and climate action. The common trait that ran through their goal and objectives was to help, assist or enrich people from a vulnerable state to an empowered one, mentioning the program areas in the specific goals. Only one of the organizations, O9, explicitly indicated their position to work with community members rather than on their behalf. The operational areas of the organizations were centred on Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western Africa. Specifically in Ghana, the minimum number of years of operation for the organizations was five, but they all had over 20 years of operational experience in other African countries. The racial and gender makeup of their management teams was explored in detail in the next chapter on social control.

For the interview participants, an intersectional examination was conducted where all women were asked about their ages, ethnicity, and years of relevant work experience. The feminist scholars were specifically asked about their academic and/or research affiliations and their involvement in international development research. Both feminist scholars and development workers were asked about the international development organizations they had worked with and in what capacities. Out of the eight participants, two of the development workers were originally from Northern Ghana. The other five were from different areas in Southern Ghana, and one feminist scholar was South African domiciled in the diaspora. The minimum education level among the women was a first degree. Of the four development workers, only one had a master's degree. Among the scholars, the minimum educational background was a master's degree, with three out of the four women holding PhDs, with the minimum years of experience in the international development space being five years across all participants. The translocal migrations from the South to the North of Ghana and other educational backgrounds accorded an intersectional relation within the study area, where the study participants were positioned in a place of power in relation to the project beneficiaries. As a researcher, it was necessary to understand this intersectionality while exploring the study's objective. The table below explores participants' demographics, highlighting their age, years of experience and ethnicity (geographical origin.)

Participants Demographics

Participant	**Category**	Ethnicity	Age range (years)	Years of experience
Teni	Development Worker	Northern Ghana	30-40	10
Talata	Development Worker	Southern Ghana	30-40	6
Lariba	Development Worker	Northern Ghana	20-30	8
Lamisi	Feminist Scholar	Southern Ghana	30-40	10
Azumah	Feminist Scholar	Southern Ghana	50-60	21
Asibi	Feminist Scholar	South African	20-30	5
Lahire	Feminist Scholar	Southern Ghana	60-70	40
Niena	Development Worker	Southern Ghana	50-60	20

Table 1: Participant demographics

Data Analysis and Coding

The data analysis was informed by the study's theoretical framing, transnational, intersectional African feminist framework. The choice of the framework was to recognize the political positioning of the organizational documents, as well as the African feminist scholars and the Ghanaian women development workers. The intersectional framework was to help in analyzing the data of interlocking identities informed by the organizations and experiences of African feminist scholars and Ghanaian women development workers. It lends its tools to multi-dimensional analysis. I used transnational and intersectional theories to critically examine geopolitical identities, such as race analyses that may be insignificant in the Ghanaian non-settler context. A combination of transnational intersectionality created the space to theoretically and methodologically explore the invoked, assumed, and navigated power relations within the experiences of the realities of Ghanaian and African women in the international development political space in Africa.

In addition to the data collected, I noted the moments of hesitation and pauses to probe respectfully for emerging discourses that connect with the research questions (Bunjun, 2011.) I managed the transcripts using Microsoft Excel to assist with coding and data management. The study conducted a thematic analysis. After initial data cleaning and organizing, the analyses took the form of initial or open coding, after which sub-themes were drawn. Content from the organizational documents will be collated and analyzed using discourse analyses. The data was categorized under two sections based on the methods used. The first was a critical discourse analysis of document sources, including reports and websites from ten African international development organizations. The organizations were coded as O1 to O10. As a guide for the CDA

process, I looked for the organizations' goals and the racial and gender makeup of their global and local leadership, including the director and board members. I also explored how words were constructed and positioned in the goals and the rest of the documents.

The second part was further broken down based on the targeted participants. It explored data from feminist scholars and locally employed international development workers in Northern Ghana. The researcher, adhering to ethical considerations and respecting the privacy and confidentiality of participants and the organizations studied, used pseudonyms based on the contextual and political position of the study. As such, participants' pseudonyms were female names commonly used in all the regions in Northern Ghana. All the names of the participants represent the day of the week except the last name, *Niena*, which is a Dagbani name (from the Dagomba, the largest ethnic group in Northern Ghana) and represents a girl born at dawn. The other names include Teni, Talata, Lariba, Lamisi, Azumah, Asibi and Lahire. These names represent girls born on specific days, from Monday to Sunday. To elaborate, a girl born on a Monday is named Teni, whereas a girl born on Sunday is named Lahire, and this applies to the other names and days between the ones referred to. The names traditionally originate from the Hausa, a popular ethnic group in West and Central Africa. Although Northern names are used, participants do not necessarily hail from Northern Ghana. Of all the participants spoken to, only two are locals; the other development workers came from different parts of Ghana but had extensive experience working in Northern Ghana.

Ethical Dilemma and Considerations

Although there were minimal foreseeable risks in conducting this research, I acknowledge a few challenges and ethical considerations, which I will discuss in this section. First, due to the possibility of challenges in easily acquiring organizational/project documents from international

development organizations, I chose to explore public records online using easily accessible engines. Participants working with international development organizations also had concerns about their anonymity or confidentiality. Therefore, two development workers did not participate, even after being assured confidentiality. To address these, the study ensured confidentiality across all processes, including using pseudonyms and removing personal direct and indirect identifiers. Participants were assured of confidentiality. The study went through the Saint Mary's University research ethics policy and received approval in February 2023 with file number (23-60.) REB cleared consent documents, a summary of the intended thesis and a recruitment letter were sent to participants to read, understand, and sign. The interview took place based on participants' schedules and only after participants fully understood the study and consented. Study participants were assured of their ability to withdraw their consent at any point.

Also, all data gathered remained confidential and with the student researcher until the writing was completed, adhering to the Saint Mary's University research ethics policy. I ensured data security by conducting interviews over secured and private virtual call platforms (specifically the SMU-secured Microsoft Teams and, in one case, Zoom.) The data was stored on one laptop, which was password-protected. Only the student researcher was responsible for the password and had access to it. The data was also held on a Saint Mary's University official OneDrive platform as backup, which I accessed. In writing and dissemination, the data was aggregated, and individuals and organizational documents were anonymized. No information at this point can be linked to participants or organizations. Data was presented in an aggregated form using themes, and exciting quotes were presented completely anonymized. Overall, the confidentiality of the data and the participants was maintained.

Conclusion

I used qualitative methods, critical discourse analysis and in-depth interviews to interrogate the multiple and diverse ways power is invoked and assumed when development projects are implemented in Ghana and how Ghanaian women workers and African feminist scholars navigate and interrupt such power relations. By doing so, I unravelled the complexities, interruption of power relations, and navigation of hegemonic governance structures accompanying the implementation of Ghana's international development projects. The combination of transnationalism, intersectionality, and African feminisms enabled me to investigate situated feminisms, moving away from globally shared oppressions to multiple identities exhibited within one geopolitical space, the development sector in Northern Ghana.

As grounded, interdisciplinary research in feminist and development areas, and guided by the transnational, intersectional African feminist framework, the main themes that I drew from the study were i) social control embedded in international development work, ii) women's re(actions) to international development and iii) connecting African feminist scholarship with international development practice. Based on these broad themes, the analytical section of this thesis comprises three chapters that thoroughly engage the emerging themes. These chapters presented an analytical discussion of the interviews' findings and the documents' critical discourse analysis interlaced with my lived experiences, reflecting my positionality. Combining the interviews, documentary sources, and my voice presented a unique space for triangulation, which deepened the study's rigour. The use of my reflections based on my spaces of engagement in this research was intended to strengthen the arguments made from the interviews and the discourse analysis. It was not to undermine the voices of the documents and interview participants but rather to co-produce knowledge with the participants. Based on my positionality as a woman steeped in the Akan culture

from Southern Ghana and my intersections with research and development practice experiences, I engage in tiered power relations and other forms of politics that underline international development both theoretically and in praxis, and my reflections are based on these experiences. The interlacing of the different voices from the interviews and documentary sources and my voice is geared towards interrogating how power is invoked and assumed when development projects are implemented in Ghana and how Ghanaian women navigate and interrupt such power relations.

Chapter Four: International Development: A Multipronged Social Control Mechanism

Introduction

Using the transnational, intersectional African feminist framework drawn from post-colonial, critical race and African (feminist) scholars (Adomako Ampofo, 2010; Crenshaw, 1989; Dosekun, 2021; Hill Collins, 1990; Patil, 2013; Swarr & Nagar; Tambe & Thayer, 2021), the first theme drawn from the study was the multipronged social control embedded in international development work. I presented international development as a multilevel social control mechanism in this chapter. The interviews and critical discourse analysis (CDA) corroborated the argument made that international development is a mechanism of social control to advance neocolonialism, maintaining the dominant-dependent relationship between the West and the Global South (Igwe, 2018; Langan, 2017; Mawuko-Yevugah, 2014; Ndaguba & Hanyane, 2018.) This study drew on two definitions of social control, intersecting them to operationalize my definition of social control. First, Maynard (2017) articulates social control as using different measures to police a group of people and their way of life. Second, I employed Chan & Chunn's (2014) description of social control as being a significant part of a "historical uninterrupted series of legal and political machinations to enforce the power exuded by a dominant group [in this case, the West], maintaining their supremacy both economically and socially over a subordinated, usually racialized group" [Global South] (p. 12.)

Intersecting the definitions of social control from Maynard (2017) and Chan and Chunn (2014), I operationalized social control about international development as a historical uninterrupted series of social, political, and economic machinations to enforce power, police and otherize a group of people. I conceptualized it further by looking at the relationship between the dominant West, which presents aid and the receiving Global North and the multi-tiered relationships between the local development workers, project participants, and employers at

international development organizations. As such, I not only remain with the dominant-subordinate discourse of international development agencies and their recipients but also examine how power is exuded among the different levels of international development assistance. In the rest of this chapter, I explore the hierarchy and governance of international development and how social control manifests on multiple levels. Beyond that, I explore how the concept of influence frequently dominates international development practice and how it unfolds and presents as a social control mechanism.

Social Control in Hierarchy and Governance

Social control in hierarchy and governance was predominant in the analyzed discourses and the interviews. First, I explored the governance structure in the organizations through their reports and websites by interrogating their location and perceived racial and gendered makeup of the decision-making team, including the board of directors and/or the management team at the headquarters. I further explored the suggested racial and gender makeup of the management team at the local level in Ghana, as informed by the interviews. The point of interrogating the governance and hierarchical systems presented by the analyzed discourses and interviews was to examine the politics in decision-making, especially answering 'Who makes decisions?' and 'How are decisions made?' Further, social control is explored in the conception of projects, the possible disconnect between the goals of interventions and the needs of the people they intend to help, and organizational tensions. As informed by Foucault's theory of power, where power manifests and operates in multiplicities through relations (1990) and is experienced at the level of ongoing subjugation, where continuous and uninterrupted processes are designed to subject bodies, govern gestures, and dictate behaviours (Foucault, 1976, p. 97.) These explorations were to tease out the multidimensional nature of power through political intentions, location, and spatial positionings

of all (actors and beneficiaries) involved in international development practice. The use of rhetoric in international development discourse as a social control mechanic and a form of othering project participants within Africa (Bruce-Raeburn, 2019; Pailey, 2020) and, to a more significant extent, the Global South is also explored under this theme. Using documentary sources, I studied how social control travels across nations and is manifested through the rhetoric employed by international development organizations. I engaged in CDA by reviewing words used on webpages and reports, how they contributed to the hierarchical conceptualizing of control, and how this othering has informed participants' views of international development over time.

The thought of governance stems from one of the questions raised in the introductory chapter of the study, on what political location development interventions meant for African women are designed. Reflectively, Adrienne Rich (1986) questions in their notes on politics of location, on where, when, and under what conditions women have been acted on, is pertinent in examining the location, especially of the organizations studied in the secondary data. Considering the political location of thoughts and ideas in designing and implementing development projects in Africa, I explored the intersecting identities of place, race and gender presented in the organizations better to understand the governance structure in the different organizations. Of the ten organizations, only *O6* and *O4* were headquartered in Europe. The remaining eight were headquartered in the Americas, specifically the United States and Canada. The leadership was predominantly white and perceived males, with O4 again having a perceived racialized female director and *O5,* a perceived white American female director. O8 also had the only perceived male person of colour. These organizations had a common interest with their attention on African women, as their projects were dotted all over Africa, with all organizations present in Ghana. Unlike *O4*, which had a member-based board at the regional level and was the only one with

predominantly perceived Global Southern female board members and, as such, potentially had African voices represented in decision-making on their board, all other organizations had board members predominantly being perceived white males. With the governance structure significantly populated by white male bodies across several organizations examined rhetorically, how are decisions made, from what political position, and whose experiences are considered in implementing projects?

As it trickled down to Ghana, the hierarchical structure was like the global view. The four development workers indicated that their directors were not locals or Ghanaians. The only exception was a recount by *Talata*, who explained that with their management team at the national level in Ghana, two were African, and the other white American. However, out of the two Africans, the highest decision maker, although African by birth, was legally European. This re-echoes Kornhaber's (2016) conversation with Han on whiteness not exactly equating to white bodies. Whiteness, therefore, is not only represented by bodies but rather systemic. It also draws from Foucault's (1991) argument of the panopticon, where control is exerted irrespective of who occupies the supervisory space. *Niena* and *Teni* also explained that their directors at the national level were white Europeans, and *Lariba*'s director was white American. In my experience in development work in Ghana, I had national white directors from the Northern Americas.

Interestingly, neither I nor some participants critically interrogated why the directors had to come from the Global North until we discussed it. When asked why, *Lariba* explained that in her present organization, there was a policy that you cannot be a director in your own country. *Niena*, the respondent with the most years of experience, explained that the governance structure was designed to reflect the financial power held by headquarters and validate the organization's international positioning. *Niena*'s response on financial power and the whiteness embedded in the

governance structure reaffirmed the study's convergent argument drawn from the African scholar Makuwira's (2018) position on development organizations exercising power as they interact with communities. Based on *Niena*'s argument, the term international organization and the reliance on funding informs how the governance structure is positioned. The need to respond to accountability owed to funding agencies and the organizations' mainstreamed agenda necessitates a representative who both racially and/or politically identifies with the agenda, thus maintaining the hegemonic trajectory that international development organizations take up. Therefore, power through the governance structure was subject to how our bodies are legally represented regarding nationality in international development practice, as *Lariba* explained. This is reaffirmed by Bunjun's argument that power is crystallized into law and policy. Looking at the hierarchy and governance structure both at the headquarters and local level through intersecting racial and gender lenses, international development presents itself as a social control mechanism to "reinforce, sustain, and police effects" in the countries they operate, including the local institutions, communities, and the individuals (Bunjun, 2011, p. 26.) This takes me back to my earlier question on political location, reiterating the question, whose interest is protected in development processes? Thinking on governance, the immanent thought is how decision-making works, especially with global and national structures represented by non-Ghanaian and Western bodies. When I engaged the local development workers, it was explained that they may have limited decision-making abilities that must fit into the organization's agenda. *Talata*, a development worker, explained her decision-making in her organization, indicating:

> There is an agenda, and each country's program will then fit into that global agenda. So, decision-making is hierarchical and trickles down to each country's program. In my area, the decisions are made by the program manager based on a detailed implementation plan,

> and he is the budget holder and the lead for that project. However, he makes those decisions in collaboration with the head of programs. If budgetary implications are beyond his approval level, they must go to the head of programs for approval. Yes, so when he receives approvals, communications are given out to local officers to replicate to fit into the main agenda. Let us say it is a top-down approach.

*Talata'*s explanation reiterates the hegemonic structure explained earlier, where there is an agenda that all actions need to fit in. The governance structure is instituted to maintain the nature of power relations between the management and employees. Even though there appeared to be a multipronged decision-making system, it was still subject to being dictated by the global agenda. Spaces, where they could make decisions, were between them and their direct supervisors. This is reaffirmed by *Teni*, who explained that "we usually hold a meeting every other month, but these meetings usually are to inform us of some decisions made but not to get information from us or get our inputs in making those decisions."

Other development workers also had similar experiences to *Talata* and *Teni*, *Niena* explaining that organizations with no local boards especially had their operations top-down where everything is decided globally. Power from the responses was therefore institutionalized and continuously sustained through the decision-making processes, and thus, control was maintained on multiple levels within the operation of international development organizations. Guided by the study's transnational, intersectional African feminist analytical framework as informed by different scholars, including African feminist scholars, Pailey (2020) and Bruce-Raeburn, who call out the racial nature of international development, power was crystallized in a positioning assumed to be neutral (Bunjun, 2011), ongoing in a sustained subjugated process (Foucault, 1990), and

maintained the unequal relations between organizations and the communities they interact with (Makuwira, 2018.)

To better understand the power dynamics beyond relations between the organizations and their employees, but extending to the project participants, I interrogated how power was invoked between participants and the organizations while continually interrogating the relations between organizations and the employees. These explorations tease out how power travels transnationally, intersects with differing identities and is interacted upon by local theoretical feminist framings. Therefore, the multidimensional nature of power was questioned through political intentions, location, and spatial positionings of employers at international development organizations and their workers and participants. I examined how projects are conceived and if there have ever been situations where there is a disconnect between the goals of interventions and the needs of participants. How, then, do employees facilitate the disconnect?

First, when answering how projects were conceived, most participants explained that the donors that fund the activities of the international development organizations have their targeted themes and agendas. Most organizations are run by donor funding and, as such, streamline their projects to the call or main interest of the funding organization. This, therefore, introduced a power dynamic between the donor agencies or funding countries and the international development organizations. *Talata* referenced a donor template where the proposal, implementation framework and reporting are expected to meet the donor's template. *Lariba* reiterated *Talata*'s point on the template and donor interest. She explained:

> So, these are like our significant donors who put out calls annually and allocate funds to specific areas in which they would like the organizations to work. It could be around education, health or agriculture, nutrition, or climate change. Once the call is sent, these

> institutions draw proposals, and you know the organizations produce solutions to the problems these donors think we are facing. They usually have a template for the design of the project, work plans, and charts, among others.

Based on the participants' responses, most projects, even when conceived in Ghana, are tailored towards the interests and agenda of funding agencies. *Teni* recounted that in specific spaces, especially faith-based international development organizations, there were sometimes contentions between their interests and the donors, and therefore, they resorted to withdrawing support. She gave an example of a previous organization she had worked with withdrawing from accessing donor funds because of the requirement of an LGBTQI lens in the project proposed by the donor. Thus, these trade-offs sometimes came up during the power discourses at the global level. Although in recent times, especially for international organizations that have existed in Ghana for over three to five years, had local staff tasked to develop proposals for new projects, they still had to fit within the global scope of interest. They, therefore, maintained a controlled relationship between local workers and the international organizations they work for. *Niena*, a development worker, confirmed:

> My experience is that the broad framework will come from the Global North; until recently, all the INGOs [international NGOs] had headquarters in the North. So, it is only recently that they have started coming to Africa. Some have regional offices in Africa, but the broad framework will come from the Global North. Secondly, you cannot develop your ideas if the organization solely depends on restricted income, proposals or grant-making because the calls will determine what you should be doing. Though you will bring your local knowledge, the call tells you we want to do ABC and D, so if you want to get our money,

do this, this, and that… So long as the funding is coming from the Global North, they will set the agenda.

Niena's argument here is centred on the study's theoretical argument, where, through the assumption of organizations being neutral and not as vehicles for intersecting vulnerabilities, including race and gender, to perpetuate social control. It, therefore, does not just end at the superficial interaction where local activities are situated within a global context, but also the study's claim of these organizations and the construct of international development being a space for a historical uninterrupted series of social, political, and economic machinations to enforce power, police and otherize a group of people (Chan & Chunn, 2014; Maynard, 2017.) It, therefore, goes beyond responding to the organization's goal to adhering to what development should look like through the lens of the organization and not necessarily the community's lens—as such, continuing the process of othering subordinated countries at the receiving end of aid that conforms to the identity of developing countries.

Reflectively, I encountered a refusal of the uptake of introduced interventions to participants. The reasons they gave were that the interventions did not suit their production scale and resisted. The experience of development workers and my experience suggest moments where there is a power imbalance between participants, the development workers, and international development organizations, which appears through resistance and opens the space for African feminist discussions as guided by the analytical framing of the study. These will further be discussed in the next chapter on women's (re)actions to international development. In these moments, to ensure project progression, the development workers indicated using convincing to steer participants to cooperate with the organization. Also, it introduces an invocation of power between employees and community members. Some negotiations emanated because of these

contentions but are discussed under the subsequent theme of influence in international development.

Hierarchy also materialized with the occurrence of organizational tensions. Here, they manifest in multiple ways and are not only restricted to relationships within the international development organization or with their employees but also between the development organization and the district assemblies. The tensions in the study were financial, ethnic-based and related to implementation. *Teni*, for instance, referred to a withdrawal of existing financial benefits that should have been discussed with the employees but changed due to regional occurrences in the organization's activities in other African countries. She indicated that employees showed dissatisfaction through agitation with their immediate supervisors, who were also answerable to employers at the national and regional levels. Although employees agitated against the standardization of benefits, it was sustained, and those who felt displeased resigned from the organization. In contrast, the others who did not have that choice stayed silent. Using the transnational, intersectional African feminist framework, the lack of consultation with employees, especially when they were expected to forfeit some financial benefits, is very evident in how power is invoked because of the hierarchical nature of the governance structure in most international development organizations.

I found this tension between employees and facilitated by the organization's policy and processes rather interesting. All the development workers I interacted with had engaged to an extent with gender-sensitive projects and, in their work, had held, at one point or the other, positions as Gender Specialists or Practitioners. *Talata* recounted an experience where there was a conflict during a recruitment process, where the competitor, also female and a native, argued from a position of location as an advantage she should be considered for. Due to the standard

performance-based organizational policy on recruitment, the participant was better qualified than the native. This caused some opposition but was ruled out due to the recruitment policy at the organization. It was conflicting because in as much as we process recruitment based on performance, the question of ethnicity and location may have been pertinent for candidates who were both employees at the organization. Mainly when most of these international development organizations' advocate,' 'include,' and 'operate' on an equity-based lens. It makes one wonder where the consideration of equity begins and ends. Is it in the projects extended to the community members or at the hiring stage, or conceptually only focused between genders? In addition to including gender equity approaches in the projects implemented, it also comes into play in the hiring process. So, does equity stop at gender? What happens to other identities, such as ethnicity or, in this case, spatial location? I find this replicative of whiteness in the national governance structure where there is no attention to employees' location and what that means, especially the relationship with the community. I say this because, in my experiences, I find that one of the reasons employees are successful in their roles is due to the relationships they build with the community and a shared language or geographical belonging, as these are essential facilitators in building meaningful relationships with community members.

Another tension arose regarding the conflict between the international organizations at the local level and state organizations such as district assemblies. *Lariba* pointed to contention between a district assembly and an organization she worked with regarding a project implementation protocol. The district assemblies usually justify their demands to lead the implementation process because of their existence and already-formed relations with community members. The rationale behind resisting district assemblies' implementation was the misuse of funds, mostly characteristic of state institutions. This also complements the existing apathy

because of systemic institutional failures due to corruption, as discussed in the chapter on literature review (Gbara, 2017.) Therefore, most organizations found it better to lead the implementation process with minimal participation of state institutions, especially regarding finances. *Teni* points to how community dynamics can disrupt a development process without foreknowledge of the politics within the community. She explained:

> We usually do not know the politics of the community, and there are sometimes community tensions, which we unknowingly escalate through the ignorance of existing politics. So, for example, there was a power struggle between two communities, and we unintentionally placed the intervention in the less powerful community. This meant that no one from the other community would ever access the intervention because of the interventions. However, if it had been the reverse, both communities would have benefitted because the struggle hovered over the seniority of the second community. With development, we only consider a little of these, and if you do not have first-hand information, you might make mistakes.

As a researcher, I acknowledge the tensions between the financial accountability the development organizations expect and the district assemblies' desire to own the projects implemented in their communities. However, I argue that international development is expected to improve the communities and districts in which it operates and that I believe includes the institutions that work in the community; so, refusing to allow a leading role in implementation by the district assemblies questions the intent of development and contributes to its contested nature of what exactly constitutes development. As *Teni* has recounted, development organizations must work closely with organizations within the community if they intend for the project to be sustainable even after its exit. International organizations operate in the narrative of the dominant,

coming in to help the vulnerable, and in moments such as these, exert their authority as experts, as dictated by the rhetoric in development, continuing the ongoing power invocation on community members as well as institutions (Foucault, 1990; Makuwira, 2018.)

Finally, the rhetoric of development, which I referred to, came up as significant in sustaining the hierarchical nature of international development. As indicated in the literature review section, the language of underdeveloped and developed points out social control traits in international development practice. In the global capital space, the assumption of being a developing/underdeveloped or developed country directly assigns countries as either recipients or donors, respectively, hence (re)producing the helping narrative as discussed by Heron (2007.) This action of othering forms an essential part of the power mechanics in international development. Studying the annual reports and website pages, all organizations except O3 and O9 assumed the position of a saviour to empower, help or support poor and vulnerable people in both their goals and the words used on their website and in their reports. Words such as "help, support, provide, enrich, influence policy, vulnerable communities/women/people, poor, empower" were highlighted in almost all the reports and websites engaged. Even the word 'empower,' argued to bring up the question of introducing agency, suggests an original loss or lack of power and thus contributes to the vulnerability descriptive assigned to aid recipients. As argued earlier, the assumption of the helping role seeking to save as a moral imperative was highlighted boldly in most of these goals and objectives, as well as a quick search on websites and reports. As such as 'saviours,' international development organizations tend then to define and ascribe what development should mean (Ha, 2014; Heron, 2007; Obayelu & Chime, 2020.) Although words like empower are used, the structuring of the goals and intent of these organizations, as argued by

Bruce-Raeburn (2019, para 1) rather than empower, “strip recipients of their agency over their lives, normalizing dependency in their own eyes.”

Hence, organizations operating in international development are constructed as neutral, as “doing a good job” in developing communities, one that the national government is deficient in doing. This non-neutral, power-invoking space within which international development organizations operate rationalizes the thriving of social control, as argued by Bunjun (2011.) This is evident in the responses of the development workers who felt that as employees, they were helping the communities they work in develop through their organizations. This is despite acknowledging international development organizations' streamlining role in project conception through implementation and reporting. *Talata* and *Lariba* clearly explain their double-edged experience with international development and control issues. *Talata* found it a great resource in causing change due to the financial prowess controlled by international development organizations. *Lariba* also commended the role played by international development organizations in Ghana but questioned their intent and operation, indicating that projects are developed to win grants but do not necessarily address root problems within the communities they operate. Both responses presented international development as a necessary evil, especially with the helplessness of state institutions in most developing countries. The following quotes from international development participants exemplified these complex relations:

> What sustains my interest in international development work is the availability of resources and funding to do your work, unlike the government institutions that cannot do anything because there are no resources. Nevertheless, sometimes, working with these international organizations gets frustrating because so many policies, procedures, and systems are in

> place that make the work frustrating. Nevertheless, abundant resources are available in the international development world that will help influence change globally. *(Talata, DW)*
>
> They have done their best to bring change into the communities in which they operate. The only thing that would have been done differently was if the interventions were more targeted to the pressing needs of the people. These organizations sometimes write to win grants based on what the donors need, but some of these projects do not necessarily tackle the root issues or the causes of the problems of the community people *(Lariba, DW)*

A reflection on the responses from the participants, especially regarding their dual relations with international development as both a saving mechanism and a space for control, contributes to the study's argument of power invocation mainly being subtle. It, therefore, becomes contradictory to call out the social control traits of international development, especially because they present their activities as helpful to the receiving communities. This explains the contradicting 'applauding' and 'critiquing' positions both *Talata* and *Lariba* presented. Drawing on Foucault (1988), power and, by extension, control in such spaces are hidden, subtle and complex to point out when invoked. The difficulty in determining control, which is shrouded by the 'helping narrative' presented by international development, is critically discussed by Heron (2007) and reflects thoughts of Okome, one of the African feminist theorists drawn on by the study as being the “worst traits of western feminist evangelism” (2003, p.74)

Emergent Influence in International Development

According to the Oxford Languages (2023), influence is “the capacity to affect the character, development, or behaviour of someone or something or the effect itself.” This capacity places an actor in a position of power to inform or change the nature of another. This section draws

on the transnational, intersectional African feminist lens, with theoretical framing of African feminism and development (Adomako Ampofo, 2010; Bawa, 2018; Darkwah, 2021; Dosekun, 2021; Nkealah, 2016; Odinye, 2022; Salami, 2022), I explored how influence manifests as a tool through different multilevel relationships within the international development practice. As indicated by Bunjun (2011), Foucault argues that power is a significant force that permeates all societal relations, both enacted and contested as a performance. As such, I explore the manifestation of influence as an invocation of power in relationships existing within international development practice between the organizations and their employees and its reverse. The organizations and their participants and a potential equalizing of power between the participants and the development workers and organizations. In these relationships, it is important to inquire how organizations control and may be controlled and how development workers and participants also control and are controlled. By this, I argue that in its hierarchical manifestation, power is presented as a performance and not a possession (Foucault, 1988), and this suggests the fluidity in power invoked at different levels and how subjugated recipients at points in time exercise resistance as a performance of agency and control. I examined these relationships based on responses on the reporting systems and international development rhetoric in the archives. How manipulation, steering, interference, and misrepresentation occur in the reporting system in international development. I considered the accountability of both workers and organizations and how organizations have been (non)inclusive. I discuss accountability at the different degrees and how it exposes power relations. Through these deliberations, I argued how international development becomes a social control mechanism through influence at multiple levels using the multiple theoretical thoughts that inform the use of the transnational, intersectional African

feminist framework (Adomako Ampofo, 2010; Crenshaw, 1989; Dosekun, 2021; Hill Collins, 1990; Patil, 2013; Swarr & Nagar; Tambe & Thayer, 2021)

The influence of international development organizations over the local development workers they employ has been discussed in the previous section. Organizations exude power through the governance structure, finances, language used, and the binary positioning of aid given by organizations from a developed to a developing country and its accompanying vulnerability ascription for the receiving developing country. In addition to the detailed description given under the preceding social control theme, I elaborated further on how reporting as an operational activity in all international development organizations is structured to continually sustain power within the international development practice through the influence of one party over the other. First, I have studied how words are structured within reports to position international development organizations to assume the saviour role. The process of these reports, including annual reports and success stories, was described thoroughly by *Talata*, who explained that after submitting written documents to the headquarters and going through the numerous reviews, the final product comes, and it is not as close to what was submitted. By that, she meant there was so much editing and changes that the development worker could not recognize what she had originally submitted. *Talata'*s argument unpacked power relational issues centred on underrepresenting their voices as local staff through language. She indicated, "You are asked to submit a report or a story, and by the time you see the final one, you cannot recognize your own write-up". Reports and success stories are significant ways these organizations demonstrate their work. They are, therefore, essential routes in maintaining the flow of money from their donors to them. It is also a way through which influence is exerted over the local development workers who are their employees. The act of developing a written document for it to be reworked by someone at the headquarters,

mostly the communication or the marketing team, when they have probably never set foot in the implementing country, suggests the kind of influence people in these positions hold over local people who are responsible for implementing. The influence over the management of development workers continues with the withholding of specific information as well. For a long time, I was not privy to the available budget or financial reports in some organizations I worked at. I, therefore, worked without this knowledge, especially regarding the budget for field activities. *Talata* and *Teni*, both development workers, reiterated this experience, stating that they had never seen the financial reports of any organizations they had worked with.

Additionally, this indicates that development workers may also have some influence over the organizations, especially with the kinds of reports they turn in, even if these reports are subject to organizational changes. Documenting the local implementing activities depends on what the development workers choose to report. So, in their way, they can devise their position of influence by choosing to withhold information or decide to misreport to meet their employers' expectations. In most cases, with relations, especially between the organization and the participants, reports are developed in English or French, thus creating a barrier for participants to access these reports. Predominantly, participants are not also privy to reports that are produced on the activities they engage in. *Teni* and *Lariba* point out that reflective meetings are held in their organizations to share the project's progress with participants. Thus, at this point, the development workers hold the power of access to information over participants. They are thus responsible for how participants are steered or what they are led to believe.

Different actors, therefore, wield power through the reporting system within organizations, and the control over information provides the ability to influence receiving actors, including workers, when organizations are in the position of reviewing or withholding reports. The

mechanics, including the nature and process of reporting and the structure, have been extensively discussed in this study as an inherent trait that presents international development as a social control mechanic. The act of reworking documents in such a manner that the original writers do not recognize it solidifies Pailey's (2020) claim of international development dissecting the political, socio-economic, and cultural processes of Black, Brown, and other subjects of colour in the so-called global South and finding them regressive, particularly in comparison to the so-called progressive North. This, in itself, is a form of policing (Maynard, 2017) where language is used as the control mechanic. Arguing on the invocation of power in this process, rather than strengthening community institutions and the agency of the people, the international development projects intend to disempower the local staff and participants. They argue that local staff and participants are thus "stripped of their agency over their lives, normalizing dependency" (Bruce-Raeburn, 2019, para 2.)

Opoku Mensah (2007) asserts that this dominant relationship often transcends to governing and policy institutions, where international development practices dictate the flow of policy discourses and sometimes government actions. As Foucault (1988) calls it, participants in this network of relation are usually the most susceptible to being steered, not just by the organizations but the local development workers. In that same light, organizations are sometimes predisposed to a power imbalance where workers may either withhold or misdirect information to fit the global agenda or control information given to participants. There are also moments where project participants exert power through resistance. Rowlands (1998, 14) elaborates on the thought of resistance to power by discussing Foucault's model of power, "which includes an understanding of resistance as a form of power." Most importantly, in uncovering the power exerted by othered

groups, including staff and community participants, it is imperative to highlight the thinness and fluidity of resistances, especially in achieving any change (Makuwira, 2018.)

Power held by development workers introduced conversations of worker accountability to the participants. Arguments in this study and the mainstream literature point to inconsistencies in international development practice and the fundamental conceptualization of development (Langan,2017; Makuwira, 2018; Nwaichi, 2021; Piertese,2012.) It was, therefore, crucial for this research to ask how development workers, as individuals, are accountable to the participants they work with. *Teni* and *Lariba* further discussed accountability between the development organizations and community participants. *Talata* explained that the organizations are expected to be accountable to project participants through the annual reports. Developing these reports also helps the organizations hold the local staff accountable. Through the annual reports, there is a multi-pronged route to establishing accountability. However, in doing so, this replicates the power system discussed, where the party that controls information has the power to influence and manage the receiving party. Although managed by their employers, development workers tend to manage and sometimes make conscious decisions about the communities they would like to engage in to avoid resistance. I have had experiences where communities refused uptake. During that period, I felt they were not open to change due to their comparative economic scale and the community's nature as peri urban. I held that view because, among all the communities I was working with, introducing that same project, it was only this community that was adamant in their apathy for the project.

As development workers, when we find ourselves in this situation, we negotiate with participants to ensure the project's progress. I have often subconsciously used my relations with participants and shared identity as 'their daughter' who speaks the native language to steer

participants towards achieving the project goal. Development workers as liaisons are trusted sisters, daughters, or mothers with shared gender, ethnicity, and other community identities. In development practice, relationships are built with participants; based on these relationships, workers assume the position of power to influence participants. In addition to the relationships built in many projects, especially in Northern Ghana, the intersection of class, education, and economic positioning situates development workers in a place of power against the project participants and that, therefore, facilitates the negotiations with participants to respond to the organizations' desires, mostly against their interest. The navigation of resistance by development workers sits within the study's analytical framework and opens the space for African feminist discussions (Adomako Ampofo, 2010; Bawa, 2018; Darkwah, 2021; Dosekun, 2021; Nkealah, 2016; Odinye, 2022; Pailey, 2020), where participants' agency is exhibited through these resistances and either acknowledged or negotiated by the development workers. Usually, the reaction of development workers is to negotiate using influencing participants. The assumption that community members are difficult because they do not know much is a familiar feeling held by development workers, especially as the 'good narrative on international development' is evangelized (Okome, 2003.) The need to manipulate or influence community members to respond to the organizations because these participants 'do not know much,' and as 'experts,' we are placed on a pedestal where community members may succumb to our desires even when they are convinced the projects are not useful to them. As indicated earlier, our multiple intersecting identities position us in a place of power to be able to influence.

All four development worker participants indicated they are accountable to participants through community dialogues. Nevertheless, are these dialogue platforms to convince participants to adhere to the organizations' bidding, and at what point do we, as workers, call out organizations

to serve community members' interests? This relation of accountability is a slippery slope. In moments where I have not conformed to my organization's sub-interest, I emphasize the 'sub' because it is challenging to oppose an overall goal of your employer, even when it is in contention with community interest. By 'sub,' I have changed project activities at different points to conform to community needs but still feed into the project goal. Even in such scenarios, I could only make these significant changes due to the support from my senior supervisor with decision-making power, who identified as an African woman at the headquarters and did not necessarily conform to the whiteness represented in the approaches of organizations. Accountability to participants, therefore, is very fluid and, at times, contradictory, and it is at these moments that the kind of bodies and politics that serve the interest of the locals present is pertinent.

This chapter has explored international development practice as a social control mechanism in its hierarchy and governance and how influence dominates international development practice. It also unfolds and presents social control mechanics to continuously otherize participants in Ghana and, by extension, Africa. It has interrogated how international development works as a social control mechanism through its rhetoric, political positioning, whiteness representation, reporting, and project conception. Delving into the multiple dominant and subordinated relationships within international development practice, it examined how power is exuded among the different levels of international development assistance. It also described how development workers assume a position of power to influence participants to adhere to project demands. The section makes an initial suggestion of disconnect between participants' needs and project interests resulting in resistance, which will be elaborated on in the next chapter on the re(actions) of women to international development.

Chapter Five: Women's Re (Actions) to International Development

The study refers to women's re(actions) describing the actions performed either as a response to international development and/or existing actions taken in development practice and scholarship spaces by African women, with and about them. This chapter, through the transnational, intersectional African feminist framework (Adomako Ampofo, 2010; Crenshaw, 1989; Dosekun, 2021; Enns et al., 2021; Hill Collins, 1990; Pailey, 2020; Patil, 2013; Swarr & Nagar; Tambe & Thayer, 2021), discussed the different ways women critique, resist, and negotiate within international development spaces by highlighting the voices of the development workers and feminist scholars engaged in this study. It also acknowledged strategies that are employed by women through African feminist scholarship regarding African women's development. Employing the term, re(actions) was to adhere to the position that women's attempts at development are not simply responses to international development but also expressions of their capability to enhance their development. Thus, navigating these themes presented an opportunity to explore women's agency in development practice either as a response to international development or as a means of defining their development. Therefore, emerging themes from the interviews were centred on critiques and resistances in different forms, as well as negotiations and other strategies employed by women in the international development discourse and practice.

Critique and Resistance

The critiques of international development range from an intersection of race, political location, gender, and class. Furthermore, how the intersections influence the conception, operation, implementation, and reporting in development practice (Ndaguba & Hanyane, 2018; Pailey, 2020; Salem, 2019; Struckmann, 2018.) International development is specifically called out as having a race problem, a 'white gaze' of development, or a neocolonial tool to disrupt the sovereignty of

nation-states within the Global South (Bruce-Raeburn, 2019; Pailey, 2020; Williams, 2013.) These initial critiques reiterate the earlier argument of the location of international development practice and how it influences development work in recipient countries. Al-karib (2018) forwards this argument, explicitly referring to international NGOs as serving the interest of and stemming from the assumptions of its Global Northern funders. As a neocolonial tool, international development has been argued to continue external control over territories subtly and differently from control mechanics used under formal Empire (Igwe, 2018; Langan, 2017; Mawuko-Yevugah, 2014; Ndaguba & Hanyane, 2018.) It may employ subtle and different methods, as extensively described in the previous chapter, but still works in advancing control through the othering of nations in the Global South. The preceding chapter elaborated on how international development has worked over the years and presented itself as a social control mechanism with a 'saviour façade.'

In this section, I specifically discussed participants' interests and views on the politics of international development, elaborating on the critiques highlighted in the responses from both development workers and feminist scholars. Then, I explored the contrast in the Western image of the African woman against women's identities in Northern Ghana emerging from their interaction with development practice. I explored accountability to project participants' needs and the contribution of local actors to the structure of international development. Resistances emanated through workers' responsibility to participant needs, the theoretical and methodological approaches employed by feminist scholars when discussing the politics of international development and participants' reasons for participating in this research study as a form of resistance. These questions were explored to understand how participants' positionalities interconnect and shape their re(actions) to international development practice as feminist scholars or development workers. Therefore, the study's analytical framework is relied on to unpack the

nuances within women's re(actions) to development, explicitly interrogating how they critique and resist the politics that accompany international development. The discussions are interlaced with a recount of personal experiences on critiques and resistances.

The views on international development expressed by the study participants were that of 'the continued helping narrative.' As highlighted in the previous chapter, development workers expressed their interest in development practice as being able to help vulnerable community members. In describing their interests and the 'good work' that was being done through international development practice, participants also did not shirk away from the contradicting realities development practice presented, including the disconnect between their intent and the needs of the people they claim to represent, and their operations not necessarily addressing the root problems of the communities they represent. As rightly indicated by Al-karib (2018) and Makuwira (2018) and repeatedly by study participants, especially *Niena*, the agenda of international development is set by the funding countries and thus perpetuates their interest as opposed to the interest of the communities they intend to support. The feminist scholars shared similar views on development politics, indicating the ridiculousness of our expectations of international development aligning with the interests of communities. *Lahire, Asibi* and *Azumah* shared similar concerns, critiquing international development as a way to stunt the growth of developing countries. Lahire simply indicated that "... development cooperation is just to keep us where we are…. Development cooperation is not what will develop us.…" *Azumah,* a feminist scholar, calls out the rationality of international development practice, arguing that the rationale of help in international development is problematic and defies logic. She used the visit of the Vice President of the United States, Kamala Harris, to Ghana between March 26-29, 2023, as an example of the questionable logic in international cooperation and development practice.

According to the United States embassy in Ghana, Kamala's visit was focused on "increasing investments in Africa, facilitating economic growth and opportunity – especially for women and girls, empowering entrepreneurs, advancing digital inclusion, and supporting work on food security, including adapting to the effects of the climate crisis" (US embassy, 2023.) However, *Azumah* argued that the whole logic of development and international relations on being benevolent and, advancing empowerment and looking out for the interest of people with whom they have nothing in common eludes logic. She expressed that:

> I have also become very conscious of the fact that there is a certain logic in development that is problematic, and it is the logic of people who are benevolent and, therefore, look out for the interests of people with whom they have nothing in common. That defies logic. It does not make sense in the Western rational choice world. Kamala Harris has come to Ghana, but it is not because she is interested in Ghanaians. Vladimir Putin is visiting South Africa soon, and the Chinese are all over Africa (concerning the BRICS relationship.) So, the Americans need to assert their interests and their place. If we read it as anything other than that, we are foolish because why would they come? There is something wrong with us for buying into that logic, and we have bought into it for so long that we have become incapacitated. We think that somebody else will come and fight our battles for us because they like us more than we like ourselves, and nobody operates in that logic. (*Azumah, FS)*

By challenging the benevolence of international development practice, *Azumah'*s argument is strengthened by the study's conceptual thought on social control, where power is exuded over receiving countries and its effects through incapacitation of the people (Bruce-Raeburn, 2019; Chan & Chunn,2014; Maynard, 2017; Opoku-Mensah, 2007; Pailey, 2020.) Unpacking these responses is the assertion of international development challenging the sovereignty of nations

through control to the extent that countries end up not being self-governing, as argued in the preceding chapter (Igwe, 2018; Langan, 2017; Mawuko-Yevugah, 2014; Ndaguba & Hanyane, 2018.) *Azumah* points to the enabling environment provided by state institutions, which facilitate the power held by international development organizations. She continued explaining the rhetoric used in development, which *others* receiving countries and has been discussed in the previous chapters, drawing on thoughts from different theorists (Bruce-Raeburn, 2019; Ha, 2014; Heron, 2007; Obayelu & Chime, 2020.) The arguments accentuate the questionable benevolence of aid coming from development organizations. *Azumah* asserted that:

> There is a problem with the global development language, and it calls its actions benevolent, but that is different from what it is. We have bought into it and therefore challenging to unsettle or disassociate from international development.

Following up on this critique of international development, *Asibi*, a feminist scholar but also a development worker at the global level, indicated that although she works in international development, her personal thoughts on it are more harmful. She argued that international development is a way for the West to practice neocolonialism, which has been extensively elaborated in this study drawing from Pieterse (2012) and Langan (2017.) Both theorists refer to international development as a by-product of colonialism. *Asibi* called the operation within international development a "soft power", building narratives around the Global South needing help but not doing much to change their existing state. International development is situated within capitalism, and just as the capitalist market, it is designed to be exploitative by continuing the harmful narrative of receiving countries needing help. She also emphasized the role played by development workers in the international development narrative by acknowledging her role in perpetuating control in the development discourse. She explained that she may draw some lines as

a development worker, but she is not entirely innocent in perpetuating the harm caused by international development. She stipulated that:

> My personal beliefs on international development are very harmful. International development is a way for the West to practice neocolonialism. Moreover, I am functioning within it. It is all about narrative. You perpetuate this harmful narrative, and you also are not that productive. Alternatively, you work for a corporation which very much sits into capitalism, and it sits into exploitation. Furthermore, that is what I am doing right now.

The development workers and feminist scholars critiqued international development differently. To some extent, the former acknowledges work done by these international organizations in terms of praxis, and the latter calls out the theoretical foundation of international development. Thus, arguing that its philosophy of benevolence is farfetched and despite the 'help' they extend, these are all subtle ways to ensure that their recipients are incapacitated and controlled to the level that their self-governance is questioned. The comparative analysis done by *Lariba* and *Talata* in the preceding chapter when they question the competence of governments in developing communities and indicate the resourcefulness of international organizations, shows how entrenched we are in the international development narrative. Aid is presented in restrictive ways where national governments give up some power and are perceived as incompetent by citizens. Of course, this is coupled with the corrupt nature of some governments and thus presents a dicey ground when critiquing international development. However, that also shows how organizations use neutrality and subtlety to ensure control, and as *Asibi* calls it, “soft power to perpetuate a harmful narrative”. *Lahire* connects international development and other international cooperation, pointing to the layered relationship between national governments in donor countries and governments in recipient countries and how irrelevant development organizations may be, especially because of

the established power relations between their governments and the governments in the nations they operate. She explained that:

> For example, we are in a debt crisis, so if we do not manage our debt, it does not matter how much development aid is brought to us. There is no way we can develop. Nevertheless, at the same time, these same governments are asking our government to go through all kinds of negotiations which undermine our social systems as policies for the aid given. And then, at the end of the day, they bring us development for cooperation.

In moving away from the critiques to start envisioning and understanding how international development can be better structured to respond to the needs of project participants, most of the feminist scholars I engaged pushed back, questioning the intent of development. *Lahire* and *Asibi*, as indicated earlier, explain how international development is meant for participating nations to stay where they are and not necessarily to improve and how the whole concept of international development is just a vehicle to enhance a harmful narrative. *Azumah* raises more questions on the conception, whereas *Lamisi* calls out the lack of critical feminist experts in development practice even at the local level and, thus, in that space, maintaining the Western approach of development even when led by locals. *Azumah*'s critique of the conception of international development pointed to the need for more diversity and the assumption that no alternative realities exist in the targeted communities.

Furthering this argument, the lack of acknowledgement of alternative realities in international development, according to *Azumah*, is the starting premise of the dysfunction of international development. She hints at the narrative of subjugation, impoverishment and disempowerment assumed by international development organizations regarding the people they support (Ha, 2014; Heron, 2007; Mohanty, 1984; Win, 2007.) Everjoice Win (2007) advances this

argument by pointing to the strategic shift in development practice only emanating when there is a move "from seeing us as objects of charity… to seeing us as agents of our own change…" p. 64.) *Azumah* specifically critiqued the philosophical conception of international development, arguing that re-engineering development projects, perceiving receiving communities as agents in their rights, is the only honest way to approach international development. She acknowledged that international development projects may have some achievements, but as *Lariba* critiqued, these achievements do not and are not intended to resolve root problems in the communities. *Azumah* argues specifying that:

> Listen, if you work for [international organization, name withheld] and you are running an education program in Bimbila, so far as I am concerned, we started from the wrong premise. So, there may be some achievements, but if you want to resolve root problems, the whole thing must be re-engineered from beginning to end. Starting with who should be responsible for the projects. We go into communities and assume that they do not see that education is needed, so we must go there and fix their education problem. However, if they do not see that education is a problem for them, that is not their biggest problem, and you may want to take a step back and ask yourself why that is not the case.

Makuwira (2018) discusses the alternative notion of international development promoting co-design and participatory approaches as informed by post-development theorists such as Escobar (2009) and African feminist theorists such as Odora Hoppers (2001) in the conceptualization and implementation of projects. The idea of co-design and participation in development processes are as contested as the concept of development, which *Azumah* indicates. A re-engineering of development practice translates into a shift in power dynamics, which is challenging to pursue, as is evident in most racial, feminist, and social justice discourses. Given the hubris international

development practice displays, assuming that there are no alternative realities and its management of local workers as discussed in the preceding chapter, it is only plausible that a change in the power discourse is challenged.

> The whole premise is a problem. How can you be sitting in Savelugu Nanton[v]. If you, in Savelugu Nanton, do not know that you have a problem, somebody will come from Madison, Wisconsin, to solve the problem in Savelugu Nanton. Like there is something fundamentally off with that, right? Moreover, you, who is in the Tamale[vi] Office, what agency really are you supposed to have? You do not have the luxury of breathing space to consider alternatives. You are sitting there when a proposal is developed and brought to you, and you are the implementer. The other side is that you have gone through a whole education system that makes you not value anything because you are entirely othered. So, how are you supposed to push back and think differently? A certain hubris is embedded in the entire enterprise, but it is such a common way of operating here that nobody thinks differently about it. (*Azumah, FS)*

Following up on *Azumah*'s argument on the role development workers play in international development primarily because of their conditioning on the saving narrative of international development. *Lamisi*, another feminist scholar, questions the lack of critical representation in the voices expected to represent women in development organizations. She argues for the lack of understanding of gender and feminist issues by local staff employed on projects that claim to be gender aware. Therefore, as a result, projects tend to advance Western-oriented approaches and not necessarily pay close attention to the women they intend to represent.

> Project officers must mandatorily understand issues around gender and feminism. Even in academia, we ask where [is] the African feminist literature? So, you can imagine what is

> happening in this field with people not trained in critical gender and feminist lenses. A lot of the projects, when they come, are designed in Western-oriented approaches. There is this call I was looking at this evening, and they already had their metrics. Okay, so if I want to do this work for you, you will sit there [in the developed world] and assume that these metrics have worked in other countries so that they will work here. So, development workers with critical lenses are what we need to be able to ensure that they respond to the development needs of the people they work with. (*Lamisi*, FS)

I interconnect *Lamisi*'s critique on staffing and the assumption that local staff are poorly equipped. *Azumah*'s assertion on the hubris centred in development practice reiterates the study's argument on how the intersections of race, class, gender, and other identities continue the ongoing subjugation in international development and its operation as a social control mechanism (Foucault,1991; Maynard, 2017.) *Azumah*, recounting her experience, argues explicitly that international development is more of a surveillance tool. She explained the mechanics of international development to control and how they are rationalized as measures for accountability. It connects with the study's exploration of the reporting systems and how they perpetuate control and management. *Azumah* summed up the entire argument made in the social control chapter, critiquing the report system and the bodies represented in development work through the lens of race.

> So, this project was conducted in Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria, and it was designed so that the project lead, based in Canada, the US, or somewhere in the Global North, could see all the data and write the report. That is the cross-country report, and I was like, no, this is surveillance in a different language, right? Moreover, this person presiding over me and controlling and managing me is a recent graduate and only two years out of a PhD.

> However, because she either has the right skin colour or is in a country where people of the right skin colour are dominant, that gives her the right to come and superintend over me, who has been doing this for two decades *(Azumah, FS.)*

The study's targeted outcome sought to resist the narrative of the African woman as portrayed in the development helping narrative positioned in subjugation, impoverishment, disempowerment, all anti-western traits. Most of the women I engaged were Ghanaian; the only homogenous identities were Ghanaian and women. Even among the eight participants, unique, critical intersecting identities across ethnicity, class and political histories allowed for multiplicity among the women. The assumption of the African woman is that of an illiterate and one who needs help (Mohanty, 1984; Win, 2007), but *Azumah*'s narrative on how she was inspired to be critical with development before she even completed her graduate studies is a crucial signifier and a basis to complement the argument that African women can define their development based on their standards and not through standards provided elsewhere. She was inspired by a non-literate Ghanaian businesswoman she met on a flight to the United States. That encounter changed her perspective on international development and her intent on reading development as a middle-class foreign-trained Ghanaian to help vulnerable communities in Ghana and defy the portrayal of African women in international development scripts.

> I began my interest in development by helping people in the Global South. However, by the time I was completing graduate school, I had a more nuanced view of development, and this was inspired by a non-literate Ghanaian woman I met on a flight. She had an exciting outlook, counting wads of dollars in cash and taking breaks in between. What struck me the most was that she spoke no English and asked me for help with her

immigration documents at a point. So, I remember asking her why she was going to America if she could not read and understand English.

She told me nobody had refused to take her money because she could not speak English. So, really, this woman I met on the plane was a massive part of how I constructed the 'other' in the Global South and recognized that 'other' is very different from the 'other' you encounter in your development texts. It was long before I would read Under Western Eyes and so on. I instinctively understood that there was a disconnect between what I read and how it portrayed the African woman as lacking agency. Then, there was this particular woman who, in my mind, stood very tall in terms of what she could do for herself. Furthermore, that has framed my writing and thinking since then.

Azumah's encounter with this woman fueled her interest in how she had represented African women for almost three decades. Her recount of this experience points to how, as African women, we are conditioned through education to conform to the narrative of vulnerability presented in international development discourses. We are clouded by our own intersecting identities, either locally attained or transnationally acquired. I worked practically and methodologically as a development worker and researcher for a long time, advancing the Western narrative of African women, especially in rural areas. Looking at them through hegemonic feminist lenses, pushing forward Women in Development theoretical frameworks that were only superficial and could not be contextualized, nor did it challenge the politics women interact within the communities in which they exist. Women in rural Africa especially are portrayed as vulnerable and challenged significantly by harmful patriarchal norms, so projects I have worked on and most other international development projects seek to empower them economically (Eisenstein, 2017; Sylvester, 1995.) These activities are guided by the argument that the help we give as development

workers and organizations will translate into changing decision-making dynamics at the household level and, therefore, invariably confront the existing patriarchal norms. Based on these narratives and assumptions, women, especially those in Northern Ghana, are portrayed, in *Azumah*'s words, as "the poster child of poverty." The assumption of help and not considering repercussions and other effects after the help has been fulfilled suggest the traits of Western feminist evangelism suggested by Okome (2003.) It also circles what agency means and how it is vital for restructuring when community members can define what help they need and how to reach empowerment. We can achieve that by community members defining what development means to them as argued and conceptualized through the African feminist lens (African Feminist Forum, 2015; Dosekun,2021; Salami, 2022.)

> In Northern Ghana, the Northern Ghanaian woman was seen as a poster child of poverty, so she has been supported to improve her circumstances. One of the major things was that we wanted her to be an active participant in productive activity, so many NGO efforts have gotten the men to agree that women have access to land. Moreover, we automatically assumed that that would lead to more egalitarian decisions within the household, and that does not happen. So, what we have done is that we have increased the workload of women in Northern Ghana in our quest to develop them. (*Azumah, FS)*

Lamisi specifically connects with transnational intersectional African feminist theoretical framing (Adomako Ampofo, 2010; Crenshaw, 1989; Dosekun, 2021; Enns et al., 2021; Hill Collins, 1990; Pailey, 2020; Patil, 2013; Swarr & Nagar; Tambe & Thayer, 2021), asserting positionality and class and how it is difficult to homogenize a group of women primarily because of the differing intersectional identities existent in even one community. She argued that the community context shapes identity issues and different communities. Even within a country, there are different cultural

beliefs, practices and norms, especially around what gender is and what appropriate gender roles, expectations and identities are. It, therefore, is presumptuous to assume homogeneity within a group of women, and it becomes difficult, according to *Lamisi*, to use one lens as a tool for investigation. She argued that:

> You must tease out from each woman's experiences and identities what is important to them and why they are the way they are. So, for example, even in Ghana, our urban Ghanaian woman and her experiences and the lenses with which she addresses specific issues vary from the rural woman. Even though their challenges may be similar, there are distinctions in how they shape the identities of these women.

Lahire responds to the intersection of international development practice and African women's identities, suggesting how, as scholars, African women consulting for these international organizations may also conform with the global narrative and how especially unsettling it is for scholars who tend to be more critical of international development discourse. She explained how funding dictates approaches used in a more reformatory rather than a transformational way and, therefore, feels constraining. African feminist scholars, including Adomako Ampofo, refer to this feeling of contention between feminist work and donor agenda as well. In such cases, even critical scholars are restricted to maintaining the narrative along the identities portrayed to conform with the consultancy requirement. *Lahire* explained that:

> Because of my political orientation, I work more and respond to research in areas I am interested in. Occasionally, when I have consulted in established NGO projects, I have felt constraints regarding the kind of analysis I want to do. Fortunately, I do not do it too often, and anytime I have done it, I tell myself that I should not be doing consultancies. In terms of my reflection and all that, there is a way that one is being pushed to approach and look

at reforms when there are more fundamental issues about structures and systems that need attention.

As Everjoice Win points out, strategically critiquing the homogeneity and the vulnerability narrative designed around African women is by strategically shifting "beyond our favourite African woman, to strategic engagements with those other women who… can be strategic allies and leaders in development. But of course, this means the power relations between Northerners and African women also shift dramatically" (2007, p. 64.) *Lamisi* pointed to feminist research on African women in development spaces meeting the dictates of funders and their needs, and *Azumah* argued about the need to move away from our favourite perspective of the African woman lacking agency to respecting the traditional forms of agency, especially when they appear in non-western traits. A person should not necessarily go through the Western standard of education to be recognized for her agency. *Azumah*'s narrative on her inspiration clearly shows how some African women, even without the conventional education system, operate and define our development. There are grandmothers in Ghana's large markets who have never stepped in formal classrooms but can control their resources. For instance, Ghana's independence, although people mention specific men, was funded and spearheaded by market women who held economic power but had no formal education. These traits should also be recognized when describing African women in the international development discourse.

Despite these critiques, development workers sometimes resist development goals to ensure they are accountable to the community members' needs. Feminist scholars also, through their theoretical and methodological approaches, resist in their own ways. Finally, I explored participants' reasons for undertaking this study as a form of resistance. I recounted moments in the previous chapter when I felt the need to be accountable to participants through adjusting sub-

project objectives but ensured that these fed into the project's goal. I did not arrive at the need to respond and meet participants' needs at a whim but realized this through previous experiences of resistance from project participants. I envisaged those resistances as a refusal to behavioural change in those moments. However, by encountering feminist research and with growth, I came to understand that international development projects were not always suitable, and some resistances from project participants were messages to showcase the disconnect between the project and their needs. With that understanding much later in life, I worked guided by how my actions in the project would affect and respond to participants' needs. Based on this urge for accountability to project participants, I expressed resistance through strategy changes. However, more was needed to affect the project's ultimate goals or the agenda. The development workers expressed similar thoughts on their need to be accountable to project participants through strategies elaborated under the negotiations and strategies adopted by development workers to resist international development.

In the introduction, when I declared my positionality in this research, I explained how, as a student and feminist researcher, my encounter with theoretical feminism was more Western, even in my Ghanaian sites of experiences. I interacted with Ghanaian women's livelihoods through Western gender analytical frameworks. As a dominant trait in most African scholarship, we succumb to a Westernized writing standard. *Lamisi* also acknowledged this position when asked about the theoretical and methodological approaches she used in her work. For her, non-Western frameworks were a recent phenomenon that she was learning to get used to. She explains:

> For feminist research, I think African feminism is a recent thing I am looking at currently. Previously, I had always focused on the Western feminist frameworks until recently. Ordinarily, I have continuously operated with Western concepts and an intersectional

perspective because that is what I was used to throughout my training. These lenses are the easiest to come across in your trained work, so you are more likely to operate in these frameworks and engage them in your activities.

However, this thesis is a resistance to Western thoughts with my use of the transnational-intersectional-African feminist theoretical lens and the methods I employ. Other scholars pointed to their political location and how their positionalities inform their theoretical and methodological approaches. *Lahire* and *Azumah* referred to a Marxist feminist lens in their writing approaches as a form of resistance. Marxist feminism is an extension of Karl Marx's theory on capital and how production is skewed towards the owners and controllers of capital. *Lahire* acknowledged that Marxist feminism was Western, but she explicated it to the African context to better understand the issues she sets out to write on. *Azumah* also indicates that she reads the world with a Marxist lens, as shown in her writing. She reflects on the underdog between gender and the political-economic binaries established between developed and developing countries. Both respondents declare their position by centring their interest on women. *Azumah* quoted a famous writer, "I must be on women's side because I am a woman. I will be foolish not to be on my side". She is therefore guided in her writing using a desired-centred narrative termed by Eve Tuck (2009), where the focus is moved away from typified vulnerability to strengths and positivity exuded by usually perceived vulnerable groups. She emphasized the need to centre the voices of the people you write about, reiterating Adomako Ampofo's (2010) argument on the significance of positionality to maintain the situatedness of African feminist knowledge. By introducing the centring of voices, *Lahire*, *Lamisi* and *Azumah* all use non-objective qualitative methods to maintain the significance of people's experiences in their work. *Azumah* positions herself in her approaches, touching on the strength-based methods and why she believes in catering to the voices of the people she writes

about. In contrast, *Lahire* contrasts experiences with statistics and makes the point that through her methodological approach, she also gets to immerse herself in the research process.

> You may have taken all my writings, but you would see me say clearly that this is the framework by which I write. I talked to you earlier about my affirming perspective, so I write with a different lens. I am interested in something other than the documentation of our problems. I am interested in seeing how people manage, how people make it through, and how we can improve those circumstances. What kind of work do we need to do to centre the people for whom the work will be done? So, I do not have this attitude that people are sitting there, and you come and parachute in because you know, and you know everything. You come and tell them what to do kind of thing. It is not my style. It is also important to centre the voices of those you write about, use their language, and think a lot about why they chose the words they chose. (*Azumah, FS)*

> I have been more interested in qualitative research, where I can listen to people immersed in their daily lives and observe. The qualitative approach has been the strong one for me. I do not believe in numbers. Human lives are more than figures, statistical operations, and all that. So, more reflexively, I can listen, understand, and position myself in the specific issues I am studying. (*Lahire*, FS)

By focusing on people, situating in the research context and even through the Marxist feminist perspective they employ, these feminist scholars present the narrative of African women from an anti-capitalist, non-western and decolonized lens. *Azumah*'s use of the strength-based approach is consistent with her narrative of her encounter with the uneducated Ghanaian businesswoman who inspired her to gaze at African women with a non-Western lens. Not defining their identities, such

as class with formal education or the ability to speak a colonial language such as English, but context-specific identities presented by the women through their agency.

The dominance of Western thoughts in knowledge creation and precisely how narratives are carried within international development discourses necessitates the rise in southern solidarity, which sits at the centre of the study's analytical framework (Enns et al, 2021; Swarr & Nagar; Tambe & Thayer, 2021.) Here, women from the Global South organize from the margins and have formed meaningful solidarities to fight notions of Western thoughts as a joint group while maintaining their autonomy and creating the possibilities of rethinking development. As indicated by the African Feminist Forum (2015), "our experiences [as African women] are linked to that of women in other parts of the world with whom we have shared solidarity and support over the years." The feminist scholars, as a form of resistance, draw on Afrocentric and non-western critical international development resources as well as regional and diasporic coalitions, which will be further discussed under the strategies they use in the re(actions) to international development. However, I found it essential to ask why participants decided to partake in the study and realized that their responses were forms of resistance to Western thoughts. The development workers felt it significant to contribute to work being done in international development and better represent African women through their responses to the study. They engaged in the study based on their interests and observations of international development politics and how it could be steered to be community focused. *Talata* explains her interest by indicating:

> I also want to contribute to knowledge. Interestingly, the research looks at African feminism, which will shed light on how Black women want to be treated and how they want to do things. How they see things, so participating in this research will also contribute to that knowledge.

The feminist scholars also hinted at shared interests, especially in questioning the politics of international development as academics and international development researchers and consultants. Their urge to contribute to African feminist spaces was also dominant, especially from an emerging scholar. The need to resist Western imposition was also a significant reason. *Lamisi* specifically pointed to engaging in this research because she believed it was positioned to highlight the situatedness of African women and elaborate the methodologies and theoretical lenses applicable to our context. She indicated, "We can engage equally, and we do not have to always use what works for them." By referring to the international development organizations and their travel of Western narratives. Pertinently, the research they felt addressed the conflict between Western and non-Western thoughts and the imposition of Western ideologies and could guide local development organizations in better understanding of gaps they face in the development space concerning their connection with donors and how they can better address them. The research opens these discourses, especially focusing on the resistance and women's strategies in navigating politics. The question of changing the development discourse is overly ambitious. However, development, especially spearheaded by international organizations, has been critiqued over the years, and changes need to be made more transparent. Thus, the study aims to understand the power invoked by how development workers and feminist scholars navigate them. The participants are two important groups of people who are African women, work with and for them and write with and about them. The feminist scholars shared their reasons for resistance and hope as stipulated below:

> As a feminist researcher, I always agree with anybody who wants to research because I always ask people to participate, so I never refuse. I am more excited about young

women, and the focus of the research also excited me. So, I am looking forward to the thesis when it is done. (*Lahire*, *FS*)

I am interested in having the perspective of a young African woman, and from the blurb you shared with me, we have shared perspectives on development. (*Asibi*, FS)

Positionality, I must say. It teases issues we question as academics, international development researchers, and consultants. These organizations travel with approaches and methodologies that sometimes need to be revised, and there is also the conflict between what is supposed to be done and what is expected of you as a researcher. Hence, if this work is done, it will tease out these issues. It highlights these things, making these development consultancies and organizations aware of some challenges in African countries.

Moreover, this research can make recommendations and make them understand that there are methodologies and theoretical lenses applicable to our context that we can engage equally, and we do not always have to use what works for them. Thus, it can help them appreciate that as well. Then, it gives the development students and researchers other lenses to examine what issues are present, how they are being challenged, what the challenges of international development agents are, and how they can also help shape the discourses around them. These are some of the reasons why it is essential to engage in this research. *(Lamisi, FS)*

Negotiation and Strategies

The second emerging theme under women's re(actions) to international development was how women negotiate and the strategies employed when navigating power exuded in international development practice. It began with respondents' navigation of the disconnect between project

goals and project participants' needs and their accountability to project participants through specific strategies employed. It also touched briefly on communication processes and how project participants are included at specific points to maintain transparency. To emphasize strategies used, scholarship produced on and with African women presenting the diverse identities and experiences of African women are discussed in this section. The section also discussed Afrocentric, non-western critical international development resources and the regional and diasporic coalitions participants draw from and rely on in producing knowledge. One reason participants agreed to the study was how scholarship could be presented as a strategy to navigate politics within international development.

For participants to manage the contention in international development, they tend to navigate by either resisting and/or negotiating, and this responds to Foucault's model of power, as described by Rowlands (1998), where resistance can be said to be a moment of invoking power, especially by a vulnerable group. Therefore, I explored strategies based on my own experience by altering sub-goals to meet participants' needs, which has been recounted under the resistance section. By expressing resistance, I developed actions that would benefit participants, such as incorporating peer mentorship to ensure participants learnt from other people from different communities who shared their interests. A strategy such as this was only a specific action. However, it ensured that participants had a sense of ownership, which, going through the responses, most development workers strived to attain. Accountability to community members could only be achieved when actions enabled them to commit to the introduced interventions. The development workers expressed similar thoughts on their need to be accountable to project participants through strategies centring most importantly on communication to facilitate ownership by the community. To explore these strategies, I interrogated respondents' navigation of the disconnect between project goals,

project participants' needs, and their accountability to project participants through specific strategies. I also explored communication processes and how project participants are included at specific points to maintain transparency.

Teni, a development worker, expressed moments when they held community reflection meetings and check-in meetings to allow community members to quiz/question the project staff on things they needed clarification about. She also pointed out that through these meetings, they looked for disparities to ensure synchronization between the project implementation and participants' needs. These were locally devised strategies to ensure accountability to community members. *Talata*, a development worker in line with *Teni*, also had a local institutionalized feedback system, which she took advantage of to be accountable to her participants. Through the monitoring system, project progress was tracked and allowed the opportunity to address participants' concerns. She explained that:

> The project I worked on had feedback mechanisms developed not by me but by the monitoring and evaluation specialist at the local office. We use that feedback mechanism tool to get in touch with project participants. Give them information, pick their complaints and concerns, and address them. So, I use that channel to be accountable to the participants I work with.

Niena talked about her accountability to participants through the involvement of participants from the project inception stage. She explained how participants are recruited as volunteers on the project to maintain community representation in both the ideation and implementation of projects. She was the participant with the highest position among the development workers I spoke with. I believed she had the space to leverage such actions since she was the only one who mentioned participants' involvement in proposal development at a point in her life. *Lariba*, just like *Talata* and *Teni*, talked about meetings with community members during implementation, explicitly

referring to gender dialogues held with community members. She explained that she had developed project participatory trackers with community members to establish relationships with participants, allowing them to develop participatory monitoring tools and corresponding assessment trackers. *Lariba* clarified that:

> We have gender dialogues, so we meet occasionally and decide when we want to meet and how often. We design the schedule to suit the planting seasons and off seasons. So, at the end of a cycle, we sit together to see what we have done. Then, as part of our monitoring and evaluation, we have participatory monitoring tools, which community members draw up themselves. Then, they assess how far they have gone in activities, and they know what they have learnt and how they can improve, so I am accountable to community members with all these. The work plans are institutionally implemented, but with the participatory trackers that I use, I have developed this myself to know where each person falls under and how I can help them improve.

Lariba's recount of a participant-led and intersectional sensitive monitoring framework is a form of resistance to the critiques of development practice. She acknowledges the existence of work plans that are institutionally introduced. However, adopting participatory trackers allows for a relationship of trust between her and her participants. Sharing the space with participants for assessments and project tracking develops a sense of accountability that is balanced between participants and the development worker. Therefore, by this tracker, she does not go into the communities with a one-size-fits-all assumption but can recognize participants' strengths and vulnerabilities through their presented identities.

Feminist scholars critiquing international development talk about their political orientation and positionality as African women, and that informs their lenses in discussing development. Through

their experiences and commitment to anti-western thoughts, these feminists produce scholarship, explicitly highlighting African women's diverse identities and experiences. This is a move away from the white-led feminism that marginalizes the worldviews of women of colour (Halley et al., 2018; Thompson, 2002) and does so through knowledge production (Mohanty, 1984; Said, 1978.) *Azumah* explains this orientation as an inspiration from a non-literate Ghanaian businesswoman, which informed her commitment to resisting Western thoughts. Other scholars delve into the portrayal of African women not as a resistance or response to international development but as actions they feel committed to as African women. This study was inclined more to express the power we hold in our interaction with international development as African women. It is a personal commitment to uncover strengths portrayed in navigating international development politics and how we can draw strength from each other as feminist scholars and development workers in navigating the power exhibited in the politics of international development. In doing so, I interacted with development workers and feminist scholars who are pivotal in the narrative on African women through their reports and scholarship, respectively. The feminist scholars had different reasons for committing to contesting the Western narrative on African women. *Lamisi*, a feminist scholar, explains that the different contexts within the African sub-region shape the identities of the different African women. The culture, beliefs, practices, and norms, even around gender appropriation and roles, necessitate an intersectional view of African women. A move away from homogenizing women on the continent has been frequently exhibited by hegemonic feminism.

To emphasize strategies used, scholarship produced on and with African women presenting the diverse identities and experiences of African women are discussed in this section. The feminist scholars in this study were committed in their scholarship to engage in presenting the identities of

African women not in an othered frame but rather in highlighting their agency. *Lamisi* previously recounted the diversity even within women in a given context, highlighting their different experiences. Thus, reflecting on African women with a homogenous lens was far-fetched for her. She preferred to use an intersectional lens in engaging scholarship on African women. *Lahire* refers to the need for showing personal accountability by sticking to a political orientation where African women are not othered or universalized, and through her scholarship, understanding the intersections of different identities in women's experiences as explained by Kannan (2018) and Mendez (2019) when they discuss the importance of transnational discussions and its pertinence on non-western alliance.

A personal commitment to present African women respectfully as African women with different identities runs through the responses of most of the participants. Therefore, *Lahire*'s strategy, beyond the personal commitment, is to ignore funding that will compromise her commitment. *Azumah* was to present African women from a strength-based approach, not just pointing out vulnerabilities but also how women navigate these vulnerabilities. Thus, as a strategy, she resists the Western traits of development and the portrayal of African women to a more focused and community-led development owned by the women the project is intended.

The study focused on how transnational discourses, intersectionality, and African feminisms interconnect to resist the universalizing of African women as depicted in the helping narrative of international development practice. Through this framework, it is important to look at the strategies devised by these individual scholars and to pay attention to the resources they draw as a strategy in itself. The study introduces transnational feminism as "perspectives that focus on the diverse experiences of women who live within, between and at the margins or boundaries of nation-states around the globe; they transcend nation-state boundaries and speak to a wide range of interacting

forces that have an impact on gendered relationships and experiences in a geopolitical context" (Enns et al., 2021, p. 11.) Swarr and Nagar (2010) present transnational feminism as:

> An intersectional set of understandings, tools, and practices that can (a) attend to racialized, classed, masculinized, and heteronormative logics and practices of globalization and capitalist patriarchies and the multiple ways in which they (re)structure colonial and neocolonial relations of domination and subordination; (b) grapple with the complex and contradictory ways in which these processes both inform and are shaped by a range of subjectivities and understandings of individual and collective agency; and (c) interweave critiques, actions, and self-reflexivity to resist a priori predictions of what might constitute feminist politics in a given place and time(p. 5.)

The study explored Afrocentric and transnational non-western feminist and critical international development resources that participants draw from in producing knowledge on African women. *Lahire* situated her work in the Global South, expressing that she worked cross-continentally in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and connected with these relationships and the resources they provided in her scholarship.

> So, this has been cross-continental with countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. I come across different country initiatives trying to look for alternatives, which is how we are connected. In Ghana, I have worked with the Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT), which focuses explicitly on Ghanaian women's interests in national development processes *(Lahire, FS)*

Azumah also pointed to some critical theorists such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty, an Indian postcolonial and transnational feminist theorist, and Robtel Neajai Pailey, a Liberian African feminist scholar and other feminist scholars who work intersecting critical development studies,

critical African studies, and critical race studies. *Lamisi* explored the politics of citation and how that informed her choice of resources in navigating development scholarship. She indicated that the names she cited showed who she was reading. Thus, she ensured that she read African feminist literature, explicitly referring to *Feminist Africa*, an African feminist journal run by African feminists and located in Ghana. However, their contributors were across Africa and the diaspora. She also referred to the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA.) Indicating that aligning with these resources ensured an insistence on teasing out lenses from an African perspective.

The study has argued that transnational feminism, especially in knowledge production, tends to resist the politics of international development. As such, connecting with participants on the resources they rely on and even the methodological and theoretical approaches they adopt was to elaborate how and why they choose their methodologies and approaches to dealing with African women's issues. The study, through its framework drawing from both postcolonial and African feminist theorists such as Foucault and Okome, Oddora Hoppers, and Adomako Ampofo, among others, as well as research participants, has explored international development through an anti-imperial and anti-racist perspective to establish how social control is advanced within Ghana. This chapter explored women's re(actions) as actions performed either as a response to international development and/or existing actions taken in development practice and scholarship spaces by African women with and about them. Ways women critique, resist and negotiate with international development politics have been explored, highlighting the voices of the development workers and feminist scholars engaged in this study. By exploring the critiques, resistances, strategies, and negotiations from the participants, I have drawn on the transnational-intersectional-African feminist outlook into the study, interrogate the multiple and diverse ways power is invoked and

assumed when development projects are implemented in Ghana and how Ghanaian women workers navigate and interrupt such power relations.

Chapter Six - Connecting African Feminist Scholarship with International Development Practice

This final chapter explored the intersection of development practice in Ghana and African feminist scholarship through participants' responses and the researcher's experiences. Beyond this interlocution of the various voices presented in the study and mine, I build on the data, positioning thoughts on how international development can better serve participants' needs in a more accountable way through informed representation and recognition of available resources that can build on development projects if that is what is intended. As such, reflexively and through the data present, I engage with feminist scholars' responses on why they think it is essential to understand the intersection of African women's identities and international development and how development workers find it necessary and valuable for African feminist research to inform project design and implementation. As a political positioning, I term this section reflexive (re)action reflecting on my experiences converging international development and African feminist research. I use the study's analytical framework, the transnational, intersectional African feminist lens (Adomako Ampofo, 2010; Crenshaw, 1989; Dosekun, 2021; Enns et al., 2021; Hill Collins, 1990; Pailey, 2020; Patil, 2013; Swarr & Nagar; Tambe & Thayer, 2021), to engage participants' resources highlighting how necessary knowledge created and implemented in development practice, especially targeting African women, should be very much rooted in their experiences, as argued by Arnfred and Adomako Ampofo (2010.) Through this framework, I also highlight women's shared experiences and solidarity in other regions and the interconnectedness of these experiences (AFF, 2015.) Thus, the use of the transnational lens to highlight shared tools, resources, and experiences has been initiated in the previous chapter.

Most importantly, I draw from the argument of the African Feminist Forum (2015), "we henceforth claim the right to theorize for ourselves, write for ourselves, strategize for ourselves, and speak for ourselves as African feminists," (p. 9) which has been reiterated by other theorists in furthering this chapter (Adomako Ampofo, 2010; Dosekun, 2021; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994.) By synergizing thoughts from African feminist scholars and development workers, I argued in this chapter the importance of closely engaging with African women, and in this case, as feminist scholars and development workers with multiple intersecting identities and experiences, to understand how development practice can better serve the diverse Ghanaian women. I attempt, therefore, through the participants' voices, to theorize using the transnational, intersectional African feminist framework while highlighting strategies and how African women speak for themselves.

According to the participants' political positions discussed in the previous chapter, all the feminist scholars deliberately employed an anti-western perspective in their scholarship. This is imperative as the study agrees with Obioma Nnaemaka (1997 who indicates that in documenting knowledge about African women, and by extension when developing programs that are expected to be beneficial to these women, then "it is not to Western feminism but rather to the African environment that one must refer" (p. 9.) The feminist scholars situated their feminism within a Marxist lens and built their scholarship around capital and how it informs neocolonial and antifeminist activities against African women. As *Azumah* explained, "The underdog is something I think about quite a bit. So, the underdog in terms of the unbalanced power relations between the global South and global north, and between women and men in the global South." *Azumah*'s position elucidates global capitalism's role in continuing the oppression and subtle control of racialized groups through the market, knowledge production, and development spaces. Global

capitalism highly influences development through international relations, preoccupations taken up by Northern countries and dating to the 1940s when financial and technical assistance was provided to supposedly "'economically backward countries" (Parpart & Veltmeyer, 2004, p. 4.) Amina Mama, a Nigerian-British postcolonial writer, feminist and academic, has been referred to previously in this thesis as expanding this argument in a conversation with Elaine Salo (2001) when she indicates how feminism, be it Western or othered in its right, succumbs to global capitalism, and can therefore not be seen as a threat, "white feminism has never been strong enough to be 'the enemy' in the way that say global capitalism can be viewed as an enemy"(p.61) Through these assertions, the feminist scholars are positioned, engaging as not only anti-western theorists but anti-capitalists as well. This is rooted in the African feminists' forum agenda, which categorically indicates that "our current struggles as African feminists are inextricably linked to our past as a continent, diverse pre-colonial context, slavery, colonization, liberation struggles, neo-colonization, globalization, etc..…." (AFF, 2015, p.3)

Drawing from such theoretical positionings and reflecting on the feminist scholars' political approaches, I enquired how they felt development practice could be designed better to suit women in Ghana. The scholars recounted an intentional choice to push for a kind of development practice that is rooted in postcolonial histories, funding that does not covertly pursue socially controlling development participants and their state institutions, and a move away from the assumption of experts coming in to 'aid' helpless development participants who lack the requisite knowledge, or what *Azumah* refers to as the "hubris of international development organizations". The most occurring issue indicated how development practice can be situated in the Ghanaian context by recognizing the intersecting identities among the targeted participants. *Lamisi* emphasized the importance of context and how it shapes the differing identities. *Lahire* recounted her positionality,

indicating she cannot say she represents all African women. She works within specific contexts and respects the distinctions within the landscapes she operates in. However, in her scholarship, she ensures that women in the specific contexts she engages are authentically represented. Therefore, culture, community practices and norms should lead the conceptualization and implementation of development. Looking back to *Azumah*'s position on how development is assumed elsewhere, with that presumption 'innovatively' introduced to community members as if they do not know and cannot understand what they need as a people or begin conceptualizing what development means to them. Therefore, a reflective and impactful development process should begin with understanding the context in which it is intended to operate before the project's conceptualization. *Lamisi* explains,

> The context shapes the discourses and identity because of the cultural beliefs, practices, and norms around what gender means. It is important to tease out women's distinct experiences and identities, drawing on what is important to them, who they are and why they are the way they are. If you do not look at these intersecting issues, you are likely to assume and put all women together as a homogeneous group, but they are not. The norms, practices and culture define their identity and should intensively inform the interventions introduced to them.

Throughout this thesis, I have repeatedly positioned this work as a political action in critiquing international development activities and dominant discourses in Ghana and finding ways that power invoked is resisted or strategized to ensure accountability to development participants. I circle back to my intent in the researcher's positionality section, as inspired by Nagar's (2002) in their '*Footloose researchers, 'travelling theories, and the politics of transnational feminist praxis'* questioning on accountability and the nature of one's political commitment. Through this chapter,

I specifically respond to the question - who am I writing for, how, and why? I am an African woman with distinct lived experiences in different engagement sites as a daughter, a student, a friend, a sister, a researcher, and a development worker in Ghana. In these engagements, whether filial or professional, I do not claim expertise in African women's experiences. However, I emphasize the authenticity in my lived experience, which also applies to all the participants I engaged with. After all, as Arnfred and Adomako Ampofo (2010) argue, “feminist knowledge must be situated and very often rooted in experience" (p. 10.) Thus, to respond to the question, who am I writing for? I write for the African women I share identities with through culture, statehood, experiences, and class. As *Azumah* indicated, “I have to be on women's side because I am a woman; I will be foolish not to be on my side". Therefore, African women do not expect others to write or theorize for us. Whose experiences will be represented then? Whose account will be reflected when we are written about? This position translates into a shared conception of what form development practice should take. The shared position was mutual among the scholars who emphasized the need for context and paying close attention to intersectionality and the development workers who argued the importance of African feminist research in the development practice. This will be subsequently engaged.

This entire thesis responds to how I am writing for African women. This is not to impose my thoughts or position or write as if I am alien to some of the experiences being recounted by assuming an objective position. Through that positionality, I fully engage with the participants in a shared space of theoretical and methodological understanding. This thesis is to critically question the power invoked in international development practice and how it is navigated. It is, however, not an isolated case. Such political commitments are reflected in the participants' work. As in the previous chapter, all the feminist scholars expressed their political commitment to writing for and

with African women through their methodological and theoretical positionings. Such political commitments are legitimized within a political statement by the AFF (2015), indicating that:

> We are African women. We live here in Africa, and even when we live elsewhere, our focus is on the lives of African women on the continent…. we acknowledge and celebrate our diversities and our shared commitment to a transformative agenda for African societies and African women in particular. This is what gives us our common feminist identity (p.3)

To respond to the question of why these feminist scholars and I engage in this kind of work-writing with African women about their experiences, I draw from responses from some of the development workers I engaged with. I asked them why they believed African feminist research is essential, especially with the background that the projects they work on are not rooted in African feminist research. Although drawn from different routes, their responses all target the issue of context and how African feminist research pertinently reflects the communities' contexts. *Teni* argued from the point of patriarchal norms and how it is important to consider community masculinity forms in conceptualizing projects, especially when they are hindrances to project progress or sustainability. *Lariba* also pointed to patriarchal norms, indicating the importance of understanding and addressing community-specific power imbalances to ensure that a project is more effective and sustainable. An assumption of homogeneity or standardizing interventions is usually challenged by existing culturally gendered norms that hinder the smooth progression of intervention, threatening its sustainability. *T*o support her argument, Teni cited a typical case of a project centred on reproductive health, pursuing family planning. A participant can adhere to it and roll onto a contraceptive plan. However, she faces different repercussions, such as marital abuse, including violence from her partner due to her reproductive choice or having to share her home with a second wife.

In another scenario, Teni recounted how teenage pregnancy is a consistent concern even after different projects have rolled out programs educating and targeting girls. A focus on the context through scholarship produced will inform such programs on how to emphasize positive masculinity and rope in men in this education process, as the context these women live in has men being significantly invested in women's bodies, lives, and the choices they make. *Teni*'s argument is rooted in Ogundipe-Leslie's (1994) womanist argument on gender inclusion, complementarity, and collaboration as a way to go in development practice. This is not a call to fuel patriarchy but to understand the systemic patriarchal norms and how they can be better navigated to design intended programs. There is a vast pool of scholarship on community patriarchal systems in different areas from African feminists, including Akua Opokua Britwum, Agnes Apusigah, Amina Mama, Akosua Adomako Ampofo, Sylvia Tamale, Dzodzi Tsikata, Akosua Darkwah among others. These scholars have writings ranging from economic production to reproductive health and sexualities centred in the African context, paying attention to the distinctive patriarchal norms forming attitudes, norms, and reactions in different African communities. Therefore, it is imperative to conceptualize development programs through the lens of African feminist knowledge production, primarily when it targets African women. *Teni* and *Lariba* explained:

> If we design and target women, we should also be conscious of the men they live with. For instance, we are talking about family planning. We assume it is her body, and she makes decisions regarding her body. Nevertheless, she makes these decisions, comes home and is beaten up by her husband when he finds out due to a lack of understanding. He then goes in for another wife without really understanding the rationale and processes behind the family planning. She may want to space her childbirth to ensure she is healthy, but if the man does not understand this, it brings adverse repercussions. (*Teni,* DW)

> African feminist research can be helpful regarding gender considerations, especially when challenging traditional power and gender norms. So, even when starting a project before its design, there must be a contextual gender analysis that will consider all these factors. Development interventions would be more effective and sustainable if these considerations were implemented. Without addressing the power imbalances, gender norms, cultural norms, and rules, these issues will crop up in project implementation and will not help the project be effectively implemented. (*Lariba*, DW)

To continue the earlier arguments made by *Teni* and *Lariba* when explaining the usefulness of African feminist research, *Talata* highlighted that an engagement with African feminist research allows connecting with the actual needs of women and not the perceived needs from the donor or international development organization's or even the workers' point of view. She argues that "this kind of research will also help us to get in touch with the actual beneficiaries but not those who we assume need the interventions." Therefore, simply reiterating the assertion about African feminist research rooted in the situatedness and experiences of African women as argued by AFF (2006), Adomako Ampofo (2010) and Salami (2021.) This chapter, in its path, works with the research participants to challenge the structure of scholarship that informs the design of development by drawing from the need of different lived experiences of participants to co-produce knowledge that serves the interest of African women.

I elaborate further on the ongoing actions of available resources in African feminist scholarship that can present accountable ways of working with women in international development practice. The study referred in the previous chapter to Afrocentric and transnational non-western feminist and critical international development resources drawn from as ongoing

actions to improve development. Consistently apparent was the study's participants' use of these transnational tools to connect with relationships and resources while maintaining their autonomy as African feminist scholars. Swarr and Nagar (2010) argue the relevance of such transnational engagement to ensure respect among individual histories, geographies and locations while investing in alliances for a common goal. *Lahire*, for instance, mentioned her connections within Africa, Asia, and Latin America and how these spaces provide resources in her scholarship. They also cite development networks in Ghana and Africa, including the Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT)[vii] Which comprises Ghanaian women development workers in local and international organizations, scholars, academics, and activists. The network focuses explicitly on Ghanaian women's interests in the national development processes. Other resources referred to are centred on scholarship, including African feminist journals and other spaces run by African scholars, theorists, and other Global Southern scholars. Drawing from scholarship and networks available to them, the participants in their theorizing, consulting, research and writing present ongoing actions to be accountable to the African women they represent.

This chapter has sought to explore how African feminists and development workers can converge in different engagement spaces to represent better the African women they engage with through their work and how they expect projects to be designed. The study is therefore attempting to create a space where it explores ways international development practice is critiqued, resisted, negotiated, and strategized by Ghanaian women in the development and feminist scholarship spaces to better serve the needs of the women it claims to support. These ways are intended to unbalance the power dynamic within international development practice and serve development interests in a more anti-western and anti-capitalist form. Through this chapter, I have attempted to connect development work with African feminist scholarship to present alternative ways to

conceptualize international development politics to ensure they are accountable to the people they intend to participate. This chapter has also attempted to legitimize the rationale behind rooting development work regarding design implementation and reporting in African feminist scholarship if it is intended to improve the livelihoods of project participants.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

The study sought to interrogate the multiple and diverse ways power is invoked and assumed when development projects are implemented in Ghana and how Ghanaian women workers navigate and interrupt such power relations. I connected to this research deeply and based on my position as an African feminist researcher and a development worker, I examined projects to uncover shrouded intentions that may seem helpful to African women's needs superficially but rather perpetuate constant social control confronting the indigenous identities of the African women they serve. It is crucial for synergy between aid provided and African women's actual development needs and identities. I interviewed participants and conducted a critical discourse analysis of annual reports and webpages of international organizations guided by the transnational, intersectional African feminist theoretical framework. The choice of the theoretical framework was to challenge and disrupt the spatial and temporal location of hegemonic feminisms that inform most neoliberal development agendas while paying significant attention to the people within the specific geographical space in Northern Ghana, Africa.

Specifically, the study responded to a) How the governance structure of international development practice re/produce hegemonic feminist ideologies in Ghana and b) How African feminist scholars and Ghanaian women development workers navigate or/and interrupt international development organizations' othering and exclusion of African women in Ghana. Data from the interview participants and the analyzed discourses suggested three significant themes in the study - i) social control embedded in international development work, ii) women's re(actions) to international development and iii) connecting African feminist scholarship with international development practice.

Social control in the study was conceptualized as a historical, uninterrupted series of social, political, and economic machinations to enforce power, police, and otherize a group of people (Chann & Chunn, 2014; Maynard, 2017.) Beyond exploring the dominant-subordinate relations of international development agencies and their recipients, the study examined how power is exuded among the different levels of international development assistance. By reviewing the hierarchy and governance structures set within the international development trade, the study explored how international development works as a social control mechanism through its rhetoric, political positioning, representation of whiteness, reporting, and project conception. It also unravelled how influence is drawn by development workers and organizations and is manifested as a tool in international development work. It highlighted how power is invoked through the management of projects. Accountability was demanded through resistance from project participants and negotiation by development workers. The study discussed accountability at the different levels and how it exposes power relations. Through these discussions, I argue how international development becomes a social control mechanism through influence drawn by power held by one actor over the other. As such, I highlighted how development workers also assume a position of power to influence participants to adhere to project demands.

Women's re(actions) in the study were conceptualized as actions performed either as a response to international development and/or existing actions taken in development practice and scholarship spaces by African women with and about them. Women's re(actions) were emphasized through their critiques, resistances, negotiations, and strategies. The study explored ways women strategize, resist, and negotiate with international development politics to navigate or interrupt in their capacities as development workers and feminist scholars. The feminist scholars specifically resisted through political commitment using anti-western and decolonial frameworks and taking

advantage of the consultancies they take and their methodological and theoretical approaches. Development workers, to highlight their resistances and critiques, displayed moments of resistance against their employers in their accountability to project participants. Participants navigated the disconnect between international development project goals, community members' needs, and their accountability to project participants through specific strategies. They devised individual and sometimes local organizational ways to stay accountable to participants but could not resist the overall goals of the international organizations they worked with. The study also highlighted communication processes and how project participants were included at specific points to maintain transparency.

Finally, the study emphasized the importance of synergy between work done by feminist scholars and development workers (and international development organizations) to inform development practice in Ghana. It highlighted how international development can better serve participants' needs in a more accountable way through informed representation and recognition of available resources that can build on development projects if that is what is intended. This, as such, is a critique, resistance, and strategy not to negotiate but to critically suggest alternative ways international development practice can be moulded to serve better the needs of the people it claims to support. These ways are intended to unbalance the power dynamic within international development practice and serve development interests in a more decentered, anti-western, and anti-capitalist form.

The research centrally focused on the critiques and alternative ways international development can be conceived and practised in accountable ways by connecting scholarship with development practice through a transnational, intersectional African feminist lens. Therefore, through my intersection as an African development worker, researcher, and student and

intersecting the work done by feminist scholars and development workers, I have responded to the study's goal of interrogating the power invoked by introducing international development activities. The study has attempted to legitimize the rationale behind rooting development work regarding design implementation and reporting in African feminist scholarship if it is intended to improve the livelihoods of project participants.

Contributions and Recommendations

This research contributed to the ongoing critiques of 'international development' as being binary and having a race problem, a 'white gaze' of development, or working as a neocolonial tool to disrupt the sovereignty of nation-states within the Global South (Al-Karib, 2018; Ndaguba & Hanyane, 2018; Pailey, 2020; Salem, 2019; Struckmann, 2018.) The dominant strength of this research is its interdisciplinarity and its theoretical and methodological position in African feminist knowledge production. This section highlights the study's strengths through its contributions. This research contributed significantly to existing knowledge, conceptualizing these critiques and unravelling international development as a social control mechanism. It also added to proposed alternatives to the international development agenda, moving more towards community-centred and anti-capitalist by situating the argument in a Ghanaian context, using an African feminist lens while recognizing transnational influences. Specifically, the study has significantly contributed to the theoretical and methodological understanding of (1) transnational, intersectional African feminism in Ghana, (2) power relations in international development organizations, (3) neoliberal hegemonic feminisms in relation to international development discourse, and (4) the "outsider within" researcher.

Theoretically, by adopting the transnational, intersectional African feminist lens, the research has been deeply rooted in an interdisciplinary discipline and challenged the dominant

liberal development theories, providing alternatives to universalizing African women in the development discourse. This alternative discourse emanates from studying how power is invoked and assumed through the spread of hegemonic positionalities in development organizations. Also, the combination of transnational intersectional and African feminisms gave the study the critical situatedness that is only peculiar to those who identify as African women, recognizing their shared identities with other women in the Global South while engaging their multiplicities. Therefore, this research has been a pivotal contribution to the study of international development practice, critiquing hegemonies and providing alternative outlooks through the theoretical framing. The study has also developed and furthered the contribution of and/or to African feminist discourses, particularly in how it combines with transnationalism and intersectionality.

Methodologically, the language of critical discourse analysis and qualitative research has been enriched through processes undertaken by this study. As an insider researcher, I interlaced my experiences through my positionality to add to participants' voices and not shroud them, giving the study the breadth and depth to ensure a rigorous analysis. Thus, the study has contributed to exploring the critical discourse analysis of project documents, interviews of participants and reflexivity. These mixed methods and the variation in the participants with the involvement of feminist scholars, development workers, documentary sources and my voice have enabled triangulation of the data to ensure depth and accuracy. Through this study, I have connected with the voices presented in the research to position thoughts on how international development can responsibly serve participants' needs through informed representation and recognition of available resources.

Recommendations

Recommendations for the study are significantly discussed in the preceding chapter on the political reactions synergizing thoughts from feminist scholars and development workers. I, however, highlight recommendations categorized under three main themes addressing international development organizations, development workers and feminist scholars. These recommendations directly speak to the study's objective of interrogating the multiple and diverse ways power is invoked and assumed when development projects are implemented in Ghana and how Ghanaian women workers and feminist scholars navigate and interrupt such power relations. The recommendations are as follows:

1. International Development Organizations

African feminist research is usually contextualized to local, national, or regional geographical locations. It is, therefore, imperative for international development organizations to conceptualize programs through the lens of African feminist knowledge production when it targets African women, precisely geographically specific locations, as across and within countries, there are multiplicities in identities and experiences. An accountable conceptualization of development programs should eliminate the assumed positioning and othering of the receiving beneficiaries. As such, international development organizations can be better accountable if they work in concert with the intended beneficiaries of the projects, not as an othered group but as people who can conceptualize their development and have autonomy to determine their needs and interests. A step to this is the erasure of the vulnerable depicted image of the African woman to one that exercises agency in her ways. This step also extends to the management of development workers, balancing the power nexus and recognizing them as experts with lived or shared community experiences who do not need to be controlled or managed but trusted to represent the needs of the beneficiaries.

2. Development Workers

Development workers can draw from available Afrocentric and transnational non-western feminist and critical international development resources to assist them in understanding participants and strategizing in more accountable ways to represent participants' interests. Resources mentioned were CODESRIA and Feminist Africa for scholarship and NETRIGHT for social capital to leverage skills from like-minded development workers and feminist scholars to serve participants' interests better. Development organizations and workers should encourage a feedback system including community reflections and gender dialogues where participants can question the project and understand its progress. A feedback system will introduce participatory monitoring and tracking, which might facilitate an excellent platform to ensure synchronization between the project implementation and participants' needs. Project participants can be directly involved in the ideation and implementation of projects to ensure and maintain community representation.

3. Feminist scholars

Feminist scholars can also be accountable with relevance in the development space by intentionally and politically committing to non-western, decolonized, and indigenous theoretical and methodological ways of knowing and doing to ensure that their work truly represents the concerns and interests of the African women they write with for and about. They can exude personal commitment to abide by a political orientation where African women are not othered or universalized and, through their scholarship, consistently project the intersections of different identities in women's experiences. It is also crucial for feminist scholars to build and expand non-Western transnational alliances and explore spaces that would not constrict their work on African women. In feminist research, advocacy, and international development project conceptualization, African women should be presented from a strength-based approach, where women's vulnerabilities are not seen as weaknesses but as opportunities for strength.

Ethical Dilemmas and Limitations

The study is positioned as non-conformist and has some ethical dilemmas. The study recounts its weaknesses based on the dilemmas encountered. These dilemmas were both methodological and theoretically informed. Methodologically, access to documents and interview participants was challenging due to the ethical nature of the research. Organizational/project documents from international development organizations were drawn from public records online using easily accessible engines and completely anonymized to ensure that the arguments raised in the study are not specified to distinct organizations but explored within the area of international development practice. The development workers also had concerns regarding their anonymity or confidentiality. A few chose not to participate for this reason, indicating that they needed approval from their managers. Also, engaging only development workers and feminist scholars and not project participants was a dilemma for the study. The intention was to engage with experts who dealt with the organizations and community members in praxis. Theoretically, combining the different theories to form the study's adapted analytical framework was a grey area. It came with its challenges because there were moments where specific theories were more evident than others when applying the framework.

Future Implications

Based on these dilemmas and limitations identified within the study, it is the expansion of the objective to understand policies such as the feminist foreign policies that drive, among others, development aid from Western countries in the Global South. It may be useful for future research to engage in a comparative analysis of community development organizations and international ones to facilitate an understanding of differences and synergies within the operations of these two types of organizations in development work. Afrocentric resources such as CODESRIA and

NETRIGHT and other development advocacy groups on the African continent can be engaged to further the engagement of the study's objective. However, the study established triangulation through the methods and respondents engaged.

For further studies, in addition to analyzing the feminist foreign policies to understand the politics within, a critical environmental scan of organizations to map out the different ways social control manifests would better build on this study. Another area for future research can be assessing the national development culture regarding governmental development and gender policies expected to guide international development operations within some African countries, including Ghana. Building on this direction, it would be essential to draw connections between the national policies, the development practice, and the needs of community members. The study focused on organizations that originate from the West. However, it is important to acknowledge the spring of other international development organizations from non-Western countries, such as Japan and Korea, that operate within Ghana and other African countries. It would be significant to explore their operations and examine any parallels to Western international development organizations in their practice in Ghana and other African countries. This study can also be transferred to other areas, including industries, not-for-profits, universities, and other institutes of higher education. Using the transnational, intersectional African feminist framework, an analysis of these institutions and spaces can uncover and challenge subtle social control traits that are presented as neutral but rather harbor and project the continuation of social control and othering of minority groups. It can also be replicated in other countries that share an aid relationship with the West and the constant travel of international development projects within Africa and the global South. Geographically, the study theory, method and overall framing can be adapted in other countries that draw parallels to Northern Ghana.

In this thesis, I set out to interrogate how power is invoked in international development work. However, beyond that, my interest was especially in how this power invoked was interrupted by significant actors within development and scholarship spaces in Ghana, and therefore, my engagement with feminist scholars and workers who work with international development organizations. I have occupied both capacities; thus, these experiences inspired this research. My positionality as an Akan woman from Southern Ghana and my intersections with research and development practice experiences presented a personal epistemological contribution that enriched this study's intersectional nature. To recount one more time, I engaged in this research, asking - who am I writing for, how, and why? The responses to these questions were guiding principles that upheld my accountability to the study. By the interlocution of the documentary sources, participants' views, and my voice, this thesis has fulfilled the intention of representing African women in their cultural authenticity and explicitly challenging the scholarship structure that informs development conceptualization and implementation. This feat was achieved using the study's theoretical framework to engage African feminist scholars and development practitioners while reflecting on my experiences to co-produce knowledge that serves the interest of African women.

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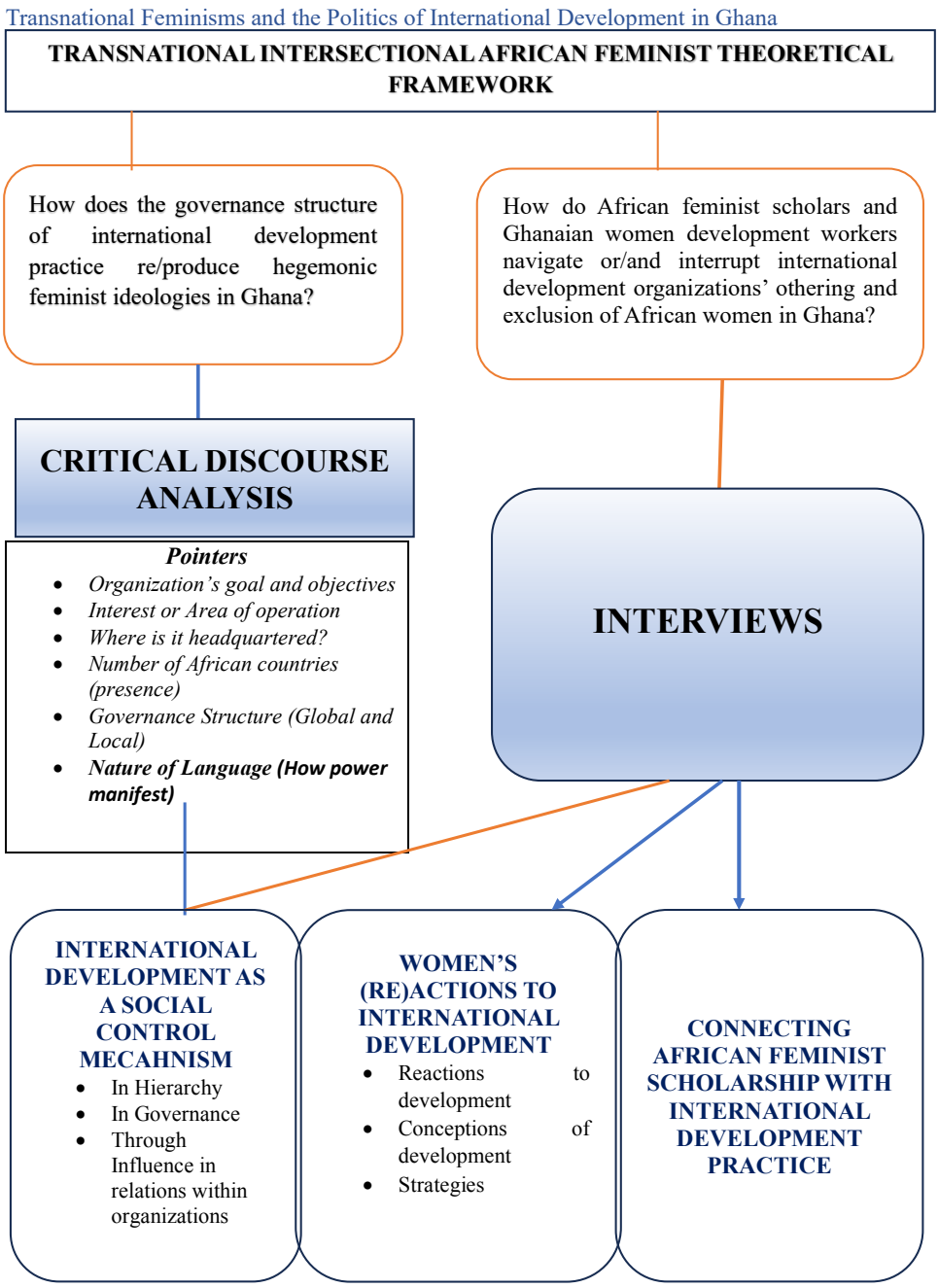
Appendices

Appendix A 2: Study Outline



Appendix A 3: Letter of Consent and Consent Form (African Feminist Scholars)

Transnational Feminisms and the Politics of International Development in Ghana

SMU REB File Number 23-60

Dr. Benita Bunjun (Faculty Supervisor)
Saint Mary's University
Department of Women and Gender Studies
Social Justice and Community Studies
923 Robie St, Halifax, NS B3H 3C3
benita.bunjun@smu.ca

Loretta Baidoo (Student investigator)
Saint Mary's University
Department of Women and Gender Studies
923 Robie St, Halifax, NS B3H 3C3
loretta.baidoo@smu.ca

[Date]
Greetings [name],
Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research project entitled *Transnational Feminisms and the Politics of International Development in Ghana*. This letter is intended to provide you with more information about the research itself, requirements for your involvement, and your rights as a participant. My name is Loretta Baidoo, a graduate student in Women and Gender Studies, Saint Mary's University, Halifax Canada. I am conducting a research study, under the supervision of Dr. Benita Bunjun, for the purpose of writing my thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the M.A. Women and Gender Studies degree from Saint Mary's University. Please be assured that your participation and the outcome of the research will not in any way affect your work status or your livelihood.

You are invited to share your views on the multiple and diverse ways power is invoked and assumed when development projects are implemented in Ghana and how Ghanaian women workers and African feminist scholars navigate and interrupt such power relations. This research contributes to the study of international development through a critical development lens, highlighting the power dynamics that are invoked in the conception and implementation of development projects that target African women as beneficiaries. Questions will be open ended and will be about your background in researching international development, your interest as well as theoretical and methodological inspirations and the strategies you think can be adopted to facilitate international development projects to better reflect the needs of the intended participants.

The interview will be conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams between March to the end of April 2023, and will last approximately 60 minutes. The benefits of the study may include contribution to African feminist scholarship and a better framing of international development projects tailored to the diverse needs of African women. There are no to minimal risks in engaging in this study.

Confidentiality will be maintained; pseudonyms will be used, and all personal identifiers will be removed. At any point you may withdraw from the research. If you feel there are risks or potential concerns, do not hesitate to contact me within a month after the interview via email at loretta.baidoo@smu.ca. If you choose to withdraw, all data will be disposed.

The data will only be accessible to the student investigator, Loretta Baidoo and the faculty supervisor, Dr. Benita Bunjun. Data will be organized, coded under themes, and stored on both a password protected laptop and the SMU official OneDrive platform during and after the study. The data will be stored for two years after the submission of the thesis report. The final thesis will be available upon request to the participants. There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

Participation in the study is voluntary, therefore you can withdraw at any point by emailing loretta.baidoo@smu.ca. Participants may contact the faculty supervisor in the event of any ethical concerns regarding the study:
Dr. Benita Bunjun
Faculty Supervisor
Saint Mary's University
Department of Women and Gender Studies & Social Justice and Community Studies
923 Robie St, Halifax, NS B3H 3C3
benita.bunjun@smu.ca

Or

Research Ethics Officer: ethics@smu.ca or 902-420-5728.

Informed Consent Form

The Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board has reviewed this research with the guidance of the TCPS 2 based on three core principles: Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare and Justice. If you have any questions or concerns at any time about ethical matters or would like to discuss your rights as a research participant, please contact ethics@smu.ca or 902-420-5728.

Transnational Feminisms and the Politics of International Development in Ghana

I understand what this study is about, appreciate the risks and benefits, and that by consenting I agree to take part in this research study and do not waive any rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can end my participation at any time without penalty.

I have had adequate time to think about the research study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐ I consent to participating in the study.

☐ I give permission to be audio recorded.

Research Participant

Signature: Name Date

…… …… (Day/Month/Year)

Principal Investigator

Signature: Name Date

…… …… (Day/Month/Year)

Please keep one copy of this form for your own records.

Appendix A 3b: Letter of Consent and Consent Form (Ghanaian Development workers)
Transnational Feminisms and the Politics of International Development in Ghana
SMU REB File Number 23-60

Dr. Benita Bunjun (Faculty Supervisor)
Saint Mary's University
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Loretta Baidoo (Student investigator)
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Department of Women and Gender Studies
923 Robie St, Halifax, NS B3H 3C3
loretta.baidoo@smu.ca

[Date]
Greetings [name],
Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research project entitled *Transnational Feminisms and the Politics of International Development in Ghana*. This letter is intended to provide you with more information about the research itself, requirements for your involvement, and your rights as a participant. My name is Loretta Baidoo, a graduate student in Women and Gender Studies, Saint Mary's University, Halifax Canada. I am conducting a research study, under the supervision of Dr. Benita Bunjun, for the purpose of writing my thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the M.A. Women and Gender Studies degree from Saint Mary's University. Please be assured that your participation and the outcome of the research will not in any way affect your work status or your livelihood.

You are invited to share your views on the multiple and diverse ways power is invoked and assumed when development projects are implemented in Ghana and how Ghanaian women workers and African feminist scholars navigate and interrupt such power relations. This research contributes to the study of international development through a critical development lens, highlighting the power dynamics that are invoked in the conception and implementation of development projects that target African women as beneficiaries. Questions will be open ended and will be about your background in international development work, the structure of the organizations you have worked with and how they invoke and assume power, how you are included or not in the power relational discourse as a local employee and how you navigate such workplaces.

The interview will be conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams between March to the end of April 2023, and will last approximately 60 minutes. The benefits of the study may include contribution to African feminist scholarship and a better framing of international development projects tailored to the diverse needs of African women. There are no to minimal risks in engaging in this study. If

you feel any discomfort during the interview process due to a recount of a previous incident at your workplace, the necessary space will be created for you to recover and/or feel free to withdraw. Confidentiality will be maintained; pseudonyms will be used, and all personal identifiers will be removed. At any point you may withdraw from the research. If you feel there are risks or potential concerns, do not hesitate to contact me within a month after the interview via email at loretta.baidoo@smu.ca. If you choose to withdraw, all data will be disposed of.

The data will only be accessible to the student investigator, Loretta Baidoo and the faculty supervisor, Dr. Benita Bunjun. Data will be organized, coded under themes, and stored on both a password protected laptop and the SMU official OneDrive platform during and after the study. The data will be stored for two years after the submission of the thesis report. The final thesis will be available upon request to the participants. There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

Participation in the study is voluntary, therefore you can withdraw at any point by emailing loretta.baidoo@smu.ca. Participants may contact the faculty supervisor in the event of any ethical concerns regarding the study:
Dr. Benita Bunjun
Faculty Supervisor
Saint Mary's University
Department of Women and Gender Studies & Social Justice and Community Studies
923 Robie St, Halifax, NS B3H 3C3
benita.bunjun@smu.ca

Or

Research Ethics Officer: ethics@smu.ca or 902-420-5728.

Informed Consent Form

The Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board has reviewed this research with the guidance of the TCPS 2 based on three core principles: Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare and Justice. If you have any questions or concerns at any time about ethical matters or would like to discuss your rights as a research participant, please contact ethics@smu.ca or 902-420-5728.

Transnational Feminisms and the Politics of International Development in Ghana

I understand what this study is about, appreciate the risks and benefits, and that by consenting I agree to take part in this research study and do not waive any rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can end my participation at any time without penalty.

I have had adequate time to think about the research study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐ I consent to participating in the study.

☐ I give permission to be audio recorded.

Research Participant

Signature:	Name	Date
……	……	(Day/Month/Year)

Principal Investigator

Signature:	Name	Date
……	……	(Day/Month/Year)

Please keep one copy of this form for your own records.

Appendix A4: Interview Guide for African Feminist Scholars
Transnational Feminisms and the Politics of International Development in Ghana

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I appreciate you taking the time to reflect on international development and African feminist scholarship, and how your work on the intersections of African womanhood and/or feminism and international development can inform projects that are introduced in Ghana and the African region.

To begin, I will ask you if you have any questions about the project or the interview process. I will then discuss how confidentiality will be maintained. I will take you through the consent form to ensure you are comfortable with the process and append your signature. Please kindly consider a pseudonym that you are comfortable with which will be used to refer to your interview data. I welcome your feedback about the interview process after the interview. I will also reach out via email to check in about the interview process and share with you a feedback letter.

The interview will begin by gathering some background information and then we will focus on your experiences as a researcher and/or scholar in this field of study. At any time during the interview, you may ask to stop recording or withdraw your consent to continue.

1. Tell me about yourself? (Age, nationality, ethnic background, years of relevant research experience)
2. Broadly, what are your affiliations? (Educational center, research institute, policy centre?)
3. In what other ways have you been involved in international development research?
4. Have you ever worked with an international development organization? In what capacity? Can you share a little bit about your experience?
5. What interested you in doing research around development work? What are your views on international development politics?
6. Through what theoretical lens do you view the politics of international development? Why do you use this lens? Are there specific methodological approaches?
7. Does your research reflect the diverse identities and experiences of African women? Can you please explain. Which African women?
8. Why do you think it is important to understand the intersections of international development practice and African women's identities/experiences?
9. Can you explain how your specific analysis of African women's identities/experiences is different from mainstream discourses on African women?
10. What are your critiques regarding the lack of diverse African specific research and literature? What resources do you draw on that are Afrocentric and non-western from a critical international development framework?
11. What are the regional and diasporic coalitions that work in the area of critical international development and African feminism? How do they influence the design of projects intended for the diversity of African women in relation to governments and/or the international development organizations?

12. Based on your experiences, how can international development projects better serve the needs in a relevant and accountable ways for project participants in Africa?
13. How can the existing local actors (community activists, government institutions, employees of organizations) contribute to better structuring development projects to specifically respond to the needs of targeted participants.?
14. Why did you agree to participate in this research project?
15. Do you have anything else you would like to add or any further questions?

Thank you again for your participation and your contributions to this interview.

Appendix A 5: Interview Guide for Ghanaian Women Workers
Transnational Feminisms and the Politics of International Development in Ghana

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I appreciate you taking the time to reflect on the ways you have navigated and/or still navigate power relations in your work as an international development worker in Ghana.

To begin, I will ask you if you have any questions about the project or the interview process. I will then discuss how confidentiality will be maintained. I will take you through the consent form to ensure you are comfortable with the process and append your signature. Please kindly consider a pseudonym that you are comfortable with which will be used to refer to your interview data. I welcome your feedback about the interview process after the interview. I will also reach out via email to check in about the interview process and share with you a feedback letter.

The interview will begin by gathering some background information and then we will focus on your experiences as an employee in international development organizations to illustrate power relations. At any time during the interview, you may ask to stop recording or withdraw your consent.

1. Tell me about yourself? (Age, ethnic background, years of work experience with your present organization)
2. What international development organizations have you worked with? What interested you in doing development work? What is your present position at your organization?
3. What has been your views about the organizations you have worked with so far?
4. What is the makeup of management at your present and previous organizations? Any differences? Who makes decisions? How are decisions made? How and when are you consulted in decision making processes?
5. How have the organizations you have worked with been inclusive regarding both local staff and project participants? What is the communication process (reporting system)? How is management accountable to project participants?
6. How are you accountable to project participants? Are there specific strategies you use? Are they self-developed or organizationally introduced through policy?
7. How are projects designed? (Project conception? Recruitment of participants? What kind of implementation frameworks are used? Who designs these frameworks?) Are there times when there is a disconnect between project goals and/or intent and participants' needs? Why? How do they show up? If there are, how do you navigate the disconnect?
8. What ways can African feminist research be useful to project design and implementation?
9. Have there ever been organizational tensions in your line of work (race, gender, ability, class in conception and implementation of projects.) With whom were you engaged (colleague, supervisor, employer, participants among others.)
10. How do you navigate organizational tensions? What structures or policies exist to facilitate or challenge oppressive dominant power relations?
11. What sustains or impedes your interest in international development work? Why did you agree to participate in this research project?
12. Do you have anything else you would like to add or any further questions?

Thank you again for your participation and your contributions to this interview.

---

[i]. Feminist foreign policy is conceptualized as a foreign policy that is rooted in feminist analysis and principles, away from the traditional and ineffective realist and liberal approaches (Lee, 2018)

[ii] Structural Adjustment Programs is the umbrella term used to describe a set of comprehensive economic policies aimed at altering the nature of a country's economy and the role of its government (Konadu-Agyemang & Takyi, 2018.)

[iii] Kwame Nkrumah is Ghana's first president, known as a pan-Africanist and a postcolonial actor whose work is mainly centred on decolonization.

[iv] The African Feminist Forum (AFF) brings together African feminist activists to discuss strategies, refine approaches and develop stronger networks to advance women's rights in Africa.

[v] Savelugu Nanton is a former district in the Northern region of Ghana, but in 2017, it was split into Savelugu Municipal and Nanton districts.

[vi] Tamale is the capital city of Northern Region Ghana, where regional offices of international NGOs operating in t Northern Ghana (the five northern regions) are usually located.

[vii] NETRIGHT is a network of civil society organizations and individuals interested in working together to bring a gender perspective into national processes and advocate for policy change to strengthen women's human rights.