

## Appraisal of the Contributions of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to Poverty Alleviation and Community Development in Gombe State, Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT:** Over the past decade, interest in community development and poverty alleviation has grown significantly in various parts of Nigeria. This underscores the need for concerted efforts at rural development and poverty alleviation with implications for urban planning and regional development since government alone cannot be relied upon. The rural areas and its people have not fared well. The rural areas as a result, have continued to be backward and low in economic and social well being. It could be inferred that no significant achievement can be recorded in Nigeria in terms of poverty alleviation without incorporating the NGOs. The objectives of the study therefore, are to: Assess the contributions of NGOs in poverty alleviation and community development in Gombe State. Literature review, questionnaire and interview methods/ Focus Group Discussion were used for the study. The results indicated that: NGOs activities spread across many fields of endeavor such as: education, empowerment, health care, environmental sustainability and HIV awareness campaign, seeking social transformation and improvement in the quality of life of the people in Gombe State. The study recommends that NGOs should seek to explore avenues for funding from donor agencies and improve efforts on advocacy and HIV awareness. The outcome of this study will elicit the necessary responses from the Government and the various stakeholders on the need to involve the NGOs as veritable tools in tackling poverty and community development in Gombe State and Nigeria in general.

**KEYWORDS;** Community development, Poverty alleviation, NGOs, Gombe State, Nigeria.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Researchers and practitioners routinely discuss the impact of Non- Governmental Organizations (NGO' s) on rural livelihoods. This has prompted the search for alternative modes and mechanisms of community development that could bring about economic development and poverty alleviation with implications for urban planning and regional development. Over the past decade, interest in poverty alleviation and community development has grown significantly in various parts of Nigeria. In Nigeria, government and community representatives view NGOs as important vehicles for community economic development and poverty alleviation.

The advent of modern societies and the development of states or nations brought to fore, the need for even development to reduce disparity and inequality which are closely associated with poverty in the spatial context (Sachs, 2005). This underscores the need for concerted efforts at rural development and poverty alleviation since government alone cannot be relied upon. According to Wahab (2000), the rural area and the people have not fared well. The rural areas have continued to be backward and low in economic and social well being. Ali (2010) also observed the concentration of investment and government expenditure in the urban areas. From the foregoing, it could be inferred that no significant achievement can be recorded in Nigeria in terms of poverty alleviation without incorporating the NGOs to achieve overall improvement in the living standard of the vast majority who reside in the rural areas (Yusuf, 2015).

Fayemi *et al* (2005) also acknowledge the huge resources that have been spent by governments on development and poverty alleviation without desired results, which the researchers attributed to planning without data and facts. Dhillon and Hansre (1995) observed that Non-Governmental Organizations have the knowledge, accurate information and experience about rural communities. Their knowledge of the felt-needs of rural dwellers being the domain of their main focus is clear. In the same vein, Bigsten *et al* (2007), and World Bank (2007) argued that Non-Governmental Organizations should be put in the fore front in the pursuance of the objectives of rural development.

Government at all levels made several policies and programmes to address the problems of rural poverty and inequality. For instance; Ali (2010), Gillespie (1990), Nafziger (1989), Narayan and Chambers (2000) X-rayed the spatial distribution of poverty and trend on a global scale. Despite these efforts, the rise in standard of living noticed in the advanced world has not trickled down favorably on the third world or developing countries as gap still exist between the haves and the have not. This phenomenon has led to constant review in approach to poverty alleviation the world over.

The World Bank has had a couple of interventions through such programmes as the World Bank Agricultural Development Projects, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) document and recently Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to mention a few. Therefore, the objectives of the study are: i) to assess the contributions of NGOs towards poverty alleviation and community development in Gombe state and ii) to make recommendations with a view to achieving poverty alleviation and community development in Gombe State. Thus the study would have far reaching implications on policy makers and would be useful to academics & students in research. The outcome of the study would help in the determination of the areas of support and/or partnership with donor agencies. It is hoped that the study would also serve as a guide to all agencies involved in community based poverty alleviation.

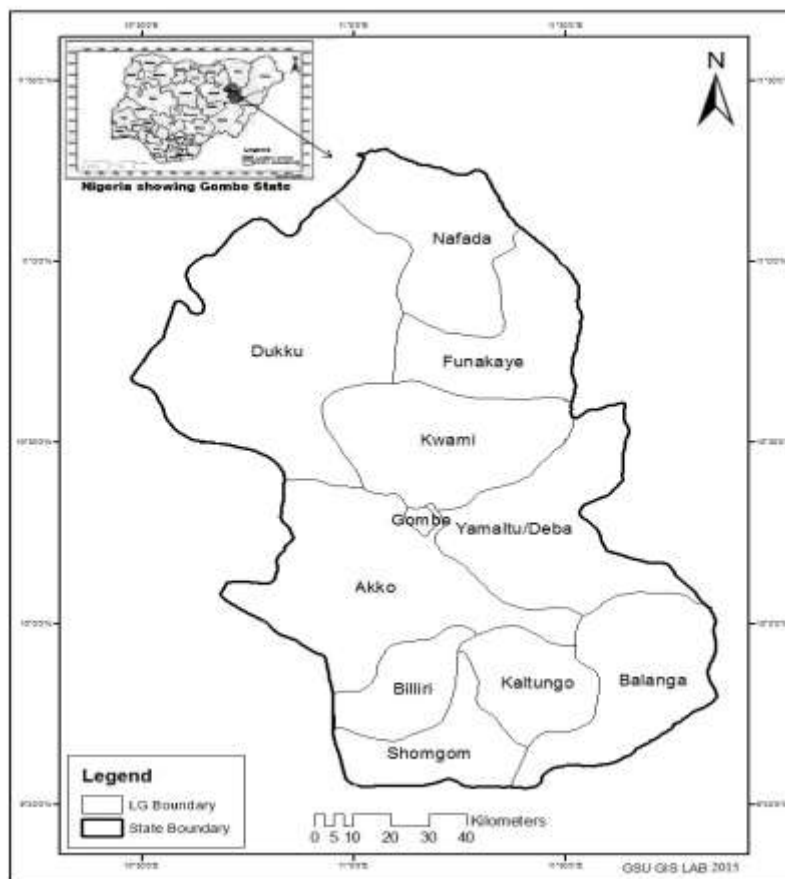
### Research Questions

1. What are the strategies employed by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in poverty alleviation and community development in Gombe State?
2. How do the community dwellers rate the contributions of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in poverty alleviation and community development in Gombe State?
3. What are the target groups of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in towards poverty alleviation and community development in Gombe State?

The study is structured as follows: The first part deals with introduction, the second part is concerned with the literature review: which encompasses the concept of poverty, poverty alleviation, and measurement, and community development. The third part address methodological issues, while the final part of the paper presents the findings; the contribution and the strategies employed by the NGOs in the study area as well as the recommendations.

### Location

The Study area is located between latitudes  $9^{\circ} 30'$  and  $12^{\circ}30'$  North and Longitude  $8^{\circ} 45'$  and  $11^{\circ} 45'$  East. It shares boundary with Bauchi State to the West and Taraba State to the extreme South West while Adamawa State lies to the South. It also has source frontiers with Borno State to the East and Yobe State to the North. Gombe State lies at the centre of the North-East Geo-political Zone of Nigeria. It is also well linked by truck ' A ' roads about 150Km from Bauchi, 225Km from Yola, 280Km from Jalingo, 250Km from Potiskum, and 310 Km from Maiduguri to the East. Gombe, the State capital is along the Port-Harcourt-Maiduguri railway line. The Gongola river allows for some level of navigation at the peak of the raining season. This is most significant at the North of the Dadin-kowa Dam. The relative location of the study area (Gombe State) is shown in Figure 1, (map of Gombe State, extracted from map of Nigeria) showing Gombe State with eleven (11) Local Government Areas (Ministry of Land and Survey, 2014).



**Figure 1:** Location map of the study area showing the Eleven (11) Local Government Areas  
**Source:** Gombe State Ministry of Lands (2015).

Gombe State has an estimated population of 2.8 million people (NPC, 2008) made up of different people with many languages. The prominent ones being: the Fulanis, Hausa Tangale, Tera, Bolawa, Kanuri, Wurkun, Waja, Jukun, Jara, Pero, Tula, Chamawa, Lunguda, Dadiya, Kamo, Awak, Kanuri, etc .

The people are mainly subsistent farmers and livestock rearers. The bank of the river Gongola provides opportunity for dry season irrigation farming which is gaining more ground among the people in recent years. Gombe State is strategically position in the centre of the North-East sub-region. As a result, a significant number of the people are into trade and commerce. Although some people are into the civil service, a great number of them combine their profession with arable farming as well.

The people are hospitable, while the emirates and chiefdoms have rich cultural heritage which include colorful traditional festivals, dances, music and costumes.

## II. REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Community development has a long history. It dates back to the early time when man discovered fire and farming techniques. All efforts at improving on his live and living could be referred to as community development. Therefore, the advancement of the well-being of the individual, the society and political economy could be referred to as community development. Accordingly, a review of relevant literature is important in understanding the issues involved, in this regard.

Wakili (2013) assessed the effects of Local Empowerment and Environmental Management Programme (LEEMP) on rural community development in Adamawa State. His study assessed the socio-economic status of some of the beneficiary communities in nine (9) Local Government Areas of the State. Thirty (30) communities were selected using simple random sampling technique. Data was collected using the instrument of questionnaire, oral interview, observation and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Descriptive statistics, chi-square and student - t- test were used to analyse the data. The findings by Wakili (2013) revealed an appreciable improvement in the quality of life of the people after LEEMP intervention in water supply, health, education, roads and others.

Jegade, Kehinde, Akanbi, and Hammid (2011) carried out an empirical investigation of the impact of micro-finance on poverty alleviation in Nigeria. The study established an empirical relationship between Micro-finance loan disbursement and poverty alleviation. The relationship was tested by employing Chi-Square test, f-Test and t-test. The finding revealed a significant difference between people who used Microfinance institution and those who do not use them. However, Micro-finance dwells on financial support while Non-Governmental Organizations are encompassing. Therefore the impact of microfinance is narrowed as compared to Non-governmental Organization which is a broader framework to alleviating poverty and its dreadful hold.

Iheanacho (2012) recommended an integrated approach to rural development in Nigeria, concluding that this may lead to sustainable development especially when the grass root is fully involved or mobilized. Iheanacho (2012) failed to explain the method and procedure for articulating the consciousness of the people at the community level considering that other integrated approaches like Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DIFRI) and River Basin Development Authority (RBDA) have failed. As a result, the search for an alternative leverage that could result to poverty alleviation and community development, becomes more desirable, if not urgent which underscores the importance of this study.

Udensi, Udoh, Daasi, and Igbara, (2012) examined the level and extent to which community leaders contribute towards community development projects in Bola Local government area, Cross River State. They selected a total of 150 community leaders through Multi-stage Sampling Techniques. Udensi, *et al.* (2012) used Frequency Count, Arithmetic Mean and Weight Mean Value, to realize the objectives of their study. They discovered that leadership position was not an exclusive preserve of a particular sex, age group, marital or educational status. Their study indicated that the duration of residence of community leaders is a significant factor in the success of the community development project in the study area. Udensi, *et al.* (2012) recommended that experience and participation in community development should aid the choice of leaders of community development efforts. This is obviously an informative discovery that could benefit the choices of leader in such endeavor including the Non-Governmental approach.

David, Edebo, and Ladi (2010) examined the role of community based association in rural development. The study identifies membership dues, registration fees and donations from members as sources of funding to the community based association. David *et al.* (2010) selected a total of one hundred (100) members of the association using simple random sampling techniques. Their findings showed that the association carried out many development projects such as the building of postal agency, health centers as well as supply of educational materials which is a contribution to community development in spite of some identified challenges like inadequate funding. Their study posits that community based association were also involved in conflict resolutions within the members and the community as well. Their study further reveals that given more support in the forms of favorable policies, good governance, the community based associations and other cohesive, vibrant and trust worthy groups could reduce poverty and under development in the rural as well as urban areas.

The belief that government alone can provide facilities and services to its citizens makes it difficult to see the contributions of NGOs in poverty alleviation and community development. Besides, little attention is given in the literature to the activities of the NGOs. As a result, scanty literature is available in this regard. Accordingly, an investigation into the activities and contributions of NGOs in poverty alleviation and community development presents an interesting opportunity for research in order to enable us hold the NGOs to standard in Gombe State.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Three approaches were used for the study; literature review, questionnaire and interview methods. These were complemented by published and unpublished works sourced from agencies like the ministry for youth and women affairs, social development, community development records, magazines, journals, etc. However, a pilot study was first undertaken. The pilot survey enables the identification of the existing development oriented Non-Developmental Organizations (NGOs), of the study area and the validation of the research instrument for the main survey.

The questionnaire was subjected to construct validity. Construct validity according to Trachim (2006) refers to the degree to which inferences can legitimately be made from the operationalizations of the study to the theoretical constructs on which they were based. To achieve this, the initial questionnaire was given to some 5 project managers of the NGOs for their inputs. This aided some level of adjustments for face and content validity, for proper re-structure and re-modeling of the questionnaire and to identify the factors noted in the literature review for a more reliable result. Some words were substituted and more lucid ones adopted e.g the “ projects” of the NGOs was substituted with contributions because some NGOs revealed their results were not tangible. The pilot study revealed that there are sixty- one (61) registered NGOs in Gombe State, out of which (21) NGOs, representing (34.4%) were selected using Systematic Random Sampling technique. The (21) NGOs sampled in Gombe State with their acronyms are presented in appendix A.

Systematic Random Sampling technique was adopted in the selection of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) from the total population of registered NGOs (61) that have poverty alleviation and community development as their area of interest as enshrined in their project document. This gave rise to twenty one (21) NGOs, representing (34%). The first in every three (3) NGOs was randomly selected and investigated accordingly in order to avoid bias in the choice of the NGOs.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses data obtained from the Questionnaire and interview.

##### ***Educational Status of the Respondents***

On the educational status of the community dwellers, 208 respondents had formal education (52%) while 192 (48%) respondents had non-formal education. This indicates that the educational status of the formal and the informal groups is almost of the same proportion. This result underscores the importance members of the community attached to education in the scheme of things and awareness of contemporary issues with respect to poverty alleviation and community development.

##### ***Occupational Status of the Respondents***

Majority of the respondents 232 are arable farmers (i.e 58%). However, 72 respondents were traders (18%), 60 civil servants (15%), while 36 respondents (9%) depend on other means of livelihood such as blacksmithing, traditional barbing, Islamic scholars, tanning, water vending, mat and cap making. The statistics indicated that traditional local skills are still in contribution to livelihood of the community dwellers. However, the study revealed that only one sampled NGO was involved in training to improve rural farming techniques and other agricultural related endeavours.

The implication is that more NGOs are needed in the study area because the bulk of the livelihood of the communities relies on agriculture. The NGOs could be involved in the areas of modern farming and livestock techniques, skill acquisition and trade to further diversify the economy. In addition, the existing NGOs have a responsibility to improve on capacity building of the farmers in the communities.

##### ***Targeted Groups for Poverty Alleviation and Community Development by the NGOs***

The interview and questionnaire revealed that, the youth, rural dwellers and women groups were the most targeted by the NGOs in poverty alleviation and community development efforts. The result confirmed that most NGOs are established as voluntary groups whose mandate includes providing succor to the vulnerable and the poor in the society/communities.

##### ***Contributions of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) towards Poverty Alleviation and Community Development in Gombe State***

Respondents were asked to assess the contributions of NGOs towards poverty alleviation and community development in Gombe State. Appendix B shows the various contributions of the twenty one (21) sampled NGOs in Gombe State located in thirty four (34) sites which comprised: advocacy, mobilization, participation, partnership, networking, skill acquisition, peer-education and self helped programmes/projects. The contributions of the NGOs in various programmes, the strategies employed and the targeted groups were derived from the inventory sheets and records of the NGOs (Appendix B).

##### ***Distribution of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) by Local Government Areas in Gombe State.***

Observation of the records of the sampled NGOs in the study area also revealed that their activities and contributions are more prominent in the southern senatorial zone of Gombe State which comprised: Balanga, Billiri, Kaltungo and Shongom Local Government Areas (LGAs). This may not be un-connected with early missionary activities and settlement in these communities. This implies the skewed distribution of the NGOs in this regard. The proliferation of the NGOs in the Southern Senatorial Zone of Gombe State meant that efforts should be made to establish more NGOs in the Northern Senatorial Zone, or extend the activities of the registered NGOs to the Northern zone made up of Nafada, Dukku, Kwami, Funakaye and Gombe LGAs.

##### ***Strategies Employed by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Poverty Alleviation and Community Development in Gombe State***

Figure 2 shows the different types of strategies employed by the NGOs towards poverty alleviation and community development in the study area. From the figure, it can be seen that the following strategies are mostly employed by the NGOs; advocacy, mobilization, participation, partnership, networking, skill acquisition, peer-education and self helped. The NGOs could use one or a combination of these strategies in a number of ways depending on the challenge or task at hand to be accomplished.

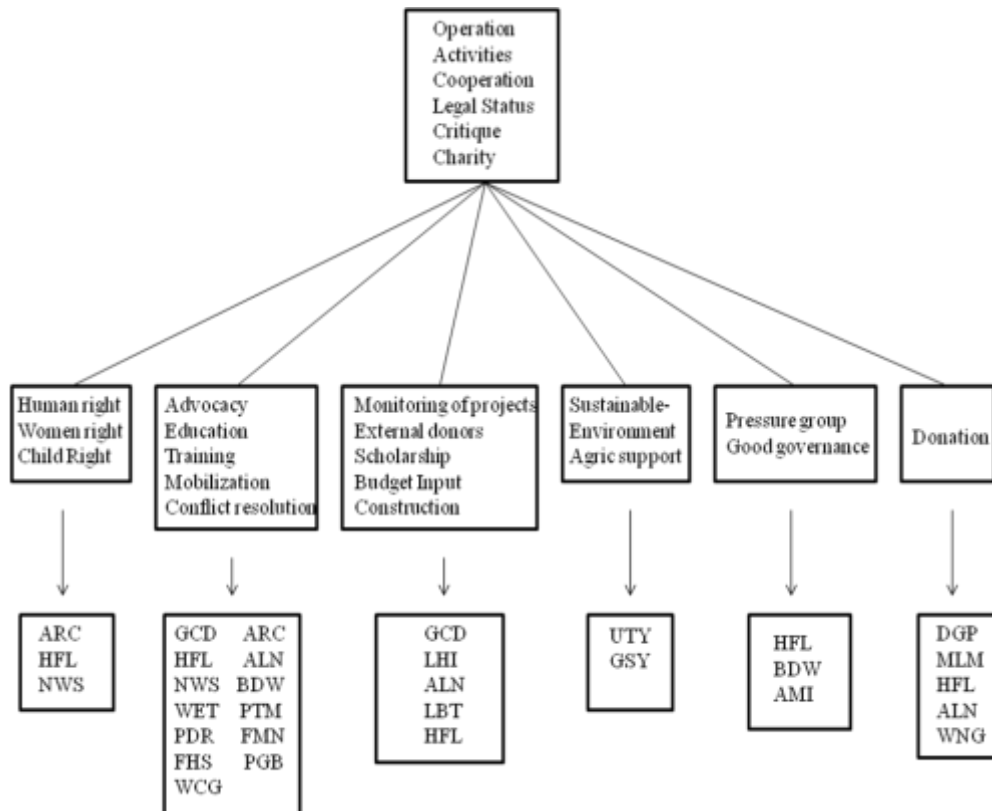


Figure 2: Classification of NGOs in Gombe State by their Projects and Programmes (Source: Field Survey, 2014)

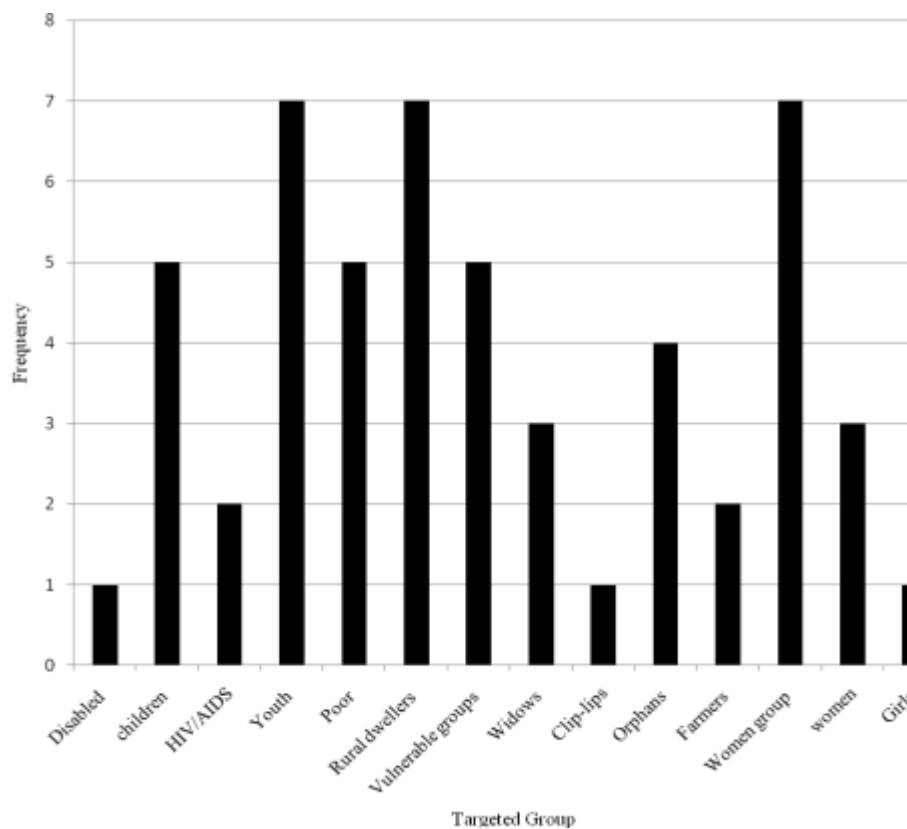


Figure 3: Targeted Group by the NGOs in Gombe State (Source: Field Survey, 2014).

## V. CONCLUSION

This study had set out to assess the contributions of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in poverty alleviation and community development in Gombe State. One of the interesting revelations of this study is that majority of people in the community dwellers interviewed stated that they wait for the Government to initiate or implement poverty alleviation programmes, projects, aimed at community development. The implication of this finding is that the community dwellers in the study area (of Gombe State) need attitudinal changes necessary for self reliance. This will discourage reliance on Government to provide basic necessities to cushion the effects of poverty and enhance community development which could impact on urban planning and regional development initiatives.

The findings also revealed a combination of strategies employed by the NGOs in poverty alleviation and community development which includes: advocacy, mobilization, skill acquisition, donations, participation, partnership, peer education and networking, advancement of the right of the child, women, disabled, urban and rural poor. However, the NGOs efforts on advocacy and HIV awareness were not encouraging, considering the rampant cases of HIV in southern senatorial zone, where the NGOs have the most presence. Thus, distribution of NGOs' activities (contributions) was spread across Gombe State with greater number located in Gombe Southern Senatorial zone: made up of Balanga, Shongom, Billiri & Kaltungo Local Government Areas (L.G.As).

The community dwellers also rated the contributions of the NGOs in poverty alleviation and community development in Gombe State as very high. This implies high level of awareness and lack of significant government presence in the communities. This outcome is also in agreement with the general tendencies for NGOs to impact positively in NGOs' activities as identified in the literature.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the outcome of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Majority of the stakeholders among the NGOs surveyed considered the strategies outlined by the NGOs towards poverty alleviation and community development as adequate; they however opined that there is room for improvement. The study recommends that wealthy individuals and corporate groups in Nigeria should improve on their support to the NGOs.
2. The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) should consolidate and improve on the relative level of achievement of their programmes and projects towards poverty alleviation and community development. In particular, the NGOs should improve their efforts on advocacy and HIV awareness.
3. Efforts should be put in place by Gombe State Government in collaboration with the NGOs to explore the use of local resources and relevant technology that have the capacity to alleviate poverty and enhance community development. Accordingly, Geographers, Educationists and Urban Planners and Regional Development experts should key into the strategies for poverty alleviation and community development in order to improve on their services and output.

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#### Appendix A

1. Guidance and Counseling Development (GCD)
2. Association of Responsible Citizens (ARC)
3. Women of Courage (WCG)
4. Molmole (MLM)
5. Hope for the Lonely (HFL)
6. Al-Nur (ALN)
7. Noble Women Society( NWS)
8. Bundu Wailari (BDW)
9. Women Executives (WET)
10. Pantami (PTM)
11. Pruder (PDR)
12. Wunge (WNG)
13. Unity (UTY)
14. FOMWAN (FMN)
15. Dogla Group (DGP)
16. Life Boat (LBT)
17. Family Health Society (FHS)
18. Progressive Boat (PGB)
19. Gaskiya (GSY)
20. Latizo Hope Initiative (LHI)
21. Aminci (AMI)

#### APPENDIX B:

Contributions of Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) Strategies used, Locations, and Targeted Groups/Population

S/N	Organization	Location (LGA)	Contributions	Strategies	Targeted Group population
1	GCD	Akko, Balanga, Billiri, Funakaye, Gombe, Kaltungo, Shongum, Yamaltu deba	Reproductive health information and services, Budget monitoring, Conflict, Mediation, counseling services, Good governance, Gender equality, Research & documentation, Income generating, youth clinic activities, Scholarship administration to girls	Advocacy, skill acquisition, Economic empowerment, Resource, mobilization, Networking	Youth, Vulnerable groups, HIV patience Rural Dwellers (Poor)
2	ARC	Gombe, Billiri, Kaltungo	Women right initiation, Child I, Human right initiatives, Youth friendly information	Advocacy, Peer education, Peer health education, Campaigns/mobilization	Disabled, Clip-lips, Orphans, Rural poor
3	WCG	Gombe, Kaltungo, Shongum, Yamaltu Deba	Promotion of peace & conflict resolution, Encourage ventures and trade	Interpersonal communication, co-curriculum support, encourage trade.	Women Group, Orphans, Youths
4	MLM	Shongom, Billiri, Kaltungo	Skill acquisition, group organization to assess institutional funds, donation of furniture to classrooms	Skill acquisition, Donation Partnership, networking, encourage trade	Rural women, Women Groups, Vulnerable groups,

S/N	Organization	Location (LGA)	Contributions	Strategies	Targeted group population
5	HFL	Yamaltu Deba, Kwami, Kaltungo	Budget development & monitoring, Agric-input, children right I, women right I, youth friendly, information, construction of maternity Adult education. Awareness creation, donation of drugs distribution of charity & relief materials	Advocacy MOU/partnership, Mobilization, , skill acquisition, peer education, Adult education, local trips.	Rural Dwellers, HIV/AIDS patient, children, Women group
6	ALN	Akko, Balanga, Kaltungo, Billiri, Funakaye, Yamaltu Deba, Dukku, Shongom, Nafada	Building of school, classroom blocks, scholarship to girls. Health information roofing of classroom blocks, maternity clinic, donation of drugs, financial support to women groups	Advocacy, peer education, campaign, MOU/partnership Adult education, Participation	Women, Infants, Youths, Vulnerable groups,
7	NWS	Balanga, Akko, Billiri, Shongom, Yamaltu Deba, Kaltungo, Nafada, Kuku	Traditional birth attendants peer education peer health education, human right I, Child right I. woman right I.	Advocacy, collaboration, inter personal communication, partnership, skill acquisition, networking	Women groups, Orphans, Widows, Vulnerable groups,
8	BDW	Akko, Kwami, Nafada, Dukku	Solar, Borehole with surface tank. Construction of school culverts Agro-milling Sustainable environment	Advocacy, networking, Tree planting, mobilization, agric support	Rural Dwellers, Children.
9	WET	Gombe	Skill acquisition	Advocacy Self-help, child right I. women right I	Women groups, widows children,

S/N	Organization	Location (LGA)	Contributions	Strategies	Targeted Group population
10	PTM	Akko, Gombe, Funakaye, Kwami, Dukku, Nafada	Public toilets, construction of classrooms block, bore hole, culverts, youth friendly information, sanitation & hygiene, environmental quality	Advocacy Donation/ charity, self-help	Youth, Rural dwellers
11	PDR	Dukku, Nafada, Kwami	Dug-up wells, drugs donation, sanitation & hygiene, environmental quality	Advocacy Donation/ charity, self-help, Participation	Youth, Poor, Rural areas.
12	WNG	Balanga, Shomgom	Bore-Hole, Classroom blocks, educational materials, culverts, borehole, tree planting	Campaign, donation, collaboration, Participation	The poor, Youth, Rural dwellers
13	UTY	Funakaye, Dukku, Kwami	Ventures & schemes, youth friendly information, promotion of peace, conflict resolution	Peer education, participation, partnership, Essay writing & Quiz competition, inter personal communication Networking	Youth , Children Adults, Youth,
14	FMN	All the local government area in Gombe State	Advocacy, Peer education, peer health education, education materials, Adult education, netting, milk making from soya beans, soap & pomade making, bags & beads making	Advocacy, Gender balancing, campaigns, skill acquisition, Girl scholarship,	Widows Orphans Women groups Girls

S/N	Organization	Location (LGA)	Contributions	Strategies	Targeted Group population
15	DGP	Billiri	Construction of rural roads, culverts, donation of furniture and books to schools, solar boreholes, overhead tanks.	Donation, MOU/ Partnership, Participation	Rural dwellers Youths
16	LBT	Balanga	Agric support, cooperative formation, animal fattening and rearing	Credits advance guarantee, Networking	Farmers Rural dwellers
17	FHS	Akko, Balanga, Billiri, Kwami, Kaltungo, Shomgom	Training of traditional birth attendants, HIV/AIDS free testing & counseling, national health care clip-lips operation	Advocacy, donation of Drugs, skill acquisition, hospital equipments.	Infants Women Group,
18	PGB	Gombe	Hygiene & sanitation, sustainable environment	Advocacy, Self-help, participation, Tree planting	Youth
19	GSY	Akko, Yamaltu Deba	Agric support, agro processing, oil making, maize thrasher, G-nut thrasher.	Campaigns, MOU/ Partnership, Participation	Local farmers
20	LHI	Gombe, Kwami	Public toilets, maternity clinic, youth clinic, encourage trade	Collaboration, MOU/partnership, mobilization	Rural dwellers & Urban poor
21	AMI	Akko, Kwami	Construction of classrooms, group formation to assess funds, skill acquisition	Self-help, Networking, Participation	Women, Youth, Rural dwellers

Source: Field survey 2014

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