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Does Religious Faith Matter in Development Practice? Perspectives from the Savelugu-Nanton District in Northern Ghana

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Abstract Religious faith and its role in development policy and practice has received much attention in recent years. However, there is relatively limited knowledge of how Christian faith is manifested in the day-to-day administration of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and how that shapes their relationships with intended beneficiaries in a Muslim-dominated community. This article addresses the knowledge gap by examining how the Christian identity of World Vision Ghana (WVG) and the ‘religious lifeworlds’ of employees and the extent to which these shape their development interventions in Northern Ghana. Using a qualitative research approach, we found that religious faith and beliefs play a key role in WVG employees’ daily administrative activities and field operations, with the employees often perceiving development as a religious act. We argue that in an attempt to promote ‘holistic development’, WVG employees draw on lifestyle evangelism and community structures to promote their Christian values in a multi-faith environment with Muslim dominance. In doing so, we show how the religious configuration of Muslim-dominated communities creates challenges for Christian NGOs in their attempt to promote holistic development. The implications of the research findings are discussed.

Keywords: Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs); Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs); lifestyle evangelism; holistic development; Northern Ghana; Savelugu-Nanton

1. Introduction

Until the late 1990s, the relations between religion and development were relatively overlooked. However, given that many people, especially in developing countries, adhere to some form of religion, the inter-relation between religion and public affairs is to be expected (see Clarke and Jennings, 2008). As such, international organisations including the World Bank now recognise the relevance of religious faith and institutions in development discourse (Belshaw et al., 2001).¹ This recognition leads

1 By religious faith, we refer to the practices, values, beliefs and norms of a particular religion.

governments, World Bank and other multilateral organisations to seek to understand and engage with faith-based organisations (FBOs) in development (see Bornstein, 2005; Clarke and Ware, 2015; Freeman, 2018; Ware et al., 2016).²

The increasing recognition and willingness to fund the activities of FBOs in development is justified by reference to their contributions to local development through the provision of social services, especially in developing countries (see Clarke, 2006; Hershey, 2016; Jennings, 2008). Further, there is a claim that FBOs are more effective than secular organisations through their grassroots connection and understanding of local contexts, albeit with contrary views (Hershey, 2016; Tomalin, 2012). Whereas the role of religious faith in development in developed countries has received much attention in the literature (Clarke, 2006; Clarke, 2008; Clarke and Ware, 2015; Tomalin, 2012; Ware et al., 2016), the same cannot be said of developing countries like Ghana.

Consequently, drawing on qualitative field research in 2011, 2014 and 2015 in Ghana, this article documents how the Christian faith of an international non-governmental organisation (NGO), World Vision Ghana (WVG) and its staff shape development practice in a multi-religious environment in Northern Ghana. Central to our analysis is the idea of ‘holistic development’. Here, we consider ‘holistic development’ as a form of development that recognises the totality of well-being of human from both spiritual and material perspective – a development that incorporates the spiritual, social, physical, emotional and psychological aspects of human life (see Bornstein, 2005). This is an approach espoused by Christian NGOs including WVG to attend to the needs of beneficiaries. This strategy of development is rooted in early missionaries’ activities (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1997). In promoting ‘holistic development’, the employees of NGOs and development workers rely on their Christian identity and at the same time their religious faith and beliefs act as an inspiration for providing humanitarian assistance in beneficiary communities. But how does religious faith of development workers shape NGOs’ holistic development programmes in a Muslim-dominated community? We address this question by drawing and reflecting on the particular case of WVG in exploring how the religious lifeworlds of development workers coupled with the Christian identity of the organisation shape development practice in Savelugu in the Northern Region of Ghana. As documented earlier, central to our analysis is the idea of ‘holistic development’ espoused by WVG as a way of promoting their Christian values in development in a multi-faith environment with Muslim dominance. We argue that WVG employees promote holistic development by using the virtues of their Christian faith as a yardstick for constructing and deconstructing technological

2 In this paper, we follow Clarke and Jennings’ (2008, p. 6) definition of FBOs as ‘organisations that derives its inspiration and guidance for its activities from the teachings and principles of the faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within the faith’. The definition captures the different typology of FBOs proposed by Clarke (2006). These include: faith-based representative organisations, faith-based charitable or development organisations, faith-based socio-political organisations, faith-based missionary organisations and faith-based illegal or terrorist organisations.

development projects and putting under control values considered as obstacles to progress. Therefore, the study shows that faith matters in FBOs because, as argued by employees of WVG, it takes faith to understand that people are poor and thus need support; faith makes people ensure that resources are well-utilised and distributed.

Our findings suggest that religious faith somewhat serves as a persuasive force in WVG's offices and field operations. We find that employees use 'lifestyle evangelism' in communities as mechanisms for controlling values considered as obstacles to development. WVG works in partnerships with the Local Council of Churches (LCC), community-level structures including chiefs, opinion and religious leaders (e.g. Imams and pastors) in the design, implementation and monitoring of their development interventions. As will be explained later, although Savelugu is a Muslim-dominated area, there were no established or formalised local Muslim structures apart from the local Imams and community leaders at the time of this research. We show here that while various religious structures are crucial to WVG's development activities, the NGO and its employees somewhat prioritises their engagements with the LCC over others including the Imams in their attempt to promote the role of faith in their holistic development in a multi-faith community dominated by the Islamic faith. The prioritisation of the LCC over other community-level structures was due to the Christian identity of WVG which made it more convenient for the organisation to work with LCC compared to that of the community leaders and the Imams. We highlight that intended beneficiaries were not passive recipients of development interventions but demonstrated their agency through their participation in the identification of development problems, planning and project implementation.

This article presents empirical findings on the effects of religious faith on FBOs by bringing to the discussion of the role of religious faith of development workers in shaping the activities of NGOs regarding their structures, programmes, relationship with stakeholders and their development outcomes. More importantly, we explore how the Christian identity of WVG shapes its operations in multi-faith communities. At the same time, we explore the strategies used by WVG in promoting holistic development in communities dominated by Islam. In doing so, this article contributes to the limited literature on how faith is manifested in FBOs and the role it plays in their day-to-day administration (see Freeman, 2018; Ware et al., 2016). Understanding discussions of faith in FBOs is crucial as it has the potential of shaping the design and implementation of development interventions by NGOs working especially in Muslim contexts. We hope that through this research, we can offer useful insights into the complex world of Christian NGOs in their attempt to promote holistic development in communities dominated by different faiths.

The structure of this article is as follows. Following this introduction, Section 2 provides a brief review of the on-going debates on the role of faith in development. We then present the analytical framework underpinning this article. Section 3 presents the study context and research methodology. This is followed by an analysis and

discussion of the research findings in Section 4. The last section concludes, documenting the study's limitations and then signposting areas for future research.

2. Faith-based organisations and faith in development

The intersection of FBOs and development has received much attention and has been the focus of academic research in recent years (Lynch and Schwarz, 2016; Scherz, 2014). Some scholars (see, e.g. Rist, 2014) have highlighted the pathways by which religion has influenced the history of development in modern times. Directly related to this is the role played by FBOs in development discourses, especially in addressing some of the impacts of neoliberal policies on the well-being of people (Atia, 2012). For example, Atia (2012) highlighted how three faith-based NGOs in Cairo combined Islamic piety and neoliberal development to address social problems in society through what she calls 'pious neoliberalism'. She maintains that these FBOs promote entrepreneurship, financial investment and business skills as important aspects of their religiosity.

Similarly, Chowdhury et al. (2018) reviewed the literature on the role of faith-based NGOs and community empowerment and highlighted the rise of Islamic NGOs in addressing social problems following 9/11. However, they argued that existing studies have failed to explore the relationship between faith-based NGOs and community empowerment. This notwithstanding, some scholars have highlighted the importance of FBOs in service provision and facilitating developmental processes. For instance, in their analysis of the participation of FBOs in health care provision in Ghana, Olivier et al. (2014) found that FBOs provide about 30–40 per cent of the market share of health care services. Recent reports further state that FBOs play an essential role in providing healthcare in developing countries (see, e.g. Marshall, 2017; Schmid et al., 2008). It is worth noting that the data behind these numbers are sometimes problematic and highly contested, given the difficulties in generating local, regional and national survey data in different countries. For instance, based on the reports on two countries, Zambia and Lesotho, the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that 30–70 per cent of the healthcare infrastructure across the African continent is owned by FBOs (WHO, 2007); though these figures vary across countries (Widmer et al., 2011). Religious institutions are also known to play significant roles in providing services during health emergencies such as the Ebola epidemic in West Africa (Marshall, 2017). For this reason, it is difficult to detach religion from development (Deneulin and Bano, 2009).

Christian organisations have therefore played important roles in development, primarily driven by charity and religious impulses (Bornstein, 2005). For instance, reflecting on the role of religious organisations in Tanzania, Jennings (2008) argues that churches and religious communities were able to redefine their roles from a welfare-oriented to a more development-led approach. Yet, FBOs including NGOs are under criticism for being the new 'agency' of neo-colonialism/neo-imperialism in Africa, a

critique levelled against the early Christian missionaries for their support for colonialism (Manji and O’Coill, 2002). Most African governments in countries such as Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Angola have formed a close alliance with these NGOs and often use them to cover their failure to deliver public goods. Some have even turned them into instruments for inciting violence (see Van de Walle, 2001). Also, Jeavons (2004, p. 143) documents that there is an emerging proof that some FBOs are creating new ‘patron-client’ networks to solicit the help of some religious leaders and their followers. Further, FBOs have been largely criticised for promoting the neoliberal hegemony agenda, especially in developing countries (Atia, 2012). Moreover, some FBOs are susceptible to pressure and conditions that may conflict with their principles or belief systems, especially in environments where competition for scarce donor resources is high.

Concerns have also been raised about the proselytisation of FBOs activities and programmes in some contexts (Lynch and Schwarz, 2016). Though acknowledging criticisms documented above, Kwarteng and Acquaye (2011) are optimistic that Christian NGOs can effectively contribute to poverty alleviation programmes that transcend ethnic, political, religious and class frontiers. However, these assertions have been highly contested on the basis that they have not been empirically tested (Tomalin, 2012). In recognising the importance of FBOs to the development of Africa, the Commission for Africa argued that ‘for the African state to become effective, it needs to understand what it is about religion that builds loyalty, creates infrastructure, collects tithes and taxes, and fosters a sense that it delivers material as well as spiritual benefits’ (Commission for Africa, 2005, p. 27). It is religious faith that motivates people to support the poor and marginalised or act in a certain way.

However, the existing literature has failed to examine the specific role played by faith in the work of faith-based NGOs (for exceptions, see Bornstein, 2005; Ware et al., 2016; Freeman, 2018). For example, according to Freeman (2018), faith has the potential of positively and negatively affecting the work of FBOs. In particular, faith shapes how NGOs design and implement their projects and programmes. Using the case of Tearfund, she argues that the integration of faith into its programmes resulted in changes in the relationship between Tearfund and its partners and beneficiaries in the Global South. By doing so, the organisation has moved from the implementation of large-scale development projects to training religious organisations to undertake their small community development initiatives such as self-help groups and the production and sales of cash crops.

In examining how faith shapes the activities, structures and outcomes of NGOs, Ware et al. (2016) found mixed results. For instance, they maintain that faith or beliefs motivate workers and donors to engage in development based on ethical grounds and a sense of calling to engage in development. Besides, faith provides NGOs access to communities sharing the same faith. Nonetheless, it has the potential of impeding responses to issues such as gender inequality. Further, their boundary keeping roles in conflict zones sometimes result in the misrepresentation of

marginalised groups in their attempt to raise funds to support their activities which in turn perpetuate their marginalisation.

While existing anecdotal literature on faith and its impact on FBOs offers useful insights, there has been a little empirical exploration of how faith shapes the operations of Christian NGOs, especially in communities dominated by a different faith. Indeed, as Lynch and Schwarz (2016, p. 64) suggest, to better understand the role of faith in Christian NGOs, it would require a focus on their ‘own discussions and debates ... [in helping us] to see the varied ways that Christian aid groups interpret and enact their beliefs and practices.’ In what follows, we briefly discuss our analytical framework for this study.

2.1. *A framework for locating faith in FBOs*

The concept of faith in FBOs underpins this article. This article adopts the conceptual framework developed by Hefferan et al. (2009) in identifying faith in FBOs. According to the FBO typology, faith is manifested through eight organisational features categorised into: (a) self-description; (b) founded or organised; (c) management and leaders; (d) staff/volunteers; (e) financial and other support; (f) organised faith practices of personnel/volunteers (prayers, devotions, etc.); (g) faith content of programme; (h) main form of integrating faith content with other programme variables; and (i) faith symbols present (see Table 1 for details). FBOs are classified according to the degree to which faith is manifested in their work. This ranges on a spectrum from faith-permeated to secular. Hefferan et al. (2009) developed their framework by modifying the typology of Sider and Unruh (2004), which focused on organisational characteristics, including mission statement, founding, personnel religious practices. These characteristics were grouped into faith-permeated, faith-centred, faith-affiliated, faith-background, faith-secular partnership and secular (see Table 1).

However, a key difference between Hefferan et al. (2009) and Sider and Unruh (2004) is that the latter focused mainly on North American context where FBOs were more formal and professionalised with written mission statements and bureaucracies and management structures. The FBOs studied by Hefferan et al. (2009) operated in the context of developing countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and had less formal organisational structures. In addition, they conceptualised FBOs based on structural indicators that exist on a continuum in which some organisations are more religious than others.

We therefore find the framework by Hefferan et al. (2009) useful because WVG, for example, in their daily operations exhibits characteristics of a faith-permeated organisations; however, in their cooperation with Muslim-dominated communities, they demonstrate elements of faith-secular partnership by making no reference to faith in the mission of partnership with the explicit aim of avoiding proselytisation. It is important to mention that in applying the framework by Hefferan et al. (2009), we found that WVG exhibits more than one of the organisational features and sometimes there are no-clear-cut distinctions in the features as there are tendencies for the organisation to

	Faith-permeated	Faith-centered	Faith-affiliated	Faith background	Faith-secular partnership	Secular
<i>Self-description</i>	Includes explicit references to faith	Includes explicit references to faith	Faith references may be either explicit or implicit	May have implicit reference to faith	No reference to faith in mission of partnership or of the secular partnership	No faith content, but references to values are often present
<i>Founded/ Organised</i>	By faith group and/or for faith purpose	By faith group and/or for faith purpose	By faith group and/or for faith purpose	May have historic tie to a faith group or purpose but that connection is no longer strong	Faith partners founded by faith group or for faith purposes; no reference to faith identity of founders of the secular partner; founders of the partnership may or may not be religious	No reference to faith identity or spiritual views (if any) of founder (s)/ organisations
<i>Management/ Leaders</i>	Faith or ecclesiastic commitment an explicit prerequisite	Faith commitment understood to be a prerequisite (may be explicit or implicit)	Normally share the organisations faith orientation, but explicit faith criteria are considered irrelevant or improper	faith criteria considered irrelevant or improper	Required to respect but not necessarily share faith of the faith partners	Faith criteria considered improper

(Continued)

Table 1: (Continued).

	Faith-permeated	Faith-centered	Faith-affiliated	Faith background	Faith-secular partnership	Secular
<i>Staff/Volunteers</i>	Faith commitment is important; most or all share organisation's faith orientation; faith an explicit factor in hiring/ recruitment decisions	Faith commitment may be explicit selection factor for tasks involved religion, but may be less important in other positions is important; most or all share organisation's faith orientation; faith an explicit factor in hiring/ recruitment decisions	Staff/ volunteers are expected to respect but not necessarily share the faith orientation; faith beliefs motivated self-selection of some staff/ volunteers	Little to no consideration of faith commitment; faith beliefs may motivate self-selection of some staff/volunteers	Staff/volunteers expected to respect faith of the faith partners; programme relies significantly on volunteers from faith partners	Faith criteria for any staff/ volunteer considered improper
<i>Financial and other support</i>	Garners support from faith community	Garners support from faith community	Able to garner some support from faith community	Able to garner some support from faith community	Able to garner some support from faith community	Able to garner some support from faith community
<i>Organised faith practices of personnel/ volunteers (prayers, devotions, etc.)</i>	Faith practically play a significant role in the functioning of the organisation; personnel/ volunteers expected or required to participate	Faith practically play a significant role in the functioning of the organisation; personnel/ volunteers may be expected to participate	Faith practices are optional and not extensive	Faith practices are rare and peripheral to the organisation	Faith partners may sponsor voluntary faith practices; secular partners do not	No organised faith practices

<i>Faith content of programme</i>	In addition to acts of compassion and care, also includes explicit and mandatory faith content integrated into the programme; beneficiaries are expected to participate in faith activities and discussion of faith	In addition to acts of compassion and care, also includes explicit faith that may be segregated from provision of care; beneficiaries have the option not to participate in faith programme components; beneficiaries may also be invited to faith activities outside the programme parameters; content integrated into the programme; beneficiaries are expected to participate in faith activities and discussion of faith	The faith component is primarily in acts of compassion and care; programme includes little (and entirely optional) or no explicit faith content; staff may invite beneficiaries to faith activities outside the programme parameters or hold informal faith conversations with beneficiaries; compassion and care, also includes explicit and mandatory faith content integrated into the programme; beneficiaries are expected to participate in faith activities and discussion of faith	No explicit faith content in the programme; faith materials or resources may be available to beneficiaries who seek them out; the faith component is seen primarily in the motivation individual staff members and or volunteers	No explicit faith content in programme activities designed by secular partners; faith partners sometimes supplement with optional faith resources and activities.	No faith content
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(Continued)

Table 1: (Continued).

	Faith-permeated	Faith-centered	Faith-affiliated	Faith background	Faith-secular partnership	Secular
<i>Main form of integrating faith content with other programme variables</i>	Expectation of explicit faith experience or change, and belief that this is essential or significant to desired outcome	Strong hope for explicit faith experience or change, and belief that this contributes significantly to desired outcome	Little expectation that faith change or activity is necessary for desired outcome, though it may be valued for its own sake; some believe that acts of compassion and care alone have an implicit spiritual impact that contributes to outcome	No expectation that faith experience or change is necessary for desired outcome	No expectation that faith experience or change is necessary for desired outcome, but faith of volunteers from faith partners is expected to add value to the programme	No expectation that faith experience or change
<i>Faith symbols present</i>	Usually	Usually	Often	Sometimes	Sometimes (programme's administration usually located in a secular environment; programme activities may be located in a faith environment)	No

Table 1: Faith-based organisations typology.

Source: Hefferan et al. (2009, pp. 20–25).

demonstrate several attributes at the same time. This affirms the argument by Tomalin (2012) that often, defining and classifying FBOs in different contexts is associated with conceptual and methodological challenges. For this reason, typologies are never comprehensive because of the tendencies for them not being able to capture all issues under study. This notwithstanding, Hefferan et al. (2009) argue about the importance of adapting the developed typology in different contexts to reflect different circumstances.

To this end, while acknowledging that the FBO typology developed by Hefferan et al. (2009) is useful for understanding how faith is manifested in FBOs, not all the organisational features in the typology apply to the work of WVG in Savelugu. Against this backdrop, while adopting Hefferan et al.'s (2009) framework, we make modifications to include ways in which religious faith of an organisation and development workers' lifeworlds manifest itself and shape development interventions in a Muslim-dominated community. This is because although the framework helps us in understanding the manifestation of faith in the day-to-day operations and programmes of WVG, it does not fully capture all the issues we want to address in this article.

3. Study area and case study organisation

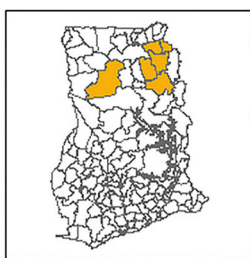
Savelugu is located in the Northern Region of Ghana and serves as the administrative capital of the Savelugu-Nanton district (Figure 1). Savelugu is an agrarian economy and lacks basic development infrastructure. According to the 2010 Housing and Population Census of Ghana, the total population of Savelugu is 139,283 with male to female ratio of 48.5 per cent (67,531) to 51.5 per cent (71,752). About 70.3 per cent of the total population above 12 years have no education. In terms of access to water supply, 13.2 per cent of the population depends on dugout, pond, lake, dam and canal as the source of water (GSS, 2014). The peculiarities of the development challenges of the district have presented an opportunity for the development intervention of several NGOs, including WVG more especially in the provision of water facilities. The dominant religion in Savelugu is Islam, where roughly 95.4 per cent of the inhabitants are Muslims, with the remaining population belonging to Christianity and other religions (GSS, 2014).

While Savelugu is a Muslim-dominated area, at the time of the research, we found that there were no established local Muslim structures. Apart from local religious leaders such as the community Imams who usually wield much power and influence at the community level, the existence of 'formalised' Islamic structures like the LCC was limited. For this reason, WVG collaborates with local Imams and community leaders within the contexts of interfaith dialogues, peace projects, sanitation and hygiene programmes. We found that WVG depends on opinion leaders and local Imams to get their followers to adopt certain behaviours and for rallying communities to support development initiatives. However, in the case of LCC, it is different because WVG goes the extra mile with them to support their activities, including spiritual nurturing of children and Bible clubs due to WVG's Christian identity.

Figure 1. An administrative map of Savelugu district within the context of Northern Region.



Location Map



Legend

- Community name
- Rivers
- Road network
- Study area
- District boundary

Source: Attandoh et al. (2013).

3.1. *Brief overview of World Vision International*

This study focuses on WVG as the case study for examining how faith and the religious lifeworlds of NGO employees shape their operations in multi-religious communities. The selection of WVG was based on the premise that WVG self-identifies as a Christian NGO.³ World Vision International (WVI) is the largest development NGO in the world and the 18th largest charity in the United States with an estimated total revenue of US \$1.039 billion in 2018 with about 95 per cent of its funding coming from donors (bilateral, multilateral and private organisations and individual sponsors) (Forbes, 2019). World Vision was established in 1950 and currently operates in about 99 countries with around 42,000 employees with programmes in advocacy, disaster management, education, food security, agriculture and health among many other sectors (World Vision, 2016).

WVI started its operations in Ghana in 1979. At the time, the NGO pursued integrated Community Development Programmes to alleviate poverty through Community Development Projects (CDPs) in small communities (Personal Communication with WVG Staff). In 1992, WVG shifted its approach from CDPs to Area Development Programmes (ADPs), covering a cluster of communities. The ADPs work in close collaboration with Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs), NGOs, churches and other stakeholders like the private sector. WVG is a child-focused organisation, so its programmes are implemented holistically to improve the well-being of the child, the family and the larger society. WVG is one of the largest international NGOs in Ghana and implements 29 area programmes across the country (WVG, 2016).

WVG started its operation in the Savelugu district in response to an acute potable water shortage in the area (Personal Communication with WVG Staff). In 2007, Savelugu recorded the highest number of guinea worm (dracunculiasis) cases (i.e. from 411 cases in 2006 to 1, 349 cases between January and May 2007) in Ghana. This situation was caused by the disruption in the supply of water in the Tamale Metropolis in March 2006 which resulted in commercial water vendors selling contaminated water to residents of Savelugu (Glenshaw et al., 2009). Consequently, WVG's activities in the district were mainly into water provision through the drilling of boreholes for beneficiary communities (Attandoh et al., 2013). However, WVG has broadened its scope in the district to undertake programmes like child sponsorship, microcredit, food security and the provision of educational facilities and empowerment.

There are many types of Christian NGOs operating in Northern Ghana. Prominent among them are Catholic Relief Services and Adventist Development and Relief Agency whose operations and organisational structure is somewhat similar to WVG. However, since the focus of this article is not on a comparative study but rather to understand the unique and complex situation of a social phenomenon, we chose to focus specifically on WVG. Our focus on WVG is on its religious identity and

3 For details of WVG values and mission statement, see <https://www.wvi.org/vision-and-values>.

programmes rather than the impact of such programmes on beneficiary communities. While recognising that WVG undertakes several programmes including child sponsorship, food security and the provision of educational materials, we focus primarily on drinkable water (borehole), sanitation, and hygiene programmes. The reason for concentrating on these project areas is their current nature of implementation and existence within multi-faith societies at the time of this research.

3.2. Research methodology

This article is based on the case study of WVG in the Savelugu-Nanton district in the Northern Region. The study adopted a qualitative research approach in order to make an in-depth investigation into the role of faith in the operations of WVG and how this shapes their programmes in a Muslim-dominated community. Yin (2013) argues that case studies become useful when the purpose of the research is to provide an in-depth understanding of complex social realities.

Data for this research was based on qualitative field research conducted with WVG in three different phases in 2011, 2014 and 2015. The three periods of fieldwork form part of a larger research project on the role of NGOs in poverty reduction in Northern Ghana. Data collection for phase one took place mainly in the Savelugu District while phases two and three occurred at the National Headquarters of WVG in Accra. In phases one and two, we conducted thirty (30) in-depth semi-structured interviews with staff members (e.g. Programme Managers and Project or Field Officers) of WVG both in the field and at the headquarters to understand how faith is manifested in their daily activities, programmes and organisational culture. Interviewing the employees of WVG helped us in getting a deeper understanding of the organisational dynamics from the perspective of an insider. As part of phase one, we also conducted key informant interviews with a government official, LCC leaders and community leaders (1 Development Planning Officer, 3 LCC leaders, 3 community leaders, including one pastor from Botingli in the Savelugu District). The interview questions were directed towards participants' background, religious beliefs, motives, and experiences of working with WVG. During phase one, we complemented the semi-structured and key informant interviews with focus group discussions (FGD). We conducted FGD with community residents of three different groups with five members each in Botingli. The FGD method was considered appropriate because it gave us the opportunity to tap into the culture and norms of the local people and how the group interacted with each other when a question was posed.

As part of phase three, we interviewed 10 employees of WVG in Accra to explore their development experiences and how their belief systems influence and shape their activities, especially when implementing programmes in multi-religious communities. All interviews with WVG staff (both at the headquarters and Savelugu ADP) and government officials were conducted in English, while a few interviews in Savelugu were held in Dagbani (i.e. the local dialect) and 'Ghanaian Pidgin English'. During the different phases of this research, participant observation was an important data collection

method. As part of the second phase of data collection, one of the authors was stationed at WVG headquarters for nine months (January to September 2014). This gave us an insider perspective on the issues discussed. Moreover, we also participated in several field visits and projects implemented by WVG in the Savelugu District. To have a clearer picture of how faith is conceptualised in NGOs' institutional settings and its reflection in the field, we moved from individual biographical anecdotes to how this is evidently normalised in the field and office settings. Our involvement in most of the 'organisational rituals' (e.g. daily bible study, weekly devotions and annual spiritual conference), community visits and project monitoring and evaluation gave us the insights necessary to corroborate some noticeable themes that emerged out of our inductive analysis.

All interviews were tape-recorded based on informed consent and were later transcribed verbatim. Transcripts in Dagbani were translated into English. The qualitative data were coded using Nvivo 10 while thematic analysis was used for the identification of emergent themes. The analysis was inductive and iterative.

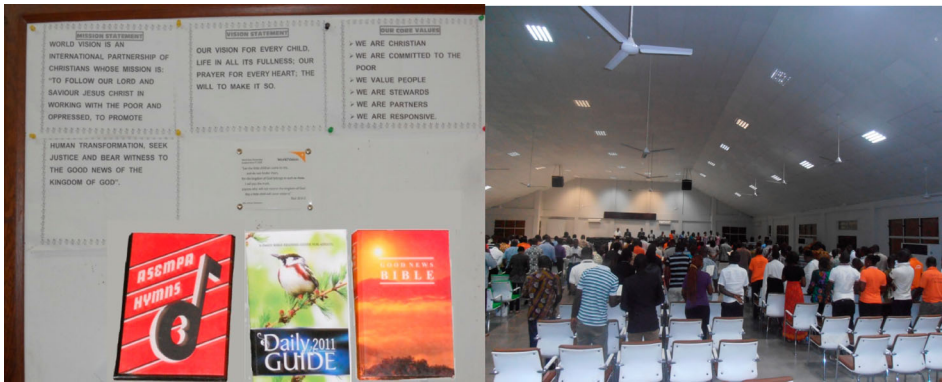
4. Key findings and discussions

4.1. *Manifestation of Christian faith in WVG organisational setting*

How can one religious group think of promoting holistic development in an environment dominated by a different faith? It is within this puzzle that this research unearths how Christian faith is entwined with holistic development for the employees of WVG. Faith is at the core of WVG's work, with the majority of employees perceiving their development work as a religious act. Drawing on Bornstein's (2005) work, two important concepts emerged within WVG's institutional and operational settings: 'holism' and 'lifestyle evangelism'. This section focuses on how the perceived religious life-worlds of WVG employees is interpreted in institutional settings, along with its dynamics with secular organisations and then document how it is demonstrated at rural project sites in the ensuing section.

Interviews with WVG employees at the Savelugu office and national headquarters revealed in-depth information about the role of faith within the WVG's organisational culture. Many respondents noted that faith is at the core of WVG's work, with the majority of the staff perceiving development as a religious act. Our research findings indicate that in the institutional setting of WVG, faith acts as a persuasive force in running daily administrative tasks and field operations (see Bornstein, 2005). The organisational working culture demands that employees must show their commitments to personal spiritual development and faith. This is because mobilising people from a particular religious precept, respondents argued, distinguishes WVG from other NGOs. For this reason, having a religious affiliation is key to the employees and the organisation in general. In applying the framework by Hefferan et al. (2009), WVG as a faith-permeated organisation, faith commitment was found to be an important element in the recruitment decision of staff and that most or all the staff share the faith orientation of

Figure 2: WVG daily devotional items and employees in a prayer session at the ASSR in May 2014.



Source: Authors' Fieldwork April 2011 and May 2014.

the organisation. For example, in promoting the faith ideals of WVG, the management has designed programmes to support the spiritual growth and nourishment of their staff. This includes the Annual Staff Spiritual Retreat (ASSR), which is held annually in May usually for about 4–5 days, and serves as an avenue for employees to 'receive more spiritual renewal and support'. As one of the respondents explained, a viewed shared by the majority of employees interviewed:

The ASSR is mandatory for all workers because it is considered a 'regular work activity,' and failure to attend the retreat without permission from the appropriate supervisors often results in some form of sanctions.

In fact, as highlighted by Hefferan et al. (2009), within faith-permeated organisations, faith commitment by the management of the organisation is an explicit prerequisite. For this reason, the management of WVG focused on building the spiritual development of their employees. As part of the ASSR, the administration ensures that all staff are camped at a designated location and are expected to participate in all programmes organised. For example, the ASSR in 2014 took place at the Pentecost Convention Centre in the Central Region of Ghana. Programmes during such retreats range from prayer sessions, Bible studies and leadership training sessions (see Figure 2). Employees asserted that they are evaluated based on both their work output and spiritual strength, with most of them attesting that they are complementary and important for development to thrive. In WVG, daily devotions are mandatory for all employees, although its enforcement is often lax. This reflects the organised faith practices of FBOs, where participation in daily devotions is expected of all employees. During daily devotions, faith symbols including Bibles, hymn books and devotional guides are given to staff (see Figure 2). As highlighted by Hefferan et al. (2009), for faith-

permeated organisations, faith symbols are usually present in their daily activities and faith is manifested across all the dimensions of the organisation and their work.

As part of WVG's organisational culture, devotional meetings are held daily before the start of the 'actual' organisational activities. These are often organised into smaller groups based on departments. During such meetings, staff members study the Bible together. Besides, prayers are requested and carried out, including ones for the success of WVG's activities in areas where there is 'war for peace and tranquility within and outside the organisation' as one respondent described it. The daily devotional prayers focus on a wide range of issues including achievement of organisational core values, praying for children with disabilities, prayer for Christian ministry and focus on individual prayer requests. According to Hefferan et al. (2009), in faith-permeated organisations such as WVG, organised faith practices including prayers and devotions by staff play an important role in the functioning of the organisation. As highlighted earlier, it is during such prayers and devotion sessions that staff pray for the success of the organisation. It is worth pointing out here that this 'daily ritual' of employees meeting together is not distinctive only to Christian NGOs but also happens within some secular organisations. This seems to contradict the argument by Hefferan et al. (2009) that in secular organisations, there are no organised faith practices such as prayers and devotions. As demonstrated by Green et al. (2012), in some contexts, the operations of FBOs are not distinctive from those of secular organisations. In the case of WVG, our respondents emphasised several times that their commitments and the daily reliance on prayers within organisational settings and field sites enable them to withstand many adversities, thus making them unique from their secular counterparts. As an organisational principle, one morning is set aside as a special devotion time where all staff members come together for worship and praise. For instance, at the National Headquarters, every Friday morning is allocated to devotion where all departments come together. In doing so, weekly devotional timetables are prepared in advance where staff members are given specific tasks, including leading opening prayers, praises and worship. The weekly devotions also provide an opportunity for WVG managers to share updates on organisational information, such as those from the national headquarters. During this time, staff are also given the opportunity to relay their concerns to the appropriate authorities. This is not, however, to suggest that staff cannot voice out their concerns until the special devotion period. The Christian virtue of faith is also expressed strongly among many employees of WVG at the ADP level in Savelugu. Many were of the view that they were able to do greater things and work with communities because of their Christian faith. One employee, an active member of the Baptist Church and a graduate who has been working in WVG for a decade, explained:

It is difficult to work in these settings [...] the culture and values of the area are rigid [...] Through acts of faith, we are able to triumph in most of our development projects.

Here, as documented in the ensuing sections, most of our informants underscored the difficulties of working in a community dominated by Muslims as they have to compromise on their Christian identity on many occasions.⁴ It is noteworthy that any development intervention, whether religious or technological, is intended to change belief systems. To this end, James (2011) suggests that there must be transformation of values and attitudes that will enable development to take-off. An informant, who considered himself a devout Christian, would sometimes witness to us by recounting anecdotes of how faith worked alongside materialistic development in his everyday activities. This informant had an advanced degree from the United Kingdom, and was an active member of the Anglican Church. After working for some time in the secular sector in Europe, he moved into the public sector of Ghana before joining WVG where he has been for the past decade. He noted:

There were places where other water companies searched for water to dig borehole for a particular village for years, but could not. Yet, by an act of faith through prayers, our hydro-geologists got water for them. Let me tell you my personal experience, I had a problem with my computer, I needed to submit a document at that moment to my director, I prayed earnestly, and the computer restored to normal [...]. You know, scientists from outside Africa got it all wrong [...] you cannot separate religion from materialistic development in the affairs of Africans.

Other respondents expressed similar views concerning how their religious faith influenced their daily activities. For instance, an employee highlighted:

We prayed before drilling when it becomes tough in the process of getting water. Some communities asked for ritual sacrifices to the ancestors be performed, but we told them, no, rather we prayed with the communities joining at their will. And through this act of faith, we get water, but it is not always possible that you can get water due to low levels of the aquifer.

Therefore, it is in this space, in the spotting of water, the laptop working again, and communities' co-operation through prayers, that employees are interpreting acts of faith. This shows how faith, as animated through prayers, was conceptualised daily by WVG employees in order to give them hope in Christian development. To the employees of WVG, hope serves as an antidote to fear, and gives strength to the weak and the hopeless. One might argue this potential spirituality inspires WVG's

4 Living in a largely Muslim context impacts WVG staff Christian identity or religious practices. For instance, due to the domination of Islam in Savelugu, rather than engaging in direct proselytisation, WVG staff tend to draw on personal evangelism. We also found that despite the Muslim domination in the area, Christians work together with Muslims to promote peace, unity and development. In doing so, as part of the faith-secular partnership, respondents indicated that they are expected to respect but not necessarily share the faith of their counterparts. More importantly, in the self-description of their partnership, no explicit mention is made of faith.

employees to promote development in the community. For some employees, their Christian faith is a persuasive and disciplinary force in their daily operations. It also influences their external relations. Many respondents had worked in several sectors, such as charities, government and secular organisations before joining WVG. In this context, given the scope of the development industry and the complexity of institutional outcomes, it is difficult to understand where these development workers are coming from, and what their motives, hopes and aspirations are due to their diverse background. Indeed, difficulty arises in any attempt to categorise personnel in the development industry. Here, the employees unanimously stated that faith and the desire to help the marginalised in society is the driving force for their engagement with the NGO. To them, if it were material remunerations, they could have easily gotten that in the private sector because of their professional experience. This re-echoes Stirrat's (2008) illustration of the culture of aid workers, where he characterises their stereotypical attributes as 'Mercenaries, Missionaries and Misfits'. In this case, the argument advanced by these respondents could fit into the Missionaries category, as they are moved by altruism, in contrast with the activities of Mercenaries, who act out of selfish material interest.

Most employees who had multiple organisational experience compared to those with experience only in Christian NGOs were of the view that the Christian organisational milieu acts as a persuasive force that enables them to do extra work, in contrast to the public sector. One of our interviewees, who had worked for charities in Brussels for three years, and in the public sector of Ghana before joining WVG, accounts how the organisation changed his approach to work:

When I was in the public sector, I worked for extra hours based on the ability of the management to pay me. Here, the majority of my office work are done in the house without asking for remuneration [...] You know in the public sector, the Christian environment was not convincing. In a Christian NGO, the setting alone and the participation in daily and annual rituals will influence you to question your Christian identity to conform to Christian values and sacrifice for others.

Indeed, during community visits, it was observed that due to the Christian identity of WVG, prayer rituals are performed before and after every participatory programme with community members. The aim was to call upon divine powers for programme success. This practice of prayer rituals for positive transformational development is what most secular NGOs lack in their development process (see Chester, 2002). This is not to suggest that non-religious values cannot have positive impacts on staff commitment and development process. However, as most of the employees of WVG highlighted:

We believe that God can turn things around even in situations where things look dire. Some of the development dilemmas we encountered in the communities are beyond

human deconstruction. Therefore, it is only through mystical sollicitation that communities of such predicaments can be liberated.

Nevertheless, given the fact that many Christians in Ghana pray before and after their daily activities at the workplace (see Ozanne and Appau, 2019), it raises questions or trivialises the specialness and uniqueness of the WVG's employees lifeworlds of daily prayer rituals. The shared Christian values and identities expedite action and reduce bureaucratic logjams, as compared to the long bureaucratic structures that characterise most public and secular organisations that breed corruption and slow down work. The employees suggested that their shared Christian values speed up work. A respondent, who worked in the public sector before, lamented on how frustrating it had been to work there. The administrative style is highly bureaucratic, slowing down organisational work. As a respondent at the District Assembly during an in-depth interview reveals:

Let me admit that the public sector is highly bureaucratic and this breeds corruption and slows down administrative work. These developments resulted in most donors now considering NGOs, particularly FBOs, as better conduits for development aid. These NGOs and FBOs have time limits and are always responsive, less bureaucratic and corrupt.

Most of our respondents attested to the fact that their ability to expedite development projects, par excellence in decentralised rural projects, making them the 'favoured children' for donor funding, more so than government and secular enterprises. Yet, they are careful not to publicly display their comparative faith advantage, since most Christian NGOs tend to refrain from highlighting their so-called comparative advantage for fear of being interpreted as arrogance. As some of our interviewees explained, being an employee of a Christian NGO does not suggest they are the best development intermediaries, but they do always endeavour to do their best. But how is this Christian faith practically demonstrated in rural project sites?

4.2. *Personal evangelism in Christian development*

Hung on the walls of WVG's national headquarters was the organisation's mission and vision statements that clearly spelt out the idea of holistic development.

Development implies a thoughtful attempt to assist a community of persons to achieve an existence in which the economic, social and spiritual domains are brought together at a level befitting dignity of an individual [...] Christian development will be carried out by Christians, who are spiritually mandated, motivated and oriented, and who act with God's love towards all people.

WVG espouses a holistic approach to economic development that seeks to bridge the gaps between the spiritual and the physical, and those stuck between the haves and have-nots. As Myers (2011) points out, the modern worldview tends to separate the spiritual and the physical in their understanding of development. By doing so, he

argues, they create a false dichotomy between religion and development. Myers argues that such separation is problematic and unhelpful. For this reason, as we discovered during the research, by providing ‘good news’ along with rural development projects like microcredit, education and boreholes drilling, WVG aims at promoting Christian spirituality and at the same time material enterprise – what we call ‘transformational development’ where the spiritual and material needs of WVG’s intended beneficiary needs are met. The use of transformational development in this article is in line with Myers’ (2011, p. 3) understanding of transformational development which refers to development that seeks ‘positive change in the whole of human life materially, socially, psychologically and spiritually’. Most of the WVG employees argued that economic development is incomplete unless it incorporates a spiritual dimension. To quote the words of one WVG employee:

WVG promotes transformational development. We don’t focus on only the economic facets of the people in need, but are engaged in holistic development – economic, spiritual, psychological, and emotional.

WVG employees emphasised the need for Christian spiritual development alongside material improvement. Yet, how possible is it to promote holistic development without direct proselytisation, given that Muslims dominate the environment within which WVG operates? WVG claims to be a non-discriminatory NGO that seeks to deliver people from poverty, inequality and ignorance. It also claims to abhor proselytisation through their development projects and programmes. To this end, what we find interesting is that WVG employees have engaged in what Bornstein (2005) call ‘lifestyle evangelism’ especially at rural projects sites. The rationale here was to promote the growth of the spiritual aspects of their beneficiary communities. By lifestyle evangelism, we mean the employees of WVG use their own life as a demonstration of God’s love to the beneficiary community members through their deeds rather than verbal proclamation. The aim here is that they do not seek to use their lifestyle to convert anyone to the Christian faith but rather demonstrate “the love of God to all people” as one interviewee stated. Besides, they work in collaboration with Local Council of Churches (LCC) (discussed in the next section) to promote spiritual and material development among other related activities. But how possible is it to assist somebody of a different faith to attain a level of spirituality, and witness to Christ through personal evangelism? Most of the employees believe that through the demonstration of Christ-like attitudes, deeds and personification of the ‘good news’ at rural project sites, they could implicitly supplement the material benefits of the communities by also meeting their spiritual needs. As one of our respondents stated, a view shared by many interviewees and observed during visits to project sites:

We normally pray together with the community members directly involved in our projects before starting to work with no conflict of interest regarding our religious beliefs. We ask one of the locals to lead us in prayer, committing our material activities into the hands of God.

For WVG-Savelugu, participation is a form of religious act. Indeed, the FBO's field is a sacred setting where prayer rituals are performed after and before every participatory programme to call upon divine providence to intercede in activities. WVG employees recount how the majority of community members participated and demonstrated their agency in all their development projects. In fact, participation of intended beneficiaries in project design and implementation was considered as a central element of WVG's strategies for promoting downward accountabilities to intended beneficiaries. For instance, it was highlighted that community members play key roles in identifying their problems and shaping project outcomes. This demonstrates that beneficiaries of development interventions were not passive but rather active recipients who participated and shaped the development process within their communities.

Erica Bornstein's work on World Vision in Zimbabwe chronicled that 'as economic development merged with the religious transformation of cultures, it entailed, and enabled, spiritual conversion [...]. Even when not overtly Christian, processes of development were intended to change belief systems and practices, whether in relation to God or technological improvement' (Bornstein, 2005, p. 48). Here a pragmatic puzzle anchors Christian spirituality in terms of the material development component of WVG's work. The assumption was that if a particular development is not rooted in Christian values and beliefs, those development activities would collapse easily. And in the case of WVG, their vision and mission drives what they do. As such, as a Christian NGO, WVG takes the position that the alternative approach was to negotiate obstacles to progress, transforming such behaviour and attitudes through lifestyle evangelism. During one of the field visits to communities in the district, a project team leader highlighted that sometimes employees quote texts from the Bible to reinforce what they have asked people to do and the need to change their behaviour, for instance, about the problems of open defecation. To this end, he cites Deuteronomy 23: 12–14:

You are to have a place outside the camp where you can go when you need to relieve yourselves [...] dig a hole and cover it up. Keep your camp ritually clean [...] (Source: Good News Bible).

According to this employee, most of the people in the village marvelled particularly when they quote scriptures to support their activities. Despite the community being dominated by Muslims, quoting the Bible adds impetus to their advocacy for behavioural transformation as similar verses could be found in the Quran. For development to occur, certain values and attitudes are considered anathema to progress and must change. Yet whose values need to be changed and by whom? The WVG employees are encouraged to work with rural communities and diverse groups of people irrespective of their belief which they claim reflects their Christian values. Through their deeds, they can function as agents of transformation through lifestyle evangelism.

As some of our respondents revealed, they are encouraged to win more souls for Christ, but not to use 'development' in Muslim communities through evangelism as WVG does not proselytise. WVG employees see Islam as different from their Christian faith; however, they appreciate and respect the beneficiaries' Islamic faith. In doing so, they collaborate with the Islam-dominated communities to achieve a shared development goal. This resonates with the argument by Hefferan et al. (2009) that in faith-secular partnership, partners are expected to respect but not necessarily share their faith. More importantly, in such contexts, there is no explicit faith content in their programmes as well as expectation that faith experience or change is necessary for a desired outcome. In this case, as highlighted by the WVG, promoting development in Savelugu does not require beneficiaries to change their religion to Christianity. To this end, employees of WVG are always encouraged to relate and intermingle with local people with no religious considerations, learn their customs and values and uphold them. In this context, staff members draw on lifestyle evangelism with WVG partnering with LCC to put under control some values and norms considered anti-progress alongside material success. It is important to note that, as WVG employees argued, the organisation engages with LCC to help build the faith of Christian beneficiaries. Though, as most of our respondents underscored during the research, WVG does not necessarily task LCC to preach Christ to Muslims. This claim is however debatable as LCC's activities on the ground are somewhat contradictory to our interlocutors' assertion as discussed below.

Christian faith is a framework through which employees mirror their relations within the organisation, construct, and deconstruct development projects. It thus goes beyond mere 'rituals' to include ascetic religiosity and the interpersonal relationship of the individual with God in development practice. Many respondents saw faith as the driving force of their activities. However, we recognise that some development workers are also motivated to work for NGOs for monetary and career advancement motives. Given that faith is an internal subjective individual attribute, it creates difficulty for an objective analysis of WVG's employees underlying motivations. Therefore, as Stirrat (2008) suggests, these missionaries can overshadow long-term material gains to superficially involve many people in the NGOs' activities, though faith at times bring some distinct benefits and must be handled with prudence. Yet, a key question remains unanswered. Are prayers before and after work and personal evangelism alongside material development enough to promote WVG's holistic development? In the next section, we provide an overview of the ordinary experiences and practices that shape the everyday social fabric of the communities. In doing so, we focus on the partnership between WVG and the LCC in their effort to promote WVG's avowed holistic development. Although WVG works in a Muslim-dominated context, there were no formalised local Muslim structures apart from the community Imams. For this reason, WVG engages with the LCC with more formalised structures. The engagements between WVG and the LCC in promoting their development in communities are also in part because of the Christian identity of the organisation.

4.2. *WVG's use of strategic partnership and programmes to promote holistic development*

WVG seeks to contain and control systems considered in opposition to the organisation's aim of promoting both material and spiritual growth by working in collaboration with the LCC. The church has been one of the WVI's indispensable partners since its founding in the 1950s. WVI partners with churches to enhance the holistic well-being of children, families and communities: here, spiritual transformation is integral to transformational development.⁵ Since its foundation, WVI's history with churches has passed through three phases: dependence (1950–1980s – WVI works through churches), independence (1980s–2000–WVI works with donors and partners), and interdependence (2000 to present – WVI seeks to work with churches).

WVG partners with the Church, other faith and development organisations, government and donors to promote transformational and holistic development to all children and their families. WVG-Savelugu started cooperating with LCC since 2000. At its inception, the LCC comprised 14 Christian denominations, but it has eight active members at the time of this research. This reduction occurred because of the differences in methods of evangelism and theological doctrines, particularly concerning the Catholic Church. As part of their partnership, the LCC plays important functions including the formation of thirty Good News Clubs (in 21 communities), organisation of inter-faith peace dialogues in communities, sensitisation on moral and social issues: child marriage, elopement and teenage pregnancy, education on positive parenting, promotion of health programmes, evangelism through the organisation of annual film programmes in addition to helping WVG in problem identification, programme design, monitoring, evaluation and objective analysis. Here, to equip the LCC's leaders with the necessary skills, they often undergo training programmes organised by WVG. The leaders of LCC and WVG emphasised the need for spiritual development alongside material improvement. As one of the officials of the LCC highlighted:

One needs innermost change. You see the world is both physical (material) and spiritual and to concentrate on simply materialistic development is to put development at risk of total failure.

Most of the values and norms of some of the Savelugu communities, such as lack of acumen for economic progress were considered anti-developmental by LCC. The LCC is of the view that some of the gatekeepers such as chiefs share a similar perspective. One of the chiefs, for instance, requested the staging of evangelism programmes, because he realised that there is progress in the communities where there are ongoing LCC activities and the need for such regular conventions. This was stated as follows by one informant at the District Assembly:

⁵ It is notable that WVI acknowledges the critical role of leaders of all faiths in addressing children's sustained well-being of a community.

The District Assembly has no problem with LCC evangelising as long as they are really promoting humanitarian services, because Islam also evangelises or preaches.

The missionising activities of LCC serve as a socially unifying force and entertainment grounds. Three of the rural communities that were visited together with LCC during their Jesus films show in towns which were not connected to the national grid saw these programmes as a form of entertainment and get-together. This reaffirmed the LCC's assertion that 'our programmes bring all the religious bodies together, which is rare in these communities'. Most of the messages of the LCC are of theology, wealth creation, good health and salvation in Christ mostly tailored towards the current needs of the community. As one of the leaders of the LCC noted:

We preach about income-generating activities and on appropriate methods suitable for farming in the area, with the underlying thought that people can progress in life through determination and hard work. We also engage in mainstreaming of health (malaria, cholera and HIV/AIDS), nutrition, and WASH best-practices, tailoring the core messages to the needs of specific faiths. We strongly believe that good health (strong labour force), to a degree, leads to development.

Notwithstanding LCC's engagement with WVG in the development process, as discovered during the research, some of the LCC leaders were of the view that not enough development space was given to them to operate. These leaders think that the WVG employees are mandated to stay in the communities in which they are working; however, the majority of them stayed outside the municipality due to inadequate infrastructure and other reasons. Therefore, the LCC believes the future remains bleak if they are gone, in that apart from evangelism and petty activities LCC is not involved in any active development projects to serve as future gatekeepers or social capital for the community. It could be argued here, given the Muslim dominance of the area, that the decision made by WVG not to put them in the front line as active development players might be somewhat right, so as not to risk Christian polarisation of development projects in the future. Further, contrary to their claims, interviews with employees of WVG show that their programmes strive to strengthen partnership with local Churches, Community Based Organisations, relevant government departments in the district and local NGOs through capacity building and by ensuring that they own all projects provided.

There is a nexus between material enterprise and spiritual enhancement in the LCC's attempts to witness with non-believers; it is worth noting that this is what LCC has been doing over the years prior to their partnership with WVG. Most of the WVG staff, the LCC and some of the local Christians we interacted with argued for the importance of the need to supplement material goods with Christ. To illustrate, occasional conversations with one of our participants revealed the relationship between materialism and evangelism. To him:

If I've had money to empower these women through microcredit, I could have approached them now to witness Christ [pointing to some women]. Those women are poor, and the moment I take them out of their poverty, they will enthusiastically be happy to hear my good news message. A hungry person wouldn't listen to you; you must first provide bread before giving them the Lord to make them complete.

In this context, the discretion with which the LCC approach this issue of evangelism is worth underlining. They always seek permission from the community gatekeepers or only enter upon invitation by them and do not use force to win converts. What makes the socio-cultural and religious context of the area complex and debatable lies on the following: the extent to which the community gatekeepers have invited the LCC, consented to their evangelism activities, and finally go far as participating in them. Also, an FGD with some of the community elders showed that they draw on various religious faiths in times of need. They narrated how they used to sacrifice to the gods for rain, good harvests and to protect them from all misfortunes and at the same time participate in Islamic rituals. Further, an FGD with the community members revealed similar anecdotes. As one participant narrated:

Let me tell you, I (we) am Muslim, I [we] participate in African traditional religious practices and I even have a Bible in my room and used to attend Church too, but now I have stopped.

The above statement is similar to the idea of 'nominal Christian' as highlighted by Nukunya (2002) who argued that the Christian beliefs of new converts in Ghana are often superficial especially when worldly pressures threatened their faith, they participate in many belief systems with no conflict (see also Gilbert, 1989). Similarly, Barber (1981) showed among the Yoruba that followers of the Orisa god moderate among other deities, Christianity and Islam, with the Orisa followers seeking answers to their existential problems. As the research findings in this article demonstrate, for some Muslims in Savelugu, they resort to different religious systems or deities to provide solutions to their daily problems. Thus, individuals and groups develop an adequate sense of agency to cope with their development and existential problems. We argue here that the flexibility of the locals religious freedoms where they see various religious faiths as 'functional' actually create the enabling space and distinctive niche for WVG by tapping into this suppleness through negotiation and implementation of some aspects of their avowed holistic development through lifestyle evangelism and engagement with LCC – thus shaping institutional and communities' dynamics. Therefore, the extent to which WVG's discourses and practices such as staff's lifestyle evangelism contribute to holistic development in a multi-faith environment calls for further ethnographic research and the need to unravel these discoveries within specific contexts exists. Most importantly, the findings in this article on the involvement of WVG in promoting holistic development in Savelugu can be situated within the broader discussion of underdevelopment in Northern Ghana. The issue of (un)premediated economic and

political policy overlook has contributed to the continued poverty and underdevelopment in the northern regions, which has in turn led to the increase in and dependence on local and international NGOs in social, economic, political and other services provision. While the peculiarities of the development challenges in Northern Ghana have created opportunities for several NGOs including WVG to fill the ‘development void’, they have been criticised at length for contributing to the underdevelopment of the communities (Osei, 2017).

5. Conclusion

This article has examined how faith is manifested in the organisational settings and operations of WVG and how the religious lifeworlds of employees shape holistic development in Muslim-dominated communities of Savelugu-Nanton District in the Northern Region of Ghana. The study highlights that organisational culture provides an enabling environment for staff to show their religiosity through the promotion of programmes like Annual Staff Spiritual Retreat and morning devotions. This study revealed that WVG articulates a certain notion of development practice that is consistent with the concept of ‘holistic development’. As discussed, this concept connotes the totality of human development – a conception of development that incorporates material success and spiritual well-being of the individual. Within WVG’s institutional setting and employees’ lifeworlds, holistic development is strongly upheld as an ideal. For WVG’s employees and the LCC, material success is incomplete without a spiritual dimension. This study demonstrates that holistic development confronts several challenges when applied to practical development. In the case of Savelugu, the existence of diverse religious beliefs has compelled WVG to embrace a distinction between material enterprise and spirituality. Consequently, in their quest to provide spiritual growth, WVG has drawn on a variety of practices such as personal evangelism and working in partnership with the LCC to implicitly control values and norms considered anti-developmental, as well as providing spiritual nurturing. While LCC has embraced this engagement over the years, it however feels that not enough space has been given to it as development actors; thus preventing LCC from exerting its influence in the future development process of the area. The agency demonstrated by WVG is also manifested in the beneficiary communities by how they internalise the belief system of WVG. Here, WVG provides material success to all, irrespective of religious loyalty.

In sum, an engagement with the ideal of holistic development, and how it undergoes various permutations when confronted by pluralist and complex transactional processes within communities has forced WVG to draw on several strategies such as lifestyle evangelism and engagement with LCCs. Further work could, however, explore the relationship between WVG and their stakeholders including the LCC and beneficiary community members to shed more insights into the power dynamics at play in their attempt to promote holistic development. The overarching point here has been to show how Christian faith shapes and manifests itself in WVG working in an

environment dominated by Muslims and the tactics that the employees of the Christian NGO draw on to promote holistic development.

While this study has provided useful insights into how faith manifests itself in FBOs, it has some limitations which can inform future studies. First, while acknowledging the diversity of FBOs operating in Ghana, we focused specifically on the single case of WVG. The research findings are, therefore, best applied to Christian NGOs and are somewhat not generalisable across the entire NGO sector. This notwithstanding, focusing on a lone case-study provided the necessary context and room for detailed exploration of complex social reality under investigation. Future research could focus on a comparative study of FBOs (i.e. Christian and Islamic) in different regions and countries in understanding how faith is manifested in the operations of FBOs. Second, future research could examine how Christian FBOs working in Muslim settings practice and present their religion and its impact on their work and relationship with beneficiaries.

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