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Religion and Development:

A Case Study of the Role of Faith-Based Organisations in Poverty Reduction Strategy of Liberia
(2008-2011)

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Abstract

This master thesis seeks to explore the role of Faith-Based Organisations in poverty reduction strategy in the Liberian society. In this study, the role of each Faith-Based Organization sampled is thoroughly investigated with the purpose of uncovering or revealing the role played during the poverty reduction programs and how those programs and or projects have varied over the period from 2008-2011. I also did an in-depth, and critical analysis of the role of Faith Based Organizations and their contributions to development in general and in particular to poverty reducing activities with the below main research question directing and guiding the entire study: What role did Faith-Based Organisations play during the Poverty Reduction Strategy of Liberia (2008-2011)?

While exploring the role of Faith-Based Organisations in poverty reduction strategy of Liberia, I find it very useful to make use of the theories on the role of religion in development and the secularisation thesis, both speak to key and important aspects about the subject being discussed. The study reveals that, the role of Faith-Based Organisations was implicitly excluded from the poverty reduction strategy of Liberia. It would be logical to think that, this implicit exclusion as indicated in the findings might be based on the constitutional provision of the separation of state and religion.

The study also indicated that on ground, the five sampled Faith Based Organisations contributed to the poverty reduction in two pillars namely; Infrastructure and basic social services and economic revitalization. In these pillars the Faith Based organisations emphasis on poverty reduction has been in the areas of Education, Health, Agriculture and Micro-finance.

This study also explores the qualities Faith Based Organisations bring to development work or poverty reduction. As perceived by the informants, it was revealed that, Faith Based Organizations bring Trust and Transparency, FBOs understand and live in the culture of the people, FBOs Work with the Poorest at Grassroots in Liberia and FBOs are committed to service and have compassion. Furthermore, the study reveals that some Faith Based organisations are still teaching their faith to their beneficiaries.

Dedication

This master thesis is dedicated to my loving and caring wife, who supported and encouraged me to take advantage of this scholarship opportunity. Upon receiving the admission letter from MF-Norwegian School of Theology, I was not very excited from the beginning to come, but she insisted by saying, “go for it”.

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List of Acronyms

AFELL-Associations of Female Lawyer of Liberia
ECOSOC-Economic and Social Council
FAWE-Forum for African Women
FBOs-Faith Based Organisations
GDP- Gross Domestic Products
GNI-Gross National Income
HDI- Human Development Index
HFL-Humanity First Liberia
LCD- Least Developed Country
LISGIS-Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services
LDHS-Liberia Demographic Health Survey
LDS- Lutheran Development Services
LAC/UMC- Liberia Annual Conference United Methodist Church
LCC-Liberia Council of Churches
MDGs- Millennium Development Goals
NARAD-New Africa Development Agency
PRS-Poverty Reduction Strategy
PPA- Participatory Poverty Assessment
UN-United Nations
UNDP-United Nation Development Programme
UNICEF-United Nations International Children Emergency Fund
UMCOR-United Methodist Committee on Relief
UNCTAD- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UHRD-Universal Human Rights Declaration
WCC- World Council of Churches
WB-World Bank
WHO- World Health Organizations
WFP- World Food Programme
WIQ-Welfare Indicators Questionnaires
YWCA- Young Women Christian Association

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1.0. Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Background to the Study

Liberia is a Country classified as both a “least-developed Country and low-income food deficit Nation that is estimated to have 4.4million people with a growth rate of 26 percent” (WFP 2016). Per the *United Nations Development Program Human Development Index* of 2015, Liberia is “ranked 177 out of 188 countries” (UNDP 2015). It is also mentioned in WFP report that “Poverty and food insecurity are high across the Country and particularly acute in Liberia’s rural areas where 51 percent of the population lives” (WFP 2016). Furthermore,”83.8 percent of the entire population lives on less than USD 1.25 a day “(WFP 2016). Additionally, when the preparatory poverty reduction document was in progress in 2007 to start implementation in 2008 the “average per capital income 190 USD per annual” (UNDP 2015) also presented Liberia as one of the poorest countries in the world ranking on the bottom as already mentioned in the human development index (UNDP 2015).

Notably, most of the decline and poverty ranked for Liberia in the world as the *Least Developed Country* as mentioned by the *Human Development Index* is attributed to the 1980 coup d’état which is strongly believed by many Liberians as the year that sailed the country step into bloody civil unrest (PRS 2008).

Additionally, poverty reduction activities cannot be discussed without making direct reference to the civil crisis, because most of the broken systems and weak institutions that subsequently caused poverty in Liberia especially rural and some urban communities were because of the crisis (PRS 2008 p. 15).The ordinary people became very poor as business and other very useful activities came to a standstill as various fighting groups looted and took away some of the very important valuables of the country (PRS 2008). Furthermore, one of the respectable institutions in our society the “family was scattered, an entire community was destroyed thereby making families homeless, all the sectors be it political, social, economic and even the traditional way of governing people got totally damaged and that most of the people became poor because majority of the citizens were made displaced and others fled from one country to another” (PRS 2008). The entire country “GDP drop to 90 percent 1987 and 1995, and it is recorded as one of the largest economic collapses noted and recorded in the world” (PRS 2008 P. 19). This decline as stated felt across every sector of our

society. This means that the “agriculture activities slow down as people fled for their lives and left their farmland” (PRS 2008, p. 16). Furthermore, most of what the citizens were using for their farming activities were stolen and sold in neighboring countries, rubber plantation closed, manufacturing stopped, and all services in the country halted (PRS 2008). Moreover, ordinary citizens became very poor because basic infrastructures were damaged and destroyed. The roads were very bad, there were no easy access, which seriously made it difficult for the economy of the country to recover (PRS 2008). It was therefore, difficult to deliver basic social services like health and education (PRS 2008). As indicated in the PRS document, the” grossly inadequate road infrastructure also impedes peaceful efforts by limiting economic opportunities” (UNESCO 2007 cited in: PRS 2008). This situation constrained the “ability of police and other security forces to operate effectively and weakening natural cohesiveness and integration” (PRS 2008).

The PRS document also indicated that high unemployment, and poverty increased sharply with nearly 64 percent of Liberians living below the poverty lines (PRS 2008). Additionally, schools, hospitals and clinics were badly damaged and most government buildings were in bad and deplorable conditions (PRS 2008). The LDHS also mentioned that, before the PRS document, the Liberia Health system was broken to the extent that only 51 Liberia physicians to cover the nation public health needs (LDHS 2008). This means that, there was approximately “one physician to 70,000 Liberians” (LDHS 2008, LISGIS 2008). It was also mentioned in the PRS that, “public finances collapsed, with annual revenue falling to USD 85 million, allowing per capita public expenditure of about USD 25, one of the lowest levels in the world” (PRS 2008, p. 20). On a sad note, “the Government defaulted on its debts in the mid-1980s and by 2006 external debt had soared to USD 4.5 billion, equivalent to 800 percent of GDP 3,000 percent” (LISGIS 2008; PRS 2008, p. 22). Additionally, of “exports and domestic debt and arrears added USD 900 million of which about USD 300 million was ultimately deemed valid by external auditors” (LISGIS 2008; PRS 2008).

Based on the above damage that Liberians underwent as the aftermath of the civil unrest, the Government and its international partners prepared a PRS document for implementation covering the period 2008-20011. The PRS document incorporated the participatory procedures for all parties or stakeholders. Importantly, the main pillars of the PRS were expected to deal with, in addition to poverty reduction; “security, economic revitalization, governance and the rule of law,

infrastructure and basic services” (PRS 2008, p 19).

It is now with curiosity that the study seeks to explore the role of FBOs in this PRS of Liberia. The study seeks to investigate if any responsibilities were given to the FBOs since in fact it was a policy document prepared by the Government and its international partners.

In the year 2007, an institution responsible for research called “Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services” (LISGIS) conducted “Welfare Indicators questionnaires” (CWIQ) survey in collaboration with local and international partners. What is very relevant and useful to this research is that, the survey took into consideration “region, demographic, group income levels and households types using 36000 households” (PRS 2008). The primary concern or direction of this was that the poverty reduction program had information on “house hold composition by size and age, education levels, occupation, and access to basic social services” (PRS 2008). The important source of information that was available as a means of setting the stage for the poverty reduction program was the Liberia Demographic and Health Survey (LDHS) with 7,000 households between 2006 December and April 2007 (PRS 2008). Moreover, the LDHS primary focus was on “population and health and included information on fertility, family planning practices, sexual activities, nutrition, maternal and child health, domestic violence, and awareness and prevention of HIV/AIDS” (PRS 2008).

Lastly, Liberians provided information about themselves through “Participatory Poverty Assessment” (PPA) about how they perceived poverty through qualitative research defining poverty across all the Counties in Liberia (PRS 2008). Therefore, all the different sources of “data information combined to provide an initial outline of the nature and the scope of poverty in Liberia” (PRS 2008). Based on that information gathered from those three sources” 63.8 percent of Liberians live below the poverty lines” (PRS 2008). This means that “1.7 million people are living in poverty” (PRS 2008, p. 21). It is also mentioned in the PRS that, “1.3 million people of the same amount 1.7 million are living in extreme poverty which is equal to 48 percent of the population” (PRS 2008; LDHS 2008).

1.2. Motivation for the Study

My motivation and high level of interest to do research on religion and development are based on the idea that the role of religion and or FBOs in development thinking and practice have not been

given considerable or sufficient attention by secular development practitioners. Haynes states that “the role of religion was often explicitly excluded from the national development programs by modernisation processes often led by secular government in many parts of the developing world” (Haynes 2007 p. 4) of which Liberia is apart. In addition to this motivation, I also came to the realisation after reading the three components of the PRS document of Liberia deriving from the Government through the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning in a way implicitly excluded the role of Religion/ FBOs for the period 2008-2011. It is, therefore, of interest to investigate whether Religion/FBOs did play a role in poverty reduction activities during the period 2008-2011 by reviewing relevant reports from selected FBOs and by interviewing their participants and beneficiaries .

Even though there have been several contributions made in the last few decades which is being acknowledged, there is still need to do more research that will deeply explore the role of religion and or FBOs in poverty reduction in Liberia. For instance, role of religion in development theory has been lacking. There has been different scholarly arguments and debates about the understanding of religion in development theories. Furthermore, the early scholars of development, as well as the modern development theorists and classical social theory claim that, when it comes to development it worked well with secularism. Weber and Durkheim argued that, with the advancement in modern society the entire world would be secularised and the role of religion would decline or diminish. The thinking that, modernisation would make society become a secular place where religion would become a private matter for individual, was in the 70s the driving force and central to the foundation of social scientists in society (Noy 2009; Inger Furseth and Pal Repstadi 2006, p 97). Additionally, religion was regarded from secular development thinking and practice as something that was not relevant, and it was viewed as hindrance to the growth and economic development in society. In line with the above mentioned, secular development thinking and practice again was heavily relying on government ability to deliver services and formulate policies for the well-being of its citizens which enhances growth and economic development. Religion has been neglected by secular development scholars as well as in the formulation of development policy.

1.3. Main Research Question

This thesis seeks to explore the role of FBOs in the PRS of Liberia during the period (2008-2011). The PRS at the mentioned period articulated the Government over all vision and major strategies for moving towards rapid, inclusive and sustainable growth and development. This period is of critical importance for research purpose(s) in the way that it marks the period of shift from post-conflict stabilisation to laying the foundation for sustainable growth and development. To explore the role of Faith-Based Organisations in the Poverty Reduction Strategy of Liberia the main research question is as follow: What role did Faith-Based Organisations play during the Poverty Reduction Strategy of Liberia (2008-2011)?

1.4. Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore the role played by Faith Based Organisations in reducing poverty in Liberia 2008-2011. This qualitative study of purposely selected sample of Faith Based Organisations is intended to match a more descriptive qualitative of the overall range of activities of Poverty Reducing Faith Based Organisations Program and projects. Most importantly, the study will be searching for actual evidences showing the role of Faith Based Organisations as well as good practices across the major poverty reducing activities. Therefore, to adequately answer the main research question which aims at exploring the role of Faith Based Organisations is by answering to three sub questions that are interconnected to the main research question:

- What range of Poverty Reduction activities or services were the FBOs engaged in over the period 2008-2011?
- Why did the FBOs undertake these activities?
- What are examples of successes, failures, and shortcomings of how FBOs reduced Poverty in Liberia, as perceived by the informants?

1.5. Research Methodology

The research strategy that I have work to use in this research is qualitative research strategy. The study under consideration seeks to investigate descriptively the meaning of human's behavior and action. Therefore, the approach is more interpretative and descriptive in words or texts. It is of

interest to explore how social events were socially constructed during the PRS of Liberia and the role of FBOs. To some degrees, I think such information gathering can be made possible through a descriptive explanation following a qualitative research method or strategy. Additionally, this qualitative research strategy is designed to help understand people and the social and cultural contexts within which they live. While it is true that, there are at least two main research methodologies strategies, qualitative and quantitative strategies (Bryman 2012, p.35), the decision to adopt which strategy is the researcher's choice in connection to the subject being studied. Mixed method is sometimes adopted (Bryman 2012, p.627). Qualitative and quantitative research strategies use different forms and means to communicate their ideas and results (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 14). In actual sense the researcher thinks that the both strategies in a way know about society and it is this idea known about society unique to translate to people.

Furthermore, both qualitative and quantitative follow different traditions in their approaches to investigation. These approaches consider their philosophical beliefs or epistemological concerns, (Bryman 2012 p. 27) which means what is or should be regarded as acceptable knowledge in the field of study. In investigating or exploring a subject or topic qualitative researchers follow interpretivist approach while quantitative approach is more related to positivism (Bryman 2012, p. 28). Providing further justification for selecting qualitative research strategy interpretivists argued that people and their institutions which are subject matter in the social science study in the social world are different from the natural sciences (Bryman 2012, p. 27). More importantly, positivists advocated that social science reality should be studied from the natural science view point (Bryman 2012 p.28)

1.6. Research Design

This research has adopted the case study research design. Research design is formally seen as a 'structure that guide the execution of a research method and the analysis of data' (Bryman 2012 p.45). My choice of this research design is based on the main research question: What role did Faith Based Organizations play during the Poverty Reduction Strategy of Liberia 2008-2011? A case study could be one or more cases. Considering the above-mentioned cases include; individuals, communities, societies, institutions, events etc (Bryman 2012, p. 66).

Additionally, a case study design allows for the collection of rich deep data which can provide new understanding of complex issues by the detailed analysis of a limited selection (Creswell 2007).

This master thesis for example, will add to existing research in poverty reduction on the role of Faith Based Organizations by exploring specifically role-play by five FBOs out of an estimated twenty-five FBOs as indicated in the Liberia Civil Society Registry of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs (LCSR 2016). The five FBOs sampled are a narrow area to a bigger issue, that may provide new insights and if possible generate theories.

Having said this, cases can be classified into three. Stake refers to this classification as; multiple case study, instrumental case study, and intrinsic case study (Stake 2008 p. 120- 123). Drawing on the above classification the case under investigation is a case of interest to me. One of the main reasons for exploring the role of FBOs in PRS is to have a clearer and good understanding of the range of activities undertaken by FBOs to reduced poverty for the period 2008-2011. Therefore, the interest of exploring this subject has been the first and last after reading different development theories and specifically looking at the role of religion in development (Stake 2008, p. 121).

This case is an intrinsic study not multiple or instrumental cases. As previously discussed and partly reflected in the motivation, I would like to have a deeper and clearer understanding of the role of religion in the Government development document; the PRS from Liberia Ministry of Finance and Development Planning in collaboration with World Bank and International Monitoring Funds. What interest me most about the case under discussion and its relevance to the main research question is that it focuses on the case issues, the very context of the case being studied and in a way, try to interpret the case (Stake 2008, p. 128)

1.6.1. Description of Case Study organizations

1.6.2. Lutheran Development Service (LDS)

Established January 2002 the Lutheran Development Services (LDS) is a Church related semi-autonomous non-Governmental Organization. It is the development arm of the Lutheran Church with the responsibilities to provide diakonia services to God's people in an impartial way (LDS 2008). As indicated in LDS report the Vision, Mission, and goal of the Lutheran Development Services capture some of the ideas that are important to the subject under consideration. The report claimed that, the vision and mission of the Lutheran Church related- FBO is to implement highly quality holistic development program with emphasis of "basic human needs regardless of religion, tribe, origin, beliefs and political affiliation with the overall goal of contributing to the

improvement in the living standard of rural and poor population in Liberia” (LDS 2008 p. 5).

With different thematic areas of operations, the LDS undertakes programs or projects aimed at a holistic sustainable development based on Christian Principles. The institution works with people for the fulfillment of their basic needs in health, food security, and small business development initiatives (LDS 2008). LDS also claimed usage of existing knowledge as well as social or cultural elements useful to development in any given community. It is mentioned in its report that, LDS promotes and supports human rights advocacy and community peace building through Trauma healing and reconciliation program as well as HIV/AIDS activities.

The report stated that, LDS has a way of networking with local and international organizations. It has its operational development offices in different parts of Liberia as well as networking with Lutheran World Service/Department of World Services (LDS 2008).

1.6.3. Young Women Christian Association (YWCA)

The Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) presents itself as a non-Governmental FBO founded 1941 to champion the cause of Liberian women of all ages in the fifteen political sub-division to become self-sufficient through different development projects and programs (YWCA 2011). According to its report, YWCA is known for its upstanding experience in women empowerment, education and gender main streaming in National Development. It was also noted that, the institution has the capacity to provide educational services to women in Liberia in urban and rural communities. As it has been stated already, YWCA operates throughout Liberia working with vulnerable women and grass root organizations in similar services. They also network with both local and international organizations for partnership and support. Part of the programs YWCA claimed it has been engaged in as part of the support to the PRS are: vocational school or skill training, agriculture, sexual reproductive and health education. The report noted that, YWCA engaged in the formulation of “policies, programs, advocacy and services that will better the lives of women in Liberia and guarantee women and girls’ human rights are protected, respected and fulfilled” (YWCA 2011 p. 8).

1.6.4. Community Development Services Programs of the United Methodist Church

The Community Development Services programs of the United Methodist Church presents itself as offering community services through different programs and projects under the United Methodist Church system is far dated in 1833 with the coming of the American missionaries and politicians in Liberia. It also claimed in its report that it has served as the catalyst for the transformation and social economic development of the republic of Liberia through its areas of ministries (LAC/UMC 2010). It continues to offer services in the health care services, education, leadership development, agriculture and community development. According to its report, the community Development services program of the United Methodist Church fill social economic gaps in the country. Additionally, it indicated to have buttressed the efforts of the Liberian government in addressing the need for poverty reduction by contributing to sound human resource development, improved health care delivery and disease control, sustainable community development, food security and faith development(UMCOR 2012, & LAC/UMC 2010).Also inspired by the social teaching of the Bible they have respect for diversity, accountability, transparency and understand that development is an essential process driven by people's participation. Lastly, they partner with different community development programs to achieve their project goals.

1.6.5. Humanity First Liberia

Humanity First Liberia is presented as an International charitable trust established in 43 countries to promote, safeguard and preserve human life and dignities. It is non-political, non-sectarian International relief and development agency that work with the world's poorest and vulnerable people (HFL 2009). As indicated in its document, HFL is a Muslim FBO that is working with the poorest and vulnerable in the Liberian society especially war affected young people. Additionally, it was also noted that this development arm is owned and operated by the Islamic FBO. It is claimed that, this institution continues to provide services that: promote peace and understanding based upon mutual tolerance and respect, they have also played a role in relieving suffering caused by natural disasters or human conflicts, like in the case of the after math of the Liberia civil crisis and helping the youthful population of Liberia to strengthen their capacity to help themselves (HFL

2009).

The report of HFL indicated that, since 2004, it has been providing supply of relief items in the Liberia society. Additionally, HFL indicated involvement with vocational education such as: plumbing, carpentry, general building construction, soap making, driving, auto electricians, refrigeration and air conditioning, welding and brazing, mason and steel fixing. Moreover, they claimed that, they have been providing computer training center for high schools in rural communities in Liberia (HFL 2009).

1.6.1. CARITAS Monrovia Office

The Caritas & Development office Monrovia presents itself as the relief and development commission of the Catholic Archdiocese of Monrovia. It claimed that, it is an expert in the areas of Sustainable Agriculture, Rural Development cooperation and humanitarian aid or relief in Liberia with vast knowledge and experience. Per the report, this Organization was established in 1971 to provide support to the marginalized, destitute and underprivileged people in the Liberian society who had lost hope because no one was there to provide hope (CARITAS 2009). Additionally, Caritas & Development Office Monrovia is inspired by the Gospel and the Catholic Social Teachings based on the “values of every human being and the solidarity to provide a dignified existence for every one regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, origin, religion, or political conviction”(CARITAS 2009, p. 2). In the development agenda of Caritas & development office their areas of interventions are intended to achieve the following: to restore the hope and dignity of the marginalized, destitute and underprivileged in our society, strengthen smaller holder farmers’ capacity to increase food production, enhance their food security and increase their household income in the short, medium and long-term, promote environmental protection and ensure sustainable rural communities, and provide unhindered access to basic social services that is, safe drinking water and improved sanitary facility (CARITAS 2009).

1.7. Sampling

Liberia has an estimated twenty-five FBOs as indicated in the Liberia Civil Society Registry of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs (LCSR 2016), but for the conduct of this research

the focus is on five that are relevant to the subject consider for the study. For the most part, the five FBOs and six beneficiaries amongst many were sampled purposely (Bryman 2012, p.417) to form a part of this study. These five FBOs whose representative will be interviewed were selected because of their relevance to both the main and sub research questions. The representatives of the FBOs were fifteen respondents which is inclusive of nine program coordinators and officers as well as six people who have benefited from the project directly or indirectly. This sample was selected based on the size and scope of the master thesis. Most of the FBOs Selected are organizations that have been offering services to the fifteen political sub-divisions of Liberia.

The FBOs were then categorized in the follow ways: CARITAS Monrovia office, Young women Christian Association of Liberia(YWCA), Humanity First Liberia (HFL), Lutheran Development Services (LDS), and Community Development Services of the United Methodist Church

1.8. Data Collection Method

The method of data collection for this qualitative research strategy were document analysis and qualitative interviews. For more clarity, documents were not the only source of data collection and analysis. Documents analysis and qualitative interviews are both in-cooperated in this research as a means of cross checking the quality of information that were provided by the informants. This means that, documents and or reports can further confirm or in a way authenticate information provided by the informants to satisfy the objective or the aim of exploring the role of FBOs in poverty reduction strategy from 2009- 2011.

Furthermore, talking about document Bryman made referenced to three main types of documents. Namely; an official document from the government, private documents as well as personal documents (Bryman 2012, pp. 543-551). In the case of this research I met some of the people from whom this information was produced.

The PRS document deriving from the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning as an official document from the government of Liberia. Importantly, other reports and documents were cross checked from the five FBOs as a way of making follow-up on responses gathered from the informants. The aim of this is to have basic documents and reports that outlined the achievements and or development work performed by FBOs. In line with the above mentioned, I identified documents that address development works, such as strategies and program reports.

Qualitative interview is considered as the best and highly attractive alternative to ethnography which need participants extended and long period of observation (Bryman 2012, p. 469). Additionally, a semi- structured interview guide was prepared and developed. Bryman cited that, these written guides are referred to as an 'interview guide' (Bryman 2012, p. 472). To explore the role of FBOs in poverty reduction Strategy which is the main research question, was guided by few written questions during the interview process. The informants randomly asked depending on how or which direction the interview considered relevant to the key theme in the discussion. This is explained by Bryman that apart from having these questions, you are not obligated to follow those questions in sequence as they are written. What is important is to avoid leading questions and make the informants to understand, explain, and give his or her views (Bryman 2012, p. 471).

Let it also be made known that, interview was conducted amongst programs and projects managers that work directly with those five FBOs sampled from the period 2008 to 2011 as well as those who benefited from the poverty reducing activities. The mentioned informants provided an insider view of the organisation and most importantly they were in the right position to interpret the documents as well.

1.9. Research Materials

The materials that were used for this research are: The Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy Document, an official document deriving from the Government of Liberia, relevant project documents and reports from the five FBOs Sampled and literature from the Millennium Development Goals that specifically focus on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. The Poverty Reduction paper contained three parts; history and current context, the strategy and the Poverty Reduction Strategy implementation. The focus here will be on part three which has different cross cutting issues that are of interest to the research inquiry. It emphasized capacity building in general, health, education, water and sanitation, roads and bridges, public building, and housing. The choice made in selecting those documents mentioned above is based on the research question and the inquiry of the study.

1.9.1. Related Research Materials

As far as I know, a direct research has not yet been done specifically on Poverty Reduction Program of Liberia where in the researcher will seek to investigate the role of FBOs. Not with standing,

there are a lot of research done in religion and development in recent years. Some of the related research are as followed: The introductory books *Religion and Development: conflict or cooperation* by Jeffrey Haynes and *Religion in Development: Rewriting the secular script* by Séverine Deneulin and Masooda Bano are frequently referred to in the theory chapter. Furthermore, *Religion and Development: Ways of transforming the world* edited by Gerrie Ter Haar, *Development* by Anthony Payne and Nicola Phillips and *Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations* edited by Jennings and Clarke has been considering. This book published in 2011 focuses on the *importance of intercultural understanding in the field of development aid*.

1.10. Ethical Consideration

In the process of conducting qualitative research there are many sensitive information including but not limited to religion, race, ethnicity, political conviction, health, sexual relations, membership in labor union etc, are to be seriously considered. In this research for example that will explore the role of Religion/FBOs in a Poverty Reduction Program designed and implemented from the view point of secular development practitioners, it is already a potential sensitive issue. Because of the above mentioned, the informants were assured that information gathered will be stored in the way that they will be protected. Furthermore, informants were in- cooperated in the entire research process only after securing informants free informed consent, and stress that participating in this research will be on a voluntary note. Therefore, the informants have the rights to withdraw participation at any time without this entailing negative consequences (Guidelines for research ethics, 2006 P. 13).

On the same note, the informants were certainly informed that interview will be recorded and assured them that after the process the recording will be deleted. The informants were informed and provided guarantee that all information provided about their private lives will be treated with confidentiality. Lastly, the researcher was assured that informants are prevented from the use and dissemination of information that could harm them (Guidelines for research ethics, 2006 P. 18).

1.10.1. Challenges and Limitations during the Interviews

In line with the challenges in collecting the data, I firstly realized that it was very difficult in getting to some of the respondents because of the way some of the office staffs handle important

communications. This influenced the process to the extent that I changed the previous FBOs sampled purposely (Bryman 2012, p.417) to another because, I walked more than two weeks to no avail. The same challenge resulted also further in reducing the numbers of respondents from the targeted sixteen to fifteen. It was because one of the program managers has travelled to a project location in Sinoe county and got cutoff because of bad road. Time was a factor and I needed to move on, so I drop him and interviewed the project coordinator only.

Let me also acknowledge that in the process of interviewing some staff at offices, I realized a lot of intrusion on the part of office staff coming and talking with their bosses or requesting to go somewhere and needed excuse. When this happened, I waited until those concerns were addressed before going into the interview. At this point, certain part of the interview may be missed and the flow of thoughts may not follow well as it was from the beginning. One way of the other I try in this situation by asking the same question over. Additionally, I also saw that there was delayed in getting back to me after I wrote the inform consent to the respondents. So, I went back to each office again to ask them whether they have read my communications and their responses to them. This delay cause me not to collect the data as planed or scheduled. Another great challenge was bad road in getting to beneficiaries in some rural communities. Because of this, I walked alone with the project staffs two or three hours before getting to project locations. This cause me not to reach to some of the project locations far way but when to closer project locations as well.

Another key challenge that factor in the data collection process was translation from English to local community native tongue. Liberia has sixteen local native tongues without a national dialect spoken by everybody. When I speak English, a person will translate in the native tongue to the beneficiary and later speak English to me. I also think that in the process of trying to communicate to me in English the interpreter might want to translate his own ideas as he or she understands rather than the beneficiary feelings, thoughts and expressions about the subject under discussion.

1.10.2. Validity and Reliability

Validity is the extent to which a measurement produce or instrument provides correct results. This deals with whether the data collected is a correct representation of the phenomena being measured (Yin 2009). This implies that, whether the procedure or instrument measured what was intended to measure (Yin 2009). On the other hand, reliability is the extent to which repeating of the

measurement may produce the same result (Litwin 1995), that means the extent to which the results are unaffected by unintended circumstances (Yin 2009).

The fact that, exploring the role of Faith Based Organizations in poverty reduction program data collection was based on qualitative interviews and document review, I think it will be difficult or hard to measure, but what I can say is that if this study is repeated the result will be the same. It is also equally important to mention that, a period can influence reliability to be weakened. In most instances, events occurring in the nation as well as within the sampled organisation can sometime change over a period (Bryman 2012).

1.11. Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is arranged in five chapters. The first chapter introduces the study and is composed of three sections namely; the background to the study, the motivation of the study and the research methodology of the study. The second chapter consists of the theoretical framework and it also discusses theories that are relevant and useful to the subject and secondly, it contains key terms that will be defined and used in the context of the research. Chapter three sets the basis for literature review or the historical context of the study. Furthermore, in chapter four findings will be presented based on the sub-research questions answering the main research question and subsequently, themes will be identified and discussed with theories and literatures. Lastly, chapter five closes the entire thesis by stating the conclusions.

1.12. Chapter Summary

This chapter provides the reader with an insight of the background to the study. In the background the research pointed out the breakdown of every sector of Liberia because of civil crisis that led to the formation and designing of the poverty reduction strategy. It is in this broken system that the study seeks to explore the role of FBOs in a policy framework that was intended to address the aftermath of the damage through the poverty reduction strategy. Additionally, the chapter shared with the readers my motivation for the study. I was curious to explore the role FBOs played in poverty reduction strategy of Liberia since in fact it was a Government document. The chapter discussed the choice of selecting qualitative research strategy. I also highlighted both qualitative

and quantitative research strategies and the qualitative method of data collection, data analysis and research design. After the different discussions, the study adopted qualitative research strategy, case study design, qualitative interviews and document analysis as a means of collecting data. For the documents, I also included program reports, evaluations, plans, PRS documents, policy document and other relevant literatures.

2.0. Chapter Two: Theoretical Approach

2.1. Introduction

The first unique aspect of this chapter is to define and conceptualize key terminologies that were used in the research. The reason for doing this, is to make the reader understand that each term has different meaning for different field of study and can be useful and relevant in each subject or context not in every other context. The chapter also highlighted some theories, approaches and literatures on Religion and Development and the secularization thesis. Those theories were examined and that the relevant ones were used to discuss the thematic analysis using the case of Liberia.

2.2. Development

Development, as indicated by Hopper, is defined as the process by which change occurs (Hopper 2012, p. 10). He referred to this change as a "good change" (Hopper 2012, p. 10). This definition is very relevant and useful to this master thesis because poverty reduction strategy is a change that is good for poor and less fortunate people. Logically, looking at development by which change occur as indicated, UNDP also mentioned that "from the late 1980s onwards the United Nations Development Programme began to employ the Human Development Index as an alternative to GDP" (UNDP cited in: Hopper 2012, p. 10). This idea implies that "range of opportunities to lead productive and creative lives and to develop their capabilities" (UNDP 2001 cited in: Hopper 2012, p. 10). Hopper observes that development that uses the Human Development Index is linked to poverty reduction (Hopper 2012). He also further "acknowledges that the most basic of human capacities are to lead long and healthy lives, to be knowledgeable through access to education, and to have the necessary resources to achieve a decent standard of living"(Hopper 2012, p. 11). So, part of what is paramount to poverty reduction or development is the "Human well-being" (Hopper 2012, p. 12). In "*human well-being*" three essential themes should be considered and those themes should be the goal of every development practitioners if indeed they want to achieve developmental agendas (Hopper 2012). Importantly, the "goal of development specialists or workers is to allow the participation of the community, human security and empowerment" (Hopper 2012, p. 11). Like in the case of poverty reduction, to a large extent, it makes a lot of sense too because central to development should be the empowerment of people (Hopper 2012). Empowerment as a concept of development is noted in Amartya Sen's work, *Development as*

Freedom "in which he makes a case for development towards enhancing human liberty and provision of choice and opportunity for people, employing the vocabulary, of entitlement and capacities" (Sen 2001 cited in: Hopper 2012 p. 11).

Historically, developmental thoughts are said to have been center around the address of President Truman in which the idea of helping to improve countries that were not developed by those countries that claim responsibilities for them or in other words colonised them (Deneulin and Bono 2009, p. 28). Additionally, the Doctrine of Development Cowen and Shenton 1996 argued: "that development started with the Industrial Revolution in Europe and the concern to mitigate the negative social consequences of industrialisation and economic progress" (Cowen and Shenton 1996 cited in: Deneulin and Bono 2009, p. 28). Another critical issue in the definition of development is the manner and form in which each development theory or approach define or look at the role of religion in development. It was to some extent clear to me from the different text that each "development approach has dominant thoughts in the evaluation of development ideas of modernization, basic human needs, human rights, multi -dimensional poverty and human development" (Deneulin and Bono 2009, p. 29). On the other hand, Arthur Lewis Theory of Economic Growth is a text from modernization but in some ways defined the " extensive role of religion in fostering capitalistic development and economic growth" (Lewis Arthur 1995 cited in: Deneulin and Bono 2009, p. 30). Furthermore, in the context of development, the role and treatment of religion were published in the key text. Those documents include but not limited to *Universal Declaration of Human rights of 1948*, which mentioned "*religious freedom as a core function*" (Deneulin and Bono 2009, p. 30). The World Bank *voices of the poor*, and *Development as freedom* was "another turning point in development thought" (Deneulin and Bono 2009, p. 31). In defining development if religion is not mentioned "explicitly, the text has opened the door for a considerable involvement of religion in the development process through civil society participation and through shaping people's values" (Deneulin and Bono 2009, p. 31). Arthur Lewis indicated that when it comes to economic growth, it "depends on the attitudes of religious people towards variables such as valuation of material goods, work, wealth creation, thrift, invention, population growth and the treatment of strangers" (Lewis, Arthur 1995 cited in: Deneulin and Bono 2009, p. 32). Lastly, he maintained that "religion becomes an obstacle to economic growth when it fuses into people negative attitudes towards wealth accumulation and economic opportunities" (Deneulin and Bono 2009, p. 32).

2.3. Religion

Deneulin and Bono using the Oxford Dictionary in their text see religion as an idea of someone or group of people believing and worshiping a force that has the power to control, by and through a personal God or gods (Oxford Dictionary Cited in: Deneulin and Bono 2009, p. 57). Additionally, Giddens describe religion as engaging in " symbols that invoke feelings and have a linked to rituals or ceremonies that the community of believers is involved in"(Giddens 2001 p, 53 cited in: Deneulin and Bono 2009, p. 58). In a related manner, Clifford Geertz also defined religion with a specific emphasis on " symbols, power, mood, and motivations, an order of existence formulation, the mood and motivation that are uniquely realistic" "(Geertz 1973 p, 90 cited in: Deneulin and Bono 2009, p. 58). These ideas are also very useful in some ways in poverty reduction. I think a religiously inspired person though poor might be stable because he or she is aware of power that is above motivating and making things to work their interest (Deneulin and Bono 2009). Additionally, the "term religion is normally associated with the values, rules, and social practices that stem from beliefs in a spiritual and supreme being usually codified in a sacred text such as the Bible, Quran or Bhagavad" (Clarke & Jennings 2008, p. 5)

From the social science point of view, religion is understood from two critical concepts. The two concepts are called, Functional and substantive concept or definition of religion. In a relevant way, social science looks at those two-different function as what religion can do as well as what religion is, which can be identified as its character and content in the social sciences (Berger 1974). It implies that religion can be characterised as engaging in different programs and project activities on ground as well as performing various rituals and symbols to motivate people

The functional and substantive definitions are very applicable to this Master thesis directly because they fall within the key topic of the thesis: The role of Faith-Based Organisations in poverty reduction strategy of Liberia 2008-2011. In a critical way, what religion is considering its content in different development theories will be described and what have religious NGOs done in the process of trying to Reduce Poverty in the Liberian society will be articulated in this thesis.

2.4. Faith Based Organization

The words Faith-Based Organisation make "a *reference to any organisation that originates encouragement and guidance for its actions from the teaching and principles of the faith or*

explanation or school of thought within the faith or conviction” (Clarke & Jennings 2008, p. 6). This definition is useful and relevant to this master thesis because it pointed exactly one or more characteristics of the five sampled FBOs. For instance, in the mission statement, vision and objectives of those FBOs, it is indicated that they are inspired by their social teaching or principles to carryout project activities in rural communities among the poor and vulnerable people (CARITAS 2009, LDS 2008).

Because of the complex nature of Faith in the development of Faith-Based Organisations, it was classified into four main types. The four main types are: passive, active, persuasive and exclusive. In the first category “passive” the primary role of faith in development is not very key (Clarke & Jennings 2008, p. 32). What is key, therefore, is putting together their material and human resources to work with their partners, staff and the local communities (Clarke & Jennings 2008). In the second type “active” the FBOs entire activities are guided or influenced by the Faith (Clarke & Jennings 2008 p. 32). The issue of their faith in development is opened to their staffs and supporters in their mobilisation process (Clarke & Jennings 2008 p. 32). Another important aspect of this type is that those who are not believers are not discriminated against on religious lines (Clarke & Jennings 2008 p. 32). The third type “persuasive” is with the goal of providing holistic services to people and later persuade them to follow their faith (Clarke & Jennings 2008 p. 32). In this case, faith is very present in the development, and the supporters and beneficiaries are inspired to be converted to this faith group. Lastly, “exclusive” type aimed at providing services for only those that belong to their faith. This means that everything that FBOs in this category does is rooted in faith, with a high level of discrimination and exclusion (Clarke & Jennings 2008 p. 32). In the process of exploring the role of Faith-Based Organisations in poverty reduction strategy 2008-2011, it was now clear that the five sampled FBOs were classified in the first two types called *passive* and *active* (Clarke & Jennings 2008 p. 32). Because of this, FBOs in this category find it very easy to gather materials and financial support from both local and international partners. In these two types, according to Clarke & Jennings “faith motivates actions, and, therefore helps to mobilise staff, volunteers and supporters” (Clarke & Jennings 2008, p. 32).

2.4.1. Types of FBOs

This sub concept is important and included in this thesis as a way of making contribution to the many literatures on religion and development by exploring the role of FBOs in poverty reduction

strategy in Liberia. I think the five FBOs sampled will be classified and identified per Clarke's classification or typology of FBOs. This classification or typology of "FBOs is a means through which different types of religious organisations and key actors for example Islamic or Christianity are revealed" (Clarke 2008 p. 25). Lutheran Development Services (LDS), Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), Humanity First Liberia(HFL), Community Development Services Program of the United Methodist Church (LAC/UMC) and CARITAS Monrovia Office can be logically placed or put into one or three of Clarke's typology. Clarke classified FBOs in the following ways: "Faith-Based representative organization apex bodies, Faith Based charitable or development organisations, Faith Based social political organisations, Faith Based missionary organisations and Faith Based radical, illegal or terrorist organisation" (Clarke 2008 p. 25). Clarke explained that the first types of FBO concerns itself with the issues of doctrine and take care of the faith followers and represent them by engaging the state and some other actors, second type put together the faithful followers to support those who are in need and poor and other social issues or conditions as well as managing programs and projects that look into the issues of poverty, and those that society has excluded, the third type of FBO organised and interpret faith as a political concept or idea to promote political agenda by means of faith identity, the fourth category engages in spreading the message of their faith beyond and making new converts and Fifth type of FBO uses the organisation to promote illegal practices on the basis of faith identity and become very violent and problematic (Clark 2008, p.25).Looking at the above typology of FBOs and its explanations, it is now clear to me that the previously mentioned five FBOs chosen for this research fall within two categories as follow ;one, they are the type that put together the faithful followers to support those who are in need and poor and other social issues or conditions as well as managing programs and projects that look into the issues of poverty, and those that society has excluded and second, category engages in spreading the message of their faith beyond and making new converts (Clarke 2008).

2.4.2. The Works of FBOs

When one is thinking about comparing, FBOs to that of Secular development practitioners, it is clear to me that FBOs have its inherent advantages in the work of poverty reduction. FBOs are known for the ability to work with their local congregations through partnerships and networks to address the concerns of the poor (Thaut 2009). For instance, FBOs have the potentials to make

change in society especially the Liberia society by teaching on the issues of “integrity, reliability, accountability and stewardship” (Getu 2000, p 7) to the many followers she has through the churches and mosques. Moreover, FBOs have grassroots presence in the areas of operations. They are also present in the remote areas particularly where they have long been located (Ferris 2005). Additionally, Gold Smith observes that, “where FBOs are present on ground, they are known for their ability to organize the community, offer leadership, as well as provide financial resources and volunteers to the community they serve” (Gold Smith 2006, p. 18). The five sampled FBOs in this research contain four Christian FBOs and one Islamic FBO. These two religious groups are often dominating the argument about ‘poverty reduction’ or ‘development’ work in Liberia. Therefore, it was important to include them to exploring the role of FBOs in ‘Poverty reduction’.

2.4.3. Motivation and Character of FBOs in Poverty Reduction

Faith Based Organisations are “motivated by different spiritual and doctrinal values they bring to development, that are written in their mission statement, work plans or in the program they have designed” (Kearns, Park et al 2005). FBOs have activities that varied over a period including but not limited to “welfare, social services, humanitarian services, Microcredits and sometimes engage in developments that take long time with the community” (Ferris 2005). Weber is of the view that, religious ideas and beliefs systems are connected or linked to economic development (Weber 1930). Faith has been very central to development, just as it is central to development work today and play a major role in defining poverty such that exclusion from main stream of development means that, said development is incomplete (Krafess 2005). What is also important and useful in this case therefore is that, the influence of religious beliefs on FBOs, had promoted the idea that FBOs have its central code values in the lives of human. Today FBOs are associated with the view of holding ‘human life sacred’ (Berger 2003), a character that together with faith, greatly motivates them to respond to the ‘need of the poor’ (Ferris 2005). Different Faith traditions have different viewpoints or stand points in helping the poor and needy through their motivations as expressed in the standpoints of Christianity and Islamic religions (Ibid 2005).

2.4.4. The Standpoint of Christian FBOs

Poverty reduction or development works of FBOs is perceived from the Christian stand point to be inspired by bible teaching or ‘biblical doctrines’. For instance, the parable of the good Samaritan as recorded in the New Testament book of (Luke 10:30-37) try in a way to push the followers of Christian faith to offer services or make some meaningful contribution to those that are in need and suffering (Scofield & Ridders 2002) and it also draws a clear analysis to Christian humanitarian work. It is also mentioned elsewhere in the book of (Acts 6:1-6) in which the apostles of Jesus Christ were designated to address the social concerns of their congregation by distributing food to the poor and needy (Scofield & Ridders 2002). This also speak to the fact that Christian FBOs are involved with welfare or social services to the poor. Scofield noted that, the task of helping those in need is embedded in the Christian Faith as it was the key mission of Jesus the Christ (Luke 14:18). In the Christian Bible all followers of Christian faith are mandated to show their faith to what they believe in by the good works of addressing the needs of people who are poor and those of them in need (James 2:14-20). Additionally, Ferris pointed out that “the theme of justice for the poor, the marginalised, and the alien is central to the Hebrew scriptures and that the persecuted often sought sanctuary in temples and cities of refuge and hostility for strangers” (Ferris 2005).

Christian agencies remain credited for the legacy they left behind in many areas of ‘development’ such as Education, Health care services and Agriculture in many parts of the world (Ferris 2005, Chikwendu 2004 and Oladipo 2000). FBOs have for some time now been commended for working with all those who receive their “services without religious orientations” (Kearns, 2005, p. 15). Religious communities specifically in Africa that are engaged in the development work try in a way to re-enforce moral standards and ethical values in the community they serve (Tsele 2001). Because of this, the community in which they serve show high level of trust by the poor who are a part of their congregation and benefiting from project that have been undertaken.

2.4.5. The Standpoint of Islamic FBOs

The Islamic Faith Based Organisations engaged in development works or poverty reduction also benefit from the “contributions made by the rich people towards assisting those that are poor and in need” (Ali 1998, p. 69). Most importantly, the “doctrine of the obligatory Zakat 2.5 percent towards charitable courses (2:215 and non-obligatory sadaqaat (9:60) as written in the Quran greatly informs the work of Islamic FBOs” (Ali 1998, p. 69). It is one of the five pillars of Islam

(Esposito 2004). Moreover, waqf which is well known for its permanent bequeathal of the real property or riches for the common good remains the most highly documented charitable activity in the Muslim world (Kraefss 2005 p. 337)

2.5. Criticism of FBOs Work in Development

Despite of the growing praises or credits given to FBOs for their good works, they have also been criticized regardless of which religious traditions or doctrines. Some scholars are of the views that Islamic and Jewish religious people only interested in taking care of those that are part of what they believe in (Kearns, park et al 2005). Ferris mentioned that, Christian agencies have also been criticised for particularly associating with “missionary” work in the past that was closely associated or linked to “colonialism” (Ferris 2005).

Moreover, just like other secular organisation involved in delivery of secular services, “FBOs are also susceptible to ethical challenges such as misuse of project resources and misappropriation of financial and material resources” (Gibelman, Gelman 2002). This FBOs” susceptibility to ethical issues in the case of FBOs wrong doing that featured in the American media between 1995 and 2001”. Additionally, FBOs blamed for lack of financial safeguards, that is, internal and external audit with reliance on solitary disbursement of funds and other mal practices (Gibelman, Gelman 2002)

2.5.1. Proselytism

The English Oxford Dictionary defined ‘proselytism’ as the process of converting a person from one idea, opinion, creed or party to another (Fowler & Fowler 1964 p. 983). It is the act of converting people to one’s belief system called ‘proselytism’ component in some FBOs which has caused many to criticize the contribution of ‘Faith’ to ‘development’. Additionally, Kroessin and Mohamed are of the views that Christians as well as Islamic FBOs were also criticized for including proselytism in their services delivered to the poor and needy (Clarke & Jennings 2008, p. 35). James mentioned that for Christian and Islamic FBOs proselytism is part of what they achieve at the end of the project (James 2009). Christian FBOs from the protestants backgrounds or tradition are highly criticized for their involvement into “proselytism as an end game to achieving their missionary goal” (Ferris 2005, p.312)

Furthermore, “proselytism influences and creates difficulties for the work of Christian FBOs”

(Ferris 2005). For example, evangelical groups helping for tsunami effect in Indonesia in 2005 aim to bring together with humanitarian aid (Ferris 2005). This caused the criticism of all Christian FBOs. The criticism is so strong that the Council of Churches in Indonesia had to release a statement disassociating them from the evangelical groups (Hoffstaedter and Hittensor 2013).

2.6. Qualities FBOs bring to Development work

As for as community development is concerned FBOs have different qualities that they bring to development work. Even though this master thesis recognises both the qualities that are the strength as well as the weakness in meeting developmental goals. One of the qualities FBOs bring to development is trust and transparency. The World Bank research on the *voices of the poor* indicated that FBOs are “often the trusted people in their communities” (Narayan 2000 cited in: Tyndale 2011 p.209). Additionally, the World Bank was the first Western institution to recognise that poor communities can also be described as the faith community. A research program initiated opened the eyes of western development agencies on how to deal with religion in developing countries. The *voices of the poor* published in 2000 also indicated that “religious leaders and institutions were among the most trusted people in developing countries” (Narayan 2000 cited in: Scott 2007, p. 69). Because of the trust that faith group has, they network better among the poor than secular development organisation (Tyndale 2003, p. 26). In a related context, Farret also mentioned that in developing the world religious leaders are often trusted very much in their society (Farret 2005 cited in: Haynes 2007, p 3). Most importantly, FBOs are often trusted to speak in the interest of individual and communities as they are to "address personal and cultural issues, poverty vulnerability and marginality" (Jennings 2013, p. 367). Jennings (2013) also noted that there is a factor building up the "broad" trustworthiness of FBOs. The first and important aspect is that FBOs have high local and international operation because of the trust they have built (Jennings 2013).

It is also important to express that FBOs bring to development work the quality of understanding and living within the culture of the people. According to Hottstaedter & Tittensor, this makes FBOs better suited to reach into different community locations and to provide links to the community (Hottstaedter & Tittensor 2013 p. 369). FBOs are very close to the community and know how to relate to the community they often naturally drawing the community to services. Based on the above statement, FBOs get involve physically in development work and share the

philosophy or world views on spiritual issues as well (Jennings 2013, p. 369). The idea that FBOs are close to the culture of the community provide logistical advantage through trust and capacity to undertake sensitive cultural services thereby becoming efficient in service delivery (Hottstaeddter & Tittensor 2013)

Faith Based Organisations have the grassroots presence in areas of operations. Ferris (2005) confirmed that on ground in hard to reach places called remote locations especially so where they have been implementing the project or doing mission work in their location. It was certainly clear that why FBOs are on the ground in these remote places, they are mainly known for making sure that the community is put together or organise (Goldsmith 2006). FBOs try in a way to have structure and systems through leadership as well as helping the less-fortunate with some material and financial resources and aid the community in voluntary community initiatives (Goldsmith 2006).

Additionally, FBOs bring compassion and commitment are another two key qualities emphasis in the development thoughts of FBOs to achieve their developmental goals (Ferris 2005). In the Christian and Islamic doctrines, that helping the poor arise from a commitment to what God has given you to do and compassion for the people you serve that are expressed in their social creed can be explained in this manner. The parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) challenges all Christians to assist needed people (Scofield, Ridders 2002), and further refer to humanitarian work with commitment and compassion. In Christianity Jesus calls on his disciples to do good to everyone because "anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God or any person who does not love his brother and sister" (1 John 3: 10)

2.7. The Role of Religion in Development Theories

In discussing the role of religion in poverty reduction strategies of Liberia 2008-2011, it will be logical to reflect a little on the role of religion in development theories and or approaches. The discussion below considers two fundamental perceptions. One group of scholars perceived religion to be harmful and irrelevant to a development and its processes whereas another group of social scientists also see religion as useful and very relevant to achieving developmental goals. It was observed by Opschoor 2007 that, religion is constrained rather than a source of catalyst for development which has been one of the perceived ideas of secular development practitioners (

Opschoor 2007). Significantly, a group of social scientists are of the view that, the more society become advance religious activities and religious institutions will again decline, vanish or fade and will now become private affairs for individual and family members (Habermas 1964, p 51). Additionally, the role of religion in development was recognised by Buijs 2004 from four different perspectives. Buijs called the four perceptions pitfalls that firstly have the missed guided concept that religion will be taken out of human society as the society itself becomes more and more develop and modernise (Buijs 2004). Secondly, religion belongs to the private sphere because it is socially not relevant, some religions are not compatible with development. Lastly, religion cannot two different or changed at all. Furthermore, some secular development practitioners view religion as the way of life that has been passed from generation (tradition) with fundamentalist conservatives that are not productive to developmental goals (Jennings 2013).

Contrary to the views that religion is not relevant to development, Guannue in his book *The History of Liberia up to 1847* indicated that religion continues to play a role in the health and education sectors (Guannue 2010, p. 30). Reflecting on the role of religion in development in the Liberia society, Guannue observed that “education and health were part of the agenda of the American Missionaries and politicians who founded Liberia in 1847” (Guannue 2010, p.32). In another book, *Religion in Development: Rewriting the Secular Script* Deneulin and Bano 2009 recognised five leading roles of religion in the process of development work that make them relevant, useful and productive to development. In the above text, they acknowledged that religion is useful and a significant contributor in meeting developmental goals such as economic growth. Report of CARITAS in my possession indicated that their FBO had been involved with economic activities. In precise term CARITAS has been engaged with smallholder’s agriculture and micro-finance activities as a means of empowering the local community to be self -sufficient (CARITAS 2009). Secondly, they said that religion is the sound basis for the formation of the values that people have and those costs in some ways are positively affecting real community development (Deneulin and Bano 2009). Thirdly, the idea of religious freedom which is recognised as fundamental human rights also promote growth, fourth, religion also form a part of human well-being and lastly, religion is a political force that helps to shape societies economically, socially, and politically. As mentioned in the above these expressions above, religion is, therefore, very inherently relevant to poverty reduction and or the process of development as claimed by Opschoor (2007). Additionally,

Jefferey Haynes, among other scholars indicated that with the growing of secularisation all over in societies the role of religion is not losing at all(Haynes 2007).Moreover, another group of social scientists indicated that the role of religion in human society is to mobilise people to collective action, and to unite them further socially and mobilise them politically even in contemporary modern society (Inger Furseth and Pal Repstadi 2006 p. 96). In furtherance to the role of religion in development Wendy Tyndale also claimed that FBOs are relevant in making common agenda for achieving the MDGs in 2015 (Tyndale 2011, p. 2010).More to the role of religion in development, it was mentioned at the United Nations assembly that, a development agenda was designed seeking to tap on FBOs to achieving the SDGs (UN 2015).Furthermore, Tyndale said that FBOs are very useful and relevant in theory and practice because they were responsible for the works of the MDGs and currently responsible for poverty reduction activities as well as human development index (Tyndale 2011).

2.7.1 Modernisation Theory

Modernisation theory is a theory that cut across the diverse field of study (Hopper 2012). It has a significant expression of the idea of "country moving from traditional to modern society" (Hopper 2012, p. 30). What modernisation theorists do is to, therefore, establish the "causes of underdevelopment in what they claimed as conditions and structures within countries rather than in any external forces or factors" (Haines 2000 cited in: Hopper 2012, p. 30). One of the fundamental essences of the modernization theory was to address the aftermath of the second World War (Deneulin and Bano 2009). It means that it was the time and opportunity to raise the standard of human population not only in western countries but the entire globe (Deneulin and Bano 2009, p. 30). The United Nations was to "ensure peace and the provision of human rights, the promoting better living condition, good employment opportunities and progress in economic development and social activities" (Article 55, UN cited in: Deneulin and Bano 2009, p. 31). Additionally, the efforts of the United Nations were in a unique way try to put efforts together that would otherwise address the concerns for both developed and developing nations (Deneulin and Bano 2009, p. 32). It was to be achieved by the process of speeding their growth process and making it sustainable for their individual countries and advancing them socially (Deneulin and Bano 2009, p. 32).

In the modernisation period, few scholarly works reflected the role of religion in modern society. For example, Arthur Lewis's theory of economic growth, the Journal of World Development, and the 1948 Universal Declaration of human rights. Lewis in his writing expresses that, religion has a role in promoting economic growth and capitalistic development (Deneulin and Bano 2009, p. 29). In modern society, Lewis indicated that religion could be relevant to development as well as become a hindrance to economic growth. He logically claimed that for religion to be useful to development it "depends on certain attitudes toward economic growth" (Deneulin and Bano 2009, p. 31). For example, the following variables Lewis listed and mentioned as: "attitudes towards health care, material goods, population growth, treatment of strangers" (Deneulin and Bano 2009, p. 31). From Lewis' perception, the role of religion in modern society may be a hindrance to economic growth based on religious leader's attitudes to what he called the accumulation of wealth in society (Deneulin and Bano 2009 p. 32). This theory applies to the master thesis in a way that it expresses the idea of improving the standard of living for both developed and developing nations. When poverty is reduced the living conditions of people who were once poor are improved.

2.7.2. Secularisation Theory

The secularisation thesis is an important debate that, Durkheim, Weber and other social scientists claimed to establish the "relationships between religion and the modern world" (Deneulin and Bano 2009, p. 53). The degree of assumption in this thesis is that, as human society becomes more and more modern, religion will gain no relevance in human society, but the secular world will be very relevant and more prominent (Deneulin and Bano 2009, p. 53). One of the key and important concepts as indicated in this text because of modernization, it is assumed that "religion no longer explains the world, rationality does" (Deneulin and Bano 2009, p. 53). Since religion cannot explain the world again according to social scientists, they claimed that the best thing to replace religion is a human reason and rational thinking (Deneulin and Bano 2009). Berger (2001) indicated that "*when society undergoes a process of modernization, it is a process in which the role of religion will reduce in importance both in society and in the perception of individual*" (Berger 2001 cited in: Deneulin and Bano 2009, p. 54). The argument in this thesis is the perceptions of social scientists that as society becomes more and more modern, the role of religion belongs in the private spheres, so to make religion disappear it has to be marginalised (Deneulin and Bano 2009).

For example, in the 1986 Constitution of Liberia, the role of religion goes to the private areas for family and individuals and this is the obvious application of the secularisation thesis.

This theory is useful in this master thesis on the role of Faith-Based Organisations in poverty reduction strategy because it explains from the perceptions of social scientist the role of religion or religious institutions in modern society. Secularisation Thesis describes key concepts and ideas that are very relevant to a secular society like Liberia. Therefore, determining the role of FBOs in a secular policy framework, I think to some extent this theory is useful and relevant.

2.7.3. FBO, NGOs and Participatory Development Theory

Participatory development theory is a concept or idea like the “top-down approach in development” (Hopper 2012). This theory for example work in the case of “micro-credits” directly provided by CRITAS Monrovia office to the poor in rural communities which was proven to be something good (CRITAS 2009). This idea of development take into consideration local people or location, self-determination, grassroots activity and empowerment. It is the process by which the local people take charge of poverty reduction activities from the beginning of the project and go through all the stages and finally to the end of the project(Hopper 2012, p. 159).Desai 2000b pointed out that, in this development process” the people themselves know best what they need, what they want and what they can afford, only close cooperation between project implementers and the community can lead to project effectiveness”(Desai cited in: Hopper 2012 p.160).

This means that participatory development is about power and who controls such power. It is a concept that challenges the traditional role of international agencies and institutions in the field of development (Hopper 2012, p. 159). By getting the local communities to be participants, it put them in the position to be committed to the project from start to the end (ibid 2012). Rowland 1997 noted that, when the above mentioned happened the feeling about it is deeper, which is the sum of one worth and it builds one’s self-esteem (Rowland cited in: Hopper 2012, p. 160).

Not with standing, participatory development has its critics, that are of the views that, in most instances, the NGOs or donors have set goals that they want their organization to achieve, even though the main community inhabitants should be the one in focus, therefore the neglecting of miss-management and corruption should not be thought of as unable to happen (Hopper 2012, p. 154). I found this theory very useful for this thesis because it pointed to the way in which the five

selected Faith Based -NGOs as per their reports had the communities involved in their own development processes (LDS 2008, & CRITAS 2009). It is also useful because the theory put the community in charge of their own development and empower them.

Regardless of the critics view on this theory FBO-NGOs seem to present many positive aspects in how they are close to the community inhabitants who need assistance, where they distribute food, clothing, offering training, education, community services and micro-credits. FBOs set up schools, teach, they run clinics and hospitals, give local people jobs and challenges “government” that are corrupt ((Borchgrevink 2006). In terms of poverty reduction FBOs have contributed significantly in the way they “provide basic social services and income generating activities” (Borchgrevink 2006 p, 269). It is therefore difficult to conclude about this theory because FBO- NGOs have different ways they approach development project since they operate in diverse arena.

2.7.4. Basic Human Needs Approach

Basic human needs approach is a concept or idea of economic development and or growth that was intended to meet the basic needs of people (Deneulin and Bano 2009). This approach of development was known in the publication by World Bank in 1982 called *First Thing First: meeting the basic needs of people in developing countries* (Deneulin and Bano 2009). In this approach, the role of religion in development is not directly stated but expressed that the “goal of development should be the provision of basic human needs, even material and non-material ones, such as a sense of purpose in life and work and self-determination” ((Deneulin and Bano 2009, p. 37). The idea that basic need approach of economic growth and development is human oriented “one should respect the choice of a religious society to build a temple if it considers more important than road” (Deneulin and Bano 2009, p. 37). One of the most important aspects of this approach to development is that there is an opportunity to achieve the following: “social development of the human personality, full physical and mental well- being” (Deneulin and Bano 2009, p. 38). Streeten et, al indicated that meeting “non-material needs are important not only because they are valued in their right, but also because they are essential conditions for meeting material needs” (Streeten et al cited in: Deneulin and Bano 2009, p. 38). Additionally, included in the basic human needs approach are the following most important ingredients: “the purpose of life, work, self-determination, security, self- reliance , participation of workers and citizens in decision-making that affect them and their cultural identity” (Streeten et al cited in: Deneulin and Bano 2009, p. 38)

2.7.5. Empowerment Approach

Empowerment approach is an ongoing discussion and very important in development thought (Sen 2001). More so the empowerment of everybody but with emphasis on women because most poverty reduction instrument precisely targeting women for example engage in Micro-finance. In the words of Sen empowerment is mentioned as something that “expand the capabilities of an individual or group for the enhancement of freedom and well-being” (Sen 2001, p 39). Furthermore, “when any organization must have the idea of empowerment so that people or individual that will be selected can responsible to act or not to” (Sen 2009 p. 39). In the words of Ibrahim and Alkire “empowerment is the expression of the expanding of institution or agency” (Ibrahim and Alkire 2007, p.388). Empowerment in “development” practice is seen in a way as a measure that is intended to have an outcome; for instance, “poverty reduction” is one of cases or issues that is assumed to work in this case (Sen 2001, p. 395), (Rowlands 1996 p,86).

The inclusion of empowerment approach in this thesis is the idea of empowerment approach focusing on “opening up simply focusing on decision making, and it include the process that lead to people perceive themselves as able to occupy that decision-making space” (Wong 2003, p. 87). It is important to mentioned that, “to empower a person means to free them from the negative social construction of her abilities by empowering from within” (Wong 2003, p 87). Rowlands understands “empowerment as a process that needs individual development which enables to look at our own situation and open the needed change” (Rowlands 1996).

2.8. Chapter Summary

As mentioned, I defined key terms that were used and tried to use those terms in context to the subject. There were theories about the role of” religion in development”, “secularization thesis”, and different “basic human needs” and “empowerment approaches” were discussed. In this case, the world religion for example was treated from the social science background. Primarily, the study seeks to explore the role of “religion in development” which means this is considering what religion does. Different ideas and definitions of FBOs were discussed and adopted and use in the context of the study. The adopted theories about the role of religion in development were discussed from two schools of thought. One of the schools of thought claim that with “modernization” the role of religion will become a “private matter” and the other school claim that religion will always be visible and will bring useful qualities to development (see 2.2.6.1).

3.0. Chapter Three: Historical Context of the Study

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the study provided the historical context to the study. The historical events were presented in line with the link to the Poverty Reduction Strategy of Liberia as stated in the background information. It discusses further the decline in the economy of Liberia because of 14 plus years of civil conflict. In this decline every sector of Liberia was effected thereby making Liberians vulnerable and poor. Additionally, the readers are provided insights about the location of Liberia, poverty levels, the economy of Liberia, cause of poverty etc. and some relevant information that are very useful to the historical context of the study.

3.2. Liberia: A Brief Overview

Liberia is a nation in West Africa. It is one of the countries in the World rank 177 out of 188 per the “UNPD’s Human Development index” and classified as “least developed country” (WFP 2016). Liberia is bordered with three West African Nations namely: the Republic of Guinea which is located on the Northeast, the Republic of Sierra Leone on the Northwest, and the Republic of Cote d’ Ivoire on the Southeast. Liberia occupied the Land space of 43,0000 square miles. The Nation is divided into fifteen political sub-divisions called Counties.

3.3. The Economy of Liberia

The economy of any given nation is the backbones that provide help to strengthen the governance system and other civil society organizations. This implies that, financial resources collected because of a strong and power economy helps to provide jobs and pay good salaries there by reducing poverty and empowering citizens to be productive in their society (Guannu 2010, p.55). On the other side of the story, when a nation has a weak economy conflicts comes and the aftermath of conflicts are poverty, diseases, illiteracy, high unemployment rate etc. Joseph Saye Guannu is of the view that “when an economy is strong it needs a transparent leadership to distribute the goods and services with fairness and justice” (Guannu 2010, p.55). I also want to personally agree with this statement because much of Liberia’s problem when it comes to weak economy is all about the way the resources are managed and distributed to few and clear majority of the people

suffer. Additionally, the manner and form in which investors who are not corrupt are treated by corrupt officials of government. Factoring from the above statement, the history of Liberia records that between the years 1980 to 2005 the economy of Liberia was not very strong because the leadership at a time was not putting in place policies that would sustain economic growth and development (Guannu 2010).

On the global market, the economy of Liberia began to decline in the 1970s because of an unfavorable situation on the world market especially so when the prices of rubber and Iron ore dropped, income or money earned from these products also dropped (Guannu 2010). This decline on revenue has adverse effect on taxes pay to the Liberia Government by companies that were operating those different projects (Guannu 2010). For instance, the worst-case scenario was the closing of the “Liberia American Swedish Company(LAMCO) in the year 1989” (Guannu 2010, p.53). As part of the plan to improve the economy of Liberia, in 1984, the Green Revolution was launched with the idea of making Liberians self-sufficient in local food production (World Bank 2016; Guannu 2010). It was made mandatory that every cabinet minister would take two months out of each year to make farm. This idea was generally accepted by the rural dwellers as a good idea because it was meant to improve the economic and social conditions (Guannu 2010). For those who were in the “agriculture sector and have a lot of money it was an opportunity to increase the wealth they already had” (Guannu 2010, p 45; World Bank 2016). These economic activities were not managed well at all. Moving forward the entire Country became unstable between the years 1980 to 2005 and the fragile economy did not develop at all. There was a slowdown in agriculture activities because of rebel activities. The so-called “freedom fighters” harassed farmers and plantations workers which caused most of the farmers and plantations owners to discontinue the operations (Guannu 2010). Many Urban and Rural dwellers were made poor and homeless because mining concessions for example did not operate during the years of civil un rest (Guannu 2010; World Bank 2016). Again, during the war years direct foreign aid to Liberia that had been coming declined in the mid-1980s because of the conflicts (Guannu 2010).

In this period of unstable Country and broken economy those who enjoyed the wealth of the nation between the years 1980-1997 were “the men in arms and their friends, both expatriate and national” (Guannu 2010 p.56), while much of the people suffer in poverty and being made poor “soldiers and their chiefs or political leaders looted the natural resources diamond, gold and timber” (Guannu 2010, p. 58). This situation as mentioned became very terrible and painful when the rights

of humans were violated especially the rights to life and free speech. Today part of what Liberia as nation experience is brain drain because many educated Liberians left the county to seek for better living elsewhere in the world (Guannu 2010).

The economy of Liberia is said to have again deteriorated based on the indication of World Bank in 2015 with “Gross Domestic Product(GDP) growth of 0.3 percent further down from 0.7 percent in 2014” (World Bank 2016). Accordingly, it factored in the struggles of the Country to overcome the shocks of the Ebola Virus diseases (World Bank 2016). This has a multiply effect on the decline in the prices in major commodity on the market leaving with no alternative but to close mines and populated plantation areas causing more people to be jobless and thereby reducing annual revenues (World Bank 2016). This also factor into the risk of downsizing and as such the government was challenged to put in place workable frame work that will mitigate the impact by Ebola Virus (World Bank 2016). World Bank noted that, terms of trade shocks and reversal in private investment influences due to the outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease(EVD) have prolonged Liberia’s post-Ebola economy recovery (World Bank 2016). Mining which has been and continues to be one of Liberia’s key driving force in economy declined by 17 percent followed by 1.1 percent in the agriculture sector (World Bank 2016). The “economy was also salvaged by a relatively resilient services sector, which grew by 5 percent attributed mainly to the recovery in the construction of hotels and training services” (World Bank 2016). Moreover, there was a declined in Fiscal revenue projected at 12 percent based on original forecast of US 474 million (World Bank 2016). Because of this, there was an expenditure cuts by government to maintain the already high fiscal deficit targeted of 8.5 percent GDP in FY 2016 (World Bank 2016). As per World Bank report Liberia’s “Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth is however assumed to recover to about 3.9 percent in 2016” (World Bank 2016). This recovery is expected to be driven by the coming on streams of new gold mining concessions, and improvements in services as rural and urban markets re-open (World Bank 2016). Notwithstanding the slowing of China’s economic growth and its potentials adverse impact on the global economy are likely to keep already low commodity prices depressed (World Bank 2016). This will then imply that, there is a potential downsizing risk for Liberia’s work force given the fact that the growth of the economy depends on the exports of rubber, iron ore and oil palm for growth, employment and fiscal revenues (World Bank 2016).

3.4. The Role of FBOs in Poverty Reduction in Africa

As I began to discuss the early role of FBOs in development work or poverty reduction in Africa, it will be important to mention that, much is not written or published on the work of the FBO as far as I know, even though the involvement of FBO is not a new thing (Oladipo 2000). The involvement of the FBOs in development work on the continent of Africa is as far back dated as the arrival of the missionaries and the colonial master of the same time (Oladipo 2000). More besides, in Africa these FBOs still have a lot of important valuables that has been used as poverty reducing tool and can still be seen and used. Some of these very important assets are: schools, mission stations, hospitals, clinics, etc. that are used and always serving the vulnerable (Jenkins 1994; Marshal 2003). One may agree with me that since the deadly HIV/AIDS virus came into the African society, FBOs have been in front line fighting against this deadly virus. The fight against HIV/AIDS by FBOs was made known through a statement by the World Council of Churches to the United Nations special assembly on HIV/AIDS at which point that august body mentioned the successes of the fight in Asia and then importantly in Africa (WCC 2001). Furthermore, George Carey, former Archbishop of Canterbury is of the view that Faith Based Organization provide up to 50 percent of services in health and education especially in poor and hard to reach communities in Africa (Marshal 2003). Let it be known that the role of religion in development work in Africa has been mentioned to stimulate development thoughts and ideas (Hope, Timmel 2003). Hope and Timmel are of the view that religion has serious potentials to place development in the “context of caring community that provide and in built system of accountability” (Hope, Timmel 2003, p. 94). In line with the above stated, FBOs are significant too in development work without being limited to the short-term goals of giving handouts to the poor. The believes system, the values and the spirituality in religion have been recognized as important ingredients to development process (CIDA 1995). For instance, it has been FBOs that have been committed to the issues of “poverty reduction and putting in place workable situations that will serve the poor people in African communities” (Hope, Timmel 2003, p. 9).

3.5. FBOs and Poverty Reduction in Liberia

Joseph Saye Guannu observed that, FBOs have been working to reduce poverty in the Liberian society from the funding of Liberia by an American Humanitarian group that colonized her in 1822

called the “American Colonization Society” (Guannu 2010, p. 33). Furthermore, he pointed that, “education and religion for example are closely tied together in a way that it is difficult to discuss one without the other” (Guannu 2010, p 66). This explains that education as a poverty reducing activity was part of the plan by the American Churchmen and politicians who founded Liberia as a medium to spreading of the assumed western civilization and religion in Africa (Ibid 2010). Because of this, the churchmen and politicians opened way for increase in different denominations that were and still now addressing the Country need through education, Agriculture, Heath, Water and sanitation etc. thereby ensuring the reduction of poverty and justices through the nation (UMCOR 2012, Guannu 2010, LDS 2008). In addition to the above mentioned, religious groups have been assisting the efforts of the Government in improving health conditions of the country. For instance, the “Liberia Demography Health Survey” (LDHS) reported that “45 percent of the total health care services of the entire nation is managed by Faith Based Organizations” (LDHS 2008). In 1833 when some of the Christian Missionaries came from America initially, the Church building was performing three functions: a place of worship on Sunday, a School from Monday to Friday and a clinic on Saturday (Guannu 2010, p. 59).

The Inter-Religious Council of Liberia report indicated that “FBOs have been and continues to actively work in rural and some urban communities to reduce poverty and injustices with different projects and programs “(IRCL 2011.p 6). They continue to achieve their goals through coordination and partnership at local and international levels. FBOs in Liberia seek to consider the root causes of poverty and how each program and project can address those different conditions (IRCL 2011). They have also worked as a long-term development partners and provide huge humanitarian assistances into rural and some urban communities (UMCOR 2012; IRCL 2011).

An example of humanitarian assistances in one of the FBO sampled is reflected in Liberia when an American “Missionary Dr. George Way Harley and Mrs. Winifred J. Harley established Ganta United Methodist mission station in 1926 precisely 90 years ago,” (LAC/UMC 2010 p.12). This mission station is one among many in the poverty reduction programs and projects is now the catalyst for transformation and social economic development of the Republic of Liberia through its areas of ministries (Ibid 2010). It continues to offer services along with other FBOs in the health care services, education and leadership development, agriculture and community development, leprosy and tuberculosis(TB) rehabilitation (UMCOR 2012, & LAC/UMC 2010). Let it be mentioned that, through these programs the Ganta Mission station and other FBOs

continues to “fill socio -economic development gaps” (LAC/UMC 2010, p.3). The FBOs have immensely buttressed the efforts of the Liberian Government in addressing the need for poverty reduction by contributing to sound “human resource development, improved health care delivery, disease control, sustainable community development, food security and faith development and nurture” (UMCOR 2012, p.2). In addition to the Ganta Mission station there are different mission stations owned and operated by different FBOs during the same function as mentioned above. For instance, Catholic Mission, Lutheran mission, Amidayah mission as well as development programs addressing the poor and vulnerable in the Liberian society.

3.6. Liberia and the Millennium Development Goals

From a general perspective, the Millennium Development Goals were sets “of goals that the International Community has agreed to try to achieve by 2015” (UNDP 2009; UNESCO 2007 cited in: PRS, 2008 P.32) as a way of responding to some of the World’s major development challenges (PRS 2008). Millennium Development Goals is so connected to the subject of this master thesis in that the eight sets of goals have some direct or indirect idea of poverty reduction locally countries by countries and impacting the whole world Internationally. For instance, “the eight goals range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS to providing universal primary education” (UNDP 2009; UNESCO 2007 Cited in; PRS, 2008 P.32). Those examples demonstrated are inter related poverty reducing activities that has cross cutting role in human living environment. One will agree that if a person is sick with HIV/AIDS, such person will not be able to address other concerns that might improve his/her livelihood (PRS 2008). To realistically achieving the MDGs was very challenging for many developing countries generally, but specifically in Liberia, it was even more difficult because of the aftermath of the fourteen plus years of civil crisis (Guannu 2010; PRS 2008). While most countries were making at least progress towards the goals, Liberia was dramatically downwards because there was capacity gap needed to achieving their goals (PRS 2008). For the most part, all of Liberia’s indicators were worse in 2000 than they were in 1990 therefore, for Liberia to make a gain at the time to achieving any of the goals meant working hard in a shorter period than any other country ahead of Liberia already (PPRS 2008). In 2006, the Government formulated some policies that would probably address some of the key issues in achieving the “MDGs” (PRS 2008). They for example, worked on the

“Interim Poverty Reduction Strategies and the Government 150 days’ action plan” (UNDP, 2009; PRS 2008, p.25).

As mentioned by the *United Nations Millennium Goals*, the first and most important goal to the subject of this research was to reduce poverty by half by 2015 (PRS 2008). In the case of Liberia, this would imply, “reducing the poverty headcount 63.8 percent to about 3.2 percent in seven years’ period from 2000 to 2007” (PRS 2008, & IGIS 2008). Logically, this estimation at time would not be possible and could be considered as one of the fastest poverty reduction in the world at large and Liberia (PRS 2008)

The “original intent of the MDGs was to reduce the poverty rate by 50 percent over 25 years or roughly 2 percent per annual” (UNESCO 2007 cited in: PRS 2008 p. 31). With Liberia, a 2 percent annual reduction in headcount index of 63.8 percent translates into the reduction of approximately 1.3 percent points per annual or about 4 percent points over the three year of the poverty reduction strategy (LISGIS 2008 &, PRS 2008). Therefore, the poverty reduction strategy headcount index to about 60 percent by 2011 (PRS 2008).

Liberia was expected to achieve this rate of poverty reduction mentioned or even faster during the poverty reduction strategy and beyond and projected economic growth rate over 10 percent annually and the policy action described in the strategy (LIGIS 2008; PRS 2008). While Liberia could not achieve the MDGs on poverty reduction by 2015, it was likely to achieve progress consistent with the MDGs (PRS 2008).

3.6.1. Sustainable Development Goals

The “(SDGs) came into existence at the *United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development* with the aim of producing a set of universal goals that will address environmental, political and economic challenges facing our World” (UN 2015). As indicated in the United Nations report, “Sustainable Development Goals replaces the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which started a global effort in 2000 to tackle the indignity of poverty” (UN 2015). Additionally, the “MDGs drove progress in several important areas 15 years; reducing income poverty, providing much needed access to water and sanitation, dividing down child mortality and drastically improving maternal health” (UNDP 2015). It is also noted in the above report that, “the Sustainable Development Goals are a bold commitment to finish what were stated, and tackle some of the more pressing challenges facing the World today” (UNDP 2015). The SDGs is mentioned as working in

the “spirit of partnership and pragmatism to make the right choices now to improve life in a sustainable way for future generation” (UNDP 2015). Furthermore, it “provided clear guidelines and targets for all countries to adopt in accordance with their own priorities and the environmental changes of the World at large” (UN 2015). The United Nations presents itself as tackle the “root causes of poverty and unite us together to make a positive change for both people and planet with seventeen Goals interconnect, meaning success in one affects success in others” (UNDP 2015).

3.7. The Concept of Poverty

In any given society, “a strategy for poverty reduction must start with the process of making sure that the poor people are identified” (OHCHR 2005 p. 7). In exploring the role of Faith Based Organizations in poverty reduction programs, it was important to firstly find out an acceptable definition of what poverty is and the population of Liberians who fall in it. Since “Poverty’ has multi-dimensional and cultural relative concept, the attributes of poverty depend on the social, economic, political, and cultural values for society. Narayan noted in the “voices of the poor” that poverty is experienced at the local levels, in specific context, in a specific place, and in a specific interaction” (Narayan, 2000 p. 230). To have a good definition of poverty, it is therefore important to take the above into consideration to have a fruitful poverty reduction program.

3.7.1. Kinds of Poverty

At present, there are three basic approaches to that define poverty; “income poverty, capability poverty and social exclusion” (Sachs 2005)

3.7.2. Income Poverty

Income Poverty has been “conventionally viewed as lack of income or purchasing power or deprivation of resources to attain the necessities of life” (OHCHR 2005). Even within this usual definition of poverty, there are disagreements in the conceptual terms and even greater ones regarding how to measure it (OHCHR 2005). Per Jeffrey Sachs, there is an agreement on the distinction of three different types of Income Poverty; extreme or absolute poverty, moderate poverty and relative poverty (Sachs 2005). In the above distinction, the World Bank uses this

paradigm by measuring a person's income and establishing a "poverty line" used 1 dollar a day which represents an income level below which cause a person to be in extreme poverty (OHCHR 2005). Additionally, 2 usd a day can also be used as to measure "moderate poverty" (OHCHR 2005).

3.7.3. Capability Poverty

Capability definition of "poverty is perfectly consistent with the human rights approach" (OHCHR 2005). In this view, poverty can be said to "consist of the non-fulfillment of a person's human rights to a range of basic capabilities" (Ibid 2005). Sen is of the view that "the failure of basic capabilities to certain acceptable levels" (Sen 1992 p. 64). The concept of capability refers to the "person's freedom to achieve well-being which consists of some interrelated functionalities, that is, things that we value being or doing, such as being in good health, being literate, or being able to participate in the life of community or being free to speak" (OHCHR 2005, p. 7). The *Human Right -Based Approach* suggest that "in each country, it must be ascertained, through a participatory process, which other capabilities its people consider basic enough for their own failure to count as poverty" (ibid 2005 para 13.)

3.7.4. Social Exclusion

The concept of social exclusion "came into literature in the 1970s to analyze the conditions of those who are not necessarily income poor, though many are but, who are kept out of the mainstream of society" (Agola; Awange 2014 p. 83). The European foundation described it as "the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live" (OHCHR 2005). UNICEF "proposes a shift in the definition of poverty away from a narrow measurement that address income inclusively to a definition that includes, income poverty deprivation and well-being" (UNICEF 2009).

3.8. Poverty in Under Developed Countries (Least Developed Countries)

Liberia is a part of fifty (50) countries around the world designated by the "United Nations" in

2008 as “*Least Developed Countries*” ((UNCTAD 2006).). Those countries were classified or designated based on the following:

1.). “Low income criterion, based on the Gross Natural Income(GNI) per capital a three years’ average, with thresholds of 750 for causes of addition to the list and 900 for cases of graduation from least developed countries status” (UNCTAD 2006).

2.) “Human assets criterion involving a composite index (the Human Assets Index) based on indicators of; nutrition- percentage of the population undernourished, Health-child mortality rate, school enrollment-gross secondary enrollment rate and Literacy-adult literacy rate” (UNCTAD 2006).

3). “Economic vulnerability” criterion involving the composite index with indicators of; natural stock -index of instability of Agriculture productivity, share of population displaced by natural disaster, trade stocks-index of instability of exports of goods and services, exposure to stocks-share of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in GDP merchandise export concentration index, Economic smallness-population in logarithm, Economic remoteness-index remote ness” (UNCTAD 2006).

3.8.1. Trends in Poverty

Frequency of “extreme poverty measured as a proportion of the people living on less than 1USD a day has decreased from a peak 44 percent in 1994 to 36 percent in 2005” (UNCTAD 2008). It is mentioned by UNCATAD that” the absolute number of extremely poor people continued to rise in Least Developed Countries (LCDs) until 2003, when the upward trend levelled off” (UNCTAD 2008). Poverty reduction has been much faster in Asian “*Least Developed Countries*” than in Africa’s “*Least Developed Countries*”, where the absolute numbers of extremely poor people continue to rise. In 2005, there was an “estimate that 277 million people lived on less than 1USD a day” (UNCTAD 2008). This was in all “Least Developed Countries, including 206 million in Africa Least Developed Countries,71 million in Asia Least Developed Countries and 1 million in Island Least Developed Countries” (UNCTAD 2008).

Classifying *Least Developed Countries* per their exports specialization, poverty incidence is higher in commodity exporters, that is, those for which petroleum, mineral and Agriculture products accounts for majority of their exports. It is mentioned in this report that “although the incidence

of extreme poverty is declining, the proportion of the population living on more than 1USD a day but less than 2USD a day has remained” (UNCTAD 2008) constant at approximately 40 percent of the population living on 2USD a day has been declining slowly” (UNCTAD 2008).

2.8.2. Growth and Poverty in Least Developed Countries

The “relationship between economic growth and human well-being is a controversial subject with many different ideas and views” (UNCTAD 2008). It is seen that the recent period of rapid economic growth in the *Least Developed Countries* “has been associated with slow rate of poverty reduction and progress towards the” (UNCTAD 2008) MDGs because of the type of economic growth in the *Least Developed Countries* (Ibid 2008). Since 2000, economic growth has accelerated sharply in the *Least Developed Countries*, “but this has been accompanied by only a marginal increase in the pace of poverty reduction, contrary, to expectations, thus, the relationship between economic growth and poverty reduction has been weakened ” (UNCTAD 2008).

3.9. Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter as I previously stated was to provide historical insights to the context of the study. In the chapter, it was noted, that before the preparing of the Poverty Reduction Program Liberia had gone through military and political instability. The civil crisis broke down every sector of our society; the economy, social, political etc beginning in 1980. In this fragile Country we saw the elections of democratic president that give rise to the idea of Poverty Reduction Strategy program. In this context, insights were provided on economic of Liberia, poverty lines, and some poverty reducing activities of Faith Based Organizations in Liberia.

4.0. Chapter Four: Exploring the Role of Faith Based Organizations in Poverty Reduction Strategy in Liberia

4.1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to articulate and presents the emergence findings gathered why exploring the role of FBOs in poverty reduction Strategy of Liberia (2008-2011). While exploring the role of FBOs, both documents and qualitative interviews were used to collect data from institutions and the natural environments of the respondents. A total of fifteen respondents from four Christian FBOs and one Muslim FBO as well as six persons who have directly benefited from the poverty reduction program initiated by those FBOs. Furthermore, findings were gathered from program coordinators, program managers and program beneficiaries who benefited from the programs on one hand, and the coordinators and managers of projects who have right hand knowledge about the workings of their institutions on the other hand. The aim of the interviews was to attempt to shed light on each of the organisations own direction on range of activities or services engaged in over the period 2008-2011, reasons for having those activities and some examples of successes/strengths, and weaknesses/short comings of FBOs in poverty reduction in Liberia. An attempt to answering those three sub research questions will obviously be proving answers to the main research question. In this way, it was not very difficult to arrange or categorize the information into parts and in the same ways it was not also difficult for those that were interview to give additional answers to the questions. The central idea is to give the actual voices of the respondents before a thematic analysis or discussion. It is therefore with this, that the below discussion was based on.

4.2. Sub- research question 1: What range of Poverty Reduction activities or services were the FBOs engaged in over the period 2008-2011?

To fully provide the kind of answers that are needed to explore the role of faith based organisations in Poverty Reduction Strategy in Liberia, one needs to give the range of activities or services undertaken by each FBO sampled in the case of this research during the period 2008-2011. In this way, you can logically see the findings following a sequence of thought from one FBO to the other. Some FBOs have the same activities or programs but the application on the field which account for this research findings on their role in the PRS may not be the same. For example, one FBO

might play a role in education but directed to vocational skill development while another FBOs may do education but directed to elementary, junior and senior high education to impact acknowledge into future generation.

As stated in the background literature the Poverty Reduction Strategy of Liberia as documented did not exactly attached any development responsibilities to any with FBOs including the five interviewed (PRS 2008). Consistent with the Government policy or development agenda the Poverty Reduction program of Liberia had four pillars looking in to different development profiles linked directly or indirectly to poverty reduction (PRS 2008). For example, “National Security,” “Economic revitalization”, “Governance and rule of Law” and “Infrastructure and basic social services were named as the four pillars” (PRS 2008 P. 46). Under each pillar, there were different cross-cutting roles that each Government ministry and agency was responsible for, as well as secular civil society organizations, secular NGOs both local and international.

4.2.1. Role of CARITAS Monrovia in the PRS

An examination of Caritas documents (reports, evaluations, & profiles) shows that is a development arm of the Catholic Archdiocese of Monrovia that operates in seven Counties with the prime role in Sustainable Agriculture, Rural Development cooperation and Humanitarian aid /relief to the poor and vulnerable people and communities (CARITAS 2009). As indicated, through these programs the FBO provide support to the marginalised, destitute, and under privilege people in the Liberia Society who has lose hope because no one was there to give them hope. I also noted that, this organisation has been deeply involved in poverty reduction as far back as 1971 by the:

inspiration through the Gospel and the Catholic Social Teaching based on the value of every human being and the solidarity to provide a dignified existence for everyone, regard less of age, gender, sexual orientation, origin or political orientation (CARITAS 2009)

Based on the above findings, I now ask about the specific role of CARITAS Monrovia office in the Liberia PRS:C-1 was interviewed as he explained the following;

Well, our NGO play a role in economic revitalization, infrastructure and basic social services. Meeting basic food needs [...] income generation, like village saving, susu, club and community food needs. We introduced small holder Agriculture farming in rural communities mhm to make the farmers graduate from [...] food insecurity to food security.

Really, we give tools, seeds, cutlasses, hoes, shovels, many more to empower the farmers to engage in the farming activities. I've been working in seven counties [...] all together with my staff in 2124 communities, I tell you we have been building hand pumps 2114, latrines 415 hmm is not easy but we are on it (C-1, interview, July 10, 2016)

Was this role direct role mentioned in the PRS?

C-1 Continue by stating the following expressions:

Well... as far as I know the PRS did not attach any responsibilities to us during the implementation of the poverty reduction program. But I read in the PRS document different roles and responsibilities cross cutting for Government Ministries and agencies. To say CARITAS, you are responsible for this pillar....it was not done it all. (C-1, interview, July 10, 2016)

In addition C-1 and C-2 in separate interview made referenced to the findings that the role mentioned above was not a direct role or responsibilities that was assigned to their FBO by the Government during the poverty reduction program of Liberia to perform ,but there has existed for their FBO development profile that has consistently been looking into programs that reduce poverty to some extent especially so in rural communities where the most affected and vulnerable people are found (C-1 and C-2 interview July 10 & 12, 2016).

Repeating similar idea C-1 have spoken on concerning their FBO role in the PRS C-2 stated;

Well, for me we we've been training the farmers on new ideas in farming. Hmmm [...] that way back farming we've changed it to something new that will give them more harvest. Now the harvest is plenty so we tech [/teach/] them how to give loan, make susu, among themselves. Besides Agriculture, we are [.....] into empowering women, building bridges, training in peace building, latrines and hand pumps bulging and TOT worship for communities' organizations on empowerment. When the women are empowered they become very good in contributing to the community (C-2 interview July 10,2016)

C-1 continues to confirm the findings by stating that the role of our FBO was not direct but an indirect role because it is mentioned to have been involved with same programs and activities as he states;

No, no... our role was an indirect role.... our FBO was not mentioned in the Poverty Reduction Strategy document simple [*somebody enters the office*] but we have been serving people in different communities providing services mentioned under social services and economic revitalization eenn you understand. Let me tell you [...] all our projects have always been implemented in communities where the proper poor are, so the

issue of poverty reduction has been our concern first and last (C-1 interview, July 10, 2016)

Another thing that was brought up during the interview was to find out whether the community people are benefiting from this poverty reducing activities. I try to seek the level to which the poverty reducing activities are reducing poverty in their community. Speaking with one of the beneficiaries on the bridge project this is what was said:

Well for me...from the time, Liberia came here, cars cannot reach here at all, lo-[these] people build this thing for us, we are happy now you see me, my cassava, plantain, with the pepper I can take to the market to sell. your self can see the town ...to buy zinc that was not small thing for the water that was on the road cannot make the car to come with zinc, and no way to sell what you put in the ground before. So, the way now we can go to sell our things is good. We can buy clothes, food, get place to sleep and do plenty things (Beneficiary interview July 10,2016)

4.2.2. The Role of the Community Services Program of the United Methodist Church in PRS.

The reports of the Community Development Program of the United Methodist Church disclosed that, her role in poverty reduction generally is to serve as the catalyst for the transformation and social economic development of the republic of Liberia through it areas of ministries (LAC/UMC 2010). It continues to offer services in health care services, education and leadership development, Agriculture and community development. I find out that through these programs the Community Services program of the United Methodist Church fill socio- economic gaps. Further finding is that the program has immensely buttressed the efforts of the government in addressing the need for poverty reduction by contributing to sound human resource development, improved health care delivery and disease control, sustainable community development, food security and faith development (UMCOR 2012).

In an interview with two staffs of this FBO about the role in the PRS. The two staffs have stated that they have idea about the PRS and how it started but their FBO was not equally mentioned as stated in previous finding but they play an active role in poverty reduction even before and during the PRS.

This is what M-1 explained as their FBO role in the PRS;

For me... before I tell you about our role in the PRS, let me tell you about what the United Church has been during hennn before till now. Let me tell you [...] my brother, the church you see here mhm started her community work among the poor people way back in 1926 [.....] through local partners and our Americans and Europeans missionaries.

She continues

We get [/we have/] ...Ganta mission with Hospital, Agriculture activities, schools; Gbarnga mission the something, yaah. Camphor mission and Garson mission [...] the same community services for the poor and vulnerable men and women. Well, coming straight to your question now our FBO role in the Liberia PRS was not something to say [...] our name was in their paper per say, but in my right mind [....] we are doing the same program in their paper.

The second staff M-2 explained their FBO role in the PRS;

welcome my dear brother and thanks for selecting our FBO. Well, the PRS has several pillars and [.....] has state actors coordinating from the national level. you see [.... ...] they tell which NGOs will do this or that on which pillars or not. Technically, [...] our FBO that did not project itself at that national level to say Mr. government... here we are [...] where will you place us in the pillars,

He further explained

Our FBO has development profile that was considering Education, Health, Agriculture, women empowerment, Human development-leadership and skills development., micro-Loan. We also engage in right based approach, in which we trained the community [...]by tell them hey, you are the duty bearer and right holders [...] you have the right and deserve the right leader and your leader should be accountable to you. So, you see their ideas and approach to development work is very different from the way others who have not gotten will react. I tell you again [...] we have more role play in poverty reduction from a general face of it but technically [....] we were not included in the poverty reduction document of Liberia.

So then with this poverty reducing activities, why were you left out of the PRS?

well maybe since we are Christian organization they left us alone to do our own things

4.2.3. The Role of Lutheran Development Service (LDS) PRS

A thorough reading into the Lutheran Development Services (LDS) documents revealed that, LDS offer services to God's people in an impartial way. This revelation is an interesting finding because it speaks to the fact that a Christian based organisation does not in no way discriminate against other lines or divide. The Vision, Mission, and goal of the Lutheran Development Services capture

some of the ideas that are important to the subject under consideration. The vision and mission of the Lutheran Church Related FBO which implement highly quality holistic development program with emphasis of;

basic human needs regardless of religion, tribe, origin, beliefs and political affiliation with the overall goal of contributing to the improvement in the living standard of rural and poor population in Liberia (LDS 2008 t).

Lutheran Development Services (LDS) undertake programs or projects aimed at a holistic sustainable development based on Christian Principle. The institution work with people for the fulfillment of their basic needs in health, food security, and small business development initiatives. It also uses existing knowledge as well as social or cultural elements useful to development in any given community. LDS play a role in poverty reduction by promoting and supporting human rights advocacy and community peace building through Trauma healing and reconciliation program as well as HIV/AIDS activities (LDS 2008).

L-1 explained the role they have played in the PRS;

Our NGO was engaged in agriculture, distribution non-food items in rural communities, in the agriculture area we've multiply (multiplied) seeds, cuttings and divide (divided) on the farmers. Re-settled some rural poor families with mhm non-food items to begin with. You see [...] we multiply (multiplied) goat, chicken, pigs, cow, sheep and give them to farmers. This is the way [...] our FBO has been taken care of the vulnerable here yaahhhh. I tell your(you) the more animals a farmer own the more money he or she makes.

He continues,

We always trained [...] our farmers most especially the female on idea of empowerment to have their own [...] yes, we also play role indirectly by [...] doing village saving or susu club. We really, really, encourage the farmers to used(use) money from their farm for load [...] micro loan. Again, I tell your(you) during the PRS we constructed many bridges [...] Both long term and short term bridges connecting villages and communities.

This finding suggests that FBOs has been play role in different sectors of our Liberia society most especially so in providing economic empowerment as well as social services. As noted, most of the FBOs have been engaged in rural communities as explained by L-2;

well, we advocate [advocated...] for the vulnerable poor men and women in rural communities, give them money in the form of loan for business, business. We have health

education for young women and men to have safe sex [...] before marriage and do away with unwanted pregnancy. We engage the community women to take part in the leadership of the community through teaching, workshop and leadership seminar.

This finding as indicated by L-2 had specific emphasis as express;

Well, our NGO play a role in two pillars of the Poverty Reduction Program; economic revitalization, infrastructure and basic social services. Under basic social services were engaged in Education and Health ...you know. For economic activities were meeting basic food needs [...] income generation, like village saving, susu, club and community food needs. We introduced small holder Agriculture farming in rural communities mhm to make the farmers graduate from [...] food insecurity to food security. Really, we give tools, seeds, cutlasses, hoes, shovels, many more to empower the farmers to engage in the farming activities.

4.2.4 The Role Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) PRS

The findings gathered from the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) shows the role of the organisation in the empowerment of women, education and gender main streaming in National Development. It plays a role in poverty reduction by providing educational services to women in Liberia both in urban and rural communities (YWCA 2009 p. 6). As it has been stated already YWCA operates throughout Liberia working with vulnerable women and grass roots organisation in similar service or function. The Young Women Christian Association play a role in poverty reduction as noted from their reports by making sure that she

engages in the formulation of policies, programs, advocacy and services that will better the lives of women in Liberia and guarantee women and girls' human rights are protected, respected and fulfilled (YWCA 2011 p. 3).

Some of the of the programs YWCA has been engage in as part of their support to the poverty reduction programs are: vocational school or skill training, agriculture, sexual reproductive health education, and women empowerment with Micro-loan.

The findings show that empowerment through skills development is a very important tool in poverty reduction as expressed by Y-1 in an interview concerning their role in FBO poverty reduction program of Liberia as:

Well, let me tell you [...] working with the poor people, especially so vulnerable women in slums communities is not a strange thing to YWCA – Liberia. Since, 1961 I was a little

girl YWCA has been taken care of [...] vulnerable women up to present time. No joke about it [...] we seriously in advocating for the rights of women against all forms of gender based violence and all forms of discriminations.

She repeated

we have a strong women empowerment program... like in sewing, tailoring, tie and died, baking, soap making, and hair dressing. This is how we do it [...] the women are group into five or three after gaining the vocational skills [...] we give them money to establish their own business with what they have learn [/learned/]

I discovered that FBO played a meaningful role in advocating for the rights of women against all forms gender based violence and all forms of discriminations in the Liberian setting. This is how Y-2 puts it in the interview;

You see in our society women are always excluded in many aspects ... so we have been speaking for most of them to come up. Today you see we have a female president all has been with the help of advocating for the rights of women against all forms of discriminations. To tell you the fact our FBO have been on the front lines writing in the newspapers, conducting workshops, seminars well as the radio stations. Let me tell you we will continue... to tell the rest that women are not slaves but equal in society.

One of the things are found in the sub-research question about the role is that, poverty reduction goes as deep as reproduction, poor self-esteem and choosing a career that you can ably master well. Y-2 further expresses that to reduce poverty we play a role by educating young girls about family planning, train them to compete with their male friends in school: This is what he explained

We are doing three programs with high schools [*long pause*] career development program for high school girls, this way... the girls, een you know, select what to study in college before they leave the walls of the high schools. The second thing is girls club in various high schools een you know een where we trained peer education to [.....*pause*] train the girls to compete with their male counterpart in leadership, academic what so ever in the school and the last thing is [...] the sexual reproductive health education in high school.

4.2.5. The Role of Humanity First Liberia in the PRS

The document in my possession from Humanity First Liberia reveals that it plays a role in poverty reduction by safeguarding and preservation of human life and dignities. It is a Muslim FBO that working with the poorest and vulnerable in the Liberian society. I noted part of what this institution

did and continues to do was to:

promote peace and understanding based upon mutual tolerance and respect, they have also play a role in relieving suffering caused by natural disasters or human conflicts, like in the case of the aftermath of the Liberia civil crisis and helping the youthful population of Liberia to strengthen their capacity to help themselves (HFL 2009).

In furtherance to these, I also find out that they play key role in poverty reduction generally and an indirect role in the poverty reduction program of Liberia in the supply of relief items, in the areas of vocational education in plumbing, carpentry, general building construction, soap making driving etc. Additionally, they provided computer training center for high schools in rural communities in Liberia.

This finding shows that the provision of technical skills is one of the effective ways of reducing poverty in context to the Liberia society. It was mentioned in an interview with H-1 as it explains the role in poverty reduction:

We have given providing skills in plumbing, electricity, general construction, carpentry, driving and many more. The thing is we [...*sound*] have a program out that cut across education, health, vocational colleges, water for life and food for life. Young youth get the skills to help better their lives in the future. So, our technical college do the training free of charge and give the beneficiaries their materials to use after training.

Tell me now with these youth training program, why were you not included in the PRS?

H-1 expressed these word:

for me I see this as something that was planned by the government and partners to leave us out so we can continue to do private business as we have been doing long ago

4.3. Conclusion of Sub- Research Question 1

The first sub research question in this chapter is; what range of activities or services the FBOs were engaged in and how has this varied over the period (2008- 2011)? It was noted or discovered from interviews and documents that, all the FBO, sampled in the research were engaged in different program activities including but not limited to Agriculture, Micro- Finance, both

preventative and curative health services, Education-vocational and skills development programs, female empowerment workshops and seminars, and right based approaches as part of their role in poverty reduction. Secondly, it was also indicated throughout the findings presentation, with clear evidences from informants and documents that FBOs were not directly included in the poverty reduction document. This was made know from the respondents as well as the Liberia poverty reduction document itself. I also find out that each FBO had separate development profile considering different development issues that address poor and vulnerable in society based on inspiration either from social principles or teaching from the Bible or Quran.

4.4. Sub Research Question 2: Why did the FBOs undertake these activities?

An attempt in answering this sub- research question will consider specific activities as role played by the FBOs. Secondly, this was also intended to find out reasons for implementing those specific activities connected to the poverty reduction strategy during the period under consideration. For example, I was concern to find out exactly why did YWCA had skills development program for women from 2008-2011?

In the previous finding from sub-research question number one, it has been noted and reflected that most of the activities undertaken by the FBOs were Micro- finance that came into the different FBOs project from different dimensions. In the findings two of the FBOs sampled had direct micro-finance loan, while the other three had its indirectly from the sales of agriculture products. This means that the farmers had cooperative farm, and then after the sales of the proceed the cash is used to give out money for other business purposes.

I was now interested in finding out the reason(s) for implementing micro-loan especially so at the time of poverty reduction.

4.4.1. Micro-loan:

The first interview was with L-2 and this is what she explained;

for me our micro-finance program really helping people in the rural communities. Some of the people don't have anything to show to us before we give them money or loan. All we want is for them to be a member of the community and show interest in selling or making farms with the money than we will give it to you and work with you.

I also find out from a beneficiary that the micro- loan given by the FBO has help some of them in

meaningful ways as she explains:

well... for me when I get the money, I use it for selling business and when we sell the profit I make from it... is the one I use to get food for the family, use it to buy clothes for myself and the children, build homes and get some money to do plenty things. When I do all these things, then I become happy and able to stand on my own. This loan business can make people strong and make you to stop begging in the streets, communities or friends.

4.4.2. Agriculture:

Agriculture was one of the specific project activities in the development profile of all the Faith Based Organisations as noted from documents and respondents respectively.

I spoke with C-2 why was this under taken, he has this to say:

For me...the reason for doing all this small holder agriculture work is just to make community dwellers to be sustainable and self-sufficient in food production and to improve their livelihood. To take them from the level where they can be for once food secure. You see, if we just lay back all our community people will surely be hungry and the situation will lead to... sicknesses and diseases and further cause untimely death. So, our intervention as a church is timely and is meaningful especially in rural community.

Another beneficiary was interviewed and he confirms that he is doing by far better than before from the agriculture activities. He explained the following;

I plant cassava on a big portion of a land each year harvest the cassava and transform cassava into gari and sell many bags on the market. I use the money I make from selling my gari to buy plenty selling things for my shop [*customer came to buy*] and the shop in turn around make money for regular farming activities all the time. As you can see [...] I am living good life, my children going to good school, my living place is in a good condition and so when any development come in our community I can be part of the first people to pay my own part of it.

4.4.3. Health:

The Faith Based Organisations played extensive role both in the curative and preventative health services as noted and uncovered from both the interviews as well as field visits and documents. This was one of their major project activities in rural communities in Liberia.

In conversation with one of the respondents H-1, this is what he explained:

well... you see we are building clinics and new hospitals in some rural communities in Liberia. But again, let me tell you we continue to supply some poor and vulnerable people with free medical services. We have a mobile team that take health to those who cannot

reach us.so you see our concern is for the people to get well and began to work for their family.

One of the beneficiaries interviewed said the following:

Well...the way the people been teaching [...] in this place about how to have safe sex it is helping me too much. now I have only one child and married. I did not stay in my parents' home to get pregnant but in my husband home. Now the child pa and my seh [...] taking care. Some girls in this town have plenty children for that reason, no way to take care of all the plenty children when they get sick or food to eat or even cloths to wear. For me part, I hear them and live by it today it helping me. My son can eat good food and on time... no worry like other people with seven or ten children.

She continues;

For me now, I am strong to work and find money and food for me and my children ...but before the NGO people came [...] there was too much cholera outbreak taking place because we [...] were drinking water from well, creek, river and other dirty water place. Now, now... we are not experiencing too much running stomach again like it used to be. we are using good water from the hand pumps for drinking. We are also using the pit latrines for toilets instead of the bush. we use to be weak and even died from running stomach [...] and there was no way for us to do hard work and take care of our homes.

4.4.4. Education

It is worth not noting that one of the project activities that was directed to towards poverty reduction as I found out in project documents in my possession as well as from interview were education and skills development programs. This takes in to account formal and non-formal education and vocational skills development programs.

Y-1 explained her reasons for implementing such activities:

Well the good thing we do is to improve lives [...] so we try to give those that have gone through the [...] training some tools and working materials to be able to use after graduating from the vocational school. This way they are not just trained and left to go looking for job to do. we create the job and empower them so that they can be forever [...] self- sufficient.

C-2 also stated:

Well most of the FBOs had project target group that would otherwise contribute to the well-being of others.

A beneficiary said these through an interview:

Well... all I can now, now say is that YWCA na open my eye boy to see real and know my real, real self. First, first time, I did not know that I can do something with my hands to be very good that... I can live on. Now I am sewing uniform for all the children in the public school here. It pays me good money. For two year now ... I build a good house out of what I get from the school as a pay ... send my children to school, help friend and family member. I tell God thank you for YWCA.

Another Beneficiary said these expression:

I finish with school and driver [...] Christian Health Association of Liberia, it was good thing to know how to drive. The driver work can give every month to take care of my three (3) children and woman home.

4.5. Conclusion for Sub- Research Question 2

The second research question is; Why the Faith Based Organisations had these activities? The five FBOs selected for this study mentioned both in their reports and interviews as I found that some of the reasons for playing this role or implementing the above-mentioned activities was to firstly empower, to make rural communities member self-reliable and to improve current standards of living. The findings have evidences of the project intervention taking place amongst the poor and vulnerable people living in rural communities lacking basic social services that are needed for the enhancement and improvement of human lives.

4.6. Sub-Research Question 3: What are examples of successes, failures, and shortcomings of how FBOs reduced Poverty in Liberia, as perceived by the informants?

When you are looking at the role of FBOs in poverty reduction program of Liberia it is equally important to understand the strengths and weaknesses that FBOs bring to development or reducing poverty in the Liberia society. The goal for asking this sub- research question, was to show the strengths and weaknesses through the respondents' answers. By asking project coordinators, program managers as well as beneficiaries what are the strengths and weaknesses of Faith Based Organisations in poverty reduction in Liberia, they provided me the following;

In an interview with one of the respondents C-1 on the strengths of their FBO in poverty reduction program he explained:

Well [...] when it comes to FBO strength in poverty reduction or development work hmmm, I will say we are closed to the people... or the community members, Because of this, the people in the community are willing to work with us. Mhm [...] our church members are living in the community with the people so we are indeed close to them

C-1 further explained

Let me, show you example... the community can some time men and women can volunteer to work free for us, give sand, rocks, and many more. They are the same people we talk to, to join our church, we [...] are not new to them at all. Let me tell you again [...] because we are close to the community [...] the community believes in the work we do with trust and confidence [...] you know een.

Well, we are with the community in bad times and good times so...we share their pain, joy, and sorrow together. You see, being close to the community [...] we know the values for men and women and their laws, taboos and their way of life.

Respondent C-2 also repeated as he explained the strength of his FBO;

let me tell you ...the community people really trust in what we do because we have proven to be transparent from time to time

C-2 continues to explain that they have income from offering regularly from their congregations that support their work:

For me strength in poverty reduction is like this [...] our churches can collect offering and some people can make big offer to help our project [...] so once the churches doors are opened our project will continue to be here... een you know een. This thing I am talking about happening now in our local [.....] churches here in Liberia and our big, big catholic body in the world do the same thing to take care of human beings. Let me tell you [...] we get schools, hospital, clinics reliefs items from our small and big [...] catholic bodies from offering and donations in the world.

Referring to being committed to services C-2 explain

Another good thing [...] I know about us is that [...] when you give us small work to do [...] we do it well. We will be doing it, doing it, doing it [...] till we finish with it and turn it over to the community. You see [...] we believe that our work is for God's people [...] so the same way God [...] committed to us that is the way we handle this work.

One of the beneficiaries said these words:

For me the way I see this people they are good and strong. They tell us everything about this work. They can do good job. They have been... here long time we know their church building. We the traditional people we respect them and they also respect us them. All the project you see they stay and finish all before leaving. We have not seen them selling project materials at all in this town.

This finding shows that FBO is inspired by the teaching of Jesus Christ as it meets both with the material and non-materials needs of people living in rural communities. This was mentioned in interview with L-1 as he explains;

For me the way I see things [......] our FBO have strength in development work because of our creator God through Jesus Christ who was going everywhere helping people, teaching people, preaching to people and healing people. So, I read this, in the bible it makes me strong to always do development work for the poor people [...] especially in the rural communities amongst the poor people.

He further narrated:

Well for me this is [...] what the church is call to do, meeting the physical and spiritual needs of people. Our local churches preach God's message [...] why we do the physical thing [...] by providing Agriculture, micro-finance, health, education as well as connecting communities to sell and offer services.

L-2 another respondent mentioned being transparent, reaching places amongst the poor and I found that their FBO is non-discriminatory in addition their strength. Specifically, this church directed NGO has a Muslim man as their assistant program manager. Below are her explanations;

Well [...] I don't know about other FBOs [...] but my LDS is strong in implementing project in a hard to reach community among the poorest people who cannot access basic social services. Places that Government cannot go [...] is where our project is right now.

This finding reveal that LDS work with different religious groups and promote inclusiveness as expressed by L-2:

Our strength lies in the organization to work with everybody [...] we do not discriminate but work with all communities' members. In some communities, we have three religious groups; the African traditionalist, Muslim and Christians group but we all work together as team. You wouldn't believe this. but I tell you hmmm [...] in Lofa and Barpolu counties all project community facilitators are Muslims. It is about human beings [...] it is not about who you are or which religion you belong to. We also encourage women to equally participate in and they are doing well.

Another an important finding gathered from FBOs in addition to other useful information is that

they are creditable and committed to services as required by their work function.

M-2 expresses those ideas through an interview as he states;

well, for our setting here our FBO is trusted and overall has a result base platform. Let me be frank with you [...] If you want result in Liberia for development work [...] I will strongly advise you to work with faith based organizations [...] and you will get the kind of results you need. Without trust we would not have been here working all these many years. We don't eat project money as other organization can do but we maintain the integrity of the church.

M-2 also express that the good work they do bring people to their local congregation to become members:

Well.... many people have come over to our churches [...] because of the work the FBO has done but they were not force or the project was not use to convert them. Sometime [...] people who make decision will say I will join the Methodist church because the church people like development[...]maybe if I join them they will send my children to school, or give my children job besides the spiritual aspect of it. In short, people are converted or they join because of what the church organization doing. Let me tell you again [*long pause*] said most of our project leaders in the villages are Muslims and traditional people. They all work together to make sure that we achieve the project goal. So, this time around I [...] tell you that development is development for all. You don't put faith business above the well-being of poor and vulnerable people all in our communities.

I also found out that Faith Based Organisation live in the culture of the people, so working with the community is relatively easy. These were the explanations of this findings from Y-1 in the interview;

The first thing I know is that...FBO know and live in the culture of the people [...] you know enn. Let me show you one example, hmmm, in Bomi county an NGO from the government program build one latrine [...] close to the entrance of the poro bush a... sacred place can you imagine [.....] for this you know enn the people are not using it all and wasted in the grass

Y-1 revealed that her work is based on compassion for the poor from the teaching in the Bible:

you see when I read the bible and hear the teaching on stealing and what will happen to those who steal what God has given them to take care of... it put me in the better position to handle project money the right way ...you see. This is about character and your character is your life"

She continues but mention some distrusted members in their work as she expresses

Well to be fair with you my brother.... our organization is trusted but there are some elements who occasionally in the life of the project cannot handle project resources with care

One of the respondents out of the nine (9), mentioned as I found out a weakness that their organization has not reached to Muslims schools in Liberia at all with programs for female empowerment and skills development.

See below as Y-2 explains;

Well, another thing I see [...] is that from the time we started doing health clubs, leadership and skills development programs, we have not established [.....] it in the Muslim schools yet in Liberia. I see this as a weakness [...] because we have young women there that we need to work with. But as I speak, we have not gone there at all you understand what I mean enn. Let me tell this is an old age thing from time in time out.

He also repeated the strength of FBOs in development knowing the culture

For me one thing I know is that...FBO know and live in the culture of the people [...] you know enn. Let me show you one example, hmmm, in Bomi county an NGO from the government program build one latrine [...] close to the entrance of the poro bush a... sacred place can you imagine [.....] for this you know enn the people are not using it all and wasted in the grass. We live along side with the people so their values, norms and traditions are all known to us. We respect their sacred places and know how they respond to development work.

It was now clear that some of the FBOs teaching sections with beneficiaries and staffs as expressed by Y-2

you see we have devotion every morning and counsel the people working here and those that we are training. I tell you the children whose parents cannot afford to send them to school in our school.... we have regular devotion for them and bible study as well. This is helping them a lot. We want them to be good citizen in Jesus Christ.

Findings gathered below from the natural environment reveal that some Faith Based Organizations do not used development projects to convert people to their faith, but through their good works people come to their faith. See as C-1 explains;

To be fair enough with you my brother [...] to get people to work or to benefit is about your qualification not base on religion, but, but I repeat myself... maybe in the past but now in this 21 first century our programs are inclusive of everybody regardless of which religion you come from or social status you have. Common example I can show you is that [.....] most of our drivers out there are Muslims and majority of the beneficiaries are African traditionalist who have their freedom to religious and traditional practices.

It was also revealed that they attract converts based on the good works of their FBOs as expressed by C-1

Since this is a FBO [.....] let me also admit that people come to the church as converts sometimes based on the good works we have done. People go our hospitals and clinics and when they are healed they decide to join the church and become member. We do not select a town or village because it is a Christian dominated town or village but is based on need. Another thing that is good to know is that our local Pastors and members of the church may use the project as a point of contact to encourage people as they do mission and evangelism but the project is not used as a pre -requisite to wining people over to Christ.

L-2 also repeated and confirms the findings about being trusted by local and international partners as she states

you see on the wall, just look there, these are certificate given to us by our international partners because the way we handle our finances and they quality we bring to the community level... so we are transparent and trusted.

Another beneficiary also revealed that FBO build the first modern school in their village as expressed:

Let me tell you... this NGO is the first to put this good school down with four houses for teacher. Our children like it and it make the place look fine. From sine 1904, this is the first time

It was here also clearly indicated by the informant that they are committed to services and doing with compassion for the poor.

This was expressed by H-1

You see one good thing [...] I know about this NGO [...] is when you give us small work to do [...] we do it well. We will be doing it, doing it, and doing it [...] till we finish with it and turn it over to the community. You see [...] we believe that our work is for God's

people [...] so the same way God is committed to us that is the way we handle this work. You know...the church has been in this development business since 1822 [...] and doing it well with the community so the people know us.

He continues;

Well... all our activities are directed for the people who are poor, we really feel for them and want to really help them. We want to change their present condition to make life better for them. You see to be a Christian and see people suffering it makes me feel bad all the times. So, we are targeting those that have been forgotten about by our communities and societies in bad poverty situations.

4.7 Conclusion Sub-Research Question 3

As I conclude on the last sub-research question in this chapter; what are examples of successes/strengths, failures and or short comings/weaknesses of how FBOs reduced poverty in Liberia? I found out from the natural environment of all the FBOs selected in the research that they have strengths in development work in the following areas; that their organisations are trusted- without trust they would not have been allowed to continue their work for those many years; relevant to the Liberian context some FBOs also believe that they are transparent and credible therefore working with them bring results; others are of the views that FBOs reach to the poorest in hard to reach communities where the Government cannot reach in the Liberian communities ,more than this some are also of the views that they are committed to services- they always complete their task in every project interventions communities as such the people have trust and confidence in them whereas other are close to the communities as such they understand the culture of the people because they live within the culture; as a result of all of these they are best suited in meeting the spiritual and physical needs of the people in rural setting as well as some urban areas. Lastly, they attract volunteers to work with them at both office and community levels. Secondly, let it be mentioned that throughout the findings presentation, it provided a clear evidence that Faith Based Organisations in the Liberian setting does not use the development project as means of converting people to Christ but rather people willingly express interest to be a part of their Faith because of the good works that they have done in poor and vulnerable communities. This was made known by both beneficiaries and programs respondents. I also find out that one Christian FBO expresses inclusiveness but has not yet implemented skills development and leadership programs in Muslims schools throughout Liberian communities.

4. 8. Thematic Analysis

The focus or direction of this research was to find out the role of FBOs in poverty reduction strategy of Liberia 2008- 2011. For the most part, this idea or main research question has in a unique way guided the entire study and provided a deeper understanding and insights into development work that has specifically reduced poverty to some extent performed by five selected FBOs in the Liberian society. It was now clear to me in the interviews, program reports, evaluations, and plans that FBOs provided some meaningful contributions in two pillars of the poverty reduction program. This contribution as mentioned above was in practice, that is on ground the role of FBOs is seen actively involved with economic activities and basic social services. Therefore, for the thematic analysis, the role of religion or FBOs in Poverty reduction/ development will be analysed in addition to specific themes like the role of FBOs in Agriculture, Education, Health, Micro-finance on one hand. On the other hand, some of the key qualities FBOs bring to development like; Trust and Transparency, FBOs Understand and live in the Culture of the Community, Commitment for Service and Compassion and FBOs Work with the Poorest at Grassroots in Liberia. And finally, proselytism as a weakness on the part of FBOs in development will also be analysed. These are key themes that were consistently mentioned why trying to explore the role of FBOs in poverty reduction program in Liberia.

4.8.1. The Role of FBOs in Poverty Reduction Strategy from Liberia Perspectives

What I found from the Poverty Reduction Document as well as reports, plans and evaluations is that, the role of FBOs particularly the five sampled FBOs roles were not mentioned, in fact they were altogether implicitly excluded. This further confirmed my motivation for the study, that the role of religion and or FBOs in development thinking and practice have not been given considerable attention by secular development practitioners as mentioned by Haynes that, “the roles of religion were often explicitly excluded from the national development programs by modernisation processes often led by secular government in many parts of the developing world” (Haynes 2007 p. 4).

This was expressed by all the project coordinators and program managers as C-1 said:

Well... as far as I know the PRS did not attach any responsibilities to us during the implementation of the poverty reduction program. But I read in the PRS document different roles and responsibilities cross cutting for Government Ministries and agencies. To say CARITAS, you are responsible for this pillar....it was not done it all.

This finding draw attention to the theories about the role of religion in poverty reduction/development. It was very clear to me by the above findings that, the arguments, debates and disputes about the views that religion is a constrained rather than a source or catalyst of development in the sense of secular development practitioners by its exclusion from public project (Opschoor, 2007). Again, the informants were also not very clear on the reasons why they were left out of the poverty reduction strategy but made some assumptions as M -2 mentioned; ‘well maybe since we are Christian organisation they left us alone to do our own things’. I was also very keen to get views from the Muslim FBO in this research concerning their exclusion and H-1 also expressed similar idea as; “for me I see this as something that was planned by the government and partners to leave us out so we can continue to do private business as we have been doing long ago”. This finding from M-2 and H-2 speak clearly about the role of religion in the private sphere. Significantly, a group of social scientists are also of the view that, the more society becomes advance religious activities and religious institutions will again decline, vanish or fade and will now become private affairs for individual and family members (Habermas 1964, p 51).

In line with the above discussion, it was revealed in Article 14 of the Liberia Constitution that the State is separated from religion as written as:

all persons who in the practice of their religions, conduct themselves peaceable, not obstructing others and conforming to the standards set herein, shall be entitled to the protection. No religious denomination or sect shall have any exclusive privilege or preference over any other but all shall be treated Like; and no religious tests shall be required for any civil or military officer for the exercise of civil rights. Consistent with the separation of state and religion, the Republic Shall establish no state religion (Article 14 of the Liberia Constitution).

Since the constitution of any state is an organic law and one of the highest policy frame work that is often used to design other documents, it would be reasonable to think that, the implicit exclusion of FBOs in poverty reduction strategy to some extent might have been attributed to the above constitutional provision. I also think, this can be interpreted as religion becoming irrelevant in public sphere as the Liberia Government partner with secular development Institutions like; the

World Bank (WB) and International Monitoring Fund (IMF) to formulate and design poverty reduction document and that it should be placed in the private sphere because Liberia is a secular nation by constitutional provision (Article 14 of Liberia Constitution). The role of religion in development as perceived by Buijs 2004 can be discussed as follow: first, the misguided perception that, religion will be driven out as societies become more developed and modern. Secondly, religion is socially irrelevant as it is in the private spheres. Thirdly, some religions are incompatible with development. Finally, religion cannot be influenced or changed. In the views of secular development practitioners' religion is a traditional, conservatives and counterproductive to development (Jennings 2013). Drawing from these theoretical viewpoints, it would be logical to think that, Faith Based Organizations were implicitly excluded because the state and religion are separated and agree with M-2 and H-1 that: "well for me I think we were left out because we are religious organizations and the government wants us maybe to do our private things in our own range".

As indicated in the above empirical findings that, the five sampled FBOs were implicitly excluded or not mentioned in the Poverty Reduction document, I also discovered that in practice, that is on ground, FBOs contributed in two pillars of the poverty reduction program namely: Pillar II: Economic Revitalization and Pillar IV: Infrastructure and basic social services respectively (PRS 2008, p, 49). Additionally, as evidence from the interviews and program reports FBOs implemented varieties of projects and programs activities in the following thematic areas: agriculture, Micro-finance, health and education. Consistent with the interviews, programs report, plans and evaluations each FBO had development profile considering those mentioned programs and projects with different practical implementation schedule activities that indeed varied over the poverty reduction period.

This was an interesting finding as expressed by L-2;

Well, our NGO play a role in two pillars of the Poverty Reduction Program; economic revitalization, infrastructure and basic social services. Under basic social services were engaged in Education and Health ...you know. For economic activities were meeting basic food needs [...] income generation, like village saving, susu, club and community food needs. We introduced small holder agriculture farming in rural communities mhm to make the farmers graduate from [...] food insecurity to food security. Really, we give tools, seeds,

cutlasses, hoes, shovels, many more to empower the farmers to engage in the farming activities.

In his book *The Liberia History up to 1847*, Guannu confirmed this finding by stating that, religion played and continues to play a role in health and education sectors in a way that he thinks it is difficult to analyse or to discuss the role of religion in development without looking at health and education in Liberia. He further indicated this by acknowledging that education and health for example, were part of the plan by the American Churchmen and politicians who founded Liberia as a medium of the assumed western civilisation and religion in Africa (Guannu 2010 p. 29). Because of this, Guannu noted that, the American Churchmen and politicians opened way for an increase in different denominations like the Baptist, Methodist, Catholics Pentecostals etc. Guannu observes that, today those denominations along with some Muslims FBOs are responsible for education, health, agriculture, water and sanitation and many more; thereby ensuring the reduction of poverty at certain level throughout the Liberian communities (Guannu 2010; UMCOR 2012).

Furthermore, this finding confirms that, religion is playing role in certain key development aspects of the Liberia communities. The previous indication that FBO was deeply involved with poverty reduction activities on ground cannot be disputed because religion has and continue to pay role in development generally and specifically to poverty reduction. This was made know in theory when, Deneulin and Bano 2009 recognised five main roles of religion in development that are connected directly and indirectly confirming the finding above. They firstly, recognise that religion is a significant contributor in developmental goals such as economic growth. This in practice was one of the areas the sampled FBOs contributed to during the period under consideration (economic revitalisation during the poverty reduction program of Liberia). They met basic food needs by the production and an involvement into small holder agriculture activities that basically promoted food security and provided financial resources (CARITAS 2009). Secondly, they said religion is a solid foundation for forming people's values that affect legitimate development, thirdly, religious freedom is recognised as the basic human rights, fourth, religion is a part of human well-being, and lastly, religion is a political force shaping societies economically, socially and politically. Therefore, religion is very inherently relevant to poverty reduction/ development (Opschoor 2007). Moreover, Jefferey Haynes, among others confirms this by referring to the point that, with the growing of secularism all over in society the role and the meaning of religion is not losing at all

(Haynes 2007). Moreover, another group of social scientists indicated that the role of religion in human society is to bring people to action collectively, and to unite them further socially, and mobilise them politically even in today's community and society (Inger Furseth and Pal Repstadi 2006 p. 96). With the above contributions of religion to development in the poverty reduction strategy on ground, evidenced by the informant's views, reports, plans and evaluations, I would like to critically agree with other scholars that there should be better cooperation between the Government of Liberia and FBOs in poverty reduction programs. Wendy Tyndale, also indicated that FBO bodies and development bodies will make common agenda for achieving the MDGs (Tyndale 2011. P 210). More to this, at the end of the MDGs in 2015 at a United Nations assembly a development frame work was also curved called the Sustainable Development Goals that has identified and seeking to seriously tap on FBOs to achieving the SDGs (UN 2015). Furthermore, Tyndale mentioned that FBOs are responsible for the work of many of the MDGs in 2015 and currently the SDGs regarding poverty reduction and Human development. He said FBOs are responsible for wide range of income generating programs and development activities like vocational courses, community development, leadership training, education, health and Agriculture. In Africa, religious groups are running almost half of the schools and hospitals (Tyndale 2011, pp 2010-117). In line with Tyndale, the United Nations also recognises the positive contributions of FBOs to poverty alleviation in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and it claims that this has been very effective in societies where there are many religious activities (UN 2015). Additionally, Haynes pointed out that there is a need for "robust partnership" between secular development agencies and FBOs, repeating the fact that FBOs cannot work by themselves (Haynes 2007 p. 127).

4.8.2. Education

The study finds out that during the poverty reduction program the five sampled FBOs contributed on ground through basic social services and one of such like education was done extensively. It was observed that in most rural communities in Liberia FBOs have more if not all educational facilities as compare to Government. For instance, the Community Development Services of the United Methodist Church with a project goal of "improving the quality of learning for disadvantaged and poor children in rural communities" (LAC/UMC 2010) has played a major role

in the education sector. They believe that it is very great to build the human skills as a means of reducing poverty.

In line with the above, this is what a program beneficiary expressed:

For me all I can say now is that this skill training open my eye boy to see real and know my real, real self. First, first time, I did not know that I can do something with my hands to be very good that... I can live on. With the sewing, I learn in school now I am sewing uniform for all the children in the public school here. It pays me good money. For two year now ... I build a good house out of what I get from the school as a pay ... send my children to school, help friend and family member (4.4)

In Amartya Sen's definition of human capacities, he considers education as an important part of developing the human capacities or skills. He also stresses that as a person learns and gain skills he or she become very useful and very productive thereby contributing to the process of developing oneself (Sen 2001, p. 292). As it was previously mentioned the five FBOs sampled programs and projects were directed to helping the poor and the vulnerable or the advantage people in both academic and vocational or skills development programs. Education as a poverty reducing activities was mentioned in the poverty reduction document as one of the key activities to poverty reduction on the list of the MDGs up to 2015 and currently in the new development frame work the Sustainable Development Goals as well (PRS 2008; UN 2015). Informant C-2 noted that, "most of the FBOs had project target group that would otherwise contribute to the well-being of others". I observe that the education of youthful population, women and children were very fundamental to their projects.

As an evidence of this statement, beneficiary from a vocational skills training program expresses the impact of the education on him and his family as well:

I finish with school and driver [...] Christian Health Association of Liberia, it was good thing to know how to drive. The driver work can give me money every month to take care of my three children and woman home (4.4)

In line with the above finding from one of the project beneficiaries it confirms the point or idea that education make way for people to get job and the job also serve as a means by which one can take care of his wife and children (Hopper 2012, p.85). It was also realised that most of the people who could not afford at all to take care of their family could now do so by taking care of some additional relatives. Another Beneficiary also express similar ideas as she states; "before my

children were living with different people but now with the skills I have... and the job ...I am taken care of many family members”.

4.8.3. Micro-finance

Informants from the FBOs sampled, findings revealed in its reports that, they fill the gaps created by the refusal of some if not all commercial banks to give loan to the poor and disadvantage people in rural communities. CARITAS Monrovia Office noted in its report that, while commercial and traditional Banks are given loan to people based on collateral, “we are given our micro-loan because on trust and empowerment scheme, so we are to only monitor and train them for multiplication” (CARITAS 2009). With this finding World Bank (2005) observes that the objective of Micro-finance is not just to provide credit for the poor for fighting against poverty alone but in a way, try to create institutions that will deliver financial services to the poor who are ignored by traditional commercial banks. The informants emphasised on how FBOs micro-finance reduces poverty, create self-employment and empowerment.

One of the beneficiaries confirmed this when she said:

well... for me when I get the money, I use it for selling business and when we sell the profit I make from it... is the one I use to get food for the family, use it to buy clothes for myself and the children, build homes and get some money to do plenty things. When I do all these things, then I become happy and able to stand on my own. This loan business can make people strong and make you to stop begging in the streets, communities or friends (4.4.4)

The Lutheran Development Services (LDS) noted in its report that the Micro-finance program is a sustainable instrument that provides capital and ensuring growth and improvement of lives in rural communities that has been ignored by banks in Liberia (LDS 2008). This is how L-2 expressed it when he was asked:

for me our micro-finance program really helping people in the rural communities. Some of the people don't have anything to show to us before we give them money or loan. All we want is for them to be a member of the community and show interest in selling or making farms with the money than we will give it to you and work with you (4.4.4)

Robison (2001) confirms this when he defines micro-finance as a supply of loans, savings and other basic financial services to the poor. He continues his expression by referring to the idea that the loan is an attempt to improve access to small deposit and the household who may have been

neglected by commercial banks. Additionally, the mentioned statement is the positive role of FBO in poverty reduction from the Liberia society as noted elsewhere in Africa by (Armendariz & Morduch 2005) that those who benefit from micro-finance programs have been impacted positively by having assets to building and access to schools and medical provision. Goldberg observes that with the introduction of micro-finance program the poor are not the same and it is also “win, win” situation for the poor (Goldberg cited in: Armendariz & Morduch 2005).

One of the beneficiaries confirmed this when she said these expressions: “since the program came here and I receive the loan...I can tell you things are not the same at all... things that I never use to do on my own I can do them now using money” (4.4). The FBOs concentrated on income generating activities as one of the poverty reduction programs. What the programs and projects achieved as discussed with similar concept as observe by the World Bank was by getting the poor and vulnerable people in rural communities into economic activities that would otherwise generate income and bring about growth in economic and providing job for people (World Bank 2001 p. 8).

4.8.4. Agriculture

The informants emphasised agriculture as one of the main economic activities on ground that FBOs were engaged in for the research period. It was also realized that all the agriculture programs varied over the period in cash crops and vegetables that are sustainable and improved food security. This was evidenced through these expressions from one of the programs managers C-2:

For me.... the reason for doing all this small holder agriculture work is just to make community dwellers to be sustainable and self-sufficient in food production and to improve their livelihood. To take them from the level where they can be for once food secure. You see, if we just lay back all our community people will surely be hungry and the situation will lead to... sicknesses and diseases and further cause untimely death. So, our intervention as a church is timely and is meaningful especially in rural community (4.4)

This engagement by FBOs helps to promote additional income for farmers and promote community’s driven development. As indicated, the role of the FBOs was to achieve some levels of sustainability amongst rural dwellers through smaller holder’s agriculture to promote investment for community’s dwellers and improve family livelihood or economy. World bank indicated that, in low income countries a broad-based growth in agriculture productivity is one of

the most effective ways of reducing poverty because it increases the income of smaller holder farmers; raises their wages earned and improve availability, quality and accessibility of food (World Bank 2005). More than what we call the direct benefits, increase in agriculture productivity also brings strong indirect benefits to the poor by reducing food prices and creating jobs (World Bank 2005). In real life situation, poor house hold in rural and urban spend huge proportion of their income on staple food. In like manner, DFID 2004 also in its document expressed the strong link between poverty reduction and agriculture productivity. It reflects the impact of agriculture on rural incomes, cheaper food for both rural and urban and rural poor and poor people's livelihood (DFID 2004). The role of FBOs in the agriculture sector bring about growth, access to better quality of food, income for family, create employment in and off the farm; and empower poor ad management groups including women (World Bank 2005).

One of the beneficiaries said these words about the agriculture growth in his life:

I plant cassava on a big portion of a land each year harvest the cassava and transform cassava into gari and sell many bags on the market. I use the money I make from selling my gari to buy plenty selling things for my shop [*customer came to buy*] and the shop in turn around make money for regular farming activities all the time. As you can see [...] I am living good life, my children going to good school, my living place is in a good condition and so when any development come in our community I can be part of the first people to pay my own part of it (4.4)

World Bank observes that, in parts of Africa and Asia agriculture growth has a proven record of reducing poverty, hunger and environmental problems. The World Bank also acknowledges that, the contribution of agriculture will depend on the specific context, how agriculture bring about proper poor growth. As mentioned earlier by the informants agriculture cut across reducing poverty, promoting gender equality and empowering women, as well as ensuring environmental sustainability (World Bank 2005).The Lutheran Development Services and CARITAS Monrovia Office indicated that, when people have access to better quality of food their lives will improve and reduce diseases, especially in women and children and also when there is an additional income in the agriculture productivity will increase household investments in children education (LDS 2008, ; CRITAS 2009).

4.8.5. Health

In the health sectors in Liberia, FBOs continue to play major role as a means of poverty reduction. I observe that, it is often the poor at the community levels that really suffer the consequences of poorly equipped social facilities or lack of health centers.

In the expressions of one the beneficiaries of water and sanitation program he expresses what the provision of the water and sanitation services are doing for them to reducing poverty:

For me now, I am strong to work and find money and food for me and my children ...but before the NGO people came [...] there was too much cholera outbreak taking place because we [...] were drinking water from well, creek, river and other dirty water place. Now, now... we are not experiencing too much running stomach again like it used to be. we are using good water from the hand pumps for drinking. We are also using the pit latrines for toilets instead of the bush. we use to be weak and even died from running stomach [.....] and there was no way for us to do hard work and take care of our homes (4.4)

It was cleared to me as noted in FBOs reports that their role in the water and sanitation programs were all intended for the sole purpose of ensuring that the poor in rural communities are strong and healthy to work and become productive in their communities. In this way, the reports indicated that poverty is reduced because most if not all engage in some meaningful projects with the goal of taking care of the family livelihoods (LAC/UMC 2010; CRITAS 2009).

The findings from the research also show that four of the five FBOs selected have many health centers around the country that have been offering and continues to offer health and medical services yet their names were not included in the poverty reduction documents. Per their reports, the FBOs named many hospitals and clinics as their contribution to poverty reduction in Liberia for example: Ganta Methodist Hospital, St. Joseph Catholic Hospital, Phebe Hospital, Amadyia hospitals and many other clinics (LDS 2008; CARITAS 2009).

The informants H-1 said;

well... you see we are building clinics and new hospitals in some rural communities in Liberia. But again, let me tell you we continue to supply some poor and vulnerable people with free medical services. We have a mobile team that take health to those who cannot reach us.so you see our concern is for the people to get well and began to work for their family (4.4)

The role of FBOs in the health sector is confirmed by the World Bank president in a statement

made 2002 that 50 percent of the work in health and education in Sub- Sahara Africa is done by the FBOs but somehow the FBOs cannot talk to them concerning their project in the areas of health (UN Wire 2002 cited in: Kitchen 2002). In the case of the five sampled FBOs whose role even in the health sector is not mentioned by the Government policy document the poverty reduction document, the World Bank president indicated that one way of the other “FBOs that provide services in the areas of health and education had disappeared of the policy and evidence map” (UN Wire 2002 cited in :Kitchen 2002).I would like to probably think that, the exclusion of the five sampled FBOs from the poverty reduction program of Liberian might have been attributed to the constitutional provision as stated in Article 14 of the Liberia constitution that calls for the separation of the state and religion. Not only that the state and religion are separated but the same Article 14 indicated that Liberia is a secular state there by putting religion in the private sphere even though religion is still visible in the Liberia society (Haynes 2007). As mentioned earlier that four of the five FBOs sampled are currently operating health and medical services, the World Bank president also noted that, the disappearance of the role of FBOs from policy and evidence map occurred even though the fact remains that Islamic hospitals and Christian Missionaries hospitals were of the first modern health care providers to be established (Shaw and Conn 2002). Also in many low -to-middle income countries of which Liberia is a part, even after colonization ended and despite massive health systems reconfigurations, Faith-Based health providers have maintained a strong presence. It was also cleared that the presence of the five selected FBOs were felt across the 15 political sub-divisions of Liberia with different health projects that varied over the period under consideration.

This is what M-2 said in these expressions;

let me tell you... our programs in the health area is all over. We have clinics if not hand pumps or some health education program that we have one way of the other untaken in almost every village (4.4)

FBOs play key role in providing health care in many parts of the world. World Health Organisation (WHO 2007) indicated that FBOs own and operate an estimated 30 percent to 70 percent of health facilities in some parts of Africa, FBOs trained number of nurses and midwives. In addition, they are often found in remote and rural areas where the public sector has difficulty in attracting and training health workers thereby increasing accessibility and equitable distribution of health services for vulnerable populations (WHO 2007).

4.8.6. Trust and Transparency

The five FBOs sampled stressed that when it comes to poverty reduction or development work they bring the quality of trust and transparency. Informant C-2 expressed this when he mentioned that;” let me tell you ...the community people really trust in what we do because we have proven to be transparent from time to time”

Another Informant M-2 expressed similar ideas as he stated:

well, for our setting here our FBO is trusted and overall has a result base platform. Let me be frank with you [...] If you want result in Liberia for development work [...] I will strongly advise you to work with faith based organizations [...] and you will get the kind of results you need. Without trust we would not have been here working all these many years. We don't eat project money as other organization can do but we maintain the integrity of the church (4.6)

Discussing trust and transparency L-2 also stated in her explanation that they are trusted locally and with the international partners when she stated these words:

you see on the wall, just look there, these are certificate given to us by our international partners because the way we handle our finances and they quality we bring to the community level... so we are transparent and trusted (4.6)

This finding about trust and transparency as a quality FBOs bring to development work is expressed in theory that, religious leaders are often the highly-trusted people in a community or society. This is indicated in the World Bank research in “the voices of the poor” (Tyndale 2011 p. 209). Based on the findings it would be logical to mention that the five Faith Based Organizations sampled are trusted amongst the community dwellers.

Additionally, the World Bank was among the first Western Institutions to recognise that poor communities can also be described as faith communities. A research program initiated opened the eyes of Western development agencies on how to deal with religion in developing countries. The voices of the poor published in 2000, indicated that religious leaders and institutions were among the most trusted in these countries (Narayan cited in: Scott 2007 p.69). This publication helped the development agencies to find new way of implementing project. What is key in this connection is that, there should be better cooperation between religious leaders and institutions in poverty reduction programs in Liberia to “bridge” the development process, simply through their roles as

trusted members of the communities. One of the reasons I think there should be better cooperation is that poverty is multi-dimensional, and that religion and transcendent matters were frequently considered to be a part of well-being (Deneulin and Bano 2009, p. 44). It is simply because faith groups had better networks among the poor than other organisation and that religious leaders were trusted than others (Tyndale 2003, p. 26)

Farret 2005 also indicated that in developing World religious leaders are often trusted very much in their society (Farret 2005 cited in: Haynes 2007, p. 3).

Informant Y-1 confirmed this theory when she said these expression:

you see when I read the bible and hear the teaching on stealing and what will happen to those who steal what God has given them to take care of... it put me in the better position to handle project money the right way ...you see. This is about character and your character is your life (4.6)

Indeed, FBOs are often trusted to represent and speak for the interest of individuals and communities as they are to “address individual behavior and cultural issues, poverty, vulnerability and marginality” (Jennings 2013 p. 367). Jennings 2013 confirms that there are more concrete factors building up the “broad” trustworthiness of FBOs. The first aspects are attributed to the fact that FBOs have strong local and international operations. That is, they can step in their localness while engage in their international faith network. Secondly, faith platform in a unique way contribute to the higher authority and powers of these FBOs. Thirdly, FBOs share the language and world views with development including the concept of well-being and the meaning of fulfilment. Consequently, believers and non-believers claim that FBOs have a driven force of interest and secondly compassion for the less-fortunate and their well-being. FBOs engaged in development work are trusted to the extent that they have advantage as compare to some less trusted secular development agencies.

In as much as FBOs are trusted based on theories and empirical findings it was also revealed by two informants that, there are minorities individual working alongside with the FBOs that may not do well in managing resources for the Faith Based- NGOs.

This was revealed by Y-1 when he expressed these word;

Well to be fair with you my brother...our organization is trusted but there are some elements who occasionally in the life of our project cannot handle project resources with care. (4.6)

This finding brings to light the argument raised by van der well. He indicated that religion can both be harmful and good as well and should not be in a way presented without presenting both the good and negative critiques (Van der well 2011).

What I see from theories and the indications from informants can be expressed critically from these perspectives. All the informants provided evidences of internal and external audits, monitoring and evaluation frame works by both local and international bodies doing checks and balances. The indication that FBOs in this case are trusted would probably be that they have procedures and processes in place that would otherwise bring to book corrupt elements. It is not also very logical to think that all will be perfect but FBOs living up to compelling institutional checks and balances might lead to more and more trust as evidenced by their certification as stated by Y-2 (see 4.4.6.) Another thing that is critically important is that, most FBOs are inspired by social principles or doctrines to be trusted and transparent but it does not rule out the mere fact that individual members working alongside the institution will not go in the wrong. What was cleared as evidenced in my possession mentioned previously were some workable mechanisms that are used through processes and procedures designed by FBOs sampled to maintain the trust between they and their development partners. To probably know that this is the case with all FBOs giving the difficult nature of explanations without concrete evidence, I would recommend more empirical research in the field of religion and development. Furthermore, it may be easy to say or show procedures and do totally different thing in the implementation of such procedures. In the case of this research the five FBOs sampled were equally cleared and provided evidences of people that have been punished according their standards set.

4.8.7. FBOs Understand and Live in the Culture of the Community

The efforts of development practitioners may be fruitful depending on understanding the culture of the people to whom you want to work with. Informants confirmed that they bring to development work quality that makes them to have easy entrance in the field as they work with

the aim of reducing poverty.

This was expressed in the words of Y-2 as she explained:

For me one thing I know is that...FBO know and live in the culture of the people [...] you know enn. Let me show you one example, hmmm, in Bomi county an NGO from the government program build one latrine [...] close to the entrance of the poro bush a... sacred place can you imagine [.....] for this you know enn the people are not using it all and wasted in the grass. We live along side with the people so their values, norms and traditions are all known to us. We respect their sacred places and know how they respond to development work (4.6)

In theory, it was indicated that FBOs have on ground strong and permanent relationship with local community members. According to Hoffstaedter & Tittensor, this make FBOs better suited to reach into different community locations and proving indept link for the community (Hoffstaedter & Tittensor 2013, p. 406). These five FBOs (Lutheran Development services, Young Women Christian Association, CRITAS Monrovia Office, Humanity First and United Methodist Church Community Development Services) are development oriented and have strong cultural ties with the community they serve by presenting physically and engaging in daily lives of adherents. The fact that FBOs have cultural and pre-existing relationships from local religious leaders and institutions are a great advantage to FBOs while other secular development organisations must have spent considerable time to build up that relationship with the local population.

Y-1 also confirmed this by stating that: “ we know the people and the people know us...we are with them in bad time and good times. Our churches are there as well. We know how to relate to them”

Because of the way, FBOs are very close to the culture of the community and know how to relate to the community they often “naturally draw the community” to their service. In an attempt for FBOs to draw the community to service their role therefore as indicated by Jennings is to get involve physically in the development work themselves and to also share philosophy or views of the world on spiritual issues as well (Jennings 2013 p.369). The finding revealed that, because FBOs are closed to the culture of the community it provides logistical advantages through trust and capacity to undertake cultural sensitive services thereby becoming effective in service delivery (Hoffstaedter &Tittensor 2013).

It will be probably sensible to reason that FBOs share developmental worldviews with the community. The community dwellers I think appreciate the approaches that FBOs bring to development work. One example is the FBO-NGOs participatory and development approach, wherein, according to (Hopper 2012 p. 160) the community dwellers are participants in the decision-making process of their own development. In the end the community feels respected, involved and owns such project. I would think that FBOs and the traditional people in the rural communities are to certain extent co-existing and collaborating on development issues. They may not probably share spiritual worldviews as indicated by Jennings 2013, p. 369 but may share common development goals. Based on observations, Christians and Islamic FBOs respect sacred places in rural communities and the Traditional people also respect those places of worships belonging to Christians and Muslims. With the above explanations, it might be reasonable to say that FBOs understand and live within the culture of the people that help to enhance their developmental goal(s).

4.8.8. Commitment to Service and Compassion

It was now clear to me that, the FBOs sampled bring to poverty reduction or development work commitment to service and compassion. This finding is because of the motivation generated from religious teaching as stated by

H-1 in these expressions:

You see one good thing [...] I know about this NGO [...] is when you give us small work to do [...] we do it well. We will be doing it, doing it, and doing it [...] till we finish with it and turn it over to the community. You see [...] we believe that our work is for God's people [...] so the same way God is committed to us that is the way we handle this work. You know...the church has been in this development business since 1822 [...] and doing it well with the community so the people know us (4.6)

He continues;

Well... all our activities are directed for the people who are poor, we really feel for them and want to really help them. We want to change their present condition to make life better for them. You see to be a Christian and see people suffering it makes me feel bad all the times. So, we are targeting those that have been forgotten about by our communities and societies in bad poverty situations.

Commitment and Compassion are two qualities Faith Based Organizations used in development project to achieve their goal for poverty reduction. In the Christian and Islamic doctrines, it is noted, that helping the poor often arises from commitment to what God has given you to do and compassion for the people you serve that are taught in their social creed as explain below. The parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) challenges all Christians to assist any one in need (Scofield, Ridders 2002), and further make a clear reference to humanitarian work with commitment and compassion. In Christianity Jesus calls on his followers to do good to everyone because “anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God, or anyone who does not love his brother and sister” (1 John 3:10).

Additionally, in the Islamic tradition or faith for example, followers pay an obligatory 2.5 percent of their income as a means of helping the poor and less-fortunate brothers and sisters of their faith (Ali 1998). To some extent those followers are inspired by the doctrinal teaching on zakat that encourage them to have compassion for the poor. Hoffstaedter and Tittensor indicated that FBOs are committed and indeed they are motivated more and more to the people they are providing services for (Hoffstaedter and Tittensor 2013, p. 405)

To make a definite statement that Abrahamic adherents are being more motivated and committed to those they serve as mentioned by Hoffstaedter and Tittensor 2013, might probably be a wild claim in some senses. I agree to some extent that, FBOs are committed and have compassion for the poor based on religious doctrines, it is also likely possible to reason that some may be committed with compassion while others may not necessarily be.

4.8.9. FBOs Work with the Poorest at Grassroots in Liberia

This is one of the key themes that was emphasized in the interviews with the nine informants who were program coordinators and officers. It was also mentioned in their reports in my possession. Additionally, it is worth noting that, findings from the reports of the program officers indicated the constant presence and role of the FBOs sampled in poverty reduction or development work generally in rural communities especially hard to reach places in the areas of education, health, Agriculture etc (LDS 2008; CRITAS 2009; LAC/UMC 2010). For instance, in the reports of the Community Development services of the United Methodist Church it was revealed that from 2008-2011 their organization has constructed five new Schools and three Clinics in a very hard to reach

communities among the poor (LAC/UMC 2010).

This was also confirmed by informant L-2 when she expressed the following:

Well [...] I don't know about other FBOs [...] but my LDS is strong in implementing project in a hard to reach community among the poorest people who cannot access basic social services. Places that Government cannot go [...] is where our project is right now. You will see for yourself when we take you in the field my brother. Like you know about us we are in Lofa county, Barpolu and the south-eastern region. Our churches and schools are there with the different projects where are undertaking each year (4.6)

In other related literature FBOs generally have grassroots presence in areas of operations. Ferris (2005) confirmed that, on ground in hard to reach places called remote areas especially so where they have been implementing project or doing mission work as their location. It was certainly clear that, why FBOs are on ground in these remote places, they are particularly known for making sure that the community is put together or organise, try in a way to have structure and systems through leadership as well as helping the poor with some material and financial resources and aid the community in voluntary community initiatives (Goldsmith 2006). Another research elsewhere besides Liberia revealed that, FBOs are even found in most inaccessible areas where Government services do not reach.

This concept was also confirmed by one of the beneficiaries as she stated the following during the interview:

Let me tell you... this NGO is the first to put is good school down with four houses for teacher. Our children like it and it make the place look fine. From sine 1904, this is the first time.

Indeed, drawing from the views of informants and what is in theory or literature Faith Based Organisations presence are felt in hard to reach places in remote communities amongst the poor. This makes it likely possible to play significant roles in poverty reduction in the Liberia even though their roles were not mentioned in the poverty document of Liberia.

4.8.10. Proselytism

From the interviews, it was now clear to me that some not all Faith Based Organisation use the program to convert others to their faith.

This was expressed by Y-2:

you see we have devotion every morning and counsel the people working here and those that we are training. I tell you the children whose parents cannot afford to send them to school in our school.... we have regular devotion for them and bible study as well. This is helping them a lot. We want them to be good citizen in Jesus Christ. (4.6)

The above finding as indicated by informant Y-2 expresses the idea as contained in the English Oxford Dictionary definition of proselytism as the process of converting a person from one idea, opinion, creed or party to another (Fowler & Fowler 1964 p. 983) confirming this finding stated. I want to agree that this act of converting people to one's belief system called proselytism component in some FBOs as stated, has caused many to criticise the contribution of Faith to development. Kroessin and Mohamed also indicated that Christians as well as Islamic FBOs were also criticized for including proselytism in their services delivered to the poor and needy (Kroessin and Mohamed cited in: Clarke & Jennings 2008).

On the other hand, majority of the informants claimed that their projects are not intended to convert people over to their faith as stated by M-2 in the following expressions:

Well.... many people have come over to our churches [...] because of the work the FBO has done but they were not force or the project was not use to convert them. Sometime [...] people who make decision will say I will join the Methodist church because the church people like development[...]maybe if I join them they will send my children to school, or give my children job besides the spiritual aspect of it. In short, people are converted or they join because of what the church organization doing. Let me tell you again [*long pause*] said most of our project leaders in the villages are Muslims and traditional people. They all work together to make sure that we achieve the project goal. So, this time around I [...] tell you that development is development for all. You don't put faith business above the well-being of poor and vulnerable people all in our communities (4.6).

To be very critical, this finding has in indirect approach of getting people to join one's faith. You cannot all together agree that it is very perfect in self for the fact that the Churches and Mosques

are in the community and the people see those projects to helping them, it is likely possible to join. James indication might be very correct in this finding even though it is not stated directly that for Christian and Islamic FBOs proselytism is part of what they achieve at the end of the project (James 2009). Christian FBOs from the protestants backgrounds or tradition are highly criticised for their involvement into proselytism as an end game to achieving their missionary goal (Ferris 2005).

5.0. Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.1. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was the curiosity to explore the role FBOs played in poverty reduction strategy of Liberia over a specified period 2008-2011. The research focus on five sampled FBOs namely: the Lutheran Development Services (LDS), CARITAS Monrovia Office, Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), Community Development Services Program of the United Methodist Church, and Humanity First Liberia. In this case, I wanted to see how each of the sampled FBOs play role in poverty reduction strategy and the range of poverty reduction activities or services over a specified period. The below main research question guided and directed the entire study: what role did play during the Poverty FBO Reduction Strategy of Liberia (2008-2011)? To do such an in-depth inquiry the study adopted a qualitative research method and case study design. The study materials consisted primarily of relevant scholarly literatures and documents regarding the poverty reduction program of Liberia as well as program reports, evaluations, interviews and plans from the five sampled FBOs in Liberia, I analysed the role of each FBOs in poverty reduction strategy considering its role, qualities and its weaknesses in development work respectively.

Finding indicated that FBOs were not mentioned in the poverty reduction strategy of Liberia. The main concern here is, why was FBOs implicitly excluded from a major policy frame work the poverty reduction document? To address this concern, it was revealed that, it might probably be attributed to a constitutional provision of the separation of State and Religion as stated in Article 14 of the Liberian Constitution. It is not only that the state and religion are separated by the above provision, but the Republic of Liberia is a secular State. This places FBOs working on different projects and programs in Liberia in the private arena. Even though religion is very visible in the Liberian society, yet it is kept private in a policy framework like in the case of the poverty reduction strategy of Liberia.

What is interesting is that, on ground, the finding indicated that, FBOs are actively involved with poverty reduction or development work to the extent that they contributed in two pillars of the poverty reduction strategy; infrastructure and basic social services and economic revitalisation.

The visible marks of FBOs can be seen in the areas of Education, Health, Agriculture and Micro-finance. The programs varied within the selected FBOs. For instance, all the sampled FBOs saw education as one of the effective tool for poverty reduction that has sustainable and lasting impacts and so they were engaged with education at primary, secondary, universities, colleges vocational and skills development as well as leadership training and empowerment components. This can also be explained as one thematic area with different key activities in both rural and urban communities in Liberia.

From the informants, it was indicated that Some FBOs used their project to convert others to their faith by teaching their doctrine in work places and schools directed by FBOs on one hand (see 4.8.9). Informant Y-1 & Y-2 both made referenced to the regular morning devotion with beneficiaries and their children attending both vocational and academic schools. On the other hand, most of the informants indicated that those who join their Churches or Mosques do so because of the good development works they might have performed. Additionally, informants indicated that they do not force people to join their faith because there is a difference between the Mosques, the Church and their development projects. Furthermore, informant C-2 for instance, consistently said that our local Churches may use the work to convert people but we from the project end will never do this at all because the project is about humanity first and last. Based on these two perceptions of the informants, I would agree with secular development practitioners to certain point who criticized that the end game for FBOs engage in development works is the achievement of their missionary goal as stated by (Farris 2005) and others.

If the Church or the Mosque may use the project to convert others, it would be reasonable to think that, FBOs whether it is a direct or in direct approaches to some extent has this idea of meeting the physical needs which end up meeting the spiritual needs that subsequently end up in a local religious group.

It was also clear in the thesis that FBOs bring a lot of qualities that are very useful to community development when playing their role in poverty reduction. Firstly, FBOs understand and live within the culture of the people. This quality makes development oriented FBOs to have strong relationship with the community in a way that they serve the people physically by engaging in their daily lives. They know and understand customs, taboo, sacred places as well as areas for

common ground and needs assessment for them is very easy as compare to secular development practitioners. Like I indicated in 4.8.7, FBOs may not probably share the same spiritual world views with the traditional people in rural communities but they may co-exist on development issues knowing when, where, and how they carry out their development work amongst the traditional people in rural communities. Secondly, in the Liberian setting FBOs reach to the poorest in hard to reach places. Again, the informants made indications of their presence in places where government projects have not reached in many years since the formation of Liberia. In those poor communities, they are engaged in health services, agriculture activities as well as providing elementary schools and skills development programs for kids and the adults. Thirdly, FBOs are committed to service and have compassion. Inspired by their social principle or doctrines FBOs have compassion as such they are always in the position to complete all the development projects for the vulnerable people in communities in Liberia. They feel the pains and frustrations of the poor and out cast in the Liberian societies and as such, FBOs work with commitment, compassion and delegation in the interest of humanity. Lastly, leaders and institutions of FBOs are trusted in their local communities. This tells me that to achieve a developmental goal I think it is wise to work with trusted leaders or institutions that will yield the kind of results needed. I would also join the World Bank in its research on the *voices of the poor* that the cooperation of the religious leaders and institutions in poverty reduction program in Liberia would be important to “bridge” the development process, simply through their roles as trusted members of their communities (see 4.8.2)

In addition to the above mentioned and based on empirical findings of the contributions of religion to development in the poverty reduction strategy on ground, indicated by the informant’s views, reports, plans and evaluations I would like to think that it will be wise to agree with other scholars Tyndale , Haynes and United Nations that there should be better cooperation and or integration between the Government of Liberia and FBOs in poverty reduction programs (Tyndale 2011, p. 210, Haynes 2007, p. 127 ; UN 2015). One good reason for this would be that, Faith Based Organizations in Liberia and secular development agencies can make common agenda for achieving development goals in rural communities throughout Liberia. Furthermore, when it comes to poverty reducing activities or programs, FBOs are directly and indirectly responsible for the work of many of the SDGs regarding poverty reduction and Human development (see 4.8.1).

Furthermore, FBOs should be better integrated in secular poverty reduction programs because they are responsible for wide range of income generating programs and development activities like vocational courses, community development, leadership training, education, health and agriculture (see 4.8.1). It was mentioned throughout the text that, in Africa of which Liberia is a part, religious groups are running almost half of the schools and hospitals. In view of the above, I therefore, want to agree with Haynes when he pointed out that there is a need for “robust partnership” between secular development agencies involve with development works and FBOs (Haynes 2007 p. 127).

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APPENDIX I: Letter to the Informants

Dear Sir/Madam:

I present my compliments and wish to inform you that, I am a master student at the Norwegian School of Theology in Oslo reading Religion, Society and Global Issues. Currently, I am writing a master thesis about the role of Faith Based Organizations in the Liberia's Poverty Reduction Program (2008-2011). In a clear term the actual area of concentration in this Master Thesis is, what role did Faith Based Organizations play during the Poverty Reduction program of Liberia (2008-2011)?

I therefore intend to carry out semi-structure interviews with two (2) persons at program level involve with development work in your institution as well as interview three beneficiaries and collect relevant documents that point to poverty reducing activities and or programs.

It is also important to note that, interview will be conducted for one hour and those program persons and beneficiaries will be recorded and that participating in this interview is on a voluntary basis, therefore, you can withdraw at any point in time without threat or danger. Furthermore, the recording that will be done as mentioned earlier will be deleted after the project has been concluded.

Most importantly, data materials will be available to me only, and it shall be anonymous at the closure of the project. Let it be further stress that, this is a master thesis that will be presented May 2017 and access by the Norwegian School of Theology academic committee. For clarity, this a small school project therefore, there will be no compensation for your participation. Before the interview is conducted I shall be glad if you can sign below as your way of consenting to participate in the project.

Sincerely,

Allen Paye
Asses Vei 4
1336 Sandvika

I consent to be interviewed because of the information provided on the project.

Signature: -----

Appendix II: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Informant General Information

Name

Age

Background

How long have you been working here?

What kind of work is your organization involving with?

How is it going

Questions for the Faith Based Organizations

1. Did any NGO Play a role during the implementation of the poverty reduction program?
2. What kind of activities did your Institution implement during the PRS, how much and how well was it implemented?
3. What was the strategies put in place in achieving the PRS?
4. What do you see as the strength and weaknesses of FOBS in the PRS?
5. If these are Strengths and weaknesses FBO why?
Were there any successes/failure, if yes how did you overcome it?

Questions for the Beneficiaries of the poverty Reducing Activities

1. How were you selected to benefit?
2. Are you aware that this was FBO Organization?
3. How long have those organizations been working within this community?
4. What strengths and weaknesses did you see?