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“How Is Haiti Doing?? Issues of Accountability in a Voiceless Haiti: A Case Study of the Lambi Fund

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“HOW IS HAITI DOING?”
ISSUES OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN A VOICELESS HAITI: A CASE STUDY OF THE LAMBI FUND.

By
Emanna Louis

A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty of the University of Miami in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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“How is Haiti Doing?”
Issues of Accountability in a Voiceless Haiti: A Case Study of the
Lambi Fund.

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The rhetoric of development is a dominant driving factor for intervention into the Republic of Haiti. Millions are pumped into the small black republic located in the Caribbean for development projects motivated by health, HIV/AIDS awareness, religion, and sanitation just to name a few. Yet, despite the innumerable efforts of nongovernmental organizations and donor organizations in Haiti, the country is sinking deeper and deeper into desperate conditions.

The motivation for this thesis is to examine the accountability that these organizations operating in Haiti have towards the Haitian peoples who are the targeted beneficiaries. Are they involved in the development process aside from being the “receivers” of assistance? Development projects designed and implemented without the input of the targeted communities have relatively short-lived progress and experience failure. Accountability to the constituents necessitates involving and engaging their values and community needs.

The Lambi Fund is a nongovernmental organization that attributes its success to its alternative “bottom-up” model of development. Local organizations in Haiti solicit funding, training, and guidance from the Lambi Fund with project proposals and
community needs in hand. This model appears to have an impressive degree of accountability to the grassroots organizations that it serves. I analyze and assess the viability and success of this model in the context of the history and current trends of development in Haiti and elsewhere by examining both the Lambi Fund’s own claims about its programs (in print and in interviews with its principal officers) and a recent evaluation made of its programs by a third party organization. A recommendation for further research is enclosed in the conclusion.
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Chapter One- Introduction

Rationale for the Study

The island of Hispaniola is shared by the Republic of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Haiti is a very mountainous peninsula located on the Western side of the island. Haiti took its place among the free nations of the world in 1804, the first colony to repudiate their masters and the second free nation in the Americas. This watershed revolution in the history of mankind took place in a period where blacks elsewhere in the Americas continued to be enslaved and degraded as property instead of recognized as equal human beings capable of self determination. After independence the black nation was virtually isolated and shunned from the rest of the world that held slaves, for fear of other successful slave revolutions. The church left along with its educational institutions and France finally recognized the nation only after a large indemnity was placed on the country. The intolerable conditions in Haiti today are the legacy of this large debt, tyrannical leaders, a poor economy, and a political climate characterized by coup d’état and bloody uprisings.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and nonprofit organizations are significant providers of social welfare services in the Republic of Haiti, whereas the official government has little to no role in supplying these programs. These organizations are an integral part of the foreign aid alliances fostered between the Western world and underdeveloped/developing countries. The issues that they address are quite varied, ranging from health to poverty. Many are religion-based enterprises. I question the beneficial impact of the operations of these international organizations on the inhabitants
of Haiti, and the ability of the ones on the receiving end of development to have a say in what is going on around them.

My interests and motivation in this study stem from my knowledge of the very poor conditions in Haiti that continue to exist in spite of the efforts of Haitian grassroots and community based organizations, as well as those of a myriad of international nongovernmental groups. There are many NGOs working within Haiti that publicize rates of success without any credibly-assessed evaluations of their progress. Therefore, what concrete evidence is available to legitimize the works of international NGOs in their goals and endeavors, as well as to justify their clamor for support, resources, and funds? Additionally, in such a volatile political and social environment the Haitian government’s relationship to the many NGOs operating within its borders is not well understood.

In this project I will locate the Lambi Fund within the broader field of development in Haiti. Development has been a dominant driving factor for intervention within Haiti. It has reached a point where it is a business and very widespread. At virtually every corner, slum, and nook and cranny of Haiti one will be sure to run across a proud sign exclaiming that such and such project has been funded and brought to this community by [insert funding agency here]. Literally millions of dollars/euros/loonies, etc. are invested in development projects, while these nongovernmental organizations from around the world employ thousands of people in Haiti. Large institutions such as the World Bank, the European Union, USAID, and the United Nations Development Project (UNDP) are composed of complex bureaucracies, resources, and man power dedicated to bringing aid and development to those in need. Cité Soleil (Sunshine City),
Haiti, recently described as the most dangerous place in the world by the United Nations Security Council, alone receives twenty two million dollars a year. The former mayor of Cité Soleil, Jacklin Exantus, when asked what impact these NGOs have had on the city, he exuberantly exclaimed “Zero Impact! The structure of the state is weak. It allows for this type of cosmetic change. Once the NGOs see a visible change, they believe that their work is done. Real change has happened in terms of infrastructure and road construction, but this creates more problems with the flooding of more houses. We are trying to see if we can form initiatives of collaboration in a strategic plan involving actors for sustainable change” (interview with author). Twenty-two million dollars into a city and zero impact: some investigation into why the mayor would have this perception is clearly necessary. The major motivation behind this study of the accountability of NGOs operating in Haiti is the perception held by Haitians that these organizations are “big money” machines that are there as profit-generating businesses striving to fatten their pockets under the guise of development, afterwards leaving communities to continue to wallow in their poverty.

By focusing on the Lambi Fund, this thesis also addresses the question of what is effective community development in terms of the implementation of sustainable projects and programs through the efforts of international nongovernmental organizations. In order to assess these organizational issues in terms of accountability towards the constituents, the greater context and history of intervention into the country of Haiti based on the goals of development will be evaluated. Problems and issues concerning development in Third World countries will be looked at in the Haitian context, through the viewpoints of the “receivers” of these ongoing efforts brought from abroad.
**Methods and Procedures**

A literature review is necessary to chart the environment in which NGOs pursue their efforts for the consolidation of development and towards future sustainability. This literature will also situate the work of the Lambi Fund in the context of other developmental models in Haiti. Information included stems from personal interviews, and final reports to formulate an understanding of funded projects of the Lambi Fund and the impact thereof. My research interviews were also directed at obtaining suggestions and propositions of how operations can be better supported by the Haitian government; as well as recommendations for growth and progress for the future of the Lambi Fund.

This study utilized semi-structured interviews to question and analyzes the staff of the Lambi Fund as well as community leaders throughout the northern part of Haiti in Cap Haitien, and in the nation’s capital, Port-au-Prince. A range of open ended questions were posed to the Lambi Fund: executive director and deputy director. I used this type of interview because I had only one opportunity to meet the executive director, and likewise the deputy director; therefore I was trying to gain a great deal of information in a short period of time. This type of interview allowed for more freedom in data collection than more traditional structured interviews.

An analysis of a third party evaluation of the projects that the Lambi Fund has supported at a grassroots level in Haiti was undertaken to examine the degree to which these development activities were accountable to those on the receiving end. The evaluation covers how the constituents’ lives have changed, and what they have attained since receiving the aid, both material and intellectual, from the Lambi Fund. After
discussing the Lambi Fund’s projects and model of development, an attempt is made to
pinpoint organizational characteristics to provide a foundation on which to make an
overarching comparative assessment of NGOs operating in Haiti and the impact of their
efforts from the standpoint of Haitians. It must be acknowledged that this study is
limited. The goal is not to find what the best practice model for development is in Haiti,
but rather to examine the Lambi Fund’s model and its potential for greater accountability
to its constituents and the degree that the model is replicable. Onsite fieldwork with the
grassroots organizations that the Lambi Fund serves would have enabled me to draw
conclusions about how this model actually operates and is executed in providing
accountability mechanisms to the grassroots organization, but such research was not
possible. This international NGO was chosen because it proposed a strong commitment
to furthering the democratic movement in Haiti by empowering the peasant majority.

Accountability- What is it?

“Accountability is generally interpreted as the means by which individuals and
organizations report to a recognized authority or how authorities are held responsible for
their actions” (Edwards and Hulme 1995, 9). Downward accountability is where the
actors operating the NGOs and conducting development initiatives are accountable and
held responsible ‘downwards’ to the beneficiaries and communities of people that they
wish to serve, as opposed to accountability to funders, government, and the like. The
legitimacy to even exist and operate in the third sector comes from justifications from the
beneficiaries that the NGO’s services are needed to undertake social and political action.
The ‘third sector’ is the term given to organizations that do not run with the purpose of
profiting like the business sector, nor do they operate with the underlying goal of being re-elected, like government. Justifications for action come from below (the people), and from above (the donors, supporters, governing bodies, etc.). Their efforts are private and voluntary and should be in the best interests of the community. Enamul Choudhury and Shamima Ahmed have argued that in a conventional approach, the meaning of accountability is based on the fiduciary responsibility of the organization to a regulatory authority, enforced through the mechanisms of supervision, oversight, and reporting to a higher authority in a hierarchical chain of command” (Choudhury and Ahmed 2002, 565). This thesis focuses more on the accountability given or not given to the Haitian peoples who are constant receivers of development projects; also to a small degree on accountability in internal controls of financial auditing, program monitoring and evaluation, and compliance with legal standards.

Public accountability is not limited to just legality and legitimacy. The public expects accountability to include a democratically grounded notion of responsibility. Since NGOs are very value-oriented there is the need for the average citizen or villager to feel a sense of ownership towards the third sector organizations. “NGOs need to earn public trust and affection, as well as consider their very selves to be serving the public interest through their professionalism and service ethic” (Choudhury and Ahmed 2002, 566). Without this, failure is a guaranteed result. In the Haitian context, trust is a very important factor in the relationship with the community for completing procedures, receptiveness to programs offered, and participation in actions that require a larger degree of community compliance.
Effective accountability also requires a statement of goals, transparency of
decision making and relationships, as well as honest reporting of what resources have
been used and what has been achieved. “It is also necessary to have an appraisal process
for oversight to judge whether results are satisfactory and concrete mechanisms should be
in place for holding to account those that are responsible for performance” (Edwards and
Fowler 2002, 194). NGO accountability may be, for example, formal ongoing discussion
among partners, the community members, the intended recipients of aid, etc. Honesty
and efficiency is important in discussing which resources are used. Additionally the
impact and effectiveness of the work (performance) must be a collaborative ongoing
discussion and effort.

Increasing the involvement of grassroots constituencies and considering their
community inputs, wants, and needs in projected development programs is an exemplary
way to correct the weaknesses of downward accountability which has been expressed by
many that I have encountered and spoken to throughout Haiti. It is a common
characteristic of NGOs working in Haiti that the communities have no real feeling of
ownership towards the projects or programs, and this seems to be the reason why projects
have no real sustainable outcomes. There is no ownership of the program objectives
from the beneficiaries, and thus when projects, funders, or the mother board of the
development program leave, so does any change that may have occurred.

The best remedy to address the issues of downward accountability is involving the
populations of Third World countries in the process of defining the goals. This type of
involvement from the onset of the development process would allow the peoples of the
Third World the opportunity to be involved in and part of the process. “A wealth of evidence has been accumulated that development projects designed and implemented without the full involvement of the intended beneficiaries have had a high rate of failure. Conversely projects planned with them from the outset, on an appropriate scale and using their skills and resources, have had a relatively high rate of success” (Kirkby 1995, 310).

**The Third Sector in Haiti and Issues of Accountability**

Most people in Haiti have the perspective that NGOs hold the heavy role of uplifting marginalized and voiceless communities. The third sector is comprised of organizations that are outside the legal organization of state authority. They should not hoard profit from their activities and they are self governing. The ones who they should really answer to are the people. Community development programs are predominately performed by nongovernmental organizations in Haiti. I believe that the attainment of goals set by these NGOs is difficult without an analysis of their effectiveness from the perspectives of beneficiaries and receivers. Despite large investments financially and in terms of labor hours, development in Haiti has been very slow or nonexistent. I will argue that in actuality development efforts have set back development in Haiti, where indications show that the living standard of the Haitian people is worsening. Donors and international aid agencies are more than readily available to supply the funding and resources for a diverse spectrum of missions and purposes. This process should involve “empowering” marginalized communities, not only to alleviate material poverty, but also to overcome the structural disadvantages that marginalization brings. From this perspective some sort of structural change is believed to result from NGO involvement in
local communities, but this has not been the case in Haiti. I would attribute this in part to the lack of downwards accountability to the people.

Addressing downward accountability to constituents of NGO development work in Haiti is important to the efficacy and efficiency of how development projects are performed. The people should feel empowered. “Empowerment in this context is the opportunity to have a choice, and influence action by the poor and the marginalized” (Kilby 2006, 951). The focus on “downward” accountability is based on the proposition that, for an NGO to be effective in empowerment it should have some level of formal or semi-formal systematic responsibility to those it wishes to see empowered by way of some type of structured mechanism.

NGOs are self-governing bodies, voluntary in nature, and have a public benefit purpose. They tend to engage both their supporters and constituency on the basis of values or some shared interest or concern (Kilby 2006, 952). Theoretically they are not driven by the incentive to make a profit or for any type of private enurement; instead they work in the interest of marginalized groups. This distinctive character is seen in the mission statements and vision statements of NGOs working in development in third world countries. How can a NGO be accountable to these broader, elusive missions? Alleviating poverty, or ending world hunger are very kind hearted and good spirited goals, but they are not concrete; they are more abstract and serve as a guideline for the NGO to operate.

The attainment of these goals can be measured by looking into the level of accountability to the constituents. “This type of accountability defines the relationship
between all of the players in the development game through identifying who can call whom to account, and who owes a duty of explanation and rectification by defining the lines and directions of accountability. Through this the distribution of power is also defined” (Kilby 2006, 953). The real or perceived conduct and performance of a NGO by the people that it serves is the credible assessment of that NGO. Accountability then is about power, authority, and ownership. Theoretically the community owns the NGO. In Haiti, do they really?
Chapter Two- Literature Review of Background and Analysis of NGO Work Based in Haiti

Theoretical Approaches in the Analysis of Development

What is to follow is a brief discussion of the theories and the paradigms of international development efforts in decadal periods. Starting in the 1950s and continuing until the early 1970s community development programs attempted to lift entire rural communities out of their “backward ways” through principles of community participation, self-reliance, and societal integration (Vander 1999, 7). Development was brought from the North (the Western world including North America, and Europe) to the South (underdeveloped countries in South and Central America, Africa, Asiatic countries, etc.). This trend remains the same today. In the 1970s came the emphasis on improving development participation and effectiveness by involving new interpretations of development through involving the host communities. The emphasis was on strengthening local participatory institutions, mainly grassroots organizations. Despite this new paradigm, the top-down planning approach remained dominant in practice. However at the same time the radical bottom-up participatory model emerged. “This was guided by alternative visions of local development based on conscientization, self-empowerment, collective action and economic liberation” (Vander 1999, 7). During the 1980s neoliberalization rhetoric was geared towards modernizing developing countries through privatization and structural readjustment programs. Mainstream development interventions followed suit and also were dominated by structural adjustment concerns.
The structural adjustments were characterized by decreasing state domination in providing social services and the privatization of that sector. Many critiqued privatization for further marginalizing and repressing the vulnerable groups by taking away a somewhat guaranteed social service that the state provided and putting it into private hands. This brought major development agencies back to the rhetoric of participation. The concepts of civil society, local participation, and community development now rule the day in theory as is the case with the Lambi Fund’s strategy for engagement of the local communities in Haiti. This is seen as particularly important in countries like Haiti which lack strong democratic traditions and established institutions.

Over the past fifteen years, and particularly since the end of the Cold War, development policy and aid transfers have come to be dominated by what is called the “New Policy Agenda.” It is driven by two basic sets of neoliberal democratic theory. Firstly, markets and private enterprises are seen as the most efficient mechanisms for achieving economic growth and providing most services to people. Governments are seen as enabling private enterprises to operate but ideally minimizing their direct role in the economy. Because of their cost effectiveness in reaching the poor, official agencies support NGOs in providing welfare to those that cannot be reached through markets. NGOs have provided services in countries where the government lacks the resources. However, now they are seen as the preferred channel to reach the poor, bypassing the control of the state. This is especially true in the case of Haiti where much distrust has been fostered towards the government, and rightly so when corruption and graft is highly prevalent among the elite that hold the power in the country.
Secondly, under the New Policy Agenda, NGOs and local civil society organizations are seen as the vehicles for democratization. They are seen as a counter weight to state power and corruption. NGOs protect human rights, promote pluralism, and encourage participation. NGOs are also seen as having unique abilities in creating new knowledge. “Mainstream donor agencies such as the World Bank and the UN system, in response to their concerns with weak state administrative capacity and the need for good governance, have turned to NGOs” (Vander 1999, 10). NGOs are seen as an extremity, an extra limb, of the government and as a result provide certain responsibilities that should be performed by the state. Consequently, aid agencies are more than willing to provide aid through NGOs. In Haiti they are the favored way for aid to supposedly reach the masses. Distrust has been fostered with corrupt and greedy government and state administrators. This agenda allows them to act independently.

An economic demand-side explanation says that political regime changes sometimes enable people to freely express their demand for their rights and for new public services. As we will see later, with the changing of governments from dictatorships to military juntas, to interim and democratically elected governments, the ability of NGOs to work has in part rested on what has been going on politically in Haiti. The increased willingness on the part of the state in recent years to allow NGOs to work in the country and to provide them with security has resulted in a rise of these organizations in the country. “A related supply-side explanation is based in policy entrepreneur theory. Those NGO entrepreneurs who had been oppressed in past political
regimes were now free to associate and form new forms of organizations to provide
differentiated services to diverse sets of population” (Kim 2003, 22).

Scholars studying the growing influence of NGOs have based their discussions on
both supply side and demand side theories. “The demand side theorists contend that
society’s increasing demand for services other than those provided by the governments
has spurred the growth of medical, social service, and educational institutions” (Kim
2003, 4). Nonprofit organizations and nongovernmental organizations serve as private
providers of public goods. The increasing diversity of their political and economic
perspectives has enabled them to play a bigger role.

**The Haitian State**

The Haitian state is inadequate to the task of coping with an increasing number of
problems. It has lost a great deal of its autonomy on many differing levels: from the
national level to city municipalities. A state-centered environment would reinforce the
belief that the government, despite the presence of non-state actors such as nonprofit
organizations, international agencies, and the like, remains the key decision maker. In
the case of Haiti the government has lost that autonomy and is the servant of NGOs who
have gained a strategic position in shaping and facilitating works done in the country.

“The roots of the state-society relationship in Haiti are believed to be linked to the
colonial structure of the country, that is, to the long tradition of a minority exploiting the
majority” (Moleon 2002, 39). Through the years the relationship between the state and
the society had not changed much. The military has often been the prominent tool of the
governing bodies to rule. Due to a succession of coups d’état as well as economic
embargos the country has been characterized by political and economic instability as well as a great distrust in the government.

The state is also a source of NGO legitimacy. The Haitian state is relatively weak. Nonetheless it is the body which has to formally recognize the NGOs through a registration process. It is the Haitian state that gives the tax concessions. Liberalization in the mid and late 1970s under Jean Claude Duvalier contributed to the resurgence of civil society (Fatton 2002, 57). “Previously under the Duvaliers, the state forced civil society to abide by the political rules it defined” (Trouillot 1990, 163). This transformed important components of civil society in new ways dictated by the political sphere. Jean Claude Duvalier accepted deepening liberalization in allowing civil society to become stronger under pressure from an increasingly vocal Haitian media, and from U.S. President Jimmy Carter’s new foreign policy of human rights. Nongovernmental organizations got the chance to challenge state corruption and abuses and offered material, religious, moral, and political assistance to a battered population. “Civil society was on the verge of outflanking the government; it was opening new opportunities that had been suppressed” (Fatton 2002, 58).

The Haitian government’s failures have played a more prominent role in the growth of the NGO sector. The state has increasingly turned to NGOs in providing various forms of public services. With a series of coups d’état and political upheavals in the late 1980s to early 1990s the public sector had been very unstable and inefficient. A potential reason for the lack of government regulatory measures over the NGOs operating within its jurisdiction is that many of the NGOs do not receive state funding. They do
receive the tax exemption status, but most funding comes from abroad. The government’s failures further exemplify the lack of control and ability to cope with and attack successfully, structural reasons why civil strife occurs in the country; this gives rise to a mounting number of NGOs within Haiti. The NGOs have taken multiple roles in tackling societal ills. Although they could be seen as a threat to the government’s power because of the amount of influence they enjoy, they are afforded almost free reign to go about serving their targeted communities. Their ‘free reign’ in Haiti is notably recognized in how the Haitian government rarely intervenes in setting the standard for internal accountability. They are subjected to little to no government oversight from the Haitian state. Their public purpose is projected as aiding the Haitian people who are confronting many challenges to everyday survival. Accountability in this context is about the conduct of these foreign NGOs, and how the people assess their performance.

**Historical Trajectory of Participation and Community Involvement**

Civil society began a more visible growth with the fall of the Duvalier dictatorship. Jean-Claude Duvalier, arguably the most ruthless dictator in Latin America, was forced out of the country in 1986 and the Haitian people set about trying to uproot the traditions of corruption and abuse that had so thoroughly permeated the country’s power structure (Smith 2001, 24). “Jean-Claude’s flight to France created a profound opening for independent associations which Haitians vigorously seized” (*Silencing a People* 1993, 3). This, in part, took the shape of the formation of numerous political parties that were banned during the 27 year dictatorship of the Duvalier regime. But
many of these political parties took the role of advocating and advancing a political figure instead of addressing social and economic issues of the Haitian people.

In the urban and rural places outside of the nation’s capital, Port-au-Prince, this gap was filled with popular organizations made up of the vast poor majority. “They formed farming cooperatives, literacy programs and rural development projects, often with support from abroad” (Silencing the People 1993, 3). This support came from churches, both Catholic and Protestant, and some associations were geared at political activities which confronted and tackled issues dealing with land distribution, corruption, and human rights abuses. Political debates about the government became possible, and underground civic organizations came about and thrived.

“But the next few years also were marred by numerous coups and a number of violent crackdowns on popular organizations and pro-democracy movements” (Smith 2001, 24). With the reinstatement of constitutional government and the election of new officials, a reforming state sought to shoulder new responsibilities, for example in the delivery of health care and education and in literacy and the provision of technical assistance to small farmers. NGOs that had viewed the state as a pariah now began to see it as a potential partner.

In urban areas organized activity soared. Politically active trade unions, working professionals, students and women’s organizations and thousands of block associations and community groups were born. The press was very instrumental in this emergence and rapid spread of organizations centered on community efforts and needs. In a county with a very low literacy rate, the radio is the main medium for the dissemination of news
and communication. The radio provided information about other organizational activities and a place to criticize periodic attacks on the independent democratic movement.

This era of instability and uncertainty ended in December of 1990, when the Haitian people participated in their first democratic elections, monitored by the United Nations, and the Organizations of the American States (OAS). The Haitian people elected as their president Jean-Bertrand Aristide. “A euphoria of empowerment and hope reverberated throughout the nation, as poor Haitians again dreamed of better days to come” (Smith 2001, 24). This was short lived when only eight months after his inauguration, his government was overthrown by a bloody coup d’état. During the following three years the Haitian people suffered under the hands of a ruthless military dictatorship and their paramilitaries. Between 1991 and 1994 the military junta actively discouraged aid groups from operating in Haiti. “In order to put pressure upon the new government, international aid was withheld and the international agencies providing technical support left the country” (Moleon 2002, 116). The junta responded to internal and external pressures by strengthening the military sector in order to maintain its political rule. Its least concern was implementing socio-economic reforms.

The military forces consolidated their rule by ruthlessly suppressing Haiti’s diverse civil society. Haiti’s civil society is characterized by the collective action of varying groups. These groups include but are not limited to women’s groups, the peasantry, associations specific to trade, religious based organizations, NGOs etc. Civil society differs from the state and the family group and it generally strives to challenge disparities, and champion development, as well as community needs. Sixty-seven
percent of the Haitian population had voted for president Aristide. Thus the army presumed that the majority of the population was hostile to the de facto military rule of the country that was deemed “constitutional” and recognized by the United States government. Seeking to avoid popular unrest, which had brought down past military regimes, the army attempted to deny the Haitian people an organized platform to express discontent by systematically repressing virtually all forms of independent association. The aim of repression was to turn Haiti into a fearful society. Even if international pressures were to return President Aristide, he would have difficulty transforming his popularity into organized support with a violent army in control of the government. “The range of organizations targeted by the army’s campaign of repression [was] exceedingly broad” (Silencing the People 1993, 1). The army viewed any popular association as a potential conduit for organized opposition.

During this period, local civil society, including grassroots groups and NGOs, confronted the challenge of not only rebuilding and reasserting capacity to implement programs but also of forging new relationships with the state. The situation was complicated because each of its major actors, the state, the popular organizations, and the international community, were diffuse and disorganized. Uncertainty was even more exacerbated by the undelivered promises of the Haitian government and by the lack of a genuine Haitian law for private organizations.

“Negotiations between the coup junta, Aristide, the U.S. government, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the OAS, the UN, and other “friends of Haiti” waxed and waned sporadically” (Smith 2001, 25). Traditional aid
agencies were divided on strategies for returning Aristide to Haiti and restoring democracy. Junta leaders were being pressed to step down, and Aristide was being pressured to accept neoliberal fiscal policies to be implemented upon his return. On October 15, 1994, Aristide was returned to the deteriorating Haitian nation. Alongside his return came millions of dollars and briefcases stuffed with ambitious programs plans such as “Operation Restore Democracy.” Some, sensing an open moment provided by the change in political leadership when the military junta handed over power, placed a premium on quick impact projects (QIPS) to make a palpable difference in the quality of life of ordinary Haitians. USAID gave priority to such projects. These projects include road and canal clean up projects. On the surface it is difficult to criticize these badly needed provisions and employment opportunities. However these projects have had no long term viability. The intention was to meet urgent needs while putting people to work and giving them some economic resources. During this period, NGOs were key actors in filling the void left untouched by the Haitian government by providing aid relief. A massive influx of aid was targeted at all sectors of the economy and society. “Development was definitely big business again in Haiti” (Smith 2001, 26). Those resources and the alleviation of urgent needs have always been temporary and short lived as described by some interviewees in Cap Haitien in the shanty town of Shada. “Their efforts are photo opportunities,” explained the official municipal deputy of that community (interview with the author).

The interim government of Gérard Latortue after the second overthrow of democratically elected President Aristide was in place until February 2, 2007 when René
Préval of the *Lespwa* party won 51.1 percent of the votes. The elections took place while Haiti was under occupation by MINUSTAH, a multi-national force established by the Security Council of the United Nations that still occupies the country. After thousands of programs, Haiti has yet to see any real change to their lot, but rather a deteriorating economy, and an unbelievable situation of desperation that touches virtually everyone. “Many charge that this is largely because recent foreign development and democratization interventions have moved only a questionable degree away from the colonial-neocolonial interventions of earlier eras” (Smith 2001, 26).

What is abject poverty? Dictionary.com describes it as: “[the] most unfortunate or miserable, without hope because there seems to be no possibility of comfort or success, inclined or willing to submit to orders or wishes of others, or showing such inclination.” Statistics in Haiti consistently place it well below all other countries in the Western Hemisphere and on par with the countries of Africa in terms of economic status. “With a comparative area slightly smaller than the size of Maryland, Haiti, with a population of roughly 8 million inhabitants, is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with 80% of the population living under the poverty line and 54% in abject poverty. Haiti suffers from higher inflation, lack of investment due to poor infrastructure and poor security and physical infrastructure” (CIA World Fact Book 2007). As a result, the government relies on international economic assistance because of its’ own inadequacies in dealing with these woes. Remittances from the Haitian diaspora living primarily in the United States, Canada, and France are the primary source of foreign exchange.
These figures make Haiti a primary destination for development and relief efforts. Haitians have been the receivers of incalculable amounts of aid money and piles and piles of projects. According to a report published in the Haitian Creole weekly newspaper *Libète*, there were more than seven hundred NGOs working in Haiti in 1996 (Smith 2001, 27); presently it would not be far fetched to predict that there are well over a thousand NGOs operating there.

**Varying Roles and Effects of NGO Development Projects and Community Involvement**

International NGOs have not only failed to benefit the Haitian poor but have actively undermined their own attempts to improve their situation. An example of this would be the $7.7 million project Export and Investment Promotion Program, designed and carried out by USAID in the 1980s. “The program, directed at increasing Haitian exports and tying the country in with the US economy, succeeded at making Haiti the ninth largest assembler of US goods for consumption in the United States. This made unprecedented amounts of profit for U.S. businesses and Haitian middlemen” (Maguire 1996, 52). The impact on the Haitians was negative: real wages and agricultural production fell. This export-led development strategy pushed thousands of rural Haitians to leave their land to go to the already overcrowded cities, creating more shanty towns, or to Miami.

Aid organizations involved in these projects, funded by USAID, acknowledged their limitations. Many of these activities, they admitted, were neither sustainable nor genuinely participatory. Some activities had obvious counterproductive results.
The sign at the village entrance proudly proclaimed, “Job Creation Project: Ditch Drainage.” The fine print indicated a two-month project funded by key bilateral and multilateral donors and implemented by major U.S. NGOs. Since the project’s inception in mid-1995, some jobs had indeed been created. Villagers had been paid to shovel silt out of a drainage ditch parallel to the road along which most homes were located.

Yet newly elected officials and civic activists were critical of the efforts. Silt shoveled into villager’s yards blocked rainfall run-off, resulting in mud mounds and mosquito infestation. “Outsiders, not the peasant’s movement, decided this project,” explained one leader. “People worked on it out of desperation.” “What we really need is reinvestment in agricultural production, educational materials, and teacher training.” Observed another, “and a way to get fruit rotting in the hillsides to market.”

(Maguire1996, 79)

Even if the community proved unwilling or unable to sustain projects initiated with outside assistance, the reasoning went; the outside world will have made well intentioned efforts in good faith. In instances outside of this one where the international aid agencies want to encourage participatory methods, they employ superficial and frivolous techniques. When it is decided by the ones with power, i.e. by the government or the large donor agencies, that the people must be given a say in the projects that affect them, their first steps are often a process of consultation. “The people are told what is to be done and their views are invited, but they are given no access to the decision making process. When this is found inadequate, they are offered participation, a shallow place, but no real influence in the policy making or planning committees” (Kirkby 1995, 312).

Grassroots organizations which are supported financially, and greeted with development programs already planned by many of the international aid agencies operating in the Republic of Haiti such as USAID, the European Union, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), etc, rarely succeed in becoming effective means for
people to get out of the deplorable situations that they are in. Instead they foster the
dependency of the supposed beneficiaries. Traveling throughout Haiti, a foreigner is
often seen as the bearer of money and temporary assistance. The word temporary should
be duly noted here because most projects are perceived by Haitians as a photo
opportunity for media awareness of development projects in Haiti. When the aid leaves,
development projects leave with them. The host population remains subordinated and
psychologically debilitated. Over the span of time that Haiti has been under foreign aid
initiatives human agency has diminished and has been replaced with utter dependence on
foreign, often temporary assistance. “Human agency is the capacity for human beings to
make choices and to impose those choices on their world. It is something that is
contrasted to natural forces” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agency_(philosophy)).

The sad situation in Haiti has not occurred “naturally.” Greater processes of
subjugation and repression are operating in an unbroken and ongoing chain of
imperialism, greed and corruption among leadership, and foreign interests prioritized
over Haitian domestic concerns. Human agency is the autonomy to act as a person with
well intentioned actions. All human beings have the autonomy to make their own
decisions, seek help where they wish to find it, eat what they wish to eat, and physically
move about freely unless physically bound and all within the constraints of their
circumstances, such as the amount of money in his or her pocket. The number of NGO
programs and the amount of foreign assistance are increasing and conditions in Haiti are
worsening. Outside influences alone cannot explain this fact. I will however argue that
the majority of programs for development that “bring development” instead of fostering
it, diminishes the human agency and autonomy Haitians have over their environment and the processes that occur there. Simultaneously, the blame for processes of marginalization does not fall only on the heads of foreigners, but simultaneously on the heads if Haitians political leaders, figure heads, and ordinary Haitians alike for letting them continue. The capacity of a person to act as an agent is specific to their environmental circumstances. Human agency entitles the observer to ask should this have occurred. Dependence on international food exports and the handouts of foreigners are the major problem in the worsening conditions of the Haitian people. The effects of these projects are perpetuating traditional forms of paternalism while establishing new dependencies on new institutions.

“The emergent structure that results from these encounters is the dysfunctional and frequently unsuccessful, but ongoing NGO development industry that can be observed throughout Haiti, and the associated proliferation of many struggling and dependent local community organizations” (Vander 1999, 332-33). The local priorities are overwhelmed by the outside resources and practices. No downward accountability to what the receivers want to happen within their communities is actually considered and community wants are distorted.

Jennie Smith notes that “Arturo Escobar, along with numerous others have shown us that at the very core of the theory and practice of development work is the modernist premise that the causes of Third World poverty reside not in the forces that enrich and empower a few of the world’s people and immiserate the rest but lie instead in the deficiencies and delinquencies of poor people and the communities in which they lay”
(Smith 2001, 33). This premise may be the reason why attempts to truly engage inhabitants of Haiti in the process of bettering their living conditions and access to necessities such as health care and clean water, has been ignored or superficially attempted. The international media has a hand in fostering the perception of the Haitian people as Negroid, ugly, helpless, and innately degenerate. They are a pathetic population and the international community has the responsibility to bring them development out of paternalistic concern. Such rhetoric echoes “The White Man’s Burden.”

The emergent effects have been the internalization of the label ‘underdeveloped’ by Haitians. As a result there are continued attempts by a growing number of NGOs to alleviate the needs of these people. A distressing reality is that most of these NGOs have the same goal or mission but act with differing strategies, often simultaneously within the same community. This is a very disorganized and pluralistic environment which consequently is very detrimental to the Haitian community. For example, ten aid organizations want to build and support the Haitian police system. All ten have different training models that replicate the police task force in their countries: carabineros (Chile), horseback riders (Canada), etc. Without the input of the Haitians the development projects are more reflective of what the aid agencies want and less of what is actually needed, what will be beneficial, and most importantly what is sustainable. The Haitians become passive acceptors of whatever project is offered, regardless of how unsuited it is to their social context. A dysfunctional and dependent relationship between the NGO and the local community emerges. There is now a conviction, a religious ideology, that
development is “out there” and is brought “in here” by “them.” This is reinforced by the practices employed by a majority of the aid agencies in outsourcing much of the materials, technicians, knowledge, etc. thereby debilitating the local community and eliminating any means of being self-sustaining or independent of help. Thousands of Haitian engineers and medical students, technicians, craftsman, etc. who may have graduated already are jobless which does not necessarily mean they are skill-less. Intellectual capital is outsourced in many development projects or otherwise contracted outside of Haiti, rather than employing the vast amount of skilled labor available in Haiti. The Haitians are in a constant state of subordination and in need. There is no sense of empowerment.

Still, during the past few decades, a number of national and foreign-based agencies have questioned this traditional model of development and made serious efforts to correct this legacy of aid causing a regression in well-being. Attempting to be more responsive to the concerns, values, resources, and agendas of local people, they have tried to resist imposing their own preconceptions on local communities, turning instead towards assisting local efforts to bring about social change, i.e. the grassroots and civil society organizations. They have hoped that these changes will afford them more success at facilitating transformations that are both sustainable and truly helpful to the poor. “Unfortunately, most of these organizations are few in number and are limited in resources. While some have been remarkably successful, those successes have been confined to small spheres” (Smith 2001, 33). Aid personnel operating from this different paradigm in many instances have been taking a more cautious approach. Acknowledging
the need for visible and sustainable change, they feel that they could be a vehicle for breaking the cycle of dependency. The innovative element, they reasoned, would be the empowerment of grassroots organizations. However, even with such a stance more often than not, locally identified priorities are continuously ignored, and long term needs are not addressed. Foreign aid mostly seems like a quick fix, and often the programs temporarily alleviate one problem but inadvertently foster another one.

**Problems that May Occur Within the Participatory Model**

The report prepared in 1979 by Lowenthal and Attfield, *Integrated Rural Development in Haiti*, addresses issues of participation within the community model. They observed that there are different types of community members, including those that occasionally participated and emerged when labor opportunities came about (Klein 1984, 13). The community members were not involved in decision making or any planning of projects. The degrees of participation varied widely. Lowenthal attributes varying degrees of community development participation to cultural patterns of respect and deference. Those who are poorer, younger, less powerful, female, and of low socio-economic status wish to avoid public conflict or disagreement and feel less inclined to speak up or participate.

Lowenthal proposed that USAID start a project based on alternative models of development, specifically on the principle of organization of small groups called *groupements*. The project materialized as the Catholic Relief Services sponsored Groupement Pilot Project which began in September 1980. It is described in the Office of Project and Grants proposal of USAID. That proposal stated:
The lack of enduring, indigenous local groupings beyond the level of the family, and the inherent unsuitability of the widely-used community council organizational model, have often rendered the community development process in Haiti a one way externally-imposed, dependency provoking affair…. The result is that program design is predetermined, with the peasant simply posited as the recipient of development and its benefits.

(Klein 1984, 15)

The groupement strategy has two basic strengths. First the groupements are small groups based on pre-existing ties of kinship, neighborhood and friendship. These prior bonds between members provide a base upon which to build stronger, goal directed, working relationships instead of an advantageous short term opportunity to participate. “Second, the limited size of the group, and its mandate to undertake its own capital-generating projects in common, demand a high level of participation and commitment from all members” (Klein 1984, 16).

While most NGOs that work in international development claim to be part of the civil society, they are generally not membership based. Mandates within the NGO often outline specific staff, self-appointed boards of directors, and they are generally driven by a vision of achieving some sort of public benefit. Missions can be geared toward alleviating poverty, providing health care and education, or meeting the tremendous need for HIV/AIDS treatment/awareness. They are public benefit organizations but not membership based.

Patrick Kilby argues that “the lack of a defined accountability path to constituents that a representative structure provides is the major weakness of public benefit organizations” (Kilby 2006, 952). Although all international non-governmental organizations in Haiti claim to be operating in the interests of the people there is no
clearly defined way that they can be held accountable by that constituency because the Haitian poor have little power in that relationship. Most are merely receivers of assistance, but have not voiced what type of assistance is most pertinent to their community, or how it would better be played out in a specific process, nor do they possess the mechanisms to change or rectify how development works in their communities. It should be the responsibility of the NGOs to implement mechanisms to engage the constituents and reinforce downward accountability.

“Development assistance which seeks to solve the immediate problems of individuals can only succeed in the short term. Long term development requires that development be viewed as a process which seeks to overhaul the present social and economic structures which are responsible for the destitution and deprivation of poor people in rural and urban areas” (Edwards and Hulme 1995, 139). Thus the development of organizational capacity and skills among poor people should be enhanced by the NGO agenda. Imposing different organizational norms and cultural values upon a group usually fails, especially when accompanied by the assumption that it is the best/better way to operate. This paternalistic attitude is presumptuous and degrading. For some time now, NGOs in Haiti have been responding to the crisis of poverty and deprivation. They need to go beyond this crisis mode which parallels the Haitian mode of living: merely to survive into the next day. Such a narrow view with no perspective beyond what the immediate needs are such as food for the week, getting to the hospital now to treat an infection, blocks sustainable thinking. This mentality blocks sustainable development.
Good Faith Fostering Dependency and Perceptions of Corruption

There are two criteria for NGO accountability and legitimacy: performance impact and transparency of operations. These two criteria in turn give rise to the accountability of NGOs—‘downwards’ to their partners, beneficiaries, staff, and supporters; and ‘upward’ to their donors, trustees, and host governments. “The degree of both downward and upward accountability is measured in terms of the capacity to demand and appraise reports and information, followed by the ability to impose sanctions” (Choudhury and Ahmed 2002, 574).

Nonprofit service providers and NGOs operating in Haiti have received criticism for their lack of financial transparency, photo opportunities for media coverage of short term development projects as opposed to sustainable projects, and unethical business conduct. The 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index is a composite index that polls perceptions of public sector corruption in 163 countries around the world. It tabulates a composite score from a scale of zero to ten, with zero indicating high levels of perceived corruption and ten indicating low levels of perceived corruption (www.transparency.org). There is a correlation between corruption and poverty, where a large majority of impoverished states have the lowest rankings. “Almost three-quarters of the countries in the CPI score below five (including all low-income countries and all but two African states) indicating that most countries in the world face serious perceived levels of domestic corruption. Seventy one countries, nearly half, score below three, indicating that corruption is perceived as rampant. Haiti has the lowest score at 1.8; Guinea, Iraq and Myanmar share the penultimate slot, each with a score of 1.9. Finland, Iceland and New
Zealand share the top score of 9.6 (www.transparency.org).” The perception of corruption is widespread among Haitian citizens, and it is inclusive of all public service provider sector organizations i.e. NGOs as well as the government, and foreign aid entities. Corruption passes through all structures as if they were made of porous membranes.

Many NGOs in Haiti are quite small, outside of the few large ones funded and organized by large international development regimes such as USAID, the UN Development Program, etc. Since the scale of many NGOs financed by these international aid agencies is small and boards of directors informal, many see no need for responsible financial accountability by way of bookkeeping practices, nor do they have formal training. Most are faith-based initiatives from community churches, or headed by an educated liberal who “found a cause, and fell in love with Haiti” who then choose to do development work there with a small group of friends as the staff/board. “NGOs’ boards are fairly inactive in terms of their oversight of management” (Kim 2003, 11). These initiatives, although good-hearted and driven by kindness to “make a difference” fail at really helping. Instead they are fostering this syndrome of dependency and disempowerment of the Haitian citizens by taking away their own agency for change. They lack accountability, which refers to the mechanics of proficient handling of finances and overall performance, as well as to transparency.

**Dangers to the Haitian People**

Local people hold an understanding of empowerment and participation which focuses on their relations to actors external to their community. “In their understanding,
empowerment becomes the ability of the community to organize itself and make claims in order to access external development resources, and in a similar manner participation becomes the ability of the community, to establish external relations that allow it to participate in the development programs that are operating in the region” (Vander 1999, 179). The question is if reporting needs or community based priorities to the government and to aid organizations is a mechanical exercise similar to throwing bottles filled with letters into the sea, not knowing if they will ever be read or acted upon. The Haitian people are powerless in this development game.

Another danger in Haiti is that the aid that is received is subverted by the existing hierarchies and structures that filter the money to places rather than the community it intends to serve. For instance, such a structural loophole exists where there are specific mandates to outsource supplies and intellectual support from the funding country. This practice is in great contrast to generating energy and effort from the grassroots level, which may be the proposed intention of the aid. The criticism here is that NGOs are insufficiently accountable downwards. NGO accountability exists in full effect when there is transparency in its activities, and measures for rectification if corruption takes place. The problem is that this scrutiny is difficult as the accountabilities that they have to respond to are multiple, complex, and the mechanisms for enforcement are limited.

An additional danger is NGOs exerting their power and influence to prescribe what they believe to be empowering rather than empowering the communities to make decisions for themselves. Many projects have rendered the development process a one-way externally imposed scheme. Much of the NGO rhetoric of empowerment is focused
on bringing external agency with a “top-down” approach in which the NGO is neither creating an “enabling environment” nor providing leadership (Kilby 2006, 955). Nothing that can stand on its own is left behind such as leadership ability, supplies, capital, etc. because it was not fostered in the community but rather delivered there. NGOs face a paradox in their work: their interactions with communities can empower people to a certain extent or in the short term, but can also lead to a disempowering dependency. Downward accountability will improve empowerment outcomes in Haitian communities. Accountability can mitigate the disempowering processes that these relationships can foster. As Junki Kim argues: “although nongovernmental organizations which are often thought of as forces of good and representative of the true voices of ordinary citizens have occupied the moral high ground compared to governments and large corporations, practitioners and scholars have long debated the need to institutionalize organizational governance and transparency to maintain public trust to keep them acting as such” (Kim 2003, 5).

Lastly, many NGOs work as contractors for specific public services. This means that accountability is subverted away from the people and instead focused towards the underwriters of the contract (Choudhury and Ahmed 2002, 572). Here the contractor is not necessarily a government agency, but rather a foreign government or governments (USAID, SIDA, OECD), a donor or donor group (OXFAM), a northern nongovernmental organization (CARE), or an international organization (UNICEF, Doctors without Borders). The purpose of contracting is not simply to use the NGO as a cost effective alternative to service delivery, but to create or rebuild the third sector itself. Thus, being
held accountable for service delivery according to a target set in a contract is different from being held accountable in relation to broader processes of democratization and social change.
Chapter Three - An Examination of the Lambi Fund

Organizational Snapshot - The Lambi Fund

The Lambi Fund was founded in 1994 in the United States by a group of Haitians and Haitian-Americans as an international development organization. Their mission is to assist the popular democratic movement in Haiti by strengthening civil society. They see civil society as the foundation for democracy and development. “The Lambi Fund draws its name from the lambi (pronounced lahm-bee), which is the Haitian Creole word for conch shell. The conch shell, blown as a horn, has played a vital role in community organizing throughout Haiti's history” (www.lambifund.org). The lambi is a symbol of the Haitian people's hope, strength, resistance, and struggle for self-determination because it was used to alert the slaves of an impending slave revolt in 1791 on the island of Saint Dominique. This became the revolution in 1804 which gave rise to the first free black republic in the world.

The Lambi Fund has a four tiered organizational structure, in which two tiers operate in the United States and two tiers function in Haiti. The Board of Directors, which is one of the tiers, is in the United States and governs the entire organization. A US-based staff raises funds and awareness for Haiti. “In Haiti there is an Advisory Board which functions as a grant-making committee and advisors to the Executive Office in Haiti. Finally an Executive Office in Haiti directs all program functions in Haiti; it primarily serves as the liaison to grassroots groups in Haiti” (www.lambifund.org).

The Lambi Fund employs a collaborative effort model which includes popular education and a “bottom-up” relationship with the grassroots communities. Emphasis is placed on understanding and affording the community organizations the opportunities to
express and defend the needs of their communities and to develop their own project proposals.

These projects are evaluated by the Lambi Fund through on site investigations with analysis geared towards assessing project feasibility, legitimacy of groups, and the institutional capacity for projects to be successful with aid and beyond that. The project ideas, which are initiated and proposed by the communities themselves, are further developed with participatory planning in conjunction with community members and Lambi Fund staff. The last step involves both the Haiti Advisory Board and the US Board of Directors’ approval of the projects with all of its amendments. U.S. staff and the Executive Office staff in Haiti are not the only ones involved with the facilitation of project activities once they begin. Field monitors from the grassroots organization’s communities are hired as a liaison between the staff in Haiti and the United States. They supervise, communicate, and evaluate progress between the two.

According to the Lambi Fund’s own literature, the organization’s approach was “inspired by the lessons learned by the founders and the staff during their prior experiences in other working environments.” This approach, they argue, provides several important advantages which make it relatively more reliable when compared to other development approaches that create dependency and a mercenary spirit in grassroots groups (www.lambifund.org). The Lambi Fund partners with grassroots organizations in a manner that claims to respect the principles of self-determination. The realities of the communities are not ignored, but rather, are embraced and prioritized. There is recognition of a group’s internal potential and of the fact that members have worthy
attributes, ambition, and talents, to support their own community. They also possess the knowledge of what is best suited for themselves and the methods needed. This approach encourages creativity and personal initiative which is very much appreciated by the organizations. Before a project starts, the Lambi Fund organizes training for the members of the organizations for better project management. “Finally, Lambi gives organizations a strategic orientation that is consistently strengthened by systematic reflections on major local, national, regional and even international problems” (Reynaud and Benoit 2007, chpt. 8).

Their bottom-up development model embraces peasant led solutions with an emphasis on democratic practices such as participation of women in leadership roles and revolving tenures. The needs of the community are determined by the community and the solutions proposed by them are supported by the Lambi Fund with finances, capital, training, and supervision (www.lambifund.org). In a recent study on rural development Wilma Klein argued that:

Building organizations of the asset less poor is one of the most promising means to reduce their peasant exploitation and provide them a potential vehicle for influencing political and administrative decision-makers (1979: 113-14).

(Klein 1984, 2)

This is the main idea behind the mission of the Lambi Fund, that true democracy and the fermentation of democratic movements must come from below, the voiceless. Karen Ashmore, executive director of the Lambi Fund, noted in a recent interview that Haitians at a grassroots level have a great sense of democracy (interview with the author). The grassroots organizations worked with are composed of community groups already in
existence, they have oversight, and decisions are made by consensus. This type of participation leads to the acquiring of skills that stimulates leadership capacity and more importantly the experience of and necessary skills for participation in larger groups. The peasant feeling of powerlessness is erased and is replaced by some gain in the control of his environment.

**Activities of the Lambi Fund**

Karen Ashmore, summarized the activities of the Lambi Fund nicely with a short and concise description stating that the approach is to “sit, discuss, and train and supply financing” (interview with the author). An overview of the programs funded and supported by the Lambi Fund includes but is not limited to sustainable development, animal husbandry, community micro-credit, environmental restoration, and organizational and management training. Grassroots organizations that hear about the Lambi Fund submit a proposal for a project or program in their community, which in turn is evaluated by the Lambi Fund, before it is supported. “They come to us to prioritize their needs in the community and what they want to accomplish. The only way that you can get buy-in from them is if they are involved” (interview with the author). This term “buy-in” is most accurately translated as turning the constituents into shareholders in the process/ventures instead of stakeholders; Author Michael Edwards makes the distinction between shareholders from stakeholders in that they are considered partners rather than clients. Proposal review may take up to a year to see if they have project management skills and to build up their capacity. There is a clear willingness to aid these communities. Projects that are rejected are afforded the technical assistance and supervision to evolve a
more doable project. When the organizations selected meet only some prerequisites, the Lambi Fund works with them on those that are not yet “acceptable” in order to help them meet the requirements.

Leonie Hermantin, deputy director of the Lambi Fund, explains that, “the Lambi Fund offers two types of training for grassroots organizations 1) Local, specific training based on the needs of each of the peasant organizations and 2) Regional training conferences where participants can share and collaborate on a wider, regional basis” (interview with the author). The Lambi Fund seeds a project with overhead capital or technical training and expects the project to become self-sustaining after a few years. Peasants are very intelligent, pragmatic, wise individuals. However they are often less educated than their urban counterparts. The illiteracy rate is outlandishly great and therefore many peasants lack the technical skills to effectively manage a large project. Project management and organizational development training are provided to all groups.

Hermantin credits the success of their model of development to the degree of ownership the beneficiaries have in the project and programs themselves. “Part of our success is that we don’t tell people what to do. We don’t come with a project and say we’ve assessed their needs, and we’re doing it for you. It is fine to say that we’ve assessed what your needs are and then ask are you interested in being part of it. But most of the time projects come in and say this is what you need and they are not really getting local input. Part of what we do goes…beyond…getting local input. It involves having the localities initiate the request and implement it themselves, so it’s empowering at different levels” (interview with the author). According to the INFODEV evaluation there
is a very high degree of buy in and ownership of the projects. For instance the members of one of the organizations, KAPKAD, have a greater sense of solidarity than before exposure to the Lambi Fund, and sense of community. They are more cooperative as a community: “The community considers our coffee factory like a community heritage.” (Reynaud and Machamp 2007, chpt. 7.2.4) Not only was the project initiated by the grassroots organization but the community has such a sense of ownership of the project that it is now a community heritage.

**Assessment and Critique of the Third Party Evaluation and the Lambi Fund**

INFODEV, the Center for Development Documentation and Continuing Education, is the third party agency in Haiti that the Lambi Fund contracted to appraise the organization’s activities and funded projects. This for-profit firm evaluated the ten years of work done by the Lambi Fund. “INFODEV’s basic mission is to contribute to strengthening the human resource capacity of Haiti, both in rural and urban settings, and to provide high-quality professional services in the area of development project management” (www.lambifund.org). They were contracted to appraise the bottom-up collaborative strategy as a development model; appraise the impact and results of the Lambi Fund’s on-site work; review the relationships fostered with working with the grassroots organizations; and assess the degree to which the Lambi Fund is fulfilling its mission to aid the democratic movement by reinforcing civil society at a local level. They also evaluated the institutional performance of the Lambi Fund. I will look more into the relationships between the Lambi Fund and its beneficiary organizations and look at the issues of downwards accountability and the impact that the Lambi Fund has had on
these communities. This evaluation document drafted by INFODEV is a main source in my evaluation of this model which is limiting because it is not based on my own primary research of the voices of the constituents served by the Lambi Fund. I must infer from and analyze the study undertaken by INFODEV.

The dominant approach of this evaluation from INFODEV is interpretive and has its emphasis on descriptions and quotations based on interviews and dialogue with the beneficiaries of the funds received for projects and programs from the Lambi Fund. It is a very people centered qualitative assessment. All of the Lambi Fund’s records were consulted and analyzed. INFODEV conducted structured interviews with all the technical and administrative departments of the organization in Haiti and with the staff from the U.S. Their evaluation covers all 101 projects financed by the Lambi Fund during its 10 years of operations.

In terms of practical evaluation methodology, one tool which is common among Latin American NGOs is the “evaluation package”. This package has no fixed content or single meaning; but it is a term which is used to describe a common approach to project evaluation among NGOs. It is based largely on the analysis of verbal descriptions of work to date and takes place through a series of internal meetings in which the whole exercise is played out. It is an exhaustive and detailed approach which; it must be said, can often become lost in a wealth of description and comment. This is sometimes the case in the INFODEV report. INFODEV’s evaluation of the Lambi Fund uses a lot of descriptive and narrative statements made from the members of the grassroots organizations that have been supported by the Lambi Fund. The process produced a
report which is the basis for future actions to move forward. As such this evaluation is an informative tool to see the direction of the Lambi Fund. The whole process reinforces the internal strengths of the project team and helps to develop a common vision of where things are going.

Most NGOs are intermediaries between grassroots, community level groups and other sectors of the society such as government, business and other institutions in the market such as private schools etc. The Lambi Fund stands as the intermediary between financial servicing institutions and the remote communities in Haiti that have little or no access to financing services. Access to investments and funding from local financing businesses has increased for the grassroots organizations that have been helped by the Lambi Fund. These investments aim to improve the economic situation of the Lambi Fund’s members and help the organizations to be financially autonomous. The Lambi Fund is reinforcing the eligibility of certain organizations to receive new investments from other sponsors and have more investment possibilities for new projects. This is substantiated by INFODEV in the statements of people interviewed.

The evaluation concludes organizations have greatly developed their organizational skills through their relationship with the Lambi Fund, for example using administrative tools to control the evolution of projects (note-taking, regular meetings, yearly evaluations, etc), organizing and storing information in a methodological way. However, the evaluation also concludes that strategic planning on the part of these organizations is necessary for implementation of new projects. No strategic/developmental projects can be found even though members of grassroots
organizations and/or the communities have ideas. A strategic plan is necessary for the proposals that the organizations present to the Lambi Fund in order to ensure sustainability and that projects and programs are replicable if the peoples involved in the projects now were sadly unable to participate in the future. Organizations must elaborate strategies for 2 or 3 years and outline the different steps to carry them out.

In regards to the relationship between the Lambi Fund and the constituents, “80% of the organizations say that their relations with the Lambi Fund have been positive. An organization with the acronym of KPM says the Lambi Fund allowed it to create new contacts and new professional relations. However, ten percent say that they have experienced some incidents when principles of their organization were not respected such as methods of the Lambi Fund differing from financial management practices of the grassroots organization” (Reynaud and Machamp 2007, chpt. 9.3.3). This complaint may reflect misappropriated funds, or monies not being devoted to specific parts of the project as previously agreed. One can only speculate as to why the funded organization made such a complaint because the organizational principle was not specified. Eighty percent of the organizations say they appreciate much of the supervision offered by the Lambi Fund. They believe that it helps to reinforce their efforts and contribute to the success of the project. They consider the Lambi Fund to be respectful of the basic principles of partnership and of their autonomy.

It is obvious from discussion with staff that the organization is strongly in favor of downward accountability and its bottom-up approach appears stronger than that of other NGOs in Haiti operating with a top-down model. There is a mechanism in place for
follow-up from the Lambi Fund and the local organizations facilitated by the field monitor. This method, however, is very informal where evaluations and statements of the constituents are orally received and written in a notebook. This is understandable, as most of the community members are illiterate. However, I believe that a database should be created to consolidate formal solicitations, appraisals, and comments from below.

The ways in which NGOs presently account for what they do, reveal a number of inadequacies. “Reporting of performance tends to focus on the achievement of immediate outputs (resonant of what interviewees have noted as photo opportunities and exposure in the media for publicity objectives), and only rarely does it delve into the long-term and more fundamental effects and impacts with which NGOs are suppose to be concerned” (Edwards and Hulme 1995, 83). Attention is restricted mainly to ‘functional’ accountability, that is, to what is happening at the level of individual projects as opposed to the achievement of wider pragmatic goals. There is insufficient attention given to the views of the intended beneficiaries. The Lambi Fund has adopted a more accountable method of evaluation for their funded projects by looking at longer term impacts on the community in terms of the accessibility these organizations have gained for future funding from other agencies. The Lambi Fund has fostered sustainability by working towards building organizational competencies, and providing the employment for increased income that has enabled the membership of partnering organizations the opportunity to send their children to school, have access to health care, etc.

I believe that the Lambi Fund is vulnerable to the criticism that it does not effectively and clearly evaluate the degree of its proclaimed successes because of lack of
reporting in a systematical, formalized, statistical framework. There needs to be more data that shows that their activities have generated better livelihoods in the communities that they have touched. Numbers or percentages showing how many more children are now able to go to school; the rise in monthly income, increased percentages of people who have access to health care, etc would benefit the Lambi Fund.

The Lambi Fund lays claim to longer-term positive effects but the evaluation conducted by INFODEV lacked the data as well as the other documents to support that. This may not matter very much in relation to certain aspects of health care and education, where longer-term consequences can be difficult to trace, but in other areas it would most certainly be desirable to explore further down the chain of causes and effects than is presently the case. Data on labor inputs as well as human hours devoted to particular activities are also hard to come by and would strengthen the Lambi Fund’s capacity to analyze its work.

The evaluation did an excellent job in showing the evolution of the projects in terms of the profits made and where deficits arose. The matrices and tables included are a good tool for predicting what profits can be made and for analyzing the variables such as fuel, labor salaries, etc. that affect profitability. Given the complexity of what the Lambi Fund is trying to do, assisting popular democratic movements in Haiti by strengthening civil society through overlapping services, and given the volatility of the environment in which it operates, it is almost impossible to prove success conclusively. However, it is an easier task to demonstrate that it has not failed in key areas. The next part of this thesis examines in more detail, the relationship between the Lambi Fund and
the people that they seek to serve and how the Lambi Fund managed the
empowerment/accountability tensions.

**Empowerment/accountability**

Analysis of the Lambi Fund’s accountability to their mission statement (i.e. is the
NGO accomplishing the vision of the organization?) is difficult to determine because of
the abstract goals guiding the operations of the organization. However, in reality and in a
practical sense, the Lambi Fund’s operations are in the business of financing and
reinforcing organizations that already exist and their ideas for projects and programs in
their community. This in turn strengthens the democratic movement in Haiti. By
acknowledging the local organizations’ ideas and capabilities, and by encouraging their
development, the work of the Lambi Fund is very empowering and diverges greatly from
models that bring development rather than foster it. I consider this to be very powerful in
building the autonomy of these types of organizations and conducting these development
activities more as a partnership instead of a ‘giver’ /‘receiver’ relationship. The Lambi
Fund is one of the rare institutions in Haiti that has a “bottom-up” approach. It is also
one of the rare institutions that respects the “subsidiary principle”. These two aspects are
considered essential to run a project successfully in the countryside. The “bottom-up”
system allows for groups to express their problems, recognize their needs, and participate
in the solving process of the issues their community encounters (i.e. determining the
projects they wish to develop to improve their condition of life). “The subsidiary
principle is paying particular attention to dignity, human lives of the partners and
capacities to take initiatives beneficial to them on their level of development” (Reynaud
The beneficiaries are in control of their activities but in partnership with a funding agency, the Lambi Fund. The Lambi Fund, in turn, is supporting the democratic movement because they are not imposing their values, rules, orders, etc on the beneficiaries. They are engaging and supporting their needs and the ways in which they want to meet their needs. This approach inherently is accountable to the constituents because the ideas to meet: their needs, their motivations, and the measures to better their environment come from the constituents.

The role of the staff in transmitting and reflecting the local communities’ values seems very important to the groups that they serve. The criteria established to select the Lambi Fund staff required experience and engagement:

- Good understanding of the Haitian social reality;
- Hope for change in the society; and
- Understanding of the process of development. (Benoit & Machamp, chpt. 9.1)

These criteria could be better defined. There is vagueness in “understanding of process of development” and the possession of “hope for change.” Both are important to have but neither is measurable nor specific. Additionally values can be eroded over time. “The values base of an NGO is not something which is given or passed down like a material object. It is something that must be worked on, as time, growth, and external influences can result in erosion of values” (Kilby 2006, 959). However, all are elements that are necessary to build trust and positive relations among the Haitian peasants. The criteria should include these aspects along with more measurable concrete qualifications.
It is apparent that many NGOs working in Haiti do not have a coherent and well-articulated understanding of why the problems they are trying to solve exist or arise in the Haitian context. They are dealing with symptoms and effects, meaning that they will fail at considering or attacking the structural nature of impoverishment if they are only bringing symptomatic relief. The Lambi Fund is treating poverty with a mutual responsibility approach. The grassroots organizations are not treated like victims, but as actors in solving their problems with a bit of guidance and aid. The organization’s endeavor is looking at the shareholders’ interests outside of just the project’s framework. With the peasants buy-in, development is not something that is brought in: development becomes something from within that is reinforced rather than constrained from outside forces. This is the real basis of accountability from below.

Because so many views and perceptions come from below, NGOs are subject to many conflicting pressures, not to mention the instability that is commonplace in the Haitian reality. The dilemmas of accountability cannot be solved, but they should be managed. “Responsibility to different groups depends not on the relative power to impose or threaten sanctions (or withdraw cooperation and aid), but on the capacity to make accountability ‘meaningful,’ i.e. to institute the ability to ask the right question and assess the adequacy of the answers” (Choudhury and Ahmed 2002, 583). The Lambi Fund, being a NGO from the United States, will always remain accountable to their donors, and supporters, aid agencies, etc. Simultaneously it has to remain operationally accountable to the low income communities. One can say that what enables the Lambi Fund to manage the two effectively is its strong sense of mission and attachment to
values and principles, augmented by the fact that Haitian staff members are actively involved in the onsite activities of the peasant organizations. Executive director Karen Ashmore’s comments in a recent interview showed a high degree of accountability to the constituency as a very important aspect of their work in Haiti [see Appendix B]. The mechanisms through which the Lambi Fund showed accountability to the constituents ranged from formal to informal irregularly held meetings for discussion. The argument is for the transferring of agency back into the hands of Haitians. Leonie Hermantin noted:

In the formal and informal meetings the peasants are the actors that bring their own agendas, minutes are taken, they have their own rituals and everything is very well structured by the grassroots organizations themselves. The Lambi Fund is more of a facilitator and support system for more democratic and equitable practices of these organizations.

The Lambi Fund finds the organizations as is, then strengthens some of the principles that will be important to ensure the success of our projects. If they like to go drink after meetings, that’s not our problem. But if they don’t know how to give a financial report, if they don’t want women to have access to certain positions, then that is our problem.

(Interview with the author)

The ability to seek rectification and ask questions is made clear from the onset. It seems obvious that the ability to ask questions and to disagree is accepted and to a certain degree encouraged as a way to support the overarching theme of democracy and respecting individual/organizational rights. Hermantin notes:

That is made clear to them from day one; that they have to do that. Not that they can but that they have to do that. There is a regional monitor who is from that area, so that regional monitor is forever driving that message that in order to move forward we have to be critical. Being critical means being critical of ourselves, being critical of our partners. I mean it is a must. That criticism does not mean that you are angry. Criticism is a way to build and strengthen; it’s constructive criticism.

(Interview with the author)
This is an example of how thwarting the detrimental assumption of docility in the development process can operate. This is the first case of downward accountability that I have seen to date operating in Haiti.

**Recommendations for Mainstreaming and Accountability**

When NGOs begin to think and act “bigger”, they can move to approaches which cover a whole city, province, or department instead of small number of communities. What will be necessary is the rejection of total substitution for the state. Staff members in the U.S from the Lambi Fund declare that interaction between the Lambi Fund and the Haitian state is very limited. They maintain an arm’s length relationship, with occasional meetings with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, or the Ministry of Agriculture, because of the revolving door that is characteristic of the Haitian government. “We were aligned with Aristide because he was aligned with the democratic movement [as we know, Aristide was overthrown twice], therefore lesson learned: do not align with persons, but with issues,” says Karen Ashmore (interview with the author). Additionally the Haiti staff has been suspicious and wary of the government and rightly so. But the Haiti staff and U.S. staff would like to encourage more cooperation between local authorities and municipal governments.

If the Lambi Fund was approached by a large scale agricultural initiative in a region that was plausible and worthy of funding they might seek a contract under the Ministry of Agriculture in Haiti. NGOs, along with grassroots organizations and the peasant organizations that they aim to aid, undertake basic activities that normally are complementary to those of a strong state, such as reforestation projects. NGOs may then
start working with regional businesses, chambers of commerce, parishes, colleges, and local institutes in the development of the regional plan. This is already in practice by the Lambi Fund in collaborating with local banks, and educational institutions. Along with the technical and organizational information, the Lambi Fund facilitates conferences where members learn about the broader socio-economic and political causes of the problems that their projects address. Together they analyze governmental and corporate policies made within their country and at the international level. “They recognize the negative effects of globalization as well as economic injustice stemming from within Haiti. Most importantly, they discover new strategies and new energy to counter those effects through their own self-determined efforts to increase national production” (www.lambifund.org).

Mainstreaming involves converting alternative solutions implemented by the NGO into the general and officially accepted policy framework of the land. The capacity of NGOs to respond to this challenge is also related to issues of accountability. With grassroots organizations along with peasant communities backing new policy frameworks that will impact their communities and others like them, change can occur. Good participatory programming, monitoring and evaluation systems are among the best and most promising ways of managing issues of accountability; and in that way NGO paternalism is replaced with active democratic agendas of the constituents that can be put at the national forefronts for transformations to occur.

By bringing popular/peasant organizations to a larger platform or council, the Lambi Fund can help to defend the interests of these vulnerable peoples in a
larger/national arena; as part of a broader plan. This is a way of securing multiple entries for organizations of the poor into the process of designing and carrying out projects and plans. This demands from the Lambi Fund a shift and flexibility in thinking so they are more prepared to work with the government (municipal and national), and the private business sector, and broaden funding opportunities. Their present activities engage local funding institutions and municipalities, as well as educational institutions. To mainstream, which may be a strategic goal 15 to 20 years from now, the state and numerous other actors encountered by the grassroots organizations from forming solid relationships through their projects must be embraced as partners in order to expand. This would ultimately be a crucial goal. As important as individual projects are, change has to occur at the macro level as well in order to uproot the causes of poverty in Haiti. That change will require continued organizing at a national level, as the Lambi Fund to some extent has been doing but which can be widened even more.
Chapter Four- Conclusion

Overall Assessment of Aid Brought to Haiti

The increasing availability of funding for NGOs, the great degree of influence that they enjoy in the decision making processes of many communities, local and national, are both a great opportunity and a great danger (Edwards 1995, 5). Haiti is at risk of becoming more and more detrimentally dependent on these international funding agencies. NGO intervention in Haiti is characterized by immediate effects. Nothing is long term, as is commonly heard by the host communities of these programs and development projects. The disjuncture between the intentions of the interventions and their actual effects is mind-boggling. Importance should not be given to the action of “bringing development” to Haiti, but rather to the side effects of doing so. It is a corrupted process not simply in terms of financial scandal, but also in the deviation of NGOs from their mission of social transformation. “The only way in which NGOs can avoid corruption is to develop systems for performance- monitoring, accountability and strategic planning. Internal evaluations are rarely released, and what is released comes closer to being propaganda than rigorous assessments” (Edwards and Hulme 1995, 5).

In attempts to make development assistance work, words are thrown around like: empowerment, participatory development, and strengthening local organizations. “Almost everywhere in the world where rural development is successful, one of the main components of the program is the organization of peasants into self-sustaining groups” (Klein 1984, 2). Groups that should be supported with material aid and financing are groups that have been functioning for an extended period of time. For instance, the Lambi Fund has a pre-established criteria by which to select organizations that are most
likely to be sustainable and succeed. External aid is useful and even necessary in the case of Haiti, but only at a certain point in the cycle so as not to foster dependency. If brought too soon, too fast, it becomes an anti-development mechanism. This cannot be stressed strongly enough. The main point is that these organizations should have solid foundations already and not be dependent on aid as has been the overwhelming case in development projects.

NGOs are seen as virtuous and able to reach marginalized peoples. This is all in theory; in practice it is very much to the contrary in Haiti. Such virtues are rarely proven. On the basis of such positive presumptions, expectations are high for NGOs in terms of outcomes, especially if they can overcome weaknesses such as limited outreach, political uncertainty, unfavorable road conditions and a Third World environment. As Michael Edwards and David Hulme argue, “‘Scaling-up’ and ‘mainstreaming’ represent two separate but interrelated approaches to overcoming these weaknesses and improving NGO capacity to utilize more systematically their experiences in developing models which are more effective and efficient than those of the state in dealing with problems of poverty and powerlessness among the poor” (Edwards and Hulme 1995, 54).

**Assessment of the Downward Accountability Structures of the Lambi Fund and Recommendations**

Unlike governments which have to undergo periodic elections or businesses that have to make a profit, NGOs have no clear mechanism through which accountability and performance can be measured. This difficulty is further augmented by the characteristic of mission statements comprised of broad social goals, and NGOs are usually working
against many forces that are not under their control. This makes it hard to attribute causation, blame, or credit for what may occur and to outcomes. There is no single mechanism through which they can be brought to account. That is why it is necessary for NGOs to take the initiative to create such a mechanism towards downwards accountability, especially in the field of international development in a country that has experienced a great deal of imperialism and foreign occupation. Holding this perspective, a great amount of effort is necessary so as not to duplicate the negative ramifications of having foreign organizations operating in a highly sensitive and vulnerable area.

The Lambi Fund has a comparatively “better” approach to reinforce downward accountability. Their principle of working for local organizations by aiding them after priorities have already been identified and measures already formulated makes for strong, effective partnerships. I do not see the process of the Lambi Fund as a single model, because the experience and actions of the staff are developed on the grounds of the expertise of multiple grassroots organizations and their distinctive needs. Additionally, this approach, bottom up, reinforces what the people see as befitting the process of meeting their community needs, with training, supervision and guidance. The Lambi Fund has taken on the role of the provider of funds and provider of technical assistance where it has seen fit, not as the purveyor of a better way to do things.

Looking at the financial summary of the Lambi Fund’s Annual Report of 2005, ninety one point seven (91.7) percent of their revenue of $607, 226 goes directly into supporting the programs and financing the projects of the grassroots organizations. The
remaining eight point three (8.3) percent is spent on management and administrative costs and fundraising initiatives. By way of this financial summary one can infer that most of the money is devoted to direct services for the programs and the Lambi Fund holds a policy not to outsource anything unless absolutely necessary in order to keep the funds circulating in Haiti. This data provided by the Lambi Fund as required by U.S. law is very impressive in the percentage of the funds that go directly into capacity building of the projects engineered by the grassroots organizations.

While obviously responsive to the strong pressures for accountability coming from funders and committed to meeting the requirements to retain its 501 (c) (3) status in the United States, the Lambi Fund has given as much attention to the reviews of its performance from the beneficiaries. Informally, such reviews exist in the operations of the Lambi Fund. However there is a problem endemic to the Haitian people in the context of many other NGOs. Being in such a state of desperation and utter poverty, if one is given the opportunity for funding and the opportunity to work, would one not welcome it regardless if it would inevitably help the community? Often enough no one will speak against a program or a project, because it generates money that was once not there, even if it is temporary. The question is whether reviews from beneficiaries, their statements, and their welcome of development projects can be assessed outside the context of desperation, hunger, and abject poverty? Within the culture of poverty there is an element of passive agreement and acceptance of whatever is offered, because institutional constraints have caused servility to replace self agency and self determination. Haiti may have reached a point where no one would ever seek
rectification from an NGO for a failed development project, because those failed projects/programs are the only options available to survive into another day with food, clean water, health care, etc. no matter how short lived and despite the negative consequences that arise. Local people do not feel empowered to demand accountability from a given NGO. The Lambi Fund claims to have full participation from the local organizations, as exemplified by monthly meetings and informal review channels with these groups. However, arguably no community will refuse funding, training, or management from any organization because they are in crisis mode of survival. Haiti is in a state of survival, and like the cliché says, “beggars can not be choosers”.

However, the fact that a high proportion of the Lambi Fund staff is recruited from the communities they serve keeps the organization in touch with what people really want. The Lambi Fund’s determination to strengthen local institutions which can articulate needs and participate in meeting their needs should in itself ensure that proper account is taken of local views. Additionally the success of the projects is calibrated against what the peasant objectives are and the present outcome. This is a very important competency of the Lambi Fund. Formalized, systematic, and recorded evaluative mechanisms should be put into place that can be made replicable strategically by other NGOs. Yes, field monitors take the external evaluations from the grassroots organizations and document them. However because this data was not included in the third party evaluation I am incapable of assessing the effectiveness and the systematic nature of these evaluations. The Lambi Fund should make the competency of downward accountability even stronger
by formalizing and institutionalizing the mechanisms through which the beneficiaries ask questions about and critique the programs.

The Lambi Fund’s activities show how the organization takes into account the views of those for whom it works. The small size of the organizations, field monitors that are hired from the community and the ease with which delegations, staff, or any party concerned can visit project locations are important contributing factors here.

“There have been major leaps forward in terms of wrestling with the qualitative notions of evaluation but, to date, the conceptual still dominates and practical tools are lacking” (Edwards and Hulme 1995, 78). It is important to recognize the major contribution that NGOs have made to the work of organizations, but results beyond those based on conceptual qualitative data need to be developed. Practical tools at the level of projects which would explain advances are critically important. The meaning of the word “results” has to be renegotiated and the Lambi Fund needs to provide more specific, tangible, and measurable data to back up what the evaluation says that they have achieved. NGO developmental work is very conceptual and this spills into their work of self-evaluation. “Participation,” “assisting democratic movement,” “promoting livelihoods”, etc. are all fashionable concepts and are correct in guiding the overall mission and vision of the Lambi Fund’s activities; yet it is a struggle to statistically explain what these concepts mean in practice and how it is possible to understand these effects from the inputs.
“An Nou Wè”- Lets Go!/ Let’s See What Happens Next

The research on which this study is based points to a conclusion. It is in the best interests of the Lambi Fund and even more of other NGOs in Haiti to review and improve their accountability mechanisms. The existing model of top to bottom development can then be challenged and turned, hopefully resulting in a positive change for Haiti rather than the endless pumping of money into the country that has been in effect for decades with no tangible change but rather a deterioration of local conditions. Lives are becoming more desperate day after day. As I write hunger protests because of rising food prices are ravaging the capital, Port-au-Prince. For development to happen, innovations are required in accountability. Supposed beneficiaries of these development programs need mechanisms to have a voice in how development is brought to their communities, which is a necessity at both the functional and strategic levels. At the functional level it is important for the Lambi Fund to recognize that it is involved in numerous activities: agricultural activities, community micro-credit, economical development through animal husbandry, and reinforcing organizations through management and leadership development training, and that different forms of accountability may be required for each one; institutional development work should be distinguished from the development and delivery of services.

Developing a range of mechanisms tailored to the requirements of these different functions would help to create a genuine system of accountability. This could then pave the way for other NGOs to have a more strategic plan of action for their initiatives, which would support changes at the functional level. Internally it might entail committing more
things to paper formally or transcribing comments on notebooks of ideas and concerns brought up from the peasant organizations -- complaints, appraisals, and compliments from below -- into documents in the Lambi Funds archives along with follow-up action from these concerns. All should be documented and formalized. The creation of this type of archive would make it possible to draw together, and make more accessible, the range of ideas presently stored in individual notebooks and informal mechanisms of accountability from below throughout the organization. This would enable the organization to project an image more in keeping with their claim to peasant led solutions. Such an initiative would support the Lambi Fund’s innovation in response to the expressed needs of those it seeks to serve.

**A Way Forward**

There is no pinpoint goal that can be reached when one can just stop and say “okay, that’s it! We are developed now, we have accomplished our goal.” What approach can be adopted to establish how the performance of NGOs can be assessed? The answer ties into the principles of downward accountability. “Organizational performance and a measure of how close they are to reaching an abstract goal is determined by measuring gaps between the expectations and perception of different stakeholders, i.e. the constituents from below” (Edwards and Hulme 1995, 149).

Developmental organizations are faced with an obstacle because the product of their endeavors -- sustainable development, greater democracy, poverty alleviation, etc. -- is not produced by the NGO but by the peasants themselves. What the Lambi Fund does is facilitate this. Another complication is that the funds that these NGOs receive are from
foreign sources and international aid agencies. Therefore there is no recognized system or mechanism for the (dis)satisfaction of the constituents from below to reach this global aid regime. Crucial elements of development processes such as the amount of control or buy-in people have in the decision-making are seldom assessed. Project performance and NGO performance are very different. A project can be very successful in building houses for a community, but the actual poverty alleviation in the community along with its sustainability is very hard to assess. The principle that should underlie appraisal is the need to involve shareholders more systematically. Firstly, input should not be a one on one affair. The input and feedback of beneficiaries should be continuously solicited to ensure the organization’s effective functioning. Thus, creating a systematic way of engaging their input and feedback is especially important.

The limitation of this study is the lack of research data on the input and feedback of the beneficiaries and statements from the people who received aid from the Lambi Fund. Resources did not permit such preliminary research; therefore my examination of the Lambi Fund relies heavily upon the INFODEV report. The integrity of my research of the Lambi Fund’s downward accountability practices rests upon what the Lambi Funds says about itself and the third party organization that operates to strengthen the human resource capacity of Haiti. In order to render my hypothesis more objectively centered, interviews with the grassroots organizations are necessary.

Accountability to the constituents is an important part of empowerment. Informal accountability processes are insufficient and at best link the Lambi Fund instrumentally (that is through its work), but not structurally to its constituency or in a way that leads to
strong empowerment outcomes. More structural links deliver stronger empowerment outcomes. The presence of formal processes establishes a right and an opportunity for the constituents/or beneficiaries to ask for rectification and the ability to impose a cost on the NGO from the bottom-up. This study suggests that the Lambi Fund views accountability in a complex way. Its emphasis is placed on the ownership that the constituents have in projects and through the follow-up of these programs.

The Haitian government must put pressures on the NGO sector to pursue sound management structures and become more transparent and effective social organizations. NGOs need to interact with these grassroots organizations but only as catalysts and protectors of development, not as benefactors. “Poor people’s development is ‘their’ process, which they must control; to this extent they are shareholders in development, not stakeholders” (Edwards and Fowler 2002, 206). The Haitian poor cannot always rely on the NGOs that have thoroughly invaded all areas of the country to operate ethically based on the virtuous and abstract mission and vision statements. The lack of study of governance models for NGOs operating in Haiti is a setback for establishing a working institution that has the power to function as a self-regulatory mechanism. Such a system could eventually provide oversight for these NGOs and cease the rape of the country by outside international organizations, as well as support the NGOs. It seems as though the government basically trusts NGOs to maintain moral and ethical legitimacy, and does not require thorough registration and accreditation to guard against corruption and private enurement. There are no fiduciary monitors to cut down the misappropriation of funds.
Areas for Further Research

The effectiveness of NGOs rests on embracing multiple forms of accountability. Further work is required in the area of program management to identify mechanisms for the development of formal or semi-formal accountability structures to provide the NGOs’ constituencies a greater sense of ownership, and therefore power in the program. From a policy point of view, the focus must shift from accountability to NGOs’ donors and supporters towards looking at workable mechanisms to ensure accountability to their constituencies. Simultaneously, this change must enable the NGOs to be true to their values while ensuring that their constituencies can engage more fully in the development process that affects them. This is important if empowerment programs are to meet the real objective of the poor being able to challenge power relations at all levels in their lives.

More research can be done through actually contacting and performing preliminary research with the groups served by the Lambi Fund. Additionally I was unable to find a reliable, up to date database of the number and specific types of NGOs currently operating in Haiti. All the numbers that I located were relative estimations. Thus a census is necessary.
References

1. Personal Interviews and Communications


2. Published Works


Klein, W. 1984. Local organizations in Haiti and Effective Community Development Special Reference to the Central Plateau. [Worcester, MA]: [Clark University].


Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

1. What are the objectives of the Lambi Fund?
2. Where does it primarily operate in Haiti?
3. Who is the targeted population and constituents?
4. What impact are you trying to have on those communities?
5. What would your criterion for success be?
6. How would you place the Lambi Fund in the greater context of NGOs operating in Haiti?
   a)  Probe- how are you different?
   b)  Would you consider other NGOs to be successful?
7. In your opinion what makes one organization more successful in the delivery of aid over another?
8. Tell me about the organizations you have worked with.
   a)  Where they from similar or different backgrounds?
   b)  What were their missions?
   c)  How do you think your similarities or differences affected the success of the mission?
9. What are your pre-established criteria to select new projects?
10. Tell me how your organization interacts with these organizations.
    a)  Is this interaction easy or difficult?
    b)  What structures are in place to help this process of interaction?
    c)  Is their room to question the Lambi Fund from the people that it serves?  Probe.
11. How often do you have meetings with constituents?
    a)  Is there an agenda?
    b)  If so, who forms it? Who brings the topics?
12. Are there any measures in which organizations can ask for rectification for something, or complain?
    a)  What is done with those complaints?
    b)  Is the Lambi Fund open up to scrutiny from the people it intends to serve?
13. What relationship do you have with the Haitian state?
14. What relationship would you want with the state?
15. What is the process by which the Lambi Fund became recognized by the Haitian state and allowed to operate within its borders?
    a)  Was the Lambi Fund required to follow certain regulations and guidelines under the Haitian state?
    b)  How is that enforced?
16. What does “absorption ability” by the Lambi Fund mean?
17. How do you evaluate yourself?
18. Who evaluates the Lambi Fund?
19. Was INFODEV a facilitator of the 10 year evaluation or were they accompanying an internal exercise?
Appendix B: Abbreviated Interview Data

Interview Data

Statements from Former Mayor or Citi Soliel, Haiti- Jacklin Exantus

- Historically Citi Soliel has a history of international NGOs working here.
- They are driven by what they can get from us (the inhabitants of Citi Soliel).
- We believe that we can have a voice in development with this network of youth i.e. in reference to the class from the Inter University Institute for Social Research.
- The development of our community is brought from the outside.
- Jacklin Exantus wants to develop a strategic planning of development activities working in the city.
- Question: what type of oversight has the office of the mayor had over the NGOS functioning in the community?
  - “The one who pays for the orchestra is the one who plays the music.”
- The structure is that the NGO has a larger budget than the municipal government.
- Question: what impact have they had on the community?
  - Zero impact!
  - As long as a problem doesn’t exist they will not come to perform development work.
  - People like you are the ones that can make the change (in reference to the class of North Americans, Haitians, and Dominican students).
  - The structure of the state is weak. It allows for this type of cosmetic change.
  - Once the NGOs see a visible change they believe that their work is done.
  - Real change has happened in terms of infrastructure and road construction, but this creates more problems with the flooding of more houses.
  - We are trying to see if we can form initiatives of collaboration in a strategic plan involving actors for sustainable change.

Interview of Executive Director Karen Ashmore

- What are your objectives?
  - The broad objective is to support the democratic movement in Haiti.
  - We partner with peasant based grassroots organizations
  - That is what makes us unique
  - For example the APGM plantation farm did not have enough income in the community and they were being wiped out by disease. So we found an agronomist and we planted stalks of plantains. We can plot slices of that plantain into a nursery to produce more plantain.
  - The approach is to “sit, discuss, and train and supply financing” to buy the greenhouse, tools, machinery.
  - The way that you get buy in is if they are involved.
  - Lots of NGOs come and don’t address the issues that the community feels is pertinent.
  - They are increasing their income; their long term solution is in not giving them plantains.
- What is the targeted population and constituents?
  - We primarily have clusters of groups in the areas around Gonaive, Artibonite, and Cayes where there are field monitors.
  - The field monitor goes to communities that have asked us for help.
Haitians at a grassroots level have a great sense of democracy. They are composed of communities, they have oversight, and decisions are made by consensus.

The field monitor brings it to program staff in Port-au-Prince, who then look at different proposals. They then look at the viability of the proposal, make suggestions and bring it to staff in the U.S. who bring it to the Haiti board.

The board in Haiti board has experienced work in the Haitian community. Their role is to have reflection and discussion time.

Proposals may take a year to see if they have project management skills.

Training and technical assistance is important.

Top down groups [other NGOs] is an ingredient for failure.

In 2007 there were 58 proposals, 14 were approved.

The U.S. board as a formality meets to give stamp of approval.

Lione and Karen organize outreach and educate to raise money to partner and support.

- Who are the targeted population/constituents?
  - Peasant organized groups in Haiti.
  - We are still pretty much a grassroots organization just like our partners.
  - We could go through USAID, but all the money for aid is pumped back into the U.S. They have mandates like vehicles purchased have to be bought in the U.S.
  - We want to keep as much money in Haiti.
  - We don’t buy pigs, motors, etc. outside of Haiti

- What impact are you trying to have on that community?
  - The common phrase that we hear is that “we just want to improve our lives.” We want to reinforce the indigenous source of democracy.
  - We have to work within a patriarchoal order with gender inequity for democracy.
  - They want sustainable living, they do not want charity. They want to be able to send their kids to school, they want to be able to afford healthcare.
  - “Sure we’re poor, but we were a lot poorer, we don’t need your charity let us help ourselves.”

- How do you evaluate yourselves?
  - There is external evaluation from INFODEV.
  - External evaluation informally from peasants orally because not everyone is literate, and the field monitor documents the oral evaluations.
  - They are developing and evaluation form that they are going to start using later this year.

- What would your criterion for success be?
  - During discussion and reflections the peasants say these are our objectives. We grade see our success by seeing if we met objectives or are we approaching them?
  - There are sometimes setback delays with droughts, or a motor taking to long to arrive.

- Who evaluates the Lambi Fund?
  - The field monitor checks the work that is being done periodically.
  - Field directors and the management staff perform an interim evaluation. Field director also performs project evaluation.
  - Karen receives evaluations to put into a format for American funders.
- We have provided digital cameras for staff to get people's faces, activities such as putting millet into a grain mill, or people holding plantains.
- Bottom up model is overarching. If you don’t have everyone’s buy in its not going to work.
- Education is also essential. For example we have a reforestation project. Free grazing goats are a problem for this because they eat new growing vegetation. We have to educate the entire community as well as staff about keeping goats in a pin.
- We work with local government to help educate community as well local authority figures.

* How do you place the Lambi Fund in the context/environment of other NGOs operating in Haiti? How are you different?
  - One of the things that we have to constantly remind them is that this is your project. We let them know that the leader of your organization needs to do that. You have the skills to do that.
  - It is empowering them.
  - There is a lot of gender inequity. We let the women who have leadership roles already and who are influential know that they can be officers. That they have leadership skills, they realize that they are empowered.
  - They have been so brainwashed, when people are saying that “you are not smart”, when they are “poto mitan.”
  - One man we work with has exerted his social leverage as a man. To be true democracy we are trying to have male and female administrators to work on gender equity.

* What relationship do you have with the Haitian state?
  - We don’t get involved with partisan issues in order to maintain neutral. We can work with different organizations because of our neutrality.
  - Also we do not evangelize or protest any religious doctrines.
  - Right now Preval is an agronomist and he likes the Lambi Fund. He supports mobilization of peasants and agronomy. We have worked with the Ministry of Women. We have a good relationship with the Ministry of Agriculture.

* What relationship would you like with the state?
  - We want an arms length relationship but also because of the revolving door of who is in power.
  - Haiti staff has been suspicious and wary of the government and rightly so. But Haiti staff and U.S. staff would like to encourage more cooperation between local authorities and municipal governments.
  - We were aligned with Aristide because he was aligned with the democratic movement.
  - William Smarth is on the board and a close ally with Aristide.
  - Lesson learned is do not align with persons but with issues.

Interview of Deputy Director Leonie Hermantin

* What are the objectives of the Lambi Fund
  - The mission is to support popular grassroots economic development in the Haitian country side.
  - It’s to support grassroots efforts for economic development in the Haitian countryside

* Where does it primarily operate
- In the southern peninsular around the province of O’ Cayes and remote communities, and also in the Artibonite Valley, in Gonaive, and again in remote areas. City of Gro Moun. And then there are some projects in the northwest.
- There is no target population. We just funded projects in Kins Couf, and La Plen. Whoever hears about us and makes a proposal we most likely will support that project.
- Because with word of month one organizations tells the other.

- **Criteria for success**
  - Part of our success is that we don’t tell people what to do. We don’t come with a project and say we’ve assessed their needs, and were doing it for. Which is fine to say that we’ve assessed what your needs are and then ask are you interested in being part of it. But most of the time projects come in and say this is what you need and they are not really getting local input.
  - Part of what we do goes in and beyond of getting local input.
  - Is to have the localities initiate the request and implement it themselves, so it’s empowering at different levels.

- **How would you place the Lambi Fund in the greater context of NGOs operating in Haiti?**
  - From what I’m told we are not necessarily the only ones operating in that way. But there are very few, so I’m not sure that we are necessarily unique in that way. Since I am not familiar with that terrain, I would not venture to say what is better and what is not.
  - I know that our approach is a very good one, but I’m not familiar enough with the other NGOs to say that what we do is best, and I don’t feel comfortable making that statement.
  - I can say with certainty that what the Lambi Fund does is excellent and really transforming.
  - There are different organizations, such as missions, Res Forcoze, which is a bank. I’m in Gro Moun, for example, there are many organizations in that area.
  - In some areas I know that we are the only ones.
  - To the extent that they provide employment, they provide income, they provide educational opportunities, by what ever it is that they are providing, I’m pretty sure that it is benefitting the communities in the short run. The question becomes what happens when the funds run out, what happens when the people have to leave? What do they leave behind that has made an impact? And I think that that is what is critical for the Lambi Fund.

- **What are the pre criteria in the selection/evaluation process of the grassroots organizations?**
  - The criterion is that it has to be an organization; it cannot be a church group. It has to be a real organization. It has to be recognized at least by the community. It has to be an organization that has proved itself. That does not appear to have been created for the purpose of the project.
  - Popular organizations, we don’t look at staff, we look at membership. How active is the organization, how active are the members. How democratic it is. Is it run by just a couple of people, is it run by members of the same family? Can it show how open it is- to women, young people, to the community? So all of that is part of the process in choosing organizations, and then we look at the projects themselves.
We look at the feasibility [of the projects] within the context of the topography. They are talking about cultivating rice in an area that is very dry, so we are not going to give them money. When they are talking about raising goats in an area without any enclosures, we’ll know, well, that that is not going to fly.

What is the interaction like between the Lambi Fund and the local organizations?

It’s very participatory. It’s very democratic between the Lambi Fund and the organizations. Because what Lambi staff makes clear to them is that we are not mother we’re not father. We are partners. And once we get in we offer training. Sometimes when we come into an organization we find that women are not participating. That some members are not participating. We really make sure that everyone goes through proper training in order to understand what is required to have a strong organization. This means strengthening the democratic principles, strengthening gender equity. Sometimes the organization is not close to being the ideal one, but we know that through workshops and seminars we can get it to a point were we know that we are comfortable with it.

Who makes and brings the agendas to the meetings?

They set everything up themselves. They have minutes, they have an agenda, and they have their own rituals. There is a prayer, the president speaks, the secretary makes a report, and the treasurer makes a report. It is all very, very well structured.

The Lambi Fund finds the organizations as is, then strengthens some of the principles that will be important to ensure the success of our projects.

If they like to go drink after meetings, that’s not our problem. But if they don’t know how to give a financial report, if they don’t want women to have access to certain positions, then that is our problem.

Are their measures to seek rectification from the local organizations?

That is made clear to them from day one. That they have to do that. Not that they can but that they have to do that. There is a regional monitor who is from that area, so that regional monitor is forever driving that message that in order to move forward we have to be critical. And being critical means being critical of ourselves, being critical of our partners. I mean it is a must.

That criticism does not mean that you are angry. Criticism is a way to build and strengthen. Its constructive criticism.

It is addressed. If it is justified then it is addressed. And if its not….for example, if someone said that “we need more money because we budgeted 50 dollars to buy pig feed”, and we gave you the money like three months ago and you start on it and you never bought the pig feed, and now the prices has gone up and you have to pay 52 dollars. You have to pay it. You have to put up 2 dollars.

That is part of saying that you have to be responsible.

You have to understand that prices go up. If you said that you were going to do it in X amount of time you have to do it. But if the cost really goes up, the Lambi staff will take that into consideration.

Does this frequently happen, when people make a complaint or ask for rectification?

It all depends with the nature of the project. Some projects run very smoothly. Things come up, depending on the nature of the project. So you will have some projects that run on time, on budget. Others will take more time, or will have miscalculations.

Relationship with state
We have to report as a foundation, we are not an NGO per se. Because we are a foundation we have to make yearly reports and that’s it. Occasionally we meet with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs. We talk about what we do especially in strengthening women’s participation. We do not have anything formal; we try to avoid interaction with the state to the extent that we can. Although we encourage members of the organizations to interact and be more proactive of the services that they need from the state

- What interaction you would like to see with the state?
  - The ideal relationship that I would like to see is greater support from the state especially in the areas of environmental reforestation.
  - A sound agrarian policy would definitely help us and help the organizations that we serve more.
  - For example if they had a land swapping policy, where there is land on the other side of the mountains. If they could swap land from the plains that would be great. But we don’t have anything.
  - If we had government building irrigation canals, instead of giving money to build irrigation canals we could give money to do other things.

- How do you evaluating yourself/INFODEV?
  - They were paid to do the evaluation. The importance of an evaluation is that it is independent. It offers an image of yourself that you are too involved with yourself to do.
  - We budget for an evaluation of each project at the end of two years.
  - There is an internal evaluation at the end of the first year. At the end of the second year there is the independent evaluation.