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**Local Strategic Planning and
Sustainable Rural Livelihoods**

**Rural District Planning in Ghana:
A Case Study**

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ACRONYMS

DA	District assembly
DCE	District chief executive
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DPCU	District planning co-ordinating units
MDAs	Ministries, department and agencies (of government)
MEST	Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology
MOF	Ministry of Finance
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
PPMED	Policy planning, monitoring and evaluation division (of sector ministries)
RPCU	Regional planning co-ordinating unit
RRC	Regional co-ordinating council
SRL	Sustainable rural livelihoods
TCPD	Town and Country Planning Department

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study is a contribution to DFID's sustainable rural livelihood (SRL) theme which seeks among other objectives to increase knowledge and awareness of vital cross-cutting planning issues and to develop and test innovative local planning approaches with the view to provide support to rural district planning in selected African countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe and Ghana where extensive decentralisation process is on-going. The main objective of the Ghana study therefore is to identify the key principles of strategic and partnership approaches to the development of rural areas of the country from a Sustainable Livelihood perspective. In line with this objective, the study assessed the current practice in rural district planning in Ghana and explored opportunities for improving strategic and participatory approaches to such planning.

Approaches to rural district planning in Ghana

During the early years of the country's development, Ghana attempted to improve the livelihood of the people of Ghana through a series of development plans but these plans suffered prolonged period of birth pangs and became obsolete before the implementation period was over. Rural district planning suffered similar fate as it became highly centralised and sectoral with little or no participation from the rural district communities whose interest the planning system was to serve.

It provided no co-ordinative framework for resource allocations or other policy decisions at the level of rural districts nor did it help to adapt development decisions to conditions and needs of the rural districts or enrich the information base for rural district planning. Development action in the rural districts were directed and excessively controlled at the national and regional levels where policy, district programmes and projects, budgets and personnel were imposed on the rural districts. The rural districts had no power or discretion to make development decisions. Seldom did they have the capacity to carry out required development actions. All forms of development actions in the rural districts were usually determined in isolated sectoral units by non-integrated central government agencies. A new decentralised development planning system was introduced in 1994 to systematically rectify the problems and deficiencies of the old centralised planning system in Ghana. It recognised the fact that there had been a lack of effective administrative machinery at the local level to deal with the critical needs of the communities with regard to development plan formulation and implementation.

The framework for the new decentralised development planning system

The new decentralised development planning system is designed to restructure the political and public administrative machinery for development decision-making at both national and local levels, and to organise development in space to attain functional efficiency and environmental harmony. The public administration restructuring and reforms seek to integrate local government and central government at the regional and district levels; decentralise but integrate the development planning and its budgetary system; effect adequate transfers of financial, human and other resources from central government to local authorities.

The new decentralised development planning system represents a complete departure from the past in that;

- the planning system is "human centred" and its main objective is to promote and improve the livelihood of the people of Ghana;
- it is comprehensive as it examines the social, economic, environmental and spatial aspects of development as a single integrated task;
- it represents the co-ordinated efforts of districts, sub-districts, the government agencies, NGO, donors and the private sector.

The role of town and country planning in the new decentralised development planning system

The Town and Country Planning Department was set up to perform spatial or human settlement planning functions. In the new decentralised development planning system, the Town and Country Planning Department still performs the functions of spatial or physical planning but it is no longer a monolithic central government agency with line branches in the regions and districts. It is now decentralised with a national department under a ministry and independent departments belonging to regional co-ordinating councils and district assemblies (DAs).

The role of the town and country planning in the new decentralised development planning system has brought into focus the crucial issue of spatial planning as an important element in the decentralisation process. The Town and Country Planning Department is however unstable and ill-equipped to perform its functions. Since its establishment, it has been placed at various times under fifteen different ministries. These frequent changes have militated against its satisfactory performance.

The new decentralised development planning system¹ operates through the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), ministries and sector agencies, the regional co-ordinating councils (RCCs) and the DAs. The new decentralised development planning system is built on the principle that the development planning process is an integrative, comprehensive, participatory, decentralised, problem solving and continuous task. The focal point of all the administrative arrangements within the new decentralised development planning system is the DAs as decentralised decision-making units. The next section analyses the new decentralised development planning framework and its inherent characteristics in detail.

The new decentralised development planning system

In the new decentralized development planning system, the districts constitute the main focus of planning action through the DAs. This process provides unprecedented opportunity for the local communities within the districts to participate effectively in the conception, planning and implementation of development programmes and projects.

A major objective of the new decentralised development planning system was to establish efficient political, planning and administrative institutions at the district level, which would enjoy popular support of local communities and facilitate the mobilisation of support and resources for district development. It was also designed to facilitate explicitly, the transfer of power,

¹ As set out by the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992, the Civil Service Law 1993 (PNDCL 327), the Local Government Act 1993 (Act 462), the National Development Planning Commissions Act, 1994 (Act 479) and the National Development Planning (Systems) Act, 1994 (Act 480).

functions, and competence in programme and project implementation from the central government to the district level institutions. In addition, the new decentralised development planning system was expected to enhance effective channels of communication between the national government and the local communities, and also provide opportunities for greater participation of local communities in development planning, effective utilisation and management of local resources. Seen from these perspectives, the new decentralised development planning system involves devolution of central government administrative responsibilities to the district level, promotion of power sharing, rational resource allocation, establishment of adequate capacity at the district level for effective utilisation and management of local resources and reduction of dependence of the district level authorities on the central government.

The structure of the new decentralised development planning system

The legal instruments which established the system of decentralisation in Ghana also determined the structure of the new decentralised development planning system in Ghana. The structure comprises:

- The National Development Planning Commission (NDPC)
- Sectoral ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs)
- Regional co-ordinating councils (RCCs)
- District assemblies (DAs)

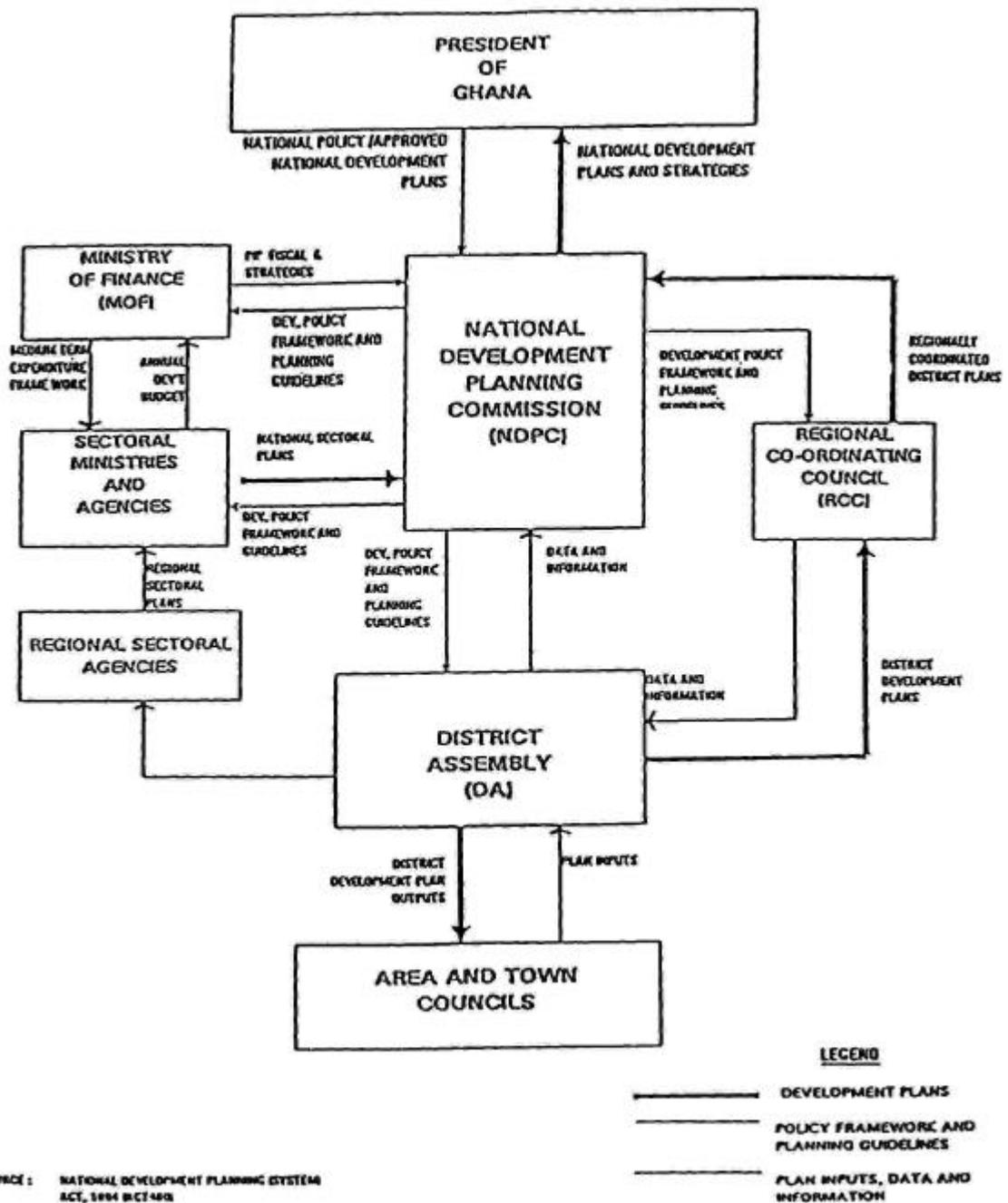
The functional relationships among the various institutions as illustrated in Figure E.1 shows both vertical and horizontal linkages among the institutions. Except for the link between the President and the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) which indicates vertical administrative authority the relationships among all other institutions in the structure are functional.

By NDPC Act 479 of 1994, NDPC is responsible for co-ordinating all national development plans. It is mandated to provide the framework and direction for national development planning and implementation. With this mandate, it provides guidelines for the preparation of district development plans to ensure that each district plan is consistent with the overall policies and strategies of national development plan.

The guidelines for the preparation of the district development plans suggested the implementation of development themes through a number of subject areas including agriculture and forestry, industry, social and economic infrastructure and services. The guidelines also laid down a prescribed format and content which emphasised district profiles or current status of the district, medium-term development proposals, implementation and proposed monitoring and evaluation, and executive summary.

Under the Local Government Act 462 of 1993, DAs have executive, deliberative and technical support services to articulate the views and aspirations of the local communities for development at the district level. This function assists the DAs not only to prepare district development plans but also to subject such plans to public hearings. The medium-term, 5 year (1996-2000) district development plans which were based on the goals and objectives of the 25 year perspective plan, Ghana-Vision 2020: The First Step: 1996-2000 are outputs from this process.

Figure E.1: Structure of Decentralised Planning System in Ghana



SOURCE: NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING SYSTEM ACT, 1994 (ACT 462)

The district development plans are harmonised at the regional level by the regional coordinating councils (RCCs) to ensure that they are consistent with national development policies and priorities. These regionally co-ordinated plans are then harmonised and synthesised with individual sector plans (prepared by line ministries) by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) into a broad national development plan.

Ghana is currently implementing the first medium-term rolling development plan as a first step in its long-term, perspective journey towards the year 2020 when Ghana is expected to become a middle income country.

The district assemblies in the new decentralised development planning system

As noted, DAs are vital links and pivot in the new decentralised development planning system in Ghana. Not only are they planning authorities, they also exercise legislative, executive and deliberative powers as conferred on them by the Local Government Act of 1993 (Act 462).

Each DA comprises the District Chief Executive (DCE), two-thirds of the members directly elected by universal adult suffrage, the members of parliament representing constituencies within the district, and one-third of members appointed by the President in consultation with the chiefs and interest groups in the district. The DCE is nominated by the President and approved by two-thirds of the members of the DA present and voting. The DA also has a presiding member who is elected from among members by two-thirds of all members of the DA.

With regard to planning at the district level, one of the key elements in the new decentralised development planning system is the participation of the local communities in the districts in planning and decisions that affect their livelihood. Accordingly, the district development planning process is expected to commence with the participation of the local communities in the identification of problems and determination of goals and objectives from the unit committee level through the town/area/zonal councils to the DAs. The district planning co-ordinating units then interpret and co-ordinate the district plans into medium-term development plans for consideration of the executive committee of the DA and debate by the assembly. The approved district development plan is then forwarded to the regional co-ordinating councils for co-ordination and harmonisation.

The district development plans prepared through this process however exhibit a number of inconsistencies. These problems are documented in a study of five district development plans in Ashanti Region by NRI/UST in 1997. According to this study, each of the five district plans commenced with a clear statement of the district goals and objectives but the district profiles tended to be very descriptive and factual rather than analytical. There was no attempt to address the identified problems and constraints by putting forward alternative strategies or choices or bringing together various sectoral proposals into an integrated co-ordinated plan. None of the five district plans had a clear vision about what trends are likely to occur over the 5-year time period or what broad longer-term spatial trends would be appropriate for their area. Consequently, each district ended up producing a series of project proposals for implementation during the 5-year period. These proposals were conceived independently of the goals and objectives or analyses of the current problems (NRI/UST, 1997).

Our field investigations and a number of empirical studies also indicate that the participatory process in the DA deliberations itself is undermined by a number of factors:

- Many assembly members perceived the position and performance of the DCE as a problem. Usually, the DCE is the Chairman of the executive committee which is in charge of district administration. In this capacity, he serves not only as the link between the central government and the district but also as the head of the district administration. He is therefore regarded as the most important member of the DA. And yet, he is the only member of the DA who is not responsible or accountable to the local people. As an ex-officio member being neither elected nor appointed member of the DA, he stands beside and above recall. He is responsible to and removable only by the central government that appointed him. He is untouchable. This situation is far removed from the "people's" exercise of power and undermines accountability to the electorate in the district.
- The DA is sometimes excessively politicised. Although the assembly is supposed to be non-partisan, the DCE and other top members of the DA continue to exhibit bias in terms of allocation of resources, consultation and impact on assembly's decisions. This situation often breeds mistrust and suspicion among the DCE, the elected and appointed members, and members of parliament in the assembly. Consequently, the assembly cannot function as a viable team for the development of the entire district.

There are institutional constraints too inhibiting the functions of the DAS. Under the Local Government Service Bill the decentralised departments are to become departments of DAs and answerable to the DAs. But these district level departments still owe allegiance to their regional and national headquarters. A more serious concern is that the sector ministries knowingly by-pass the district assemblies and work directly with schools, hospitals and other institutions delivering public services. By these actions, the sector ministries undermine the powers of the district assemblies contrary to the provisions of the Local Government Act.

From the discussions so far, it would seem that the DAs, although institutions of representative democracy, are not able to promote participatory democracy for which they are established. They also seem powerless to bring the decentralised departments in the districts under their control as required by the Local Government Act.

Under the new decentralised development planning system, the DAs are empowered by the 1992 constitution of Ghana and the Local Government Act 1993 (Act 462) to formulate and execute development plans, programmes and strategies to enhance effective mobilisation of resources necessary for the overall development of the districts. The financial, human and institutional resources available to the districts for the performance of these tasks are reviewed as follows:

Financial resources

By far the most significant and reliable source of development funds for the DAs is the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF). Under the Article 252 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana and DACF Act 1993 (Act 455) "not less than five percent (5%) of the total revenue of Ghana" is to be allocated annually to the DAs for development. The fund is allocated annually by parliament and distributed to the DAs on the basis of the formula shown in Table E.1

The DAs are using these funds to implement the district development plans but the funding tends to concentrate on the provision of social and economic infrastructure such as education,

health or public latrine projects. Despite the clear development functions of the district assemblies, the pattern of expenditure of the DACF for the period 1994-1996 shows significant absence of allocations to "promote and support productive development".

Table E.1: Formula for allocating District Assemblies Common Fund

Factor	Weight	Rationale
Needs	45%	To address imbalances in development
Responsiveness	20%	To motivate the district to generate more income locally
Equalisation	30%	To ensure each district has access to specified sum from the Fund
Service Pressure	15%	To assist in improving existing services which as a result of population pressure are deteriorating faster than envisaged

Source: Administrator of DACF

The analysis of the use of the 1994 DACF for example shows that the total amount utilised by the districts as at June 1995 was 27.246 billion Cedis or nearly 70% of the total allocation.

Expenditures in three key sectors were as follows: education (-34.3%); health (-21.2%) and projects under local government (-44.5%). The profile of disbursements in 1996 showed that district shares of the DACF were spent mostly on the same sectors. Education was allocated (35.97%); Health (-6.92%) and local government and rural development (-22.8%).

Although the provisions of these services are important priority areas in the districts it is important to allocate DACF also for the expansion of the economic base of the districts. For this reason, the DAs have been mandated to allocate at least 20% of the DACF for the promotion of income-generating activities in the Districts.

The formula for the allocation of the DACF also has several limitations which intensifies imbalances in the development of the districts. For example, despite the equalising and needs factors more DACF are allocated to the districts with high resource endowments than to those with low resource base.

Revenue mobilisation has been a major problem facing the DAs. Revenue targets in most DAs are hardly met even though there is evidence that revenue sources in the districts are not fully being tapped.

Human resources

In spite of the pivotal role of the DAs in the new decentralised development planning system, there are still inadequate human resources with requisite skills and competence to perform the various tasks of the assembly. For instance, the absence or inadequacy of development planners in most of the districts constitutes a major constraint on the establishment and effective operation of the district planning co-ordinating units in the districts. Through training programmes organised by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development in collaboration with other institutions, the personnel of the DAs are being trained to alleviate the human resource problems and to strengthen the operational, technical, administrative and management skills at the district level.

Institutional resources

The DAs exhibit weaknesses in co-ordination and integration of institutional resources at the District level. This weakness permits district line ministries to owe dual and conflicting allegiance to the district assemblies and their headquarters institutions in Accra. It is hoped that the Local Government Service Bill which is to establish a Local Government Service will be passed by parliament and implemented to make the district sectoral departments fully answerable to the DAs.

Unit committees

At the base of the new decentralised development planning system are the unit committees. Representing a settlement/community with a population of up to 1,500, the unit committees are expected to be closely in touch with the local communities, and to articulate their needs and aspirations. The unit committees comprise ten elected and five appointed members. With the full participation of the local communities, the identification of the community problems and determination of the goals and objectives are expected to be undertaken at the unit committee level prior to forwarding them to the DAs. In practice, it is usually difficult to establish the extent to which local communities are aware and have participated in decisions affecting their livelihood. A study of district development planning in 5 districts in Ashanti Region by MRI/UST (1997) revealed that town or village development committees (now replaced by unit committees) did not seem to have been actively involved in village planning and doubt existed about the degree of consultation which took place in most villages. Despite this situation, most local communities are undertaking self-help development projects either by themselves or in collaboration with NGOs (see sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.3 etc. in the main report).

In point of fact, the DAs and the sub-district structures such as town/area councils and unit committees have not made meaningful impacts in transforming the livelihoods of local communities in the districts. Rural poverty is therefore an endemic problem in Ghana. Recognising that improvements in people's welfare or livelihood must be the primary goal of national development effort, the government of Ghana, donor agencies and NGOs have initiated action in collaboration with DAs and local communities to reduce poverty especially in the rural districts in Ghana where poverty is "unacceptably high". Some of the bold initiatives at the poverty reduction in the rural districts include National Poverty Reduction Programme (NPRP), Social Investment Fund (SIF), Village Infrastructure Project (VIP), and donor and NGO assisted rural district poverty reduction (see sections 6.2, 6.2 and 6.4 of the main report for details of these initiatives).

The way forward: recommendations and conclusions

The concept of sustainable rural livelihood (SRC) approach is consistent with the entire decentralised planning system in Ghana. The need to restructure development strategies in order to sustain development of the rural districts, improve rural incomes, employment opportunities, general welfare and livelihoods in the rural districts prompted Ghana to focus development attention and action on the districts. The total devolution of power to the districts as a basis for the rational allocation of national resources, the establishment of 110 districts as administrative units and operation of the DA as the development planning authority are therefore designed to achieve sustainable livelihoods in the districts. Through a participatory and integrated but decentralised system of relationships, the decentralised planning system in Ghana is transforming rural "capital assets" through structures (various levels of

government/private sector) and processes (legal enactments, policies and institutions) with meaningful and positive livelihood outcomes.

The decentralised planning system has awakened the spirit of voluntarism, awareness and local development initiatives among rural communities in Ghana. Through the decentralisation process, rural communities in Ghana are securing better access to and management of natural resources, a cohesive and supportive social environment; financial resources; high quality education, information, technology and training, and facilitating infrastructure.

Despite these gains, the new decentralised planning system in Ghana is not yet robust to sustain development in the rural districts. To achieve sustainable livelihood in the rural districts therefore, there is the need to:

- Strengthen the capability of DAs, district planning co-ordinating units and unit committees to design, draw, implement and monitor district development plans with active and full local community participation.
- Promote micro-business enterprises and market-oriented skill training for local communities with micro-credit schemes as exemplified by Ho farms and Technoserve.
- Make the inherent characteristics of the DA structures to be responsive to local community aspirations and concerns. There must therefore be real "power to the people" and the DCE must be elected by the people and answerable to the people.
- Improve the capability and capacity of the DA members through targeted training programmes to strengthen their participation in DA deliberations. Train unit committees to improve their capabilities and relationship with local communities and DAs.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and purpose of study

The UK Department of International Development (DFID) has expressed interest in funding projects that provide support to rural district planning in selected African countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe and Ghana where extensive decentralisation processes are on-going. As a preparatory step, DFID has commissioned studies to ascertain what information and experiences on rural district planning exist in these countries to draw out lessons, principles and recommendations for the design of possible DFID support programmes.

1.2 Objective, justification and expected outcomes of the study

The objective of the study in Ghana is to identify the key principles of strategic and partnership approaches to the development of rural areas from a sustainable livelihood perspective. In this regard, the study assesses current practice in rural district planning in Ghana and explores opportunities for improving strategic and participatory approaches to such planning.

It is widely observed that rural development planning and interventions tend to be sectoral and top-down limiting the opportunities to build complementary linkages between sectors and their spatial dimensions.

In contrast, the emerging sustainable livelihood approach is an holistic system that promotes an integrated package of policy, technology and investment strategies. Rural-urban linkages are an important aspect of this integrated approach, adding a vital spatial dimension to understanding key development issues. The symbiotic linkages involved are often crucial in sustaining household livelihood strategies.

Given that planning as a discipline seeks to co-ordinate across different sectors, identify important inter-relationships, and develop collaborative frameworks, it has an important role to play in this approach. Unfortunately, guidance and experience in developing and implementing such an integrated approach toward planning is limited. There is, therefore, an urgent need to improve knowledge on the appropriateness and effectiveness of existing rural district planning systems especially at the district and sub-district or community levels, and their relevance and suitability for people-centered development and poverty reduction.

The study is expected to contribute to DFID's sustainable rural livelihoods (SRL) theme by:

- Increasing knowledge and awareness of vital cross-cutting planning issues;
- Laying the groundwork for rural district planning component of the SRL theme aimed at developing and testing innovative local planning approaches;
- Benefiting rural poor communities by promoting SRL through improved planning and management processes.

1.3 Scope of the study

This report comprises six chapters. The first is the introduction.

Chapter 2 provides a historical overview of approaches to rural district planning in Ghana. It highlights the framework for the new decentralised development planning system and the role of town and country planning within that framework to prepare the ground for the detailed analysis of rural district planning and participatory approaches to such planning in Ghana.

Chapter 3 discusses the actual practice and experience of the new decentralised development planning in relation to rural district planning in Ghana with emphasis on the participatory approaches involved in the practice. These participatory approaches are also linked to livelihoods in the rural districts.

Chapter 4 assesses the financial, human and institutional resources available to the districts for effective formulation and execution of plans, programmes and strategies to enhance effective development of the districts.

Chapter 5 examines the actual performance of sub-district administrative units such as town/village and area councils, and unit committees in relation to participatory action and sustenance of livelihoods in sub-district communities.

Chapter 6 analyses the efforts that are being made by the government, donor agencies, NGOs and the private sector to reduce poverty especially in the rural districts through the decentralised planning system.

In the conclusion we discuss the future prospects and way forward for rural district planning and sustainable livelihoods in Ghana.

CHAPTER 2

APPROACHES TO RURAL DISTRICT PLANNING IN GHANA

2.1 National development planning

Ghana has long a history of development planning experience. For a relatively short period of 50 years, Ghana witnessed the birth of a total of ten development plans; development plans which attempted to determine for a period of two to ten years, the pace and general pattern of change in the economy and means of securing such change. Implicitly, these plans aimed at raising the levels of living of Ghanaians by increasing national income and reducing poverty, unemployment and inequalities in development.

Contrary to expectation, however, many of Ghana's development plans suffered not only a prolonged period of birth pangs but also became obsolete before the implementation period was over (Botchie, 1986). The major constraints that affected the effectiveness of the implementation of these plans were lack of commitment on the part of the national overnments and lack of continuity of development programmes due to frequent changes in government. Consequently, there existed a glaring contrast between the level of development of the country and development proposals documented in all the development plans.

2.2 Rural district planning

It was within this planning milieu that rural district planning was practised in Ghana during the early years of the country's development. Like the approach to national development planning, rural district planning was highly centralised and sectoral with little or no participation from the rural district communities whose interest the planning system was to serve. It provided no co-ordinating framework for resource allocation or other policy decisions at the level of rural districts, nor did it help to adapt development decisions to conditions and needs of the rural districts or enrich the information base for rural district planning. Development action in the rural districts was directed and excessively controlled at the national and regional levels where policy, district programmes and projects, budgets and personnel were imposed on the rural districts. The rural districts had no power or discretion to make development decisions. Seldom did they have the capacity to carry out required development actions. All forms of development actions in the rural districts were usually determined in isolated sectoral units by unconnected central government agencies.

The chief central government agent at the rural district level, the district commissioner, wielded substantial local political authority and personal influence. However, this office lacked the requisite supporting managerial and professional personnel to initiate, co-ordinate or implement development programmes. Besides, decisions to develop the districts were dictated to the district commissioner by unco-ordinated central government agencies. The various district branches of central government institutions also functioned without consulting or collaborating with each other. They operated as mutually exclusive entities.

Despite this excessively centralised planning approach, attempts were made to decentralise development and authority to the rural districts. The Mills-Odoi Commission (1967), the Siriboe Commission (1968), and the Constitutional Commission 1967-68) gave strong support to

decentralised development strategy formulations in Ghana. However, no serious attempt was made to implement the recommendation and decentralisation policy of these commissions in Ghana until 1974 when the Local Administration (Amendment) Decree 1974, NRCD 258 was promulgated. (Trevallion B., 1994)

This decree sought to abolish the distinction between local and central government at the local level in favour of one "common monolithic" structure (district councils). The district councils became responsible for the entire local government administrative machinery. Those existing local council areas which were considered small were merged to create larger districts. This action resulted in the creation of 65 district councils. District commissioners were appointed for each district. (Boateng, C.N.K, 1987)

The attempt to establish the local government system at the district level to implement the decentralisation policy was unsuccessful due to a number of factors which include:

- No effective and legitimate political authority was established at the district level to implement the decentralisation policy;
- The decentralisation process was initiated at the regional level. This action made the regions politically powerful and bureaucratic entities that hindered attempts to decentralise to the district level;
- The functions that were transferred to the district council under the NRC Decree 258 were not accompanied by simultaneous transfer of skills, competence and resources for effective implementation of the decentralisation policy;
- The infrastructural, staffing and logistic needs of the district councils were inadequate to implement the decentralisation policy;
- By the enactment of a Financial Administration Decree, centralised all fiscal controls in Accra at the expense of the districts.

2.3 Impact on livelihoods in rural districts

These patterns of highly centralised development planning experience had profound impact on livelihood in the rural districts. The lack of effective vertical and participatory linkages between national development planning strategies and rural district development planning contributed significantly to poor living conditions in most rural districts (Box 2.1).

The distributional patterns of the poor raises two important challenges for rural district planning in Ghana. First, how can rural district planning be effectively integrated in the national development planning process to ensure participatory and collaborative development that can promote and sustain household livelihood strategies in the rural districts? Secondly, how can power and authority be devolved to the rural districts to ensure that they have the mandate and discretion to make development decisions? These challenges are being addressed by the new decentralised development planning system which is systematically rectifying the problems and deficiencies of the old centralised planning system in Ghana.

Box 2.1: The Poor in Ghana

Table 2.1
Distribution of the poor in Ghana by degree of urbanisation and ecological zone

	Poorest 10%	Poorest 30%	All Ghana
Degree of urbanisation			
Urban (Pop > 5,000)	19.2	19.8	30.2
Semi-urban (pop. > 1,500 < 5000)	15.0	17.2	19.6
Rural (Pop. < 1,500)	65.8	63.0	50.2
Ecological zones			
Coastal	20.2	17.2	30.3
Forest	19.5	40.9	43.1
Savannah	60.3	42.0	26.6

Source: World Bank: Ghana Structural Adjustment for Growth, Report No. 7515-GH, 1989.

By this classification, 65.8% of the poorest 10% and 63.0% of the poorest 30% of Ghanaians live in the rural districts of the country. The savannah zones (in the Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions) are inhabited by 60.3% of the poorest 10%, and 42% of the poorest 30%, of the population of Ghana (World Bank, 1989).

The impact of the centralised development planning experience on livelihoods in Ghana may also be analysed in terms of the mean household expenditures. Boateng *et al.* (1990) set a poverty line and hard core poverty line at two-thirds and one-third of mean household expenditure per capita per annum, respectively. To determine these poverty lines, mean household expenditure distribution was calculated from the Ghana Living Standards Survey which is based on a probability sample of 3,200 household selected from approximately 300 enumeration areas, stratified by urban/rural.

The poverty line was set at c32,981 (1988) or US\$162.99 per annum and the hard core poverty line was set at c16,491 (1988) or US\$81.50 per annum. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Rural and Urban Poverty in Ghana

Area	Share %	of Pop. in Poverty	<u>Contribution Proportion</u>		Contribution to National Poverty and Hardcore poverty
			of National Poverty	of Pop in Hard Core Poverty	
Rural	64.95	43.88	79.3	9.54	83.8
Urban Excluding Accra	26.76	26.54	19.8	4.48	16.2
Accra	8.29	3.97	0.9	0.00	-
All Ghana	100.00	35.93	100.00	7.39	100.00

Source: Boateng *et.al.* A Poverty Profile for Ghana. The World Bank (1990).

Poverty in rural areas accounted for about 79% of national poverty. About 44% of rural inhabitants are below the poverty line. The same pattern persists for hard core poverty. By this criterion, 7.39% of Ghanaians are considered to be living in hard core poverty, and 9.5% of these live in the rural areas.

2.4 The new decentralised planning system

2.4.1 *The framework of the new planning system*

The new planning system is designed to restructure the political and public administrative machinery for development decision-making at both national and local levels, and to organise spatial development to attain functional efficiency and environmental harmony. The restructuring and reforms of public administration seek to integrate local government and central government at the regional and district levels; decentralise but integrate the development planning process and its supporting budgetary system; and provide adequate transfers of financial, human and other resources from central government to local authorities.

These public administration reforms are outlined in four main pieces of laws:

- The Civil Service Law, 1993;
- The Local Government Act, 1993;
- The National Development Planning Commission Act, 1994; and
- The National Development Planning (Systems) Act, 1994.

These laws (especially, the Planning Systems Act, the Planning Commission Act, sections 1,2 and 9 to 15, the Local Government Act, Part II and Civil Service Law, sections 11 to 14) provide the core elements or structure of the new planning system. These elements comprise district planning authorities, regional coordinating councils, sector agencies, ministries and a National Development Planning Commission (NDPC). The NDPC coordinates, directs and regulates the system.

2.4.2 Objectives of the new system

The major objectives of the new decentralised development planning system are to:

- Create an institutional framework for public and community participation in national development to ensure optimal resource mobilisation, allocation and utilisation for development;
- Provide opportunities for greater participation of local people in development planning and efficient management of local resources;
- Establish effective channels of communication between the national government and local communities and increase administrative effectiveness at both levels.

The new planning system evidently sought to vest authority for implementation of national development with decentralised institutions. The focal point of these institutional arrangements are the district assemblies (DAs).

2.4.3 The role of town and country planning in the new system

The Town and Country Planning Department was set up to perform spatial or human settlement planning functions. In this capacity, it contributed to the formulation of the consolidated Seven Year National Development Plan of the 1960s by preparing a national physical development framework which was never implemented.

In the new decentralised development planning system, the Town and Country Planning Department still performs the functions of spatial or physical planning, but it is no longer a monolithic central government agency with line branches in the regions and districts. It is now decentralised with a national department under a ministry and independent departments belonging to regional co-ordinating councils and DAs.

The role of the Town and Country Planning Department in the new system is detailed in a number of laws. The Planning Systems Act for instance, requires that settlement structure plans be prepared in addition to district development plans. It also consolidates existing legislation which regulate the preparation of settlement plans or physical development plans. In addition, most of Part II of the Local Government Act (which defined the planning functions of DAs) deals with physical development and the management of settlement growth. In particular, eight sub-sections of the Act specify the basic functions of the DA. One sub-section assigns responsibility to the DA for the Development, improvement and Management

of human settlements and the environment of the district. District offices of the Town and Country Planning Department are to be established under the DAs to provide technical support to the assemblies to plan and manage changes in the physical environment and to direct the growth, development and improvement of human settlements of the district. The particular emphasis on town and country planning in these laws relates to the spatial, human settlement and environmental planning issues which the Town and Country Planning has been responsible for and can best handle in the new decentralised development planning system.

Despite this critical role in the new planning system, the Town and Country Planning Department lacks the capacity to perform. 48 of the total 110 districts (44%) (see Map 2.1) have no town and country planning establishments, 88 have weak or no planning capacity at all due to lack of town and country planning officers. 14 of those 62 districts which do have town and country planning establishments are manned by draughtsmen, while 24 are managed by experienced planning assistants.

Regional offices of the Town and Country Planning Department are responsible to the regional co-ordinating councils. These are expected to assist and support, on interim basis, those DAs which have no town and country planning establishments or capacity. However, only 4 out of the 10 regional offices have mobility to carry out such outreach operations.

At the national level, the Town and Country Planning Department is under the Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology. Its main function is to support the ministry to collaborate with the National Development Planning Commission on the formulation and review of national policy for the development, improvement and management of human settlements.

Specifically, the Town and Country Planning Department is expected to:

- Initiate the formulation and review of land use standards for various categories of human settlements;
- Advise on and initiate revision of human settlement legislation;
- Advise on and guide the preparation of settlement structure plans and management of urban growth;
- Guide and assist DAs in the establishment of their own town and country planning departments;
- Study and identify manpower training and logistic needs of national, regional and district town and country planning departments;
- Monitor human settlement programmes and projects nationwide to analyse and review national policy (Boateng, C.N.K. 1996).

The role of the Town and Country Planning Department (TCPD) in the new system has brought into focus the crucial issue of spatial planning as an important element in the decentralisation process. The TCPD is, however, unstable, under-resourced and ill-equipped to perform its functions. Since its establishment, it has been placed at various times under 15 different ministries. Currently, it is within the Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology (MEST). These frequent changes have inhibited its ability to perform satisfactorily. The roles of the NDPC and TCPD with regard to policy on human settlements planning have not been explicitly defined.

2.5 Assessment of linkages between the new decentralised development planning system, town and country planning and the sustainable livelihoods approach

Conceptually, the new decentralised development planning system, town and country planning and the sustainable livelihoods approach share common characteristics. They should all be participatory, integrated, decentralised and problem-solving processes that focus primarily on the enhancement of district (local) level development.

2.5.1 *Participatory*

The participatory processes that intricately link the three approaches to district level development aim to be interactive and promote self-mobilisation. An interactive participatory process involves local community participation in decision-making processes for local level planning, effective management of local resources and strengthening local institutions for development. It also entails active community participation in optimal resource mobilisation, allocation and utilisation for development. This interactive process is not limited to the local community level. Through horizontal and vertical participation, the interactive participatory process aims to link national and local level development strategies. Horizontal participation is a collaborative process in which functional agencies, sectoral ministries, regions, districts, local communities and private sector interact horizontally to ensure that development issues are handled across sectors or between areas, and that partnerships are formed where joint actions are necessary. Vertical participation processes link the national development strategies to the district participatory development strategies through the regions.

Self-mobilisation participatory processes are characterised by local community development initiatives undertaken independently of external institutions. They also involve the provision of external institutional support to the local communities for needed resources and technical advice to implement local community development initiatives. However, the local communities exercise control over the utilisation of the resources provided by the external institutions (Bass *et al.*, 1995)

2.5.2 *Integrated*

The systems are designed to be integrated in the sense that each system should seek interdependence and should provide a link between the political, social, economic, environmental and spatial issues which constitute the major determinants of the national and district development strategies. These perspectives are synthesised into comprehensive, cross-sectoral and mutually-reinforcing development strategies and programmes for action at the national, regional and district levels.

2.5.3 *Decentralised.*

The national and district level development strategies are decentralised to ensure that the responsibility assigned to the districts for the overall development of the districts are effectively implemented to sustain livelihoods at the district level.

2.5.4 *Problem solving*

Previous development planning strategies devoted considerable resources to responding to questions that were perceived (by national-level planners) to be the problems of the district level communities. In contrast, the new participatory and decentralised development planning system focuses on identifying and responding to community problems at this local level. This sharp focus facilitates targeting of interventions to the solution of such problems.

The next chapter provides a detailed analysis the new decentralised development planning framework.

CHAPTER 3

RURAL DISTRICT PLANNING IN A DECENTRALISED PLANNING SYSTEM IN GHANA

Since 1994, rural district planning in Ghana has been practiced within the framework of a decentralised development planning system under which districts are the main focus of planning action through the district assemblies (DAs). The decentralised development planning process provides unprecedented opportunity for the local communities within the rural districts to participate effectively in the conception, planning and implementation of development programmes and projects. Established as the bedrock of district development planning in Ghana, the decentralised development planning process is the mechanism through which sustainable utilisation and efficient management of local resources in the rural districts are being translated into reality.

3.1 The new decentralised development planning system

The decentralised development planning process in Ghana was instituted under the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) government as an ideological principle which aimed at democratic decision-making, popular participation in governance, self reliance and accountability of public officers to citizens (Akuoko-Frimpong, 1996). A major objective was to establish efficient political, planning and administrative institutions at the district level, which would enjoy the popular support of local communities and facilitate the mobilisation of support and resources for district development. It was also expected to facilitate explicitly the transfer of power, functions, means and competence in programme and project implementation from the central government to district level institutions (Ahwoi, 1996). In addition, the process was designed to enhance effective channels of communication between the national government and local communities, and also to provide opportunities for greater participation of local communities in development planning, effective utilisation and management of local resources.

Seen from these perspectives, the decentralised development planning process involves the devolution of central administrative responsibility to the district level, promotion of power-sharing, rational resource allocation, establishment of adequate capacity at the district level for effective utilisation and management of local resources and reduction of the dependence of the district (local) authorities on the central government. To facilitate this process, central government institutions were re-organised to enable them to concentrate on policy-making, leaving planning and implementation of development programmes and projects to district-level authorities. In addition, central government institutions are expected to operate at the district level under the control and direction of DAs (Ahwoi, 1990).

3.2 Legal and administrative basis of decentralisation and rural district planning

The organisational and administrative framework for the decentralised development and governance was given a legal basis under the PNDC Law 207 of 1988. This was replaced by the Local Government Act 1993 (Act 462) and its Legislative Instrument, 1994 (LI 1589) which emphasises the "administrative district" as the focal point of planning activity. The

PNDC Law 207 laid the basis for the entire decentralisation process and empowered DAs to perform political, administrative, deliberative, legislative and planning functions. Similarly, DAs were made responsible for overall district development and for the formulation of programmes and strategies for effective mobilisation and utilisation of all resources at the district level.

PNDC Law 207 also provides for the establishment of district planning and budgeting units within the DAs with responsibility for the provision of:

- Guidance and advice to the DAs on social, economic and spatial development of the district;
- Assistance in the preparation of district perspective plans, settlement structure plans, medium- and short-term plans and annual development budget;
- Assistance on integration and co-ordination of activities of local sectoral departments in relation to development at the district level;
- Innovative and practical solutions to development problems at the district level.

By law, all development plans in the districts must be prepared with public participation. To ensure the effective implementation of development policies, programmes and projects, district assemblies have been empowered to acquire land for development purposes, prohibit, abate and remove unauthorised development representing incompatibility with the local economy or public right of space (Ahwoi, 1990).

The Local Government Act 1993 (Act 462) established 110 districts, municipal and metropolitan assemblies together with urban, zonal, town councils and unit committees. It also created the regional co-ordinating councils as planning authorities.

In addition, a number of other laws also regulate the decentralisation process in Ghana:

- **The Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992**
Chapter 20 and Articles 86-89 and 240-256 of the constitution specify the concept of Decentralisation and local government and the principles of co-ordination of development planning by a National Development Planning Commission.
- **The Civil Service Law 1993 (PNDC Law 327)**
The aim of this law is to restructure the public administration system by creating new institutions, redefining roles and procedures in order to make the service more responsive to the development needs of Ghana. Part V of the Civil Service Law, for instance, is devoted entirely to decentralisation and local government issues.
- **The National Development Planning Commission Act, 1994 (Act 479).**
This Act establishes and specifies the composition, roles, functions and authority of the National Development Planning Commission, as the highest co-ordinating body of development planning functions in Ghana.
- **The National Development Planning (Systems) Act, 1994 (Act 480).**
This Act specifies institutions and agencies which are planning authorities, their roles and functions, as well as procedures by which planning authorities can carry out their development planning functions (Diaw, K. 1997).

Other relevant laws include the District Assemblies Common Fund Act 1993 (Act 455) and Local Government (District Tender Boards Establishment) Regulations, 1995, L.I. 1606.

All these pieces of legislation are aimed at ensuring the establishment of an effective system of decentralisation in Ghana.

3.3 The structure of the new system

The decentralised planning system comprises:

- The National Development Planning Commission (NDPC)
- Regional co-ordinating councils (RCCs)
- District assemblies (DAs)
- Sectoral ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs)

The functional relationships and the vertical and horizontal linkages between the various institutions are illustrated in Figure 3.1. There is an administrative link between the president and the NDPC, but relationships between all other institutions are functional and symbolise the operationalisation of the decentralised planning policy in which the power for decision-making is devolved from the national to the local community level.

3.3.1 National Development Planning Commission (NDPC)

Functionally, NDPC is at the apex of the structure. The NDPC Act 479 of 1994 gives the NDPC responsibility for co-ordinating all national development plans. It is mandated to provide the framework and direction for national development planning and implementation. It provides guidelines for the preparation of the district development plans which it then harmonises with sectoral plans to produce a broad overall national development plan.

3.3.2 District assemblies (DAs)

Key elements in the structure are the DAs and their sub-structures such as area and town councils and unit committees. Under the Local Government Act 462 of 1993, DAs have executive, deliberative and legislative powers and are designed to be supported by administrative and technical services to articulate the views and aspirations of the local level communities for development at the district level. This function assists the DAs to prepare district development plans. Vertically related to the DAs are the area and town councils and the unit committees established by Legislative Instrument 1589.

3.3.3 Regional co-ordinating council (RCCs)

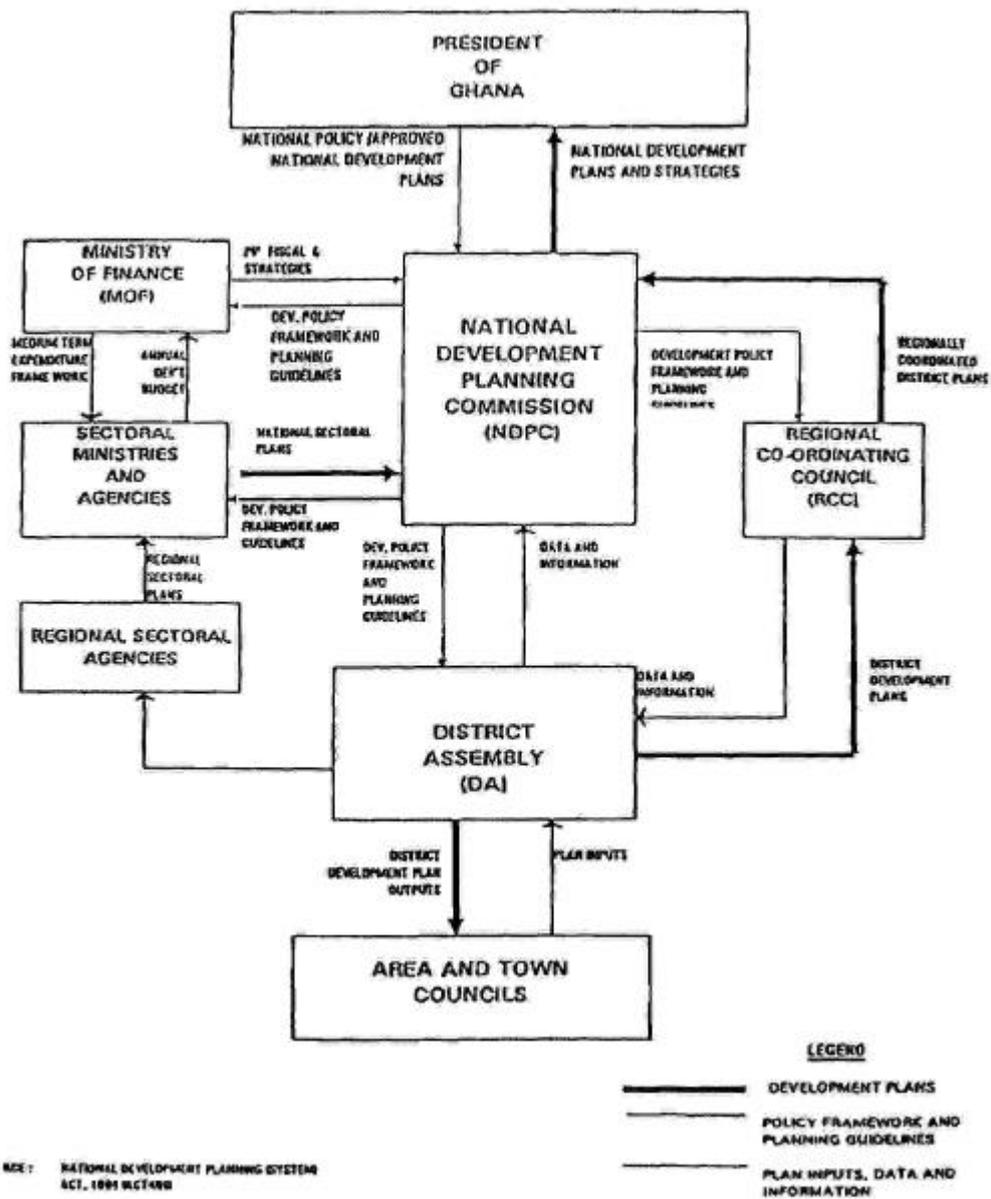
Positioned between the NDPC and the DAs are the regional co-ordinating councils. The RCCs have the task of co-ordinating the development plans and programmes of the district planning authorities and harmonising these with national development policies and priorities for approval by NDPC. They are also expected to provide the district planning authorities with such information and data as are necessary to assist them in the preparation of the district development plans.

At the national level, line ministries also prepare sector plans following guidelines provided by NDPC. The Ministry of Finance (MOF) has a special relationship with NDPC with regard to the preparation of Medium Term Framework (Medium Term Expenditure Framework), fiscal and financial strategies with guidelines provided by NDPC (Dagbui, M.P., 1997).

The laws that established the decentralised planning system also provided for the creation of regional planning co-ordinating units for RCCs, district planning co-ordinating units (DPCUs) for DAs, and the policy planning, monitoring and evaluation division (PPMED) for sector ministries. These planning units for the RCCs and DAs, and the PPMED for the sector

ministries perform all the planning functions of the respective planning authorities at the regional, district and sectoral levels (MLGRD, 1996).

Figure 3.1: Structure of decentralised planning system in Ghana



3.4 Ghana Vision 2020

A long-term perspective for the decentralised development planning process is provided by the National Development Policy Framework (Ghana-Vision 2020). This is a framework for accelerated growth and sustainable development in Ghana; it gives a strategic direction for national development over a 25 year period from 1996 to the year 2020. Its main goal is to transform Ghana from a poor, low-income country into a prosperous middle income country within a generation. The achievement of the goals of *Ghana-Vision 2020* is expected to be accomplished through the mechanism of a series of medium-term development plans that are based on the decentralised planning framework.

The first Medium-Term Development Plan (1997-2000) was prepared as a collaborative effort between local communities, DAs, regional co-ordinating councils, government ministries and sector agencies, the private sector and NGOs. It involved the preparation of district medium-term development plans by all the 110 DAs as well as sector plans by all the ministries and sector agencies. The district medium-term development plans were harmonised at the regional level by the regional co-ordinating councils (RCCs) and forwarded to the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) for harmonisation and synthesis with the sector plans. The implementation of the output - The First Medium-Term Development Plan (1997-2000) for Ghana is in progress (Botchie, G. 1997).

Ghana's decentralised development planning process has important implications for rural planning. First, the district development plans are critical determinants in the national development planning process. This suggests that the goals of *Ghana-Vision 2020* will be achieved if the objectives of the district development plans and actions are achieved. Secondly, the decentralisation process is a participatory framework that holds promise for efficient utilisation and management of local community resources. Thirdly, it facilitates local community level planning and improvement in rural livelihood. Fourthly, it catalyses the provision of social infrastructure and opportunities in rural areas. Fifthly, the emergence of integrated and intra-regional development planning within the decentralised planning framework has bridged the gap between national, regional, district and sectoral planning. Indeed the decentralised planning framework clearly indicates that the development of the rural districts through the DAs constitutes the bedrock of national development.

3.5 District assemblies and rural district development planning

DAs are planning authorities. Their major function is to initiate and prepare district development plans.

These are expected to incorporate deliberate and concerted efforts to eradicate the economic, social, cultural and political factors that contribute to mass poverty in the rural districts within the framework of sustainable rural development. In the rural district development plans, sustainable rural development implies not only increased and more stable income in agriculture, but also an integrated programme which is aimed at improving total rural incomes, employment, general welfare and conditions of life in the rural districts. This involves balanced development and community participation in development programmes and projects in the rural districts. Thus, rural district development plans are expected to result in entrepreneurial, social, economic and community development action leading to improved social and productive capacity of the poor within the rural districts. The district development plan preparation process is indicated in Box 3.1.

Box 3.1: District development plan preparation process

In preparing the First Medium-Term Development Plan (1997-2000), the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) issued guidelines for the preparation of district development plans. These specified a prescribed format and content which include an executive summary, a district profile or current status of the district, medium-term development proposals, implementation and proposed monitoring and evaluation. The district development plans were also expected to be based on the goals and objectives of the 25 year perspective plan: Ghana-Vision 2020: The first step: 1997-2000. Examples of the contents of two such plans for Akuampem North and Kadjabri Districts are shown below. All District Plans follow this pattern although their specific details vary.

Districts were given only 3 months to adopt the NDPC planning guidelines and prepare their medium-term, 5 year (1996-2000) district development plans. Within this time constraint and due to the lack of trained, experienced professional staff, all the 110 districts appointed consultants to prepare the plans.

The majority of the district development plans received by the NDPC had common problems. Even though each plan stated the district development goals and objectives, the development problems in the districts were poorly defined. The district profiles were intended to specify these problems but were very descriptive and factual rather than analytical. Consequently, there was no attempt to address identified problems and constraints by analysing and proposing alternative strategies or choices. There was no synthesis of the various sectoral proposals into a co-ordinated plan. Above all, there was no clear vision about what development trends are likely to occur over the 5 year time period.

The planning guidelines identified community participation in the preparation of the district development plans as a priority issue. But participation in the developing these plans varied from minimal or partial participation to no participation at all in a number of districts. Full participation involving the local communities, unit committees, assembly members, the district planning co-ordinating units and the consultants was rare in most districts. However, it is believed that future plans could be improved significantly.

Akuampem North 5-Year District Development Plan

1: Executive summary:

Highlights the current status of the district in terms of:

- General stagnation of population growth, inadequate social infrastructures, low incomes, weak settlement hierarchy, and weak administrative and management capacity.
- The focus of the development plan - stated as promotion of social and economic growth and development of the district consistent with the objectives of Ghana Vision 2020.
- Strategies for achieving the development objective
- Specific development programmes following from the strategies
- Implementation of the 5-year district development plan.

2: The existing context (profile)

Covered population, social services, economic base, infrastructure, environment, land and land management, housing, urban management and NGOs.

3: Medium-term development proposals

Covered development constraints and opportunities, development objectives and focus of the district development plan, development programmes and projects.

4: Implementation of the 5-year district development plan

5: Monitoring and evaluation.

Box 3.1: Continued:

Kadjabi District 5-Year Development Plan

1: Executive Summary:

Highlights the current status of the district: district profile comprising: physical and population characteristics; social and economic development; economic, financial and tourism services; and institutional analysis.

2: Medium-term development proposals:

- Objective: alleviation of poverty
- Development strategies

3: Implementation

4: Monitoring and evaluation

3.5.1 The composition of the district assemblies

The Local Government Act 1993 (Act 462) stipulated the composition of the DAs to ensure the efficient performance of their planning, legislative, executive and deliberative functions. Each DA comprises:

- District Chief Executive (DCE) - appointed by the President and approved by not less than two-thirds of the assembly members present and voting;
- Presiding member (speaker) - elected by at least a two-thirds majority of all members of the assembly;
- Elected members each representing an electoral area and elected by universal adult suffrage. They constitute 70% of total members of the assembly;
- Appointed members - appointed by the President in consultation with traditional authorities and other interest groups in the district;
- Heads of decentralised departments - co-opted members without voting rights; representatives of traditional chiefs in the districts.

3.5.2 Local community participation in decentralised development and rural district planning

One of the key objectives of the decentralised development planning system is the participation of local communities in programmes/projects and decisions affecting their livelihoods. In other words, the decentralisation process is expected to "give power to the people" and to ensure "participatory democracy". A major step taken to achieve this objective was the organisation of non-partisan elections for two-thirds of the membership of the DAs. The remaining one-third was nominated by the government in consultation with traditional authorities and interest groups in the districts.

Our field investigations and a number of empirical studies indicate that participation in DA deliberations is constrained by a number of factors (see Ayee S.R., 1996):

- In a large number of districts, elected DA members do not have an educational background to adequately participate in the proceedings of the assemblies. These elected members therefore tend to respect the views of the nominated members who have a comparatively better educational and occupational background. The appointed or nominated members therefore form the hub around which the DAs revolve. They dominate the discussions at meetings and take initiatives. As such, the voices of the majority of less-educated members are not often heard and taken into account.
- The membership of the important DA Committees are often skewed in favour of the appointed or nominated members of the assembly. For example, the Executive Committee (the most powerful and important committee) is supposed to comprise not more than one-third of the total number of the members of the DA and should be elected by the members. In practice, the committee membership is dominated by nominated or appointed members. Clearly, this increases the dominance in the assembly of the already powerful and wealthy at the expense of the ordinary local people. This inhibits the effective participation of the DA members and local communities in the DA deliberations. In effect, the DAs are reinforcing the existing power relations without empowering the "people" to ensure participatory democracy at the district level.
- This situation is exacerbated by the position and performance of the district chief executives (DCEs). Usually, the DCE is the chairman of the executive committee which is in charge of day-to-day administration of the district. In this capacity, he serves not only as the link between the central government and the districts but also as the head of the district administration. He is therefore conceived as the most important member of the DA. And yet, he is the only member of the DA who is not responsible or accountable to the local people. As an ex-officio member, being neither elected nor appointed member of the DA, he stands beside and above recall. He is responsible to and removable only by the central government that appointed him. He is untouchable. This situation is far removed from the "people's" exercise of power and undermines accountability to the electorate in the districts.
- Some scholars argue that decentralisation not only increases the number of public goods and services but also the effectiveness with which they are delivered at lower cost (Rondinelli, D.A., 1981). The evidence from Ghana does not support this assertion. The DAs are expected to undertake development projects in the local communities to improve the livelihood of the rural people. But the contribution of development projects initiated by district assemblies is still relatively marginal. In a number of cases, projects like provision of water and school classroom blocks have been undertaken by district assemblies in collaboration with non-governmental organisations such as the World Vision International and Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA).
- The inability of most DA members to bring development to their electoral areas has led to their frustration, embarrassment and disappointment. Consequently, during the March 1994 DA elections only a few DA members stood for re-election or were re-elected (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Information Digest, July - August, 1994).

On the positive side, local communities are able to suggest their priority needs (e.g. latrines, clinics, feeder roads, classrooms and workshops, electricity, water and markets) and discuss these with their elected representatives to the DAs who promote these needs in the DAs.

Prior to the implementation of projects approved by the DAs, local communities are consulted through village/town meetings.

Thus, whilst DAs are institutions of representative democracy, they are not able to promote participatory democracy. The opportunities for popular participation, however, exist at village or town levels where the relations between the assembly members and their electorate are rewarding. Popular participation at the local community levels is normally conducted through meetings with village groups or individuals or through developing and implementing local projects (mostly through self help).

Through these processes, most local communities are motivated to participate in the planning process and discuss issues that affect their local areas. By this means, most communities become aware of development problems of their areas, their causes and effects as well as how to tackle them. They are also prepared to contribute labour and financial resources through local fund-raising activities for developments which directly affect their livelihoods.

3.5.3 Lessons for rural district planning and sustainable livelihoods

The concept of sustainable livelihoods is central to the entire decentralisation process in Ghana. The need to restructure development strategies in order to improve rural incomes, employment opportunities, general welfare and livelihoods in the rural districts prompted Ghana to focus development attention and action on the districts. Total devolution of power to the districts as a basis of rational allocation of national resources, the establishment of 110 districts as administrative units and the operation of DAs as development planning authorities are intended to achieve sustainable livelihoods in the districts. These efforts have shown positive impacts.

The process of decentralisation has awakened the spirit of voluntarism and awareness among most rural communities in Ghana. Through the decentralisation process, local communities have accepted the fact that development of their local areas is largely their responsibility.

Despite these gains, the expectation that the implementation of the district development plans would improve total rural incomes, employment, general welfare and conditions of life in the rural districts has not yet been translated into reality in most rural districts. There are several reasons for this failure:

- Most DAs are still experiencing considerable difficulties for mobilising and allocating development resources.
- The decentralisation process is expected to fuse governmental agencies in the districts into one administrative unit through the process of institutional integration, manpower absorption and composite budgeting. 22 government departments were listed in the first schedule of the PNDC Law 207 as decentralised and were therefore required to operate as institutions of the DAs. But the district offices of these government departments continue to work as before with their allegiance to their headquarters in Accra. This top-down or vertical institutional relationship tends to weaken potentially useful horizontal integration of institutional responsibilities at the district level.

This problem may be attributable partly to the inadequate staffing of most district planning and coordinating units (DPCUs). Yet these units are expected to provide assistance on integration

and co-ordination of the activities of the district sectoral departments in relation to district level development (Botchie, G., 1996).

The major constraints on the achievement of sustainable livelihoods at the district level through the decentralisation process may be summed up as institutional inadequacies and financial constraints. These issues are addressed in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

DECENTRALISATION AND DISTRICT FINANCIAL, HUMAN AND INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

Under the decentralised planning system, the districts are empowered by the 1992 constitution and the Local Government Act 1993 (Act 462) to formulate and execute development plans, programmes and strategies to enhance effective mobilisation of resources necessary for the overall development of the districts. This chapter assesses the financial, human and institutional resources available to the districts for effective performance of these tasks. It also assesses the impact of the utilisation of these resources on livelihoods in the districts.

4.1 Financial resources

There are four major sources of funds for financing development programmes and projects at the district level:

- Central government transfers comprising local government workers' salaries, ceded revenue and the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF);
- Traditional revenues;
- External Assistance from donor agencies and NGOs
- Other locally - generated revenues comprising royalties, land rent and loans.

4.1.1 *Central government*

4.1.1.1 Salaries and wages

Since 1995, the central government has assumed full responsibility for the salaries and wages of the district assembly (DA) staff. In 1995, the government transferred ₵7.2 billion to DAs, representing 1.7% of total expenditure on personal emoluments. In 1996 and 1997, government transfers remained at this percentage. However, the staff numbers of DAs will need to increase if they are to satisfy the demands placed on them, and government transfers to meet salaries and wages will be likely to increase.

4.1.1.2 Ceded revenue

In an effort to broaden and strengthen the revenue base of the district assemblies, the government introduced *ceded revenue* in 1990. Ceded revenue is the total of all revenues collected centrally by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) on behalf of the DAs. It includes tax collection on entertainment, casino, betting, gambling, registration of trades, businesses, profession, vocation, advertising and daily transport. This revenue is later transferred to the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development for sharing to the district assemblies on the basis of an annually-agreed formula. As a source of development funding, ceded revenue averaged 0.046% of GDP between 1993 and 1995. There was a

nominal increase in ceded revenue of 37% between 1993 and 1994, but only 9.3% between 1994 and 1995.

As a share of taxes on income, ceded revenue averaged 1.5% between 1993 and 1995 (First Medium-Term Development Plan, 1997-2000, p.249).

4.1.1.3 District Assemblies Common Fund

The District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) is by far the most significant and reliable source of development revenue for the district assemblies. It is provided for under Article 252 of the 1992 constitution and DACF Act 1993 (Act 455).

Under the constitutional provisions, "not less than five percent of the total revenues of Ghana" is to be allocated annually to the DAs for development. The fund is allocated annually by parliament and distributed to the district assemblies on basis of a formula approved yearly by parliament.

Factor	Weight	Rationale
Needs	35%	To address imbalances in development
Responsiveness	20%	To motivate the district to generate more income locally
Equalisation	30%	To ensure each district has access to specified sum from the fund
Service Pressure	15%	To assist in improving existing services which as a result of population pressure are deteriorating faster than envisaged

The DACF is released quarterly to the DAs. The main objective of the fund is to strengthen the financial position of the DAs to enable them to contribute effectively to the improvement of livelihood in the districts.

The total fund provided to DAs under the DACF scheme amounted to ₵37.0 billion in 1994, ₵47.9 billion in 1995 and ₵68.4 billion in 1996.

Table 4.1 shows the allocation of the Common Fund to the DAs by region from 1994 to 1996. The pattern of variation of the fund allocations from 1994 to 1996 is about the same. Even though the total fund allocation will vary with the total revenue of the country for each year, the pattern of allocation is not likely to change since the current allocation formula is likely to remain the same for some time.

In the first five years of the operation of the Common Fund, regions with relatively high development levels received the highest allocations. If the objective of the Common Fund is to strengthen the financial base of the districts, then the well-endowed regions and districts will continue strengthening their financial positions at the expense of the poorer ones which receive the lowest allocations.

"For Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath".

Matthew, chapter 25:29.

Table 4.1: Allocation of Common Fund by Region, 1994-1996

REGION	ALLOCATION ('000 CEDIS)							
	1994	%	1995	%	1996	%	1994-1996 %	
WESTERN	3,490,000	9.6	4,574,500	9.5	8,328,800	12.2	16,394,100	10.7
CENTRAL	3,745,700	10.3	4,908,100	10.2	6,683,600	9.8	15,337,400	10.0
GREATER ACCRA	3,609,800	9.9	4,730,400	9.9	6,824,500	10.0	15,164,700	9.9
EASTERN	4,869,800	13.3	6,387,000	13.3	8,430,200	12.3	19,687,000	12.9
VOLTA	3,705,200	10.1	4,863,200	10.1	6,053,700	8.8	14,622,300	9.6
ASHANTI	6,364,700	17.4	8,372,450	17.5	12,416,800	18.1	27,153,950	17.8
BRONG AHAFO	3,731,800	10.2	4,913,200	10.3	6,860,300	10.0	15,505,300	10.1
NORTHERN	3,270,300	9.0	4,277,100	9.0	6,375,100	9.3	13,922,500	9.1
UPPER WEST	1,674,500	4.6	2,194,600	4.6	2,676,000	4.0	6,545,100	4.3
UPPER EAST	2,057,100	5.6	2,706,200	5.6	3,709,500	5.5	8,532,800	5.6
ANNUAL TOTAL	36,519,700	100	47,926,750	100	68,418,700	100	152,865,150	100

Source: District Assembly Common Fund Administrator

Even the intra-district allocation of the Common Fund creates considerable problems for some districts. For example, in the Ho District in the Volta Region, there is a glaring contrast between population numbers and the level of allocation to districts (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Volta Region: district assemblies, population and Common Fund allocation

DISTRICT	POPULATION			DA COMMON FUND ALLOCATION	
	1984	Annual Growth Rate	1996	1996 (¢ million)	1996 Per Capita
SOGAKOFE	46,886	1.1	53,500	639.88	11,960
ADIDOME	68,882	1.2	79,500	590.51	7,428
KETA	111,700	0.5	118,600	560.60	4,727
KETU	180,309	2.2	234,100	592.09	2,529
AKATSI	47,221	1.2	54,500	564.34	10,355
HO	195,441	2.1	250,800	487.51	1,944
KPANDO	104,908	1.9	131,500	498.70	3,792
HOHOE	87,612	1.9	109,800	460.78	4,197
JASIKAN	93,665	0.8	103,100	486.91	4,723
KADJEBI	94,075	0.6	101,100	528.87	5,231
NKWANTA	84,544	5.2	155,300	561.68	3,617
KETE KRACHI	96,795	2.8	134,800	425.03	3,153
VOLTA REGION	1,211,907	1.8	1,501,200	6,396.90	4,261

Source: Ho District Assembly, June 1997.

Tables 4.2 shows that Ho District has the largest population in the region; yet it received the smallest per capita share of the Common fund in 1966 (¢1,944). This compares with ¢11,960 allocated to Sogakope District which has the least population in the region (Ho District Assembly, 1997).

It might be argued that the current pattern of Common Fund allocation to districts in Volta Region can be explained by the fact that Ho is both the regional and district capital, on the basis that this enables Ho District to attract additional financial resources to augment those allocated under the Common Fund. But this argument is incorrect. Tamale, Cape Coast, and Kumasi also serve as both regional and district capitals in the Northern, Central and Ashanti Regions respectively. Yet, the Common Fund allocations to them are far in excess of Common Fund allocations to Ho District. While Tamale, Cape Coast and Kumasi received 17.4%,

13.4% and 16.1%, respectively, of total regional Common Fund allocations in 1996, Ho District received only 7.6% of its regional allocation in the same year.

This anomaly has compelled Ho District Assembly to spread its meagre Common Fund allocations thinly over the whole district in an attempt to address the development needs of the district. The DA has been under considerable pressure as it has attempted to undertake development programmes and projects with meagre resources. Not surprisingly, Ho District Assembly has agitated for the district to be partitioned to create four new districts. If this petition is granted, then the total Common Fund for Volta Region will be allocated to 16 instead of the current 12 districts. This might shift financial pressure from Ho District to the other districts in the region, since their current allocations from the Common Fund could be reduced to satisfy allocations to the four new districts.

Until recently, the District Assemblies Common Fund has been utilised by the districts for social infrastructure projects such as school classroom blocks, clinics, provision of water and sanitation facilities. Even though these projects are necessary, they are not sufficient to improve the overall livelihoods of the local communities in the districts. Consequently, the DAs have now been directed to spend 20% of their Common Fund allocations on income-generating activities to improve the incomes of the local population.

4.1.2 *Traditional revenues*

Traditional sources of revenue are also available to the DAs for financing the implementation of development programmes. These sources include basic and property rates, market fees and licences from hawkers, restaurants and beer and wine sellers. Revenues from these sources between 1993 and 1995 averaged ₵12.03 billion (an average of 0.22% of GDP for the period).

Traditional revenue increased from 8.3% of the total district revenues in 1993 to 11.1% in 1994 - an increase of 21% compared to 1993. But the real increase was negative (-3%) when discounted by the average rate of inflation in 1994 (24.9%). In the following year, traditional revenue increased by a further 50% of total district revenues (compared to 1994) but, when again discounted by inflation (average 59.5% in 1995), the real increase was also negative (2.7%) (First Medium-Term Development Plan, 1997-2000).

DA revenues raised from traditional sources has been weak for several reasons:

- Reliance on unskilled revenue collectors;
- Ineffective supervision of revenue collectors leading to embezzlement;
- Non-payment of taxes by citizens due to the inability of DAs to justify the use of tax collections.

4.1.3 *External assistance from donor agencies and NGOs.*

Donor and NGO assistance is becoming an important source of development finance at the district level. The main areas of donor development assistance to the districts include poverty reduction, health, education, water and sanitation, agriculture and micro-projects. The European Union (EU) for instance, is currently implementing a micro-projects programme in 14 districts. In the last few years, however, the level of overall aid disbursements to Ghana has declined significantly.

4.1.4 *Other locally-generated revenues*

Other sources of revenue available to DAs include royalties, land rent, loans, and taxes and duties. Districts endowed with mineral and forest resources earn additional revenue through the payment of mining and timber royalties. These are collected, respectively, by the Minerals Commission and the Forestry Commission and are paid directly to DAs concerned. Similarly, the Lands Commission collects rent on land and pays it to the relevant DAs. The DAs are also empowered under Section 88 of the Local Government Act, 1994 (Act 462) to borrow up to ₵20 million from the banks on their own authority. Loans exceeding ₵20 million may be taken only with the approval of the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development in consultation with the Minister of Finance.

4.1.5 *Total district level financial resources*

It was estimated that the total amount required to be mobilised at the district level from all sources (central government, traditional revenues, and donor and NGO development assistance) to implement district development programmes from 1997 to 2000 would be about ₵1,468.9 billion. The annual totals expected to be received were estimated at ₵269.3 billion in 1997, ₵365.1 billion in 1998, ₵398.0 billion in 1999 and ₵445.3 billion in 2000. These amounts exclude revenues from royalties, land rent and loans from the banks.

Two key factors have inhibited districts to achieve these estimated revenue targets:

- Inability of the districts to identify investment opportunities, and market the districts to attract investors;
- Potential district revenue sources are mostly undeveloped.

In those districts which have developed tax collecting systems, tax payer compliance is low, and the systems, reporting and forecasting are ineffective. This is because of:

- Poor feedback mechanism for assessing budgetary performance in the districts;
- Inability of most DAs to achieve their revenue targets;
- Absence of a co-ordinated system of controls which would ensure judicious spending of revenues.

In general, DAs remain dependent on central government grants. These are often not enough to undertake the specific functions assigned to DAs under various legislative instruments. As a consequence, some projects, once started, are stopped, and the supply of materials is often irregular and uncoordinated. For example, in the Keta District in the Volta Region, the construction of classroom blocks for seven junior secondary schools and four senior secondary schools was suspended by the DA due mainly to financial constraints. The general and pervasive problem of inadequate financing of development projects in all of Ghana's 110 districts.

4.2 **Fiscal decentralisation**

To improve the financial management system at the district level, the government introduced fiscal decentralisation under Public Financial Management Reform Programme (PUFMARIP). This programme seeks to support national socio-economic development by providing a decentralised, effective and efficient financial management system. This system is also expected to lead to the better allocation and management of financial resources at the

district level. The first step involved designing the Budgetary Structures and Public Expenditure Management System (BPEMS), completed in 1997 (Obirih-Opareh, 1998).

4.3 Human resources

The decentralised planning system has imposed changes in the public administration and planning system in Ghana. Section 10 (3) of the Local Government Act 462 lists the legislative and executive functions now devolved to DAs which require personnel of adequate calibre to perform them. Examples of these tasks include (MLGRD, 1997):

- Responsibility for the overall development of the district and preparation and submission of the district development plans to the NDPC for approval;
- Formulation and execution of development plans, programmes and strategies for effective mobilisation of the resources necessary for the overall development of districts;
- Responsibility for the development, improvement and management of human settlements and environment in districts.

These functions place heavy responsibility on the DAs in terms engagement of qualified district development planning officers. The numbers district planning officers in post in each region in 1997 is shown in Table 4.3 - and summarised for the whole country as follows in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 shows that 48 districts (43.6% of the total number of districts) had only one district development planning officer, while 17 districts (15.5%) had none at all. The highest number was 4 planning officers, in only two districts. It is also evident that less than 50% of district development planners have the professionally training needed to perform planning functions.

District planning co-ordinating units (DPCUs) are supposed to play a major role in the development efforts in the districts. But the absence or inadequacy of development planners in most districts means that such units have not been established or operate ineffectively.

4.3.1 Human Resource Training

To alleviate human resource problems and to strengthen the operational, technical, administrative and management skills at the District level, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development initiated training programme for personnel at different levels of the decentralisation process in collaboration with other institutions. For example, as a result of the training programmes that have been organised in collaboration with NDPC and the Department of Planning, University of Science and Technology (UST) since 1990, over 500 people of various categories had gone through training programmes by the end of 1997. The programmes included training in:

- Overall integrated district level development planning and implementation;
- Participatory district development administration and management;
- Preparation and co-ordination of medium term development plans;
- Spatial planning;
- Financial management;
- Human relations and communication

Despite the bold initiatives to implement the decentralised development planning process in Ghana, there are still inadequate number of personnel with the requisite development planning and management skills and organisational competence to implement the decentralised planning system at the District level. Key issues that should be addressed to rectify the situation include:

- Lack of intra and inter district co-operation and collaboration;
- Undeveloped local community development initiatives, and low entrepreneurial and managerial competence;
- Excessive politicisation of appointments into the District Assembly alienated many professionally capable people from involving in deliberation and general governance of the Districts; even though the decentralisation programme provided a basis for inducting such people into the District Assemblies;
- Refusal or reluctance of certain categories and calibre of staff to accept postings to some Districts especially the deprived areas;
- The full integration of the sub-district structures such as town, area councils and unit committees in the District Assemblies is necessary to ensure effective community or grass root participation in the decentralisation process.

Table 4.3: District development planning officers in post in 1997

Region	No. of districts in the region	No. of district planning officers per district	No. of districts reporting
EASTERN	15	2	9
		1	5
		0	1
VOLTA	12	2	3
		1	7
		0	2
ASHANTI	18	2	16
		1	2
CENTRAL	12	2	4
		1	4
		0	4
WESTERN	11	2	2
		1	7
		0	2
GREATER ACCRA	5	4	1
		3	1
		2	1
		1	2
BRONG AHAFO	13	4	1
		3	1
		2	5
		1	5
		0	1
NORTHERN	13	1	10
		0	3
UPPER EAST	6	1	2
		0	4
UPPER WEST	5	2	1
		1	4

Source: MLGRD (Human Resource Division) Records, 1997.

Table 4.4: Summary of Table 4.3

No. of district planning officers per district	No. of districts reporting	Percentage
4	2	1.8
3	2	1.8
2	41	37.3
1	48	43.6
0	17	15.5
	110	100.0

Source: Compiled from Table 4.3

4.4 Institutional resources

The decentralised planning process requires 22 'decentralised departments' to be fully integrated into the DAs as a single administrative unit in order to strengthen the institutional capacity of the DAs. However, most departments have been reluctant to integrate into the DA system and have continued to work under the control of their head offices in Accra. This has created a conflict of allegiance which undermines and weakens the administrative capacity of the DAs.

The Local Government Service Bill aims to establish a Local Government Service. Once this is passed by parliament and implemented, this dual allegiance problem should be overcome and efforts to achieve complete decentralisation in Ghana should be enhanced

4.5 District financial, human and institutional resources and sustainable livelihoods in the districts

The decentralisation policy in Ghana is designed to empower the local communities to participate actively in the development process to improve their livelihoods on a sustainable basis. The effectiveness of this policy depends on local communities being able to effectively utilise and manage the financial, human and institutional resources at their disposal. In response to this need, the District Assemblies Common Fund has assisted by providing social infrastructural facilities in many local communities and helping many communities to improve their livelihoods through using these facilities – although, in some districts, these facilities have become moribund due to uncoordinated development. In addition, there has been a remarkable increase in self-help initiatives to provide facilities to sustain rural livelihoods.

Some districts have also undertaken capacity-building programmes to ensure effective implementation and management of decentralised planning and development. Despite several problems and weaknesses, the decentralisation process is gradually empowering the DAs to assume responsibility for sustainable development.

4.6 The role of the private sector in the decentralisation process

In addition to the efforts of the DAs, an improved business environment and increased support for the private sector will assist all entrepreneurs to make a significant contribution to local community development to sustain livelihoods. In general, the private sector has not yet made a significant contribution to development at the district level. However, a number of private sector organisations are contributing significantly to the improvement of community livelihoods. Of particular note is the efforts of church-based private organisations (Box 4.1).

Box 4.1: The Ho Farms Project

A typical example of a church-based private organisation is the Evangelical Presbyterian Church Farms Extension and Training Programme at Akoefe-Avenui, a small farming village located 6 km east of Ho in Volta Region. The project area is popularly called "The E.P. Church Ho Farms" while the training centre is known as "Bremen Village" because of the support the programme receives from partner churches in Bremen, Germany.

Based on 26 acres of land donated to the church, the programme is mainly designed for vocational training and small-scale business promotion. This focuses on market-oriented, short-duration skills training programmes for local communities. The programme offers skills training in sustainable agriculture to interested individuals, groups and organisations.

Since its establishment in March, 1991, training programmes have been conducted for local communities and other organisations on nutrition and diet improvement, agro-processing and income generation, agro-forestry and woodlot establishment, and hedgrow inter-cropping. The programme's other training activities include bee-keeping, snail and mushroom farming, breeding of sheep, goats, rabbits, grasscutters, ducks and fowl, animal traction and organic farming. It combines these micro-enterprise training programmes in sustainable agriculture with training in entrepreneurial skill development, micro-credit financing, record management and book keeping to support local community initiatives on self initiated project (E.P. Church, 1997).

Coverage of the training programme

The original aim for establishing the "Ho Farms" was to provide agricultural and technical services mainly to the farming communities around Akoefe and Tanyigbe within a radius of 5 Km. However, it quickly developed into an important training centre for other interested groups, organisations and individuals from outside the target area. The programme attracted groups and individuals from local communities outside the target area. Trainees from Cameroon, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Kenya and South Africa also benefited from the training programmes of the Ho farms.

Institutional collaboration

The Ho farms collaborates with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. It is also a registered member of Ecumenical Association for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development - a network of church and private voluntary organisations in the southern sector of Ghana. In addition, it networks with the African Centre for Human Development in Accra and Agricultural Mission Inc. U.S.A. Indeed, Africa 2000 and Agriculture Mission Inc., U.S.A. have funded some of its training programmes.

From a sustainable livelihood perspective the Ho farms is playing a significant role to improve the livelihood of local communities through the micro-enterprises training opportunities it offers both the local communities within and outside the target area. Some beneficiaries have become trainers in their own local communities. The practical skill-oriented training at the Ho farms is therefore generating multiplier effects in the local communities and offers greater opportunities for other local communities which have not participated in the programme also to benefit from the training programmes.

The emphasis of the Ho farms on training in organic farming techniques is important. Not only is the technique environmentally friendly, it also gives better opportunity for the outputs from this form of farming to enjoy easy access to markets within and outside Ghana where customers patronise produce from organic farming rather than inorganic farming. The training programme at Ho farms is thus an important complement to the decentralised development efforts of the local authorities since it also targets the improvement of community livelihoods.

CHAPTER 5

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING THROUGH THE DISTRICT CONCEPT

Sub-district and administrative structures such as town/village and area councils, and unit committees are important elements in the decentralised planning system in Ghana. Their major function is to galvanise local action and channel local energies into productive and developmental activities. They are also expected to be the rallying points of local enthusiasm in support of the development of the districts. This chapter examines the performance of these sub-structures in relation to participatory action and sustenance of rural livelihoods in the sub-districts. It discusses the role and effectiveness of the town/village, and unit committees, community development projects and their conception, design and implementation, micro-credit schemes as a basis for financing community development, and linkages between local development and sustainable livelihood approaches.

5.1 Role and effectiveness of the town/village and area councils, and unit committees

The sub-district and administrative structures such as town/village and area councils and unit committees are established by law as the lower tiers of administrative and political decision-making in the districts. They provide vital links between the DAs and local institutions and resources.

Town councils are established for communities with population between 5,000 and 15,000 while area councils represent a number of community groups whose individual populations are less than 5,000. The area councils are the intermediaries between the DAs and the communities which are organised under the unit committees.

Unit committees form the base of the decision-making system in each district. Representing a settlement/community with a population of up to 1,500, unit committees are expected to be closely in touch with the local people, and to articulate their needs and aspirations. They are also expected to play the important roles of promoting education, organising communal labour, mobilising revenue, implementing and monitoring of self-help development projects, registering births and deaths, and ensuring environmental cleanliness.

The unit committees comprise ten elected and five appointed members. Following the local government elections in June 1998, unit committees now operate fully under the DAs. DA members representing particular communities are members of the unit committees for those communities and are an important link between the committees and the DA. They have knowledge of activities, programmes, projects and problems of both the councils and the assemblies.

The functions of the unit committees are specifically set out in the Second Schedule of the Legislative Instrument 1589. These functions include:

- Supervision of the staff of the DA assigned duties in its area of authority;
- Assisting to enumerate and keep records of all rateable persons and properties;
- Taking over, as appropriate, all functions formally performed by the town/Village committee concerned;
- Mobilisation of members of the unit for implementation of self-help development projects;
- Monitoring the implementation of self-help development projects;
- Taking lawful steps to abate nuisance;
- Provisions of focal points for the discussions of local problems and taking remedial action where necessary or making recommendations to the DA where appropriate through the relevant area or town council;
- Making specific proposals to the DA for levying and collection of rates for programmes and projects through the relevant area or town council;
- Taking responsibility, under the guidance of the Registrar of Births and Deaths, for the registration of births and deaths in the unit;
- Organisation of communal labour and voluntary work especially with respect to sanitation.

In addition to these important functions, unit committees are expected to assist the DAs in data and information gathering to enable the assemblies to make informed decisions for the effective development of the districts. For example, records of births and deaths constitute an important part of the new thinking on demographic data required for social and economic development planning in the districts. Unit committees will be central in the registration of all births and deaths that occur in all the communities in Ghana. To facilitate this exercise, a community population register will be established in the districts to guide the data collection system which can provide a continuous recording of information.

Since their election in June 1998, the unit committees have been very enthusiastic in the performance of their roles in the local communities. While some have organised and educated the local communities on poor environmental practices, others have been able to lead local communities in initiating and constructing projects which are vital to the communities or have organised local fund-raising rallies to support local development initiatives. Since these committees have only been in operation since June 1998, it is not yet possible to assess meaningfully their impact on community livelihoods.

Unit committees have an important role in the decentralised development planning system, but a number of constraints inhibit their operations. For instance, there are still inadequate human resources with requisite skills and organisational competence to operationalise the decentralised planning system at the sub-district level. Secondly, many unit committee members have become disillusioned (even before starting active work) because they have not been paid any allowances - unlike their counterparts in the DAs. Not only does this lower morale among committee members, it also undermines the effective performance of the tasks assigned to them. There is poor contact between DA members and local communities. If there was a better and regular level of contact, this would enable unit committee members and local communities to get access to information and decisions of the DAs to enhance local community development efforts.

5.2 Local community development project conception, design and implementation

Within the context of the current decentralised development planning process, the conception, design and implementation of local community development projects is expected to be undertaken by the beneficiaries (local communities) themselves. Through this process, local

community group meetings are expected to be organised to solicit views about local development projects.

The outcomes of these meetings are then presented to the whole community through the town/village unit committee. Questions are answered and suggestions are integrated into the design. After considering concerns raised about project design, the unit committee members are expected to inform the community on what should be done and the sort of contribution that should be made towards the implementation of the project. Resources are then mobilised for the implementation of the project.

In practice, it is usually difficult to establish the extent to which ordinary people in the local communities are aware of and have participated in decisions affecting them. In most instances, the involvement of the local community members is sought at the implementation stage when labour resources are required for manual work. Overall, the level of real participation in decision-making is low. In many communities in Ghana, the experience is that planning is considered the prerogative of local leadership (assembly members and unit committee members). Thus, large segments of the local community do not participate meaningfully in the identification of needs or determination of priorities for action.

This situation may be illustrated by the nature of community participation in the preparation of district development plans in five districts in Ashanti Region - Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly, Atwima District Assembly, Bosomtwi-Atwima-Kwanwoma District Assembly, Ejisu-Juaben District Assembly and Kwabre District Assembly (NRI/UST, 1997, Kumasi National Resource Management Project, Inception Report):

- Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly: To formulate the district development plans in this district, departments were requested to submit their programmes to the district planning co-ordinating unit. The consultants hired to prepare the plan also met the members of the metropolitan assembly to submit the problems, needs and requirements of their electoral area based on local meetings with the assembly members. But it is not clear how widespread these meetings were. The draft proposals were discussed with the technical officers and assembly members, although it appears the assembly members were not actually involved in establishing priorities for these proposals.
- Atwima District Assembly: A workshop was held involving all assembly members, heads of departments, opinion leaders, chiefs and others to relate development problems of the district to the objectives of the district assembly. A participatory workshop was later held to discuss goals and related objectives, together with the phasing and possible sources of funding. Although slow and time-consuming, the majority of assembly members identified themselves with the plan and were keen to see it implemented. The extent of the involvement of large segments of the ordinary people in the district whose livelihoods are to be affected by the plan was not clear.
- Bosomtwi-Atwimo-Kwanwoma District: Baseline surveys were used to collect basic information, but assembly members were not involved in the identification of development problems and resource potential. A draft copy of the plan was reviewed by the development planning sub-committee of the district assembly before final approval by the general assembly. District officials felt that there was inadequate interaction with the people during the process of plan preparation by the consultants hired to prepare the district development plan.

- Ejisu-Juaben District Assembly: There was no indication that local community members were involved in the implementation of the plan proposals. This situation questions the ownership of the plan and the involvement of the local communities in the preparation.
- Kwabre District Assembly: The results of socio-economic and institutional surveys were presented to assembly members and district departmental heads, and a liaison committee was formed to discuss the final output with the consultants hired to prepare the plan. But the assembly members did not see the final plan.

These examples amply testify that local communities rarely participate in the conception and design of development proposals that affect their livelihoods even though they are expected to be involved in the implementation of the plan proposals. This situation is not restricted to the five districts in the Ashanti Region; it is a general phenomenon in most districts in the country.

Despite this situation, a number of local communities are undertaking local development initiatives either by themselves or with the help of NGOs to complement the decentralised development planning process (Boxes 5.1 - 5.4).

Box 5.1 Gub-Katimale

Through an effective rural-urban linkage system, the Gub-Katimale is providing an effective local community development initiative to complement the decentralised development planning process. Gub-Katimale is a Dagbani* word which means "together we build".

Gub-Katimale was established in 1991 by local people who are essentially resident in urban areas, and who realised the need to develop their local communities. Currently, the organisation has 75 village groups operating in 8 districts in the Northern Region.

The aim of the organisation is to bring communities together, unite, empower them and enhance their capabilities to undertake self-help development projects. Through its network of community groups, it raise the conscience of people through durbars and rallies which are often held in the community. These rallies are designed to continuously draw the attention of people towards purposeful community development in their various communities. Through focus group discussions during these rallies, major problems of the communities are identified. The application of this participatory tool enabled communities in the Savelugu-Nanton District in the Northern Region to identify priority development needs such as water, health and income generating activities.

Gub-Katimale has established relationships with relevant local development groups working in their area of jurisdiction to collaborate or seek assistance for local communities or groups. It also coordinates its activities with the unit committees and district assemblies in their area of operation.

* Dagbani is one of the local Ghanaian languages which is spoken mainly in northern Ghana.

Box 5.2: Amasachina

Amasachina is a local NGO founded in 1967 to promote the spirit of community participation through self-help for local community development. It aims to empower local communities for

sustainable development through the mobilisation of community groups for local decision-making, programme/project implementation and monitoring. Amasachina is currently operating in 220 communities in the Northern Region of Ghana.

It works closely with the DAs and unit committees in its area of operation to enhance local community development efforts. The monitoring of the local community development programmes and projects is executed by the local communities themselves with the aid of well-structured project management plans and in close collaboration with Amasachina.

Box 5.3: Ghana Denmark Friendship Project (GDFP) in Tolon-Kumbungu District, Northern Region

Started in 1986, the GDFP is a collaborative effort between Ghana and Denmark to promote local community development. It focuses attention on adult education, women and loan programmes, and dissemination of development information through radio broadcasts. So far it has restricted its activities to Tolon-Kumbungu District in the Northern Region covering a radius of about 20 km and including 17 main communities and 220 small communities.

The project broadcasts information on communal work, literacy classes, and income-generating activities. Its adult education centre discusses issues relating to animal husbandry and animal traction while its vocational courses include skills acquisition programmes for young men. Women also acquire skills in soap-making and access to credit loans.

The projects operate around a local committee system which comprises a local chief and between 19-25 members. A third of the members of the local committee are encouraged to be women. The local committee is the link between the community and the project. The communities are encouraged to identify their own projects based upon their priority needs for assistance by the project. The community requests to the project are first screened by the local committee. When accepted by the project as feasible, the community provides 25% while GDFP provides 75% of the total cost. In addition, the community provides communal labour for the execution or implementation of the feasible community development projects.

Box 5.4: Programme for Rural Action (PRA) of GTZ

The Programme for Rural Action (PRA) seeks to support the decentralisation policy of the government with a focus on capacity-building for DA members and technical staff.

Approach and methodology

The PRA approach centres on stimulating grassroot involvement in decision-making implementation processes for district level development. The salient features of this approach are as follows:

- Communities identify their problems, interests, needs and objectives through meaningful dialogue;
- The needs and concerns are discussed, prioritised and a time frame set to achieve them;
- Through their own collaborative efforts, beneficiaries try to achieve the development concerns that are within their means or the assembly member in the community forwards the requests of the community (that are not within its ability to handle alone) to the DA or any other external body for assistance;
- The DA asks the relevant department for simple feasibility studies;
- The requests and feasibility studies are considered in the respective sub-committees of the DA and proposals for decision-making are prepared for the executive committee, and the general assembly;
- The general assembly analyses and discusses the proposals within the frame of its budget and decides on the projects to be implemented.

All projects are monitored by representatives of the communities and the respective sub-committee of the DA.

For each of these steps, PRA is used to train the relevant actors on what is expected of them by the decentralisation policy. For example, for step one, PRA trains DA members in basic animation skills, how to conduct listening surveys and how to build village for a. The relevant sub-committees are given training on identification of criteria for prioritisation, weighting of criteria and prioritisation techniques.

The training sessions are participatory. Participants' knowledge on the topic discussed is taped, experiences are shared, and extra information delivered by the facilitator is discussed by all, to arrive at a consensus.

In furtherance of local community development, the PRA operates in the communities as a "village level facilitator concept" in which each village selects a man and a woman as facilitators of all conceivable aspects of development for that community, and they serve as multipliers for the project ideas. Currently, the unit committees have been established, and PRA is now in the process of establishing support for community governance by the local communities themselves. In this regard, PRA will train three representatives of area councils including one woman who will serve as local counterparts for the scheme.

The PRA is currently engaged in local communities in three districts: West Gonja (Northern Region), Kintampo (Brong Ahafo Region) and Hohoe (Volta Region). It is presumed that the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) will provide resources necessary to continue training when the PRA terminates.

Source: PRA/GTZ/ MLGRD (1996)

Local development initiatives and the operations of the NGOs at sub-district levels are directly aimed at improving community livelihoods. They create opportunities in the various local communities in the districts for active participation in discussing local problems and for action to solve such problems. They also enable active involvement of local communities in the development of districts and sub-districts. Viewed from another perspective, the local initiatives are rational and creative actions by the local communities themselves to improve their livelihoods.

5.3 Financing community development projects through micro-credit schemes

The financing of community-based development projects in Ghana has increased considerably since the introduction of micro-credit schemes in the country. This is because of the severe deterioration in relations between the formal (profit-seeking) banking system and poor local communities. The high cost of traditional money lending sources (rates of 40% a month are common in Ghana) locks local community households into debt. The expansion of institutional credit through banks and co-operatives was expected to break this impasse but, in practice, the expansion of such credit provisions does not reach those most in need. Institutional credit, often heavily subsidised, is normally available only to the creditworthy. The poor are usually excluded from these sources and remain trapped in a cycle of debt. Consequently, the poorer households are forced to borrow from informal sources at exorbitant interest rates to meet their immediate needs.

There is, therefore, a need for a form of development banking for poor local communities to advance local community development, as represented by the micro-finance scheme.

The conditions and processes under which the micro-finance scheme operates suggest that it is adaptable to disadvantaged groups and involves the sound management of the savings of "little people" by self-reliant local credit unions. It is a true local banking scheme carefully adjusted to the local community development needs within specific localities coupled with management of local savings with local competence.

A number of institutions have developed programmes for channeling micro-credit to various local communities in Ghana. Table 5.1 shows these institutions in relation to the local community group and the group activities.

Table 5.1 Micro-Credit Institutions and Local Community Groups

Micro-Credit Institutions	Local Community Group	Local Community Group Activities
Ghana Money Literacy and Mutual Support Programme (Northern Region)	Community-based women groups	Support for income-generating activities and strengthening of organisational capacity of women groups
Women's World Banking	Local community women groups	Institutional credit to disadvantaged women
Sinapi Aba Trust (SAT) (Mustard Seed)	Economically disadvantaged women and small-scale entrepreneurs	Supports income-generating activities and job creation
CEDEP Women's Forum	Low income women and men co-operatives	Supports income-generating activities
Enhancing Opportunity for Women in Development (ENOWID)	Small-scale business groups	Distribution of credit to small-scale businesses
CEDEP Women's Forum	Low income women and men co-operatives	Supports income-generating activities

These institutions obviously employ different approaches and target different local community groups, but the ultimate objective in all cases is to provide micro-credit facilities to local community groups to enhance local community development. It is widely believed that informal financial markets of micro-credit schemes in Ghana are more important and larger in scope than formal markets when it comes to financing local community development programmes and projects. It is also believed that ordinary people in the local communities would benefit a lot if the micro-credit schemes could be effectively promoted to sustain livelihoods in the local communities in the sub-districts. What is required is careful targeting of micro-credit to the needs of the local community groups. In this way, they would become active partners in local community development.

5.4 Linkages between community development schemes and sustainable livelihoods approaches

The entire package of community development schemes at the sub-district level was intended to promote improvements in the livelihoods of Ghanaians on a sustainable basis through enhanced access to social and economic services. The local community development schemes were comprehensive to the extent that the social, economic, environmental and spatial aspects of development in the communities were examined as a single integrated task in designing mutually supportive community development packages aimed at sustaining community livelihoods. The process represented the co-ordinated joint efforts of the local communities, NGOs, donors, government of Ghana, districts and sub-districts.

Districts and sub-districts are working vigorously to sustain livelihoods through improving the development potential of local communities so as to enhance productivity and provide essential socio-economic infrastructure. There is a genuine desire to achieve spatial equity in the allocation of public investment funds.

Even though several problems and weaknesses plague local community development efforts, decentralisation is gradually empowering district and sub-district structures to take up responsibility for sustainable community development.

The unit committees were only established following the local government elections in June 1988 and, as yet, have little operational experience. As a result, and with the official dissolution of town/village development committees, unit committees will have to move very fast to establish their own identities and mechanisms to engage in the community development process. Any vacuum resulting from inactivity might impact negatively on livelihoods and decentralised development planning.

Local communities rarely understand the integrated nature of the decentralised development planning at the sub-district level. They still tend to regard planning as a shopping list of individual projects. To facilitate the implementation of the decentralised development planning system to sustain local community livelihoods, it is important to integrate the development activities of all actors in the local community, including local communities themselves, NGOs, decentralised and non-decentralised departments operating in the district and especially in the local communities. A necessary prerequisite for successful rural district planning and for sustaining the livelihoods of rural communities will be to ensure that effective mechanisms are introduced for co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration among all stakeholders in the local community development efforts.

CHAPTER 6

RURAL DISTRICT PLANNING FOR RURAL POVERTY REDUCTION: EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS

6.0 Introduction

Rural Poverty is an endemic problem in Ghana. Currently, with the support of donor agencies and NGOs, the government is intensifying national efforts to reduce poverty, especially in rural districts through the decentralised planning system. This chapter analyses these efforts, the co-ordination mechanisms involved in rural poverty reduction and their impact on livelihoods.

6.1 Rural districts as a focus for poverty reduction

Poverty in Ghana is predominantly found in rural districts. Of the 35% of Ghanaians classified as poor by the World Bank in 1995, 75% lived in rural districts and depended essentially on agricultural production for their livelihoods. The most affected are women who are believed to perform about 40% of all agricultural activities (World Bank, 1995).

Recognising that improvements in peoples' welfare or livelihoods must be the primary goal of the national development effort, the government, Donors and NGOs initiated actions to reduce poverty, especially in the rural districts. The main approaches consists of:

- Direct and targeted poverty reduction programming;
- Decentralised participatory development planning;
- Co-ordination and monitoring of poverty reduction policies and programmes.

6.2 Targeted government actions and rural district poverty reduction projects and their impacts on rural livelihoods

Direct government initiatives and targeted poverty reduction efforts within the framework of the decentralised, participatory development planning system include:

- Increases in District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) allocations and a shift towards poverty-reduction related expenditure;
- Implementation of the Ghana Government/UNDP National Poverty Reduction Programme (NPRP) in 5 pilot District Assemblies (from June 1997);
- Establishment of Ghana Social Investment Fund (SIF) (in June 1998);
- Village Infrastructure Project (VIP), 1997.

6.2.1 *Increases in DACF Allocation and Shift Towards Poverty-Reduction Related Expenditure*

Between 1994 and 1996, there was a significant shift towards social sector expenditure which affects poverty reduction (see Table 6.1). The increased expenditure was targeted mainly at

rural districts showing the government's commitment to poverty reduction in the country as a whole.

Table 6.1: Shift of DACF allocation towards social sector expenditure (1994-1996)

Sector	Allocation 1994 ¢	Allocation 1995 ¢	% increase 1994-1995	Allocation 1996 ¢	% increase 1994-1996
BASIC EDUCATION	5.66	21.22	135.0	32.16	287.7
PRIMARY HEALTH CARE	9.22	17.50	19.0	27.46	103.2
RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE	7.89	27.36	117.4	42.30	265.8
● WATER	0.50	1.87	134.5	6.61	802.0
● ROADS	0.80	16.2	56.3	19.84	108.3
● ELECTRICITY	0.89	9.29	554.4	15.85	1115.1
TOTAL	22.77	66.08	81.9	101.92	207.4

Source: Ministry of Finance; Sector Ministries; District Assembly, Common Fund Administrator

6.2.2 National Poverty Reduction Programme (NPRP)

The government is currently implementing a National Poverty Reduction Programme with funding from UNDP. The programme support document was signed in November 1996 and implementation started in June 1997.

The NDPC is responsible for co-ordinating and guiding the programme support and implementation and has established a programme co-ordinating unit (PCU) for this purpose. This unit is responsible for developing guidelines for the preparation of a detailed workplan for each poverty reduction target, co-ordinating their preparation and presentation for approval. The PCU is also responsible for the disbursement of funds to each implementing agency.

The programme targets five poverty reduction areas:

- Management capacity-building;
- Skills development;
- Social Investment Fund;
- Technology development;
- Social development mechanisms.

Beneficiary local communities have been selected from five districts (NPRP 3rd Quarterly Report, 1998):

- Bongo District in the Guinea Savanna Zone;
- Juabeso-Bia District in the Rain Forest Zone;
- Afram Plains District in the Semi-Deciduous Forest Zone;
- Dangbe West District in the Coastal Savannah Zone;
- Accra Metropolitan Area, an urban area

The major objective of the programme is poverty reduction in the target districts through the five poverty reduction programme areas. To achieve this objective, the five districts have been implementing training activities in the five areas of emphasis. Between April and September

1998, 11,687 people (7,257 females; 4,430 males) in the five target districts benefited from the various training programmes of the NPRP (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2: Beneficiaries of NPRP training programmes in the five target districts

Areas of Emphasis	Female	Male	Total
Management Capacity Building	155	276	431
Skills Development	750	221	971
Technology Development Transfer	1,620	1,897	3,517
Social Development Mechanisms	4,732	2,036	6,768
Total	7,257	4,430	11,687

Source: NPRP, Third Quarterly Report, July-September, 1998.

As a result of these training activities, the programme objectives have been achieved to some extent in each of the five areas of emphasis in the given districts.

6.2.2.1 Management capacity-building

Through creating awareness about what the local communities can do to help themselves to reduce poverty, the programme has encouraged people to undertake activities that will improve their livelihoods. Consequently, the demand for programme interventions from the local communities and community-based organisations has increased considerably.

6.2.2.2 Skills training

Skills training is helping local communities in the five districts to improve their livelihood significantly. For instance, a blacksmith/welder in the Juabeso Bia District, who was just mending and repairing tools and equipment, is now actively involved in the production of farm implements such as hoes, mattocks, block moulding machines, iron bar gates and cages. The increase in production has led to additional employment opportunities and improved incomes for the beneficiaries of the enterprise. Similarly, in the same district, 70% of women trained in powder, pomade and soap making are actively engaged in income-generating activities that yield better incomes and better ways of using time.

In the Afram Plains District, ten out of the 24 persons trained in snail farming are active in business of snail production. Fifty (50) additional people have been trained as a rippling effect from the first training programme resulting now in the creation of 50 new jobs. In addition, the local communities themselves have started exchange visits to learn snail farming from each other. For example, 20 persons from one community, "Kyemfre" went to another community, "Bebuso" to learn snail farming.

Similarly, 50 out of 115 youths trained in the Afram Plains District in entrepreneurial skills, rudimentary bookkeeping and marketing strategies have established and are managing their own small-scale production units in the district.

In Dangbe West District, the district model apiary won the regional tourism award for best community-based project. More training in bee-keeping will enhance the upgrading of the apiary to improve its tourism potential and generate incomes for its members and the local community as a whole.

Under the NPRD training programme, the quality and variety of handicrafts from Bongo District has improved considerably. This industry is attracting a lot of patronage from tourists and exporters (NPRP, 3rd Quarterly Report, 1998).

6.2.2.3 Social Investment Fund

The activities of the Social Investment Fund have not yet commenced in the districts. In its absence however, community associations and groups have established farms to raise incomes that could serve as revolving funds for members. The DAs are also making efforts to ease the problem of micro-finance in the districts. In the Afram Plains District for instance, the DA has reached an agreement in principle with Freedom from Hunger Project (an NGO dealing in micro-finance) to give priority attention to the local communities involved in the Poverty Reduction Programme.

6.2.2.4 Technology development and transfer

Technology development and transfer in the target districts is transforming positively the livelihoods of local communities. In Bongo District, for example, the introduction of "wet grinder" in processing shea butter and groundnut has reduced the processing time of oils by four hours leading to greater productivity and the generation of additional revenue in beneficiary communities.

The introduction of improved varieties of poultry, sheep and goats and training in animal health has improved the income levels of the beneficiaries. For example, the local variety of poultry birds cost at most ¢4,000.00 per bird. But the improved cross-breed sells at between ¢8,000 and ¢12,000.00 per bird, a price increase of more than 50%.

Similarly, a total of 68 rabbitries have been established in communities in Bongo District and 120 rabbits have been supplied to beneficiaries by the programme. More than 50% of these have started kiddling. The rearing of rabbits is serving as a very important off-farm employment opportunity for farmers in the district.

In the Afram Plains District, a high-yielding variety of cassava has been introduced and accepted by farmers. They have also adopted agro-forestry as an intervention for environmental protection.

6.2.2.5 Social development mechanisms

Under the social development mechanisms, beneficiaries have been taught self-awareness and self-confidence through training workshops organised by the programme. For example, in Feo local community in Bongo District, a women's group had a membership of only three which increased to 30 following the commencement of NPRP activities. In addition to expanding its activities and improving member's livelihoods, the group had adopted and is caring for eight orphans. In Juabeso Bia District, KVIP toilets (3-20 seaters) have been provided to three communities. As a result, individuals in the community have stopped careless pollution of the

environment. This has significantly reduced the incidence of communicable diseases such as cholera.

The National Poverty Reduction Programme is now in the third year of implementation. Its activities so far indicate that it is progressing satisfactorily to achieve its main objective of poverty reduction and improvement of livelihoods in local communities in the target districts. The true extent meeting this objective and the impact on the programme on livelihoods may not be known until implementation is complete. Lessons about what works and does not work will then be clear and the successful experiences will then be replicated in other poor districts in the country.

6.2.3 Establishment of the Ghana Social Investment Fund

The government has made substantial progress towards establishing the Ghana Social Investment Fund in collaboration with the African Development Bank (AFDB) and UNDP to serve as a major poverty reduction intervention. The objectives of the fund are to:

- Facilitate access of the poor to basic social services through investment to improve the availability and operation of these services;
- Enhance the financial capacity of the poor through micro-credit and other forms of support;
- Strengthen NGOs, grassroot institutions, community-based organisations, indigenous financial institutions and the local administration (District Assemblies) in support of the overall goal of poverty reduction in Ghana.

The implementation of the Social Investment Fund has not yet commenced but serious efforts are being made to start its implementation.

The African Development Bank will initially contribute US\$15 million to the fund while UNDP and Ghana Government will contribute US\$ 1.5 million and US\$1.7 million, respectively.

6.2.4 Village Infrastructure Project (VIP)

The poor state or non-existence of infrastructure for rural water supply, post-harvest processing and rural transport has been identified as the main constraint to improving rural living standards or livelihoods in Ghana. In response to this challenge, the Village Infrastructure Project was initiated. The overall implementation of the project is under the supervision of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA).

The main goal of the VIP is to improve the quality of life of Ghana's rural poor through increased transfer of technical and financial resources to develop basic-level infrastructure. Its specific objectives are to:

- Empower local communities and beneficiary groups through technical assistance and other measures to enable them to identify, plan, implement and maintain small village-level infrastructure investments;
- Increase access by rural communities to development resources through small grants;
- Strengthen community and district-level institutions in order to improve the efficiency of rural resource transfer and to ensure sustainability of poverty-reducing interventions;

- Support the government's strategy of decentralisation of development responsibilities to DAs and other local government entities.

The VIP comprises four major components: rural water infrastructure, post-harvest infrastructure, rural transport infrastructure and institutional strengthening projects (MOFA, VIP Report, 1997).

6.2.4.1 Rural water infrastructure

The project is designed to support the integrated development and management of water resources, including catchment management and other water conservation practices. It also emphasises the rational use of water for agriculture, livestock and human consumption. The project will support the construction of small dams, dugouts, boreholes, hand-dug wells, stream flow diversions and pumping to support small-scale irrigation in the dry season. Rainfall conservation and management for more effective use in rain-fed crop production will form part of the project.

6.2.4.2 Rural transport infrastructure

Support will be provided for the selective rehabilitation and improvements to degraded feeder roads, and the development of village trails and tracks linking farms to villages. A pilot programme to develop intermediate means of transport for the rural poor to increase the efficiency of moving produce from farms to villages and onwards to markets will also be implemented.

6.2.4.3 Rural post-harvest infrastructure

Support is expected to be given for the development of on-farm and village-level drying facilities to reduce post-harvest losses. The project will assist the development of on-farm and community storage and other village-level market infrastructure including appropriate facilities for processing of crops, livestock and fisheries products. It is hoped that these facilities will improve income-generating activities targeted at the poorest segments of the rural population.

6.2.4.4 Institutional strengthening

The project will fund capacity-building within the DAs to strengthen the planning and financial management of rural infrastructure. It will also strengthen NGOs and other community-based organisations to provide more effective implementation support to beneficiary communities and groups. In addition, the project will empower beneficiary communities to take direct responsibility for the sustainable operation and maintenance of rural infrastructure. The pilot phase of the post-harvest infrastructure programme is being coordinated by Technoserve, an International NGO. This programme will finance investments in post-harvest management of selected crops to encourage rural incomes, jobs and productivity. The pilot phase is focused in Ghana's maize triangle in the Brong Ahafo and Ashanti Regions.

The pilot phase is expected to:

- Establish an integrated system linking production, post-harvest activities, marketing, rural finance and training;
- Motivate farmers to adopt productive technologies being promoted by Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) and Technoserve;
- Mobilise and train farmers groups to invest and manage their own funds in production, storage and processing technologies; and train rural banks to appraise and lend to small scale agricultural enterprises;
- Provide a forum for rural financial institutions, NGOs, farmers groups and government agencies to share results or lessons learnt in the course of the pilot project;

- Test a model of collaborative and concentrated assistance to rural producers and processors for nation-wide application.

After some delay, the pilot phase commenced in March, 1997. To date, production inputs have been supplied to 15 qualifying groups. Sasakawa Global 2000 and MOFA have provided training to some groups on crib construction and participating branches of the Agricultural Development Bank have disbursed funds to agricultural input suppliers.

6.2.4.5 Project benefits and impacts on rural livelihoods

The VIP is expected to provide a number of benefits:

- Increased smallholder productivity, employment and rural incomes;
- Strengthened community institutions which can participate more effectively in rural development;
- Improved community health and nutritional status.

It is expected that all these benefits will help reduce rural poverty since it is targeted at poor farmers, rural communities and DAs. At least 500,000 rural families are expected to benefit directly from the project.

6.3 Donor and NGO-assisted rural district poverty reduction projects and impacts on rural livelihoods

Donor agencies and NGOs are actively supporting the poverty reduction agenda in Ghana.

6.3.1 *Donor support*

The areas in which poverty-reduction support is provided by donors are listed in Table 6.3. There are three levels of donor support:

- The macro level;
- Institutional level through institutional strengthening and capacity-building;
- District and community level, targeting DAs and poor communities with direct support.

Donor programmes structured according to this classification are indicated in Table 6.4. The poverty reduction programmes listed in Tables 6 and Table 6.4 are indicative of donor support but are not exhaustive (Botchie, 1997).

6.3.2 *NGO support.*

Poverty reduction initiatives in Ghana enjoy very active support from NGOs. One of the most active NGOs in this respect is Technoserve/Ghana - a non profit organisation that helps the rural poor by providing skills and know-how to build their own, viable and sustainable community businesses. It also provides technical, environmentally sound agricultural assistance, business management and marketing training to increase the productivity of the rural poor.

Table 6.3: Sectoral support of donor agencies for poverty reduction

Donors	Agriculture	Water and Sanitation	Education	Health	Roads
Canada (CIDA)	X	x	X	x	
Denmark (DANIDA)		x	x	x	x
France	X	x			
Germany (GTZ)	X	x	x	x	x
Japan		x	x	x	x
Netherlands	X	x		x	x
U.K	X	x	x	x	x
U.S.A	X		x	x	
AfDB		x		x	x
EU	X	x	x	x	x
FAO/IFAD	X				
UNDP	X	x	x	x	
UNICEF		x	x	x	
World Bank	X	x	x	x	x

Source: World Bank

Note: Other emerging areas of support include environment, decentralisation and governance.

Table 6.4: Specific areas of donor support for poverty reduction at macro, institutional and district/community levels.

Donor Agency	Year of Support	Type of Support	Location/ Coverage of Support	Level of Funding	Status of Support
MACRO-LEVEL					
CIDA	1995-2001	Public Expenditure Reforms	Accra/ National	CAD \$ 49,999,996	On-going
CIDA	1995-2001	Fiscal decentralisation	National	CAD \$ 1,500,000	Approved but not operational
WORLD BANK	1997	Public Finance Management Programme	Accra and National	US\$ M 20.9	On-going
WORLD BANK	1996	Highway Sector Investment Programme	National	US\$ M 100.0	On-going
WORLD BANK	1995	Non-Banking Financial Assistance Programme	National	US\$ M 23.9	On-going
WORLD BANK	1996	Basic Education Programme	National	US \$ M 50.0	On-going
WORLD BANK	1996	Public Enterprise Programme	National	US\$ M 26.45	On-going
WORLD BANK	1996	Urban Environmental Sanitation	National	US\$ M 71.0	On-going
WORLD BANK	1997	Private Sector Adjustment	National	US\$ M 3.5	On-going
WORLD BANK	1995	Private Sector Adjustment	National	US\$ M 70.0	On-going

INSTITUTIONAL-LEVEL					
DANIDA	1995-1996	Budget support to the Ministry of Health	National	DKK 17 m	Completed
DANIDA	1996-1999	Health Estate and building maintenance Project	National	DKK 18.8 m	On-going
DANIDA	1993-1996 (Phase I)	Private sector Development Programme	National (Ministry of Finance)	DK 33.6 m (phase I) DK 80.0 m (phase II)	On-going
CIDA	1996-2000 (Phase II)	Ghana Grains Development Project	Kumasi and Ashanti Region	Can \$ 9.8m	Completed
CIDA	1996	GWSC Assistance Project	Northern, Region	Can \$ 28.0m	On-going
CIDA	1995-2001	Ghana Technical Education Project	Tamale, Kumasi Accra	Can \$7.3 m	On-going
CIDA	1995-2001	Gratis Project	National	Can \$ 4,586,799	On-going
CIDA	1995-2001	Ghana Credit Union Development Assistance Project	National	Can \$5 m	On-going
DANIDA	1993-1997	National Feeder Roads Rehabilitation and Maintenance Project	National	DK 117.3m	On-going
DANIDA	1993-1997 (Phase I)	Volta Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project	Volta Region	DK 115.7m	Phase 1 completed
DANIDA	1996-1999	National Electrification Project	Central and Upper West Regions	DK 125.2m	On-going
DANIDA	1995-1998 (phase II)	Technical Assistance to the financial sector	National	DK 11.8m	On-going
DANIDA	1994-1999	Land and Water Management Project	National	DK 20.6m	On-going
DANIDA	1994-1999	Environmental Information System	National	DK 20m	On-going
DANIDA	1997-2000	National Poverty Reduction Programme	National	US \$ 7.0m	On-going
DISTRICT/COMMUNITY-LEVEL					
CIDA	1995-2001	Girl Child Education Project	National	Can \$ 3.5m	On-going
CIDA	1995-2001	Community Water project	U. East and U. West Regions	Can \$13.4m	Completed
CIDA	1995	Expanded Programme of Immunisation Project	National	Can \$2.9m	On-going
WORLD BANK	1995	Vocational Training Programme	National	US \$ 9.6m	On-going
WORLD BANK	1996	Urban Environmental Sanitation Project	Urban	US \$ 71m	On-going
WORLD BANK	1996	Private Sector Development	National	US \$ 13m	On-going
WORLD BANK/IFAD	1995	Village Infrastructure Project	National	US \$ 30m	On-going
DANIDA	1996	Strengthening of Primary Health Care	Upper West Region	DK 171m	On-going
EUROPEAN UNION	1994-1998	The Micro-Project Programme	National	US \$ 116-290m	On-going

(EU)					
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The activities of Technoserve/Ghana include:

- Promotion of shea nut industry in northern Ghana;
- Training in mobilising rural savings and credit; and
- Organisation of local soap producers to supply private industry with raw materials;

6.3.2.1 Promotion of shea nut industry in northern Ghana

Since 1993, Technoserve/Ghana has been involved in efforts to raise the incomes of small-scale shea kernel and butter producers as part of the promotion of non-traditional exports under the Trade and Investment Programme funded by the government and USAID. During the 1997 shea nut season, Technoserve assisted three NGOs to link 44 women's groups comprising 1,801 members in the Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions to a major exporter. A total of 416 metric tonnes of shea kernel valued at US\$ 83,140 was purchased between July and December by the women's groups which earned commissions of about 5.5 million cedis from a total 142 million cedis disbursed during the season (Boafo, 1998).

6.3.2.2 Training in mobilising rural savings and credit

Technoserve/Ghana has provided institutional capacity-building support to the Co-operative Oil Palm Millers Association (COPAMA). It organised a five-day training programme in mobilising rural savings and credit management at Kumasi for its executives from April 27 to May 1 1998. The training was to assist the association to mobilise funds for setting up a revolving fund scheme. It involved instruction in leadership skills and governance, rural savings mobilisation and credit management, progress report writing, debt recovery strategies and basic record keeping. Participatory approaches to adult teaching and learning were also applied including brainstorming exercises, group discussions, role plays and short lectures.

6.3.2.3 Organisation of local soap producers

Technoserve/Ghana has acted as an intermediary between the private sector and rural businesses. It has organised local soap producers in the Ashanti and Western Regions to increase their incomes through the improvement of their products and supplying these to an Accra-based manufacturing and fair trade marketing company. The firm produces a bath soap which is made from a local soap called "*alata samina*". The success of the bath soap on the Ghanaian market has led to plans by the firm to increase purchases of the local soap from rural producers.

Through these efforts, Technoserve/Ghana is helping to link rural enterprises with the larger business community; to create new opportunities for savings and credit, to open up larger markets and promote private investment, natural resource management and assistance from local NGOs. Thus Technoserve/Ghana is contributing effectively to improving the living

standards of many communities in Ghana and to achieving sustainable livelihood in different parts of Ghana.

6.4 Lessons from rural district poverty reduction projects and impact on livelihoods

All the projects analysed above focus their poverty reduction interventions directly on the rural poor. The government as well as donors and NGOs are strongly committed to reducing rural poverty. The governments' National Poverty Reduction Programme, the shift in allocation of resources towards the social service delivery and the Village Infrastructure Project (when fully implemented) will combine effectively with the efforts of donors and NGOs to sustain livelihood in the rural districts. These combined efforts will also complement the attempts being made by the DAs through the decentralised planning system to improve rural livelihoods.

CHAPTER 7

THE WAY FORWARD: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The concept of sustainable rural livelihoods is entirely consistent with the decentralised planning system in Ghana. The need to restructure development strategies in order to achieve sustainable rural development, improve incomes, employment opportunities, general welfare and livelihoods in rural areas prompted the government to focus attention and action on the districts.

The new planning system has sought to achieve sustainable rural livelihoods through the establishment of 110 districts as administrative units and district assemblies as development planning authorities, with the devolution of power to the districts to allow the rational allocation of national resources. The participatory and integrated but decentralised planning system is transforming rural "capital assets" through its new structures (various levels of government/private sector) and processes (legal instruments, policies and institutions) and meaningful and positive livelihood outcomes are emerging.

The new planning system has awakened a spirit of voluntarism, increased awareness and prompted local development initiatives in rural communities. Through the decentralisation process, rural communities are better able to access and manage natural resources. In addition, there is now a more cohesive and supportive social environment, access to financial resources, high quality education, increased levels of information, access technology and training, and new facilitating infrastructure.

Despite these gains, the new decentralised planning system is not yet sufficiently robust to ensure sustainable development and secure livelihoods in the rural districts. There is, therefore, a need to:

- Strengthen the capability of DAs, district planning co-ordinating units and unit committees to design, draw up, implement and monitor district development plans with active and full local community participation;
- Promote micro-business enterprises and market-oriented skills training for local communities with micro-credit schemes as exemplified by Ho farms and Technoserve;
- Make the inherent characteristics of the DA structures responsive to local community aspirations and concerns. There must therefore be real "power to the people" and district chief executives should be elected by the people and answerable to them;
- Improve the skills and capabilities of DA members through targeted training programmes to strengthen their participation in DA deliberations;
- Train unit committees to improve their capabilities and relationships with local communities and DAs.

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